

THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION SINCE THE REFORMATION, PART II: CHANGING CLIMATES OF OPINION

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A previous study of one facet of this topic surveyed the more-or-less official and formal expressions of the teachings on the inspiration and authority of Scripture from each of the major traditions within the Christian Church. It reflected the orthodox Christian position on the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture as it entered the twentieth century.¹ The present investigation will trace the emergence of the various challenges to that traditional teaching of the Church, which ultimately led to the bold confrontation of religious authority by proponents of modern science and scientific method as they developed an anti-theological position to that of the mainstream of traditional orthodox Christian thought on the subject.

In his study of the confrontation between religion and science in the modern world, H. D. McDonald chose the year 1860 as the turning point in that conflict. For him the period before 1860 "was concerned with specific problems of a special revelation, while the latter was concerned with the serious question whether there was any revelation at all."² He sets forth two influences that brought these two periods into such a sharp contrast. The first influence was Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which made its appearance in November 1859. The second was the introduction of the so-called historical method.³ McDonald states that "just as Darwin was thought to have given to evolution basis in scientific fact, so the introduction of the so-called historical method was held to justify the criticisms which the deists maintained against the Bible."⁴ With this frame of reference, the following discussion will look into the changing climates of opinion as they developed attitudes and methods that have come to be reflected in modern views of revelation, inspiration and the authority of Scripture.

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¹W. E. Nix, "The Doctrine of Inspiration Since the Reformation," *JETS* 25/4 (December 1982) 443-454.

²H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study, 1700-1960* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 1. 6.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 7-16. McDonald cites John Dewey's *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* to the effect that "however true it may be that Darwin's work was the climax of a movement, it certainly is to be marked as the commencement of an era." He also indicates that 1859 was the year that Karl Marx produced his *Critique of Political Economy*, as their concerns about misery in nature and society brought about a new perception of both after 1860.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 10.

Although the seeds of the rejection of Biblical authority were already present in the experimentalism of Roger Bacon (c. 1214-c. 1292) and the material skepticism of William Ockham (c. 1285-1347), it was during the post-Reformation period that the first major deviations from the orthodox doctrine of inspiration of the Scriptures, both OT and NT, made their appearance. Previous discussion has shown that these deviations were not universal. Nevertheless some major deviations from the traditional doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture did begin to appear. These deviations were not sharp contrasts to the traditional doctrine but a gradual moving away from it.⁵ They arose following the Reformation era, which has been called "the dividing of Christendom" because of the successful challenges to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. With their successful challenges to ecclesiastical authority, dissident groups were able to give protection to individuals as they developed new ideas and methods of investigation. During the early part of this period, for example, the efforts of such men as Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543), Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), Galileo Galilei (1546-1642) and others forged the modern scientific attitude in the western world. Their views were often opposed by established religious authorities.⁶

Similar trends are observable in the theological world. Martin Luther was given protection when Frederick of Saxony concealed him at Wartburg Castle in 1521-22. From that place of refuge Luther published a tract on monastic vows and translated the NT into German. Another instance is that of the Italian Soci-nians, Lelio Francesco Maria Sozzini (1525-1562) and his nephew Fausto Paolo Sozzini (1539-1604), who were able to deny the deity of Christ as they moved to Poland and joined an active group of Unitarians located there. Fausto became leader of the group from 1572 until his death in 1604. In 1605 they published the

⁵On this subject see J. D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), which is a sound examination of the well-intentioned but inadequately-demonstrated proposal by J. B. Rogers and D. K. McKim (*The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* [San Francisco: Harper, 1979]) that the Christian Church has held a "paradoxical view" that regarded the Scriptures as infallible in matters of faith and conduct while being incorrect in matters of historical and scientific detail. Also see McDonald, *Theories*, for a competent two-volume analysis of this subject with detailed investigation into the writings of leading proponents in the process of deviation that occurred in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries; J. Delumeau, *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (1971), published in the series *Nouvelle Cléo—Cléo* and translated into English as *Catholicism Between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation* (London: Burns & Oates, 1977); R. H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (New York: Harper, 1964).

⁶J. H. Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age* (New York: Columbia University, 1926, rev. ed. 1940), provides a broad background on the intellectual setting of this period. Also see any standard treatment of the rise of modern thought, such as C. Brinton, *Ideas and Men: The Story of Western Thought* (2d ed.; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963); R. N. Stromberg, *An Intellectual History of Modern Europe* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966); B. Demarest, "The Bible in the Enlightenment Era," in *Challenges to Inerrancy: A Theological Response* (ed. G. R. Lewis and B. Demarest; Chicago, Moody, 1984) 11-47; C. Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith: A Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1968). On the origins of science see Butterfield, *Origins of Modern Science*; Hall, *Scientific Revolution*.

Racovian Catechism.⁷ Toward the middle of the seventeenth century they were driven from Poland altogether. In the 1650s John Biddle (1615-1662) published the Unitarian tracts that resulted in his being reckoned "the father of Unitarianism." In the meantime the Christian world was experiencing some significant changes in the climates of opinion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

I. PIETISM (C. 1650-C. 1725)

Pietism⁸ arose in Germany with Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) and his close friend August Hermann Francke (1633-1727). While serving as a pastor in Frankfurt, Spener published his influential book *Pia Desideria*⁹ (1675). Some time later, when Spener was court preacher at Dresden, Francke joined him. Orthodox Lutheranism soon reacted against Pietism and the movement became involved in controversy. By 1694 the Pietists had become established at Halle, where they established charitable centers and founded the University of Halle as a training center. This group held to the inspiration of Scripture in the same manner as did the Roman Catholic, Anabaptist, Lutheran, Evangelical Reformed and Westminster traditions. Their view, however, had a different emphasis. The Pietist emphasis stressed the individual's subjective, personal experience rather than the propounding of Biblical doctrine or catechism. As Francke put the matter: "We may safely assure those who read the word with devotion and simplicity, that they will derive more light and profit from such a practice, and from connecting meditation with it . . . than can ever be acquired from drudging through an infinite variety of unimportant minutiae."¹⁰ To this observation Justo Gonzalez adds:

While none will doubt that this statement is essentially correct, such a position did arouse opposition among orthodox theologians and ecclesiastical leaders—although not so much for what is in fact said as for what it did not say. The emphasis here falls entirely on the individual believer and his relationship with God, and the church seems to be entirely bypassed. . . . This tendency to set aside the church and her ministrations was one of the main reasons why the orthodox Lutheran theologians attacked the Pietist movement.¹¹

⁷T. Rees, *The Racovian Catechism, with Notes and Illustrations, translated from the Latin: to which is prefixed A Sketch of the history of Unitarianism in Poland and Adjacent Countries* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818; reprinted in Lexington, KY: American Theological Library Association, 1962).

