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UMI
HEGEL'S THEOLOGICAL LEGACY

A Descriptive Reassessment of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion in the Light of Karl Barth's Critique

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009624722

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wycliffe College and the Theological Department of the Toronto School of Theology. In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology awarded by Wycliffe College and the University of Toronto.

Thesis Director: George P. Schner SJ

Toronto, Canada
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...for
Beth Akitt Patterson
Hegel...the misunderstood one.
Again and again we find we must think three times before contradicting [his philosophy], because we might find that everything we are tempted to say in contradiction of it has already been said within it, and provided with the best possible answer.

Karl Barth

Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl
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# ABBREVIATIONS

**Barth's Works:**

- **A or Anselm** = *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*.
- **CD** = *Church Dogmatics*.
- **HT** = "The Task of a History of Modern Protestant Theology".¹
- **PT** = *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl*.
- **S** = *The Theology of Schleiermacher*.

**Hegel's Works:**

- **HF** = the 1822 Forward that Hegel wrote for H. F. W. Hinrichs' *Religion*.²
- **Letters** = *Hegel: The Letters*, ed. Butler and Seiler. References to particular letters are to page numbers, not letter numbers.
- **LHP** = *Lectures on the History of Philosophy.* Vol. 3.³
- **LPR** = *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.
- **OCS** = "On Classical Studies".⁴
- **PR** = *Philosophy of Right*.

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¹ My edition of *Protestant Thought* does not contain this chapter. I have therefore treated it as a separate work, abbreviating references to it as indicated.

² There are at least two English translations of this work. I have used both. Where the page references are in the 200's, the translation is by A.V. Miller for an appendix to *Beyond Epistemology: New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. Frederick G. Weiss, The Hague, 1974, 227-44. Where the page references are in the 100's, the translation is that by J. Michael Stewart, "Forward to Hinrichs' Religion (1822): The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason", included in *G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. Peter Hodgson, Minneapolis, 1997, 155-71.

³ All references to *LHP* in this essay are to vol. 3.

⁴ This 1809 speech is included as the "Appendix" to *On Christianity: Early Theological Writings by Friedrich Hegel*, trans. by T.M.Knox, with an introduction, and fragments trans. by Richard Kroner, Gloucester, 1970, 321-30.
INTRODUCTION

Hegel interpreted modern cultural awareness to itself in an unprecedented fashion by saying that at the deepest and ultimate level it was concerned with the claim of truth. This claim takes a form possible only if the truth is God, and God is the Master of men.... Will modern man recognize his joy in truth, his quest for truth, his fanaticism for truth...in this looking-glass? Will he put up with being taken so seriously, with being thus seized upon in his penchant for truth?...Or will he shrink back before the last things, which are pointed out to him as his own; before the discovery of the revelatory nature of absolute truth and all real knowledge, and still, now as ever, seek to fall humbly into the left hand of God, instead of exalting his thinking to a divine service, as is here demanded of him?

Barth

Hegel and the Knowledge of God

"Hegel thought through his whole system from the perspective of Christ - or was it the other way round?" From the perspective of Christ will be my contention in this essay. The other way round has been the consensus of many philosophers and theologians in the second half of the 20th Century. H. S. Harris, B. Cooper, W. Jaeschke, and W. Kaufmann are just four of many who

"Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl. 295f.


"The consistent interpretation of Hegel’s science of experience actually requires us to reject every spiritual hypothesis of a transcendent kind. In the phenomenology of the absolute religion, God dies in order to be resurrected as the 'spirit of the community.'" (H. S. Harris, "Hegel’s Phenomenology of Religion", in Thought and Faith in the Philosophy of Hegel, ed. John Walker, Dordrecht, 1991, 100).

"I don’t believe you can be a Hegelian and a Christian. There are those who believe you can, - some of them are good friends of mine. But, I don’t think you can do it. In the final analysis Hegel’s system is atheistic". (Barne Cooper, interviewed in Part 2 of a three-part series on George Grant, “The Moving Image of Eternity”, broadcast on Ideas, by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), 1986).

"Hegel’s philosophy begins by pronouncing the death of God, and ends with the insight into the end of religion.... Religion erroneously understands what it is...Once the philosophy of religion has gone beyond what it is implicitly, religion in general, including the Christian religion, is...incapable of satisfying the highest concern of spirit, and has thereby reached its end" (Walter Jaeschke, "Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion", in New Perspectives on Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion, ed. David Kolb, State University of New York Press, 1992, 1, 15).

Kaufmann represents Hegel as saying, “In God I do not believe; spirit suffices for me” (Walter Kaufmann, Hegel: A Reinterpretation, Garden City, 1966, 274).
believe that Hegel’s system contradicts the Christian doctrine of God and theism of any kind.

Stuart Barnett has recently reminded us of the extraordinary influence upon the modern renaissance in Hegel studies, not only in France but in the rest of Europe and in North America. of Alexandre Kojève’s atheistic reading of The Phenomenology of Spirit delivered in lectures in Paris in the late 1930’s.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Kojève’s interpretation was his insistence on an anthropological foundation to Hegel’s thought. Dismissing issues of theology, indeed, of ontology itself, Kojève focused on the notions of self-consciousness and history... For Kojève, Hegel’s philosophy is fundamentally a theory of the historical evolution of consciousness.

The persistent interest in Kojève’s interpretation up to the present day is explained in part by his reading Hegel in terms of the central notion of discourse, again with anti-theist implications:

Hegel’s Spirit is not therefore truly a divine Spirit...it is human in the sense that it is a discourse that is immanent to the natural World and that has for its support a natural being limited in its existence by time and space...Spirit is the Real revealed by Discourse.

Spirit is not the self-manifestation of the Absolute. Rather it denotes the fact that discourse has achieved an autonomous existence which it is the task of philosophy to elucidate. Yet Kojève is not able to avoid a tendency to divinize discourse, to veer from his anthropological assessment of Hegel in giving an account of the constitutive function of discourse for human being as such.

That Kojève’s influence on European and North American Hegelian studies is almost impossible to exaggerate is due in part to the remarkable audience that was drawn to hear him, includ...
It is no wonder that anthropological readings of Hegel which ignore or translate all religious and especially Christian vestiges predominate in the contemporary setting.

Hegel would not have been surprised:

[anyone who grasps the thought, or tries to, of entering upon the cognition of God, of comprehending his nature in thought, can therefore expect that no one will pay any attention at all, that such a thought is regarded as a long-refuted error, deserving no further attention.... It is no longer a grief to our age that it knows nothing of God: rather it counts as the highest insight that this cognition is not even possible (LPR 1, 86f).

Nevertheless there have been, and are theologians who have wanted to look to Hegel as a continuing resource for theology." Too often, however, Hegelian theologies appear to do less than full justice to the integrity of God, humanity, grace, the Incarnation, or creation as these have been understood within the classical tradition of the Christian church and in accord with the church’s Credo. Hegelian theologies seem to be inevitably compromised by that modernity of which Hegel is said to have been the consummate philosopher, “if also the source of its eventual demise.” So it is that Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar caution against looking to Hegel as a resource for theology. In Barth’s words, Hegel can only be considered if he is seriously rethought.

“understood... better than he perhaps understood himself...vigorously translated and transformed” (PT 300f).

Or, is it rather that Hegel still waits to be understood better than either his theological or anthropological allies or opponents have hitherto read him?

Among them, Tillich, Kung, Moltmann, and Pannenberg.

“Hegel - according to a general critical consensus - defines the modernity that our postmodern era seeks to escape” (Barnett, “Introduction”, Hegel After Derrida. 1).

“All that post-modernism proclaims has been carefully mapped out by Hegel” (Ibid., 2).

Approximate Interpretation or Poiesis

Hegel has shown himself remarkably hospitable to very different readings. William Desmond suggests that, alongside the multiplicity of interpretations that have “fed on the disjecta membra of his system” developing one aspect with a view to “dismembering the system’s fuller claims”, and alongside the post-Hegelian efforts to determine what is living and what is dead in Hegel, there are four pairs of striking oppositions around which major interpretations cluster: the first sets Hegel the panlogist against Hegel as the one who precipitated “the floodgates of the irrational”; the second, the atheist against the one who “reinstated religious mystification”: the third, the foundationalist, the philosopher of identity, against the deconstructionist, the philosopher of difference; and the fourth, the enemy of science against the one who was “enamored of science”.

Though this may seem to leave the field of Hegelian studies open to what O’Regan calls a skeptical manifold where interpretation gives place to production and poiesis, not all criteria of critical judgment are to be jettisoned leaving the field open to just any reading. There remains the legitimate invitation to “approximate to the internal complexity of Hegelian thought”. Without claiming to have said the final word, according to this criterion the interpretative endeavour is an attempt to correspond to an object that sets definite constraints on invention and promotes critical approximation. If final definition is not given, if adequation is never fully realized, this says more about the inexhaustibility of the object than the subjectivity of inter-

1 “Perspectival variation, massive volatility appear to characterize assertions concerning...the thought of...Hegel” so that it is “not likely to be available to simple, one-sided description”. (Cyril O’Regan, The Heterodox Hegel, State University of New York Press, 1994, 11).

2 The title of Croce’s book on Hegel (see the bibliography to this essay).


4 O’Regan, The Heterodox Hegel, 2.

5 Ibid., 2.
My reading in this essay tries to meet this criterion, in part at least. I have limited myself almost entirely to Hegel's "religious" texts and letters of the 1820's. Apart from revisions of earlier works, only his Forward to Hinrichs' Religion (HF) and a few book reviews, noteworthy among them the 1829 review of Göschel's Aphorisms, were published during his lifetime. None of the four sets of Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (LPR), nor the Lectures on the History of Philosophy (LHP) were published until after his death, and then in editions gleaned from his own and students' lecture notes. My neglect of the great works from the Phenomenology of Spirit through the Logic, the Encyclopedia, and the Philosophy of Right necessarily limits my effort at approximate interpretation. That does not cancel the value of a close reading of the religious works: too often Hegel is read the other way round from the perspective of the earlier works. the religious works being assessed in their light, if at all.

In Karl Barth's Company

I am approaching Hegel's texts in the company of the 20th Century theologian, Karl Barth: in particular, his reading of Hegel in Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl (PT), a collection of essays (all of them by Barth) on 19th Century Protestant philosophers and theologians. Though it is primarily with his three-fold critique in mind, - a critique that has a noble pedigree, including Schelling, Trendelenburg, and Kierkegaard, and noble contemporary company in the

57 Ibid. 2. Cf. Burbridge's characterization of interpreters of Hegel as more often than not "seeing" in Hegel a version of [their] own image", and so telling us more about themselves than about Hegel (John Burbridge, "Is Hegel a Christian?", in New Perspectives... ed. Kolb, 1995, 94).

That Hegel approved of expository endeavors at close approximation in interpretation is evident in this excerpt from a letter commending his one-time student, Georg Andreas Gabler, on the thoroughness of exposition demonstrated in his recently published first book, The Propaenctic to Philosophy, vol. 1 (1827). In particular Hegel says, his digressions on Aristotle and the anti-Hegelian, Johann Friederich Herbart, are models of exposition: "[c]onfusion of thoughts, shallowness, and even ignorance are equally glaring in much that talks big and struts about full of its importance. This cannot be counteracted by declamations, but only by expositions, such as yours, which follow precisely the author's statements" (Letters 535).

It is Gabler who is referred to in Hegel's cryptic remark near the end of his life, that "even the one man who had best understood him misunderstood him" (Butler's ed. comments, in Letters 533).

5 For lack of space I have had to exclude Hegel's revisions, completed in the 1820's, of his own earlier works; in particular, the 1830 edition of the Encylopaedia, first published in 1817.

56 The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (ed. Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, London, 1994) does not mention LHP or LPR. Kojève's sole major work on Hegel was a commentary on The Phenomenology of Spirit.
theologian, von Balthasar. I have chosen Barth ahead of these others for two reasons.

First, his critique is but a relatively brief conclusion to an assessment that is to a significant degree sympathetically disposed toward Hegel and the “peculiar greatness” of his philosophy (PT 280), and that for theological reasons. In the introduction to the German edition Barth wrote.

I believe one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. And if I seriously intend to listen to a theologian of the past [including, by implication, Hegel, as the subject of one of the essays in the book], then I must mean this ‘I believe’ seriously, unless I have been released from this obligation by private inspiration! That is, regardless of my myriad opinions I must include these people in the Christian Church. And in view of the fact that I myself, together with my theological work, belong to the Christian Church solely on the basis of forgiveness. I have no right to deny or even to doubt that they were as fundamentally concerned as I am about the Christian faith.

I have endeavoured to read Hegel in this same spirit, as a colleague in Christ in the church. Hegel himself confessed that his philosophy had only confirmed him in his Christian faith (Letters 520). Over against the contemporary revival of Hegelian studies in the spirit of Kojève’s anthropological approach, I take seriously Barth’s challenge:

There can be no denying that knowledge of God was what Hegel meant, and that he was speaking from very close to the heart of the matter. But will modern man tolerate such a theological invasion, and one of such a particularly menacing aspect? Or had not Hegel already understood him in far too deep and far too Christian a way, by demanding of him that he should thus found his philosophy upon theology, and eventually allow his philosophy to be transformed into theology? (PT 298)

The second reason explains both my choosing Barth as a companion and my effort at demonstrating that Hegel may be trusted as a resource for theology more uncompromisingly than Barth believes. In setting forth his objections to Hegel, Barth acknowledges that

again and again we must think three times before contradicting his philosophy, because we might find that everything we are tempted to say in contradiction of it has already been said within it, and pro-

That at least is true of PT. In the later CD he is much more critical. Hegel is really only atheism in disguise, so that “overt atheism is a blabbing out of the secret” which he, among others, strives to conceal (CD II. 2. 320); Hegel’s work may be compared with the “pious blasphemies” of Angelus Silesius (CD II. 1. 282): etc. (See Appendix 4 for a survey of the significant passages in CD where Barth treats Hegel).


*“The hardest of all lessons in interpretation is to believe that great men mean what they say” (Bernard Bosanquet, quoted by James Yerkes in The Christology of Hegel, Missoula, 1978, 307).
vided with the best possible answer (PT 280).32

My reading endeavors to show from Hegel’s own words that he may be read as having provided Barth’s criticisms with the best possible answers. answers that are determined to be consistent with the Credo of the Christian church. In Küng’s terms. Hegel did indeed think through his whole system from the perspective of Christ and not the other way around.33

It will become evident that, in serving as a resource for theology at the close of the 20th Century. Hegel need not inevitably give rise to a theology compromised by the worst vestiges of modernity. This is not surprising, for Hegel himself was, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate. sharply aware of the extent to which modern philosophy and theology, at least since Descartes, had betrayed their God-given vocation to serve the gospel. “to found [their] philosophy upon theology. and eventually allow [their] philosophy to be transformed into theology” (PT 298). Described by Hegel as “the point of departure of modern philosophy” (Letters 637), Descartes wrote his Meditations as an apology for theism and the immortality of the soul. As such, he understood himself to be defending the faith of the church.34 His apology established the ground for certainty (ala Montaigne. “my metaphysics is myself”) in the self. and not only the self, but my self: cogito ergo sum. Though Hume masterfully undermined the apologetic, Kant restored it and it became definitive for theology from Schleiermacher to Tracy. Kant to Rahner. Butler to Lewis. Kierkegaard to Tillich.

1 A very different thinker. Michel Foucault. says very nearly the same thing though evidently without any conviction regarding companionship in the church! “But to truly escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps. is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless. waiting for us” (Quoted in Cooper. The End of History, 1, and in Barnett (ed.). Hegel After Derrida. 21).

“1 think Hegel’s christology is closer to the Chalcedonian (sic. (?)) definition than the general. untrinitarian christologies we have seen during the last few decades” (Rolf Ahlers. The Community of Freedom: Barth and Presuppositionless Theology. New York. 1989. 396n. 68). Ahlers’ affirmation of the Chalcedonian character of Hegel’s Christology is in explicit contradiction of Kung’s criticism of Hegel’s attempt to harmonize faith based on revelation and faith based on reason; Kung had written that Hegel’s attempt at harmonization is “a radical destruction of the Christological dogma” (quoted by Ahlers in The Community of Freedom,. 396n. 68; cf. Kung. The Incarnation of God. New York. 1987. 137ff. 241f. 456f. 466f. 479).

1 See especially Descartes’ Letter of Dedication of his Meditations. “To the Wisest and Most Distinguished Men. the Dean and Doctors of the Faculty of Sacred Theology of Paris”, in which he explains that Holy Scripture suffices for believers (“like ourselves”), but not for unbelievers who would judge a biblically based argument for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as circular. Unbelievers must be convinced “by reason drawn from a source none other than our own mind” (Descartes. Meditations. trans. by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis. 1979. 111).
But there is another tradition whose roots are older than Descartes. In this tradition there can be no fruitful beginning in the self. Its heart is dogmatic: its foundation, revelation: its criteria. Christological and trinitarian. Barth is its 20th Century representative: Anselm. Hegel’s favourite theologian. Its 12th Century representative. I intend to demonstrate that Hegel not only belongs to this tradition, but reinvented it for modernity, from within modernity, and as such engineered modernity’s inevitable demise, subverting the modern project from within. Resources for theology in a post-modern world lie in the rediscovery of Hegel.

Three Perennial Issues

Barth’s critique of Hegel centers around three issues that have perennially provoked intense even acrimonious debate among theologians and philosophers of religion. The issues concern three pairs of concepts: God and world, history and reason, freedom and necessity. With regard to God and world it has been observed that accounts of their relationship tend to opposite poles, stressing either their unity or their disparity. “The same tendency may be observed in accounts of the relations that hold within each of the other two pairs.

Hegel and Barth are usually taken to be advocates of opposing accounts of each of these pairs: Hegel tending consistently to a monist description which, according to his critics at least, absorbs one side of each pair into an identity with the other; Barth tending in a dualist direction, emphasizing the antithetical distinction between the poles of each pair, and accused of overwhelming one side of each pair. As Barth is often caricatured as a theologian of antitheses at the expense of reconciliation, so Hegel is caricatured as a theologian of syntheses, even identities, at the expense of his claim to do justice to the integrity of those realities whose reconciliation he wants to demonstrate.

—Cf. Oliver O’Donovan, “The Concealment of Creation”, the sixth in an eleven part series of lectures entitled, On the 39 Articles of the Church of England: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity, available on audio-tape from the library of Wycliffe College, Toronto, s.d. The lectures were later revised and published as a book under the same title (see bibliography). Not all that is on the tapes however appears in the book, though on the relation of God and world cf. On the 39 Articles..., 66f.
Both characterizations are caricatures. While Barth's is beyond the confines of this essay, it is our intention to consider carefully Hegel's contribution to the debate around these three issues and in so doing to get behind the caricature by recovering an account of his position that approximates more closely to his own texts. We shall see that perceptive as Barth's reading is, even it does not do justice to Hegel."

Nevertheless his caricature of Hegel is much less extreme than that of many other readers favorable and unfavorable. He applauds Hegel's determination to begin with God, the God who has already made his beginning before ever we make our's. Equally he acknowledges his concern to honour the fullness of the life of the world in all its manifold complexity and particularity, as also its being in time, its historical becoming. And he appreciates Hegel's earnest intention to reintegrate religion and truth. Having said that, Hegel remains a problem for Barth. In every case where he is able to be positive, he is compelled to point up a shadow, a corresponding failure to do justice to the fullness of God and the world in terms of the gospel.

I shall endeavour to show that Hegel is able to provide satisfactory answers to all of Barth's charges. Relying on close reading of his writings I shall also take account of Hegel's historical context, and in particular the theological implications of the thought of his predecessors and contemporaries as it influenced his own thinking. Whereas it was a too easy identification of divine and human realities and interests, especially in the theologies and religious philosophies of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, that influenced Barth towards an insistence upon certain profound antitheses necessary to an adequate appreciation of the gospel of reconciliation in Christ; it was Hegel's contemporaries' banishment of God from the world, exclusion of religious reality from serious intellectual reflection, divorce of religious truth and life, and exaltation of human autonomy to

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Footnote 1: Suffice it to say here that Barth's emphasis on the antithesis within each of the pairs is for the sake of demonstrating the reality and integrity of the reconciliation between God and world; that that reconciliation is by grace, achieved in sovereign freedom by God, in the midst of the necessities of history in Jesus of Nazareth; that it is capable of being reflected upon and proclaimed by the church as the first fruits, and for the sake, of the reconciled world, to God's eternal glory. Barth's insistence upon the antitheses is in other words for the sake of the greater and more fundamental reality of their reconciliation in Christ. To insist on antithesis as Barth's primary category is to caricature, to misrepresent, him even though selective quotation might be made to support it.

the exclusion of all claims upon humanity by God, that influenced him in the direction of insistence upon the essential relatedness of God and world, with correspondingly significant implications for the inherent relatedness of history and reason, and freedom and necessity.

New Resources

A reassessment of Hegel’s philosophy of religion as a resource for theology is the more urgent in light of recent important advances in Hegelian scholarship. Significant new editions of LPR, LHP, and the Letters have been produced in the past fifteen years making available hitherto unavailable material and providing extensive and much needed revisions of what was available. Much material only now made available was unavailable to Barth, and the Lasson edition of LPR with which he worked was “marred by serious defects”.

The best way to handle this material with a view to O’Regan’s approximate interpretation would be a running commentary on the texts themselves. The confines of this essay do not allow for it. I have worked as closely as possible with the texts open beside me. Much of the essay is therefore paraphrase of Hegel’s writings with a view to getting at what he really said. That has inevitably entailed ruthless précising of his work. The challenge to clarity and conciseness is most demanding with regard to LPR and LHP as they benefit and suffer from being the records of lectures that Hegel was unable to edit for publication in written form. The benefit is great in that one seems almost to hear Hegel first-hand. The problems arise because oral delivery as compared with written text tends toward repetitious discursiveness, made the more problematic in the case of LPR where there are multiple revisions of the same material. I have limited myself to quoting directly where I felt compelled to substantiate my reading over against more familiar interpretations. Even then I have had to exclude much that I would rather have included, giving only page references to the original.

Outline

Chapter one is a summary of Barth’s account of what he calls the three landmarks of Hegel’s thinking. In terms of those landmarks Barth articulates the three worthy demands that Hegel

\[ \text{Hodgson’s "Editorial Introduction" to LPR 1, 31. An account of the production of the new editions, together with comparisons with older editions, is included in the "Editorial Introductions" to LPR and LHP, and in the second section of Chapter 1 of Letters (3-6).} \]
makes of modern culture and theology, but also the three temptations he discerns and on the basis of which he formulates his three criticisms, each of which centers on one or other of the three perennial issues described above. Chapters two, three, and four address the three temptations in turn, endeavouring to show that Hegel may be read as having avoided them.

Chapter two is relatively brief, limited as it is to adducing evidence from the introductions to the four series of _LPR_ in order to show that Hegel does not reduce God to humanity nor _vice versa_, but honors the integrity both of God in his inalienable self-sufficiency and of humanity in its multifaceted fullness. Further material of the same kind emerges as other texts are investigated in subsequent chapters: as that occurs I have made explicit reference back to this second chapter. All three issues and Barth’s three criticisms are really variations on one issue and criticism. Barth himself says that his third criticism includes and brings to a head the first two (PT 304). In leaving chapter two then we do not really leave the first issue and criticism behind.

Chapter three responds to Barth’s second criticism by demonstrating Hegel’s commitment to the irreducibly and uniquely constitutive character of the gospel for philosophy. Gospel informed philosophy serves _what_ Hegel calls _developed worldliness_, the consistent application of the gospel to all of life. The chapter is disproportionately long because it also addresses Hegel’s historical context and his understanding of contemporary intellectual forces. Certain of his letters, _HF_, and his account in the third part of _LPR_ of the Christian doctrines of fall, reconciliation in Christ, and the church are the foundational texts for this chapter.

Chapter four, devoted almost entirely to _LHP_, contains perhaps the most provocative material, an account of Hegelian _necessity_ as the self-authenticating character of the truth, an account that is fundamentally different from what Barth believes Hegel’s necessity to be.

Chapter five is an adventurous conclusion in which I undertake to develop the rudiments of a metaethics of delight, discernment, and responsive action, finishing with a summary statement of the resources for theology that may profitably be looked for in Hegel.

At the heart of my argument is Hegel’s description of the _ontological reconstitution_ of human subjectivity in the Incarnation of the God-man Jesus Christ. Redeemed from autonomous opposition to all objectivity and otherness, humanity has been set free for willing and appropriate responsiveness to the real God and to the real world.

The argument is based upon what I perceive to be for Hegel the _essential complementarity_
of God and created humanity, which is not ultimately undone even by humanity’s fall into absolute antithesis. That essential complementarity is itself grounded in the eternal union of the Father and the Son in the Spirit. It is recovered in the Incarnation of the Son, the once for all reconciliation of God and the world.

The end of the argument is what Hegel describes as the *vocation* of the church. That vocation, for the fulfillment of which the church is formed and liberated by the gospel, has as its goal the universal interiorization and comprehensive actualization of the gospel in the world. The vocation is both liberating and imperative: both, because it derives from the gospel, the self-authenticating power of which is its necessity. The gospel is God’s necessary, sovereign and therefore liberating claim on humanity. It is philosophy’s business comprehensively to describe and demonstrate that claim.
Barth’s Threefold Critique of Hegel

Theology...has no occasion to assume an attitude of alarm and hostility to any renaissance of Hegel which might come about.... We must...be content to understand him as the man he was: as a great problem and a great disappointment, but perhaps also a great promise.

Barth”

Revelation, dogma, and theology are for Hegel about God consummately revealed in Jesus Christ. His philosophy of religion is about the human thinking of God, human knowledge of God, human consciousness of God, human experience of God. Always though, and with remarkable consistency, the reality of God. God in himself, is determinative of our knowledge of God. The initiative is absolutely with God. Religion is the human response evoked by God: the philosophy of religion, the descriptive appropriation and conceptual reformulation of that response for its application to the totality of life.

While almost every word of the previous paragraph remains to be explained and accounted for in terms of textual evidence from Hegel’s works, it will serve for the present as context for a summary description of Barth’s assessment of Hegel in his relatively early essay in Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl (PT).

Three Demands and Three Criticisms

Barth identifies what he calls the three landmarks of Hegelian thinking. They are truth, the moving cognition of truth, and the dialectical character of this movement, or as Barth also describes them, the absolute claim of truth, truth as event and history, and truth as contradiction and the reconciliation of that contradiction (PT 295, 301). These issue in what Barth calls the three demands that Hegel makes of modern culture and the church. While Barth is almost wholeheartedly approving of the demands, the same landmarks also give rise to his three criticisms of Hegel.

More than anything else it is Hegel’s deliberate preoccupation with God and the absolute claim of the truth of God that wins Barth’s approval. Of modern cultural awareness Hegel demanded that it recognise itself as fundamentally accountable to the claim of truth as a theological

\[PT 305\]
claim: “the truth is God, and God is the Master of men”. That explains Hegel’s often maligned intellectualism which is really nothing other than that “man lives from the truth, and only from the truth” (PT 295). Tragically, modern culture will shrink back from this proclamation of the revelatory nature of absolute truth and all real knowledge, shrink back into the left hand of God and refuse this invitation to thinking as a divine service (PT 295). Addressing theology, Hegel first confronts it too with the claim of truth. That claim is absolute, imperialistic, because the truth is God and therefore ultimately it alone must form the agenda. Can theology “absolve itself from the earnestness with which Hegel equated the knowledge of truth and the knowledge of God?” (PT 299)

At the same time, Hegel’s preoccupation with God is exclusive of sufficient attention to the fullness and integrity of the world, and in particular of human nature as more than mind and intellect. First, there is what Barth calls the single-track nature of Hegel’s concept of truth, which is truth as thought. Ought not Hegel to have learned from Kant and Schleiermacher that the human person “always exist[s] at the invisible intersection of...thinking and willing?” That being so, “is a theory of truth which builds itself up upon the inner logic of a thought which is divorced from practice still the theory of man as he really is, the theory of his truth?” (PT 301) Underlying this is Hegel’s transcending of the distinction of the divine and human natures in the higher unitive reality of mind. Hegel’s Geist. God and humanity are moments in the unfolding of mind. More accurately, humanity is a moment in the unfolding of the one reality which is mind, which is God. Underlying, and ultimately undermining, the reconciliation of the holy God and sinful humanity is the conceptual unity of the divine and human natures in the one idea of mind. For Hegel that conceptual unity is basic, absolute (PT 301).

Moving to the second Hegelian landmark, Barth is impressed by Hegel’s determination to restore reason and thought to culture and theology as the attendant response to the initiative and vitality of truth as self-revelatory in history. Barth acknowledges Hegel’s concern for Christian doctrine, admitting the truth of Hegel’s own claim that much more of dogmatics was preserved, maintained, and safeguarded in Hegel’s philosophy than in the theology of his contemporaries (PT 293: cf LPR 1, 156ff). He applauds Hegel’s demand of modern culture and theology that they know the truth “only [as] history, event...only...in the form of a strict obedience to the self-movement of truth”: truth is revelation: truth is “the God who presents himself to our knowledge, and can be known, only as the Living God”: and Barth is confident that “he saw God’s aliveness well, and
saw it better than many theologians" (PT 294f). More than that, he acknowledges Hegel’s affirmation of “the positive and historical nature of revelation, the uniqueness of Christ” as the incarnation and revelation of the living truth that is the living God (PT 299).

