

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Bachelor of Divinity

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

6-1-1962

A Comparison of Hegel's Christian Philosophy with Historic Christian Theology

Fred H. Stennfeld

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_stennfeldf@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Stennfeld, Fred H., "A Comparison of Hegel's Christian Philosophy with Historic Christian Theology" (1962). *Bachelor of Divinity*. 630.
<https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/630>

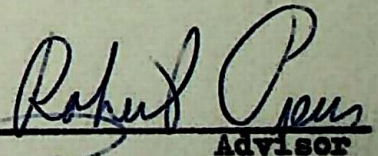
This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Divinity by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

**A COMPARISON OF HEGEL'S CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY
WITH HISTORIC CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

**A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by
Fred H. Stennfeld
June 1962**

Approved by:


Advisor

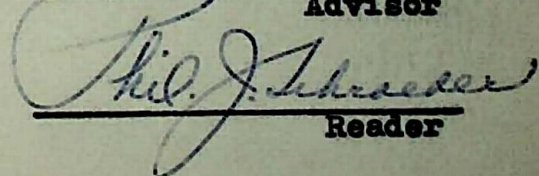

Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Short Title:

Chapter	Short Title:	Page
	HEGEL AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY; Stennfeld, B.D., 1962	1
II.	THE LIFE OF HEGEL	5
III.	THE PHILOSOPHY OF HEGEL	14
IV.	NOTES OF HEGEL'S TEACHING	23
V.	HEGEL'S INTRODUCTION	39
VI.	HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION	46
	Stage I. Natural Religion	48
	Stage II. The Religion of Israel	54
	Stage III. Revealed Religion	58
VII.	HEGEL AND CHRISTIANITY	60
	Hegel and the Bible	66
	Hegel and the Doctrine of the Trinity	67
	Hegel and the Personality of God	71
	Hegel and the Doctrine of Sin	73
	Hegel and the Doctrine of Redemption	80
	Hegel and the Doctrine of Christ	81
	Hegel and the Doctrine of Man	86
	Hegel and the Doctrine of the Will	93
	Hegel and the Doctrine of Immortality	96
	Hegel and the Doctrine of the Church	105
VIII.	CRITICISM OF HEGEL'S THEORY	108
IX.	CONCLUSION	123
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	127

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
II. THE LIFE OF HEGEL	5
III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF HEGEL	14
IV. ROOTS OF HEGEL'S THOUGHT	23
V. HEGEL'S ANTECEDENTS	39
VI. HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION	46
Stage I. Natural Religions	48
Stage II. The Religion of Freedom	54
Stage III. Revealed Religion	58
VII. HEGEL AND CHRISTIANITY	60
Hegel and the Bible	60
Hegel and the Doctrine of the Trinity	67
Hegel and the Personality of God	71
Hegel and the Doctrine of Sin	73
Hegel and the Doctrine of Reconciliation	80
Hegel and the Doctrine of Christ	81
Hegel and the Doctrine of Man	90
Hegel and the Freedom of the Will	93
Hegel and the Doctrine of Immortality	96
Hegel and the Sacraments	98
Hegel and the Doctrine of the Church	105
VIII. EXAMPLES OF HEGEL'S INFLUENCE	108
IX. CONCLUSION	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Man today is living in the age of the exaltation of the human mind. Sputniks, astronauts, rockets, cosmic radiation--these are now common household words. The scientific advancement of this decade alone is beyond utter amazement. More and more do voices proclaim: "With man, nothing shall be impossible." And we must admit, it seems that sky is the limit. And this exaltation of scientific achievement has certainly not limited itself and its effects to man's social and economic stature. No, the body of man is not the only part of his life that has been touched. His soul, too, has been waylaid in these years; his religion, too, has been put severely to the test. The rational powers of man have made such great advances in every other field, why not rational advancements in the area of theology, too? Certainly the faith of a child was good for us when we were children, but can it still suffice now in this age of the adulthood of human achievement?

In reality, these questions are nothing new. Throughout the ages man has wrestled with the problem of "maturing" the Christian faith, of presenting something that the intelligent mind could grasp and hold on to. Beginning with gnosticism and carrying on through the ages to today

and tomorrow, this process has been and will be carried on. This paper concerns itself with one such effort, the effort of philosopher George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel to present a system of Christian philosophy to satisfy the grasp of the "higher mind." This paper will show what happens to historic Christianity when such effort is carried out.

The problem of Hegel was in reality the problem of many of every age, the problem of pride. Hegel would not concede,

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? (Romans 11:33,34).

To Hegel the mind of God was knowable, and he proceeded to make it known through his system of idealistic philosophy.

Actually, religion itself is an integral part in the whole of Hegel's philosophy, and he spends much time and effort putting his philosophy into religious terms. This fact in itself can easily ensnare the cursory reader of Hegel. Hegel often referred to himself as the defender of the Christian faith. As we shall point out later in this paper, Hegel and his system came onto history in the period when many intellectuals had lost or were losing their faith in the teachings of the Reformation. To simply accept at face value the dogmas of Christianity seemed an insult to the intellect of the human mind. And yet, many of these thinkers hesitated at throwing off their

Christian heritage altogether. So when Hegel presented his philosophy of religion, many felt that this was the answer to their intellectual problem as at last they had been presented with a form of religion that was reasonable to the genius of the human mind. In reality, one of the main purposes of Hegel's efforts was to do away with the gap between philosophy and religion and reconcile the two. Hegel was born a Lutheran and as he himself once emphatically said, he "proposed to die one."¹

Without a doubt, the influence of Hegel in consequent years was profound. When we speak of the followers of Hegelian thought, immediately the names of Biedermann, Wellhausen, Strauss, Bauer, Ritschl, Rauschenbush, Mathews, Troeltsch, and Mackintosh appear. Even today, despite the reaction of pragmatism and realism, idealists showing direct or indirect Hegelian influence are still perhaps the most numerous of American academic philosophers.

We will in this paper, then, attempt to reach into the philosophy of Friedrich Hegel and critically analyze its Christian content. We will in detail compare Hegel's so-called Christian philosophy with historic Christian theology. In conclusion of this paper, it is then hoped

¹H. D. Aiken, The Age of Ideology (New York: The New American Library, 1956), p. 80.

that the reader will clearly see how far and distant Hegel's idealistic system is from any semblance of historic Biblical Christianity.

This work is divided into nine chapters. First we put forth our introductory remarks. Secondly, we speak of the life of Hegel, bringing out the external circumstances that played a role in the development of Hegel's philosophy. In the third and fourth chapters, we present briefly yet completely as possible the main tenets of the whole of Hegel's philosophic thought. Chapter V speaks of Hegel's antecedents. This is done with the thought that through this study the reader will be able to attain a deeper insight into the thought of Hegel. In Chapter VI we move more to the religious aspect of Hegel's thought and put forth his theory of the evolution of religion. Chapter VII is the longest and, so to speak, the climactic chapter of this thesis. Here we compare Hegel's theory of revealed religion with historic Christian theology. In this chapter we will discuss all the main doctrines of Christian thought. In Chapter VIII we discuss the extent of Hegel's influence, and finally, in Chapter IX, we present our concluding remarks.

The author hopes that the reader of this paper will gain much from it, much reassurance that except he have the faith of a little child, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. To God be all glory.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF HEGEL

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was the last in succession of four great writers, who during the latter part of the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth century developed the idealistic philosophy of Germany. The quartet consisted of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Hegel developed his philosophy in the Golden Age of philosophic thought in Germany.

Hegel's biographer, Rosenkranz, reminds us, "The history of a philosopher is the history of his thought--the history of the origination of his system."¹ And so also in the life of Hegel it is clearly seen how external circumstances played a role in the developing and shaping of Hegel's thought and system. Hegel lived in one of the most striking periods of history, as the philosophic formulations of Immanuel Kant were being discussed and taught in the higher institutions of learning. The spirit of revolution was also filling the air as Napoleon and his forces were on the march, overcoming every opposition.

G. W. F. Hegel was born on August 27, 1770 at Stuttgart, Germany. Stuttgart was the capital city of the

¹H. R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 65.

province of Wuerttemberg. At this time Wuerttemberg was a grand duchy. Hegel's family had settled in this little state during the seventeenth century, fleeing from Austrian persecution of the Protestants in Carintha. So the Hegels were now Suabians by generations of residence and by numerous marriages. Suabia was mainly Protestant in confession; and it is noted that there was a certain national or racial consciousness among the Suabians that may be compared with the singular unity of Scotsmen. It is noted also that Suabia (or Swabia) has been the cradle of more thinkers and poets than any other German region. Goethe and Schiller, the poets, Schelling the philosophic precursor of Hegel, and Schwegler the theologian, his disciple in philosophy, were all Suabians. Roughly, Suabia may be defined as equivalent to southwestern Germany. Suabia is also the corner of Germany in which the constitutionally tradition of government by consent is firmly entrenched.

The father of Hegel, like many of his ancestors, served in the humbler ranks of government employment. He was a subordinate official in the department of finances of the state of Wuerttemberg. Hegel himself grew up with the patient and methodical habits of those civil servants whose efficiency gave Germany the best governed cities in the world. Hegel's mother died when he was only twelve years old, but he always held her in vivid recollection. It is said that Hegel inherited his higher qualities from

his mother rather than his father.² He had one brother and one sister. Hegel was accredited with having a mind of very slow development. In his early schooling he earned a reputation for diligence rather than brilliance. Already in these days of his youth Hegel was drawn as few boys are to the study of Greek poetry. His studies of Greek literature gave him an enthusiasm for Attic culture which remained with him when almost all other enthusiasms had died away. He once wrote, "At the name of Greece the cultivated German finds himself at home."³ Hegel studied at the Stuttgart gymnasium until he was eighteen.

After his graduation from the gymnasium in 1788, Hegel entered the famous theological seminary at the University of Tübingen. He studied here from 1788 to 1793. The theology and polemics of Tübingen were to become more widely known within a few decades, when disciples of Hegel carried their master's thought to unexpected limits. It was as a Tübingen lecturer that Strauss published his first Life of Jesus; while the leaders of the Tübingen School in New Testament criticism--Bauer, Schweigler, Zeller--were all disciples of the Hegelian philosophy. Two of his fellow-students at Tübingen were the poet Friedrich

²Ibid., p. 66.

³Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: The Pocket Books, Inc., 1926), p. 292.

Holderlin and the philosopher F. W. J. Schelling. At Tübingen, Hegel showed very little interest in theology and his sermons were considered failures. It seems he found much more congenial reading in the classics and took to the study of philosophy. With Holderlin and Schelling, he read and discussed enthusiastically the works of Rousseau and Schiller, started an exploration of Kant, and more especially immersed himself in the study of Greek poetry and philosophy. Hegel made all his university studies at Tübingen and in the autumn of 1793 he received his theological certificate. It may be noted that his theological certificate stated that Hegel was a man of good parts and character, well up in theology and philology, but with no ability in philosophy.⁴

Perhaps the most significant point of Hegel's university life was his relationship with Schelling, his philosophical predecessor. At the university Hegel and Schelling formed an intimate friendship. Schelling was five years younger than Hegel, but very precocious. His rapid intuitive genius urged him to express his thoughts almost before they were ripe for expression, and he had begun to publish important contributions to philosophy even before his student life had come to an end. Hegel, on the other hand, was slow in his intellectual

⁴Ibid., p. 293.

development, and from a desire for systematic completeness and consistency he was unwilling to utter his thoughts until he had made all their relations clear to himself.

After his graduation from Tübingen, Hegel spent the next six years as a private tutor, first at Berne, and later at Frankfurt-on-the Main. Here he lived in intellectual isolation, pre-occupying himself mainly with theological and historical questions. He compiled a systematic account of the fiscal system of the canton of Berne during this time, but the main factor in his mental growth came from his study of Christianity. But ultimately, as we shall see, it is not as a religious teacher but as a philosopher that Hegel felt himself called to serve his age.

From 1801 to 1806 Hegel taught at the University of Jena. Jena was the university town of the little state of Saxe-Weimar. Successive electors of Saxony were the foremost of all the champions and protectors of the Protestant Reformation. The University of Jena was a Protestant foundation and was planned originally in the interests of a peculiarly rigorous Lutheran orthodoxy. Schelling preceded Hegel as professor at Jena. Hegel first taught as a Privatdozent (licensed lecturer), and within two years rose to the position of Professor extraordinarius. His main object here was to answer the theological questions of the day and to construe for himself the real

significance of the person Christ Jesus. He wrote a life of Jesus, in which Jesus was portrayed simply as the son of Joseph and Mary. He asked for the secret contained in the conduct and saying of the man which made Him the hope of the human race. At this time in Hegel's life, it appears that philosophy was still subordinate to religion, for he held that philosophy must never abandon the finite in the search for the infinite. Soon, however, Hegel was to adopt the idea that philosophy is a higher mode of apprehending the infinite than religion.

On October 14, 1806, Napoleon entered the city of Jena. Hegel, like the poet Goethe, felt no patriotic shudder at the national disaster, for in Prussia he saw only a conceited and corrupt bureaucracy. However, the University of Jena was forced to close and Hegel had to seek employment elsewhere. His career was suspended for a while and he was thankful to find work temporarily as a newspaper editor and bookseller at Bamberg. Hegel's fortunes were now at their lowest ebb; yet it was at this time that he finished and published his first great work, Phenomenology. This book of Hegel's has been described as a philosophical Pilgrim's Progress. Hegel himself called it his voyage of discovery.⁵ In 1808 he accepted a somewhat better position as he was appointed headmaster

⁵Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 74.

of the Aegidien Gymnasium in Nuremberg, a post which he held until 1816.

In 1811 an event took place in Hegel's life that is almost unique in the history of philosophers. Unlike so many of his predecessors, he married. Thus the long line of bachelors, extending from Descartes to Hume and Kant, was broken. The view is held that this marriage was symbolic of the turn from Hegel's radical individualism to a broader social view of man. The woman Hegel married was a lady of family belonging to the city, the Tuckers. Marie Tucker embodied the best traditions of the Western German patriciate. It is said that her rare education and charm made her an independent and at times a vividly opposing companion. She was different from Hegel in many important traits. A happy marriage of twenty years followed. Two sons were born of the marriage; one became well known as a professor of history, the other as a politician.

In the year following his marriage, Hegel published the first volume of his greatest work, the Logic. In 1816 the third and last volume of this work passed through the presses. By this time the fame of Hegel was rapidly growing, and he received three offers of philosophical chairs--from Erlangen, from Heidelberg, and from Berlin. For the present he accepted the call to Heidelberg, perhaps the fairest city of which Germany could boast. Restored to the more congenial work of a philosophic professorship,

Hegel rose steadily in esteem during his short stay at Heidelberg. Here for the first time he lectured on aesthetics; and here the first and shortest sketch of his Encyclopedia took shape.

In 1818 Hegel was again called to Berlin, and this time he accepted the invitation. The recently established university had become at a bound the greatest center of culture and learning in all Germany. As a teacher Hegel rose and rose. It was believed that the problem of ages had been finally solved and men were afraid to differ from the great master who dealt such heavy blows. It was here at Berlin that Hegel's activity and influence reached its maximum. His popularity and the popularity of his philosophy grew until a Hegelian school began to gather. By this time he was called the philosophical dictator of Germany.

It is interesting to note that Friedrich Schleiermacher was a colleague of Hegel's at the University of Berlin. It is said that at Berlin Hegel and Schleiermacher were on the stiffest of terms.⁶ Schleiermacher put much emphasis and reliance on feeling, actually making his religion a religious psychology. Hegel looked upon feeling as a conveyance of certainty with extreme aversion, for he held that feeling was the lowest form of experience.