⁸J. L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 3. 274-278. Also see T. A. Burkill, *The Evolution of Christian Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1970) 315-327, for a discussion of the connection between Pietism and Methodism.

⁹For an English translation of this work see P. J. Spener, *Pia Desideria* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

¹⁰See *A Guide to the Reading and Study of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: David Hogan, 1823) 83 as cited by Gonzalez, *History* 277.

¹¹Ibid.

Although Pietists adhered to the inspiration of the Bible, they advocated individual feeling as being of primary importance. Whereas this was an adequate method of avoiding the cold orthodoxy of "Protestant scholasticism," it opened the door for the equally dangerous enemy of "subjective experientialism." The first generation of Pietists could recall and reflect on its grounding in Scripture while validly advocating the need for individual experience. A second generation would stress the need for individual experience, but often without a proper Biblical or catechetical basis. This would leave a third generation that would question individual experience with no Biblical or doctrinal "standard" to serve as an objective criterion. In turn, their unanswered questions would tend to demand an authority. When the Scriptures were neglected, human reason or subjective experience would fill the need as the required "standard." Thus while not causing other movements Pietism gave impetus to three other movements in the post-Reformation Church: deism, skepticism and rationalism. Although these movements were not limited to any particular country prior to the revolutions in America and France, deism was most dominant in England and America, skepticism in France, and rationalism in Germany.¹²

II. DEISM (C. 1625-C. 1800)

The deists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries adopted what is known as a "two-level" approach to apologetics and theology. Such an apologetic approach utilizes philosophy to lay foundations, and the Christian faith is presented on the strength of the philosophical arguments. Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) is usually identified as the father of deism. His idea was that certain common notions were imprinted on the human mind by the hand of God independent of particular creeds and revelations, and as such they form the basis of all true religion. These ideas of natural theology were comparable to the ideas of Rene Descartes (1596-1650)¹³ and Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677),¹⁴ except that Lord Herbert attempted to relate them to the Christian experience of revelation. His ideas were similar to those of a group of influential Platonists who flourished at Cambridge c. 1633-1688. They had a distaste for both fanaticism and Calvinism as they extolled the virtues of reason. Their view about God and the universe is quite different from the modern popular notion that asserts that deism views God as an "absentee landlord" who is too remote to be involved in the day-to-day events of his creation. Nevertheless their approach to theology did open the door for divergent views about the inspiration and authority of

¹²Brown, *Philosophy* 37-106, treats the development of intellectual trends between the Reformation and the age of Enlightenment. Also see Demarest, "Bible" 11-47.

¹³R. Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (1637) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) represent his two chief philosophical works. They and other works have been published together with B. de Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) as Volume 31 of *Great Books of the Western World* (ed. R. M. Hutchins; Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952).

¹⁴Benedict (or Baruch) de Spinoza was a Dutch philosopher born into a Portuguese Jewish family. Excommunicated from the synagogue in 1656, he supported himself by grinding lenses and devoted himself to the study of philosophy, especially the system expounded by Descartes.

Scripture. It was in this setting that Cambridge scholar Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) became the most eminent scientist of his time.¹⁵

III. MATERIALISM (C. 1650 TO THE PRESENT)

The stage was set for modern Biblical criticism after Francis Bacon (1561-1626) had expounded systematically his ideas about inductivism. He asserted that man's power to control nature rested in his own hands and could be achieved if he were to apply experimentally the right methods. He did this in his famous *Novum Organum* (1620), where he claimed that all truth is discovered by induction and known pragmatically.¹⁶ He argued that by making inductions from the simplest facts of experience man could reach forward to discover the fundamental principles that would issue forth in beneficial practical results, thus making truth and utility the same things in the world of science. In addition he completely separated the realm of reason and science from the realm of faith and religion.

The most prominent materialist philosopher in the post-Reformation period is Thomas Hobbes (1588-1672). His views have been identified variously as theistic, deistic, and even atheistic,¹⁷ although they are most clearly viewed as being materialistic. In addition most modern naturalistic theories have their origin in his writings since he anticipated them in a remarkable way. In his famous book, *Leviathan* (1688), Hobbes argues that

whatsoever we imagine is *finite*. Therefore there is no idea or conception of anything we call *infinite*. No man can have in his mind an image of infinite magnitude, infinite time, or infinite force, or infinite power. When we say anything is infinite, we signify only that we are not able to conceive the ends and bounds of the thing named, having no conception of the thing, but our own inability. And therefore the name *God* is used . . . that we may honour Him.¹⁸

Elsewhere he adds:

The word *body*, in the most general acceptance, signifieth that which filleth or occupieth some certain room or imagined place; and dependeth not on the imagination, but is a real part of what we call the *universe*. For the universe, being the aggregate of all bodies, there is no real part thereof that is not also body; not anything properly a body that is not also part of that aggregate of all bodies, the universe.¹⁹

In view of all this, Hobbes concludes as follows:

The world (I mean not the earth only, that denominates the lovers of it "worldly

¹⁵Brown, *Philosophy* 74-75.

¹⁶F. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning; Novum Organum; New Atlantis*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, 30. 105-195. Also see the discussion in N. L. Geisler, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy* (ed. N. L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 312-314.

¹⁷N. L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 154.