Again however, it is a too exclusive preoccupation with thought that undermines the integrity of the gospel and the church as essentially determined by God’s self-revelation in Christ. That revelation is supplanted by the higher and immediate manifestation of eternal truth in human thought which the Hegelian dialectic shows to be identical with the mind of God. Barth summarizes Hegel’s argument as follows. God is truth. Truth is thought. Thought is God’s self-movement: it is also humanity’s. Thought, therefore, is the highest mediation of God and humanity. In thought humanity thinks God’s thoughts after him. Barth calls this Hegel’s confusion of human with divine self-movement. Hegel’s affirmation of the positive and historical nature of revelation, the uniqueness of Christ, is compromised by his insistence upon the task of the philosopher to advance beyond historical revelation to the higher level of God being manifest in thought. Another basis for knowledge alongside theology’s only proper basis which should be revelation is provided in philosophy. That other basis is reason, pure thought. Reason is divine revelation. As the highest form of divine revelation, reason transcends historical revelation. What Hegel describes as the representational character of historical revelation turns out to be what makes it penultimate, at best. Reason’s task is “to raise [revelation] to the form of thought as the form suited to the reality of mind” (PT 302f).

As with Barth’s first criticism, here too the root problem is the conceptual unity of God and humanity. The duality of God and humanity that is maintained in historical revelation is overcome in thought and ultimately annulled. God’s self-revelation in Christ is shown more fundamentally to be the self-manifestation of humanity to itself:

Hegel’s living God - he saw God’s aliveness well, and saw it better than many theologians - is actually the living man.... The Hegelian doctrine of the Trinity coincides with the basic principles of Hegelian logic, which is at the same time quite explicitly the basic principle of Hegelian anthropology and the Hegelian teaching of life (PT 302f).

In these first two responses to Hegel, Barth’s approval though not unqualified is enthusiastic. With his third response the mood changes. He is grudgingly impressed by Hegel’s commitment to reconciliation as the original and final purpose of God for the world. Achieved in Christ, the gospel liberates humanity to think and to live on account of that otherwise inconceivable recon-
ciliation. Hegel demanded of modern culture that contradiction be recognised as “the law of truth understood as history” (PT 297). There is no possibility of resting in truth as a unity once and for all attained. “In despite of the whole of western logic....life itself”. - and Barth acknowledges that Hegel is interested in nothing less than the fullness of life. - “is...a perpetual a = non-a” (PT 297). Hegel sought the unity of truth passionately, and as the unity of contradictions, their reconciliation not their setting aside. This too is fundamentally theological. Reality is based in nothing less than the trinitarian nature of God. It is the knowledge of God that yields “the knowledge of irreconcilable contradictions and their eternal vanquishing in the mind” (PT 297). Barth sets aside for the present the question whether Hegel’s method really does yield knowledge of God. For the moment the important thing is that “there can be no denying that knowledge of God was what he meant” (PT 297). Again, modern culture could not bear this theological invasion. And Barth asks provocatively, “had not Hegel already understood [modern man] in far too deep and far too Christian a way, by demanding of him that he should thus found his philosophy upon theology, and eventually allow his philosophy to be transformed into theology?” (PT 297f)

Hegel similarly demanded of theology that it should face up to the contradictory nature of its own particular knowledge:

Hegel with his concept of mind must wittingly, or unwittingly have been thinking of the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord over nature and spirit, precisely by virtue of the unity and opposition of dictum and contra-dictum, in which Hegel had the spirit conceiving itself and being real (PT 299).

This is paralleled in “the other Hegelian synthesis, that of reason and history in Christianity itself” (PT 300). Both syntheses are contradictory in that they are the incomprehensible synthesis of God (PT 300). As we shall see Barth is critical of Hegel for not taking this synthesis seriously enough and so not appreciating that it is achieved incomprehensibly by God alone. Nevertheless, theologians ought to have learned the contradictory nature of their knowledge from Hegel instead of capitulating to a revival of a neo-Kantian “apriori way of thinking, within which it imagined it was well housed and secured in producing a special, religious apriori method” (PT 301).

Barth’s approval of this third demand is qualified because he is afraid that so to read Hegel is really to understand him better than he understood himself (PT 304). His quarrel is again with Hegel’s reduction of the gospel to thought; the miracle of reconciliation, inconceivable apart from revelation, is comprehensively explained and so explained away. God’s gracious and sovereign
freedom in Christ is, at best, penultimately determinative. The Hegelian dialectic thinks behind and beyond what was hitherto taken to be inconceivable. It demonstrates the necessity for God and for the world, of both reconciliation and the fall. Barth says this is “probably the weightiest and most significant of the doubts about him which might be raised from the theological point of view” (PT 304). Indeed it is the origin of the other two. It is Hegel’s failure to recognise that God is free. Reconciliation for Hegel is a necessary act of God. When God acts he acts necessarily and the philosopher can demonstrate that necessity.

Hegel is able to do this because he identifies God with the dialectical method. The unfolding of the Hegelian dialectical logic is the unfolding of the purposes of God. As such, God is a prisoner of finite consciousness: “I am necessary to God”. God comprehends all things including ultimately himself “by virtue of the fact that he does this in the consciousness of man” (PT 304). Humanity’s rational conceptualization of all of reality including God is necessary to God’s being God. It is his self-manifestation not only to the world but to himself. He must so manifest himself: “it is necessary to him to reveal himself” (PT 304).

Barth acknowledges that for Hegel, God’s necessary dialectical reconciliation of all things is accomplished in the church: “[t]he church is necessary to God himself, for in it he can be the mind of the church: and it is this alone which first makes it possible for him to be mind and God” (PT 304). God is bound inevitably to unfold himself and the reconciliation of all things in the church: “if he were not the mind of the church he would not be God. And he is God only in so far as he is the mind of the church” (PT 304). The effect of all of this is “the abolition of God’s own sovereignty...The God of Hegel is at the least his own prisoner” (PT 305): at the least, because Hegel’s God is really no God at all. The identification of God with the dialectical logic of human consciousness is. - and here we come again to the problem at the root of Barth’s first and second criticisms. - the reduction of God to humanity. or what is the same thing, the elevation of human consciousness to God.

The implications for soteriology are disturbing. The neglect of practice in his theorizing about truth that Barth identified in his first criticism, leads Hegel to trespass beyond bounds which “a theory of practice” would otherwise have led him to honour. He ought first to have “call[ed] a halt before the concept of sin”: instead, he includes it as a moment to be passed through in the unity and necessity of mind (PT 301). In so doing he involves himself in the further trespass of render-
ing reconciliation understandable. He does not finally take seriously the unfathomable mystery of either sin or salvation. Sin belongs as a necessary moment in the unfolding of the concept of mind which is identical with the course of truth and the existence of God (PT 306). Sin therefore makes sense and may even be said to be necessary to the full unfolding of mind. It follows that reconciliation too makes sense and is necessary to the “continuation of the eventual course of truth”. That salvation is a radically unpredictable and incomprehensibly new beginning is entirely lost sight of (PT 301f).

Barth calls this an unacceptable thinking beyond the mystery of evil and salvation. Hegel is only able to do it by providing another basis for knowledge alongside of theology’s only proper basis which should be revelation. That other basis is pure thought which seems to permit and make possible the solution of the dual mystery of sin and salvation. The divine and human natures are united conceptually, and therefore absolutely and necessarily, in the idea of mind. No! Barth protests. Theology can have no other foundation than revelation. And revelation is “of God’s incomprehensible reconciling...to man who is lost in sin”. (PT 301f)"

“The dialectic in which we ourselves exist...is not the actual dialectic of grace” (PT 305). Hegel’s necessity annihilates grace. The acts of God, whether in creation, reconciliation, revelation, or ecclesiology, are his own. God is essentially free. As such he is incomprehensibly sovereign. The actual dialectic of grace, over against the dialectic of human existence, has its sole and sufficient foundation in the freedom of God. Where Hegel speaks of the necessity of the acts of God and of his ability philosophically to demonstrate their necessity, Barth speaks of the sufficiency and extravagance of God: sufficiently constituting himself in the relations of the Father and of the Son in the Holy Spirit; extravagantly willing himself to be eternally the Lord of another (who is not God), his creature: known to be this God by his self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

If Hegel had grasped this actual dialectic of grace, “the attempt to speak of a necessity to which God himself is supposed to be subject would be radically impossible” (PT 304). Failing to perceive the actual dialectic of grace, he failed also to “open the gate-way of this knowledge to theology” (PT 305).

* In Barth’s essay this material concerning the necessity and comprehensibility of sin and salvation is included within his first criticism. I have moved it into the context of the third criticism, as I take it to be more directly related to the problem of necessity and freedom.
Summary Response

In responding, as it were, on Hegel's behalf, we shall demonstrate, with respect to Barth's first criticism, Hegel's commitment to the sovereign freedom, the inalienable self-sufficiency, of God, and the integrity and manifold complexity of human nature (chapter two); with respect to his second criticism, Hegel's insistence on the consistently determinative priority of the church's Credo for philosophy and theology (chapter three); and with respect to his third criticism, Hegel's dedication to the vocation of philosophy as a handmaid to the church's preaching and teaching ministries, in serving God's own purpose of impressing on all people the necessarily exclusive claim of the gospel (chapter four).

It will be especially Hegel's high view of the doctrine of the church over against the neo-Kantians, Schleiermacher, and the theological positivists, as also his radical rethinking of human subjectivity over against the autonomous subjectivity of modernity at least since Descartes, that will occupy the bulk of our attention. Hegel's dedication to the consistent and constitutive presence of the multi-layered content of the church's Credo will counter the charge that he supplants the revelation of the gospel and reduces life's fullness to thought. His account of human subjectivity will disclose Barth's misunderstanding of Hegelian necessity which, far from limiting God's gracious freedom, denotes the inherently self-evident and indelible character of the truth of the gospel. As the consummate, comprehensive, and exclusive revelation of reality the gospel cannot be conditional upon a human decision and judgment for its authentication. It is the revelation of the real and as such lays a necessary and universal claim upon humanity. Philosophy's vocation is comprehensively to think through the appropriation and application of that claim for human life and culture.

'The claim is arrogant beyond belief but for the fact that my intent is to harness Hegel's resources so that, by paraphrase and direct quotation, he himself may make his case in response to Barth's accusations.
In the Beginning, God

Above all...direct your soul to the thought of God, and...receive into your mind [Gemut] strength and consolation from this higher love.

Hegel

The Inalienable Self-sufficiency of God

Hegel's emphasis upon the sovereignty and the determinative initiative of God consistently compels him to begin with God. And to begin with God as the God who is already the beginning. There can be no getting outside God, no deducing of God from some prior or independent position. logical or practical. Barth applauds this bold beginning with God as a theological demand which Hegel "hurled at modern man more forcibly than any theologian...had done for centuries." (PT 296).

Hegel begins his 1827 Lectures on The Concept of Religion, "[t]he question with which we have to begin is: 'How are we to secure a beginning?'" (LPR 1.365) The long answer takes up several pages: the short answer. one sentence: "[t]he beginning of religion. more precisely its content. is the concept of religion itself. that God is the absolute truth. the truth of all things. and subjectively that religion alone is the absolutely true knowledge" (LPR 1.366). More striking still are the opening paragraphs of the Introductions of all four series of LPR. God is the beginning of all things and the end of all things: everything starts from God and returns to God (LPR 1.84). As the supreme (LPR 1.113). the ultimate focal point (LPR 1.150). God is the highest. the absolute. that which is absolutely true or the truth itself (LPR 1.83).

Lest this seem at best to set God only at the head of a series. or at one end of a continuum. so that. as Barth accuses Hegel of saying. the divine and human natures are but aspects of the one higher idea of mind. Hegel is careful to articulate God’s sovereign and inalienable self-sufficiency. "If we consider this object [God] in relation to others. then we can say that it is strictly for its own sake": because of the potential for misunderstanding in his use of "relation". he immediately adds.

12 Hegel wrote this on August 31, 1822. to his sister Christiane who had recently been released from an asylum. (Letters 421).

13 I have borrowed the phrase from Oliver O'Donovan: he used it in the first of a series of lectures on the 39 Articles of the Anglican church. on audiotape at Wycliffe College. Toronto. s.d.
"it has no such relation [to others] and is strictly in and for itself the unconditioned, the free, the unbounded, that which is its own purpose and ultimate goal" (LPR 1. 114). It is "absolutely self-sufficient...the supreme end unto itself" (LPR 1. 84). More than anything, Hegel repeatedly emphasizes God's freedom: he is the absolutely free being" (LPR 1. 150).

**God for the Whole Human Person**

Hegel is equally committed to the full integrity of human nature in relation to God, a relation that is never overcome. as in Barth's accusation, through the reduction of human nature to a mere moment of the divine, a mere aspect of the higher unitive reality of mind. That integrity includes the freedom, feeling, action, and faith of the whole human person. Freedom looms large: the free God sets us free. Religion is the consciousness of this freedom:

[This concern [with God] is the true liberation of the human being and is freedom itself, true consciousness of the truth (LPR 1. 150). Occupation with this object [God] is fulfilling and satisfying by itself, and desires nothing else but this. Hence it is the absolutely free occupation. the absolutely free consciousness (LPR 1. 114).

But religion is more than consciousness. It is also a feeling. Hegel's quarrel with Schleiermacher notwithstanding. As a feeling it is bliss. attaining to that region where all the sorrows of the heart are resolved. in which every pain of feeling is dissolved and healed (LPR 1. 149f). It is devotion's present feeling and the absolute enjoyment that is called blessedness (LPR 1. 114f).

Most notable of all in light of Barth's first criticism. religion, through faith, is directly productive of action on the part of the individual will. God is glorified through the deliberate. volitional activity of the individual believer. As an activity religion has to manifest God's glory and majesty (LPR 1. 150); it is the present glorification of God (LPR 1. 461). Though "[the bliss of] religion is put off into the future, it is still radiant in life here and now...in the actuality within which [it] is effective and substantial" (LPR 1. 150). In a similar vein. Hegel speaks of the light and love of religion as "not a remote but an actually present liveliness. certainty, and enjoyment" (LPR 1. 150).

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(1) We shall consider the "death of God" in Chapter 3; with respect to Hegel's appreciation of the freedom of God, however, the following comment of Eberhard Jungel is illuminating: "in Hegel, he writes, "the ideas of absolute freedom and absolute suffering are bound together, since God himself gives himself up to annihilation, and so in absolute freedom chooses absolute suffering"" (quoted by John Webster in Eberhard Jungel: An Introduction to his Theology, Cambridge, 1991, 64).

(2) We shall return to Schleiermacher below (see chap. 3, sect. 1. and the subsections entitled "An Urgent Summons" and "Schleiermacher and the Religion of Pure Subjectivity").
It is faith that makes the connection between hoped for and otherworldly light and love on the one hand, and, on the other, life here and now. The light of Eternity, "the image of the absolute that religious devotion has before it...radiates into the temporal present"; the faculty for its discernment is faith which "is cognizant of it as the truth, as the substance of present existences" (LPR 1. 114). More than that, through faith this content of religious devotion makes a difference to the devotee's present activity. It "animates the present world" and "operates effectively in the life of the individual, ruling over one's commissions and omissions, over one's volition and action" (LPR 1. 114 f). Again, highlighting the obvious, in that last phrase there is the explicit mention of the will of the individual.

Barth is critical of what he calls the single-track nature of Hegel's concept of truth, which is truth as thought. Ought not Hegel, he asks, to have learned on the one hand from Kant that the human person always exists at the invisible intersection of thinking and willing, and on the other from Schleiermacher the central significance of feeling? That being so, he asks further, "is a theory of truth which builds itself up upon the inner logic of a thought which is divorced from practice still the theory of man as he really is, the theory of his truth?" (PT 291) This is evidently unfair to Hegel. Feeling and action are, as we have just seen, at least as important as thought in his account of the religious person: "the sorrows of the heart...every pain of feeling...healed": the content of religious devotion "ruling over...one's volition and activity".7

The Subjective/Objective Distinction

We have seen that God is the absolute beginning and end of all things, the sacred center which animates and inspires all things. We have seen further that God calls forth from humanity the religious response, the all-consuming and liberating concern and occupation with God that comprehensively affects and effects the human person. As such, religion is universal, though variable. Hegel is explicit concerning the universality of religion in the 1821 series of LPR: "all persons have...a consciousness of God, or of the absolute substance, as the truth of everything that

4 This radiating takes a specific form, namely education and preaching addressed to the whole human person as a unique individual, not neglecting the heart: "[religion] is awakened first by the general religious instruction that we receive from our youth [up]"; [religious feeling arising] in a person...what is called edification...is the aim of preaching, directed to the heart, to the singularity of the subject as this one person" (LPR 90).

47 Cf. Hegel's letter to his sister quoted at the head of this chapter.
they are and do...This is the universal intuition, sensation, consciousness - or what you will - of religion" (*LPR* 1. 85f). In the 1824 series, this sentence disappears. In its place Hegel introduces a reflection on the variable character of religion:

> [the] image of the absolute that religious devotion has before it can have a greater or lesser degree of present liveliness, certainty, and enjoyment, or can be presented as something longed or hoped for, something far off, otherworldly (*LPR* 1. 115).

No doubt this variation is the case both within the experience of the same person, as also between different persons. Hegel goes on to say that it is faith that is cognizant of the content of religious devotion "as the truth, as the substance of present existences" so that the "content of devotion...animates...operates effectively...ruling over" the particular individual (*LPR* 1. 115).

The variability of religion, dependent as it is on faith, suggests that Hegel distinguishes between the universality of religion as an objective reality, and the subjective experience and confession of individuals. This impression is reinforced by Hegel's deriving the universality of the consciousness of God theologically; it follows from who God is: "[s]ince God is...the principle and goal, the truth of each and every deed, initiative, and effort, all persons have therefore a consciousness of God" (*LPR* 1. 115).

That the objective/subjective distinction accurately represents Hegel's view is further confirmed by his startlingly juxtaposing on the one hand religion as "present and presupposed in everyone" so that "it is not a question of bringing something substantially new and alien into humanity" (*LPR* 1. 89), and on the other, actual people "who have never enlarged their hearts...who have not felt the joy and peace of the eternal, even if only dimly in the form of yearning, [who] do not possess the stuff [i.e. religion] that we here speak of" (*LPR* 1. 89). He continues with what amounts to a statement of the objective/subjective distinction, depicting it as the root of an experience of conflict: "[t]hey may perhaps have an image of [religion], but the content is not their own thing: it is an alien matter they are wrestling with" (*LPR* 89). To underline the obvious. Hegel has, as already quoted, only a few lines before denied that the religion he is talking about is "substantially...alien".

In other words, objectively, universally, religion is not alien: it is the *imago Dei* in which humanity is made. Hegel's terms, *presupposed* and *substantially*, as quoted above, could just as well be replaced with *objectively*. Religion as a universal reality is religion as an objective reality.
irrespective of the subjective experience of religion which varies greatly and includes at one extreme being without religion, being set against, in conflict with, God.

To anticipate, Hegel's philosophy of religion is concerned with overcoming this objective/subjective juxtaposition and paradox at the heart of religion, overcoming it by learning to think subjectively and comprehensively, both with regard to content and implications, the objective reality of the God of the gospel as expounded in the preaching and dogmatic teaching of the Christian church. It will be Hegel's insistence on the indispensable priority of the church's preaching and doctrine that will show Barth's accusations to be wide of the mark. God's sovereign initiative in his self-revelation in the gospel can be thought philosophically only to the extent that such thought derives originally and consistently from church dogmatics, which in turn derives from the gospel and its exposition in preaching and teaching.

But this is to anticipate much that remains to be demonstrated from Hegel's writings. For the present, we have demonstrated Hegel's commitment to the sovereign and inalienable self-sufficiency of God as the universal and objective condition for religion. as indeed, for all of life. And we have seen his insistence on God's determination to address, lay claim to, and liberate humanity, and to do so subjectively, at every level of their existential being, heart, mind and will.  

Hegel's fondness for Anselm will be a recurrent theme in this essay. It can be introduced here through venturing a comparison between Hegel as he has so far emerged in our study and Anselm as he appears in Barth's Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum (A). Barth suggests that An-

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Bernard Cullen addresses Kierkegaard's criticism, of which Barth's is but a variation, that speculative philosophy annihilates the subject. "Hegel is adamant", he writes, and then quotes from LPR: "the difference [between subject and object, self and God] emphatically does not disappear, for it belongs to the pulse of [the subject's] vitality, to the impetus, motion, and restlessness of spiritual as well as of natural life. Here is a unification in which the difference is not extinguished, but all the same it is aufgehoben [sublated]" (LPR 1, 173). (Bernard Cullen, "Hegel on the Human and the Divine, in the Light of the Criticism of Kierkegaard", in Hegel and his Critics: Philosophy in the Aftermath of Hegel, ed. William Desmond, State University of New York Press, 1989, 101).

* Aufheben and its compounds include three senses, dialectically related: to raise up, to abolish, and to preserve (cf. Michael Inwood, A Hegel Dictionary, Cambridge, 1992, 281ff). Two cumbersome but helpful compound renderings are, "bringing again into a wholeness that which is fragmentary", and "to transcend and preserve" (Michael George, "Marx's Hegelianism: An Exposition", in Hegel and modern Philosophy, New York, 1987, 121).

* "Hegel was familiar with the major works of Anselm - the Cur Deus Homo, the Monologion, and the Proslogion - and considered this eleventh-century theologian to be a seminal figure in the history of speculative thought about God" (Hodgson, LPR 154, n. 9). See below, chap 4 and the section entitled "Anselm and Necessity".
Anselm's confidence in God and God's objective truth would not permit him to take with final seriousness the unbelief of worldlings: that whatever they may have had to say for themselves subjectively, he addressed them as they were objectively. "in the light of the great 'as if' which is really not an 'as if' at all, but which at all times has been the final and decisive means whereby the believer could speak to the unbeliever" (A 71). In that light, objectively or Christologically Anselm addressed "the sinner as one who had not sinned, the non-Christian as a Christian, the unbeliever as believer" (Barth, A 68, 70f).

Hegel is as convinced as Anselm and Barth of the victory of God in Christ.1 so that he intends for us to take him at his word: God really is the beginning and the end, and the center of all things. We may then go on justifiably to suggest of Hegel what Barth suggests of Anselm, that regardless of the subjective disposition of the unbeliever, objectively the reality of God impresses itself upon all, believer and unbeliever alike.2 That this Anselmian Hegel is the real Hegel will become increasingly evident as we become more familiar with Hegel's account of what he intends by the philosophy of religion.

**The Closed Circle**

The relation of God and world will continue with us through the rest of this essay.3 Indeed all of Barth's criticisms are closely bound up with each other so that the response to each is also a response to all. Nevertheless, as an interim conclusion to this first issue, we turn to a piece of indirect evidence of Hegel's refusal to collapse the distinction between God and world into what

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1 As we have already seen (chap. 1, and the section entitled "Three Demands and Three Criticisms") Barth himself is confident that "[Hegel] saw God's aliveness well, and saw it better than many theologians". More than that, he acknowledges Hegel's affirmation of "the positive and historical nature of revelation, the uniqueness of Christ" as the incarnation and revelation of the living truth that is the living God (PT 299).

2 Barth writes of Anselm what I am suggesting could just as well be said of Hegel, that in his "desire to prove: perhaps he was daring to assume that disbelief, the quia non credimus, the doubt, denial and denial of the unbeliever are not really to be taken so seriously as the unbeliever himself would take them. Perhaps, while appealing to him 'with proof', it was not in his lack of faith that he was trusting but in his faith. Perhaps, he saw him standing at his side not only within the precincts of theology, but more important within the precincts of the church... It may be...that Anselm could quite well have risked that astonishing assumption because of the power of the objective ratio of the object of faith that enlightens and is enlightened from above by the summa veritas and which, according to Anselm, was able to teach and all along did teach truths that are beyond the power of one human being to teach another" (Anselm, 70f).

Barth describes as the one absolute unity of mind.

The anti-Hegelians of the late 1820's included Christian Hermann Weisse, a member of the philosophical faculty of the University of Leipzig. In a letter addressed to Hegel, Weisse explains that his desire is to follow Hegel's own method, but with greater consistency. Specifically, he says that Hegel had argued for the infinite progress of the dialectical process of the deepening of the concept through its negation, at every level of reality except the highest. God himself. God alone, though he is involved in and with the dialectical unfolding of creation, according to Hegel does not progress, deepen, enrich, or perfect himself. He is the same at the end as he is at the beginning. "a closed circle" (Letters 539ff). Weisse will not have it so, insisting that God too must progress infinitely towards ever deeper and richer self-realization. The image of the closed circle is a striking one. It represents Weisse's recognition of Hegel's commitment to the absolute and inalienable self-sufficiency of God: God is not imprisoned within the dialectical process but is set apart from and sovereign over it. Sadly, Hegel died before he could realize his wish to review Weisse's treatise. On the Present Standpoint of the Philosophical Discipline with Particular Respect to Hegel's System (1829). Immanuel Hermann Fichte objected to the same contradiction in Hegel's philosophy and offered his own resolution in his work of the same year. Contributions to the Characterization of Recent Philosophy and to the Mediation of its Contradictions. The contradiction which Weisse and Fichte objected to in Hegel is very like the antithesis of God and world so dear to Barth. If Weisse and Fichte are correct in their assessment of Hegel, then far from threatening the antithesis of God and world Hegel stands as Barth's ally over against those who would dissolve it."

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"This is Barth's term, PT 292.

"Weisse's letter includes the following: "I have not been able to reply [to Hegel's account of speculative knowledge] except by the concept of a divinity which, being the self-conscious unity of the absolute Idea, is at the same time an endless progress in the deepening, enrichment, and perfection of itself. For this demand for a growth by dialectical negativity always and ever recurs to me. It has seemed to me that it could in no way be put aside by the supposition of a closed circle in which what is most elevated returns to its beginning without growing by this fact...No matter how I consider it, to me the demand is [for] such a progress toward the infinite as, I feel obliged to infer, must really exist in the divinity" (Butler includes Weisse's letter in Letters 539ff).
The Ecclesial Vocation to Philosophy

[Your] letter expands upon...the position of knowledge with respect to truth. I immediately add...that when - in mind, in sensibility, and especially in religious feeling - faith, certainty, conviction, or however else we wish to qualify it, holds steadfastly for itself to truth, to God, it is not of primary importance to acquire this conviction through knowledge. In your first letter, in connection with both your career and your situation as head of a household and as a family father, you spoke of such religious feeling not only with fullness of feeling and firmness but equally with kindhearted intimacy. Granted, people also often attain to this conviction by the path of philosophical insight. Yet far more important than attaining it by knowledge is recognizing and conceptually grasping [begreifen] this solid foundation that already exists for the heart. In this situation the mind is, so to speak, sure of itself vis-a-vis knowledge. If one's conceptual grasp is not satisfying, such certitude does not suffer. This certitude can remain unshaken, whether one attributes the failure of knowledge to the particular path followed or to the very nature of knowledge in general. According to this position, knowledge can be viewed more as a luxury than as a need of the mind.

Hegel

In this chapter we shall be concerned with the relationship between history and reason: more specifically, between the history of Jesus of Nazareth and philosophical reflection. Barth contends that Hegel supplants the gospel history as the unique revelation of God with the higher manifestation of God in human thinking brought to fulfilment in the Hegelian dialectic.

My description of Hegel's response to Barth's criticism is in four parts. First, and with particular reference to HF, I examine Hegel's context, his analysis of the theological and philosophical perspectives of his contemporaries. He develops his own philosophy of religion with direct reference to their particular failures. Secondly, I take note of Hegel's insistence upon the vocational character of true philosophy: it is a service rendered in response to God's call. Thirdly, I follow Hegel's accounts, particularly in LPR, of the Christian doctrines of creation, fall, and reconciliation in Christ, concentrating on the absolute ontological difference that he believes Jesus Christ

\[\text{Written April 29, 1823, to Édouard-Casimir Duboc, a French-born hat manufacturer living in Hamburg who had recently become interested in the Hegelian philosophy (Letters 4980).}\]
makes to all of reality, but especially to human nature. That difference is the *gospel*. This leads fourthly into Hegel’s account, again in *LPR*, of the church, the Christian *community*, as the means whereby God the Holy Spirit brings the world into the new reality as it has been reconstituted in Christ. The church’s mission is described in terms of its three-fold task, the third part of which includes philosophy. In effect Hegel’s philosophy of religion discovers the proper business of all of philosophy to be not the provision of another higher means of revelation but the application of the gospel to every aspect of life so that its having been once and for all reconstituted in Christ may be comprehensively realized, actualized, in the here and now. But if philosophy is the third aspect of the church’s three-fold task, Hegel is insistent upon the priority of its first and second aspects, evangelical preaching and dogmatic teaching, for the awakening of the subjective religious response to God, as well as for authentic philosophy and theology. Hegel’s respect for church dogma is a recurring theme in this chapter. Neither philosophy nor theology is possible except on the basis of the dogmatic teaching of the Christian church.

Section 1: The Context

What was it that provoked Hegel into lecturing on the philosophy of religion? It is evident that he took it up rather suddenly with real urgency and that it became his chief interest for the last ten years of his life.

*An Urgent Summons*

In May of 1820 he addressed a memorandum to the Rector of the University of Berlin, where he was a professor, concerning the appropriate topics for a philosophical curriculum. He did not mention the philosophy of religion as an independent discipline. Yet less than a year later he was offering a new course in just that subject. It seems almost certain that it was the imminent ap-

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*"[Hegel’s] belief in Christian doctrine is a necessary condition for the truth of Philosophy" (John Burbidge, “Is Hegel a Christian?”, in *New Perspectives*... ed. Kolb, 1992, 102).*

*Cf. Hodgson, *LPR* 1. 3.*
pearance of Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre* that provoked Hegel into a counter-blast. Not that Hegel had not been interested in religion for many years. From his days as a theological student in Tubingen there was no topic in which he had a deeper and more abiding concern. But the philosophy of religion was unknown as an independent philosophical discipline: philosophy’s handling of *God* was customarily dealt with as *rational theology* within metaphysics. Hegel’s efforts were pioneering, which goes some way to explaining his continual revision of the subject.