⁶Ibid., p. 81.

The revolution of 1830 was a great blow to Hegel, and the prospect of democratic advances almost made him ill. In 1831 cholera first entered Europe. In trying to avoid the plague, Hegel and his family retired for the summer to the suburbs. At the beginning of the winter session he returned to his house in the city. On November 14, 1831, after one day's illness, he died of cholera and was buried, as he had wished, between Fichte and Solger.

seen to impose unity and integration upon the world and human experience. However, through the years there was always one major problem that plagued the monistic idealistic philosopher, and that was the problem posed by the concept of opposites. According to the idealist, the universe is the embodiment of mind or spirit; the universe is rational, intelligent, therefore there can be no disorder, no irrationality, no disharmony in it. But if the universe is the embodiment of mind or reason, how is it that our experience reveals so much that is irrational and unintelligible? How are we to reconcile the existence of an infinite God with the fact of evil, how are we to reconcile the fact of opposites? It seemed almost impossible to find some unity in the universe by the absolutist as long as this problem of opposites remained intact. This is the

CHAPTER III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HEGEL

In philosophic terms, Hegel is classified as an absolute idealist. In essence, absolute idealism is very strongly monistic.¹ "Unity," "totality," "the whole," are key terms in absolutism. Absolute idealism probably represents the strongest attempt by philosophic mankind yet seen to impose unity and integration upon the world and human experience. However, through the years there was always one major problem that plagued the monistic idealistic philosopher, and that was the problem posited by the concept of opposites. According to the idealist, the universe is the embodiment of mind or spirit; the universe is rational, intelligent, therefore there can be no disorder, no irrationality, no disharmony in it. But if the universe is the embodiment of mind or reason, how is it that our experience reveals so much that is irrational and unintelligible? How are we to reconcile the existence of an infinite God with the fact of evil, how are we to reconcile the fact of opposites? It seemed almost impossible to find true unity in the universe by the absolutist as long as this problem of opposites remained intact. This is the

¹Hunter Meade, Types and Problems of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1946), p. 81.

problem that Hegel attacks, that he claims to have solved, and it is upon this "solution" that Hegel bases his whole philosophy.

Throughout the ages the idealistic philosopher found himself face to face not only with distinct concepts, but also with directly opposed concepts. The distinct concepts did not pose much of a problem, for they could be united with one another even though they were distinct. Distinct concepts did not mutually exclude one another; therefore they presented no real threat to "the whole." But it is a different case when two opposite concepts appear, for certainly they seemed to mutually exclude one another. Where one enters, the other totally disappears. An opposite is slain by its opposite.² Where truth appears, falsity disappears; what is beautiful cannot be ugly; where there is joy, there is no sorrow; when love appears, hatred is slain. These terms certainly seem to mutually exclude one another. Distinct concepts are terms such as intellect, morality, right, goodness, terms which can exist side by side.

Now, if distinctions do not impede, if instead it does render possible the concrete unity of the philosophic

²Benedetto Croce, What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel, translated from the original text of the third Italian edition, 1912, by Douglas Ainslie (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1915), p. 10.

concept, it does not seem possible that the same should be true of opposition. It is with this problem that the human mind has always labored, and the problem Hegel sought to solve. One of the solutions upon which this problem has relied in the course of the centuries was presented by the unitarians. They simply excluded opposition from the philosophical concept and maintained the unreality of that perilous logical category.³ The facts did prove just the opposite, but the facts were denied and only one of the terms was accepted, the other being declared "illusion." In truth, this was no solution at all. Another solution was presented by the oppositionists. They claimed that there was some sort of identity or unity of opposites, but the truth of this fact was unattainable by the human mind owing to its imperfection.⁴ This, too, presented no real logical solution to the problem of opposites.

All in all, the case seemed desperate for the monists. However, the conviction always seemed there that this unconquerable dualism is ultimately conquerable; that the idea of unity is not irreconcilable with that of opposition, and that one can and should think of opposition in the form of a concept, which is supreme unity.⁵ And right

³Ibid., p. 12.

⁴Ibid. pp. 19-20.

⁵Ibid., p. 16.

here is where Hegel gives his shout of jubilation, the cry of the discoverer, the Eureka. In his labor, Hegel claims to have discovered the principle of solution of the age-old problem of opposites. The opposites are not illusion as the unitarians claim, neither is unity illusion, as the oppositionists advance. The opposites are opposed to one another; the truth of this fact cannot be denied, but yet opposites are not opposed to unity. For true and concrete unity is nothing but the unity, or synthesis, of opposites.⁶ It is not immobility, it is movement. It is not fixity, but development. The philosophic concept is a concrete universal, and therefore a thinking of reality as at once united and divided.

To Hegel, this is the only possible solution, for it rejects neither "monism" nor "dualism of opposites," but actually justifies both. It regards them as one-sided truths, fragments which await their integration in a third, in which the first and second, even the third itself, disappear, merged in the unique truth. And that truth is that unity is not actually opposed by opposition, but holds it within itself. Without opposition, reality would not be reality, because it would not be development and life. Unity is the positive, opposition the negative; but the

⁶Ibid., pp. 19-20.

negative is also positive, positive in so far as negative.⁷ If this were not the case, then the fullness, the richness of the positive would be unintelligible.

Hegel called this, his doctrine of opposites, dialectic. It would perhaps be well to explain in detail the basic elements of the dialectic. The two abstract elements, or the opposites taken in and by themselves, Hegel called moments. The relation of the first two concepts to the third concept is expressed by the word "solution," or "overcoming," Aufheben. By this Hegel means that the two moments in their separation are both negated, but still preserved in the synthesis. The second term (in relation to the first) appears as negation, and the third (in relation to the second) as a negation of negation, or as absolute negativity, which is also absolute affirmation.⁸ For example, the first and most well-known of Hegel's triads is being, nothing, and becoming. Being is the first term, the thesis; nothing is the second term, the negative of the first term, the antithesis; becoming is the third term, the negation of the negation which is absolute affirmation, the synthesis. Being and nothing are both abstract terms, becoming is considered concrete. What is being without nothing? And on the other hand,

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁸Ibid., p. 21.

what is nothing without being? To take one of the terms by itself comes to the same thing as to take the other term by itself, for the one has meaning only in and through the other. Outside of the synthesis, the two terms taken abstractly pass into one another and change sides. Truth is found only in the third; that is to say, in the case of this triad, in becoming, which, as Hegel says, "is the first concrete concept."⁹ Outside of this synthesis, opposites are unthinkable.

To exemplify this thought in Hegel further, Bertrand Russell uses the illustration of the uncle and the nephew.¹⁰ First we would say that reality is an uncle. This would be our thesis. But the existence of an uncle immediately implies the existence of a nephew, for there could be no uncle without a nephew. Since nothing really exists in Hegel but the absolute, and we are now committed to the existence of a nephew, we must conclude: "The absolute is a nephew." This, then, would be our antithesis. But there is the same objection to this as to the view that the absolute is an uncle; therefore we are driven to the view that the absolute is the whole composed of uncle and nephew. This would be our synthesis. But if we look

⁹Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 732.

closer, this synthesis would also be unsatisfactory, because a man can be an uncle only if he has a brother or a sister who is a parent of the nephew. Hence we are driven to enlarge our universe to include the brother or sister, with his wife or her husband. In this sort of way, so it is contended, we can be driven on and on by the mere force of logic from any suggested predicate of the absolute to the final conclusion of the dialectic, which is called the "Absolute Idea." Throughout the whole process, there is an underlying assumption that nothing can be really true unless it is about reality as a whole.

This is Hegel's famous "dialectic system." And it is upon this discovery that Hegel bases the whole of his philosophical works. To Hegel, this triadic discovery carries with it the solution to all of man's life and problems. It is this dialectic system that flows through page after page of Hegel's voluminous works. It is this triad that Hegel carries over into his Philosophy of Religion (here he signifies it by the name Trinity), and it is by this triad that he explains and rationalizes Christianity. One could certainly say that Hegel "milked" this discovery dry, for at every turn he presses the dialectic before his reader.

Because Hegel was so overtaken by his discovery, he actually did not make the most of it. It is pointed out by Benedetto Croce in his What is Living and What is Dead

of the Philosophy of Hegel, that Hegel now did not make the important distinction between the theory of distincts and the theory of opposite, but fused the two.¹¹ One can find examples of this confusion by putting forth some more of Hegel's dialectic triads. In anthropology Hegel presents: natural soul, thesis; sensitive soul, antithesis; real soul, synthesis. In the psychology we find: theoretic spirit, thesis; practical spirit, antithesis; free spirit, synthesis; and again: the family, thesis; civil society, antithesis; the state, synthesis. In the sphere of subjective logic: concept, thesis; judgment, antithesis; syllogism, synthesis. In the sphere of absolute spirit, which is of most interest to us, we find: art is thesis; religion is antithesis; philosophy is synthesis. In truth, this certainly can be seen as an abuse in the Hegelian system. Who will or can persuade himself that religion is the not-being of art, or who can persuade himself that art and religion are two abstractions which possess truth only in philosophy which supposedly is the synthesis of both?

So we see that the theory of opposites and the theory of distincts become one and the same thing for Hegel. He was so tyrannized by his own discovery that he saw it everywhere before him and he was led by it to conceive

¹¹Croce, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

everything according to this new formula.

CHAPTER IV

ROOTS OF HEGEL'S THOUGHT

As stated, Hegel is an absolute idealist. Idealism lies at the basis of all his philosophic thought. It was his idealistic favorings that led him into the problem of opposites and ultimately to his dialectic. These idealistic tendencies no doubt can be attributed much to the early years of his life, to the training he received in his Lutheran home, and to his later theological schooling. The philosophy of materialism was repugnant to Hegel, and he kept away from the thought of the Enlightenment and philo-
sophic Romanticism. To go further, he had no sympathy for Scholasticism and spoke strongly against Rationalism. Throughout Hegel's life, it was evident that he did not want to disclaim his Lutheran heritage. He spoke highly of Luther and the Reformation and accredited it with "liberating" the minds of men. Hegel himself proclaimed at one time in his life that he was born a Lutheran and that he proposed to die one.¹ And so throughout the whole of Hegel's philosophic thought, one readily sees that religion itself does play an integral part in his system. It has been maintained that "the deepest root of Hegel's

¹H. D. Aiken, *The Age of Ideology* (New York: The New American Library, 1956), p. 30.

CHAPTER IV

ROOTS OF HEGEL'S THOUGHT

As stated, Hegel is an absolute idealist. Idealism lies at the basis of all his philosophic thought. It was his idealistic favorings that led him into the problem of opposites and ultimately to his dialectic. These idealistic tendencies no doubt can be attributed much to the early years of his life, to the training he received in his Lutheran home, and to his later theological schooling. The philosophy of materialism was repugnant to Hegel, and he kept away from the thought of the Enlightenment and philosophic Romanticism. To go further, he had no sympathy for Scholasticism and spoke strongly against Rationalism. Throughout Hegel's life, it was evident that he did not want to disclaim his Lutheran heritage. He spoke highly of Luther and the Reformation and accredited it with "liberating" the minds of men. Hegel himself proclaimed at one time in his life that he was born a Lutheran and that he proposed to die one.¹ And so throughout the whole of Hegel's philosophic thought, one readily sees that religion itself does play an integral part in his system. It has been maintained that "the deepest root of Hegel's

¹H. D. Aiken, The Age of Ideology (New York: The New American Library, 1956), p. 80.

system was a personal religious experience."² One of the major motivating powers behind Hegel was his effort to do away with the supposed gap between philosophy and religion and reconcile the two. He was also stirred in his efforts by the seeming disintegration of the Christian faith as manifested in the French Revolution.

Hegel felt and believed that philosophy was nothing but conscious religion. He gave high regard to the Bible but felt that it could be properly understood only after a great deal of philosophic interpretation. According to Hegel, philosophy and religion are actually inseparable as the object of religion as well as the object of philosophy are one and the same, eternal truth.³ Statement upon statement may be found in Hegel's works that give ample evidence to his desire for remaining upon friendly ground with theology, especially Lutheran theology. For Hegel, Christianity was the fulfillment of the spirit's inner destiny, as Hegel saw it. More especially, its Protestant form was for him the necessary basis of the "absolute knowledge" for which he strove and which he conceived to

²The Philosophy of Hegel, edited, with an Introduction by Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Random House, Inc., 1953), p. xxi.

³G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Religion, translated from the second German edition by E. B. Speirs and J. Gordon Sanderson (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., Ltd., 1895), I, 19.

be the culmination of religious development.⁴ In his discussion of the Sacraments of Baptism and of Holy Communion which is found in the later sections of his Philosophy of Religion, Hegel asserts that it is the Lutheran interpretation that is closest to philosophic truth.⁵ It is without a doubt that Hegel believed that his was a real service to Christian theology, for his system had made theology intelligible and interpretive to the higher thinking individual, the individual who was capable of containing more than that simple, childlike faith. His main aim in his work was to reconcile religion with reason, to make religion "reasonable" for belief.

Dr. J. Macbride Sterrett makes the statement concerning Hegel's theological favoring:

Hegel himself always professed his belief in the doctrines of the Lutheran Church. Against both the rationalistic school and that of mere feeling or faith, he labored to show that the dogmatic creed is the rational development or intellectual exposition of what is implicit in Christianity.⁶

Again:

With Hegel philosophy and theology are synonymous. As in the old Roman Empire all roads lead to Rome, so in Hegel every finite truth leads up to and is explained in God.⁷

⁴Friedrich, op. cit., p. xxxvii.

⁵Hegel, op. cit., III, 133-134.

⁶J. Macbride Sterrett, Studies in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1890), p. 9.

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

And again:

Hegel was radically and throughout a theologian. All his thought began, continued, and ended in that of Divinity. We may justly say that even the religious element is persuasive of all his works. Writing almost like a zealot against the current indifference to vital theology, he exclaimed pathetically, "What knowledge would be worth the aims of acquiring if knowledge of God be not attainable."⁸

As referring to motive and object in his labors, Hegel himself says in his work, Philosophy of Religion:

God is the beginning of all things, and the end of all things. As all things proceed from this point, so all return back to it again. He is the center which gives life and quickening to all things, and which animates and preserves in existence all the various forms of being.⁹

The object of religion as well as of philosophy is eternal truth in its objectivity, God and nothing but God, and the explication of God. Philosophy is not a wisdom of the world, but is knowledge of what is not of the world; it is not knowledge which concerns external mass, or empirical existence and life, but is knowledge of that which is eternal, of what God is, and what flows out of His nature. Philosophy, therefore, only unfolds itself when it unfolds religion, and in unfolding itself it unfolds religion.

Thus religion and philosophy come to be one. Philosophy is itself, in fact, worship; it is religion, for in the same way it renounces subjective notions and opinions in order to occupy itself with God. Philosophy is thus identical with religion, but the distinction is that it is so in a peculiar manner, distinct from the manner of looking at things which is commonly called religion as such. What they have in common is, that they are religion; what distinguishes them from each other is merely the kind and manner of religion we find in each. It is in the peculiar way

⁸Ibid., p. 25.