¹⁸T. Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, 23. 54.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 172.

men," but the *universe*, that is, the whole mass of all things that are) is corporeal, that is to say, body; and hath the dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth, and depth: also every part of the body is likewise body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the universe is body, and that which is not body is no part of the universe: and because the universe is all, that which is no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere.²⁰

Thus, as Frederick Copleston asserts, Hobbes' philosophy

is concerned with the causes and properties of bodies. And this means that it is concerned with bodies in motion. For motion is the 'one universal cause,' which 'cannot be understood to have any other cause besides motion'; . . . Hobbes's philosophy, therefore, is materialistic in the sense that it takes no account of anything but bodies. And in so far as the exclusion of God and all spiritual reality is simply the result of a freely chosen definition, his materialism can be called methodological. He does not say that there is no God; he says that God is not the subject-matter of philosophy.²¹

In addition to his materialistic philosophy Hobbes was one of the first modern writers to engage in explicit higher criticism of Scripture. In one passage he boldly suggests that "the Scriptures by the Spirit of God in man, mean a man's spirit, inclined to Godliness."²² After claiming that the story of Jesus healing the demon-possessed man was simply a "parable," Hobbes announces: "I see nothing at all in the Scripture, that requireth a belief, that Demoniacs were any other thing but madmen."²³ In brief the miracles of the gospels must be understood as spiritual or parabolical but not historical. Such desupernaturalization of Scripture leads him to claim that "Scripture was written to shew unto men the kingdom of God, and to prepare their minds to become his obedient subjects; leaving the world, and the philosophy thereof, to the disputations of men, for the exercising of their natural reason."²⁴ Thus Hobbes advocated a complete separation of divine revelation from human reason, leaving the former for "spiritual" truths and the latter for "cognitive" truths. Here Hobbes not only anticipates Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth; he goes beyond them.

IV. NATURALISM (C. 1650 TO THE PRESENT)

While some deists had used natural theology to support the Christian religion, others used natural religion as a rational alternative to what they considered irrational, revealed religion. In the arena of philosophical speculation Benedict de Spinoza was even more explicit in his naturalism than was Hobbes. "Spinoza has been variously described as a hideous atheist and as God-intoxicated. In fact, he was a pantheist."²⁵ His rational pantheism was soberly worked out from premises akin to those of Descartes, in which he espoused two presuppositions that led to his rationalistic naturalism. The first of these was deductive

²⁰Ibid., p. 267.

²¹F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 5. 15-16.

²²Hobbes, *Leviathan* 70.

²⁴Ibid., p. 70.

²³Ibid., pp. 70-71.

²⁵Brown, *Philosophy* 54.

or mathematical deduction, which he espoused along the lines of Descartes. The second was his blatant antisupernaturalism. In the former he assumed that all truth can be deduced from self-evident axioms, although this assumption itself is far from self-evident. This argumentation led Spinoza to the notion that there is but one Substance in the universe, and this Substance can be referred to as either God or Nature.²⁶ His antisupernaturalism led him to define miracles out of existence since they are based on violations of the inviolable laws of nature.

More than two centuries before Emil Brunner would make a similar assertion Spinoza argued that the Bible does not contain propositional revelation. He asserts: "I will show wherein the law of God consists, and how it cannot be contained in a certain number of books." For those who might object that "though the law of God is written in the heart, the Bible is nonetheless the Word of God," Spinoza replies, "I fear that such objectors are too dangerous to be pious, and they are in danger of turning religion into superstition, and worshipping paper and ink in place of God's Word."²⁷ Like Bacon and Hobbes before him, Spinoza relegated the authority of Scripture to purely religious matters. Even though he had been steeped in rabbinical tradition, Spinoza concluded that the Bible is fallible. It is clear from his writings, which were so controversial that they were published either anonymously or posthumously, that over a century before Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791) and two centuries prior to Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) Spinoza was engaged in systematic antisupernatural criticism of the Bible. Indeed virtually all of the central emphases in higher critical thought are found in Spinoza.²⁸ His work thus set the stage for Biblical criticism during the Enlightenment as well as in the modern world.

Similar themes may be seen in the writings of such deists as John Toland (1670-1722) and Matthew Tindal (1655-1733), while Anthony Collins (1676-1729) and Thomas Woolston (1670-1733) were among the pioneers of radical Biblical criticism.²⁹ Other prominent transitional figures include the statesman-philosopher John Locke (1632-1707),³⁰ George Berkeley (c. 1685-1753) and the American naturalist Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), who composed his own rendition of the Christian Scriptures.³¹ They were part of that movement that adhered to a natu-

²⁶N. L. Geisler, "Inductivism, Materialism, and Rationalism: Bacon, Hobbes, and Spinoza," in *Biblical Errancy: An Analysis of Its Philosophical Roots* (ed. N. L. Geisler; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 22.

²⁷Geisler, "Presuppositions" 317, where he cites B. de Spinoza, *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza* (London: George Bell, 1883), 1. 165-167.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 320. Other themes argued by Spinoza include the idea that "the Bible merely contains the Word of God," the accommodation theory, rationalism, naturalism, the idea that the Bible is reliable in religious matters only, the moral criteria for canonicity, and the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.

²⁹Brown, *Philosophy* 77-78.

³⁰Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority* 94 and n. 61 (p. 194) as well as 98 and n. 97 (p. 198), has extensive notes concerning the fact that Locke held to the infallibility of Scripture until 1661 but that these views were troubling him in 1685 when he carefully followed the debate between Richard Simon (1638-1712) and Jean le Clerc (1657-1736).

³¹Although he never published it, Jefferson began work on a religious manuscript, the so-called "Jefferson Bible," in 1803. He completed the English portion of this work by 1816 and later added Greek, Latin

ralistic approach to the world and free thought, as they denied the inspiration of Scripture, taught that God is merely "providentially" involved with the world, and stressed such things as the laws of nature and natural rights as they replaced a Biblical perspective with a naturalistic one in their reaction against subjectivism and revealed religion. Critics of such naturalism include Thomas Sherlock (1678-1761), Joseph Butler (1692-1752) and William Paley (1743-1805), who attacked it from a rationalistic approach. In addition John Wesley (1703-1791), who had been converted just two years after the publication of Butler's *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), and his collaborators in the Great Awakening, George Whitefield (1714-1770) and Jonathan Edwards, all championed the traditional doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture.