Nor was Schleiermacher a stranger to Hegel. As early as 1802 Hegel had “advanced a brief but perceptive critique of Schleiermacher’s *Speeches on Religion*.” Since 1818 they had been colleagues at the University of Berlin, uneasy colleagues almost from the beginning. From students who heard both of them lecture and from Philipp Marheineke, also on the theological faculty in Berlin and close to both Hegel and Schleiermacher, Hegel no doubt learned of the content of Schleiermacher’s impending tome, and “may well have concluded that it was necessary to provide a counterweight to a theological position about which he had reason to believe he would have deep reservations.”

Two letters provide important clues as to what Hegel believed himself to be doing in contrast to Schleiermacher. The first is to Carl Daub, a former colleague and friend at Heidelberg, and indicates Hegel’s particular interest in dogmatics. He had just commenced his first series of lectures: Schleiermacher’s book had not yet been published:

> Schleiermacher, from what I hear, is presently having his dogmatics published as well. The *Xenien* just came to mind in this regard: ‘You can get away with paying with IOU’s for a long time but you still finally have to open your purse’.

It remains to be seen, however, whether this purse will dispense anything but more IOU’s. In any case his treatise on predestination, published in his theological journal, has impressed me as highly threadbare (*Letters*, 460).

Hegel is concerned about dogmatics and, if we take the “as well” seriously, is not averse to refer-

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19 We know it in English as the first edition of the first part of *The Christian Faith*.

20 Hodgson, *LPR* 1. 1.

21 Hodgson, *LPR* 1. 2.

22 *Ibid*.

23 Paraphrase of an epigrammatic quotation from the *Xenien* (?). by Schiller.
ring to his own work as dogmatics, or at least, as dogmatically grounded."

The second letter shows Hegel’s urgent concern for the welfare of the church and in particular its dogmatic foundations. He is writing to his younger colleague, H. W. F. Hinrichs. also in response to the recent publication of the first edition of Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*.

From Daub I expect public clarification of whether that is really, as we have so impertinently and superficially been told, the dogmatics of the United Protestant Church - although naturally we have only been presented first with the first part (*Letters* 486)."

Hegel’s ongoing conflict with Schleiermacher, including most famously his Forward to Hinrichs’ 1822 treatise on the philosophy of religion (*HF*), should be viewed in the same light, as demonstrative of his passionate, ecclesial concern for “religious policy in regard to the fundamental theological principles of the Evangelical Church of the Prussian Union” and “not as private disparagement of a colleague”.

Turning to *HF*. Hegel’s ecclesial concern is evident in an early passage in which he writes of the importance of sorting out “for the church” the relation between faith and reason so that “the church’s teaching is not opposed by a creed of man’s own making, nor has changed into something external, untouched by the Holy Spirit” (*HF* 228). Hegel’s work is, by implication, of service to the church in its all-important work of education:

> the church’s work in relation to its members will consist primarily in educating them to the stage where the Truth, which at first could be communicated to them only in the form of something to be learnt by rote, has developed into an interior possession which touches their hearts so deeply that in that Truth alone do they find their own fulfillment and their essential, permanent being (*HF* 228).

(We shall see that this “interiorization”, or “inwardization” [*Erinnerung*] through education is one

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**Footnotes:**

**1** Though it should be said that the text could also be read as referring to contemporaries who are producing dogmatics “as well”.

**2** “(P)robably the first Hegelian to teach the Hegelian system.” (Clark Butler, editorial introduction to *Hegel: The Letters*, 1984, 13).

**3** In his preface to the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher had described his work as the first dogmatics to give an account of the “Fundamental Principles of the Evangelical church” (part of the full title of his work). The Evangelical church included both the Reformed and Lutheran communions, and Schleiermacher intended that his text would provide the theological basis for their union.

**4** Hodgson, *LPR* 1, 4.

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of the main tasks of the church that is served by doctrine and the philosophy of religion"). Hegel
does not forget this ecclesial purpose as he returns at the end of HF to set his own philosophical
work in perspective as one part of a larger enquiry into the way in which the contemporary church
"is again to procure respect, reverence and authority for its doctrines" (HF 241)."

Hegel's main objection to Schleiermacher's dogmatics is its reduction and limitation of the
relationship between humanity and God to feeling so that theology is repudiated and subjective
opinion, which Hegel describes as capricious, fortuitous, arbitrary, and incapable of knowing the
truth, is put in its place (HF 240ff). A dogmatics of feeling is a dogmatics of IOU's that is vacuous
unless backed up by opening one's purse and bringing out real money, real dogmatic content. Not
that Hegel denies feeling its proper, even necessary place and function. But feeling by itself is con-
tentless. The important thing is that feeling should be directed to and evoked by its true and proper
object. Hegel is as opposed to an understanding of faith that emphasizes content "learnt by rote" to
the utter exclusion of its "communication...to man's innermost self", as he is to "the merely sub-
jective state of believing" that "leav[es] untouched the nature of the content...of the belief". In-
stead, "I hold that faith, in the true, ancient sense of the word, is a unity of both these meanings,
including the one no less than the other" (HF 228).

Without this fullness of faith, this knowledge of God, the church, theology, and philoso-
phy are altogether nothing, "a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal" (HF 243). That the church
should be what it is intended by God to be requires that it recover its dogmatic foundations, that,
"in face of mere arbitrary opinions...[it] create for itself a bond of objective faith, doctrine and cul-
tus" (HF 241). We must not be mislead by his use of the phrase, create for itself. He does not
mean a reinvention of doctrine. It is the original doctrine of the Christian church that must be re-

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5 See below, chap. 3, sect. 5 and the subsection entitled "Philosophy: Developed Worldliness", also the first section
of chap. 4.

6 "The Christian religion...is and claims to be nothing else but the revelation of what God is, and the Christian
community is supposed to be none other than the community into which the Spirit of God has been sent and in
which that Spirit leads the members into the knowledge of God just because it is Spirit and the divine, holy Spirit,
not sensation and feeling, not a picture-thinking of sensuous things. And without this knowledge what would the
Christian community be? What is a theology without a knowledge of God? Precisely what a philosophy is without
that knowledge, sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal" (HF 243).
covered. It is precisely those doctrines, "the Credo, the church's confession of faith" (HF 228), that are the irreplaceable foundation for philosophy, as for theology and the Christian community. So important is this to a true understanding of Hegel, and furthermore so often is it ignored or forgotten in interpretations of Hegel, that it merits our further investigation."

**Philosophy and the Credo of the Church**

We begin with a letter from Hegel, written in April 1822, to the liberal reformer Baron Karl Sigmund von Altenstein, the Prussian Minister responsible for religious, educational, and medical affairs. Hegel's report addresses what he himself describes as "the complaint arising from many quarters that students tend to come to the university without the requisite preparation for the study of philosophy" (Letters 390). Proper preparation he suggests should include both material and formal matters. Though the more material "is at once indirect and more distant", nevertheless he considers it to be the true foundation of speculative thinking (Letters 391). It would include the study of the ancients, alerting students to ethical principles and piety. It would also include "the dogmatic content of our religion" (Letters 392).

\* Commenting on the phrase, "the Credo, the church's confession", Merold Westphal in his Introduction to A. V. Miller's English translation of Hegel's HF explains that "this would have to refer primarily to the canonical confessions of faith which constitute the Bible, and secondarily to the creeds of Christendom" (Westphal, "Introduction" to Hegel's HF, 225).

\* Cf. Bernard Cullen's paraphrase of LPR 1, 156ff: "Hegel explicitly refers to theologians 'of the last thirty to fifty years'...who have wreaked...havoc on traditional Christian doctrines such as the Incarnation and the Trinity by practically ignoring them" (Bernard Cullen. "Hegel's Philosophy of God in the Light of Kierkegaard's Criticisms". in Hegel and his Critics: Philosophy in the Aftermath of Hegel, State University of New York Press, 1989, 103 n.17).

\* Even Barth, though he acknowledges Hegel's claim to have honored church doctrine (PT 293), discounts Hegel's claim in favour of his own characterization of Hegel as one who renders such doctrine immaterial when it comes to the higher activity of pure philosophy which is undertaken entirely within the limitless and self-generating confines of autonomous human thought. It may be true to say this of Hegel's writings up till 1821. It cannot be sustained thereafter.

\* Von Altenstein had held the position since 1817, and was responsible for Hegel's appointment, in 1818, as professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin. The letter is a report in which Hegel delivers his general conclusions and recommendations based on his four years experience as a member of the Royal Academic Board of Examiners for the province of Brandenburg. Von Altenstein had appointed Hegel to the position in part fulfillment of his promise to augment his income and open up spheres of activity beyond his teaching at the University. It entailed his taking part in the examination of candidates for teaching positions and for admission to the university, as well as the supervision of gymnasium students' final examinations, even the correcting of examination essays. Hegel resigned from the post a few months after submitting his report, as he felt that the minimal addition to his income did not justify the amount of work entailed and consequent distraction from philosophy (cf. Butler's editorial comment in Letters 377f, 388).
Hegel writes at length on this aspect, at greater length than on any other in the report. It is the most important element in preparing a student for philosophy. He is careful to be relatively specific about this dogmatic content. It is "religious truth insofar as it still consists in the old dogmatic teachings of the church" (Letters 392), which as we shall see "LHP identifies with the dogmatic achievement of the church fathers. The reason is clear: "the dogmatic content of our religion embraces for itself the content of truth", it "contains truth in and for itself": the truth of church dogma "constitutes the interest of philosophy in the specific sense of knowledge" (Letters 392). The truth content of philosophy is the truth content of Christian doctrine. More than that, the dogma of the church gives philosophy its subject matter. That is because it enshrines in an exemplary fashion the proper relation of the human person to God and to the gospel as truth that is given to be known. It constitutes "an immediate connection with the formal content of speculative thinking" (Letters 392). In Christian doctrine the truth is in and for itself, independent of the experience, presuppositions, and beliefs of humanity. In Christian doctrine the truth is sovereign, bringing with it its own authority: the church knows it and is conscious of it in such a way that its inalienable self-sufficiency is not compromised. The church in its dogmatic definitions appropriates but does not expropriate the truth of religion as it has been revealed in the gospel.

Unless philosophy returns to Christian doctrine it must remain imprisoned within the limits set for it by Kant, who reduced thought to the categories of the Understanding which has direct access only to finite and sensible phenomena: infinite, self-sufficient, sovereign and independent realities are by definition rendered unavailable. By contrast, church dogma upholds the truth "to such a degree vis-à-vis speculative thinking that it at once contradicts the understanding and defeats mere argumentation [Rasonnement]" (Letters 392). Therefore philosophy must once again apprentice itself to the church fathers to learn the appropriate and legitimate relationship between God and the truth of God on the one hand, and human knowledge and speculation on the other. In so doing, philosophy will recover the true and ordered compatibility, the mutual interdependence, of faith and reason.

Hegel issues a word of caution, warning against mistreatment of Christian doctrine in the

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1 See chapter 4 and the section entitled "Theology and Philosophy in Conflict".

2 I am indebted to Oliver O'Donovan for these terms, which he uses to describe the legitimate and illegitimate relationships of theology to Scripture. (On the Thirty Nine Articles, audiotapes of lectures, available from the library of Wycliffe College, Toronto, s.d.)
fashion of what he elsewhere describes as the three universal prejudices of his age, dogmatism, popular Kantianism, and religious subjectivism (Cf. HF 237):”

whether this content is to have a preparatory connection to speculative thinking will depend on whether church dogma is treated in religious instruction as something merely historical...or alternatively whether attention is chiefly directed to deistic generalities, moral teaching, or even mere subjective feelings (Letters 392).

Hegel’s use of “merely” and “mere” in his modifying “historical” and “subjective feelings” is critically important here. As we have already seen in his criticism of Schleiermacher, and as we shall see when we consider his fuller treatment of these prejudices in HF, history and feeling are essential to true religion. Reduction to the merely historical is the fault of dogmatists and historical critics, who read history and dogma critically with the Understanding only, and who are therefore unable and unwilling to treat them in other than finite categories, to read them as bearing authentic witness to eternal and absolute truth and reality. And it is the religious subjectivists who insist on reducing religion to mere feeling.

The triviality and unbelief of the three universal prejudices must be avoided in favour of reverent faith, what Hegel describes here as “that true, deep respect for those dogmas”, a respect which he says “is not generally implanted” (Letters 392). And the image of implantation is important. We shall see this again in LHP. Reverence for church dogma does not come naturally: as he says elsewhere, commenting on St. Paul’s the natural man perceiveth not the things of the spirit of God and cannot know them. “the natural man...is not supposed to know anything:...a natural feeling of the divine and the spirit of God are two quite different things” (HF 238).

Reverence for church doctrine is learned specifically through religious instruction and the preaching of the church. Wherever such education is neglected, the universal prejudices give rise to a mode of instruction [that] cultivates rather an attitude of opposition to speculative thinking. The self-conceit of the understanding and of caprice will be put first, either leading immediately to simple indif-

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" See below, the last four subsections of chap. 3, sect. 1.

" See chapter 4 and the section entitled “From Patristic to Scholastic”.

* Quoted loosely from the Luther Bible’s translation of 1 Cor. 2.14 (cf. Peter Hodgson’s editorial comment on “Forward to Hinrichs’s Religion” (HF) 278, note 5, in G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit, ed. Hodgson, 1997).
ference to philosophy or falling into sophistry (Letters 392)."

"The real essence of philosophy [is]...the addition of speculative form to [the] solid content" of Christian doctrine. That doctrine then "I would view as the substantial side of preparation for philosophical study": and he concludes his report.

Indeed, I would even claim that when the sense and spirit of youth are not filled with it there remains to university study at this late date the scarcely soluble problem of for the first time awakening the mind to substantial content, of overcoming an already established vanity and orientation toward ordinary interests, which otherwise, as a rule, so easily find satisfaction (Letters 392).

Classical Studies or Church Dogma: A Shift of Emphasis?

Mention has already been made of the possibility of a change and development in Hegel's understanding of philosophy and its relation to theology and the Christian gospel. Even a somewhat sudden change, as suggested by the 1820 memorandum on philosophical curriculum at the university which made no mention of philosophy of religion, and the 1821 commencement of the first series of lectures in just that subject, which became Hegel's chief area of concentration for the rest of his life. Along the same lines there is Hegel's sharp reaction to Schleiermacher and the threadbare character of his dogmatics, provoking an urgent need for a more adequate dogmatics.

Both of these instances signal a shift in the focus of Hegel's attention. A fuller exploration of the reality and extent of such a shift is well beyond the confines of this paper. Nevertheless, one further indication is suggested by a comparison of this 1822 report for von Altenstein on high school preparation for university education, and a speech Hegel delivered thirteen years earlier (September, 1809) as Rector of the Gymnasiaum at Nuremberg. There too the subject was high school preparation for learned study at the university. But, without even the briefest allusion to

7 Nearly ten years later in 1830 the Halle affair as Hegel described it pitched orthodox and rationalist theologians against one another. Though Hegel was wary of orthodoxy's tendency to barren dogmatism, it is clear from a letter to Karl Friederich Goechel (to whom we shall return) that his sympathies were with the orthodox against the "so-called liberty" of the rationalists who despise defenders of the church's Credo. "The other side [the rationalists] has tried to shield itself in its own way behind [the cause of] formal liberty, and has taken good care not to betray its nakedness. The assertion of this so-called liberty enjoys for itself immense popularity. It is defiant in the face of attack in part because it is at once ready to give anyone who defends the dogma and form of the church the hateful appearance of attacking the employment and livelihood of individuals" (Letters 544).

8 See above, chap. 3, sect. 1, and the subsection entitled "An Urgent Summons".

Christian doctrine, the entire speech is devoted to an apologetic for classical studies being given pride of place in the syllabus. As we have already indicated, there is a significant shift of focus when we turn to the 1822 report. The ancients remain important to Hegel. But they are equalled and surpassed by the dogmatic system of the church fathers as preparation for higher learning and in particular for the study of philosophy.

The Eclipse of God by the Enlightenment

Access to Hegel’s more explicit and expansive handling of philosophy’s relationship to the church’s Credo entails supplementing our reading of that epistolary report with the HF of the same

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By classical studies he intends, as in the 1822 report, the languages and literature of ancient Greece and Rome. “Greek literature in the first place. Roman in the second” (OCS 324). Hegel’s claims on behalf of these ancients are extravagant in the extreme. They are “the basis of learned knowledge”; if “excellence” is to be “our starting point”, then they “must be and remain...the foundation of higher study”. Hegel’s language for their esteem becomes religious, including terms such as baptism and paradise: “The perfection and glory of these masterpieces must be the spiritual bath, the secular baptism that first and indelibly attunes and inculcates the soul in respect of taste and knowledge. For this initiation a general, pertinacious acquaintance with the ancients is not sufficient; we must take up our lodging with them so that we can breathe their air, absorb their ideas, their manners, one might even say their errors and prejudices, and become at home in this world - the fairest that ever has been. While the first paradise was that of human nature, this is the second, the higher paradise of the human spirit, the paradise where the human spirit emerges like a bride from her chamber, endowed with a fairer naturalness, with freedom, depth, and serenity”. At the climax, Hegel’s claims are absolute, and apparently exclusive of any other source in the history of humanity, including the Bible and the Tradition of the church, providing anything of such fundamental worth (or ought we to allow for an element of rhetorical hyperbole?): “[the human spirit manifests its profundity here no longer in confusion, gloom, or arrogance, but in perfect clarity.... If we make ourselves at home in such an element, all the powers of the soul are stimulated, developed, and exercised; and, further, this element is a unique material through which we enrich ourselves and improve the very substance of our being.... The works of the ancients contain the most noble food in the most noble form: golden apples in silver bowls. They are incomparably richer than all the works of any other nation and of any other time” (OCS 324f).

The 1809 speech was delivered shortly after Hegel had completed the Phenomenology of Spirit. The Phenomenology is more often than not the controlling text in treatments of Hegel. I can only raise it as a question, as I am limiting myself almost entirely to consideration of Hegel’s writings of the 1820’s, but what would be the result if Hegel’s writings before 1821, which also include the Logic and the Encyclopedia, were read in the light of his writings after that date, including the HF, LPR, and LHP, which are based on an apparently new emphasis on the formative place of the gospel and the doctrine of the church fathers in relation to philosophy?

Which is not to suggest that Hegel did not continue to develop in the 1820’s, as evidenced, not least, in his reworkings of LPR. It is interesting to note in this regard, and with the difference that we have already noted between the 1809 and 1822 education reports, the changes in LPR with regard to the religions of Greece and Rome, and Judaism: in Peter Hodgson’s words, “Hegel’s interpretation of Greek and Roman religion did not change fundamentally after 1821, but a growing appreciation and more positive assessment of Judaism was evident”. (Peter Hodgson’s editorial introduction to a selection from LPR 2, included in G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit, ed. Peter Hodgson. Fortress Press. Minneapolis, 1997, 202). We might also compare Hegel’s unqualified praise of the greatness of the ancients in the 1809 speech, with his description (to which we shall return below, chapter 3, section 3) of Jesus’ teaching as the overthrowing of all that the world regards as great, and “in comparison with which everything else counts for nothing” (LPR 3, 118).
year (1822). In *HF* we find Hegel providing his diagnosis of the diseased state of the religious philosophy and theology of his contemporaries. Our analysis of it will serve to fulfil Barth’s fourth criterion for doing historical theology** by disclosing Hegel’s historical context and more importantly his own perception of that context. It is almost inevitable that without that context one will misunderstand Hegel’s account of what theology and philosophy should be as the appropriate wedding of faith and reason on the firm foundation of the *Credo* of the church. Hegel uses technical language which he shares in common with his contemporaries. All the time however and often with great subtlety he is adapting that language to articulate content that is profoundly different from that intended by his contemporaries. At the same time his determination to use that terminology sets him apart from the dogmatists and historical critics among his contemporaries who merely repeat by rote or investigate as fossilized remains the traditional language of church dogma and the Bible.

It is in *HF* perhaps better than anywhere else that Hegel defines what he means by the *Understanding* and explains why. contrary to the near universal conviction of his contemporaries, it is unsuitable for philosophical and theological enquiry. We shall consider Hegel’s historical treatment of this as the fate of religious truth in modern theology and especially in the Enlightenment when we come to *LHP*.*** Here in *HF* Hegel provides a conceptual analysis of the same phenomenon as preparation for his analysis of its philosophical and theological offspring, the three approaches to religion that he calls the universal prejudices of his own day.

The *Understanding* in Hegel’s terminology denotes finite thinking, thought which directs itself to finite objects. So directed it functions properly and the Kantian categories serve to define its basic concepts (*Letters* 393). Problems arise when that which is infinite and absolute, the content of philosophy and theology, of religion, is made the object of the *Understanding*. This confusion happens because of a struggle that takes place within the human person where s/he is most God-like. “in that which signalizes his [her] divine origin”. Faith is “stubborn[ly]” threatened by “independent thinking…what is called human thought. one’s own understanding, finite reason”(*HF* 228).

At first the *Understanding* may seem to be supportive of religion. “adorning…it with pro-

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** The fourth criteria is *historical awareness*. For a full description of the four criteria see Appendix 1.

*** See chapter 4.
ducts of its own invention, curiosity and acumen” (HF 228). These are of two kinds: first, “inferences” and “ends”, conclusions apparently drawn from the gospel: and secondly, “presuppositions” and “grounds”, conditions of possibility supposedly required by, and providing support for, the very existence of religion. By virtue of their being set within the context of the “eternal Truth” of the gospel these *inferences* and *grounds* assume the same status, “easily becom[ing] endowed with the same worth, importance and validity, as the Truth itself” (HF 229).

Appearances however are deceptive. The fatal flaw in both cases is that their content is finite: it cannot be anything else, for that is all that can be conceived by, or come within the purview of, the Understanding. “They lack the testimony of the Holy Spirit” (HF 229). Finite in content, they were invented for finite interests. And their authority inevitably rests in human structures and arguments: “they naturally require to be defended by external authority”. They therefore inevitably provoke “contradiction and counter-arguments” so that religion becomes “a field for impassioned dispute”, and that, not only concerning its finite accretions, but essentially (HF 228f).

The situation is the more complicated because of the essential nature of revelation which inevitably entails the mediation of the Eternal by means of what is finite. God is unavailable immediately, indeterminately, to humanity. He is known mediately, as he has manifested himself:

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knowledge has to do with a determinate content, with movement....it is only through shape, content and a determinate nature that anything can exist for spirit, can exist as Reason, actuality, life, can possess an intrinsic being of its own (HF 232).
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Though this determinate nature of God is in the first place God incarnate, the gospel history, it is also revealed therein to be the immanent and essential being of God, God as Trinity. Here too an image or model that is finite is co-opted by God to bear witness to his intrinsic being as eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For Hegel it is meaningless to speak of God as if he is somehow even more fundamentally the indeterminate God behind or beneath or above God the Trinity. God as an empty abstraction, emptied of all content, is no God, is “the void...lack[ing] a content,...indeterminate and possess[ing] no immanent life and action”. There is no getting from this empty abstraction to the living God:

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The doctrine of Truth is wholly and solely this, the revelation of what God is, of His nature and works.... [T]he absolute Truth itself assumes a temporal shape with the external conditions, relationships and circumstances associated with it (HF 231f).
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Supremely, consummately, God has revealed himself in the “eternal history” that is the gospel of Jesus Christ (HF 230).

It is the manifestation of the infinite God in the finite realities of the gospel history that provides a foothold for the “enemy” (HF 229). That foothold is gained with the failure to distinguish between God himself in his self-mediation, and the finite and temporally relative realities that become associated with the gospel in particular generations and cultures.

A clear distinction must be made between the eternal manifestation which is inherent in the nature of Truth and the transient, local, external phenomena of its inessential side, else the finite will be confused with the infinite, the inessential with the essential (HF 230).

With the failure to make this distinction, the gospel itself becomes identified with the finite inventions of the human understanding, is assumed therefore to rest on the same external authority. and so becomes a subject for contradiction, counter-argument and impassioned dispute (HF 230).

Again it needs to be said, the culprit is the Understanding: or, more exactly, the application of the Understanding to that which is essentially unavailable to it. The Understanding can grasp the finite means of God’s self-revelation but it cannot grasp God. It is nevertheless seduced into believing that because it possesses that through which God makes himself known, it is therefore competent to assess, supplement. and even critique and evaluate religious and philosophical truth at every level. In reality and by definition all that is more than finite, God himself, the truth as infinite and absolute, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, indeed all that is of the essence of religious truth is missed: not so much ignored as simply unobserved and unavailable, its content reduced to an empty abstraction (HF 230). Hegel variously describes what is left of God once he has been reduced to this empty abstraction:

the pure negative. the caput mortuum of a merely abstract Being....the Unknowable....the void [that] lacks a content, is indeterminate and possesses no immanent life and action....[God] veiled...from human knowledge:....from such a God. in Him, there is nothing to be had for he has already been emptied of all content (HF 232).

Correspondingly bereft of their true content the finite means of God’s self-mediation. “procured for itself from the divine content” by the Understanding, are “reduced to the externality of merely ordinary historical events, to local opinions and particular contemporary views” (HF 232).

Strictly speaking this marks the demise of theology, for theology requires objective content
The objective is "a substantial content that is independent and self-subsistent, a truth that is not a matter of opinion and intellectual conceit" (HF 232); it is self-manifesting, it cannot be wrested or grasped at will by autonomous, independent human understanding: "it must manifest itself, and its manifestation must be an accomplished fact" (HF 230). So it is that, as we shall see when we come to LHP, the church fathers assumed and were convinced of the fact of the Incarnation: their work begins from that fact, developing from that given content their theology and philosophy. In Hegel's own words, at the root of their work is "the testimony of the Holy Spirit" or, which is the same thing, the self-authenticating revelation of God in the gospel history of Jesus Christ (HF 230ff).

[The] narratives and circumstances which enter into the eternal history, the narrative and doctrine which surrounds [sic] the eternal Truth, deserve...at least the greatest respect and a reverent treatment (HF 231).

The Understanding however robs them of their objectivity, their self-evidently divine authority, grasps them, claims to give them their meaning and establish their authority, and subjects their being understood to itself, in the name of divine truth. Divine truth having been emptied of its content, this demand for subjection derives not from the divine spirit of faith but from the Understanding itself which has abrogated to itself the sole right to speak with authority on divine matters. Inevitably, it is the products of its own acumen that are stressed at the expense of divine truth (HF 230ff).

The catastrophic result for religion is its disintegration into any one of three counterfeits: the barren orthodoxy of dogmatism (which for Hegel includes positivist biblicism); the secularized idealism of popular Kantianism; and subjectivist religion with its reduction of theology and piety to feeling alone. 

**Burden Orthodoxy**

The barren orthodoxy of dogmatism treats of that through which God manifests himself. - Hegel has in mind, in particular, the Bible and the doctrines of the Christian church. - in such a

**" See chapter 4, especially the opening sections.

* For lack of space, in this essay I have limited myself to Hegel's original works of the 1820's. It would otherwise be instructive to compare Hegel's parallel account in the Logic of what he calls the three "Attitudes of Thought to Objectivity." (Hegel's Logic, being part one of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, first published in 1817 and revised for the 1830 edition, trans. by William Wallace, Oxford, 1975, 47-112).
way that their divine character is ruled out of court and they are handled as ends in themselves, finite and temporal human constructs. “Confine[d] within that finite sphere of the Understanding”. Religion is reduced to “literalism” and “the barren learning of orthodoxy” (HF 231). It is preoccupied with the outer shell of religion, the “external[s]” as ends in themselves, which is all that is left to it. “All that remains [of religion] as material for thought” is the determinate content of religion surrendered to, or better, wrested by “the consciousness that is merely temporal and finite in character” (HF 232). Hegel variously and colorfully describes the character of this restricted, pseudo-religious thinking. “It must find its satisfaction in the vain elaboration in various ways of a subject-matter lacking any substantial import and in procuring for itself in scholarly fashion a vast mass of such material” (HF 232).

It is interesting to compare an amusing letter that Hegel addressed to Friedrich August Gottreu Tholuck, a major representative of pietistic revivalism. In the letter Hegel defends the dogma of the Trinity which according to Tholuck had been falsely read into practically motivated biblical texts by later theologians. Commenting on Tholuck’s recently published book on the Trinity Hegel writes.

> I have found the transition on page 40 likewise very facile: ‘Much as Christian theologians under the influence of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy derived a speculative theorem from indeterminate (?) expressions in the New Testament introduced only (?) with practical (?) reference....’ Does not the sublime Christian knowledge of God as Triune merit respect of a wholly different order than comes from ascribing it merely to such an externally historical course? In your entire publication I have not been able to feel or find any trace of a native understanding of this doctrine. I am a Lutheran, and through philosophy have been at once completely confirmed in Lutheranism. I do not allow myself to be put off such a basic doctrine by externally historical modes of explanation. There is a higher spirit in it than merely that of such human tradition. I detest seeing such things explained in the same manner as perhaps the descent and dissemination of silk culture, cherries, smallpox, and the like (Letters 520).

In other words the trivialization of biblical and dogmatic texts was a temptation to the pietists as well as to the historical critics, the pietists falling to the temptation in the name of practical moralism.

**Barth is in complete accord with Hegel here: “Of what use to theology was all knowledge of reported history, that of the Bible too, and of the Bible in particular, if at the same time it was incapable of recognizing real history, of recognizing the Living God?” (PT 300).**

**Cf. Butler’s editorial comment in Letters, 518.**
In its positivist guise dogmatism withdraws into a fortress and repeats ad nauseam its dogmatic and biblical formulae without ever breaking through to the eternal and spiritual realities with which the fathers of the church understood them to be weighted. God and the gospel are lost and one is left with the shabby [shells][6] of Protestant and Catholic scholasticisms.

In its other guise, orthodox formalism moves ineluctably toward the secular idealism of popular Kantianism. That is not its original goal. On the contrary, it set itself to defend and uphold Christian religion by establishing itself within the Academy. Hegel’s language is not so neutral. For him it is more a matter of its disguising its nakedness in scholarly garb, - “a mass of arid insignificant determinations” and “formal weapons” derived therefrom, - and looking to the Academy for recognition and even justification. It is “vanity” (HF 233).