⁹Hegel, op. cit., I, 2.

in which they both occupy themselves with God that the distinctions come out.¹⁰

The subject of religion as well as of philosophy is the eternal truth in its objectivity, or God, nothing else but God, and the explication of His nature. Philosophy has for its aim the cognition of truth, the cognition of God, for His is the absolute truth, in so far that nothing else is worth knowing compared with God and His explication. Philosophy cognized God as essentially concrete and spiritual, self-communicating like light. Whoever says God cannot be cognized, says that God is envious, and he cannot be in earnest in his belief, however much he may talk about Him. Rationalism, the vanity of the understanding, is the most violent opponent of philosophy, and is offended when it demonstrates the presence of reason in the Christian religion; when it shows that the witness of the spirit of truth is deposited in religion. In philosophy, religion finds its justification from the standpoint of thinking consciousness, which unsophisticated piety does not need to perceive.¹¹

According to Hegel's own ideas, then, he felt that his contribution to mankind was the demonstration of reason in the Christian religion. He "lifted" religion out of the domain of feeling and practical experience, "lifted" religion out of the domain of the "unsophisticated," and made it an object of thought. Hegel claims to have sought out the thought implicit in religious ideas and to have translated them into their equivalents in thought. He never tired of asserting that religion and philosophy have the same content, only differing in form. True philosophy simply tries to comprehend that which religion is. As

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 19-20.

¹¹Ibid., p. 21.

such, Hegel claims that philosophy is the highest form of theology, the theology of the few, while religion is simply the theology of the many. Philosophy is merely the system that comprehends for thought what religion holds in its heart. It thinks its creed in terms of thought. Some Christians (this includes the majority) do not need and do not care to have their creeds thought out into an organic, systematic, and absolutely necessary whole. But there are others who are asking for the reason of the faith. These cannot rest in the reasons which current apologetics give, nor can they rest upon the ultima ratio ecclesia, until these reasons and this authority are vindicated by the reason of absolute thought and authority. It is to these higher thinking individuals that Hegel is directing his absolute philosophy of thought. So to Hegel, religion is merely spirit thinking naively, while philosophy is that same spirit passing beyond this naivete to the speculative comprehension of the same content.

This whole trend of reasoning can also be seen in Hegel's own division of his system of philosophic thought. As might be expected, Hegel divides his whole system into three major sections, into a dialectical triad. These three major divisions of the Hegelian philosophy are: Part I, the Logic; Part II, the Philosophy of Nature; and Part III, the Philosophy of Spirit. These three in themselves supposedly constitute a triad of abstract opposites

being synthesized into a whole, a unity. In the Logic, the treatment is of the philosophic "Idea" as itself. This is the thesis. In the Philosophy of Nature, nature is presented as the Idea in its otherness, it is the opposite, the negative of the Idea itself. This is the antithesis. In the Philosophy of the Spirit, spirit is presented as the absolute unity of the Idea and Nature. This is the synthesis, the unity, the whole, the Absolute. In the Philosophy of Spirit, Hegel subdivides this into more triads. Philosophy of the Spirit itself is divided into the triad of subjective spirit, thesis; objective spirit, antithesis; and absolute spirit, synthesis. And finally, in absolute spirit Hegel presents his last and highest and final dialectical triad, that of art, thesis; religion, antithesis; and philosophy, synthesis. Absolute spirit is that which is revealed through Christianity, comprehended in its highest form in philosophy, the final synthesis of all thought. Absolute spirit is the absolute end of the whole system of triads, not only of subjective and objective spirit, but also of nature and the logical idea. It is thus the ultimate foundation of the world, it is, as said, the Absolute.

Hegel himself is the last great teacher of the "universal philosophy" which was based on Eleatic thought, on Plato and Aristotle. Hegel highly favored and esteemed the ancient Greek philosophers and Greek thought, even

though he was aware that the world of the Greeks was gone and dead. It is said that in his youth, however, Hegel always secretly cherished the dream that somehow Greece might be revived.

The idealistic creed at the time of Aristotle was quite well developed and advanced. Idealistic philosophy at the time of Aristotle already consisted of the following general beliefs: (1) The real is what has a wholly independent being, a being dependent only upon itself. (2) Appearance is what depends for its being upon another being. This other being is the real. (3) Existence is what can be immediately presented to consciousness. It may be either a material or a psychic entity. (4) The real is the universal. (5) The real is not an existence. Its being is a logical being. (6) Existence is appearance. (7) The real, that is, the universal is also thought, mind, or intelligence; but this thought, mind, or intelligence is not an existent, individual subjective mind, but an abstract, universal, objective mind. It has logical and not factual being. (8) The real, that is, objective thought, is the first principle or ultimate being, the Absolute, which is the source of all things, and from which the universe must be explained. (9) This first principle is first only in the sense that it holds logical priority over all things. It is not first in order of

time.¹² These idealistic beliefs are generally the same tenets that are carried through the centuries by idealistic philosophers. These beliefs are also, in the main, a general summary of Hegel's thought, with some variances, of course.

A glance at the history of thought in Western civilization will reveal that idealism has probably been the most widely held and most important type of philosophy.¹³ This truth can be seen especially in modern philosophy. In part, this can probably be accounted for somewhat by the "relation" between its views and the views of Christianity. In any case, idealism may be signified as the thought of philosophy that runs closest to Christian thought, even though there may be justifiable doubt if there is any relation between idealism and Christianity at all. The idealist is not so readily inclined to denounce Christianity as is the materialist or the rationalist.

Reduced to its essence, idealism is the belief that ultimate Reality is spiritual in its nature, and that the universe is the embodiment of mind or spirit. Idealism holds that if we are to gain the clearest insight into the nature of Reality, we must not look to the physical

¹²W. T. Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924), pp. 30-31.

¹³Hunter Meade, Types and Problems of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1946), p. 59.

sciences, with their emphasis on matter and motion and force; but, instead, we must turn to thought, to intellect, and to reason. Idealism argues that it is from the knowing, experiencing subject that there comes not only all meaning and value, but even all existence; hence any system which does not build upon the mind or knowing subject as central must necessarily give an inadequate picture of Reality.¹⁴ Also basic in idealism is the belief that our minds and the thought world in which they move are intimately and significantly related to Reality in a particular way. If we want to know what lies at the heart of the world, we must first of all look within ourselves. In our own minds and souls is to be found the clearest indication of the nature of Reality.

Hegel is certainly properly classified as an Absolute Idealist, but yet it cannot be said that he carried his idealism to the ultimate extreme as many other idealists did. Hegel did not totally reduce the fact of the outer world to idea, and he did not hold that there were absolutely no facts but the ideas of the individual mind. This would not fit in with Hegel's own dialectical thought. Immanuel Kant, Hegel's predecessor, had shown that existence means nothing unless it means existence for self. Hegel carried this argument a step further and maintained

¹⁴Ibid., p. 60.

that the world of objects is not only related to intelligence, but that it can be nothing but the revelation or manifestation of intelligence. Hegel does make the statement that world is merely appearance,¹⁵ but he does not use the word "appearance" in the sense that the world has no being at all. Referring, as always, back to his law of contradiction, Hegel asserts that that which is considered appearance is a contradiction. It is not mere dependence on another. To say that a thing has no being of its own but wholly depends upon another, would not involve it in any contradiction. The thing is not merely dependence--reflection into another, it is at the same time independent, a subsistence--reflection into self. It is thus a contradiction. It is an independent which sets its own independence aside and makes itself a dependent.¹⁶ In Hegel's meaning, to regard the world as an appearance is thus to attribute to it that necessary inner contradiction. So Hegel did not completely deny the existence of a material world, but maintained it to be an imperfect or incomplete reality, an abstraction which could not exist by itself without something to supplement it. And that supplementary something (the basic tenet in Hegel's philosophy) is the "Idea." To Hegel, the ultimate reality is "Idea," or

¹⁵Stace, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁶Ibid.

"Absolute," or "Spirit." In his Philosophy of Religion Hegel presents this "Idea" as "God."

Therefore, in this world Hegel says there is actually nothing but "Idea." All matter is simply appearance; but again, we must not confuse Hegel's use of the word "appearance." As stated before, not that Hegel is denying that matter is, but we can know a thing only through our own consciousness. It is so related to intelligence that it can be nothing but the manifestation of intelligence. The material world is merely an apparatus by and in which spirit manifests itself. It is of inner importance in itself, and it is beneath our dignity to consider. It is the object of thought, and could not exist apart from thought. To Hegel, "the real is the rational, and the rational is the real."¹⁷

According to Hegel, with his emphasis upon mind and the spiritual phenomena, we see God and the world in a process of continuous development. It is in this development that reality must be seen. This is, of course, a necessary tenet if Hegel is to be true to his theory of the dialectic. Thought, or reason, too, is not static, but moves, is dynamic, is an active moving process, a process of evolution. The higher stage in Hegel's process

¹⁷Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 731.

of evolution is simply the realization of the lower, it is really what the lower intends to be. In Hegel's language, it is the "truth" of the lower, its purpose, its meaning.¹⁸ What was implicit in the lower form becomes explicit or is made manifest in the higher. In the instance of the acorn, its "truth," its purpose, its meaning is the oak tree. The oak tree is what is implicit in the acorn. The world in this sense is at every stage both a product and a prophecy.

This is just what Hegel means when he declares that contradiction is the root of all life and movement, that the principle of contradiction rules the world.¹⁹ Everything tends to change, to pass over into its opposite. The seed has in it the impulse to be something else, to contradict itself, to transcend itself. Without this contradiction Hegel claims that there would be no life, no movement, no development; instead, everything would be dead existence, static externality. But, naturally, contradiction is not the whole story. Nature does not stop at contradiction, but strives to overcome it. The thing passes over into its opposite, but the movement goes on and oppositions are overcome and reconciled. In the end

¹⁸Frank Thilly and Ledger Wood, A History of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1914), p. 479.

¹⁹Ibid.

they become part of a unified whole. As we shall see, it is especially in the history of religion that Hegel presents this upward development, that development in which also God reveals Himself to an ever clearer self-consciousness. In paganism, in Judaism, and in Christianity we have the progressing stages of development in the process of unfolding the divine.

In the Hegelian observation, historical development is the constant representation of the absolute. In this historical process there is no permanence: God Himself, indistinguishable from the phenomena, is in a constant process of change.²⁰ In this development it appears that the Absolute, that God, is always only on the way of becoming real, but never reaches that end as a completed process. This fact is borne out by Hegel's first triad, the triad of being, not-being, and becoming. Becoming is the synthesis, the unity of being and not-being. As soon as a thing ceases to be becoming it becomes static, lifeless, without opposition, without contradiction, and thus, without reality. As we have seen, this process of a thing passing over into its opposite Hegel calls the dialectical process.²¹

²⁰J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), II, 120.

²¹Thilly and Wood, op. cit., p. 479.

It appears then that the whole universe itself is also a process of evolution in which ends or purposes of universal reason are realized. Hegel points out that the important thing in his evolutionary, or perhaps, dialectic theory, is not merely what existed at the beginning, but what happens or is made manifest at the end.²² This is a point of difference between Hegel and the theory of Darwin. Darwinism necessarily begins with the lower forms and traces the development of the lower into the higher. It needs the lower to find the higher. However, Hegel would just as well begin with the highest form and follow back to the lower. He finds the lower from the higher. Of course, Darwinism is more materialistic, while Hegel is purely idealistic.

Therefore, in the Hegelian system, Reality is a process of logical evolution. It is a spiritual process and we can understand it only in so far as we experience such a process within ourselves. Hegel sought to reduce reality not merely to the form of subjectivity as thought, but to the form of intellect as logical thought.²³ What it comes right down to in the end is that Hegel ultimately identifies being with thinking. It is almost impossible to

²²Ibid., p. 480.

²³H. R. Mackintosh, Hegel and Hegelianism (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 4.

avoid this conclusion after working through Hegel's thought. In thinking we grasp reality to the extent of objectifying it. Hegel, however, does not mean that the thinking of an individual is necessarily identical with objective being, its errancies are admitted; but absolute thought, absolute reason, and objective reality are the same. In line with this Hegel does insist that the thinking of the individual shares in this identity with reason and reality only in so far as his thinking is a part of absolute thought.²⁴ Therefore, the universe is thought and is subject to the laws of thought. In Hegelian philosophy, as we think, so the universe develops. Or even to go further, as we think, so God develops.

²⁴Neve, op. cit., p. 119.

²Henriette Heim, What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel, translated from the original text of the third edition, 1912, by Douglas Ainslie

CHAPTER V

HEGEL'S ANTECEDENTS

In viewing the voluminous system of Hegel, the question will naturally arise: was Hegel the first to formulate the logical principle of the dialectic, or was he dependent upon thoughts and discoveries of his philosophic predecessors? And in answering this question it is possible to procure a deeper insight into Hegel's thought and purpose, into his task and burden.

It is doubtful if any, even the most ardent followers of Hegel, will claim that the dialectic is an absolute Hegelian formulation. Actually, the doctrine of the dialectic is the work of mature thought and is the product of long philosophic incubation. It is in Hellenic antiquity that we find the first perception of the difficulties to which the principle of opposites gives rise. It was Zeno who is generally accredited with being the first to see clearly this difficulty. He set out to resolve the contradiction posited by opposites by denying the reality of movement. He put forth the postulation that motion is an illusion of the senses; being, reality, is one and immovable.¹ In opposition to Zeno, Heraclitus made of movement

¹Benedetto Croce, What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel, translated from the original text of the third Italian edition, 1912, by Douglas Ainslie

and becoming the true reality. His sayings are: "being and not-being are the same," "all is, and also is not," "everything flows."² Heraclitus felt profoundly that reality was a contradiction and development.

In Plato the first real advance is recognizable. Plato is accredited with being the father of all idealists, and Hegel more than any other takes up the task of speculation on the lines laid down by Plato.³ The very word "idea" was introduced into philosophy by Plato, and for centuries it was used in strict adherence to his lead. It was Plato who first put forth the theory that things were nothing at all if they did not embody in themselves thoughts, or rather, ideas. "One escaped from error to truth, from non-being to reality, when one grasped the idea behind the phenomenon."⁴ And yet, even with his formulating a theory of ideas, Plato was not completely free from the dualistic strain so opposed by the monist Hegel, for in Plato the real by necessity always falls short of the ideal. The advance in Plato seems most apparent in his Farmenides. The conclusion of the Farmenides is, that the one is and

(London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1915), p. 36.

²Ibid.

³H. R. Mackintosh, Hegel and Hegelianism (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 33.

is not, is itself and other than itself, and that things in relation to themselves and in distinction from others are and are not, appear and do not appear.⁵ All of this indicates an attempt by Plato to overcome a difficulty, a difficulty which issued only in a negative result. In any case, as Hegel noted, in Plato we find the dialectic, but not yet complete consciousness of its nature.⁶ Plato does produce a speculative method of thinking, but he does not attain to the level of a logical doctrine.

There seems yet to be a further advance, along a different scale, as we pass from Plato to Aristotle. Aristotle is critical of Plato, especially of Plato's ideal theory. Aristotle holds that ideas do not explain, but merely re-duplicate reality. He opens the view that reality is matter becoming real by acquiring or passing into form. Here what we have is an evolutionary philosophy, the real is found in the process of things. By Aristotle's advance, the dualism of form and matter which dominated Plato, is at least partly broken down, for mere matter is always on its way to abolition or to transformation into a higher type of being. Throughout, however, Aristotle did not present a reasoned system. But if one were to add together and combine Plato's conception of ideas to Aristotle's

⁵Groce, op. cit., p. 38.

⁶Ibid.

conception of movement, something very much like Hegel's logic would result.