V. SKEPTICISM (C. 1725 TO THE PRESENT)

The revival of Greek skepticism in western thought appeared in the sixteenth century with the rediscovery of the writings of Sextus Empiricus (fl. late second and early third centuries A.D.), which were published in 1562.³² His writings fit into the three major strains of philosophy in the seventeenth century and became the intellectual orthodoxy of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which is of particular significance as a distinct turning point in the rise of modern secular thought. Hayden V. White asserts this point:

The Enlightenment attitude of mind was complex and internally varied, but it can be characterized roughly as a dedication of human reason, science, and education as the best means of building a stable society for free men on earth. This meant that the Enlightenment was inherently suspicious of religion, hostile to tradition, and resentful of any authority based on custom or faith alone. Ultimately the Enlightenment was nothing if not secular in its orientation; it offered the first program in the history of mankind for the construction of a human community out of natural materials alone.³³

The skepticism of the French Enlightenment moved out in a wave that affected the philosophical, theological and political world of England, America and Germany. Although there were many Enlightenment philosophers, David Hume (1711-1776) of Scotland was probably the most significant philosopher between

and French texts in columns side by side. The English portion of this work was printed in 1904. It was edited and published again by D. E. Lurton as T. Jefferson, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* (Cleveland: World, 1940). Jefferson's "Bible" consists of extracts from the gospels from which all miracles and claims of Jesus to his deity have been removed. The closing lines of his work portray Jefferson's views most poignantly: "Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never a man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed" (p. 158).

³²Popkin, *History* 17.

³³H. V. White, "Editor's Introduction," p. ix, in R. Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition* (New York: Harper, 1967), which is probably the best brief introduction to this movement. This work has been reprinted more recently with its annotated bibliography updated (Berkeley: University of California, 1979). Also see E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston: Beacon, 1964). Three major works by one of the most distinguished American scholars of the Enlightenment are P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (2 vols.; New York: Vintage, 1966-69); *The Party of Humanity: Essays in*

Spinoza and Kant to exercise long-range adverse effects on Biblical authority. Hume's antisupernaturalism and his extreme emphasis on empiricism were the two most basic elements he used in his attempt to undermine the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. He rejected the claim that Scripture is inspired, and with it he denied that the Bible is an authoritative revelation of God to humanity. He denied the deity of Christ and also rejected miracles as he sought to make theology the subject of empirical testing.³⁴ In his essay entitled *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) Hume argues against the credibility of miracles rather than against their possibility (Spinoza). Nevertheless Hume's rejection of miracles is emphatic:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. . . . Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happened in the common course of nature. . . . There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise that event would not merit that appellation. . . . The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the miracle be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after detecting the inferior."³⁵

In contrast to England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Germany had no national state with which all Germans could identify, no national past to give them a collective existence and destiny, no thriving capitalist economy, no self-respecting, cosmopolitan middle class, and no great national center of culture and intellectual ferment. Hence while the deists and empiricists dominated the intellectual life of Britain and the skeptics held sway in France, German thought has come to be known as rationalist. The adaptation of the intelligentsia to the general abjectness of German society gave the German En-

the French Enlightenment (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971); *Voltaire's Politics: The Poet and Realist* (New York: Vintage, 1971). For two comprehensive reconstructions of intellectual history in this period see P. Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1963); *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century: From Montesquieu to Lessing* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1963). For a survey of the historiography on the origins of the French Enlightenment see I. Wade, *The Intellectual Origins of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton: University Press, 1971). A significant interpretation of the various terms used to denote the Enlightenment is M. Baridon, "Lumières et Enlightenment Faux parallèle ou vrai mouvement philosophique?", *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 10 (1978) 45-69. These works may be used with benefit along with McDonald, *Ideas*; Brown, *Philosophy*.

³⁴G. R. Habermas, "Skepticism: Hume," in *Biblical Errancy* 25-49. Also see Geisler, "Philosophical" 320-322.

³⁵D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, 35. 491. Hume published his *Treatise on Human Nature* in 1737, his *Essay, Moral, Political* in 1741 and his *Philosophical Essay* in 1748. This last work was later renamed *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. In 1751 the third book of the *Treatise* was recast and published as *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Hume's *Four Dissertations*, including one devoted to the *Natural History of Religion*, was published in 1757. He had also completed his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, but on advice of friends its publication was postponed until after his death in 1776.

lightenment its distinctive character. The world of thought and the world of social reality were seen in sharp contrast and opposition, as were the glorious past and the dismal present. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) was the son of a pastor in Saxony. Serving as librarian to the duke of Brunswick (1774-1778), Lessing published a series of *Fragments of an Unknown Writer* popularly known as the *Wolfenbützel Fragments*. In actuality this document was a defense and restatement of skeptical deism by Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) that included a fragment entitled *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*. Left unpublished during his own lifetime, this Reimarus fragment claimed to expose the gospel accounts of Jesus as a piece of fraud because of their alleged unfulfilled eschatological predictions. It unreservedly rejected miracles and revelation and cast an accusation of conscious fraud, innumerable contradictions and fanaticism on the Biblical writers. Such a perspective raised a storm of controversy at the time, and it revolutionized the image of Jesus in modern theology. Indeed this was the point of departure for Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) to write *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (1906). Lessing himself wrote an essay in gospel criticism entitled *New Hypothesis on the Evangelists Considered as Merely Human Historical Writers* (1788), which posited a single Hebrew or Aramaic source behind the gospel narratives and portrayed Jesus as a merely human messiah.