Its main feature is that it is systematic, preoccupied with “hair-splitting, metaphysical, casuistic distinctions and determinations into which the Understanding split up the substantial content of religion” (HF 233). This is undertaken specifically within the spheres of the biblical and dogmatic content of traditional Christianity. Thereby the transition is begun towards Kantian secularism. The Understanding

plants its own finite determinations in the soil of the divine doctrine itself and...use[s] the absolute, divine authority for its own rank weeds;...all definite character and with it all content receive a finite significance, thus destroying the specific form and character of the Divine (HF 234).

The content of legitimate theology and philosophy (the particular character of which we have yet to investigate) is superficially the same as that of barren orthodoxy; however, because the latter’s investigation is limited to the Understanding with its inability to countenance anything other than what is finite and temporal, that content is emptied of substance and reduced to data similar in kind

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[6]: I have borrowed this phrase from Lonergan, who uses it in Method in Theology to describe the manualist theology of scholastic Catholicism.
to that of secular science, "the aim of [which] is a knowledge of finite objects" (HF 236).1

The Achilles’ heel of this barren orthodoxy is its having wrested authority from eternal truth and claimed it for its own constructions. It was not its original intention to make that rebellious claim. Rather it was the inevitable but initially unperceived consequence of its having surrendered, with the noblest of motives, theology, philosophy, and biblical studies to the Understanding.2 In spite of all efforts to the contrary it cannot hide the fact that in this role of usurper thought shows itself to be autonomous and independent. Once that becomes obvious to all but the most obtuse the Understanding turns against its own religious constructions “and finds its ultimate principle in pure abstraction itself, the characterless supreme Being” (HF 232), spawning various forms of the secular idealism of popular Kantianism, to Hegel’s analysis of which we now turn.

Neo-Kantian Theology

Secular idealism refers to the autonomous rationality that had become fashionable at least since the Enlightenment, and which, precisely because it was not informed by the content of church dogma and the method of the church fathers, was at the mercy of the whims and sentiments, the caprice, of mere subjectivity. The Understanding thus employed on the one hand, and true philosophy and theology, the speculative thinking consistent with true religion on the other, are for Hegel mutually exclusive.

Secular idealism was originally a reaction to the barrenness of sterile theological orthodoxy on the part of what Hegel calls the better mind (HF 231), provoked by sheer frustration into formulating a substitute for religion, a system of moral ideals resembling those of the discountenanced religion but shorn of supernatural and dogmatic associations. Hegel calls it Kantianism, the all-pre-

1 "So it is that, "from this standpoint, even a doctrine recognized as divine cannot itself as such be the object of enquiry, but only the facts and circumstances surrounding it. The doctrine itself remains outside the interest of intellectual activity and because its content is assumed to be unattainable, it is idle to seek an insight into the doctrine, a belief in it and a conviction of its truth. Accordingly, intelligence in occupying itself with religious doctrines must confine itself to their phenomenal aspects, must concern itself with the outer circumstances and the interest becomes a matter of history where spirit has to do with things past, with something it has left behind it, in which spirit is not itself present. The products of the earnest efforts of scholarship, of industry, of acumen, etc., are likewise called truth, and an ocean of such truths is brought to light and propagated: but these are not the sort of truths which the earnest religious spirit demands for its satisfaction” (HF 235). This remarkable passage would hardly need to change in order to describe biblical studies once the divine character of Scripture is ruled out of the intellectual court.

2 “[Hegel] was much more exercised than some modern ‘biblical’ theologians about how inadequate philosophical hermeneutic presuppositions could in fact obscure or deform the revelational ‘content’ of the scriptural witness to Christ” (James Yerkes, The Christology of Hegel, Missoula, 1978, 321).
vailing philosophy of his age (HF 231). These ideals are not given from above, or developed through dogmatic reflection on the gospel history, but are developed by abstract thinking alone. Deduced immanently, from within. God, if his existence is not denied altogether, is conceived of as a merely abstract Being, granted existence by reason (Hegel’s Understanding) as a necessary “postulate” for the grounding of the universality and consistency of the already established ethic of reason. “Thought appears as autonomous...and finds its ultimate principle in pure abstraction itself, the characterless supreme Being” (HF 233). As Enlightenment religion and theology “no longer possess a truth that is known, an objective content, a doctrinal theology” (and Hegel adds that “strictly speaking, it is only religion of which this can be said, for where there is no such content there can be no theology” (HF 233), theology without the doctrinal content of the Christian church is no theology), so Kantian philosophy too lacks the same objective content.55

This philosophy set out originally with the purpose of freeing religion from error and superstition. It “sought to make room for the Truth; it sought eternal Truths” (HF 235). It successfully accomplished its rescue mission as it believed by providing new foundations, criteria, and guidance for those eternal truths in reason (HF 234f). It failed in its task because it relied on the Understanding alone which as we have already seen can grasp and conceive of only finite things. Much that in the doctrine of the church is more than finite, participating as it does in the Divine, was stripped of that more and reinterpreted in finite terms. What could not be so reinterpreted, above all God himself, was pronounced unavailable to human Understanding (correctly, Hegel acknowledges, given the finite limits of the Understanding), necessarily emptied of all content, and

54 “It is the better mind that...restored and asserted the freedom of the spirit, the principle of a spiritual religion, yet...as only an abstract thinking, has not known how to distinguish between the characteristics of a merely finite content and those of Truth itself” (HF 231).

55 Barth’s interpretation of the place of God in Kant’s philosophy closely parallels Hegel’s. According to Barth, for Kant God is unavailable to human rational investigation except as a necessary “presupposition” (Barth notes that Kant’s term, “not a very happy choice linguistically,” is “postulate”) for ethics. God is at the limit of human reason as that which lies behind the universal and categorical imperative to do what is right and to refrain from what is wrong: right and wrong being definable by reason. That is why only the moral proof of God’s existence retains any validity for Kant (PT 161).

“It is imperative to see that Hegel is absolutely correct in emphasizing...that the Kantian position grants to God (included are also freedom and immortality) only hypothetical status” (Rolf Ahlers, commenting on LPR 3, 95, in The Community of Freedom: Barth and Presuppositionless Theology, New York, 1989, 396n. 72).

44 “For the defect from which philosophy now suffers proves to be likewise a lack of objective content. It is the science of thinking Reason...the consciousness and the absolute conviction of the truth of Reason...and for this science the subject-matter has become just as attenuated as it has for faith” (HF 233).
banished to an unattainable realm (HF 235).

Hegel draws the startlingly obvious conclusion. No matter how noble its original intention, which was nothing less than the liberation of the religion of Truth from sterile and pharisaical dogmatism, philosophy has become the enemy of religion, at least of the consummate religion. It cannot acknowledge that the condition of possibility for the knowledge of God might be, not "the insight of reason", but the initiative of a God whose "fundamental determination" is that he is "in and for himself". "possesses intrinsic Being", is inalienably self-sufficient (HF 235). Such a fundamental determination is inconceivable to the Understanding to which this philosophy has reduced all human knowing. The conclusions of Kantian philosophy, particularly with regard to its hostility to religion other than in its severely attenuated form as limited to reason alone, are Hegel believes, in spite of all claims to the contrary, the almost universal prejudice, the presuppositions and acknowledged truths, of his contemporaries.*

Given the generally assumed impossibility of the self-revelation of God and therefore of a philosophy rooted in and consistent with such impossible knowledge, what route is left to someone whose religious aspirations persist, unsatisfied by barren orthodoxy and unrepressed in the face of popular Kantianism? Or as Hegel himself puts the question "[w]here can the human spirit still find a place where it could meet with substantial, absolute Being, where the Eternal could approach it and it could attain to union with the Eternal, to the certainty and enjoyment of it?" (HF 237)

In passing, we underline the suggestion, in this short quotation, of life and initiative that Hegel attributes to the Eternal. God is seeking the human person with at least as much energy as the human person is seeking God; and their coming together, while spoken of as union is also described as a "meet[ing] with". There are in other words ingredients that point to that antithesis between God and humanity which is so important to Barth as safeguarding the integrity of both God and humanity, but also their union as authentic relationship.**

* "In holding spirit to be only the Understanding, Kantianism has given currency to the general proposition that man can have no knowledge of God,...no knowledge of what possesses intrinsic Being. If religion declares that man's glory and salvation lie in his knowing God and that religion's service to man consists in having imparted to him this knowledge and in having revealed the unknown nature of God, then this philosophy forms the most monstrous antithesis to religion.... This result may well be regarded as having become, except in a few instances, the universal prejudice of our culture" (HF 235).

** See above, chap. 2, and the section entitled "The Closed Circle"
Schleiermacher and the Religion of Pure Subjectivity

Dissatisfied with dogmatism and rationalism the religious spirit retreats into the realm of feeling. Hegel here has in mind especially Schleiermacher.38 Again, it is not that Hegel denies feeling its rightful place in religion. Feeling is among the evidences of genuineness in religion. It is significantly even fatally absent from both the barren orthodoxy and the popular Kantian moralism of which Hegel is so critical. It is the reduction of religion to feeling alone, “the opinion that feeling is the true and even the sole form in which the religious spirit preserves its genuineness”, to which he is opposed (HF 237).

Underlying that reduction to feeling, and what makes it a retreat, is the tacit or in some cases overt assent to the Kantian commitment to the Understanding as the sole means of rational thought in philosophy and religion.99 The consequences of such a reduction are a threadbare theology100 and an inability to appreciate the essentially ecclesial character of the religious life, which in turn lead to schismatic withdrawal from the community and indiscriminate syncretism.101 The sole criterion for religious truth becomes depth and sincerity, existential authenticity of feeling, purely subjective experience.102

Hegel leaves us in no doubt of his contempt for this religious attitude. He cannot dignify it

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38 See above, chap. 3. sect. 1. and the first two subsections.

99 “The objectivity and definiteness which knowledge and an awakened faith demand...the Understanding has learned to destroy...for this reason...the religious spirit which fears this danger withdraws into this veiled form [feeling] which seems to offer no aspect which could be dialectically attacked by thought” (HF 237).

100 Cf. Hegel’s letter to Daub in which he reflects on Schleiermacher’s forthcoming Glaubenslehre, quoted above. chap. 3. sect. 1. and the subsection entitled “An Urgent Summons”.

101 “[T]he seat of authority in matters of belief and conduct is transferred from so-called reason (but it is really the finite Understanding...) to feeling”, with the result that “there has vanished even the semblance of objectivity”. “An expansion into the cultus” [which Hegel has just paraphrased as “an expansion into acts which proclaim the community of spirits in religion”], and into a body of doctrinal beliefs, is no longer compatible with the form of feeling; on the contrary, “religiosity...has fled from any development and objectivity to feeling, which it has challengingly declared to be the exclusive and predominant form.... [F]eeling is a form which, itself indeterminate, embraces matter of the most diverse and opposite kinds. Feeling...is equally capable of being good as evil, pious as ungodly” (HF 237). “If feeling is made into a principle that determines a content [in “religion”, as in all other “human conditions” and “relationships”], all that has to be done is to leave it to the individual which feelings he will have; it is an absolute indefiniteness that constitutes the standard and authority, i.e. the caprice and inclination of the individual, to be and to do what pleases him and to make himself the oracle for what shall be accepted as true as regards religion, duty, right, and what is fine and noble” (HF 239).

102 “It will strive to make good by intensity and inwardness what its faith has lost in definite character and extension” (HF 237).
as even bad theology. Theology and philosophy, good or bad, must contain. more, must be shaped according to determinate, objective content, truth that is knowable. By contrast this reduction of religion to subjective feeling is

the perversity, the conceit and absolute egotism prevalent in our time which makes self-will. one’s own opinions and inclinations the rule for what is religious and right:...vanity, conceit, shallowness and pride are the feelings...[in] which...this attitude has its origins (HF 240).

The Question

Given this massive critical analysis and refutation of the theology and philosophy of his contemporaries, what is the philosophy of religion that Hegel has to put in its place? Whatever else it is, we know now that it will attend to the means of God’s self-revelation, the biblical witness and the church’s dogmatic formulations, not in the manner of barren orthodoxy as ends in themselves, but for God’s sake, with a view to grasping and being grasped by the very being of the infinite, triune God. Yet too, we also know that in contrast to the neo-Kantians it will know God in no other way than by attending to the Church’s Credo as the means through which God has chosen to manifest himself. We know further that Hegelian philosophy will not permit the neo-Kantians to empty the knowledge of God of all determinate content, nor the subjectivists to close off the way of reason to the knowledge of God. Instead it will proceed confident that God can and may be known specifically as Father, Son, and Spirit, precisely through rational thought rooted in faith, and with a view to the engagement with God of the whole human person.

But if these are the implications of Hegel’s critique of his contemporaries, it remains for us to follow Hegel in his explicitly constructive accounts of a true philosophy of religion. What is philosophy when it is informed, given its substantial content, by the dogmatic content of our religion? What is the speculative form that it is the real essence of philosophy to add to such solid content (Letters 392)? What is the philosophy of religion when it relates essentially (as it must do according to what we have already seen in Hegel’s Introductions to LPR, his report to von Altenstein, and HF) to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, to the Bible, to the dogmatic system of the church fathers, and to legitimate theology? It is to Hegel’s answers to these questions that we now turn.
Section 2: The Call

A God-Given Vocation

The philosophical and theological enterprise that Hegel identifies as the philosophy of religion is first of all a God-given vocation. Early in LPR Hegel describes the philosophy of religion as a service rendered to God: “philosophy is theology, and one’s occupation with philosophy - or rather in philosophy - is of itself the service of God” (LPR 84). Hegel uses the word for worship.\(^4\) For the specific character of that vocation, its what and its wherefore, we return to HF.

In a phrase, that vocation consists in the reconciliation, or the demonstration of the inherent compatibility of faith and reason. None of Hegel’s contemporaries’ various claims to have established that reconciliation, neither the neo-Kantians’, nor the positivists’, nor Schleiermacher’s, convinces him. All of them he says work by emptying both faith and reason of objective content,\(^5\) so that there can no longer be any great discord for there remains no object of dispute. But such reconciliation is hollow. Born of an indifference to the real issues through merely overlooking or looking down upon what in either faith or reason offends and estranges, the claim to have achieved peace is frivolous and barren, and the continuing implicit scission remains festering with the promise of dangerous damage (HF 156).

By contrast, Hegel intends to do justice to both faith and reason by demonstrating their true reconciliation, thereby “satisfying...the deepest genuine needs [of] the sanctuary of spirit” (HF 156). To do justice to them entails first recovering the proper sense of faith and reason.

\(^{103}\) Hegel is wary of the term ‘theology’ because it has been reduced in modernity either to the piety of mere feeling, contentless conviction, or to the positivism of biblical and dogmatic propositionalism, convictionless content. Over against these theologies Hegel sets his own speculative philosophy of religion. As we shall see in LHP he discovers a theology that corresponds to his philosophy in the work of the Medieval scholastics, preeminent in St. Anselm. But because that theology has all but been forgotten by his contemporaries Hegel finds it less confusing to prefer the term ‘philosophy’ to ‘theology’; though it too is not without its problems, which is why he modifies it with the terms ‘speculative’ and ‘religion’. At the same time we should remember that LPR includes the assertion “philosophy is theology” (LPR 84, italics Hegel’s).

\(^{104}\) Hodgson contributes the following editorial footnote. “Gottesdienst is the customary word for ‘worship’, which is a ‘divine service’. In this context the more literal rendering ‘service of God’ seems appropriate since philosophy is the ‘worship’ of God not in a cultic but in a serving sense” (LPR 84). We are reminded of Barth’s description, already quoted (in chap. 1): for Hegel “thinking [is]...a divine service” (PT 296).

\(^{105}\) Faith “has become devoid of content and nothing has remained of it but the empty shell of subjective conviction”; reason “has renounced the cognition of truth, and spirit is left no issue other than one partially in appearances and partially in feelings...neither...any longer comprises any objective content” (HF 156).
Faith and Reason

Genuine faith combines subjective conviction and objective content. The former includes inner certainty and personal appropriation such that the believer’s very identity as self is fundamentally and inextricably bound up with the content of the gospel: the latter is the Credo, the gospel and creeds, the content of the confession of the Christian church. Neither one without the other is faith, but only “their being combined in undifferentiated unity”; their distinction is purely formal (*HF* 156).

Reason is the human response evoked by, and appropriate to the infinite and eternal content of faith. That is why, as we saw at the start of our whole argument, the philosophy of religion, the rational appropriation of faith and its content, must begin with God. This beginning with God is not undertaken in the guise of an independent arbiter treating God as an initial postulate in an argument, with a view to determining whether reality and significance is to be attributed to him, according to some set of criteria arrived at through prior analysis of human rationality or any other human capacity. No, instead our beginning with God is to be God’s beginning, the beginning that he as the living God already is, immanently as Father, Son and Spirit, and extrinsically as the absolutely self-sufficient condition of possibility for all that is.

The speculative philosophy of religion, in fulfilling its God-given vocation as the rational exposition of the Christian faith, must avoid certain pitfalls, all of them due to there not being an immediate or existentially⁶⁹⁷ original union of natural human identity, human subjectivity, the self. on the one hand, and, on the other, the gospel, the authentic content of genuine faith: “these two

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⁶⁹ “By faith I do not...mean the merely subjective fact of being convinced, which relates only to the form of certainty and leaves it still undecided whether this being convinced has any content, and, if so, what; nor do I mean merely the creed, the church’s confession of faith, which is compiled in words and writing and can be adopted orally, in representation and memory, without having penetrated the inner core, without having been identified with the certainty human beings have of themselves, with human self-consciousness. In accord with the genuine, ancient sense of the word, I reckon faith as consisting in the one moment no less than the other, and I locate it in the fact of their being combined in undifferentiated unity” (*HF* 156).

Hegel is describing in philosophical/theological terms what St. Paul intends in such statements as “it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), and “[Christ] died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (2 Cor. 5:15).

⁶⁹⁷ The content of the gospel is subjectively, immediately, existentially alien to the human person. We saw this (see chap. 2, and the section entitled “The Subjective/Objective Distinction”) in our reading of Hegel’s “Introductions” to *LPR* (89). At the same time we saw that he wants to insist upon God’s being objectively “not...substantially new and alien”, which seems to be Hegel’s determination to think human falleness within the wider context of humanity’s having been created by and for God, in his image. We have therefore modified our use of ‘original’ with regard to the union under discussion by introducing the term ‘existentially’.

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sides are not united with each other either in immediate fashion or permanently and securely in all
determinations, but rather...the immediate certainty of oneself is divorced from the authentic
content.” *(HF 157). Originally they are divorced. And Hegel means this divorce in the full sense of
the word, ranging as we saw at the start of this essay¹⁰⁸ from indifference to conflict, “wrestling
with...an alien matter” *(LPR 89). This separation and estrangement is what he understands to be
represented by the doctrine of the fall, to which we shall return.¹⁰⁹

Barth seems to forget this when he asserts that Hegel identifies human and divine thought
and so achieves by means other than the gospel the reconciliation proclaimed in the gospel. The
reconciliation achieved in the Hegelian dialectic, Barth argues, dispenses with revelation. Hegel on
the other hand states that natural humanity is without faith, estranged from both the subjective con-
viction and the authentic content of that conviction. This natural estrangement is the underlying rea-
son why faith for Hegel is granted only through education by the church. It is the vocation of the
church to instruct the world in that which the world does not yet possess, even though, unbek-
nownst to the world, the world is possessed by it; or, to use language with which Hegel was more
familiar, the church is to instruct the world in the true character of the real, as revealed consum-
mately in the Christian gospel, and about which the world is deceived.

As we have already seen,¹¹⁰ the primary means whereby the church is to fulfill its vocation
are preaching and religious education *(LPR 90). We shall see further below¹¹¹ that the gospel sets
forth a threefold task, the first and second aspects of which are preaching and dogmatics *(LHP
27). And here in *(HF Hegel writes of the spiritual regeneration of the individual which necessarily
begins in the church’s bringing the gospel externally in speech and writing, in Scripture and its ex-
position in preaching and teaching, to each person *(HF 156f). It is important not to miss Hegel’s
insistence upon the fact that the gospel cannot come to a person other than externally; it is not in-
herent in the natural, created spirit of humanity. Nor is the natural spirit creative or transformative
of itself in response to the inspiring example of the gospel that remains other than and external to
the self.

¹⁰⁸ See chap. 2, and the section entitled “The Subjective/Objective Distinction”.

¹⁰⁹ See below, chap. 3, sect. 3, and the subsection entitled “The Doctrine of the Fall”.

¹¹⁰ See chap. 2, and the section entitled “The Subjective/Objective Distinction”.

¹¹¹ See below, chap. 4, and the section entitled “A Threefold Task”.

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Which is why the church cannot be content with a merely external knowledge of the truth, a content maintained in the memory as stories and doctrines, repeatable by rote but having no impact upon a person’s inner nature, his/her self. The church will therefore press on with her preaching and teaching, content with nothing less than the transformation of her hearers, as the gospel itself, “what was mere letters”, enters into the inner sanctum of a person and is inextricably bound up with and determinative of his/her very being and identity, “becomes its own living spirit” (HF 157). This is the “interiorization”, the “inwardization” (Erinnerung), to which we have already alluded. And it really is just that, personal appropriation, not a transcending or supplanting of the gospel as Barth argues.

The church’s instructional task does not cease once a person has internalized the truth. The struggle between the natural spirit and the divine Spirit is continuous as the Spirit of God presses toward increasingly engaging the whole fullness of the multifaceted being of each person. In a passage we have already looked at with regards to the existentially original and immediate divorce of human nature and the gospel (“the fact that these two sides are not united with each other...in immediate fashion...” HF 157). Hegel insists further that neither is their union subsequently established “permanently and securely in all determinations”. These two facts “pertain...to the way in

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3 We may compare G. Schner’s account of Hegel’s “interiorization” as the taking into oneself of the reality of the other, a process which assumes the essential unity, as in the Medieval synthesis, of God, world, and self, “unfolded through the medium of language and thought” (“Introduction” by George P. Schner SJ, to Ignation Spirituality in a Secular Age, ed. Schner, Waterloo, 1984, 6ff). “Interiorization” is also “inwardization” and “recollection”, in German, Erinnerung (cf. Michael Inwood, Hegel Dictionary, Cambridge, 1992).

11 See chap. 3, sect. 1, and the section entitled “An Urgent Summons”.

111 “The church’s own inner activity will consist primarily in the education of the human being, in the matter of internalizing the truth, which initially can be given only to representation and memory so that the mind may be carried away with it and permeated by it, and self-consciousness may find itself and its essential security only in that truth.... [T]he genuine content at first impinges on spirit externally, in words and letters. Religious education unites the two [the person and the gospel] so that the feelings that human beings have only immediately in natural fashion lose their force, and so that what was mere letters becomes its own living spirit” (HF 157). Hegel’s passion, expressed in words and phrases like “carried away with”, “permeated”, “essential security only in that truth”, should not be ignored in this account of the effect of the gospel once it engages with and liberates the human person. Hegel’s description of the biblical stories of Jesus as representation is indicative of his antagonism both to his biblicist contemporaries who are content with mere repetition of the stories, and also his contemporary historical critics who investigate the texts but are blind to their theological and spiritual significance. It is the apostles and the church fathers who have taught us to attend both to the stories and to the eternal realities (as for example the Trinity, cf. Hegel’s letter to Tholuck quoted in chap. 3, sect. 1, and the subsection entitled “Barren Orthodoxy”) which they represent.

112 See chap. 3, sect. 2, and the subsection entitled “Faith and Reason”.

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which such permanent education becomes apparent" (*HF* 157, italics added).

**Three Pitfalls**

The reference to a struggle is associated with certain pitfalls or temptations which, according to Hegel, theology and the preaching and instructional ministries of the church risk falling into. It is these pitfalls which particularly relate to the need for the educational ministries of the church to be supplemented by philosophy.

The first pitfall is the temptation to positivist propositionalism\(^\text{116}\) in which the church’s Credo is treated as an external content “such as leaves the Holy Spirit indifferent to it”, repeatable by rote and exploitable as a discreet object possessed by the church for her own use (*HF* 157). This is dramatically illustrated in the wax nose image that Hegel uses to describe subjective reading of the Bible without reference to the church’s Credo and uninfluenced by the Holy Spirit, which he implies has become the typical way of reading the Bible in his own day:

[i]t can be said, therefore, that the Bible has been made into a wax nose: one person finds this in it, another finds that, and something firmly established shows itself equally to be not so, since it is treated by the subjective spirit (*LHP* 31).

Using the same image in *LPR*, Hegel provocatively describes the consequence for biblical commentaries: “Bible commentaries do not so much acquaint us with the content of scripture as with the mode of thought of their age” (*LPR* 1, 123).

The second temptation derives from the individual as s/he is addressed by the church. The gospel initially provokes a rebellious response in its hearers because they have already constructed their own identity together with their own sense of certainty about that identity, and it is as so self-constructed that they exercise will, heart, and intellect.\(^\text{117}\) With reference to Barth’s accusation that Hegel reduces the human person to thought and intellect, Hegel insists that “[t]he certainty of oneself is, to begin with, natural feeling and natural will, together with the opinions and idle notions that correspond to them” (*HF* 157). It is the whole person who responds to the truth; the will and

\(^\text{116}\) Cf. above, chap. 3, sect. 1, and the subsection entitled “Barren Orthodoxy”.

\(^\text{117}\) “[T]he human spirit establishes out of itself a content of its own in opposition to the content of the church.” The internalizing of “what is at first external material is immediately confronted with an enemy with which it has to deal: it has an immediate opponent in...natural spirit” which of itself engenders only “a natural life”: “free spirit” on the other hand “is to be engendered” by the gospel, “because free spirit exists only as a reborn spirit” (*HF* 157).
the heart are involved in generating the response and the content of the intellect.

As so formed, or deformed, individuals contradict the gospel with their own account of reality and truth. The church must not be deceived by this response but must confide in the power of the gospel to overcome such opposition, and persist in its ministry of education with a view to the actualization in each individual of that victory wrought once for all by God in his Son at the Cross. That victory shows all opposition to the gospel to be empty, the nothingness of deception: it only appears to have any substantial content and force.

The third pitfall is the most important for our purposes, as it in particular calls forth speculative philosophy of religion as a further resource in the church’s fulfillment of its vocation to serve the gospel for the undeception of the world. Like the second, it is found in the individual’s response to the church’s confession. Human nature is multifaceted and the gospel lays claim to each person at every level of their being. That includes the intellect which for Hegel is the highest level, where the imago Dei is most clearly manifest. Nevertheless, though it may express humanity’s glory, it is also the source of humanity’s perversity. A person may at first applaud the gospel endeavours to support it with his/her own intellectual apologetic, yet almost inevitably and often with great subtlety he/she will turn against it and become its opponent, thinking him/herself into

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118 See Appendix 2 for my treatment of Hegel’s poetical last will and testament as evidence of his confidence in the inherent vitality and power of the gospel word.

119 The genuine content of the church’s confession, through religious education so impinges on the human spirit “that the feelings that human beings have only immediately in natural fashion lose their force…. This natural enemy…is spontaneously overcome by the divine idea, and free spirit is released...The struggle with natural spirit is only a matter of appearance in the finite individual” (HF 157).

120 “The individual, however, gives rise to yet another enemy - an enemy that does not originate in the mere naturalness of human being”, as the second temptation did, “but rather in its supersensuous essence, in thinking: thinking is the primal state of inner being itself, the mark of human beings’ divine origin, that by which they are distinguished from animals, and what alone is the root of their nobility no less than of their degradation” (HF 157).
autonomy. Made in the image of God, human beings set themselves up as gods over against God. This is reproduced within the life of every person as intellectual self-assertion, a thinking for oneself, or just plain human thinking. Such autonomous thinking is stubbornly opposed to faith. Its most daring and outrageous accomplishment is the negation of God, rendering him empty of all content (HF 157). With the eradication of God as objectively real “the finite understanding...is made the deciding criterion in regard both to what I am to deem true and to what is to be my maxim for action”; the heart, subjective feeling, is coopted as “the basis for deciding what I am and what is valid for me” (HF 157).

Section 3: The Fall

The Doctrine of the Fall

The third pitfall to which we have just given our attention describes the effects of what He-

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12 Autonomy is an ambiguous term. Macken notes that Barth uses the term in a positive and a negative sense: “[w]hat can be affirmed is not sovereign or absolute autonomy, or autarchy, but a relative autonomy which stands in relationship to Revelation” (John Macken SJ, The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics, Cambridge, 1990, 192 n. 93, 54). Hegel knows this distinction, though ‘Autonomie’ seldom occurs in his writings. Freedom, self-determination, and self-consciousness are his preferred terminology. On his view, falleness (absolute autonomy) is an opting for freedom and self-determination through a constructed self-consciousness that is defined and protected through the absolute assertion of self over against other selves, the world, and God; it is characterised by independence and isolation. Redemption from fallenness yields what Hegel describes as the discovery and enhancement of one’s affinity to and for the other (relative autonomy): “[s]ince self-consciousness consists in seeing the affinity of the other to oneself and in thus enriching one’s conception of oneself, freedom and self-consciousness advance together” (Michael Inwood, Hegel Dictionary, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 112). Cf. Inwood’s entries on “1” and “Consciousness and Self-consciousness”: esp. “no one can be solely a self-aware I; I-awareness involves a body...[and] entails, and is entailed by, consciousness of a world distinct from itself” (Ibid., 122); also, “self-consciousness...is essentially interpersonal...it is an I that is a we, and a we that is an I’...and it is practical...[it] involves the establishment and operation of social institutions” (Ibid., 63).