Concerning the doctrines of Philo and of the Gnostics, nothing more can be discovered than an extremity of need, or perhaps better, a consciousness of helplessness. For them, true reality, absolute being, is simply considered unattainable by thought. This is equally true for Plotinus, for whom all predicates are inadequate to the Absolute. In Proclus we have developed an idea that Plato had already mentioned--the idea of the trinity or the triad.⁷ Many skeptics claim that it is here that Christianity found the basis for its historic doctrine of the Trinity of God. Christianity simply made a philosophic advance on the theory of Proclus.

Advancing to modern thought, it was Nicholas of Cusa who most energetically expressed the need of the human spirit to emerge from dualisms and conflicts, and to raise itself to that simplicity where opposites coincide.⁸ But in his view, that which does unite the opposites is incomprehensible to man, to the mind of man. The unity of opposites is also earnestly asserted by Jacob Boehme. Hegel says that Boehme posits the antitheses in their full force, but does not allow his thought to be arrested by

⁷Ibid., p. 39.

⁸Ibid., p. 40.

the strength of the differences and proceeds to posit unity.⁹ Boehme sees the triad in all things, and fathoms the significance of the Christian trinity according to philosophical thought, but he too does not succeed in putting his thought into logical order.

The philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was much developed under the influence of the mathematical science of nature, so not much further thought was given to this problem of opposites by the idealists. There still was no logical postulation of unity in the idealistic school. It was left to Immanuel Kant to give new impetus to the thought of this problem. Through his Critique of Pure Reason he proved to be the true progenitor of the new principle of the coincidence of opposites, of the new dialectic, that is, of the logical doctrine of dialectic. First of all, Kant maintained and rendered more effective the difference between intellect and reason. Secondly, in his philosophy he seemed to catch sight of the idea beyond the abstract concept. But what was most important was Kant's discovery of the a priori synthesis. Hegel remarked concerning the a priori synthesis, that that was nothing but "an original synthesis of opposites."¹⁰

Although Kant rendered a tremendous influence upon the

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 45.

young Hegel, still most scholars say it is wrong to consider Hegel a Kantian.¹¹ One does not have to minimize Kant's influence to deny such a proposition. Actually the distance between Kant and Hegel is very considerable. Hegel and Kant were diametrically opposed to each other on a number of issues. Kant's key position was to deny the possibility of metaphysical dogmatism, and to outline a hypothetical approach to the problem of truth. But Hegel dogmatizes metaphysics to the extreme. For Kant, nothing absolute is knowable, all our knowledge is relative. For Hegel, absolute knowledge is possible, for whoever knows the principles that determine the true nature of our thought and of our life finds these principles, as the expression of the true self, absolute. Kant is considered the philosopher of peace, of international constitutional order. Hegel is often referred to as the philosopher of war and of the national authoritarian state. It would be safe to say that it is most probable that without Kant's Critique of Pure Reason Hegel would never have formulated his dialectical method, but this is where the tie between Kant and Hegel ends.¹² The task that awaited philosophy after Kant was the development of the a priori synthesis, to create the new philosophical logic,

¹¹The Philosophy of Hegel, edited, with an Introduction by Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Random House, Inc., 1953), p. xxi.

¹²Ibid.

to solve the problem of opposites by destroying the dualisms that had not only been left intact, but rendered more powerful by Kant. This was the task taken up and claimed completed by George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Therefore, it is generally recognized that the logic of the dialectic is an original discovery of Hegel. Although the problem of opposites had long existed and much thought and theory had been put into this age-old problem, it was left to Hegel to present a "solution" in logical form.

History is simply the development of history itself. History is the history of spirit realizing itself. And so also the history of religion is simply the history of spirit developing absolutely. Hegel asserts that religion is the completion of the life of the spirit, its final and complete expression. He also asserts that scientifically considered, God is at first nothing but a general, abstract name, which had not come to have any true value. It is the philosophy of religion which is the unfolding, the apprehension of that which God is, and it is only through the philosophy of religion that our philosophical knowledge of God's nature is reached.⁴ Concerning religion as the developing of spirit Hegel says, "Religion is the Divine Spirit's knowledge of itself through the mediation

⁴G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, translated from the second German edition by E. S. Spenser and J. Hardin Sanderson (London: Methuen, Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., Ltd., 1895), I, 90.

CHAPTER VI

HEGEL'S THEORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

In this chapter we move to the concept of religion itself, developing along the ideas of Hegel himself. Hegel emphasized greatly the necessity of man looking to history to find the answers of his existence. This is essentially so for the development of spirit into the ultimate Absolute Spirit is simply the development of history itself. History is the history of spirit realizing itself. And so also the history of religion is simply the history of spirit developing absolutely. Hegel asserts that religion is the completion of the life of the spirit, its final and complete expression. He also asserts that scientifically considered, God is at first nothing but a general, abstract name, which had not come to have any true value. It is the philosophy of religion which is the unfolding, the apprehension of that which God is, and it is only through the philosophy of religion that our philosophical knowledge of God's nature is reached.¹ Concerning religion as the developing of spirit Hegel says, "Religion is the Divine Spirit's knowledge of itself through the mediation

¹G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Religion, translated from the second German edition by E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., Ltd., 1895), I, 90.

of finite spirit."² The history of religion is the history of spirit's self-realization.

As with Idea, religion, as expression of Idea, went through an evolutionary development. In the development of religion, spirit itself is presented by Hegel as assuming definite forms, which constitute the distinctions involved in this process. Hegel says that religion is as old as man qua man. It is really an implicit, an essential part of his nature. Without religion man could not be man, he would simply be a mere brute.

According to Hegel, there were also three stages in the development of religion (another dialectical triad). The first stage is the stage in which the realization of spirit is just a principle and notion of religion itself-- religion as immediate and thus "Natural Religion." Here spirit knows itself as its object in a "natural" or "immediate" shape. In its lowest form nature religion consists of the magic and witchcraft of savages. As the religion of nature develops into its higher forms we have the Chinese religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism, the religion of the Persians, of the Phoenicians and Syrians. The highest development in this stage is the religion of the Egyptians.

The second stage in the evolutionary development of

²Ibid., p. 206.

religion is necessarily that of spirit knowing itself in the shape of transcendent and superseded natural existence, that is, in the form of self. This, according to Hegel's thought, would be the antithesis of the nature religions. This is the religion of freedom, or of spiritual individuality. The sphere of spiritual individuality consists of the Jewish religion, the religion of the Greeks, and the religions of the Romans. Here the spiritual is entirely purified and freed from nature, the pure product of thought.

The third and highest stage in the development of religion is the sphere of "Revealed Religion." This is Christianity. Thus Christianity is the synthesis of the two preceding stages. In the first stage spirit is in the form of consciousness, in the second stage it is in the form of self-consciousness, and in the third stage spirit is the form of the unity of both, it has the shape of what is completely self-contained. The Christian religion is the religion in which the idea attains its adequate reality. This is the last, the highest, the ultimate, the religion of the perfect "at-one-ment" of the human spirit with the Absolute Spirit. It is the religion of truth, because in it spirit has spirit for object.

Stage I. Natural Religions

According to Hegel, the first stage in religious

development is the stage of natural religion. Hegel includes under the head of natural religion all those religions in which spirit has not yet gained the mastery over nature, in which spirit is not yet recognized as supreme and absolute. So wherever God, or the Absolute, is conceived as anything less than spirit, for example, as substance or power, these Hegel includes under the term "natural religions."

Natural religion exists first as immediate religion, or magic. Hegel's reasoning follows thus: the developed notion of religion necessarily presupposes that the separation between the universal mind, which is God, and the particular mind, which is man, has already made itself felt in consciousness. The aim of all religion is precisely the bridging of this gulf of separation, the reconciliation of God and man. Now where this separation has not yet made itself felt, religion proper cannot exist, or can only exist in the crude form of magic. Here everything is particular. There is nothing but this tree, this river, this man. So man does not distinguish himself from nature, he is merely a unit amid a chaos of particular objects. Nevertheless, since the supremacy of spirit must force itself in some dim way into consciousness, because it is the moving force at the back of all spiritual development, it appears here as the idea that I, this particular ego, am superior to stones, and rocks, and clouds, and have

power over them. By the exertion of my mere will I can command the clouds, the waters, and they will obey. And this is magic.³

When finally the distinction between universal and particular comes to be made, then we have the first possibility of genuine religion. In this early stage of distinction between particular and universal God is conceived as substance. Such religion is pantheism. In Hegel's system there are three stages of this religion as substance, namely, the Chinese religion, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

In the Chinese religion, God is primarily the wholly undifferentiated universal, contentless and empty being. What corresponds in the material universe to pure being is Heaven, the sky, emptiness. Heaven is here conceived as the absolute power. But as in the religion of magic, so here too the idea of the supremacy of spirit must needs force its way into human consciousness. It does this in the form of a particular spirit, the Emperor. The Emperor is divine and has absolute power on earth. Not only his subjects, but the elements of nature and the spirits of the dead are subject to his power.

Next Hegel presents us with Hinduism. In Hinduism,

³W. T. Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924), p. 492.

Hegel says, the conception of substance is more explicitly developed. God is now the formless one, Brahman. Brahman is abstract unity. As against the One all other existence is unreal, merely accidental. Nothing has any right of independent existence. Though the One may frequently be spoken of in terms which seem to imply personality, yet it is not spirit that is the real content, but only substance. Out of this one substance, and as its accidents, proceed all being, all worlds, all men and all gods. But since the One is not concrete in itself, but is completely empty and abstract, all particular things, including all the gods, fall outside of it. The One does not retain the multiplicity within its grasp, but rather stands on the one side entirely excluding the multiplicity on the other. Hegel points out that this explains the fact that while Hinduism is a pure monotheism, it is yet at the same time the wildest and maddest of polytheisms.⁴

Buddhism, Hegel held, is the last phase of the religion of substance. This substance is now recognized as what it is, vacancy, emptiness, nothing. The Absolute is this nothing, this emptiness. Out of nothing all things arise and to nothing they all return. The position of Buddhism may be represented by saying that it has reached the stage where pure being is seen to be identical with

⁴Ibid., p. 496.

nothing. In Hegel's system this is seen as an advance toward reality. In Buddhism, as in the religion of China, substance becomes embodied in a particular empirical consciousness, Buddha, who is accordingly worshiped as the absolute power.

According to the Hegelian system, a definite advance in the development of spirit is made in Zoroastrianism. God now becomes spirit, but not yet fully developed spirit, not completely concrete spirit. Hegel held that only in Christianity is God truly concrete. In Zoroastrianism God is no longer the wholly undetermined. He now has a determination. He is the Good, and this Good is power. And that God is not wholly undetermined, but is determined as the Good--this is the first trace of the advance from substance to spirit.⁵ This Good, however, is still completely abstract and one-sided, and for that reason the opposite one-sidedness stands over against it. This is evil. Between these opposites, good and evil, there is waged an everlasting strife. Actually what we have here is extreme dualism. Here we are presented with the second trace of spirit. The universal, the Good, God, now has an other. There is division, opposition, strife; opposition that is absolutely necessary for the development and realization of spirit. But what is essential to the idea of spirit,

⁵Ibid., p. 500.

namely, that the division, this strife, this opposition should be within itself, is lacking. The Good here wages war with a wholly external principle.

In Zoroastrianism, then, religion has advanced to the extent that the universal has an other with which it is at strife. This represents the division of the universal and the particular. But in Zoroastrianism this other is an external principle. The advance now registered by the Syrian religion, according to Hegel's evolutionary theory, is that the God has his other within himself, and is divided within himself, so that the strife and opposition is internal and proceeds within the substance of God himself. This is an essential element in the idea of spirit, the opposition must come from within. As stated, the concept of inner division does appear here in the Syrian religion, however it is in symbolic fashion. The Syrian religion has at its center two myths--that of the phoenix and that of the god Adonis. The phoenix is a bird which burns itself, but ever rises, rejuvenated from its own ashes. The god Adonis dies, but rises again on the third day. Hegel says that these legends mean then that the essential element of negation no longer lies outside the god, as a mere external opposite, but now enters into the very substance of god-head. Negation is the same as otherness, the god has his own other in himself. He negates himself, the strife, the division is within the god. This is the advance made here.

The characteristics of the Syrian religion are retained and further developed in the religion of Egypt. The chief god in this sphere is Osiris. Osiris, like the Syrian god Adonis, has the element of negation within himself. Osiris dies, but he rises again and becomes after this resurrection not only lord of the living, but also ruler over the spirits of the dead. Of course, the important thing here is the emphasis which is placed on the idea of resurrection. In death we have the negation of spirit, resurrection is the negation of this negation. Death is slain. The conception of spirit has now been definitely reached, the transition has been made, and we are ready to pass over into the second major religious stage in Hegel's ladder of spiritual development.

Stage II. The Religion of Freedom

In this sphere of religious activity Hegel includes the Hebrew religion, the Greek religion of beauty, and the Roman religion of utility. Again we shall see Hegel discussing this development in the form of a dialectical triad.

Hegel classed the Jewish religion as a religion of spiritual individuality because of its fundamental determination that God is a person. God is personal; God is now One, not the impersonal One of the Hindus, but the One Person--Jehovah. For the Hebrews, Jehovah alone is independent reality. But Hegel says that God as spirit must

act in accordance with ends.⁶ Since Jehovah is Himself held as the sole reality, and therefore finite ends receive no recognition, God's end is Himself. There is only this one end, all things are for the glory of God. Hegel points out that Hebrew worship too consists in this, that man should recognize the glory of God, and should know his own worthlessness and nothingness. Since the finite consciousness has no standing before God, since it exists not of right but merely by grace, the attitude of man in the Hebrew religion is essentially one of fear. God is the Lord, and the Lord is to be feared. Man, as having no right of existence is the bondservant of the Lord, he is not free. The people of God is a people adopted by covenant and contract on the conditions of fear and service. And, since God as spirit has transcended all entanglement with the sensuous, he exists accordingly in no sensuous shape, but solely as spirit, solely for thought. There is no image of God, no statue. The sensuous representation of God is natural forms, the making of images and idols is considered the highest of abominations.

Hegel then claimed that the antithesis to the thought contained in the religion of the Hebrews was to be found in the religion of the Greeks. The idea advanced in the Grecian religion was that man did have the right of

⁶Ibid., p. 506.

independent existence, that man was an essential manifestation of God. Hence man is considered self-determined and free. The divine no longer merely negates the finite sensuous world, but actually dwells in it, is on friendly terms with it. In Judaism the finite flees away before the face of God, but the Greek gods are presented as friendly beings, they are personal and individual beings. The finite has no need to fly from their wrath. Theirs is rather an infinite geniality and tolerance of all things, man is no longer afraid. Man is a spirit and the gods, too, are spirits. They are like him, they are human and gracious. Hence, anthropomorphism becomes the dominant note in this stage in the evolution of religion. The Greek mind pictures the divine as a pantheon of human-like gods. These gods are no mere abstract personification, but are presented as genuine individuals depicted with a wealth of intimate characterizations. This is the religion of joyousness. Worship consists in games, festivals, processions, songs, plays, and works of art.

But Hegel states that behind this multiplicity of gods there must needs be an underlying unity. To admit to the Greeks nothing but actual polytheism would not be an advancement, but would be a falling backward in the development of spirit. This cannot be. Instead, Hegel claims that the many gods in the Greek religion have arisen by the differentiation of unity. This underlying

unity is dimly felt, vaguely seen. This one power which rules over even the gods is mere emptiness, a darkness; it is incomprehensible, blind, irrational, for what is completely empty cannot be known. This power which remains in the background, which rules in a blind irrational way, is necessity, is Fate.