VI. AGNOSTICISM (C. 1750 TO THE PRESENT)

Even more than Lessing, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) exemplifies the dualistic character of the German Enlightenment. Kant has been considered by many to be the crossroads thinker of modern philosophy. He fully subscribed to the progressive ideals of the French Enlightenment, but he saw little hope for those ideals to be realized under the cynical rule of Frederick II the Great (1712-1786) where he lived in East Prussia. Part of Kant's greatness lies in the fact that he was able to synthesize the two dominant but conflicting modes of thought of the Enlightenment—empiricism and rationalism—into an intellectual whole. His importance arises from the fact that he had a twosidedness: He was a synthesizer, yet original.³⁶ In his creative synthesis Kant became an agnostic concerning reality. He argues that the mind knows only after the construction but not before it. Only what appears to one is known, not that which really is. These he calls the phenomenal and the noumenal respectively. In addition he asserts that whenever one attempts to apply the categories of the mind (such as unity or causality) to the noumenal (real) world, hopeless contradictions and antinomies arise.

One consequence of Kant's revolt against reason is his fact/value dichotomy. For him the "objective" world of fact is the phenomenal world of experience, while the "subjective" world of will cannot be known by pure reason. Instead this subjective world is known by practical reason or a morally postulated act of

³⁶W. D. Beck, "Agnosticism: Kant," in *Biblical Errancy* 53-78. Also see Geisler, "Philosophical" 322-327. The dominant rationalists were Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, while the empiricists are represented by Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Kant claimed to be awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by reading David Hume. He then wrote *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), *On Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone* (1792) and other works. This last-named is not published among Kant's works in Vol. 42 of *The Great Books of the Western World*.

the will. For him, even though it is not possible to think that God exists, one must live as if God does exist. Thus Kant caused the objectivity and rationality of divine revelation to be philosophically questioned. He placed religion in the realm of the postulated rather than the known. This gives rise to the moral imperative that lies behind Kant's use of "moral reason" as the ground for determining what is essential to true religion. For Kant this reason demands him to conclude that miracles do not occur.³⁷ Thus like Jefferson he was able to reject the resurrection account at the close of the gospels. In making this moral imperative the criterion for true religion, Kant is the forerunner of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Following in the subjective footsteps of Kant and Schleiermacher, Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) used an irrational basis for his higher criticism of the Bible when he wrote that "there is no harm even in the fact that the records of Christ's life are fragmentary, and that they contain manifold uncertainties, that they are intermingled with legendary and overlaid with Hellenistic elements. For the Spirit knows and recognizes what is of the Spirit."³⁸

VII. ROMANTICISM (C. 1780-C. 1840)

Nothing seemed more characteristic of the late eighteenth century than the dominance of reason or common sense. It was an age of unemotional and intellectual questioning that swept away ancient superstitions and abuses. It is not surprising that strong opposition arose to this cold, onesided approach and that the claims of feeling were reasserted in a call to "return to nature." These claims were often conjured up by the imagination, but they also gave rise to a resurgence of classical and medieval strains as well as a sense of revival of the supernatural in religion. This was an alternative way of approaching the past: by appreciating its great men and heroic movements rather than its ideas and institutions. In sharp contrast to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, which extolled the classical heritage of Greece and Rome as the natural product of men's minds working in an orderly fashion and viewed Christianity as a decline from that greatness, claims were asserted that man is a feeling rather than a purely thinking being. The generic term "Romanticism" is generally applied to this complex and elusive movement, which so radically challenged the older rationalism. Its most effective early advocate was Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), but it became most dominant in Germany where its participants included Gotthold Lessing, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805) and Johann Christoph Friedrich Holderlin (1770-1843). Romanticism had advocates in literature, music, painting and philosophy throughout Europe before it ran its course in the late 1830s. Actually Romanticism was less a movement in favor of religion than it was an artistic-literary movement that became religious. Its leading proponents began as students of theology—as had the great German philosophers Fichte, Hegel and

³⁷I. Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (New York: Harper, 1960) 83-84.

³⁸R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: University Press, 1967) 162.

Schelling—but the most important Romantic who actually became a theologian was Friedrich Schleiermacher.³⁹

Early in the nineteenth century, evangelical and pietistic currents appeared throughout to a considerable extent to cut across various confessional and national churches. Some of these movements were reminiscent of earlier awakenings in Church history. Still others appeared that stressed romantic, sacramental and confessional elements. During the half century following 1810, Roman Catholicism “was washed over by several successive waves of theological revival. After languishing during the darkness of the Enlightenment, theology came alive again in various Catholic centers at different times.”⁴⁰ Among the Protestants in Germany, which was astir with religious and social conflict, Schleiermacher led people to find an experiential basis in the Christian tradition that had long been obscured, while Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802-1869) led the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* during the 1820s and 1830s. Hengstenberg stood firmly for the infallibility of the Bible and the alliance of Christianity with the conservative feudal party in German politics. About 1840, however, he broke away from this movement and became a champion of strict Lutheran orthodoxy.

In the meantime Schleiermacher, a native of Silesia who studied and taught at the university in the Pietist center at Halle, “developed what is sometimes called *positive theology*.”⁴¹ His theology, based in personal experience, was heavily influenced by the Romantic movement through Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) as well as the thought of Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant. Schleiermacher contended that religion should be based on intuition and feeling (*Anschauung und Gefühl*), which is independent of all dogma. For him the highest experience of religion is personal union with the infinite. He “redefined revelation when he applied the term to every original and new intuition. He also applied ‘inspiration’ exclusively to a human activity.”⁴² As a result Schleiermacher need not bother with rational proofs for the existence of God. Instead he views the Christian life as being marked by “spontaneous activity in living fellowship with Christ.” For him religion is the sense of absolute dependence.⁴³ Its purest expression is in

³⁹H. O. J. Brown, “Romanticism and the Bible,” in *Challenges to Inerrancy* 49-65. Also see C. Brown, *Philosophy* 108-116; R. V. Pierard, “Romanticism,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (W. A. Elwell, ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 959-961; W. A. Hoffecker, “Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst,” in *ibid.*, pp. 981-983.

⁴⁰J. T. Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration Since 1810* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969) 3.