Throughout this essay I shall use “autonomy” to denote the fallen, self-deceived quest for freedom in self-assertive independence, the absolute autonomy which for Barth (and for Hegel as I shall try to show) is opposed to that relative autonomy which is properly situated in relationship to Revelation.

13 “[T]hinking makes itself independent to the point where it becomes dangerous to faith, a higher, more stubborn struggle is engaged than the former struggle [i.e. the second pitfall]... This thinking is then what has been called human thinking, one’s own understanding, finite reason.... [As] the opinions and conceits of the understanding...it is the evil consisting in the fact that thinking comes on the stage as independent” (HF 157).

Hegel’s account of independent human thought reads very like Peter Berger’s “heretical imperative”. But whereas Hegel recognizes an alternative to it in redeemed thinking, Berger identifies it as the only available option for thinking today. (Peter Berger, The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation, Garden City, 1979, esp. 90ff. 136, 148).
Hegel understands by the doctrine of human fallenness: a falling away from God into persistent and independent autonomy. Hegel variously describes the effects of the fall as arbitrary free will, the choice to be and do as it pleases and to make itself the oracle of what is deemed of value, what kinds of religion, duty, and right are deemed of high value. The perversity, the conceit, and the absolute selfishness that makes one's own will, opinion, and inclination the rule governing religious sentiment and right. Vanity, conceit, shallowness and pride. The contingency and capricious nature of subjective feeling and its opinions. The vanity of its own asserting and revealing. The arbitrary forming of opinion (HF 157, 160f., 162f., 165, 167, 168).

In three of the four series of LPR Hegel gives significant attention to “The Story of the Fall...the familiar story of Genesis.” To that we now turn in order finally to put to rest any suspicion that Hegel believed in an immediate manifestation of God in human thinking alongside and independent of his self-revelation in Christ.

Originally, “God created human beings in his own image...[in] the state of innocence”: this is the essential being, “the concept. of the human being” (LPR 3, 300). Seduced into that which God has forbidden through the promise that the knowledge achieved thereby will make him/her like God, humanity falls to the temptation of evil, deceit, and pride (LPR 3, 105): “humanity has elevated itself to the knowledge of good and evil: and this cognition. this distinction. is the source of evil. is evil itself” (LPR 3, 301). Hegel is careful to underline the self's responsibility. The fall is humanity's self-elevation: “evil is its fault...evil is its self-seeking...evil is a matter of human responsibility” (LPR 3, 102). It will be the acceptance of that responsibility that will constitute the beginning of redemption: “[h]umanity has dignity only through the acceptance of guilt” (LPR 3, 102). The fall involves both the will and the intellect: “[c]ognition. intelligence. and theoretical capacity come into a closer relationship with the will. and the nature of evil comes to more precise expression” (LPR 3, 205).

Before considering the more precise expression of evil, we should notice in this last selection the comprehensive description of the intellect as it is originally and actively caught up in evil. Barth accuses Hegel of identifying human and divine thought so that through the dialectic God is manifest immediately in human thinking; another source of revelation alongside of and in the final

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Footnote 13: Page references below 200 are to the 1821 series of LPR; in the 200's, to the 1824 series; and in the 300's, to the 1827 series. In the Strauss excerpts of the 1831 series (which is all we have of the last series of LPR) the treatment of the story of the fall drops out completely. Whether this reflects the actual content of the lectures, or only Strauss's selective editorializing according to his own interests, cannot be determined with any degree of certainty.

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analysis superior to God’s mediate revelation in Christ is discovered. It is clear however that Hegel recognizes human thought, far from being identified with the mind of God, as intricately and comprehensively bound up in the fall, as autonomous, independent, and the enemy of faith. God cannot therefore be manifest immediately in human thinking nor can human thinking be a source of revelation.

The cooperation of the fallen will and intellect issues in the conviction that

I exist for myself for the first time, and that is where the evil lies (LPR 3, 206). Evil...is the willing of separation, the setting of one’s singularity against others (LPR 3, 102). [T]he human being is constituted as an individual opposed to others, that which puts up resistance and establishes separation” (LPR 3, 93).

This autonomy is creative in a perverse way, turning the self into its own project, defining its own identity which in spite of all appearances to the contrary is finally nothing, a deception and a flight from reality:

the subject...here defines itself, grasping itself as the extreme of abstract being-for-itself, or abstract freedom: the soul plunges into its depths, right down into its abyss. This soul is...the empty soul lacking fulfillment (LPR 3. 209).\textsuperscript{124}

All the time, objectively, the contradiction between created humanity and its proper purpose and calling on the one hand, and this fallen distortion on the other, persists: “this emptiness or abstraction contradicts its vocation, which is to be concrete” (LPR 3, 209). In place of what is alone real, the concrete individual created by and for God, there appears the hollow self-deception of independent and self-assertive autonomy which is mistakenly taken for what is real.\textsuperscript{125} Hegel describes it in a letter to his friend, Karl Friederich Göschel, as the deceptive phantasmagoria that is the constant temptation to illusion, the opposite of the reality of God’s reconciliation in Christ (Letters 545).

\textit{Infinite Antitheses and Pseudo-Reconciliations}

This willful and autonomous independence is productive of antitheses and contradictions:


\textsuperscript{125} “The soul finds nothing before it but desire, selfishness, etc.” (LPR 3, 209f). Evil “drives and presses human beings back into themselves...they seek happiness and satisfaction in the harmony of the self with itself...through independence and rigid self-containment...in...abstract self-absorption” (LPR 3, 307f).
The antithesis, the contradiction, the estrangement, the distance, between God and humanity is infinite. It is reflected in infinite contradictions between humanity and the world, and within each human being. These antitheses express themselves as human repulsion from whatever is at the opposite pole: "this is the infinite anguish, the suffering of the world" (LPR 3, 210).

This suffering is not however redemptive. The human response to it only serves to further exemplify the autonomous perversity of human fallenness. A kind of reconciliation is sought. But not in God. The reconciliation is sought within, in the pursuit of an "inner equilibrium of the ego" (LPR 3, 308). It is a reconciliation in thought, an abstract reconciliation, an ideal reconciliation, a thinking away of the estrangement with self, world, and God, that is profoundly seductive but entirely unsatisfactory because it is produced by and for the human self as at best a hypothetical, postulated reconciliation, a reconciliation that has no higher grounding than human desire. The real self, the real world, and the real God remain untouched by it, unreconciled. The apparent reaching out to these polar opposites for reconciliation is in actuality the subtlest taking flight away from them into an even more profound independence and estrangement. Surely here Hegel is rejecting the very reconciliation in thought, the identification of human thought with the thought of God, which Barth accuses him of holding to be true. We will return to this in its modern guise below.

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126 "It knows itself as a thinker, and its object is what is thought, the universal; this is for it absolutely everything, it is the genuine essence for it, so that this universal is valid for it. Something that is thought belongs to the subject, because it is posited by it". Hegel explains why the subject "cannot...bring about this reconciliation by itself, through its own efforts, its own activity...through its piety and devotion" even though "it is commonly believed that it can...bring this about on its own, as subject". It cannot, because it is "for itself", it "has the characteristic of positing...something is so through my agency...the product [in this case, reconciliation] is only something posited...and this is always one-sided" (LPR 3, 210).

127 "But a reconciliation of this kind is itself only abstract: all determination lies outside this thought, which is merely formal identity with itself. An abstract reconciliation such as this cannot and should not take place at the absolute standpoint where we now are". It only serves to make more clear "the standpoint at which we now find ourselves, i.e., the standpoint of infinite flight and abstractness... [T]he subject is now defined as this profound being-within-itself, this flight from reality, this complete withdrawal from immediate existence, from fulfillment" (LPR 3, 210ff).

128 See chap. 4, and the section entitled "Modern Philosophy: The Loss of Necessity".
Section 4: The Gospel

God Was in Jesus Christ Reconciling the World to Himself

We have seen that the Hegelian philosophy of religion is a God-given vocation that belongs to the ministry of the church. In light of Hegel’s account of the fall we can further describe it negatively in terms of its opposite, using Hegelian terminology. It is not autonomous, arbitrary, contingent, capricious, self-assertive, whimsical, natural, or independent. Above all, it does not generate its own criteria, its own standard and justification, for determining the character of God, truth, personal identity, relationship to God, the world, religion, duty, or right.

Instead, and over against this autonomous human thinking that is dangerous to faith, Hegel’s philosophy of religion is the human thinking that is God-given, the exercise of the redeemed human intellect as servant of the gospel, as appropriate response to the truth, to the genuine content of the self-revelation of God in Christ. All of which Hegel can describe by the one word Reason.129 God, the truth, the gospel evoke and liberate this Reason, faith’s intellectum, as their proper response. Which means that it is through giving an account of the gospel, the content of faith, that he makes known the more exact nature of this redeemed Reason. To that we now turn.

If, as we have seen,130 the absolute antitheses and the anguish and deception they occasion cannot be overcome from the side of the human subject, their reconciliation must be achieved, if at all, for the subject, from the other side. As the absolute antithesis of God and humanity lies at the root of all the other antitheses, it is God alone who can achieve it.131

And God has achieved it in the particular and unique history of his Son, Jesus Christ. Achieved it moreover in such a way that the apparent opposition of subjectivity and objectivity which characterises fallen human nature is overcome. The original peace between God and human-

129 Human thinking, one’s own understanding “is rightly distinguished from the thinking that, although it is within human being, is nonetheless divine, from the understanding that seeks not its own but the universal, from the reason that knows only the infinite and eternal to be what alone has being, and contemplates it as such” (HF 157).

130 See above, the subsection entitled “Infinite Antitheses and Pseudo-Reconciliations” that concludes chap. 3, section 3.

131 “...What is it that effects reconciliation for it [the human subject]? This reconciliation can come about only by the separation being sublated for it... The subject is in need of this truth, and this truth must come into being for it” (LPR 3, 211, italics are mine). “[T]he unity of divine and human nature...has to be given to humanity... [It] must therefore come to it” (LPR 3, 110, italics are Hegel’s). We have yet to consider the issue of “necessity” suggested here by “can...only”, “must”, and “has to” (see chapter 4, below).
It is not an idea or a thought, neither the idea of God nor "the thought of humanity, but...sensible certainty...just one human being...humanity as singular" (LPR 3.313). But even this singularity in general might be thought to be a universal and abstract idea. It is not singularity in general as a universal idea that is intended, but Jesus as "this exclusive singularity" (LPR 3.313).³³

Jesus is "the determinate form of this exclusive singularity" (LPR 3.314): he is this unique and particular person who lived in the world and was seen and heard by other human beings at a specific, actual time and place within human history. As God incarnate he is the otherwise incomprehensible reality of the consubstantial unity of God and humanity. Hegel, in spite of Barth’s ac-

³³ Hegel deliberately, with theological intentions, named his son Immanuel Thomas Christian (cf. esp. Letters 313).

³³ Jüngel argues that Hegel fails to do justice to the uniqueness of the event that is the identification of God with Jesus, reducing it, in John Webster’s paraphrase, to “simply the highest instantiation of a more general, structurally-fixed relationship of God and man”. Webster then quotes Jüngel as follows: “Hegel’s definition, in which through the incarnation and death of God there occurred the raising of an absolute spirit uniting divine and human nature in general, must be challenged by theology...as a threat to the concrete being of Jesus Christ as well as to the proper distinction between God and man. The theological criterion of a correct definition of the Christological unity of divine and human nature is respect for the uniqueness of Jesus Christ” (J. B. Webster, Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to his Theology, Cambridge, 1991, 35f). I am endeavouring to show that this is not altogether fair to Hegel.
cussion to the contrary, knows of no other way that this mystery could be disclosed.\textsuperscript{134} It is nowhere to be found within or by human thought except as an idea, as an hypothesis, as a myth, posited but without actuality.

That is exactly why the unity in question must appear for others as a singular human being set apart: it is not present in the others, but only in one from whom all the others are excluded (LPR 3, 312f). This content is nothing other than the life, passion, and death of Christ (LPR 3, 219).

Jesus is the full revelation of God. As such he is the revelation of the reconciliation of humanity with God. And he is that, not as a mere cipher or visual aid, not as a mere symbol of a higher or deeper reality. His life, including his passion and death, is itself the content synonymously described by ‘God’, and therefore the content synonymously described by ‘reconciliation’.

\textit{One has Died for All: Therefore All have Died}

More than that, his life\textsuperscript{135} and above all his death is revolutionary as the overthrowing of the old, fallen world order and as the establishment of the new. The old order was defined, as we have seen in our discussion of the fall,\textsuperscript{136} by antitheses and dichotomies rooted in humanity’s setting itself up over against God as independent and autonomous. Jesus has overcome the estrangement between God and humanity, above all in his death taking into himself humanity’s hostility and infinite anguish.\textsuperscript{137} He has canceled it, rendered it bankrupt, shown it to be founded upon a lie, cruci-

\textsuperscript{134} “The substantial unity of God and humanity...is something that lies beyond immediate consciousness, beyond ordinary consciousness and knowledge. Hence it must stand over against subjective consciousness, which relates to itself as ordinary consciousness and is defined as such” (LPR 3, 312).

\textsuperscript{135} “Throughout [his life and teachings] Jesus’ sadness over the lost condition of his people and of humanity is conveyed” (LPR 3, 117).

\textsuperscript{136} “The horrendous notion that God himself has died on the cross, which has been obscured by harmless conventional renderings of the story, is here restored not merely as an historical event but as a supreme speculative insight restored in all its original force and pitiless severity” (Stephen Crites, quoted by Robert R. Williams, in “Theology and Tragedy”, in New Perspectives..., ed. Kolb. 1995. 51). Have John Burbidge and Emil Fackenheim grasped the full horror of the death of God as Hegel conceives it, when they suggest that Auschwitz radically undermines Hegelian reconciliation, compelling us to move beyond it or even away from it altogether? E.g. “no wisdom is required today for the insight that the Hegelian synthesis, if ever a genuine possibility, has broken down beyond all possible recovery” (Fackenheim, The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought, Bloomington, 1967, 12, and cf. 234ff): “[the] truth will not be Christian, at least not the kind of Christianity that Hegel espoused” (Burbidge, “Is Hegel a Christian?”, in New Perspectives..., Kolb. 1995, 105).

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fied and buried it, once and for all.

Hegel writes at length on the cross in all four of the series of *LPR*, most strikingly in the last, unfinished series of 1831, the year of his death. The cross is the touchstone of faith. All that Christ is and has done is brought to a head at the cross, though the resurrection “belongs just as essentially to faith”.

In his death Christ has taken on himself the fullness of what it is to be human. “even unto death...and indeed Christ has died the aggravated death of the evildoer: not merely a natural death, but rather a death of shame and humiliation on the cross”. More than that, he has died as God:

*God has died. God is dead* - this is the most frightful of all thoughts. that everything eternal and true is not. that negation itself is found in God. The deepest anguish, the feeling of complete irretrievability, the annuling of everything that is elevated, are bound up with this thought.

But it is not an inevitable process within some kind of universal monad that may be described from one perspective as God, and from another as the world or humanity. Hegel is very specific. Human nature, finitude, humiliation and sin are “taken upon himself” by Christ, as that which is “alien to him and has been taken over from an other: this other is the human beings who stand over against the divine process”. The evil in the human condition is above all its aggressive willingness to be “on its own account (as against God)”. In Christ’s death that fallen human nature has died once and for all: Christ “has taken it upon himself in order to put it to death by his death”. The reconciliation of God and humanity may be described as “the monstrous unification of these absolute extremes”. But therefore, “this shameful death is at the same time infinite love. It is out of infinite love that God has made himself identical with what is alien to him in order to put it to death”. And Hegel looks to St. Paul to summarise his understanding of the cross: “it means that Christ has borne the sins of the world and has reconciled God with the world (2 Cor. 5.18f)”. And he adds. “thus the world has been reconciled: by this death it has been implicitly delivered from its evil”.

Implicitly, because it still remains for the victory to be appropriated by the world; the once for all objective reconciliation of the world must be proclaimed by the church so that the world may know itself to be what it already is in Christ:

[1]The subject feels the anguish of evil and of its own estrangement, which Christ has taken upon himself by putting on humanity, while

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"LPR 3, 323-5 n. 199, and all further quotations in this paragraph."
at the same time destroying it by his death.\textsuperscript{139}

Jesus Christ is the new humanity, the humanity originally created in him, the humanity that bears the image of the Son’s own eternal relatedness to the Father, created humanity rooted in the only-begotten Son. Hegel is uncompromising in his insistence on the absolute, ontological difference between the world before the Incarnation and the world after. Jesus Christ is the revelation and the actualization of reality. Whatever is not in him is finally not real but a lie and a deception that has already been exposed for what it is, and that must fade away into the nothingness and unreality that it has been shown once for all to be.

[W]e are here [in the historical, sensible presence of Christ] in the presence of a new consciousness of humanity, or a new religion. Through it a new world is constituted, a new actuality, a different world-condition...The kingdom of God, the new religion [Christianity]...contains implicitly the characteristic of negating the present world. This is its polemical aspect, its revolutionary attitude toward all the determinate aspects of that outer world, all the settled attitudes of human consciousness and belief...The previous state of things is now altered; the way things used to be, the previous condition of religion and the world, cannot continue as before...In all of [the teaching of Jesus] there is language of inspiration that displaces all other human interests, eradicating them completely - penetrating tones that shake the very foundations...In brief, his teaching is a complete abstraction from what is regarded in the world as great (\textit{LPR} 3, 117f).\textsuperscript{140}

That reality and Jesus Christ, ontology and Christology, are to be identified, is the final and decisive argument in the case against Barth’s charge that Hegel sets up philosophy and more specifically his own dialectic as another and in the final analysis higher revelation of God alongside the Incarnation. That cannot be. The new reality, the new world, the new creation is identical with and is inaugurated by Jesus Christ, above all in his death upon the cross when Pilate was Governor in Judea. That is a once for all event. The divine coup d’etat has taken place. There is no going back. The new beginning is once again God’s beginning, the beginning that he has made. The initiative is essentially and originally his. “The Spirit that was shed abroad is the beginning, which makes the beginning, which raises up” (\textit{LPR} 3, 334). \textit{When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son} (Gal. 4.4), is a verse Hegel quotes in the 1821, 24, and 27 series of \textit{LPR}, in

\textsuperscript{139} The different accounts of the death of Christ in \textit{LPR} may be found in vol. 3, 125-31 (1821 series), 219-22 (1824 series), 322-28 (1827 series), and 323-25 n. 199 (1831 series).

\textsuperscript{140} Cf. “if anyone is in Christ, there is” (not merely, ‘s/he is’) “a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” (2 Cor. 5.17).
each case in the context of giving an account of the historical particularity of the Incarnation (LPR 3. 144, 215, 310) and of the radical and comprehensively new beginning God made there.

Philosophy's Presupposition: the Gospel

What then is the task of philosophy as Hegel understands it? First of all, it has as its unique and exclusive "presupposition" (LPR 3. 214) or condition of possibility the gospel of the Incarnation. Apart from that, as we have already seen, it can only postulate and hypothesize from the one-sided perspective of human subjectivity, thinking as though God has not come in human flesh, as though the old world order of humanity's independence and estrangement from God is still in place, holding on to the lie which was once for all exploded at the Cross. The gospel on the other hand sets humanity free to think the truth, reality, as it has been revealed by God in Christ.

Section 5: The Community

The Primitive church

The relation of the gospel to philosophy is not immediate. Between the Incarnation and the philosopher there is the church, the community of the Spirit. Hegel discerns this in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Only with these events does a spiritual perspective on the life and death of Jesus become possible for humanity. That spiritual perspective, which is the same for Hegel as the discerning of what is real, the truth, is granted initially to the immediate disciples. And it is their's through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who enables them to recognise in Jesus, above all in his death, the inauguration of the new world order and therefore the overthrow of the old which they had hitherto taken to be the real. It is the Spirit who undeceives them.

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141 "I entirely agree with what you say in your letter as to the impossibility of reiterating too often recognition from philosophy's side of the content of living, actual faith" (Letters 544). "The one thing that philosophy, and of course all science, has to accomplish is to find the form of thinking and to recognize in this the form of the truth; but the truth has also been available for itself in the pious faith of Christianity for a long time in its own particular form, and this, in its divine confidence, makes its demand on the results of thinking, that "they show themselves to be in agreement with it" (Hegel's review of Göscht's Aphorisms. The original is in G.W.F. Hegel, Werke 11. Berliner Schriften 1818-1831. Frankfurt am Main. 1970. 353-389, corresponding to Hegel Werke XX, in the standard ed., 276-313. I have provided my own translation as the review has not been translated into English).

142 See chap. 3, sect. 3, and the subsection entitled "Infinite Antitheses and Pseudo-Reconciliations".

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and initiates them into the God-given real. With that, they are given, and empowered for, their particular vocation which is the apostolic proclamation of the gospel, telling forth and expounding by the Spirit the story of Jesus. This initial phase in the unfolding of the new world order has what Hegel calls a representational form. It is narrative and story together with charismatic exposition. The “Kingdom” (LPR 3.318) is marked by an intensity and spontaneity appropriate to the newborn community of faith establishing a foothold in the world, which for the most part remains convinced of the old lie and unaware of its exposé in the revelation of God in Christ.

The content of the gospel which is the eternal truth of God never changes. Its form however does. At this initial stage its form is “polemical” (LPR 3.318). It defines itself over against the settled attitudes of the world in general. God’s purpose is that through the church, the world should learn of its new and true character as reconciled to God in Christ, that the condition, consciousness, and belief of the world should become “coinherent”, in harmony with the gospel (LPR 3.318). However, for the church to bring the message of reconciliation to the world, it must initially become unreconciled to it, estranged from it. The first adherents of this new religion must “fight and struggle” in order to unlearn old habits of belief, thought and action, and establish themselves firmly in that “sole, eternal interest...which they were bound to believe [but]...were still in danger of losing” (LPR 3.318). This apostolic phase of the church is continuous with the earthly ministry of Jesus and, in its “renunciation, surrender, and setting aside of all vital interests and moral bonds”, has the “essential characteristic of the concentrated manifestation of the truth” (LPR 3.318). Bound to God in Christ by the Spirit, “elevate[d]...to an infinite energy....all other bonds - indeed, all things hitherto regarded as ethical and right - are to be set aside” (LPR 3.318). And Hegel cites various of the most provocatively radical of Jesus instructions regarding family, respect for the dead, property, etc., conflating, quoting, and paraphrasing Matt. 12.48, 50: Mark 3.33f; Luke 9. 59f; Matt. 8.21f; and Matt. 10.34-38.

The Institutional church

In the second phase of the church’s life this radical overthrowing of natural relationships, institutions, and ethics gives place to a new form of existence appropriate to the established character of the church in which the truth of the gospel “has achieved a secure existence”. The emerging community becomes the subsisting community (LPR 3.333). This happens as the primitive church
completes the process of internalizing the gospel. The reconciliation of the world, which was external and objective to them in Jesus Christ, increasingly engages and informs their own subjectivity so that they know within themselves that they together with the world are reconciled to God. Their being reconciled and their being within the world as reconciled is their new identity.

This is accomplished by the Spirit of God within them testifying to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the reconciler, and persuading and convincing them of their own new identity as individually reconciled within the reconciled world. It is accomplished by the Spirit of God testifying to the historical achievement of Jesus and in no other way: Hegel writes specifically, "not...through speculative philosophy" (LPR 3. 329, my italics). The Spirit alone can instill the certainty of faith which God intends for humanity to enjoy. Certainty characterises the objective content of the reconciliation of the world in Christ. Its certainty is its having reality in and for itself quite apart from my knowledge or ignorance of it. I am made certain of it as it is given to my subjectivity, my personal identity. I do not postulate, conceive or imagine it. I do not grasp it or achieve it. It is quite independent of me: but it is for me and for the world, unwilling to remain independent of me, determined to include me so that I know myself and the world to be included (LPR 3. 329f).

The primitive and emerging church becomes the subsisting church through the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, whereby the first believers are brought to certainty through Christ's Spirit. Henceforth the charismatic character of the church as a community of individuals in immediate relation to God in Jesus, gives place to the church as the means of grace, the community of the Spirit. This is the church as institution, as a culture. Now it is within the church that subsequent generations meet God. The objective gospel engages individuals in their subjectivity, bringing them to their new identity as reconciled to God, through the church, its cultus, actions, beliefs and teaching (HF 165).

Hegel is careful to explain that the spiritual experience of subsequent generations of Christians is not different in kind from that of the Apostles. They too are brought into relationship to God himself. They enjoy the presence of God as fully as did the primitive church.140 They internal-

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140 "In the heart and souls of believers is the firm belief that the issue is not a moral teaching, nor in general the thinking and willing of the subject within itself and from itself; rather what is of interest is an infinite relationship to God, to the present God, the certainty of the kingdom of God - finding satisfaction not in morality, ethics, or conscience, but rather in that than which nothing is higher, the relationship to God himself...The defining characteristic of this kingdom of God is the presence of God." (LPR 3. 322).
ize and live out of the gospel as fully as did the Apostles, and with the same degree of certainty of faith. It is just that whereas the first generation of disciples had seen, heard, and touched Jesus in the flesh and it was that direct connection to the historical Jesus that was the content and means whereby the Spirit brought them to their new identity, it is for subsequent generations in the life of the church and therefore in a different form that the identical content of the gospel is made available to them. - in the church as the means of the Spirit’s inner testimony and conviction (LPR 3, 333).

**Doctrine in the Early Church**

Hegel is particularly interested in the development of doctrine in the few centuries following the apostolic period.144 The subsisting church develops doctrine as the explicit and conceptual articulation of that which is initially given through the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. The certainty of the gospel, which is faith, - that the world and I in the world have been reconciled to God in Christ, - is a content that engages and transforms people at the deepest level of their being, a content appropriated through the inner testimony of the Spirit to the objective reality of Jesus Christ.

This content is known. As such it brings with it the incentive to its articulation, its being conceptualized and understood ever more deeply. This gives rise to the doctrinal account of the content of the gospel. In this, nothing is added to the content. It merely takes on a new form. Story and narrative give place to dogmatic description. Doctrinal form is given to the gospel content which is “presupposed and finished” (LPR 3, 334).

The gospel must determine the doctrinal form. Hegel recognizes that the church makes use of concepts which through their prior use in the old world order and their continued use by those who are not yet aware of the passing of that old order bring with them content that is incompatible with and therefore threatens to pervert. to “intermix impure thoughts” with, the concrete content of the church’s confession. The doctrinal development of the gospel must therefore be undertaken by the church, with the gospel alone setting the criteria. Doctrinal development is for the purpose of teaching the faith. The church in part fulfills its office of teaching the gospel by expounding doctrine (LPR 3, 334).

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144 Cf. Hegel’s 1822 report to the Prussian Minister of Education, with its emphasis on the teaching of Christian doctrine in the gymnasium as necessary preparation for the study of philosophy at the university. See above, chap. 3. sect. 1, and the subsection entitled “Philosophy and the Credo of the Church".

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The first and determinative form of the gospel is the apostolic telling and interpreting of the story, the history, of Jesus. The second form is the church’s doctrinal exposition of that same gospel content.

Philosophy: Developed Worldliness

The third form is philosophy. Again the content is the same, the gospel of the reconciliation of God and humanity in Jesus Christ. It is the form alone that alters. And again this new form is in order that the community, the church, may fulfill a particular and God-given task. In LPR Hegel describes that task as developed worldliness (LPR 3.339), extending the gospel to the world; but not as evangelism, not as the bringing of individuals to an awareness of their new identity in Christ, not as what Hegel himself describes as “new birth” (LPR 3.234f). This continues to

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144 “The development of the mind never leads beyond Christian faith: that faith continues to provide the content of philosophical thought” (Louis Dupre, quoted by Philip Merklinger in Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel’s Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821-1827. State University of New York Press, 1993, 189).

145 H. Pietersma in unpublished notes for a graduate seminar (April 8th, 1997, at the University of Toronto) on Kierkegaard, explains that Kierkegaard was not convinced that in Hegelian philosophy it is only the form and not the content of Christian revelation that changes. “According to Kierkegaard...the change of form affects the content as well. The form speculative philosophy would give to Christianity does not preserve the form of authority intrinsic to Christian faith. Hegel takes the incarnation, and in particular the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to mean that the human being is no longer beholden to an external authority. Faith therefore loses its relation to a God who addresses the human from an external and independent standpoint. It is no longer a listening to an authoritative voice heard in the words of Jesus as an historical figure.”

It is my case in this paper that such a charge is answered, first, by the radical change in the very nature of human subjectivity brought about by the Incarnation as the revelation of the one, new and only reality over against the phantasmagoria of fallen subjectivity; secondly, by Hegel’s understanding of the self-authenticating character of the Christian revelation which itself drives toward its interiorization and actualization, matters about which we shall have more to say when we consider Hegel’s understanding of necessity as the authoritative claim of the gospel on human subjectivity (see chap. 4, below); thirdly, by interpreting Hegel’s concern with going beyond the mere words of Jesus in terms of his antagonism to positivist and pietest Bibliicism à la Tholuck (cf. esp. Hegel’s letter to Tholuck quoted above, chap. 3. sect. 1, and the subsection entitled “Barren Orthodoxy”).


147 Almost accidental evidence for Hegel’s sense of philosophy as a God-given vocation in the Kingdom of God is to be found in a letter he wrote in 1826, as professor at the University of Berlin, to his friend, Victor Cousin, with good news of a new colleague in the Department of Law and of a student who will soon graduate upon defending his dissertation on Descartes: “[t]hey are fine acquisitions for work in the Lord’s vineyard” (Letters 638).
be, as we saw in the earliest pages of Hegel's Introductions to *LPR*, the vocation belonging to the preaching and teaching offices of the church. The task of philosophy as developed worldliness is to provide for the fashioning of the world, human community as it is other than religiously, according to the gospel. The totality of human existence is to be defined by the kingdom of God. Hegel has in mind human community in every manifestation other than as the church: political, social, ethical, familial, scientific, artistic. Philosophy develops out of the gospel, principles for ordering every aspect of worldly life. Those principles are really one principle which is that the gospel is "the truth of the worldly" (*LPR* 3.339).