Hegel then leads us into discussion of the Roman religion, the religion of utility. Hegel presents the Roman religion as the synthesis of the Hebrew and Greek religions. In the sphere of spiritual individuality, God is necessarily conceived as acting in accordance with ends. The Hebrew God, we have seen, had but one end, infinite and universal in character, namely, Himself. The Greek gods, on the other hand, identify themselves with a multitude of particular ends. This is necessitated by their multiplicity and their human character. They are, in fact, finite beings with finite ends. Hegel says that the Roman religion arises from combining the characters of the Jewish and Greek religions. It is, in this respect, their unity and synthesis. In common with Jehovah, the Roman Divinity serves a single universal end. But in common with the Greek conception, this end is a finite, particular end, a human end, an end belonging to this world. This single end, finite and earthly, yet broadened out till it is universal in its scope, can only be the state. The Roman state is conceived as a universal power bringing

all peoples within the scope of its sovereignty. The Roman gods are degraded to the rank of means, and chained to the ends they serve. They lose spirituality and life, they become pale and lifeless. Ultimately, the Emperor, the actual present power who was the embodiment of that end, came to be worshiped as a god.

Stage III. Revealed Religion

The sphere of "Revealed Religion" is the highest stage in Hegel's theory of the development of religion. As stated previously, this stage of development contains only one religion, the absolute religion, Christianity. Christianity is the last, the ultimate, the highest of religious development. Christianity is the absolute religion because it has for its content the absolute truth. In Christianity spirit has spirit for its object, in Christianity we have the ultimate union of the infinite with the finite, we have the atonement, the reconciliation of the finite spirit with the Absolute Spirit. God and man become one. Christianity is the religion which contains the fully developed and synthesized elements of truth of all the preceding religions. Not one of the antecedent religions of Christianity was absolutely false, they all contained some elements of truth in them; but all were incomplete. In Christianity we have absolute completeness. All had their roots in the needs of humanity

estranged from God, in humanity seeking after God; but only in Christianity is this estrangement wiped away, only in Christianity is God found.

We see, therefore, that Hegel does emphatically and repeatedly speak of Christianity as the highest of all religions, as the absolute religion, and as true. However, this fact in itself does not merit Hegel the title of "Defender of the Faith," nor does it in any way signify that Hegel's system was truly a Christian system. As one reads through Hegel's exposition on revealed religion, doubts will very quickly arise if there is any relation whatsoever between Hegel and Christianity. Christian terminology is placed before the reader in every paragraph, Scripture is quoted, reason is appealed to--and the devils dance for glee. We will now examine closer Hegel's theory of revealed religion and see just what similarity, if any, it has to historic, orthodox, Biblical Christianity.

such as Scriptures, as we have seen, he speaks concerning the Bible. One can very easily be thrown off guard when he finds Hegel making a statement such as this:

It is of primary importance that, in Hegel's system, the Bible is regarded as a mere historical document, and not as a divine revelation.

G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, translated from the second German edition by W. W. Wallace and J. Barton Sanderson (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1955), II, 245.

CHAPTER VII

HEGEL AND CHRISTIANITY

As Hegel begins his exposition on Christianity, the absolute religion, we find this statement:

At the present time it is philosophy which is not only orthodox, but orthodox par excellence; and it is it which maintains and preserves the principles which have always held good, the fundamental truths of Christianity.¹

We will now give closer scrutiny to Hegel's "orthodox Christian philosophy," and we shall try to perceive just what Hegel means when he speaks of "the fundamental truths of Christianity." How orthodox is Hegel's system, or perhaps even, how Christian is this system?

Hegel and the Bible

It is rather difficult to immediately pinpoint Hegel's attitude concerning Holy Scriptures, especially just how much of Scriptures, as we know it, he includes when he speaks concerning the Bible. One can very easily be thrown off guard when he finds Hegel making a statement such as this:

It is of infinite importance that, by Luther's translation of the Bible, a popular book has been put into

¹G. W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Religion, translated from the second German edition by E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., Ltd., 1895), II, 345.

the hands of the people, in which the heart, the spirit can find itself at home in the very highest, in fact in an infinite way. For Protestant peoples the Bible supplies² a means of deliverance from all spiritual slavery.²

This may sound very well, for certainly we hold that the Word is a means of grace whereby we are led by the Holy Ghost to our Savior, and to deliverance from sin. The crux of this statement by Hegel lies in the word "deliverance." As we shall see later in this chapter, deliverance for Hegel has not even the remotest relation to the Christian's deliverance from sin, death, and the devil. We become more wary of Hegel's attitude toward the Bible when we read:

The words of the Bible are a statement of truth which is not systematic; they are Christianity as it appeared in the beginning; it is Spirit which grasps the content, which unfolds its meaning.³

Again,

There are people who are very religious, who do nothing but read the Bible and repeat sayings out of it, and whose piety and religious feeling are of a lofty kind, but they are not theologians; religion does not, so far, take with them a scientific form, the form of theology.⁴

So Hegel infers that the Bible is itself sufficient for some men and makes them pious and religious; but these men who rely only upon the Bible are not thinking Christians,

²Ibid., III, 81.

³Ibid., I, 28.

⁴Ibid., II, 342.

they are not theologians. As such, this type of Christian has not yet reached the stage where his finite spirit has united with the infinite Spirit, Hegel's salvation. To rely solely on the Bible means unattainment of total salvation. The Christian doctrines are found in the Bible, but they become truly meaningful only after extensive philosophic interpretation. Only in this philosophic interpretation of Holy Scriptures can man find reconciliation with the infinite.

It is evident that Hegel is altogether out of touch with the Old Testament and Old Testament religion. To Hegel the Old Testament is merely a history of one people and he uses it thoroughly to give evidence to his own theory of the development of spirit. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the Jewish religion is simply considered the thesis in a triad of the further development of the spirit. The antithesis and synthesis in this realm of development were the Greek religion and the Roman religion. Hegel says that the Old Testament pictures the Jewish religion as the religion of fear, fear produced by the idea of a Power above. The fear here referred to by Hegel is not the fear of respect or worship, but it is the fear of the Unseen. The nature of the Jewish religion is that of servitude. Concerning the covenant made between God and His people, Hegel says, "The people of God is accordingly a people adopted by covenant and contract on the

condition of fear and service."⁵

Hegel continues by explaining that the obedience so rigorously demanded in the Old Testament is not of a spiritual and moral sort, but is merely the definite blind obedience of men who are not morally free. God is a God who punishes evil simply as something which ought not to be. And this leads us to the idea of reconciliation in the Old Testament. Concerning sacrifice Hegel says,

Here sacrifice is not intended simply to signify that the offerer is symbolically renouncing his finitude, and preserving his unity with God, but it signifies more definitely the act of acknowledgment of the Lord, a testifying that He is feared.⁶

We see, therefore, that Hegel does not recognize any relation between sacrifice and the promise of the Savior, the Christ. Of course, the basis is the difference of the idea of reconciliation between Hegel and historic Christianity. In Hegel reconciliation is simply the union of God and man, the actual union through the understanding and recognition that God and man are one.

Further, Hegel claims that the Old Testament made no distinction between the divine and the human. It was owing to this absence of the idea of freedom that the Jews did not believe in immortality. The immortality of the soul, Hegel claims, is not an admitted fact in the Old

⁵Ibid., p. 211.

⁶Ibid., p. 218.

Testament. There is no higher end in the Old Testament than the service of Jehovah, and so far as man is concerned, his aim is to maintain himself and his family in life as long as possible. Also Hegel gives absolutely no recognition to the fact of the Trinity in the Old Testament. The Trinity is strictly a Christian concept in Hegel's system. Hegel presents God in the Old Testament as simply the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and so forth. There is no recognition to the fact that the promised Messiah is to be born through this generation of families. Generally it is easy to see why, for such a recognition would have no room in the Hegelian system.

As Lutheran Christians, it is impossible to stand in agreement with Hegel on any point concerning Holy Scriptures, and we must assert that those theologians that do pervert the doctrine of Holy Scripture. We hold and have always held that Holy Scripture is the only source and norm of faith.

We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone.⁷

We hold that the Bible is the norm of faith for the "naive" Christian as well as for the "thinking" Christian. We

⁷"Formula of Concord," Book of Concord: The Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 216.

hold and believe the Holy Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, to be the Word of God, given of God to men through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 Timothy 3:16. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter 1:21. We believe and teach Holy Scripture to be authoritative (John 10:35; Luke 24:25-27; Matthew 26:54); to be efficacious (Romans 1:16; 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23); to be perfect and sufficient (2 Timothy 3:15-17; John 17:20; 1 John 1:3,4); and to be perspicuous (2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 1:19; Psalm 119:105). We believe and teach that the Word of God is a means of grace without which God does not grant His Holy Spirit.

And in those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit of grace to no one except through or with the preceding outward Word.⁸

In opposition to Hegel's advocacy for philosophic interpretation of Scripture, this is what we believe and teach.

In connection with Hegel's views regarding Holy Scripture, it may also be interesting to note his objection to the "language" of the Bible and of Christianity in general. As noted, Hegel referred to Christianity as the absolute

⁸"Smalcald Articles," Book of Concord: The Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), pp. 146-147.

religion because it has for its content the absolute truth. But the defect of Christianity is that it presents these truths in the form of contingency.⁹ Hegel uses the term Vorstellung to express the "picture language" that is used in Christianity. Hegel holds that the religious knowledge of ordinary thought is strained through finite images, is representative, is figurative, and consequently this knowledge is inadequate. For example, "Son" or "Begetting" is only a figure of speech derived from the natural relations existing in our finitude.

Further, when we speak of the wrath of God, of His repentance, or His vengeance, we know at once that the words are not meant to be taken in the strict sense, but merely as implying resemblance, likeness. The fall of man is represented by an event that took place in the Garden of Eden, and the reconciliation of God and man is likewise presented in the form of a story or event. Thus, Hegel says, there must be a higher method of knowing the content of religion, of grasping the manifold elements of divine truth so that they shall be seen as correlated members of an organic whole. It is this Vorstellung of Christianity which pictures logical relation as outward event, thus investing them with the form of contingency. And this is

⁹W. T. Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924), p. 515.

the shortcoming of Christianity and the Holy Scriptures.

• This picture language of Christianity may be satisfactory to the "common man," but philosophy is needed to rescue the higher thinking individual. When this Vorstellung is stripped off and nothing but the pure thought is left we have philosophy, which Hegel claims gives the absolute content in the absolute form. Philosophy is the knowledge of the Absolute, not as the Vorstellung, the picture language of religion, but as what it essentially is, as thought, or more precisely, as the Idea. It is the knowledge of the Idea by itself. Again, we see by these assertions of Hegel that the whole historic doctrine of Holy Scripture is radically denied.

Hegel and the Doctrine of the Trinity

The most significant point in Hegel's philosophy of religion is his analysis of the Absolute, or Reality, into a triad. This is Hegel's doctrine of the Trinity. It is at this point that Hegel mainly asserts the identity of his philosophy with that of the Christian religion. The doctrine of the Trinity, to Hegel, is the starting point and the foundation to his whole exposition concerning the absolute religion. He regards the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as the vital center of all Christian doctrine, "the essential truth in the light of which alone it is

possible to know God and to understand the meaning of nature and human history."¹⁰ This Christian doctrine of the Trinity is what separates Christianity from all other religions, and it is this doctrine of the Trinity which gives Christianity its absolute character.

Again, it is not very difficult to find yourself thrown off guard in reading Hegel, for very easily you can find in Hegel such a statement as this: "Those who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity are men who are guided merely by their senses and understanding."¹¹ And to this we would immediately reply, "Yea, verily." But you would not have to read much further before you realize that the only relation between Hegel's "Trinity" and the Trinity of historic Christianity is that they both simply have been signified by the same name. The Trinity for Hegel, as we shall see, is nothing more than another triad in his dialectical process. True, it is the highest triad, it is the absolute triad, it is the last and ultimate triad, it is Reality; but this does not lessen the fact that the Holy Trinity has been reduced by Hegel to a mere process. In Hegel's Trinity we are again presented with the concepts of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. God the Father is

¹⁰ J. Macbride Sterrett, Studies in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1890), p. 165.

¹¹ Hegel, op. cit., III, 19.

the thesis, God the Son is the antithesis, and God the Spirit is the synthesis. Or, to carry this thesis out further, God the Father is the abstract thesis; God the Son is the abstract negative, the not-being of this thesis, the antithesis; God the Spirit is the negation of this negation, or the concrete absolute, the synthesis. As Stace explains Hegel's concept of the Trinity:

This is the doctrine of the nature of God as He is in Himself before the creation of the world. God, as such, is the Idea, the Notion. The Notion is threefold; and God is therefore threefold in Himself. As universal He is God the Father. The universal produces the particular out of itself, i.e. God the Father begets God the Son. The particular returning into the universal, in the individual, i.e. God the Holy Spirit. The three factors of the Notion are not three parts of it. Each factor is itself the entire Notion. Thus the universal is not merely the universal; it is also the particular and the individual. And the particular likewise is the universal and the individual. The notion, although it contains three moments, is yet one undivided Notion, for each moment is the entire Notion. This appears in Christianity as the doctrine of the Trinity. God is the undivided One. Yet God is three persons. But the Son and the Spirit are not different from the Father. For each is, not a part of God, but the entire Godhead.¹²

Or in Hegel's own words:

The three forms indicated are: eternal Being in and with itself, the form of Universality; the form of manifestation or appearance, that of Particularisation, Being for another; the form of the return from appearance into itself, absolute Singleness or individuality.¹³

True to Hegelian fashion, then, God is the outcome of

¹²Stace, op. cit., pp. 511-512.

¹³Hegel, op. cit., III, 2.

the unending forward movement which has been mediated by the tension of contradictories. Hegel claims to be able to detect even in the "becoming" of God the presence of one-sided stages which await their integration in the higher, unique truth. As pure abstract idea, God is Father; as going forth externally into finite being, the element of change and variety, God is Son; as once more sublating or cancelling this distinction, and turning home again enriched by this out-going, God is Holy Spirit. Accordingly, it is obvious that Hegel's dialectic doctrine of the Trinity places the Holy Ghost on a higher level than that of the Father and of the Son. Actually, the Father and the Son are two abstract concepts which are merged into the Holy Ghost which, therefore, is the sole reality of God. The Father and the Son, both taken together, would be less than the Holy Ghost according to the Hegelian dialectical system. Such a Trinity, clearly, represents that which is in no sense eternal, but only coming to be. Such a Trinity has no meaning or even existence apart from the finite world, being dependent on the finite world for existence.

Obviously, the Hegelian view of the Trinity takes us a good way from the historic, Biblical doctrine of the Holy Trinity. With historic Christianity we hold and believe and teach that

the Catholic [universal] faith is this, that we

worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the
Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the
Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the
Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty
coeternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is
the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreat, the Son uncreat, and the Holy
Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible,
and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy
Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three Eternal, but one eternal.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy
Ghost is God.¹⁴

This we believe and teach to be the Scriptural doctrine of
the Holy Trinity.

Hegel and the Personality of God

From the discussion of Hegel's views of the Trinity,
it can be readily seen that Hegel did not believe in a
personal God in our Christian sense of the term. God, for
Hegel, is simply the philosophic Idea, the ultimate Idea,
the highest Idea. "God is not the highest emotion, but
the highest Thought," Hegel states.¹⁵ Again Hegel re-
marks:

Thought alone is the substratum of this content.
Thought is the activity of the Universal; it is the

¹⁴"The Athanasian Creed," Book of Concord, op. cit.,
p. 9.