⁴¹Brown, *Philosophy* 110.

⁴²F. H. Klooster, “Revelation and Scripture in Existentialist Theology,” in *Challenges to Inerrancy* 205. In this context Klooster identifies Schleiermacher as “the father of liberal theology.” In the following discussion Albrecht Ritschl is identified as “the founder of theological liberalism.” Schleiermacher’s role is thus viewed in a broader and more basic context than that of Ritschl.

⁴³F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) 5-12. Brown, *Philosophy* 111 n. 1, indicates that the “term *das schlechthinige Abhängigkeitsgefühl* is usually translated as *feeling of absolute dependence*. But the word *feeling* is perhaps too strong and positive. What he is trying to analyze often seems to be more a profound awareness or sense of utter dependence.”

monotheism, but he adds that of all the diversity of religions Christianity is the highest though not the only true one.⁴⁴ His

revision of Christian theology had its most radical impact on the issue of authority. No external authority, whether it be Scripture, church, or historic creedal statement, takes precedence over the immediate experience of believers. This contributed to a more critical approach to the Bible by questioning its inspiration and authority, and the rejection of doctrines he believed unrelated to people's religious experience of redemption such as the virgin birth, the Trinity, and the return of Christ—tenets which implied a cognitive and thus indirect knowledge rather than immediate God-consciousness.⁴⁵

Schleiermacher's revision of Christian theology accomplished three things of great significance to Christianity: (1) He made religion socially acceptable to those who no longer took the Bible and its doctrines seriously by showing its appeal to man's aesthetic tendencies; (2) he attracted to the study of theology countless young men who were interested in religion primarily as an expression of man's imaginative spirit; (3) for a time he changed Biblical criticism from historical analysis to literary analysis.⁴⁶ In general his influence was limited to Germany during his lifetime, but it has been enormous on subsequent Protestant thought. It is Schleiermacher and his followers Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) against whom Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Emil Brunner (1889-1966), as well as conservative Christians, have reacted in the twentieth century.

VIII. IDEALISM (C. 1800 TO THE PRESENT)

The German idealist movement emerged in the immediate background of the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Unlike Kant, whose primary philosophical questions began in the realm of scientific topics, the leading idealists Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) all came to philosophy from theology. In seeking to understand the relation between the infinite and the finite, their writings reflect one of the most remarkable flowerings of metaphysical speculation in the long history of western thought.⁴⁷ The most dominant figure among the German idealists was Hegel, who is described as "possibly the most stupendous of all nineteenth-century thinkers."⁴⁸ The influence of Hegel's

⁴⁴McNeill, *Christian Tradition* 253-262; Brown, *Philosophy* 108-116.

⁴⁵Hoffecker, "Schleiermacher" 982-983.

⁴⁶Brown, "Romanticism" 60-61.

⁴⁷See F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 7. 15-49, for an excellent overview of this period of post-Kantian idealist systems of thought.

⁴⁸R. R. Palmer and J. Colton, *A History of the Modern World* (5th ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978) 434. Also see W. A. Kaufman, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965); W. Corduan, "Hegelian Themes in Contemporary Theology," *JETS* 22/4 (December 1979) 351-361; G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke* (ed. E. Molderhauer and K. M. Michel; Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), esp. vols. 8-10: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*; Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959).

thought certainly has dominated philosophical speculation since his unanticipated death from cholera in 1831 while he was at the height of his popularity.

In his system of philosophy Hegel argues that all reality is the outworking of Spirit (*Geist*). To him the Absolute Spirit (God) comes into self-consciousness through a process of struggle. Hence the sum total of human knowledge is none other than Absolute Spirit thinking out its thoughts through human minds. Colin Brown presents the popular notion that "it is customary to describe Hegel's view of the outworking of Spirit as Dialectic (which is simply another word for process or dynamic pattern) of Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis. But it has been pointed out that although Hegel makes occasional use of these latter terms, they are in fact more characteristic of Fichte."⁴⁹

Hegel's stance toward the Bible and its place in his religious thought is easily discerned. He states that the Absolute Spirit works in such overt manifestations as art, religion and philosophy. As a result the Spirit enables man to take religion seriously without his taking the facts of revelation too literally. For Hegel there are two religious viewpoints—rationalistic skepticism and naive literalism—that demonstrate the poverty of Spirit in the common man. He argues: "One whose understanding of religion is based on Spirit will accept the same beliefs as the naive pietist but will simultaneously be able to interpret them rationally without falling into the skeptic's trap. . . . The positive and the spiritual are combined."⁵⁰ The positive grounding of Christianity is the Bible, but that is not to say that the Bible alone is sufficient for doing Christian theology. "Hegel contends that the 'scientific' theologian will recognize the precedence of Spirit over the Bible. . . . In the light of Spirit it is then entirely possible to overcome the historical details that may encumber positivistic religion."⁵¹

After his death the followers of Hegel became divided approximately into three main branches. In the center were those Hegelians who held philosophy to be the core of Absolute Spirit, although there is still room for religion in the system. A second branch contended that Hegel's system must be understood ultimately in theological terms. The third branch effectively destroyed the need for religion in the world of thought. This last group exercised the most influence on the philosophical conception of the Bible. They are represented by such Biblical critics as Bruno Bauer (1809-1882), Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872), David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874) and Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860). In the meantime Karl Marx (1818-1883) soon appropriated the so-called Hegelian dialectic to new uses, while Hegel's philosophy converged with other currents in Germany to make the study of history more philosophically meaningful than ever before, since history, as "the study of time process, seemed to be the very key with which to unlock the true significance of the world."⁵²

⁴⁹Brown, *Philosophy* 121, cites J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A re-examination* (Allen and Unwin, 1958) 70. There is considerable scholarly argumentation against the more popularized notion. See W. A. Kaufman, "The Hegel Myth and Its Method," *PhRev* 60 (1951) 459-486; G. E. Mueller, "The Legend of 'Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis,'" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19/3 (June 1958) 411-414; W. Corduan, "Transcendentalism: Hegel," in *Biblical Errancy* 81-104.