Philosophy as developed worldliness is the extension of the "vocation to...freedom" that is granted to every human being "as an object of divine grace and as one who is reconciled with God" (*LPR* 3.340). As one who already has infinite value, the worldly Christian is free to live in the world as one who, at peace with God, is also at peace with the world and with him/herself, "at home with itself, reconciled with itself,...utterly secure" (*LPR* 3.340). Knowing God and knowing the world and self in truth reconciled to God as revealed in Christ, the believer allows this knowledge to be "foundational in its relation to what is worldly" (*LPR* 3.340). That is its rationality, that is philosophy, reason wedded to faith, philosophical faith. Hegel concludes with a succinct description of the task of philosophy as developed worldliness: "[w]hat is required, therefore, is that this reconciliation should also be accomplished in the worldly realm" (*LPR* 3.340)."
Necessity and the Sovereign Freedom of God

What faith guarantees, reason clarifies.... In covering the same ground and holding the same conclusion, faith and reason each add something to the other. Faith adds the glory of self-abandonment to the statements of reason; reason adds the glory of systematic understanding to the statements of faith. Neither the nature nor the conclusions of faith are changed by reason, but the concepts of faith, in becoming clearer in the understanding, become more active in the soul, more systematically inter-related in the mind, more joyfully embraced.

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In order to appreciate more fully what Hegel understands by philosophy we now turn to the third volume of his Lectures on the History of Philosophy (LHP). There Hegel develops the task of philosophy with particular reference to his own historical context, the modern period (stretching from the Renaissance and the Reformation, and especially Descartes), but also within the wider historical context of the development of Patristic and Medieval philosophy and theology. What is described to a large extent a-historically and conceptually in LPR, is recounted in LHP as history, and the very particular history of Europe as the conversation partner of the Spirit of God in the church bearing testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Eternal, absolute reality engages with the changing actuality of the European world for the realization of its once for all redemption and reconciliation in Christ. The story provides a case study in developed worldliness, for better (e.g. Anselm) and for worse (e.g. modern subjectivism).

In LPR we have seen Hegel develop an understanding of human reality, fallen and redeemed, in terms of subjectivity and objectivity. Seduced into comprehensive deception, fallen humanity was cut off from objectivity, from reality as it is in itself. Imprisoned within the one-sided perspective of finite subjectivity it was estranged from everything absolute except in so far as it postulated it; and then by definition it could have no certainty about it, no conviction that the absolute had reality other than as its own construct, a figment of its own imagination, an abstraction, an ideal. With the Incarnation all of that changed. Jesus Christ is the absolute, the infinite, God, self-

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152 All references to this third volume are indicated in this essay by the abbreviation LHP.
revealed as he is in and for himself. Jesus Christ is objective reality giving itself to human subjectivity, or objective reality taking to itself human subjectivity, and in so doing setting it free to acknowledge and to know it. He is objective reality because he is the revelation of God. He is the reconciliation of that reality with subjective consciousness because he is the revelation of God in his own humanity. In making God known, Jesus sets human beings free also to know God's world as he made it and as he knows it. In Christ humanity is taken up into God's knowledge of himself and of his creation. The Holy Spirit enables the human person to participate in the Father's knowledge of the Son and the Son's of the Father.

Now in *LHP* Hegel considers the philosophical task with regard to modern philosophy. Seduced into autonomous subjectivity, it has lost its hold on reality as revealed in Christ. In following Hegel as he sets about recovering that reality as the only proper content of philosophy, we shall see why necessity plays such an important part in his philosophy, and in so doing will be able to respond to Barth's third and weightiest accusation. Hegel does not mean by 'necessity' what Barth thinks he means. It is not that God is answerable to some higher necessity that compromises his freedom. Rather it is a necessity that is laid upon humanity, the wedding of human subjectivity and divine objectivity such that autonomous subjectivity, a way of being that was occasioned by falling victim to a lie, is ruled out of court. Hegelian necessity is the appropriation of human subjectivity by reality, the vision and awareness of which is granted in God's once for all self-revelation in Christ. Objective reality being what it is, human subjectivity is set free to know it and to live in accord with it. Its necessity is its reality, the only reality there is, the reality for which and within which human subjectivity was created to be.

But we are running ahead of ourselves. In turning to *LHP* we shall begin by going over some familiar material, in particular the three tasks of preaching, doctrine and philosophy. But the different perspective will serve to confirm the comprehensively reconstitutive role that the church's preaching and dogmatic explication of the gospel play in Hegel's account of philosophy as developed worldliness.

* A Threefold Task

There are, Hegel says, three tasks laid upon humanity in the light of the absolutely decisive and consummate revelation of God in Jesus Christ (*LHP* 27). Those three tasks serve what he has
already described as the world’s task which is to make Christianity “into the principle of the world...to actualize it inwardly, with a view to being reconciled with God” (LHP 26).\(^{193}\) It is the world’s task and not merely the church’s because Christ’s victory has made not just the church but the world his own. That it is the church and not the world that knows the nature of the task, is a privilege granted to the church not for its own sake but as the world and on behalf of the world, so that through the church the world will come to know its proper task. The church is the world coming to an awareness of what it (the world) already is. The three tasks are derivative from and serve this one great task.

With regard to the three tasks, first there is “the dissemination of the Christian religion, its establishment in human hearts”, or in other words, “propagation of the gospel in the heart” (LHP 26f). Strictly this he says “lies outside our consideration”. Nevertheless he is careful to explain that his use of the term ‘heart’ is deliberate, denoting “the human being qua human...the human subject as this man or woman” (LHP 26, the italics are Hegel’s), or as we have already seen\(^{194}\) this particular individual. Christianity is first and foremost God’s address to the individual. This must be assumed and is not by-passed, set aside, left behind, or overcome by the philosophical endeavour. But as we have seen,\(^{195}\) neither is it philosophy’s proper task; it is the proper task of the preacher and of religious education, and Hegel could wish that the church might return to it with renewed zeal (LHP 26f).

The second task is dogmatic, “the development of the Christian religion for thoughtful cognition” (LHP 27). This he says was the task of the church fathers, a task that they accomplished. It does not need to be redone but only recovered as the foundation for the fulfilling of the vocation of the church in each succeeding generation (LHP 27). Again, and we are reminded of his 1822 report on education in the gymnasium,\(^{196}\) Hegel could wish that the church might recover its proper foundation in, and vocation to teach, this “Christian system of doctrine” (LHP 27).

With the third task we come to the particular vocation of philosophy. Its fulfillment be-

\(^{193}\) Perhaps Hegel has St. Paul’s words in the back of his mind, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself...We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5.19f). Cf. LHP 18n: LPR 3, 65, 324.

\(^{194}\) See chap. 2, and the section entitled “God for the Whole Human Person”.

\(^{195}\) See chap. 3, sect. 4, and the subsection entitled “Philosophy: Developed Worldliness”.

\(^{196}\) See chap. 3, sect. 1, and the subsection entitled “Philosophy and the Credo of the Church”.

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longs, though not exclusively, to philosophy. The task is in each generation the conforming of every aspect of human life, public and private, to the gospel. This cannot be achieved apart from the Christian conversion of individuals. Hence the priority of the first task. But neither is that enough. Beyond there being “a multitude of believing hearts”, there must also be “the establishment of a kingdom”. It is not enough to look to “a heavenly kingdom lying in the beyond”; the gospel must be “realized in actuality”, “implanted in actuality”, “accomplished in the world” (LHP 27).

Hegel has in mind primarily the public realm, “the laws, customs, and political constitutions” and he adds, “whatever generally belongs to the actuality of subjective consciousness” (LHP 27). Actuality is contrasted here with merely inward and private piety; as he says, the gospel “must...be consummated not just in the heart but in a realm of actual consciousness” (LHP 27). Consciousness is the term he chooses here because this third task can only be accomplished on the shoulders of the first and second tasks: or to put it another way, gospel faith is to issue in the application of the gospel to all aspects of the public realm, corresponding to and following from its interiorization at every level of the private realm. Individual, personal conversion to the new reality, the way things are on account of the Incarnation, entails a commitment to the conversion of all of life, the world order from most personal to most public, so that all of it is ordered by the gospel.19

This is the task to which Hegel believes himself to be called in his own day; with some urgency, given the religious bankruptcy of the Enlightenment which has cut itself off from both the gospel and church dogma, and of the contemporary church which has split apart into irreconcilable factions: on the one side, the subjectivists who have given up on the content of the gospel as significant for religion, on the other side, the positivists, we might call them the objectivists, who wholly neglect the gospel call to personal conversion for the sake of a pseudo-scholastic preoccu-
pation with doctrinal and biblical texts as ends in themselves.¹⁵⁸

Theology and Philosophy in Conflict

At the root of the contemporary situation is the tragic divorce of philosophy and theology. The Enlightenment and Kant have set the course of philosophy as necessarily independent of theology. The Positivists have deliberately pursued theology over against philosophy. The Subjectivists have acknowledged the inevitability of the divorce and chosen to go their own third way by means of feeling. In order to account for this tragic state of affairs and to justify his own claim that the divorce is neither final nor inevitable, Hegel undertakes in LHP to examine the original synthesis of theology and philosophy in the church fathers, and to retell the story of the Scholastic, Renaissance, Reformation, and modern handling and mishandling of that original and trustworthy deposit, with a view to its contemporary recovery and renewed development toward the universal actualization of the once for all redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ. And Hegel’s hope is, as we have already seen,¹⁵⁹ really nothing less than that.

We shall attend to his account listening especially to what he has to say about the continuing priority of the Patristic “system of doctrine” (LHP 27) as the indispensable condition of possibility for true theology and philosophy, and the equally indispensable subjectivization of that doctrine in the world through the church and philosophy. It is the pursuit of one of these at the expense of the other that repeatedly undermines the theological and philosophical enterprise in both the medieval (doctrine at the expense of subjectivity) and modern (subjectivity at the expense of doctrine) worlds, and so hinder the world in the fulfillment of its God-given task of making the gospel its own universal principle, “with a view to being reconciled with God” (LHP 26).

Hegel insists on speaking of the gospel for the individual as a vocation (LHP 21. 25f). The human subject as the “object” of the gracious address of God “has a different status from what human subjects had heretofore” (LHP 26). The heretofore is not the individual’s time before convers-

¹⁵⁸ As but one of many examples in LHP of allusions to this theological schism and bankruptcy of the contemporary church, I cite almost at random Hegel’s preamble to his description of the church’s/world’s three-fold task. On the one hand he warns against “misconstrue[ing]” and “discard[ing]...the content of [church] doctrine[s]”, and on the other, of “cling[ing]” to them as absolute forms in the way that a sterile orthodoxy wishes to recognize and hold fast the content in these forms alone” (LHP 26). The repetition of what we have already seen in Hegel’s account of the three universal prejudices in HF is evident. Popular Kantianism and religious subjectivism discard the content of church doctrines; sterile orthodoxy here is the dogmatism and biblicism of HF.

¹⁵⁹ See esp. chap. 3, sect. 5, and the subsection entitled “Philosophy: Developed Worldliness”. 73
sion, but the time before Jesus when human subjects had a different status. It is not merely the individual’s autobiography that Hegel has in view as an absolute but private conversion and change of status, but rather as we have seen in LPR the individual’s participation in the new reality established objectively, once and for all, by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is the preaching of the gospel that initiates individuals subjectively into the objectively new reality, the new status of humanity in Christ, out of what is now seen to be unreality, a way of being that is outmoded, rendered obsolete by the Incarnation. Too often in Hegel’s view the church has allowed itself to become one-sidedly preoccupied with either the objective or the subjective. The philosophy which Hegel wants to recover and develop through his account of the history of philosophy avoids both of these traps, grasping and reflecting upon the gospel reconciliation of objectivity and subjectivity.

From Patristic to Scholastic

Early in LHP Hegel describes the difference between the Patristic and Scholastic periods. The Patristic is marked by the consolidation of the church through doctrinal elucidation of the gospel. Its doctrinal character is due in large part to its historical context which is that of the later Roman and Byzantine civilizations. Unable to transform either from within because both were too highly and firmly developed according to the old pre-Christian world order, the church was compelled to establish itself over against them, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in conflict. Hegel is not critical of the church for this. Indeed it was a course determined by the actualities of the situation which served it well for future generations (LHP 41).

The transition to the Scholastic period is co-terminus with the fall of the old Roman world to the Germanic peoples. Lacking a developed culture this new Germanic “barbarian” world was established through conflagration and destruction (LHP 40). As such it was strangely susceptible to the Christian message. The gospel found fallow ground, not an already planted garden as with Roman culture, and took root, eventually producing a profoundly Christian culture, one aspect of which is Scholastic philosophy (LHP 41).

The image of fallow ground and the seed of the gospel serves to characterize the newness and the objectivity of the gospel with respect to the human heart. It is not produced from within the human heart by human subjectivity: neither is it produced by or from within the highest and most

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See above, chap. 3, sect. 5, and the subsection entitled “One has Died for All: Therefore All have Died”.

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complex of human cultures, be they Roman, Byzantine, or any other. God himself through his Spirit and the church’s preaching and teaching of the gospel of Christ must plant the seed of true religion within the human heart. Apart from the preaching and teaching of the gospel human thought cannot approximate to the mind of God.

But Hegel supplements the image of the seed with the image of the sword or the surgeon’s scalpel (LHP 41). The barbarians may not resist the gospel through their having already developed a sophisticated culture: they are nevertheless one with fallen humanity, defined by autonomy and independence, so that Hegel characterizes their initial relationship to the gospel as a monstrous antithesis and contradiction. - they are infinitely opposed to it so that it must pierce them, claiming them for itself through initial torment and a great inner struggle.161

The Scholastic Complementarity of Theology and Philosophy

The gospel was however victorious, in part at least. That victory gave rise to the Scholastic philosophy which Hegel so admires. The Scholastics maintained the essential relationship between theology and philosophy that is unique to, and rooted in the gospel. Theology is the dogmatic explication of the gospel; philosophy, the application of that dogmatic exposition of the gospel to every sphere of life outside the ecclesial. Philosophy must remain rooted in theology otherwise it loses the connection between the objective and subjective aspects of reality.

Being and thought are originally complementary and united in the mind of God, in the consubstantial unity of the Father and the Son. Originally created participant in that complementarity, created in God’s image, humanity fell into that self-assertive, independent autonomy in which subjective consciousness, in a vain bid for sovereignty, divorced itself from, set itself up over against, objective being as that which was to be mastered. As antithetically and exploitatively disordered toward self, the world, and God, it was consummately exposed at the Cross in what proved to be its ultimate act of rebellion and exploitation, the murder of God. The exposé of the lie proved also to

[161] "[T]hey came under the authority of a new and alien spirit, which was imposed on them...Their heart was as though pierced by it. Thus the idea became immanent in their crude and dull nature as something infinitely opposed to it; in other words, the infinite torment was kindled within them...They had to endure the great inner struggle involved in this monstrous antithesis, and the philosophy that subsequently established itself among them and was at first received as a given is one aspect of this struggle...The principle of the spiritual has been sown within them, and with it is necessarily posited this torment, this battle of spirit with the natural. Cultural development begins here from the most monstrous contradiction, and this contradiction has to revolve itself. Its two sides are essentially so related to each other that the spiritual is what is supposed to rule, to be master” (LHP 41f).
be the revelation of the reconciliation of God and humanity. In the life and death of God in Jesus Christ, complementary and mutually indwelling thought and being, subjective consciousness and the objectively real, triumphed over human autonomy and gave itself to humanity, took humanity to itself, in the divine and human being of Jesus.

Living in and from the gospel, philosophy is able to think through the implications of that once for all, unique, exclusive, and comprehensive reconciliation, for all of life; doing so on the basis of the conceptual formulation of that same gospel as it was accomplished in the dogmatic achievement of the church fathers. The gospel and its corresponding system of doctrine, which together are the Credo, the confession, of the church, contain within them what Hegel calls “a summons to thinking” (LHP 49). It is not enough to learn by rote, to have by memory, the Credo, as the biblical and dogmatic positivists believe. People in every age through the preaching and teaching of the church are brought into a living relationship to God as present to and with them. God claims and engages with them in their thinking as in every other aspect of their being. Their new identity in Christ is a “cohering with God and in God” (LHP 49) that includes the vocation to think through the Credo, both in terms of its inner depth and relationships, and also its implications for every aspect of human life, private and social. The pioneers in answering this summons to thinking are “the church fathers earlier, and now the Scholastic philosophers.... In this way Scholastic philosophy is essentially theology, and this theology is immediately philosophy” (LHP 49f).

Anselm and Necessity

Anselm above all others exemplifies the best of Scholastic philosophy. In doing so he sets forth what Hegel means by necessity with regard to theology and philosophy. Above all, philosophy worthy of the name undertakes rationally to demonstrate, to elucidate, to prove, what it already knows with certainty by faith. 162 Hegel acknowledges that Anselm’s procedure is unfashionable, disapproved of as human conceit: the modesty of modern theologians and religious philosophers

162: “His chief endeavor was to treat church doctrine in a philosophical manner, to give proofs for it...In this regard he states that Christians must come to reflective cognition (denkende Erkenne) through faith, not come to faith through the intellect. If they succeed in winning through to reflective cognition, they will rejoice at proving to themselves by thought what they already believe. If they do not succeed in proving the faith of the church by thought, then they must stay with the teaching of the church, not abandon it. Very noteworthy is the following passage, which captures the whole of his meaning. In his treatise Cur Deus sit homo,...he says that it seems negligence to him - negligentia mini videtur - if, after having been established in faith, we do not seek to understand, intelligere, what we believe. Intelligere is reflective cognition” (LHP 53). This is remarkably close to Southern’s reflection quoted at the head of this chapter.
compels them to hold apart reflective cognition from faith, to be content with immediate knowledge of, or faith in God. The summons to thought which is integral to true Christian faith is ignored, or denied, or slandered. - anything but answered. Needless to say Hegel is impatient of such modesty (LHP 54).\textsuperscript{103}

Philosophy rooted in Christian faith is able to think God's thoughts after him because and in so far as it thinks according to the coinherence of thought and being revealed in Jesus Christ and imparted by the Spirit. Anselm, the Christian philosopher \textit{par excellence}, thinks through that coinherence, demonstrating its necessity, its coherence, by assuming for the sake of argument (or faith's understanding) the \textit{antithesis} of thought and being. Over against the unity of thought and being revealed in Christ Anselm articulates. Hegel says for the first time in human intellectual history, the fact that human beings can \textit{think} anything, including God, and contemplate the real possibility that there is no \textit{being} that corresponds to that thought. Our thinking unicorns for example does not necessarily entail their existing other than in our thinking. If that is true of unicorns it may also be true of God. Except that the thought of God includes the thought of that which is most perfect. And the thought of that which is most perfect must exist because the thought of that which is most perfect but does not exist is less than the thought which includes existence within its conceiving of that which is most perfect.

The proof is effective only because the perfection of the God who \textit{is} and who is \textit{conceivable} has been already self-disclosed by that perfect and perfectly conceivable God in Jesus Christ for human comprehension. It is faith seeking understanding, not the Understanding seeking faith. The perfection, because also the reality of the coinherence of the being and the thought of God, is the necessary presupposition for Anselm's proof. To make the proof, Anselm thinks thought and being apart, in antithesis. That the antithesis cannot hold for God is demonstrable only because the coinherence of the thought and the existence of God as that which is most perfect has been revealed

\textsuperscript{103} Cf. Barth's similar impatience in his account of "modern man's...falling humbly into the left hand of God" (\textit{PT} 296, my italics).
by the God who is, and who is for human faith and rational conception, in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{164}

The proof is deemed unsuccessful by Descartes and Kant, even by Anselm's contemporary, Gaunilo, because they have let go of God's self-revelation in Christ as the unique source of the true content for theology and philosophy (\textit{LHP} 55f). They along with most of late Medieval and modern philosophy have assumed the absolute antithesis of thought and being to be foundational for, even definitive of what philosophy is. They have further reversed the Scholastic order of faith and understanding so that one does not believe in order to understand but understands in order to believe. Philosophy is a summons to thought that does not originate in the gospel, in the essential coinherence of thought and being in Jesus Christ, but rather in human subjectivity interpreted as independent and autonomous.

We have already considered at length\textsuperscript{165} Hegel's critique of this modern move, the attempt to think the eternal and infinite God by means of the Understanding which is limited to categories that are adequate only to temporal and finite content. Here, in \textit{LHP}, he describes it as the tragic divorce of faith and God on the one hand and reflection and cognition on the other. The best that can be done for God is his being rendered an abstract postulate required as a means to some usually moral end, as for example in the establishment of the moral law as categorical and imperative. That the moral law should be categorical and imperative however is proven through an analysis of human nature, reason, and community, which in turn provides the foundational or transcendental condition of possibility for determining the existence or not, and the nature of God. The conclusions which follow are various, ranging from the postulated theism of Descartes and Kant, through the skeptical theism of Hume, the pantheism of Eastern philosophy, Spinoza's acosmism, Herbert

\textsuperscript{164} "The simple content of this proof embodies the antithesis of thinking and being. It is striking for us to see that only now, and not at some earlier time, do thinking (or the universal) and being come to be mutually opposed in this abstraction - and in this way the highest antithesis enters consciousness. Bringing the highest antithesis to consciousness is the greatest depth of profundity... 'We think something, we have a thought; this thought is on the one hand subjective, but the content of the thought is what is wholly universal. This universal is at first only universal as thought. Being is distinct from it. Now if we think something and even if, for example, we think God (the content does not matter), what we think perhaps may not even be. But we regard as most perfect what is not only thought but at the same time exists. Consequently God, who is what is most perfect, would be imperfect if he were only in thought and the attribute of being did not belong to him. Consequently we must ascribe being to God.' The content of the proof is of the highest kind. It expresses this identity of thinking, that is, or the thought of God...with being. We grant that what is true is not what is mere thinking, but what also is. But here we must not take thinking to be merely subjective, for by 'thought' we mean here the absolute, pure thought" (\textit{LHP} 54f).

\textsuperscript{165} See chap. 3, sect. 1, and the section entitled "Hegel's Critique of Contemporary Philosophy and Theology".
of Cherbury's deism, and the atheism of certain Eighteenth Century French philosophers. However, because thinking has cut itself off from revelation and from education within the community established by that revelation, the one conclusion which cannot be reached is the philosophical faith, the reflective cognition, the intellectum informed by the certainty of faith, exemplified in the proof-theology of Anselm. The necessity of theological philosophy, "the philosophy that is theology and the theology that is philosophy" (LHP 49), is displaced by the abstraction and arbitrariness, the skepticism, of subjective and autonomous speculation.

All of it derives from the pursuing of philosophy independent of revelation. For Hegel however, God, or the absolute, or objectivity coinherent with subjective consciousness, is only known where it is made known as that which exists in and for itself. As there is no absolute outside of God, and as the absolute includes the truth for rational cognition about all that God has made, philosophy must look to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ for its true content. Apart from that revelation all intellectual reflection on God is contingent, hypothetical. The gospel alone so unites thought and being that it overrules every temptation to human autonomy, laying claim to humanity for the truth. It is the self-authenticating character of this philosophy, consistent with the Credo of the church, that is its necessity.

For Hegel, the demonstration of the necessity of the reconciliation of the world to God in Jesus Christ is the reflective cognition, the rational elucidation, of reality as it has been revealed and proclaimed in the Credo of the church. What is believed to be true through Christian preaching and teaching is so explained as to compel the assent of the intellect. Faith's summons to thought, to understanding, is answered according to the content of faith, and therefore compellingly, necessarily, with the burden of proof. Such proof is part of what Hegel calls the interiorization of faith. Gospel reality becomes so determinative of a person's mind that s/he is equipped. Hegel prefers the term "liberated" to think truly about all of reality.

Hegel thinks that this was lost, or grasped only sporadically (e.g. Anselm) even by the Scholastics. This explains Hegel's designation of the victory of the gospel in the medieval world as partial. More often than not, church authority, which is external authority, compelled the alle-

156 Cf. LHP 163, note 177.
157 Cf. esp. LHP 96ff: see below, chap. 4, and the section entitled "Luther".
158 See above, chap. 4, and the section entitled "The Scholastic Complementarity of Theology and Philosophy".
giance of the human person and in so doing quenched or repressed subjectivity. This by contrast with the method exemplified by Anselm which sought to educate (a favorite term for Hegel) a person to the place where they were themselves in their own subjectivity convinced of the certainty and rationality of the gospel. their own mind having so interiorized it that they may be said with St. Paul to have the mind of Christ, though never in isolation from the Christian community.

*The Renaissance and the Reformation: the Recovery of Subjectivity*

At the Reformation this interiorization as the fullness of the human response to the gospel was recovered (*LHP* 99ff). The Lutheran faith in its earliest days epitomized it, redeeming the recovery of subjectivity that had been achieved by the Renaissance in its reaction to the ecclesiastical authoritarianism of the late Middle Ages.

The Renaissance recovery of subjectivity was in need of redemption because, in rightly reacting to medieval authoritarianism, it also rejected the God of the gospel.\(^{169}\) In so doing it found its way to a reduced subjectivity, something very like the fallen, autonomous subjectivity of *LPR.*\(^ {170}\) Here in *LHP* Hegel describes it as "sheer human subjectivity. sheer human freedom", and "barbaric self-will" that "finds its satisfaction only in subjective purposes...[un]justified" by God. Recognizing that Renaissance subjectivity may be expressed with greater sophistication in terms of "universal...human...rights and freedoms...the right that belongs to the other as well as to me", Hegel insists that it is nonetheless "[un]sanctified". - asserted, posited. but not ultimately grounded. without ultimate necessity. "[un]confirmed" (*LHP* 95).

Only when this principle of activity [my willing and doing what is right\(^ {171}\) is established and recognized in relation to the object that has being in and for itself, namely, in relation to God - only when it is thus grasped in its perfect purity freed from impulses and finite ends - only then does it receive its confirmation (*LHP* 95).

\(^{169}\) An account of Hegel’s profound analysis of the way in which the Nominalists contributed, for the most part negatively, to the emergence of the Renaissance is, for lack of space, beyond the confines of this essay.

\(^{170}\) See above, chap. 3, sect. 3.

\(^{171}\) Or we might paraphrase the principle as the right to be and to become what I really (ideally, eschatologically) am. For Hegel the dissonance between natural or fallen humanity and redeemed humanity is the dissonance between immediate human subjectivity and humanity as it is in Christ. The latter is given to faith. It is what Hegel intends by the ideal. *Interiorization* is the gradual appropriation of that ideal, which is also the real, until human subjectivity is transformed from within and, released from its bondage to the lie of the old order, knows itself to be what it is in Christ. We can therefore not unjustifiably equate Hegel’s ideal with the eschatologically real. - reality as it is in Christ.

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The underlying reality that gives derivative reality to human subjectivity is "that human beings acquire the inner certainty of their worth in relation to God" (LHP 95). Necessity and inner certainty are the same for Hegel.

Luther, the Lutherans, and Company

Luther recovered the inherent togetherness of the gospel of reconciliation in Christ and individual (existential) human subjectivity so that human subjectivity was wholly determined by the gospel. That determination was not external, but from inside; so much so that the believer’s very identity at every level of his/her being was bound up with, one with, that of Jesus Christ. The reality of God, of God for me and for the world, of God as, in Jesus Christ, the sovereign and comprehensive reconciler of the world and therefore of me in the world, became through Luther the reality, the only reality, the reality which made a necessary, absolute, eternal claim upon me, and to which all else must be referred for redefinition and response (LHP 95ff). Luther represents modernity’s turn to the self redeemed. The self is radically reconstituted in Christ as the self that is for God, - who is for us. Given the infamy of Hegel’s critique of Schleiermacher’s subjectivism, Hegel’s own passionate commitment to redeemed, reconciled subjectivity cannot be overemphasized.

Tragically the Lutheran insight was all too quickly lost sight of even by Lutherans. As with Scholasticism, the extension of redeemed subjectivity to the whole world, to every sphere of life, to the totality of life, was lost sight of. The fullness of Christian freedom was reduced to conscientious certainty regarding external religious matters, the biblical and doctrinal texts of the church learned by rote, “grasped mainly... for the memory” (LHP 98). Treated as merely historical documents, their inherent summons to thought and reflective cognition was entirely neglected. It is the fundamentalist and dogmatist positivism that Hegel criticized so virulently in HF and LPR. The restriction of Christian faith to this “unspiritual mode”, this “arid form”, rendered Christian freedom vacuous. Exclusive preoccupation with “dogmatic content speculatively elaborated” meant that the interiorization and comprehensive application of the gospel to every sphere of life “got entirely set aside” (LHP 98).

Alternatively, in reaction to this arid dogmatism and biblicism, redeemed subjectivity was reduced in the opposite direction to scholastic pietism, an inwardness restricted to the elaborate


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analysis and cultivation of subjective feelings and dispositions. “The form of subjectivity - as faith, longing, repentance, conversion - became established as the preponderant element” (LHP 98). The subjective response to the gospel became an end in itself. The heart of religion became more and more “the subject[s]...delving deeply within itself, within its own heart” (LHP 98). Again the God-given vocation to reflective extension of the gospel, to philosophical application of the church’s Credo to the totality of human existence, was lost sight of.

This delving deeply within the self, its penitence, contrition, and conversion, this preoccupation of the subject with itself, was the moment that was said principally to have been legitimated [at the Reformation] (LHP 99).

With this increasing concentration upon subjectivity, albeit religious even Christian in form, the content of the gospel, whether in its original representational form as the eyewitness history of Jesus, or in its Patristic, doctrinal form, or in its Anselmian, philosophical form, was gradually lost:

[the subject did not delve more deeply into the content but cast away the mundane version of the universal content, though with it cast away as well the earlier plumbing of the depths of spirit: speculative elaboration was left to one side and abandoned (LHP 99).