¹⁵Hegel, op. cit., I, 62.

Universal in its activity, or operation; or if we express it as the comprehension of the Universal, that that for which the Universal is, is still Thought. This Universal is for Thought and is produced by Thought.¹⁶

Ultimately, Hegel falls into the idealistic habit of identifying God with man. God, for Hegel, is infinite Spirit; as such, however, He is ultimately identical with finite spirit, man. It is in the development of the finite mind that the infinite and absolute, or God, first rises to consciousness of self. Thus, it would appear, God has reality only in the thought of those who believe in Him. God is actually dependent upon man for existence. Hegel reaffirms such a view with his remarks, "It is equally true that God exists as finite and the Ego as infinite,"¹⁷ and, "Without the world God is not God."¹⁸ Hegel holds that God is the continual moving towards the finite, and owing to this He is, as it were, the lifting up of the finite to Himself. In the Ego, as in that which is annulling itself as finite, God returns to Himself, and only as this return is He God. Finite spirit is the negative, the necessary opposite of infinite Spirit, and it is only in the combining, or synthesis of the two that absolute Spirit is reached. It is only in this synthesis that

¹⁶Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 200.

"God is God."

This, of course, is just the opposite of the view of the personality of God held by historic Christianity. Certainly, God is not dependent upon man for any means of existence, certainly God is not dependent upon the universe for any means of existence; but, instead, man is dependent upon God for his very life and being. We believe God is He who "is before all things," and it is He by whom "all things consist" (Colossians 1:17). We believe that the true God personally does concern Himself with man, with the fate of man. As the nature of God is unfolded to us through Holy Scriptures, we find ourselves face to face with a personal Being. He is higher and greater than man (Romans 11:36). But at the same time He is interested in man, concerned about man, and occupies Himself in performing what is best for man (Psalm 33:4ff.; Isaiah 25:1). As revealed by the Holy Scriptures we attribute to God divine life (John 5:26), divine knowledge (John 21:17), divine wisdom (Romans 11:33), divine will (1 Timothy 2:4), divine holiness (Deuteronomy 32:4), divine justice (Psalm 92:15), divine veracity (Numbers 23:19), divine power (Matthew 19:26), and divine goodness (Matthew 19:17).

Hegel and the Doctrine of Sin

In examining Hegel's view concerning sin, we must accredit him with the formulation of a truly unique

doctrine. It appears almost incredible, as the reader shall soon see, that a man who continually acclaimed himself as a Lutheran could come up with such a distorted view of sin and evil. Without a doubt, Hegel's unique formulation of the doctrine of sin is due to his strict adherence to his dialectic principles. In Hegel, sin loses half of its evilness, and he presents us with the position that the "fall" into sin by man was actually a fall upward.

Hegel begins his discussion of sin by first philosophically explaining the true significance of the "myth" of the Fall as presented in the book of Genesis. "This well known account of how evil came into the world is in the form of a myth, and appears at the same time in the guise of a parable," according to Hegel.¹⁹ Hegel holds that in this story, regarded as a whole, there is a deep philosophic meaning. Adam is taken to signify no one significant person, but signifies man in general. The tree of which Adam is not to eat is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thus the idea of a tree with an outward definite form disappears. Hegel stresses the fact that we observe that both good and evil are denoted by this tree. Sin is then described by saying that man ate of this tree. Man eats of this tree and he attains to

¹⁹Ibid., II, 201.

the knowledge of good and evil; Adam becomes like God. The serpent says that Adam will become like God if he eats of this tree, and God confirms the truth of this, and adds His testimony that it is this knowledge which constitutes likeness to God. It is just this knowledge of good and evil which constitutes the character of Spirit. It is upon this knowledge that the rise of consciousness from finite into infinite depends. Knowledge is the principle of spiritual life and it is the principle of knowledge which supplies also the principle of man's divineness.²⁰ So immediately, in this interpretation of the narrative of the Fall, we see Hegel's advocacy for the necessity of sin in the development of man.

We see this assertion carried further when Hegel discusses innocence. Hegel held that the lowest state that man has ever been in was his state of innocence in the Garden of Eden. To quote Hegel:

It is knowledge which first brings out the contrast or antithesis in which evil is found. The animal, the stone, the plant, is not evil; evil is first present within the sphere of knowledge; it is the consciousness of independent Being, or Being-for-self, relatively to an Other, but also relatively to an Object which is inherently universal in the sense that it is the Notion or rational will. It is only by means of this separation that I exist independently, for myself, and it is in this that evil lies. To be evil means in an abstract sense to isolate myself; the isolation which separates me from the Universal represents the element of rationality, the laws, the

²⁰Ibid., III, 54-55.

essential characteristics of Spirit.²¹

In essence, then, it appears that sin for Hegel is synonymous with finitude. Man, as particular spirit, is in his essential nature distinguished from the universal spirit, which is God. My particularity and finitude are precisely the factors which constitute my lack of identity with God. Man is evil, is estranged from God, just because he is a particular and finite spirit. According to Hegel, this is the meaning of the doctrine that man is by nature evil. In his state of innocence, man did not realize his finitude, did not realize his estrangement from universal Spirit, and thus could not attain reconciliation with the universal Spirit, with God. The state of innocence is then equated by Hegel to the state of ignorance. This "knowledge of good and evil," sin, was essential to man in order that he might cast off his finiteness and again return to universal Spirit. The advance from innocence to virtue can be made only through sin. Man cannot be truly a "person" without experiencing evil. Man's fall and sin in general consequently became to Hegel not only a necessary stage of development for striving toward the higher, but even a needed impulse for that end.

The idea of the necessity of sin in Hegel's thought can possibly be explained further if it is put into Hegel's

²¹Ibid., pp. 52-53.

own dialectical triad. Sin is placed as the antithesis in another of Hegel's triads. This triad is innocence, thesis; sin, the negative, the not-being of innocence, the antithesis; and virtue, the synthesis. Virtue can be reached only through sin. A man who has not experienced sin cannot attain virtue. In respect to this triad, then, we see that for Hegel sin is actually nothing more than mere appearance. As antithesis, sin is taken to be merely an abstract concept with no real concreteness. Thesis and antithesis are always denoted as abstractions in the Hegelian system. Sin for Hegel is so much less real than man that it would be an impossibility for man ever to regard himself as altogether sinful. In Hegel's system, therefore, there is no trace or need of any feeling of absolute humility and sorrow and contrition of man before God because of sin.

In his discussion of sin, Hegel also speaks of original sin and the sin against the Holy Spirit. But here, also, the only relations these carry to the parallel historic Christian doctrines are the similarity of terminology. In brief, Hegel says that original sin is simply a term used in finite fashion (picture language) to explain the universality of sin. This term and doctrine were necessitated by the fact that sin is represented by Christianity as being introduced into the world by a particular being, Adam. The doctrine of original sin explains for the non-thinking Christian the fact that sin is universal in spite

of the fact that it was that one particular individual who committed the evil deed.

Concerning the sin against the Holy Spirit, Hegel again presents us with a unique explanation. Hegel says that what is highest in the Christian religion is that all men are called to salvation.²² Therefore Christ also says that all sins can be forgiven to men except the sin against the Spirit. What Christ means here, according to Hegel, is that the supreme transgression is the denial of the absolute truth of the unity that exists between finite and infinite spirit. There can be no reconciliation to anyone who denies this truth, that God and man are one; for he who denies this truth cannot become one with God.

We as Christians know with perfect clarity that when we face sin, we do not face some necessary abstract concept, but we face a grim and dreadful and real fact. And what Christianity takes as its task is not to make sin luminous to our intelligence, but to bring us to repent of it, trusting Him to make an end of it, and, through forgiveness mediated by Christ, to replace it by His own righteousness. Historic Christianity defines sin to be every departure from the norm of the divine Law, no matter whether it consist in a state or condition or in actual

²²Ibid., p. 108.

deeds.²³ Sin is an actual fact and not simply appearance. We believe that the cause of sin is not the necessity of the finite spirit realizing its infinity, but that the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God.²⁴ We believe that the seat of sin is primarily the soul with its intellect and will, for Jesus says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries."²⁵ In holding to the actuality of sin we believe and teach that the consequence of sin is the punishment of death, temporal and eternal, the expression of God's wrath; for the apostle Paul declares that by sin came death.²⁶ Original sin we hold to be that state of depravity which followed Adam's transgression and which now inheres in all mankind. We believe the Scriptural teaching that the sin against the Holy Ghost is the individual's hardening of his heart against the office and work of the Holy Ghost, the refusal of the Gospel of Christ. This is what we believe and teach concerning the doctrine of sin.

²³John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), pp. 210-211.

²⁴"Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

²⁵Matthew 15:19.

²⁶Romans 5:12.

Hegel and the Doctrine of Reconciliation

From his theory on sin, Hegel leads directly into the discussion of reconciliation between God and man. In view of statements made earlier in this chapter concerning reconciliation, we need here only to point out Hegel's views in brief.

Hegel theorizes that through sin, through evil, man comes to the knowledge that he is a finite, particular being, that his finite spirit is estranged from infinite Spirit. This estrangement necessitates reconciliation, the reconciling of finite spirit with infinite Spirit. According to Hegel, the possibility of reconciliation rests only on the conscious recognition of the implicit unity of divine and human nature.²⁷ Unity already exists between particular spirit and universal Spirit, man simply has need to come to the realization of this already existing unity. When he does come to this realization, he is reconciled. When man recognizes that he and God are ultimately one, he is reconciled. Man, as part of the world, is simply an expression of God's "otherness," part of the negative moment of God, the contradiction of God, thus part of God Himself. Thus, for Hegel, reconciliation is

²⁷Hegel, op. cit., III, 71.

the union of God and man, the actual union through the understanding and recognition that God and man are one. Man attains reconciliation through philosophic knowledge.

This then is the explication of the meaning of reconciliation, that God is reconciled with the world, or rather, that God has shown Himself to be by His very nature reconciled with the world, that what is human is not something alien to His nature, but that this otherness, this self-differentiation, finitude, as it is sometimes expressed, is a moment in God Himself.²⁸

In his principle of reconciliation, we again see Hegel straying far from the path of historic Christianity. In Hegel's theory of reconciliation we see no sorrow for sin. In fact, man can be thankful for sin, for it is sin that ultimately leads him to reconciliation. We see man attain reconciliation through his own efforts, through the raising of the mind in accordance with philosophic principles. Actually, there is no similarity at all between Hegel's meaning of reconciliation, and reconciliation as defined in historic Christianity. How great the difference is will be further noted in the following section concerning Hegel's views on the person of Christ.

Hegel and the Doctrine of Christ

The reader will probably immediately note that the doctrine of the person of Christ is discussed after the doctrine of reconciliation. This is Hegel's own order of

²⁸Ibid., p. 99.

position, and this point in itself is very significant to the whole of Hegel's views on the person of Christ. It would be unfair to say that in Hegel's system of religious realization Jesus Christ is deprived of all reality or meaning, but the general trend of Hegel's argument is sufficiently indicated by the fact that the name of Christ is not mentioned at all until the speculative treatment of reconciliation between God and man has been given in full. This point we wish to keep in mind as we put forth Hegel's doctrine of Christ.

In discussing Hegel's views of the Trinity, on the personality of God, and especially on sin and reconciliation, this leads us to ask, "Where does this leave Christ in the Hegelian system?" Truly, Hegel held emphatically that the person Jesus Christ did and does have a very special significance for man and the Christian religion. According to Hegel's views of God as Spirit and Idea, and according to his view that Nature and the world is God's otherness, God's negative moment, Hegel naturally held that God was incarnate in every finite thing. Hegel qualifies this view by asserting that God is not equally incarnate in all finite objects. God is more perfectly incarnate in a dog than in a stone, more perfectly incarnate in a wise and good man. (It is with this view that Hegel is met with the accusation of pantheism.) And concerning Jesus Christ, Hegel held that Christ was a special

incarnation of God, we could even say, the incarnation of God. But for what reason Hegel held this view we shall soon see.

We shall first express Hegel in his own words:

On the contrary, if Man is to get a consciousness of the unity of divine and human natures, and of this characteristic of Man as belonging to Man in general, it must come to him as representing Man in his immediate state, and it must be universal for immediate consciousness.

The consciousness of the absolute Idea, which we have in thought, must therefore not be put forward as belonging to the standpoint of philosophic speculation, of speculative thought, but must, on the contrary, appear in the form of certainty for men in general. This does not mean that they think consciousness, or perceive and recognize the necessity of this Idea; but what we are concerned to show is rather that the Idea becomes for them certain, i.e., this Idea, namely, the unity of divine and human nature, attains the stage of certainty, that, so far as they are concerned, it receives the form of immediate sense-perception, of outward existence--in short, that this Idea appears as seen and experienced in the world. This unity must accordingly show itself to consciousness in a purely temporal individual who is at the same time known to be the Divine Idea, not merely a being of a higher kind in general, but rather the highest, the Absolute Idea, the Son of God.²⁹

In view of this assertion, then, Hegel felt that Christ was a special incarnation of God but only for the reason that mankind in general was of itself unable to grasp the true idea of the incarnation in its truth. Man in general cannot of himself rise to the philosophical idea that all finitude is an incarnation of God, that his finite,

²⁹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

particular spirit is in actual unity with the infinite, universal Spirit, that he and God are one. Man requires this truth to be presented to him in the form of immediate sense-perception, and further, this sense-perception must take the form of one single man. "This unity must appear for others in the form of an individual man marked off from or excluding the rest of men."³⁰ And this is where Hegel, in his system, places the historic Christ. Hegel says that in the person of Jesus Christ the popular consciousness finds the unity of God and man placed before it as an absolutely immediate sensuous fact. Christ, according to Hegel, was therefore the first to catch sight of that vast speculative, philosophic truth. He perceived that God and man are one. In realizing this truth, Christ, therefore, was God.

Christ is presented by Hegel as merely a representation for man of the manifestation of the Idea. Through Christ, human thought is enabled to rise to and grasp the ultimate truth that Divinity and humanity are one in essence, that the life of man is the life of God in temporal form, and that the two natures, the Divine and human, can only realize themselves through vital unity with each other. Christ is the concrete representation of that fact for man in general, the necessary sensuous testimony of that

³⁰Ibid., p. 73.

speculative truth.

In the Church Christ has been called the God-man. This is the extraordinary combination which directly contradicts the Understanding; but the unity of the divine and human natures has here been brought into human consciousness and has become a certainty for it, implying that the otherness, or, as it is also expressed, the finitude, the weakness, the frailty of human nature is not incompatible with this unity, just as in the eternal Idea otherness in no way detracts from the unity which God is.³¹

Hegel explains the death and resurrection of Christ to further testify to the truth of his system. Hegel says that with the death of Christ there begins the conversion of consciousness. God not only becomes finite in Christ, but He then proceeds to the extreme of finitude: He suffers death. Negation, otherness, finitude are part of the very substance of God, and this is a necessary element in the idea of God as Spirit. However, God rises again from the dead and ascends to the Father, that is, the universal which became particular now returns into itself. The estrangement between God and man is overcome. Hegel says:

God through death reconciled the world, and reconciled it eternally with Himself. This coming-back from the state of estrangement is His return to Himself, and it is because of it that He is Spirit.³²

The consciousness of the fact that God did die expresses the truth that the human, the finite, is itself a divine moment, is in God Himself. Death is the ultimate

³¹Ibid., pp. 76-77.