⁵⁰Corduan, "Transcendentalism" 88.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵²Palmer, *History* 435.

IX. LIBERALISM (C. 1850-C. 1920)

Although "liberalism" is applied to any Protestant religious movement that questions the basic doctrines of evangelical Christianity, it specifically refers to the attempt to harmonize the Christian faith with all of human culture. Its period of dominance was from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I, and it was a reaction against the alleged "monastic" or pietistic, introspective Romanticism of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher. While Romanticism had delivered Christianity from near-elimination at the hands of rationalism, it had done so "at the terrible cost of depriving it of its relevance to civilization. In particular the relegation of Christianity to the realm of aesthetic feeling and personal morality effectively removed it from the realm of history, where nineteenth-century man was convinced middle class progress could be seen in all its glory."⁵³ In such a circumstance liberalism became virtually a "civil religion" (*Kulturprotestantismus*) in both its German and American expressions. Instead of compartmentalizing religion and culture, liberalism took up anew the head-on challenge of the Enlightenment tradition. Its principal philosopher was Hegel, whose "commitment to unity in thought did much to explode the old dichotomy of the rational/mathematical/static on the one hand and the romantic/dynamic/progressive on the other."⁵⁴

Albrecht Ritschl, the great founder of theological liberalism, was convinced that Christianity could not be equated with any narrowly mystical or pietistic version. Instead, using the so-called Hegelian dialectic he conceived it to be the interaction of the two focal points of the Christian faith: the concerns of society and civilization, and those of personal salvation. For him a proper use of the Bible could not be confined to the question of how it brings personal salvation. It must also correlate with larger concerns. In its cultural setting liberalism accepted the notion that the Bible contains errors, and its proponents sought means whereby the newly discovered truths of modern thought could be harmonized with Scripture. The traditional doctrine of verbal inspiration was regarded as a seventeenth-century viewpoint that was understandable in its day but that had become untenable.⁵⁵ In *The Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (1882) Ritschl first states that the doctrine of inspiration based on the Protestant perspective of Scripture interpreting itself is of little value. He then argues that "the Bible can be employed only for theology and basic morality, but not in the details of life because of the change in the position of Christianity in society."⁵⁶ He bases the binding elements of Scripture on the fact that they can be recognized by their content rather than by any doctrine of verbal inspiration. This basic shift asserts that instead of Scripture being the Word of God, the Bible merely contains the word of God.

⁵³D. C. Davis, "Liberalism: The Challenge of Progress," in *Challenges to Inerrancy* 67-68.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 70. Davis cites A. Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1882) 2:12.

Ritschl's emphasis on the need for Christianity to "again and again be appropriated as personal conviction, not merely as repetition of what was once significant but is now unintelligible," found its appeal in the writings of Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922), who served as professor of theology at Marburg and teacher of Karl Barth (1886-1968), Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) and the intellectual leader of American evangelicalism in the early twentieth century, J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937). In Hermann's most influential book, *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott* (1886), the author argues that an individual

does not become a Christian by submitting to some doctrines but by recognizing the great fact of Jesus. Faith in the doctrines about him cannot be demanded as the prerequisite for salvation by Jesus, but rather as the result of that salvation. Only that which transforms a person can constitute a saving fact. The only objective ground for the truth of Christianity is one's moral transformation.⁵⁷

In keeping with the Ritschlian tradition, Herrmann was concerned with the aims of a Christian society as well as with personal faith. As a result he was one of the leading spirits in the Christian socialist movement of the late nineteenth century. It is in this capacity that his view of the Bible is most clearly seen, as it is in the writings of the German liberal theologian and Church historian Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930). Harnack made the intellectual sojourn from orthodoxy through the historical-critical approach of the Tübingen school to Ritschlian liberalism before writing *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), which was translated into English as *What Is Christianity?* (1901). This volume is the best known and most popular expression of thought for the whole liberal movement. In it Harnack expounds the conclusions of his monumental *History of Dogma* (1886-1889),⁵⁸ which emphasize the fact that Christianity is not a matter of correct doctrines—an idea he suggests comes from Greek thought forms—but of a total life involvement. In the meantime Catholic scholars who were warm to such new ideas, especially as they came from Protestant critics, were informed by Rome that they were unwanted. In "1910 a loyalty oath against Modernism was imposed on all clerics whenever they received holy orders, applied for confessional faculties, took papal degrees, began office as religious superiors, or taught in a seminary or pontifically approved faculty."⁵⁹

X. EXISTENTIALISM (C. 1850 TO THE PRESENT)

The term "existentialism" probably goes back to Søren Abby Kierkegaard (1813-1855), whose writings were not widely known outside Denmark prior to 1918. Existentialism grew out of the soil of Kantian agnosticism and is quite diverse in its expression. In general, existentialism may be traced through the phenomenism of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and his student Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).⁶⁰ The German philosopher and poet Friedrich Wilhelm

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 73-74.

⁵⁸Several historical studies resulted in the publication of Harnack's *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (3 vols.; 1886-1889), which were translated as *History of Dogma* (7 vols.; 1894-1899).

⁵⁹Burtchaell, *Catholic Theories* 232.

⁶⁰Klooster, "Revelation" 177-178.