Hegel suggests that on the whole the Catholic church fared rather better than the Protestant in this area:

the philosophical or speculative element is much greater in Catholic dogmatics...In the Catholic church the linkage of theology with philosophy has in substance always been preserved. In the Protestant church, by contrast, the subjective religious principle parted company with philosophy (LHP 99).

Modern Philosophy: The Loss of Necessity

With this deterioration of the Reformation into dogmatism and subjectivism we move into the modern era and the complementary emergence of modern philosophy as “independently abstract thinking”, philosophy that “leaves behind thinking’s unity with theology” (LHP 107f). Within the limits of this essay we cannot treat Hegel’s often profound account of modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant. It must suffice for our analysis of Hegelian necessity to treat of a remarkable passage (LHP 43f) in which Hegel distills the peculiar character of modern philosophy through implicit comparison with its opposite, namely his understanding of the necessity that characterizes Christian theological/philosophical truth. Contrary to Barth’s charge we shall see that ne-
cessity does not bind God but binds the autonomous, self-assertive independence that always threatens to distract the human person from the exclusive and comprehensive reality uniquely revealed in the gospel.

What Hegel describes and disapproves of reads very like Barth’s characterization of Hegel according to his threefold critique: ultimate reconciliation achieved through the identification of God and human subjectivity; the Incarnation supplanted by the thinking, conviction, and conscience of the human person as criterion of validity; and the reconciliation achieved having about it an immediate, self-authenticating, necessary character because it is the realization that all is one, that the self is the universal that is identical with itself, an abstract reconciliation that is the coming to awareness of the monadic oneness of everything in human subjectivity. Hegel describes this counterfeit philosophy not as its most notorious representative but in order to reject it as passionately as Barth does.

Hegel says that it is a recent phenomenon. Though he mentions no names he has in mind an Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment way of thinking which he elsewhere associates with Fichte, Jacobi, and Novalis among his near contemporaries. This counterfeit claims to have achieved ultimate reconciliation through the self’s resting in itself as the summation of all that is, in a form of inner reflection that is self-contained and self-authenticating, absolutely valid for itself. This abstract unity achieved within human subjectivity has no need of the Christian gospel which has ceased to be of any personal significance as entirely a matter of the past, of historical interest only, an outmoded form of reconciliation, a museum piece. It has been supplanted by the higher reality of what human subjectivity knows immediately within itself and constructs upon it. That which, however subjective its implications, relies upon something external, some form of media-


174 Cf. too Hodgson’s editorial footnote (LPR 3, 241, n. 207): “Hegel here describes the ideology of Enlightenment rationalism. It accepts the reflective critique of traditional religious dogma but substitutes for it merely subjective ethical and cognitive criteria, ending with abstract and empty self-identity over against the equally empty beyond”.

174 “[T]he subject is inwardly contented with itself just as it is, contented with its thoughts, its volition, its spiritual state, so that the subject, its own knowing, thinking and conviction, has become the summun - has the character of the divine, of what has validity in and for itself. This reconciliation, something universally spiritual, is thus posited within my subjective spirit and is identical with me, so that I myself am what is universally spiritual, so that I subsist within my immediate spirit and that my immediate knowing is the sole criterion of validity. This is the most recent form of reconciliation” (LHP 43).
tion not continuous with human subjectivity, - whether it be the church, doctrine, the Bible, or Jesus of Nazareth, - cannot hope to compete with the self-mediation of immediate subjective knowledge and conviction, which is at once immediate and mediated because it is the self-mediation of what is essentially identical. The human subject is the *sumnum.*

That God is absolutely, inalienably self-sufficient; that he is not therefore to be found, however deeply searched for, within individual, human subjectivity or the collective subjectivity of humanity; that he can be known only as he reveals himself where he has chosen to reveal himself; that his self-revelation is within the particularities of human history, has a determinate, concrete form and content. is in fact just one, exclusively singular human being, Jesus, God in human flesh: that the human subject must be engaged by, and itself engage with, enter into, this God so revealed: and that this mutual engagement, this mutual entering into, is accomplished by the Spirit of God through the preaching, doctrine, and reflective cognition of the content of the church’s confession: - all of this, which is true religion, theology and philosophy for Hegel, has vanished and, consigned to the past. has been supplanted by “the standpoint of the subject’s immediate reconciliation with itself” (*LHP* 44).

The truth of the gospel, - grounded as it is in the objective and self-authenticating being of God self-revealed in Jesus Christ as in and for himself the reconciler of the world, - makes a necessary, a sovereignly compelling, claim upon the human person. It does so because in that revelation the Spirit of God reconstitutes human subjectivity, restoring to it its original created identity so that the human subject in thinking itself, thinks itself as reconciled to God, and not only thinks it-

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174 "Once reconciliation has attained this latter shape, the position of the Christian religion that we set forth earlier holds no further interest; it is only something past, a matter of history. What we know or are convinced of, the way things reveal themselves immediately in each subject’s inwardness, that is what is true, what subsists in and for itself. All of the modes and processes by which the true, as what subsists in and for itself or as God, gets mediated with the human being, no longer hold any but a historical interest. That is all something we no longer need or care about. And in like fashion the teachings and system of doctrine of the Christian religion have the status of something strange, something belonging only to a particular time that the people of that time took seriously...Thus all that I have said about the principle of the Christian system of doctrine...is of interest only from the (earlier) standpoint we have stated, that is, where the idea has validity in its concrete determinateness, but not from the standpoint of the subject’s immediate reconciliation with itself” (*LHP* 43).

175 "This...most recent form of reconciliation...is one-sided, since what is spiritual is not grasped as subsisting objectively in and for itself but only as it is within my subjectivity as such, in my conscience. My conviction as such is taken to be what is ultimate...The idea in and for itself - that the idea is concrete, is spirit, and that the subject itself must enter into this idea - all this has vanished and appears only as something in the past” (*LHP* 43, 44).
self but thinks the world as so reconciled. The God who made me and all the world, in whom objectively I and the world live and move and have our being, the God concerning whom I and the world have hitherto been deceived so that we have reconstructed human identity as autonomously independent of God. - that same God has restored me and all the world to himself in Christ so that I and the world are participant in the identity of Jesus as Son of the Father. More than that, this God wills that through education in the Credo of the church I and the world should be reborn (cf. LPR 3, 234f) in the Spirit to subjective consciousness of our new identity, - existentially restored to the image of God in which we were made. The necessity in all of this is the exclusively compelling claim of reality, the christological reality which through the Spirit in the church determines my very identity. Reality is what it is because it is the work of the God who is sovereign and therefore free, absolutely self-sufficient. That reality must be what it is, is the compelling character of reality as demonstrated to the believing subject by philosophy, by reflective cognition, by interiorization and application of the gospel.

By contrast, the grounding of the claim of this more recent, subjective form of reconciliation is "my conviction", my having constituted reality and posited universal reconciliation "within my subjective spirit" (LHP 43). The one sided character of this grounding, its abstract disconnection from what is other than me (though on the way to positing ultimate reconciliation that other has been shown to be "empty of content"), ensures the inevitable contingency of its conclusions (LHP 43).

The atheism of this abstract unity that is achieved by emptying of content all that is not

--- Cf. esp. the discussions of reconciliation in the context of Hegel's giving an account of the Incarnation, in LPR 3 (see above, chap. 3, sect. 4); also his discussion of Luther in LHP (see above, chap. 4 and the section entitled "Luther, the Lutherans, and Company").

--- The reconstitution of human subjectivity through its being made participant in the immanent knowledge of God the Holy Trinity is explained by Martin Nys in terms of philosophy's reflection upon the affirmations of the Christian religion. Nys writes of Hegel's philosophy that it is the "rational...appropriation of the content of religion and the process of allowing that content...to disclose what on its own terms belongs to it"; he continues, "religion, as Hegel understands it, is not merely a human consciousness of a divine other, but 'the self-consciousness of absolute spirit'. In and through religious understanding, human selfhood knows itself in knowing its self-surpassing relation to what is absolute and divine, and knows what is absolute and divine as it knows itself in its knowledge of its other". By way of summary Nys includes his own paraphrase/translation of Encyclopedia #564: "'God is God insofar as God knows Godself. This knowledge, which God enjoys of Godself, is simultaneously but also further the self-consciousness that God enjoys of Godself in human selfhood. Divine knowledge of the divine indwelling in human selfhood brings about and is in this manner identical with the self's knowledge of God. The self's knowledge of God is, in turn its knowledge of its being as constituted in and through the divine indwelling'" (Martin J. De Nys, "Philosophical Thinking and the Claims of Religion", in New Perspectives..., Kolb, 1995, 23ff).

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within my subjectivity is no more satisfying and compelling than the acosmism\textsuperscript{79} of that opposite but strangely complementary abstract unity that is achieved by “submerg[ing]” human subjectivity “in the unity of God, of the infinite”, so that “subjectivity has no being on its own account” \textit{(LPR 242)}. Though both of these resemble the abstract reconciliation in thought that Barth suspects Hegel of propounding, they are rejected by Hegel as hollow precisely because they do not do justice to reality, to the integrity of God in his absolute self-sufficiency and of the human subject in its “being on its own account”, its “affirmative private sphere” \textit{(LPR 3: 242)}. One or the other is negated. The relational identity of real reconciliation, the paradigm of which is the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son in the Spirit, is replaced by an abstract identity that is monistic and therefore, in Hegel’s terminology, atheistic or acosmic.

\textsuperscript{79} Cf. especially Hegel’s discussion of Spinoza’s acosmism which he says is too often mistaken for atheism \textit{(LHP 162f; LPR 1: 377)}. 
Conclusion: Necessity, the Philosophical Task, and Theological Resources

To me it all seems to come down to Faith in [the Holy Mystery of the Person of Jesus Christ]...as the Divine Actualizer of the Idea of eternal truth, as the Living Truth itself assigning to all speculation its true and complete content, as God Himself who as man walks among men, who by His entry into the world first made possible a genetically progressive, ever more closely self-determining knowledge of truth in its divinely human and complete form.... I am happy to see from your judgment of the Aphorisms, [n9]...that as far as the important relations of faith and knowledge are concerned you have expressed yourself just as I expressed the hope you would...You have borne an important testimony to truth by declaring yourself so decisively Christian, seeing that precisely on this point judgments were not yet settled.

Windischmann\[n10]

Can we say more about philosophy as Hegel conceives of it when it is true to its God-given vocation? If Hegel’s objective idealism is not the manifestation, from the transcendent perspective of his dialectic, that God is all and all is God: if in other words it is neither acosmism, the world is really God coming to be, nor atheism, God is really the world coming to be; if instead it is the philosophy of the gospel, the content of the gospel in speculative form. - what will that mean that its task looks like?

In an adventurous three-part conclusion to this essay I shall venture first to define further, and in explicitly theological terms, what I think Hegel’s trinitarian necessity of reconciliation is. I shall then explain what I think the formal shape of the philosophical task, informed by the trinitari-

\[n8: Hegel reviewed Karl Friedrich Goschel’s Aphorisms in 1829. His 40 page review included the following: “The rare excellence of this work...consists in the fact that the author’s pious mind proves itself to be thoroughly imbued both with the truth of the old, i.e., of the authentic doctrines of the Christian faith and with the need for the thinking reason and (what is more) in its diligently practised formation.... The distinction between Christianity and philosophical thinking which is wont to be falsely presented as an infinite existence and a gap that cannot be filled, is at once put aside: at this depth this pretended distance is not present at all” (quoted by Philip Merklinger in Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel’s Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821-1827, State University of New York Press, 1993, 1877).

\[n9: This conflates two letters received by Hegel from his long-time friend (their correspondence continued from 1809 to 1829), the medical doctor, “philosopher of some repute”, and “noted lay Catholic theologian” (Butler’s editorial comment, Letters 558), Karl Joseph Hieronymus Windischmann (Letters 566).
an paradigm of the gospel, would look like as developed worldliness: actualization that combines interiorization in the private realm and application in the public realm. Finally, I shall briefly summarise the resources for theology which I believe may be profitably looked for in Hegel’s philosophy. The adventurous character of this material is its venturing to some extent beyond what Hegel has explicitly stated in his writings, though it is not I think inconsistent with their implications and as such should follow quite naturally from all that we have observed so far.

Necessity

Necessity is the compelling character of the logic of the God whose acts always precede and reveal their own possibility. As Barth says of Hegel’s God: “God is God only in his divine action, revelation, creation, reconciliation, redemption; as an absolute act, as actus purus” (PT 283). Where the possibility of something logically precedes its enactment, and where that possibility is attainable independently of its subsequent enactment, the ability to demonstrate its necessity would imply having transcended the apparent initiator, enactor, of the act in question, and discovered a cause for the action outside of, prior to, its enactor. On the other hand, where actuality precedes and defines its own possibility, carrying with it its own logic, its necessity is within itself. Its necessity is its self-consistency, its faithfulness to itself. ‘I am that I am’ is its own necessity.

The gospel includes God’s gracious invitation to penetrate some way into the logic of his acts. It is the invitation to theo-logic. It elicits faith seeking understanding; it is the certainty of faith, the self-evident character of the saving acts of God, calling forth reflection upon that certainty, that self-evidence. The necessity attaching to the acts of God is the logic of God’s absolute freedom, his being accountable to himself alone.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the conceptualization for thought of the self-reflexive freedom, the inner necessity, the theo-logic, of God. The necessity of the gospel of reconciliation is the absolute freedom for absolute faithfulness of the Father and the Son, - revealed in the incarnate life of Jesus and illuminated by the Spirit of God. The necessity inherent in the freedom of the Son is his being absolutely free precisely in his being the one who says, “the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing”; “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me”.

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\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}} \text{Jn. 5.19; 6.38.}\]

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precisely his being glorified by the Son whose freedom is his uncompromising obedience to the Father. Necessity, far from compromising the sovereign freedom and grace of God, is the absolutely compelling character of the revelation, in act, of God. Its necessity is its laying upon humanity an absolute and exclusive claim. Unbelief, the rejection of that claim, can only be the impossible possibility: "Jesus was amazed at their unbelief." 183

Philosophy is reflection on the certainty of faith as the only appropriate response to the logic, the self-authentication, that attaches to the acts of God. 184 The necessity that attaches to the gospel of the mighty acts of God is the dynamic of that gospel as it evokes faith and presses on to its comprehensive inwardization and application, until the whole earth is the Lord's in actuality, as it already is the Lord's ideally, really, in Christ.

Responsive Actualization

I might also have entitled this, First Steps in (what Paul Ramsey called) Metaethics. 185 Above all, the Trinity and Christology are paradigmatic for thinking about the world. 186 In Christ, the world has been reconciled to God. That reconciliation is its being set free for participation in the unity of the Son with the Father in the Spirit. The same trinitarian Spirit that is integral to the immanent life of God is at work in the world realizing, actualizing, the gospel of reconciliation through the church as the first-fruits of that reconciliation.

Philosophically, as developed worldliness, the trinitarian paradigm is the threefold concept of unity or identity, difference, and reconciliation. It is perfectly realized in the immanent trinitarian life of God revealed in the gospel and developed for thought, conceptualized, in patristic doctrine.

183 Mk. 6.6

184 "If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 Jn. 5.9ff).

185 "Christian theological ethics is metaethics, and the Christian community in all ages is a standing metaethical community of discourse" (Paul Ramsey, quoted by Oliver O'Donovan in Resurrection and Moral Order, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1986, 8).

186 "[Hegel] sought to relate the significance of the christological truth claim to the total inherited and present cultural experience of mankind. Hegel was convinced that truth is one and so he attempted to demonstrate that the ultimately convincing power of the Christian witness lies in its potential for integrating and unifying the whole of human life - personal and corporate" (James Yerkes, The Christology of Hegel, Missoula, 1978, 322f).
Philosophy serves the world by discernment, and by the application of that paradigm, that concept, to all aspects of life in the world.\(^5^7\)

The logic of the world is analogously trinitarian. The unity out of which the difference, the otherness, that is the created world emerges is the world's being conceived by the Father in the Son who, as the Word of God, is the Word of creation. Hegel insists on the creation of the world being contained within, bound up inextricably with, the Father's begetting of the Son. The Patristic doctrine of creation is the affirmation that difference, otherness, in the world as in God is good. The doctrine of the fall is the negative description of difference when it is self-abolsutized, self-assertively independent, over against the rest of creation and over against God. The Christian gospel, the salvation of the world in Christ, affirms the essential goodness of difference, - it is of God; at the same time it shows it to be penultimate. Unity, reconciliation, that has as its paradigm the unity of the Father and the Son in the Spirit, is ultimate.

Philosophy cannot on its own know this apart from the gospel, except perhaps hypothetically, abstractly, and therefore inevitably distortedly. That reality is this way, that reconciliation is the law of the world, that created reality is set free in Christ from the lie of absolute and independent subjectivity, - is the gift of the gospel, conceptualized for thought in the doctrines of the Patristic church. Creation and everything within it is teleologically ordered\(^5^8\) to reconciliation.

\(^5^7\) For an account of a striking example of Barth's rejection of all of this see Appendix 3.

\(^5^8\) I mean by "teleologically ordered" what Hegel intends by his notorious and controversial statement, What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational (Philosophy of Right (PR), trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford, 1952, 10). Sean Sayers writes that "Hegel is at pains to insist that he distinguishes mere 'existence' from what is 'actual' and that he is not justifying all that exists as rational...It is also vital to see that he is not merely reducing the actual to the rational or vice versa. The relationship between these opposites is conceived as a concrete and dialectical one...There are things which exist and yet which lack 'actuality' in Hegel's sense, for actuality is 'the unity of essence and existence, inward and outward' (Logic, trans. W. Wallace, Oxford, 1975, 142). An existing thing is actual only when its existence is in harmony with its essence; when its existence corresponds with its proper function or idea. On the other hand, 'when this unity is not present, a thing is not actual even though it may have acquired existence. A bad state is one which merely exists; a sick body exists too, but it has no genuine reality' (PR 283)...'objects are true if they are as they ought to be; i.e. if their reality corresponds to their notion. When thus viewed, the untrue is much the same as to be bad. A bad man is an untrue man' (Logic 276)... [In fact] nothing finite is fully actual or rational...'God alone is the thorough harmony of notion and reality. All finite things involve an untruth: they have a notion and an existence, but their existence does not meet the requirements of the notion' (Logic 41)... The world as it is, the existing state of things, must be criticised and transformed: reason must be realised, it must be made actual.... 'To consider a thing rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object from the outside and so to tamper with it, but to find that the object is rational on its own account' (PR 340)" (Sean Sayers, "The actual and the Rational", in Hegel and modern Philosophy, ed. David Lamb, New York, 1987, 143ff),
Hegel was asked for an explanation of his thoughts on truth by Edouard-Casimir Duboc.\footnote{Duboc was a French-born hat manufacturer living in Hamburg who had become interested in the Hegelian philosophy (cf. above, the quotation at the head of chap. 3).} His response, too long to quote here, nicely illustrates this teleological account of reality, and of knowledge as discernment of the concept, the purpose, the truth, immanent in each thing, the undistorted realization or reenactment of which it is philosophy's vocation to serve.\footnote{The letter is long, but is helpfully summarized by Butler as follows: "[t]ruth for Hegel is not primarily an attribute of subjective representations insofar as they conform to externally given objects. Nor is it such a correspondence insofar as the object is not externally given but is constituted by the knowing mind \textit{a la} Vico [and the letter includes a lengthy discussion of Kant]. It is rather, in the first instance, an attribute of objectively existing things themselves insofar as they succeed in overcoming their 'finitude' or self-contradiction to exist in conformity with their own immanent concepts. [Butler does not mention that Hegel relates this first instance of the truth in things to the knowledge of God who is "alone truly true" and who gives the trinitarian paradigm, the "Idea" of \textit{being, becoming and reconciliation}, as the truth of contingent reality, for our knowledge of the world (\textit{Letters} 493).] Following the lead of ordinary language, which itself speaks interchangeably of, for example, "true friend" and a "good friend", Hegel identifies in quasi-Platonic fashion the true with the good and, ultimately, with the beautiful. The quest for truth is first converted into a practical quest to actualize the concept. But since the concept of things is a standard of self-development internal to them, practical striving for the good issues in aesthetic contemplation of the dialectic by which things actualize their own immanent good or truth without external Fichtean striving on our part. The good as immanent in things, actions, persons, and institutions is precisely the beautiful, \textit{i.e.}, the beauty of the object existing in harmonious correspondence with itself. And the reenactment of the conceptual development of the good and beautiful in things - which Hegel calls the 'scientific presentation of the Idea' - yields truth in the secondary sense of a faithful reconstruction" (\textit{Letters} 491).}

At the same time it must be said that the comprehensive reconciliation to which all things are intrinsically, teleologically ordered does nothing to compromise the \textit{difference}, the plurality, of God's world: rather it is a reconciliation that delivers the world from humanity's enslavement to the lie of fulfilment through absolute, self-assertive independence. Philosophy redeemed by the gospel is set free for comprehensive and unprejudiced attention to the multifarious diversity and purposive interrelatedness of the fullness and vitality of all of life. And the philosopher is so set free as partic-
ipant within that fullness.¹⁹¹

Barth brilliantly captures Hegel’s determination to do justice to the fullness of life. For Hegel, he says, everything must be known to be, essentially, event (PT 282). All is life, movement, process. There is no possibility of stopping, standing back from the comprehensive reality that is ceaselessly in motion, identifying this or that moment, and claiming to have got hold of the truth once and for all, and in such a way that surrender to the movement of reality is no longer necessary. that one now stands, as it were, above it all and summons it to answer before oneself. Barth calls this the grossest misunderstanding (PT 283). It is “error, lying and sin”, which are nothing other than “obstinate one-sidedness, a blind lingering and stopping” that refuses “obedience to the self-movement of the concept” (PT 286). We must know life and do philosophy by jumping in and swimming with it, in direct contrast to the Gascon/Scholastic who would learn to swim before getting into the water.¹⁹² And if that is true of life and philosophy, it is preeminently true of God.

“God is God only in his divine action. revelation. creation. reconciliation. redemption: as an abso-

¹⁹¹ “A philosophy which tries to talk about the sort of thing which Hegel talks about can, of necessity, only speak adequately if it is also silent, only know if it is also ignorant. This is indeed the problem with Hegel’s philosophy; but it is also the problem of that philosophy. It is what that philosophy, at its innermost core, is about” (John Walker, “Hegel and Religion” in Hegel and Modern Philosophy, ed. David Lamb, New York, 1987, 219).

¹⁹² Though it is a Gascon in one source for the 1824 “Introduction” to LPR 1, 139. in every other case, including Hegel’s use of this anecdote in the 1827 “Introduction” (LPR 1, 169) and in LHP, it is a Scholastic, as it is in the original, “The Friend of Laughter”, a collection of witticisms from late antiquity, written in Greek (cf. Peter Hodgson’s editorial comment. LPR 1. 169 n. 51).
lute act, as *actus purus* (PT 283).

If we are to appreciate Hegelian philosophy, “we must not think of a rigid, stable construction”. There is no possibility of arriving at a “tranquil picture of his views”. He will not let us. “With him we are only to look, and look again and again, and anyone who thinks he sees stable points and lines, quantities and relationships, is not in fact seeing what Hegel is seeking to show us” (PT 283).[^13] And what he is seeking to show us is nothing less than life itself. Barth is careful to guard against any compromise of Hegel’s appreciation of the fullness, the totality of life. So he writes of the full movement, the observed fullness, the rhythm of life itself (PT 283). Philosophy is the exact and continual recollection of this life. The rhythm, the heartbeat of life is the heartbeat of philosophy. This in turn is “the famous dialectical method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis”. Life, “the picture itself” is continually recollected and reproduced in and by the method. The method of philosophy is the method of Reason, and life is the event of Reason. In the recalling and reproducing of the fullness of its movement, life is given permanency and validity (PT 283f).

If anything is missing in this thrilling description by Barth of the realism and vitality of Hegel’s thought and vision, it is the gospel revelation of the redemption of this abundant life which, for Hegel, is inextricably bound up with what he intends by Reason, philosophy, and the dialectical method. Philosophy that is rooted in the gospel revelation of reconciliation is philosophy attentive to the fullness of life, and active in serving the undistorted realization, liberation, and reconciliation of that fullness which as a whole and in all its parts is purposive, teleologically ordered.

As such, philosophy will be characterised by delight, discernment, and responsive action. Redeemed philosophy may, and is called to, *delight* in the world, its actuality, its sheer, God-given facticity: “affective[ly] attent[ive] to something simply for what it is and for the fact that it is”.[^14] Delight and enjoyment characterise Hegel’s correspondence: as one example, remembering their trip together in France Hegel expresses his gratitude to his friend, Victor Cousin, for “procuring for me the facilities, counsel, and means to instruct myself and enjoy everything;” (Letters. 665, my italics). When he is away, his letters home to his wife are rich in detailed de-[^13]

[^13]: Could not Barth be writing of his own work in these words? Does this not portray Hegel as a witness to a reality that he has not mastered but by which he has been mastered?

[^14]: In providing succinct descriptions of delight, discernment and responsive action I have quoted three times from Oliver O’Donovan’s description of the wisdom of love in the introductory chapter of *Resurrection and Moral Order*. (Leicester, 1986, 26). Hegel is nowhere to be found in that chapter; I have expropriated O’Donovan’s descriptions, as they seem so aptly to describe Hegel’s understanding of the philosophical task.
scriptions of countryside, art galleries, cathedrals, and people that he has seen as he has traveled; his delight is palpable (cf. Letters. 594, 597, 599, etc.). The same delight is evident in his fondness for his family and friends, his wanting time with his sons whom he “loves”: “I will embrace you all with deep joy” (cf. Letters. 660, 656, 661, etc.).

Redeemed philosophy may also, and is called to, give itself to patient discernment of the world. “the intellectual apprehension of the order of things which discloses how each being stands in relation to each other”. Thereby it serves the world in its response to God’s call to realize in every aspect of its life its having already been reconciled once for all in Christ. This reconciliation is to be worked out, maintained and developed at every level of the life of the world whether ecclesial, political, scientific, familial, artistic, educational, or any other level. Philosophy is to articulate the God-given and multivalent coherence of the world. And it is to do so not from some transcendent, angelic point of view, but from within the almost infinite diversity and changing reality of the world in time.

Again and again this discernment is evident so naturally in Hegel’s correspondence: the lengths to which he would go in order to get the latest material on the religions of the world, especially first-hand material: detailed descriptions and comparisons of works of art, as Correggio’s Night that surpasses Holbein’s Madonna and Child because, among other things, “the light radiates likewise from the child... She [the Madonna] smiles on the child as do the surroundings. Everything is serene and yet more serious [than in the Holbein]” (Letters. 595, 609): detailed and passionate comparisons of English and French acting: of the English actor, Kemble, “ghastly, crazy... English rage... [they] completely lose their minds... raging about... horrid... Equally botched Romeo and Juliet’s first encounter”; this is not Hegel’s obsession with thought and intellect at the

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2 “Philosophy, Hegel insists, should study actuality. The content of Hegel’s work is thoroughly realistic: to a remarkable and unique degree for a modern philosopher. It covers a truly encyclopedic range of topics, treated in a thoroughly concrete and empirically detailed manner” (Sean Sayers, “The Actual and the Real” in Hegel and modern Philosophy, ed. David Lamb, New York, 1987, 144).

3 Louis Dupré writes of Hegel’s “concern for an empirical investigation of the content of each religion. In his discussion of Roman religion he was well in advance of his contemporaries. His analysis of the Greek religion of the classical period, however restricted in scope, has remained deservedly famous. But even his treatments of Hinduism and Buddhism are surprisingly perceptive, considering the scarcity of sources at his disposal. Precisely a mature awareness of the complexity of those faiths caused Hegel constantly to rearrange their order” (Louis Dupré, “Transitions and Tensions in Determinate Religion”, in New Perspectives..., Kolb, 1995, 90).
expense of heart and will; rather it is his appreciation of acting that does not impose itself upon and exploit the script, but with intelligent discernment draws out and allows to be seen, heard and felt, the essential integrity of the text;¹⁴⁸ as is also evident in his description of the French actress, Mlle. Mars, in *Valerie*: “quiet deportment...unfailingly correct, intelligent, full of feeling at the proper places. Not a single eye had an easy time staying dry...She is supremely moving, but just as essentially expresses a correct understanding of the role, i.e., the inner thoughtfulness” (*Letters* 657, 659). In a similar vein are his comparisons of French, German, and Italian operas and opera singers. He is especially partial to Rossini and to Italian singers, and for similar reasons to those given for his fondness for Mlle. Mars: the passion is not forced and alien but free, responsive to and arising out of the particular character of the music, “immediately free of mere yearning...the true ringing of naturalness is ignited...the sound is freedom and passion”; and again there is Hegel’s enthusiastic, rapturous responsiveness to the feeling of it all, not at all reduced to thought and intellect: “the singers blissfully...with open breast and soul...the divine furor...melodic stream spreading rapture, penetrating and freeing every situation...Rossini whose operas are essentially passion and soulfulness” (*Letters*, 628). We may cite too the long and wonderful reflection on his visit to Cologne Cathedral, too long to quote here, but expressive again of responsive discernment at several levels, not least, theological; and this incidentally in the same letter in which he tells his wife of his friend, Windischmann’s healing “through prayer”, which Hegel simply accepts as a miracle, disclosing his faith in the unpredictable and incomprehensible grace and freedom of God, uncompromised by his commitment to necessity (*Letters*, 585). It is not only culture and beauty as evocations of the ideal that call forth his attention, but particular and present actuality in every guise: a slaughterhouse in Paris (*Letters* 660), and the poor. Amidst all the beauty and plenty of bourgeois Belgium and Holland he wonders “where the common people and the poor are put up...Dilapidated houses, broken-down roofs, decayed doors, and broken windows are nowhere to be seen”, though “from around Aachen to Liege the road crawls with beggars” (*Letters* 599, 597).