³²Ibid., p. 96.

expression of humanity, of finitude; God, by His resurrection from the death shows to man definitely that what is human is not something alien to His nature, but actually a moment of His nature. By His death and resurrection God testifies to the unity of God and man, by death death is slain. God has taken upon Himself our finite nature in order to slay it by His death. Hegel states:

It is a proof of infinite love that God identified Himself with what was foreign to His nature in order to slay it. This is the significance of the death of Christ. Christ has borne the sins of the world, He has reconciled God to us, as it is said.³³

So the stress that Hegel put upon the person of Christ was His teaching. Who Jesus was or what He did carries no real significance for man. The special significance of Jesus was that in all of His preaching, He bore witness to one metaphysical truth--the unity of God and man. Now, this was important, and was exactly what made Jesus what He was, simply because He preached the truth which man in general could not grasp. This is what made Christ God. Hegel also stresses the fact that Jesus appeared at a time when just this preaching of the unity of God was most needed, when the common people were in deep perplexity and helplessness. The world at the time of Christ, both in practice and belief, was apart from God. It was useless to preach to such a world that it was separated from God,

³³Ibid., p. 93.

of that it was conscious. What was needed was to give it hope by insisting on the other side of the truth, that it was just as vitally united with God. This was "the fullness of time," and Jesus of Nazareth appeared on the scene to fulfill that need.

So the case with Hegel, then, is that Jesus is only the special incarnation of God for men in general who cannot rise to speculative thought. Christ is the sensuous representation of the philosophic truth of the unity of God and men for non-thinking Christians, for naive Christians. Therefore, we can assume, that those persons who can rise to speculative thought, those persons who can be considered philosophers, have no need for Jesus Christ. They can arrive at philosophic truth without concrete, sensuous aid. Thus, there is no reason for speculative thought to treat the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ as anything of peculiar significance. The philosopher does not need Christ; he can attain reconciliation on his own.

To sum up Hegel's views as to the person of Christ we can specify three points: (1) Jesus was not the sole incarnation of God; (2) Christ's significance is that in Him the Church symbolizes that universal incarnation which the Church has not sufficient speculative insight to grasp without the symbol; and (3) Christ's appropriateness for this does not lie in His being a more perfect incarnation of God, but in His being especially adapted to represent

the divine incarnation to the people who were unable to grasp its full meaning.

After reviewing Hegel's doctrine of the person of Christ, it would seem impossible for any Christian theologian to give stock and heed to such an exposition. But as we shall discuss in the next chapter, no system has exerted such influence upon Christian thought as Hegel's dialectical system.

With regard to the doctrine of the person of Christ, we of the Lutheran Church believe and confess and teach that "our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man."³⁴ We confess and believe that Christ is "equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ."³⁵ Christ, God from eternity, assumed the human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably conjoined in one Person. While the human nature of Christ was at all times truly human, it was at all times free from every taint of sin and was absolutely impeccable (1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ came down from heaven and assumed the

³⁴"The Athanasian Creed," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁵Ibid.

nature of man, not for His own benefit, but in order that He might suffer and die to overcome sin for me, that He might make satisfaction to His Father for me and pay what I owe with His own precious blood (1 John 1:7; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:9). The death of Christ was a violent death on the cross, yet a voluntary death fulfilling the will of the Father to save all men from death (John 3:16; 10:18; Matthew 20:28). We believe that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was the actual justification of the whole world, for by the resurrection God declared all sinners free from sin (Romans 4:24,25; 10:9; Ephesians 1:20-23). The resurrection of Christ was the divine acknowledgement of the completion and sufficiency of our redemption, a proclamation of Christ's victory over sin and death, a confirmation of the truth of His doctrine. Further we confess and believe that Christ "ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and [that] He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end."³⁶ According to the express teachings of Holy Scripture we believe that there is only one possible way for a man to be saved from eternal death, and that is by faith alone in Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer; by faith that through Christ's suffering and death atonement has been made for sin and

³⁶"The Nicene Creed," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 9.

forgiveness of sin is offered. The recipient of this offered forgiveness is faith. The apostle Paul proclaimed to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."³⁷ Paul again testifies in the book of Romans, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law."³⁸ In Galatians we read, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."³⁹ And in the book of Acts, "To Him all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."⁴⁰ This is what we confess and believe.

Hegel and the Doctrine of Man

Man is by nature good, he is not divided against himself, but, on the contrary, his essence, his Notion, consists in this, that he is by nature good, that he represents what is harmony with itself, inner peace; and--Man is by nature evil.⁴¹

With this sentence Hegel introduces his discussion on the nature of Man. Although this may sound like the extreme in contradictory statements, Hegel does mean exactly what he

³⁷Acts 16:31.

³⁸Romans 3:28.

³⁹Galatians 2:16.

⁴⁰Acts 10:43.

⁴¹Hegel, op. cit., III, 45.

states here; Man by nature is good and at the same time Man by nature is evil. The key to understanding Hegel in his discussion on man lies in the word "potentially." Hegel, in saying that man is by nature good, means that Man's nature is good in so far as it is potentially Spirit. This is the "image of God" in Hegel's thought. Inasmuch as man is potentially universal Spirit, inasmuch as Man is rational, man is created in the image of God. God is the God, and Man as Spirit is the reflection of God, he is the Good potentially.

Hegel says that it is upon this very proposition and on it alone that the possibility of Man's reconciliation rests.⁴² Each man is potentially divine because the Absolute Spirit is in him as his core and substance. The human spirit is essentially of the same kind as the spirit of God. "The difficulty, the ambiguity," Hegel states, "is, however, in the potentially."⁴³ When we have said that Man is potentially good we have not said everything. Man, being good only potentially is good only in an inward way, good so far as his notion or conception is concerned, and for this reason not so good so far as his actual nature is concerned. It is just the very fact that Man is only potentially good that the defect of his nature lies;

⁴²Ibid., p. 46.

⁴³Ibid.

because he is only potentially Spirit means that he is not Spirit. As we have seen, Man must fulfill his potentiality to be reconciled. This view of man as held by Hegel is an essential view if Hegel is to be true to his own system. Man, as part of nature is part of God's "otherness," part of the necessary negative moment in God. As such, Man cannot be by nature absolutely good, for if he was good by nature he would have no element of division within himself and there would be no need for reconciliation. If Man was by nature good he would necessarily by nature be Universal Spirit. There would thus be no division, no development within God Himself. But at the same time Hegel cannot ascribe to Man's nature absolute evilness, for although Man is finite spirit, he is still spirit and has Spirit potentially within himself. To ascribe only evilness to Man's nature would be to deny "potentiality" to Man and do away with the possibility of reconciliation, the unity of finite and infinite Spirit. Hegel masterfully concludes his discussion on the nature of Man by stating:

It is to put a false question to ask, Is Man good by nature, or is he not? That is a false position, and so, too, it is superficial to say, He is as much good as evil.⁴⁴

Unlike the Hegelian theory, the historic doctrine of the Lutheran Church, following Scriptures, is neither

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 50.

ambiguous nor contradictory. We clearly confess that Man, as created by God, was created in the image of God. By the image of God we mean that man was not only created sound in body, but that he was created with perfect natural righteousness, goodness, and holiness (Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:24; Genesis 1:26,27). We believe that Adam and Eve, being tempted of the devil, voluntarily transgressed a commandment of God, and by this sin lost this image of God and became entirely depraved in spiritual death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12). Furthermore, not only was Adam affected by his sin, but the guilt of Adam is imputed to all his descendants so that from the time of Adam there has not been a man born who has not been totally corrupt and sinful in nature (with the exception of Christ, the Son of God, Romans 5:18; 3:23; Psalm 51:5; 143). By nature we are all born evil, we are all born as sinners, we are all born as transgressors and deservers of God's wrath and punishment. There are none that are born good by nature, potentially or otherwise. This is the Scriptural teaching concerning the nature of man.

Hegel and the Freedom of the Will

It is very difficult to put forth Hegel's exact ideas concerning the will of man, for he himself speaks only briefly on it and is far from being precise. Actually, Hegel does not identify freedom with freedom of the will,

or freedom from the operation of causality. In brief, when Hegel speaks of freedom of the will, he means the activation of one's own inner tendencies. Freedom of the will is the unfolding of oneself, it is self-realization. In developing itself, objective Spirit wills itself, and in as much as it does will itself it is essentially free will. Now, the Universal is something which I myself have projected into the world, and, therefore, if I am governed by the Universal I am being governed by myself and free. The will is free in so far as it wills the universal. So as long as I work for self-realization, as long as I work toward fulfilling my potentiality, which is universal Spirit, I am free and my will is free. But if the action of the will contradicts the Universal, and proceeds merely according to its private and selfish interests, as long as it does not proceed to the development of its potentiality, it is then not free. These selfish interests are not the embodiment of the true self whose essential is universality. They belong to man as a part of nature rather than as spirit. And the will is, in such case, rather to be regarded as still in bondage to nature. And this is genuinely bondage, unfreedom, because to be ruled by nature is to be ruled by the external world, by what is not me. This is what Hegel means when he says, "The good man is good

along with and by means of his will."⁴⁵ Further, this is what Hegel means when he states:

To be in a state of nature means that I am without consciousness in reference to myself, means the absence of will; I am a being of the kind which acts in accordance with Nature, and so far regarded from this side I am, as is often said, innocent, I have, so far, no consciousness of what I do, I am without any will of my own, what I do I do without definite inclination, and allow myself to be surprised into doing it by impulse.⁴⁶

Historic Christianity teaches concerning the freedom of the will, first, "that man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work things subject to reason."⁴⁷ Further:

It can speak of God, offer to God a certain service by an outward work, obey magistrates, parents; in the choice of an outward work it can restrain the hands from murder, from adultery, from theft.⁴⁸

Secondly, concerning spiritual matters we teach that

the free will from its own natural powers, not only cannot work or concur in working anything for its own conversion, righteousness, and salvation, nor follow, believe, or assent to the Holy Ghost, who, through the Gospel, offers him grace and salvation, but from its innate, wicked, rebellious nature, it resists God and His will hostilely, unless it be enlightened and controlled by God's Spirit.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 61.

⁴⁷"Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁸"Apology to the Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴⁹"Formula of Concord. Thorough Declaration," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 243.

Hegel and the Doctrine of Immortality

The doctrine of immortality in the Hegelian system is another doctrine in which it is very difficult to acquire Hegel's exact intent and meaning. He speaks of it only briefly, almost just in passing; but he does give us enough information to observe that again he is far from the idea of immortality as confessed in historic Christianity. Because of Hegel's continual identifying of finite spirit with infinite Spirit, or, of man with God, it may be correctly assumed that Hegel did hold to some idea of the immortality of the soul, although he never definitely defines his sense of immortality. What definition he does give may be summarized in one of his own statements:

Thus the immortality of the soul must not be represented as first entering the sphere of reality only at a later stage; it is the actual present quality of Spirit; Spirit is eternal, and for this reason is already present.⁵⁰

It appears then, that immortality for Hegel is a quality of the mind, a present quality of mind. This would fall in line with Hegel's teaching of the unity of man and God. Since Spirit is naturally immortal, man, upon reaching the realization that he is one with Spirit also becomes immortal. This tenet, Hegel feels, gives him the right to

⁵⁰Hegel, op. cit., III, 57.

say that "Man is immortal in consequence of knowledge."⁵¹ Hegel felt that what differed man from the animal was his ability to think and reason, thus, it is through this ability that man "immortalizes" himself. "Reasoned knowledge, thought, is the root of his life, of his immortality as a totality in himself."⁵² Hegel never speaks of immortality as being connected with a future fact or event, but speaks of it only as a present quality of spirit. Concerning bodily resurrection and immortality, Hegel says nothing, but it can be safely assumed that he did not hold to the belief of physical immortality, immortality of both body and soul. Also Hegel mentions nothing about those belonging to the human race who never reach the philosophic truth of the unity of spirit with Spirit.

According to Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Church presents a definite doctrine of immortality, of eternal life. Our Confessions do teach also that eternal life is a present quality, for eternal life does begin here on earth: "But eternal life (which begins in this life inwardly by faith) is wrought in the heart by eternal things."⁵³ When a man, through the work of the Holy Ghost, comes to faith

⁵¹Ibid., p. 58.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³"Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 134.

in Christ as his Savior, the quality of eternal life already begins its existence. Upon the death of a believer, we believe according to Scripture that the soul of the believer is immediately taken to God, taken to paradise with Christ (Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59). But we not only hold to the immortality of the soul, but hold and believe that although the physical dies, it will be raised again at the second coming of Christ and will share with the soul in the eternal bliss of heaven, will share with the soul eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:42-58; John 5:28,29; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Hegel and the Sacraments

When Hegel speaks concerning the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper he goes quite into detail and puts much stress and emphasis upon the value of these Sacraments. Moreover, Hegel asserts strongly that it is the Lutheran interpretation of the Sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, that is the only correct and meaningful interpretation. But, again, Hegel's interpretation of the Sacraments is strictly philosophical with only philosophical value, and is far from Christian spiritual meaning.

Concerning baptism, we have evident in the Hegelian system no regard of the Sacrament of Baptism as a means of grace. To Hegel baptism is merely the sign or symbol which

testifies to the individual's membership in the Church. Hegel says that spiritual truth exists only as something that is consciously known, the mode in which it outwardly appears consists in the fact that it is taught. The Church, then, is essentially the institution which implies the existence of a teaching body to which is committed the duty of expounding this doctrine.⁵⁴ Since the individual is thus born in the Church, he is therefore destined, although unconsciously, to share in the truth of the Church and to become a partaker of it. It is in the Sacrament of Baptism that the Church expresses this fact. Through baptism the Church testifies that that individual is in the fellowship of the Church, "in which evil is necessary, in-and-for-itself overcome, and God is essentially, or in-and-for-Himself reconciled."⁵⁵ Perhaps we could best illustrate Hegel's idea concerning baptism by presenting one of his own summary statements:

Baptism shows that the child has been born in the fellowship of the Church, not in sin and misery; that he has not come into a hostile world, but that the Church is his world, and that he has only to train himself in the Spiritual Community which already exists as representing his worldly condition.⁵⁶

So the Sacrament of Baptism, in Hegel's theory, is related

⁵⁴Hegel, op. cit., III, 126.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 127.

⁵⁶Ibid.

to the individual only as something external, simply as an outward sign of Church membership. Baptism, thus, is deprived of all spiritual value and meaning in the Hegelian system.

In Hegel's exposition on the Lord's Supper, we find much spiritual significance ascribed. In the Sacrament of the Supper the individual enjoys the presence of God. What we have is the consciously felt presence of God, unity with God, the unio mystica, the feeling of God in the heart. The reason that the Sacrament of the Supper was given was that man would have in a sensible immediate way the consciousness of his reconciliation with God, the abiding and indwelling of the Spirit in him. This may sound, in itself, fairly well, but we must always keep in mind just what Hegel means by reconciliation. Hegel explains further:

(Since this is a feeling in the individual heart, it is also a movement, it presupposes the abolition of difference whereby this negative unity comes into existence as the result.) If the permanent preservation of the Spiritual Community, which is at the same time its unbroken creation, is itself the eternal repetition of the life, passion, and resurrection of Christ, then this repetition gets a complete expression in the Sacrament of the Supper. The eternal sacrifice here just is, that the absolute substantial element, the unity of the subject and of the absolute object is offered to the individual to enjoy in an immediate way, and since the individual is reconciled, it follows that this complete reconciliation is the resurrection of Christ.⁵⁷

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 133.

Hegel goes on to say that the Supper is the central point of Christian doctrine, and it is from it that all the differences in Christian doctrine get their color and peculiar character.