Nietzsche (1844-1900) and the Russian novelist Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevski (1821-1881) also anticipated some ideas that became pronounced in existentialism, although they would not necessarily be identified as existentialists in the modern sense of the term. For some, existentialism occupies the place left vacated by idealism as the philosophical basis of Christianity. To others it represents the bankruptcy of western philosophy. Although the link between Kierkegaard and existentialism is not certain, there are some common characteristics between his thought, existentialism, twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy, and much of neo-evangelicalism. Four characteristics of existentialism, although not exhaustive, are especially relevant to the the issue of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. These are summarized by Fred H. Klooster:

First, existentialists all oppose Hegel and the Western metaphysical tradition with its supposedly abstract ideas and systems of thought. From that perspective, existentialist theologians reject the classic Roman Catholic and Protestant views of Scripture as the written Word of God. Second, the chief emphasis of existentialism is upon the existing human person in his everyday needs and concerns. Although existentialists criticize Western tradition for its objectivity, their radical concern for the individual existing person opens them to the criticism of subjectivity and anthropocentricity, even though they generally reject such charges. From that perspective the existentialist theologians concentrate their views of revelation on the human person in the "revelatory experience." Third, existentialism is marked by such pessimistic themes as death, finitude, limitation, guilt, anxiety, and dread as forms of "inauthentic existence." Existentialist theologians draw on scriptural statements for endorsement of those themes, but a radical change in meaning (*Umdeutung*) is generally involved. Fourth, existentialism emphasizes that "existence precedes essence." That is the major philosophical perspective of the movement and has become its decisive slogan. Sartre frankly admitted that the contention that "existence precedes essence" was a radical rejection of God's creation and involved a pervasive subjectivity and an anthropocentric approach.⁶¹

With this perspective in view, some parallels between Kierkegaard and the existentialists may be observed.⁶² As Kant had declared that the noumenal is unknowable by reason, Kierkegaard declared God to be "wholly other" and "paradoxical" to human reason (although not paradoxical to himself). Kant made his way toward moral reality by a subjective act of the will; Kant called his similar move a "leap of faith." Kant bifurcated the realms of fact and value, and Kierkegaard argued that the factual and historical have no religious significance as such.⁶³ Kierkegaard criticized Hegelianism as being anti-Christian because his system bears no relation to the reality of human existence and because it makes individuals less important than the race, which is contrary to Christianity. In short, Hegel is criticized because his system is no good and because it is not true. For Kierkegaard, Christianity begins more or less where Hegelianism stops.

But Hegel is not Kierkegaard's sole victim. His primary objective was to at-

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 178-179.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 175-214, where Klooster excludes Kierkegaard from his discussion but includes Bultmann, Tillich and Macquarrie as sufficiently diverse representatives of existentialist theology.

⁶³Geisler, "Philosophical" 327.

tack "the modern gratuitous assumption that truth is impersonal, that it can be attained simply by thinking dispassionately."⁶⁴ Although he did not teach that truth is subjective or that there is no such thing as objective truth, he did dismiss objectivity as a way of knowing ultimate or religious truth because "the way of objective reflection leads to abstract thought, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of different kinds; and always it leads from the subject . . . [and] becomes infinitely indifferent."⁶⁵ For him truth, like God, is not "paradoxical" to itself but only to finite man who is able to appropriate it by a passionate leap of faith.⁶⁶ Hence for Kierkegaard objective or historical truth is not essential to Christianity. He writes: "If the contemporary generation had left nothing behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough."⁶⁷ Nevertheless he personally believed in the historicity of the Bible, of Christ, and even of the resurrection. To him a personal acceptance of Scripture as inspired need not be supported by an objective confirmation of that inspiration. In fact he deprecated scholarly efforts to defend the inspiration and authority of Scripture.⁶⁸

Existential theologians in the twentieth century such as Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, John Macquarrie and others, by applying the term revelation to every original and new intuition and making inspiration an exclusively human activity cast in the thought forms of existentialism, stand in the Schleiermacher line of Enlightenment thought.⁶⁹ In his influential book *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, John Baillie reinforces this notion:

For the revelation of which the Bible speaks is always such as had place within a personal relationship. It is not the revelation of an object to a subject, but a revelation from a subject to a subject, a revelation of mind to mind. That is the first thing that differentiates the theological meaning of revelation, the revelation that is made to faith, from the sense in which all valid knowledge has been said to be revelation.⁷⁰

⁶⁴Brown, *Philosophy* 128.

⁶⁵Geisler, "Philosophical" 327.

⁶⁶J. Climacus, *Philosophical Fragments, or A Fragment of Philosophy* (Princeton: University Press, 1936 [1971]) 53.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁶⁸S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: University Press, 1941 [1963]) 26.

⁶⁹Klooster, "Revelation" 205.

⁷⁰J. Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (New York: Columbia University, 1965) 19. It is interesting to note that nowhere in this volume does Baillie actually define the term "revelation." He does, however, mistakenly associate the notion of propositional revelation with mechanical dictation on p. 40. He prefers to view revelation as antipropositional personal encounter in his discussions (cf. pp. 30, 36-38, 40, 75, 121-122, etc.).

XI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Various creedal forms and confessional statements from across the broad and diverse ranks of Christianity indicate that Christians officially adhered to the traditional doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless between the early seventeenth and early twentieth centuries a series of changes in the climates of opinion gradually prepared the ground for a direct and open confrontation between religion and science over the issues of revelation, inspiration and the authority of Scripture. As the impact of the rationalism of the Enlightenment tradition made itself felt on the question of authority (religious or otherwise), changes in the climates of opinion began to undermine the traditional doctrine of Scripture both within and without the Christian churches. Sometimes these changes resulted from a reaction to the cold, formal orthodoxy that has a stultifying effect on personal experience. At other times they were the result of legitimate attempts to defend the Christian faith in the face of challenges from the arenas of scientific discoveries and philosophical speculations. On occasion doubt about the authority of Scripture would turn to skepticism and the denial of Scripture when the methods of science were rigorously applied to specific problems of special revelation. When unsatisfactory results were achieved by these methods the issue often yielded to the serious question of whether there is any revelation at all. Yet the haunting question remained: Had God indeed spoken to man through revelation? Some responded by taking refuge in individual autonomy and declared that they could not know with certainty that Scripture was revealed and inspired by God and authoritative. Others resorted to their subjective experience as the basis of their authority. Still others modified their faith into a virtual civil religion by compartmentalizing religion and culture. Finally, there were those whose emphasis on the existing human person in everyday life needs and concerns stressed the need for a "leap of faith" in their attempt to avoid the paradoxical issue of authority in the realms of fact and value. In view of this conundrum, it is hardly unexpected that modern man entered into the twentieth century without a basic commitment to the traditional doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture as the very Word of God.