Finally, as responsive action redeemed philosophy “achieves its creativity by being perceptive: it attempts to act for any being only on the basis of an appreciation of that being”.¹⁹ We can compare again Hegel’s rejection of “external Fichtean striving on our part” (*Letters* 491) in favour

¹⁴⁸ Cf. above, in this section, Hegel’s rejection of “external Fichtean striving on our part”, *Letters* 491.

of "aesthetic contemplation of the dialectic by which things actualize their own immanent good or truth". issuing in the reenactment, the reconstruction. the realization or actualization "of the conceptual development of the good and beautiful in things". We recall words. already quoted: "[f]aith...is cognizant of [the light of Eternity]...as the truth, as the substance of present existence" (LPR I, 114f).

Hegel objected to the Catholic claim on behalf of ecclesiastical sacralization and artistic aesthetization of the world and the gospel. that they are the highest forms of developed worldliness.

An even higher expression was its modern philosophically comprehended Protestant political expression. Through the incipient descent of the Kingdom of God. the finite is politically sacralized; and the Protestant finally achieves a deeper participatory actualization of the Incarnation than is possible aesthetically. In a letter to his friend Victor Cousin. written in 1828. Hegel reflects on the present political scene and demonstrates something of what this responsive action. this political actualization that does not impose itself externally but serves the inherent purposes in things. looks like in practice. It is by no means an old man's reactionary surrender to the status quo. expressive of an immanent fatalism. He rejoices in the recent electoral defeat of the ultra-Royalists by the Liberal opposition:

[above all. I share...satisfaction...of seeing a philosophy professor...at the head of the Chamber of Deputies [in Paris], whose composition has so furiously surprised the powers that be. But there is still much to be done. especially the resumption of your lectures. It seems that the field is yielded only gradually. and that they are letting themselves be gently forced...Actually I have the feeling that what is essential has been won. which is to have instilled at the highest levels the conviction that the course taken so far can neither be continued nor resumed. that it has been - albeit with regret - inwardly renounced. so that it is now only a question of following through in matters of detail and of consequences. though it is often precisely from them that one shrinks back (Letters 665).

I have sketched an Hegelian metaethics of delight. discernment. and responsive action for life within a world analogously ordered along trinitarian and Christological lines. The idealist character of this philosophy is its seeing the actuality of the world Christologically. Really reconciled in Christ. the world is to become actually reconciled. Philosophy's vocation is to serve that actualiza-

Cf. earlier in this conclusion the lengthier reference to Letter 422. Letters. 491ff.

See above. chap. 2. and the sect. entitled "God for the Whole Human Person".

Butler's editorial comments in Letters 615.
tion. Had Hegel been writing in the twentieth century he might have described his philosophy not as objective idealist but as Christological eschatological: ‘eschatological’ in that it points to the teleological orderedness of creation; ‘Christological’ because it describes God and the world as revealed in Christ.

*Hegelian Resources for Theology*

In what ways is Hegel a resource for theology today? First, he exemplifies the determination to do justice to the created and the fallen dimensions of the world. Acknowledging the absolute antithesis between God and humanity by virtue of the fall, he nevertheless insists upon the essential complementarity of the divine and human natures by virtue of creation. The priority of created complementarity over fallen antithesis derives from the mysterious groundedness of creation in the eternal begottenness of God the Son.

Hegel exemplifies, secondly, a commitment to the Incarnation, including climactically the cross and the resurrection, as the unsurpassable and central event for time and eternity. The death and resurrection of God in Christ is the death and resurrection of humanity. As such it includes the ontological reconstitution and liberation of human subjectivity and therefore of human rationality. No longer in Adam autonomously and antagonistically disposed towards all objectivity, whether God’s, the world’s, or the self’s, in Christ it rediscovers willing openness and appropriate responsiveness to the divinely constituted real. God and his creation are appreciated, known, and knowable as God, and as his creation.

Hegel knows and invites us to know, thirdly, the self-authenticating power of the Word of God as the real that is God’s reality, ideal reality. That Word, that reality, underlies and gives rise to the new human subjectivity. The God-given real in Christ lays its sovereign, necessary claim upon humanity’s allegiance, which is the appropriate responsiveness of faith seeking understanding. That allegiance is perfect freedom. Hegel exemplifies the confident willingness to articulate and champion that necessary claim.

Hegel, fourthly, recovers for the church its proper vocation. As the community of God’s Spirit possessed of the mind of Christ it is called to serve the universal personal interiorization and public actualization of the gospel. It does so by discerning and acting for the full realization of the inherent proclivity to reconciliation in Christ of all created being.
In these ways at least theology may look to Hegel for rich resources as it endeavours to articulate in modern and post-modern contexts the doctrines of creation and fall, Christology and soteriology, pneumatology and ecclesiology, ethics and eschatology. In looking to him as a fellow member of the catholic church, we will find much to confirm his claim to have respected and defended in his philosophy the doctrines of the church, more faithfully than his contemporaries and near contemporaries in their philosophies and theologies. But as Barth asks, will we tolerate such a theologically invasive demand to “found [our] philosophy upon theology, and eventually allow [our] philosophy to be transformed into theology”? (PT 298) Will we allow ourselves “to be taught by him much more thoroughly” than his theological contemporaries and successors down to the present day? Or. will we too shrink back? We would do well to heed Barth’s suggestive and cautionary question of theologians since Hegel, “[w]ho knows whether it was not in fact the genuinely theological element in Hegel which made [them] shrink back” (PT 305)?
APPENDIX 1

Barth’s Four Criteria for Doing Historical Theology

Barth developed his four criteria for doing historical theology in his introductory essay to Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl. He called the essay, “The Task of a History of Modern Protestant Theology” (HT). The four criteria are,

1. participatory encounter:

[we know history only when and in that something happens in us and for us...an event concerns us...we are there...we participate in it (HT 16); [A]n action of our own...somehow encounters, corresponds to or even contradicts the action of another...another's action somehow becomes a question to which our own action has to give some sort of answer (HT 17).

2. ecclesial collegiality:

[they are in search of the answer to a question that concerns us, too...a question which is raised for men by the Christian revelation that is the foundation of the church (HT 27). I have to count all these people as members of the Christian church (HT 28). Like me, they were ultimately concerned with the Christian faith (HT 28).

3. courtesy: a historical figure must be read not as a “pretext”, but as a “presupposition”(HT 22). As a pretext “the wise man of the past” (HT 19) “has to play a role corresponding with my own point of view” (HT 20); he is “used simply as a means to our ends...strengthening a position that has already been adopted” (HT 22). As a presupposition “he is...allowed to have his own say” (HT 20); “they have a claim on our courtesy, a claim that their own concerns should be heard...” (HT 22); or “knowledge of history is honestly sought as a presupposition of one's own position” (HT 22).

In theology, we have beyond question not only the right but even the duty to be clear about the degree and manner in which our own particular approach was already present in an earlier time; we have to see how the peculiar theological concern of our own historical context was already seen and developed at an earlier date, or how far it was overlooked and neglected. It is quite legitimate for us to carry on a controversy, both positively and negatively, with the past in this way (HT 29).
and 4. historical awareness:

...we must take seriously the difference between them and ourselves...They obviously speak quite a different language from us...Its content, too, is different, in that the common vocabulary of the Christian church which we both share is stressed, evaluated, used, classified and interpreted in quite another way...They translated and interpreted the same text in a particular way that is quite different from ours...were troubled in quite a different way from us...Real historical knowledge of another period must consist in an awareness of its peculiarity and otherness, of its subsidiary themes...controversy originating in our own time must not be allowed to dominate the proceedings. We must always - under the presupposition of the unity of the church - investigate the particular context and concern of the past and understand this from its own relative centre and not from ours (HT 28f).
APPENDIX 2

The Vitality of the Word: Hegel’s Poetical Last Will and Testament

Hegel’s awareness of the inherent vitality of the gospel as the activity of the Spirit of the living God in the world, so that the task of the church is rightly described as service of, as an attentive waiting upon, the truth as that which has its own initiative and purpose, is discreetly suggested in the poem which Hegel wrote just a few months before his death, and which has been described as “a kind of last will and testament to his spiritual heirs”¹ The poem was his response to the request, also in poetic form, of a student, Heinrich Stieglitz, “to give again, like a Sorcerer, the magic word which his apprentices in their disarray had forgotten”. As Butler rightly adds, “Hegel’s rhymed response...was a charge to students to free themselves of apprenticeship in the mere letter, in spiritless and hence forgotten words of magic”. But then Butler describes what he believes Hegel is prescribing instead, “faith in the further world-historical efficacy and destiny of his [Hegel’s] thought, and readiness to surrender to that efficacy”. So to read him entails identifying “the word”, to which in the poem Hegel calls his readers, with his own thought: it is in other words Hegel’s word. It seems to me far more likely, more consistent with Hegel’s own writings particularly of the last decade of his life, that “the Word” should be capitalized. Within the poem itself the speaker understands himself to be waiting upon and driven by “the Word” which has its own initiative and purpose in and for the world. What is called for is an appropriate “reciprocall” response. Of course the original German does not settle this particular disagreement as all nouns are capitalized in that language. If the “w” should not be capitalized, then, again in the light of the Hegelian texts of the 1820’s, it is Hegel’s word as a testimony to the divine Word which it is philosophy’s vocation to serve. Here is the poem in its original context.

Hegel to Stieglitz...the day after [Hegel’s birthday] August 27, 1831

Such a greeting from my friend I welcome,
But with this greeting now a call for resolve has come,
For a deed of words to conjure up - no less -
The many - friends included - enraged to madness.
Yet what means “crime” to those accused by you,
If not that each but wants to hear himself, to do the talking, too.
Thus the Word that was to ward the evil off

¹ This and all further quotations in this paragraph are from Clark Butler’s editorial comment, Letters 679f., 101
Becomes another means to increase the mischief,
And if this Word, as it has long driven me, were at last to escape,
Your call would bind me to proceed with daring and not to wait,
But to hope that to this Word other spirits would reciprocate,
That empty grievances should not dissipate this Word,
That these spirits may bear it to the people and put it to work!
- From the little castle atop Kreuzberg

Hegel²

²Letters 680. I have capitalized the 'w' in "Word"; Butler and Seiler do not.
Human Theology or God’s Very Own Theology: Barth and the Pure Fantasy of the Hegelian Solution

What amounts to Barth’s rejection of my version of an Hegelian metaethics, as “a pure fantasy, really ‘too beautiful to be true’” is eloquently set forth in the chapter called “Solitude” which opens the third section, “The Threat to Theology”, in one of Barth’s last books, Evangelical Theology: An Introduction. Barth begins in terms with which Hegel would have been altogether in sympathy. The inevitable isolation of the theologian seems not to correspond to the essence of theology.

The work and word of God are the reconciliation of the world with God, as it was performed in Jesus Christ. The object of theology, therefore, is the most radical change of the situation of all humanity; it is the revelation of this change which affects all men.

Surely this will mean that theology’s object must provide a prototype and pattern for all sciences. No wonder the attempt is made (and Barth has in mind, in particular, Paul Tillich) “to integrate theology with the rest of the sciences or with culture itself as represented by philosophy and, vice versa, to set culture, philosophy, and other sciences in an indissoluble correlation with theology”.

“What solutions! What prospects! ‘Would that we were there!’” But we are not. Barth identifies the goal that according to this project is taken to be attainable here and now, as either the paradisial state before the fall, the perfected state which will only be inaugurated with the second coming of Jesus Christ, or the divine and archetypal presumption of having attained to “God’s very own theology”. Admittedly, were such a state attainable, such theology/philosophy would indeed “be the philosophy either because the light of God illuminates it, or because it is identical with this light”. Such however is not the case. “All that men may here and now know and undertake is human theology... theology typical not of God but of... men who are pilgrims”.

Human theology is undertaken by people who are at once still blinded and already enlightened with knowledge through the grace of God. Their pilgrim character, their being between the times, their

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1 See above, chap. 5, and the section entitled “Responsive Actualization”.


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being no longer in paradise, not yet perfected, and never to be gods, means that they “do not yet view the glory of the coming universal revelation”.

There is therefore only a mutually exclusive either/or that lies before the theologian: on the one hand, and to be rejected according to Barth, the theologia archetypa, or paradisiaca, or comprehensorum; on the other, the theologia ektypa, or viatorum. They are two different things and the theologian’s problem and task “can only be the latter, not the former”. Barth does acknowledge the very real longing and hope that looks toward the perfected theology, “the vision of the unity of all sciences in God or of the unity of the origin and goal of their study”. But “realism demands the renunciation” of all attempts to realize the syntheses before the time: “the theologian must still carefully avoid trying to produce from his own resources that perfection”.

Leaving aside Tillich’s particular project, I want to ask Barth why it cannot be part of the theologian’s legitimate task to approximate to the unity of all sciences in God, to press toward the perfected theology, not from the theologian’s own resources in so far as those are not the gifts of grace, the gospel, and the Spirit in the church, but as one who, baptized into Christ in the church, is in Barth’s words “already enlightened with knowledge through the grace of God”? Without claiming more than partial insight into the comprehensive actualization of gospel reconciliation, is the endeavour itself so absolutely illegitimate? I have undertaken in my conclusion to this essay5 to show what such an undertaking might look like. It assumes that the trinitarian character of God is paradigmatic, in Barth’s words a prototype and pattern, for the logic of creation. Certainly that is Hegel’s contention.

Barth emphatically rejects such an undertaking:

theological knowledge, thought, and speech cannot become general truths, and general knowledge cannot become theological truth...[The people of God] will not try to integrate its knowledge of...the work and word of God...as a supremely novel event...with the different knowledge of its environment or, in reverse order, the different knowledge of its environment with its own knowledge...[Theology] dare not try to break free of its solitude.

5Ibid.
APPENDIX 4

Hegel in the Church Dogmatics

In Church Dogmatics (CD) Barth forsakes the Hegel of legitimate promise and challenge for almost exclusive preoccupation with Hegel as disappointment and temptation. Significantly, whereas PT is rich in direct quotation of Hegel, in CD there are no such quotations. I shall look at all of the important references to Hegel in CD categorizing them according to the threefold critique of PT.

The First Criticism

In relation to the first criticism, the reduction of God to human consciousness and thought, in a passage on the vestigiartrinitatis (CD I. 1. 337ff) Barth recalls Hegel’s identification of the Trinity with the structure of human consciousness, which he says derives directly or indirectly from Augustine’s theory of the vestigium trinitatis within the human soul which “was more...than a mere vestigium”. Barth warns against taking Augustine’s theory too seriously. Take it as a “helpful hint...not...as a proof” because “we need to know and believe the Trinity already if we are really to perceive its vestigia”. Hegel, he says, sees the Trinity as a representation of human consciousness which philosophical reason demythologizes or conceptualizes. Whereas for Augustine the structure of human consciousness is supplementary to the Trinity, for Hegel exactly the reverse is the case.

On several occasions (CD I. 2. 320; II. 1. 270; II. 1. 282). Barth cites Hegel as a classic example of atheistic monism. We are reminded of Barth’s account of Hegel in PT as katasarka, comprehended entirely on one side of the biblical antithesis of sarx and Pneuma, of which Hegel was not even aware so that his Geist is entirely on the side of created reality, altogether other than the Holy Spirit of God. In the first of the three passages, Hegel’s “in and for itself of the absolute Spirit” is really atheism in disguise. He serves the same purpose as mysticism, pursuing the goal of that “formless and unrealized vacuum, where knowledge and object are...the same thing.” “Atheism means a blabbing out of the secret” which Hegel and mysticism, among others, strive to conceal. In the second passage God is “ourselves”. Hegel’s description of God “is not a description of God whose movement is infinitely more than our self-movement even when the
latter is hypostatized.” Barth refers to the absence of God as “self-motivated” and as “a particular idea”. Such talk of God cannot be taken seriously and is little more than mythical language for describing human “attainment of...self-consciousness”. In the third passage Barth compares Hegel with Biedermann and even the “pious blasphemies” of Angelus Silesius. (The passage is an example of Barth at his most mischievous and amusing.) God is “the self-determination...of the absolute world-process.” The “tendency” here, “to say the least”, is toward “the identification of God and the world-process”. The evil consequence of this is to “forsake...and forget...the actuality of God’s love as seen in his revelation”, and to replace it with, and here the explicit comparison is made with Hegel, a general and “not incontestable” concept of love.

A brief but important mention of Hegel occurs in an extended discussion of Heidegger (CD III. 3. 335), where Barth says that Heidegger

agrees with Hegel that ‘pure being and pure nothing are one and the same’. The older affirmation: ex nihilo nihil fit must be amended to read: ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit [Barth refers to Sein und Zeit 377].

This too relates to the Hegelian synthesis that does away with all antitheses including, through an allegedly faulty doctrine of creation, the distinction between Creator and created.

We saw that Barth’s first criticism of Hegel included his illegitimately rendering sin and salvation humanly comprehensible, their necessity philosophically demonstrable. Barth returns to this in CD IV. 1. 375f (cf. 374). He notes that Hegel’s account of sin comes in a section of his lectures which he entitles “The Kingdom of the Son” (this is in the 1821 series of lectures).

Whereas this might imply that it is Christ who reveals what sin is, in fact for Hegel sin is known independently of our knowledge of Christ. Also, and this too Barth criticized in PT, “there is an unbroken continuity between creation, sin and atonement.” They are moments within the unfolding of the comprehensive reality of mind.

As a final passage from CD relating to Barth’s first criticism of Hegel we come to the first of the interesting positive exceptions (I. 1. 244).¹ The passage is part of a reply to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the analogiaentis. Over against it Barth sets the analogiafidei identifying it with “the remarkable passages in Paul in which man’s knowledge of God is inverted into man’s

¹ Admittedly in this passage Barth has “the Hegelian P. Marheineke” more in mind than Hegel himself. But it is worth recalling the letter in which Hegel urges Marheineke (and Daub) to develop their theologies as, in Hegel’s own view, a positive alternative to the theology of Schleiermacher (Letters 460).
being known by God". This inversion points to the radical discontinuity between all human knowing and the knowledge of God. They do not "correspond". No amount of human knowing, even Christian knowing, can successfully achieve God as its object. Instead God himself in his self-revelation creates the actuality and therefore the possibility of his being humanly known:

the divine act of knowledge...takes place on man rather than through man...[E]ven in the Christian this being known, the divine possibility, remains distinct from the human possibility of knowing.

Having observed that support for this may be found in Augustine, Barth goes on, albeit grudgingly, to find this distinction drawn in Marheineke’s *Grundlehren d. ch. Dogm. als Wissenschaft*, published in 1827. He prefaces the quotation as follows: “One must also be sufficiently impartial not to overlook that which for all the dubious elements can still be taken in *bonum partem* in the words of the Hegelian, P. Marheineke.” Then this direct quotation follows:

In the human spirit God is not manifest through this but through himself, and hence manifest also to the human spirit. This, as reason, is annulled in Him. The hardest thing that science requires of every devotee is that pure substance show itself as subject, that [man] with his spirit should subject himself to the divine spirit and be patient under it. His true knowledge of the absolute is itself absolute.

With Barth’s previous references to Paul’s inversion of knowledge of God into being known by God (Galatians 4:8f) it becomes clear that he understands Marheineke (and Hegel?) to mean by the absoluteness of true knowledge that it is God’s knowing that creates human knowing of God, and not a continuation or achievement or even consummation of natural human reason. It is the fruit of grace, of revelation. Again, "‘God is not manifest through the human spirit...but through Himself.’" Marheineke makes the contrast with the human spirit “as reason” explicit. For him as for Hegel all other expressions of the human spirit (eg. Schleiermacher’s feeling), being secondary to reason, need not even be mentioned. It is surely striking that in this passage at any rate Barth refers only to Augustine and “the Hegelian, P. Marheineke” for support in the Christian tradition for his reply to the Roman Catholic *analogiaentis*.

Before we leave Marheineke it is worth mentioning another passage (*CD* I. 1. 303) in which Barth acknowledges the “constitutive” place of the doctrine of the Trinity in Marheineke’s “special dogmatics”, though he is not very impressed by what he says about the Trinity “in itself and as such”. He doesn’t explain why he is unimpressed; though in a later passage (*CD* I. 2. 878f)
he implies that the Trinity is a presupposition for Marheineke’s dogmatics, “a fundamental principle” from which all of his dogmatics is derived. This in contrast to Barth’s own procedure which he says is without a fundamental principle; rather, his whole dogmatics including the doctrine of the Trinity “is derived...from...the work and activity of God in His revelation”. And again, “the doctrine of the Trinity, like all other doctrines, is preceded by the fact of revelation and as such” (CD I. 2. 878f).

This is Barth’s criticism of Hegel in another guise. The integrity, the original and essentially constitutive character, of revelation is compromised by ultimacy being granted to a concept of God. Even if that concept is an orthodox dogma it will not do. God in himself, God in his revelation, is lost sight of and reduced to being identical with some conceptual content of human understanding. Barth describes it as “mere appearances or emanations...demi-gods or deified creatures”. over against “the essence and the truth of the living God” as he meets us “in his revelation” (CD I. 2. 878f).

But is this fair to Marheineke? Ought Barth to have bracketed Marheineke with Schweizer, Marthensen, Haring, and Rade as he does (CD I. 2. 879)? Without being able to answer for the others it looks as though the Hegelian Marheineke is not so cavalier as to reduce God as self-revealed, to God as a human concept. He too, like Barth, though using different language, is careful to distinguish human consciousness and understanding, concepts and doctrines, from “the Absolute who is manifest...through Himself” (Marheineke quoted by Barth, CD I. 1. 244).

Of course, the same question arises with regard to Barth’s treatment of Hegel. Specifically, do Hegel and Barth understand the same thing in their use of the term, “concept” (begriff)? Barth reads Hegel as a neo-platonist; there are other possible interpretations including the one I have ventured in this essay of Hegel as a Christian philosopher with much more in common with Anselm and Luther than the neoplatonists. I have discussed Hegel’s understanding of concept as the trinitarian paradigm, in the body of this essay.7

The Second Criticism

With respect to Barth’s second criticism of Hegel and his alleged compromise of revelation in Christ through the provision of another, higher level of knowledge of God by philosophical

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7 Cf. Michael Inwood, A Hegel Dictionary, 58ff; n.b. Inwood’s account of the contrast between Hegel’s and Kant’s accounts of Begriff.
reason, there are several passages in the *CD* that repeat the charge from different perspectives.

In the first instance (*CD* I. 1. 258f) it is again not Hegel but the Hegelian philosopher, Marheineke who is accused of compromising the Bible as “concrete and supreme criterion” through his account of the Spirit in the Church. Barth sees the same compromise at work in Roman Catholic and Protestant modernists. It results in the theologian, the dogmatician, finally sitting in judgment on the Bible.

In three further passages, we find Hegel charged with swallowing up the distinctiveness of the Gospel in philosophy and rendering it available as a tool for the philosopher to use as and when he sees fit. He is said (*CD* I. 1. 323) to have secularized the revelation of God in Christ by considering it to be a constant and a given, rather than “always a new thing, something that God actually brings into being in specific circumstances”. As such, Hegel can draw from Jesus “the Idea of religion”, which is then at his disposal, able to be discerned and applied at will. In a similar vein (*CD* I. 2. 290) Hegel is likened to Kant, Wolff, and Feuerbach, all of whom are variations on the same sad servitude of Christianity to the more profound reality of religion or morality. The Christian religion is “only a prototype of the awareness of philosophy purified by the idea”. So Barth can say of Hegel that “existing religion with its dogmatics and ethics is a structure which is taken over only to be broken up” (*CD* I. 2. 320).

In an extended treatment of Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity (*CD* III. 2. 240) Barth writes of Goethe’s paganism that never expressed itself as explicit opposition to Christianity. As such it compares with Hegel, among others, who “if he could not make much of the Christianity of the New Testament, was restrained in [his] criticisms...trying to interpret it as positively as possible...within the limits of [his] own understanding”.

Finally with respect to his second criticism, Barth explains (*CD* IV. 2. 82f) how it is that Hegel could so compromise the revelation of God in Christ and yet profess himself a good Lutheran and be accepted as such by his contemporaries. He says that 18th and 19th Century Lutheranism turned orthodox Christology on its head so that Jesus is but

a hard shell which conceals the sweet kernel of the divinity of humanity as a whole and as such, a shell which we can confidently throw away once it has performed this service...[Therefore]Hegel...could profess to be a good Lutheran...[and] Feuerbach usually liked to appeal to Luther for his theory of the identity of human and divine essence, and therefore of God’s becoming man which is really the manifestation of man
becoming God.

As an aside we may compare with this Barth's comments on Hegel in his Schleiermacher lectures of the mid-1920's (The Theology of Schleiermacher (S)). As he enters upon his treatment of The Christian Faith, the first edition of which had been severely criticized, on the one hand as "speculative" replacing "Christian truth with a knowledge of God that is attained *apriori* by transcendental critical abstraction", and on the other hand as lacking any "speculative basis at all". Barth reminds us that Hegel was among the most virulent of the latter critics. While Barth betrays a modicum of sympathy with Hegel's criticism he identifies the one thing necessary that is lacking not only in Schleiermacher but in his critics on both sides including Hegel, namely,

that there might be an original which is not an *apriori* but revelation and therefore something very different from the fact of consciousness which Schleiermacher reads into John 1:14 and in whose manifestation he finds the stuff of dogmatics - this possibility lay outside both his own field of vision and that of his critics (S 188).

Here again is the criticism of Hegel's failure to take revelation seriously as "an original". Furthermore, in identifying Hegel's Geist with consciousness, as we have seen that he does, he might just as well have addressed the criticism, here focused on Schleiermacher, at Hegel, omitting only the reference to John 1:14. The terminology is that of the Hegel essay in PT. The "fact of consciousness" is the "manifestation" not of the stuff of dogmatics but of God himself.

But this blurring of the distinction between Schleiermacher and Hegel should make us pause. Barth is right about Schleiermacher, who himself wrote of his Christian Faith that its true aim is "the presentation of the distinctively Christian consciousness", and that "the concept of God...developed in it...has simply arisen in reflection on this higher self-consciousness" (quoted by Barth: S 188). But is the parallel assessment of Hegel fair? Is Hegel's Geist Schleiermacher's "'simply and honestly empirical'...self-consciousness" (S 188) whether Christian or not? Perhaps it is in the Hegel of the first decade of the 1800's, even through to 1820; but not, as we have tried to show, after 1820. For Hegel, to look for God or for the dogmatic and speculative foundations of the knowledge of God through an analysis of human consciousness is as unprofitable and misguided as to remain within the limits of Kantian Understanding. Barth ought not therefore to have bracketed Hegel and Schleiermacher together as the object of an identical criticism.
The Third Criticism

There are only two significant references in CD to Hegel from the point of view of Barth's third criticism of the philosophically demonstrable necessity of reconciliation and the corresponding annihilation of the actual dialectic of grace. In the first instance (CD II. 1. 282) Hegel is said to have "forsaken" and "forgotten" the uniqueness of God's love in Christ in favour of a general concept of love. The particularity of God's reconciliation in Christ is absorbed and overwhelmed by a generic reconciliation which is always and everywhere.

In the second passage (CD IV. 3. 2. 703-707) Hegel is cited as an example of a temptation which is to be avoided in understanding Christian reconciliation. Barth has identified two essential realities for understanding the reconciliation of God and the world, the providence of God and the confusion of humanity. Just here he pauses to analyze the Hegelian solution to the contradiction, promising that the explicit articulation of this illegitimate alternative will serve, by way of contrast, to set in a clearer light the true solution. The flaw at the heart of the Hegelian solution is that it is knowable and achievable apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus is at best a metaphor or mythic representation of this general synthesis. "Jesus Christ is not a concept which man can think out for himself...On the contrary Jesus Christ is a living human person." The true solution, which is in Jesus Christ, is "grace actually present and active...enveloped by the mystery of its royal freedom". Implied by the Hegelian solution is the philosopher's "superior point in the void" from which he can "look back and survey and explain all...He thinks he can set himself above both God and himself." Of course, with the illegitimate solution, this too must be rejected. There is no such superior point of view.

Still with reference to reconciliation a third passage deserves consideration as another of the interesting exceptions to Barth's normally sharp criticism of Hegel in CD (III. 1. 388f, 404f). The praise is muted. But it is there. Barth is cautiously applauding the optimism of Leibniz and his era as a "philosophical counterpart" to his own theological enquiry into "The Yes of God the Creator" and "Creation as Justification" (388). He mentions Hegel as the last gasp of that optimism after Kant's reversal of it in his philosophy of radical evil. Barth cannot be critical of the Leibnizian and Hegelian optimism without first acknowledging that they "proclaim glad tidings, and thus display a formal affinity to the proclamation of the Gospel" (404). In that, they correspond to "the
incomparable Mozart” (404). That being the case “it would be out of place to bring [them] into
downright discredit. All this must be remembered before we frown and grumble” (404). In other
words, Barth is not prepared to write off Hegel’s optimism; it is his discernment of the Gospel of
universal reconciliation. He is aware that in this respect Hegel stands in conflict with Kant, and in
some sort of continuity with Kant’s predecessors from Leibniz to Rousseau and Voltaire (405).

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* Hegel wrote of Mozart (and Haydn) in terms that correspond remarkably with Barth’s own Mozartian reflections: “The serenity of the spirit remains intact in the works of these masters; pain, of course, finds expression as well, but it is always resolved. The poised symmetry never reaches an extreme; everything coheres within the bounds of restraint, so that jubilation never degenerates into wild ranting and even lamentation exudes the most blissful calm.” (Georg Knepler, Wolfgang Amade Mozart, Cambridge 1994, 170f. Knepler gets the original German quotation from Asthetik 1817-1829, ed. G.Lukács, Berlin 1955, 850.)


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