The Roman conception of the Lord's Supper is a false conception, according to Hegel. In the Roman Church's celebration of the Supper, the host, the outward material, owing to the act of consecration, becomes the actually present God. God becomes a thing, comes in the form of an empirical thing, and thus, empirically enjoyed by man.

"Since God is thus known as something outward in the Supper, which is the central point of Doctrine, this externality is the basis of the whole Catholic Church."⁵⁸

Therefore, owing to the fact that God is represented as something fixed and external, this externality runs through all further definitions of the truth in the Roman Church. Through this interpretation of the Supper, the Roman Church presents the Universal as something which has a definite existence outside of the subject. This is an untruth in the Hegelian system.

The Reformed Church also falls short in its interpretation of the Supper. In the Reformed belief, God is present in the Supper only in the conception we form of Him, only in memory, and thus His presence is merely

⁵⁸Ibid.

immediate and subjective. The conception of the Reformed Church is thus unspiritual and merely a lively remembrance of the past. It is not a divine presence, there is no real spiritual existence.

To Hegel therefore, only the Lutheran conception of the Supper carries with it true spiritual meaning. In the Lutheran celebration the act of communion takes place and the inner presence of God "arises to the extent to which, and in so far as, the externality is eaten not simply in a corporal fashion but in spirit and faith."⁵⁹ Hegel goes on to say that it is not the act of consecration that gives the Supper spiritual meaning in the Lutheran Church, but the value of the Supper exists in faith only. Apart from the act of communion and faith, the host is a common, material thing. The process truly takes place only in the spirit of the subject. In this case, then, there is no transubstantiation, the whole presence of God is of a purely spiritual sort directly connected with the faith of the individual subject. This is the Lutheran interpretation, also the correct interpretation, according to Hegel.

Hegel may claim that his interpretation of the Sacraments is just another way of putting forth the Lutheran interpretation, but we of the Lutheran Church must then claim that certainly Hegel must have completely disregarded

⁵⁹Ibid.

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in setting forth this assertion. In our Confessions we clearly testify to the fact that the Sacraments are means of grace through and in which the Holy Spirit works and preserves faith. In regard to baptism, we believe that baptism is not a mere church rite, as Hegel claims, but we believe that it is a divine ordinance which is to be in force till the end of time and must be observed by all Christians (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:19,20). Our Confessions affirm this when they teach concerning baptism, "that it is necessary to salvation, and that through baptism is offered the grace of God."⁶⁰ When we baptize an individual by applying water in the name of the Triune God, we believe that God Himself is present with the water connected with the Word, and efficaciously offers the gifts of His grace (Acts 22:16; 2:38; Luke 3:3). This grace that baptism by water and the Word does impart is that "it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this."⁶¹ This our Confessions teach according to Mark 16:16, which says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Therefore, it should be

⁶⁰"Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶¹"Luther's Small Catechism," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 162.

clearly evident that we of the Lutheran Church have always taught and believed that baptism is not merely a sign or symbol of church membership, as Hegel claims, but it is an actual "washing of regeneration," performed by the Holy Spirit through the water and connected with the Word.

Accordingly, we also believe and confess that the Sacrament of the Altar is a divinely instituted means of grace, whereby life and forgiveness of sins is offered. Our Confessions teach that the Sacrament of the Altar is "the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink."⁶² In the Sacrament of the Altar, Christ confirms and seals His gracious forgiveness of sins by imparting His own blood and His own body, which the communicant receives in, with, and under the bread and wine (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:27-29). We take the words of Christ's institution (Matthew 26:26-28) in their simple meaning, just as they read, and trust that Christ, who has made the promise is able to fulfill it. We do not insist or call for any philosophic interpretations of the Sacrament of the Altar, but simply take Christ at His word. The Lutheran doctrine rests simply and purely on Scriptural ground and is in agreement not only with the words of institution, but also with every other passage that treats of the Holy Supper.

⁶²Ibid., p. 163.

Hegel and the Doctrine of the Church

Hegel identifies the Church with the kingdom of the Spirit. As we have noted, the Holy Spirit is actually the synthesis of the Triune God, and it is in this synthesis that the Church is found. Hegel also calls the Church the Spiritual Community. In the kingdom of the Spirit reconciliation has been accomplished and God and man are one. Finite spirit is identical with infinite Spirit. Their unity is now represented in this fashion, that the spirit of God is in man, not, however, in man as particular man, but in a community of men, the Church. In reality, Hegel is opposed to any emphasis or worth being put on the individual person as such, as we find in the theory of Kirkegaard. To Hegel, an individual alone is no person at all. A person is the quality of being an object to itself in relation to other persons and things. He finds himself at home in all the larger life about him. A native-born Robinson Crusoe on his island might be an individual, but he could not be a person. Society is to the person what language is to thought. Hegel would hold to the idea that if you multiply your relations and you increase yourself, minimize them, and you dwarf even to annihilation. The individual must die in order that the person may live in an organism of persons. The Spiritual Community consists of the subjects or persons who live together in the Spirit

of God, and the Spiritual Community is what in general is known as the Church.

In the Spiritual Community as actually existing, the Church is emphatically the institution in virtue of which the persons composing it reach the truth and appropriate it for themselves, and through it the Holy Spirit comes to be in them as real, actual, and present, and has its abode in them; it means that the truth is in them and that they are in a condition to enjoy and give active expression to the truth of Spirit, that they as individuals are those who give active expression to the Spirit.⁶³

Thus, in Hegel's system, we see that the Church consists of all who have come to the realization of the philosophic truth that God and man are one. This also seems to infer that to be a member of the Church in the Hegelian system, one has to have passed the stage where Christ is known as Savior, and has to have attained the realization of the understanding that God and man are not disparate natures, but are essentially the same substance. As Hegel states,

We no longer have to do with the fact that this one man has been elevated by the outpouring, the decree of the Spirit, so as to have an absolute signification, but with the fact that this signification is consciously known and recognized.⁶⁴

Again, Christ is deprived of all spiritual meaning for the Church.

Historic Christianity has always defined the Church

⁶³Hegel, op. cit., III, 124.

⁶⁴Ibid.

simply as consisting of all those who truly believe the Gospel, who truly believe that Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away their sin and the sin of the world. Our Augsburg Confession defines the Church simply as "the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."⁶⁵ Or Luther states in the Smalcald Articles, "For, thank God, a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd."⁶⁶ According to the Lutheran doctrine and definition of the Church, Christ is not minimized so as to lose all meaning for the Church, but Christ Himself is rightfully believed to be the cornerstone and foundation of the Church. Only through the individual's faith in Christ Jesus as his personal Savior can he become a member of the Church of Christ. Faith is absolutely the means by which a person is joined to the Church. This Church is the Church that will endure forever, and even the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

⁶⁵"The Augsburg Confession," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶⁶"The Smalcald Articles," Book of Concord, op. cit., p. 148.

CHAPTER VIII

EXAMPLES OF HEGEL'S INFLUENCE

"Profound"---in its briefest form this would possibly be the best word to describe the influence of the Hegelian system on Christian thought since the nineteenth century. Hegel and his system came into the scene in the period of history when many intellectuals had or were losing their faith in the teachings of the Reformation. Descartes' philosophy of self-consciousness was being referred to. To Descartes was added the message of empiricism from England. Voltaire's writings had reached into Germany and had found many followers. After Voltaire came the writers and theologians of the Enlightenment. This whole movement stressed a new view on life and searched for a new concept of religion and theology. It was into this age of thought that the Idealistic movement was born. When Hegel presented his philosophy of religion many felt that this was the answer to their intellectual problems and they had at last been presented with a form of religion that was reasonable to the genius of the human mind. To simply accept at face value the dogmas of unreasonable Christianity seemed an insult to the intellect of the human mind. And yet, many of these "advanced thinking" individuals hesitated at throwing off their Christian heritage altogether. For this reason, Hegel's philosophy had peculiar

appeal both to philosophers and theologians. This enabled him to remain a "Christian" and yet to be held in regard as an intellectual.

Further, it is observed that in every movement of man, whether it has been social, political, or religious, there has always been movement to the right and to the left. Protestant theology, also, has been characterized by a double line of development from the time of the Reformation, the liberalistic and the conservative. The nineteenth century especially put this double-development into notice. And the great gains of the liberalistic trend in this century is due largely to the Hegelian system which found quickly a large following among "deep thinking" theologians. Theological liberalism proceeded along the presumption that the theology of the Reformation was fundamentally unattainable. This gave rise to the determination to reconstruct religion and theology independent of the confessional heritage of the Reformation. The determination was to construct a theology after the ideal that had developed in connection with Rationalism, ignoring all revelation of Holy Scripture and working with the thoughts offered by this new philosophy. By now many of the intellectuals had lost their faith in the teachings of the Reformation. One example of this fact is this awareness in Schleiermacher and his famous speeches directed to the "intellectuals" of Germany. Then followed Hegel and his

system, an endeavor to synthesize philosophic thought with Christianity. It was Hegel who almost wholly paved the way to reduce historic religion to philosophic ideas and rational conceptions. In this Hegel was immediately followed by a strong school of liberalistic theologians whose influence is still being exerted in this twentieth century.

The expanse of Hegel's influence can perhaps be best seen by first examining the teachings of some of the more influential theologians who have exhibited Hegelian inspiration. As happens in other movements, Hegelianism in theology before long came to be represented by a left wing, a right wing, and a mediating center.

On the so-called positive side we meet such theologians as A. E. Biedermann. It is in Biedermann that we probably see theological Hegelianism at its best. His chief work was Christian Dogmatic in which he spends much labor in showing the mythical foundation of the dogma of the Church. He passes the figurative images of faith through the processes of dialectic and thus renders them into pure speech of the notion. By this work Biedermann reduces the religious contents of the dogma of the Church to philosophic formulas. Biedermann felt that by reducing all affirmations of faith to terms which were strictly philosophical, they would then be given lasting and permanent value. The belief in God as a Person is declined by Biedermann and it is replaced by Hegel's idea of the

absolute mind. The idea of God is simply formed in the human mind by necessity, he teaches.¹ Individual immortality is declared to be indifferent, the truth in this teaching is the continuance of life in the universal mind back of objective reality.

In Christology his main interest lay in distinguishing sharply between what is called the principle of redemption and the Person of Jesus. By an optical illusion the Church has seen these two as one. Biedermann claimed further that when the Church ascribed redemptive might to the God-man, rather than to man's absolute religious self-consciousness, it had lapsed into mythology.² The incarnation of God, traditionally misconstrued as a once-for-all event, is an eternal fact present forever in the being of God as the self-externalizing Absolute One. With views as these propounded by Biedermann, we can see a clear case of Hegelian influence.

In the person of Vatke we see applied for the first time Hegel's conception of the evolution of religion to the history of the Old Testament. Vatke was a pupil of Hegel and a professor of Old Testament literature in the Berlin university. In 1835 he published his best known work,

¹H. R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 131.

²Ibid., p. 132.

Religion des Alten Testaments. In this book Vatke puts forth the theory that the monotheism of the Old Testament prophets is the result of a gradual evolution from the old crude Semitic worship of nature to the purer conception of a personal God. Not much notice was given to this theory when it first was presented, but here already was presented the principle of the Wellhausen School and its successors.

We could probably say that the greatest amount of Hegelian influence still evident today was carried to us by J. Wellhausen and the Wellhausen school of Old Testament higher criticism. The Wellhausen school and its successors were all dominated by the Hegelian idea of evolution. Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) is considered the special leader of higher criticism. He tried to trace the evolutionary development of Israel's religion from an early crude polytheism to a pure ethical monotheism. The most startling element of his theory was his assertion that the great prophets of the Old Testament religion had preceded in time the codification of the Mosaic Law.

Wellhausen was the staunch defender of the theory known as the "New Documentary Theory," or, "The Final Documentary Theory." This theory was put forth mainly by Eduard Reuss and modified by his pupil, Karl Heinrich Graf. This theory held that there were four main sources in the development of the Pentateuch: P, the Priestly Code;

E, the Elohist Document; J, the Jahwist Document; and D, the Deuteronomist Document. It was the skilled defense of this theory by Julius Wellhausen that won many followers for the theory and gave it the ascendancy. As a result, it is popularly called the "Wellhausen Theory." And without a doubt this doctrine has had widespread influence for today; many great Protestant scholars still hold to this view. This principle seems to make good sense to them and satisfies their minds. However, when one goes along with this view he would necessarily have to deny the miraculous in Old Testament religion. He would be saying that Israel's religion developed just as all other, even heathen religions did. This would be good Hegelianism, but not good Christianity.

With respect to putting Hegel's ideas to the New Testament we meet most of the radical left-wingers. It appears that the radical comprised most of Hegel's followers. We meet the chief representative of the left-wing of the Hegelian school in the person of David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874). In Strauss we find Hegelianism run wild. He began as teacher of theology in Tuebingen, but his radicalism was the cause of his removal from theology into a position as teacher of classical subjects. The work that Strauss is most known for is his Leben Jesu which was published in 1835. The problem which his work principally centered on was the significance of the historical person

of Jesus Christ for the believer of the present day. As we recall, Hegel wanted to reconcile philosophy and religion, especially Christianity, and to show in the end that they were both one. Strauss used the Hegelian system to show just the opposite, that Christian belief and consistent Hegelianism are incompatible.

Strauss first set at work to prove that the Gospel narratives were nothing more than a collection of myths gradually formed in the earliest Christian communities, "a wreath of adoration woven round the Master's head by worshipping fancy."³ Hegel held that one of the differences between the theologian and the philosopher was that the theologian operated with figurative conceptions while the philosopher operated with exact notions. Through his system, Hegel felt that he brought the two into perfect harmony. But for the "pictorial thinking" of Hegel, Strauss puts "mythology." Strauss did not wish to deny that Jesus ever did exist, but he is simply an echo of Hegel when he says,

Jesus, we are told, was the first to perceive that God and man are one. Later this was perverted by the Church into the dogma that God and man are one--in Jesus Christ.⁴

Strauss, in his works, takes up all the doctrines of

³Ibid., p. 118.

⁴Ibid., p. 120.

faith one by one with the aim of showing that "once the Scriptural and supposedly experimental factors have been drained out, nothing is left but the faded residuum of pantheistic monism."⁵ Strauss had no feeling for the sinner's bitter cry for deliverance, and in his philosophy "good" and "evil" lost all their meaning. In the end he turned to materialism and held that there was no hope for a life to come. He praised Darwin's discoveries as the Bible of the new religion with all theology removed. So we see D. F. Strauss, an ardent pupil of Hegel, in the end disproving just what Hegel spent his life proving. Hegel stressed the relative affinity of faith and idealism; Strauss, by using the Hegelian system, showed the impassible gulf between the two.

We meet another "left-winger" in the person of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). If Strauss had sought to destroy Christianity, Feuerbach was bent on uprooting religion in every form. Feuerbach is noted as the classic sceptic in theology just as Hume is in philosophy. He set out to show that whatever religion turns out to be, in its last essence it will be something that man is bound to have out of necessity and cannot be without. Feuerbach parallels Strauss in that they both started with Hegel and ended in materialism. He said that faith in God other than myself

⁵Ibid., p. 121.

is a fruitless effort to escape from the circle of my own being. When theology is analyzed, it is nothing more than anthropology. We call God "love" because we wish for, and have formed a picture of a Being that will satisfy all our desires and dreams. That which makes men happy, that to him is his God. The consciousness of God is nothing more than man's own self-consciousness.

Feuerbach held that the Trinity is a hypostatized form of the social impulse. The Holy Spirit is the soul of man in its urgent or enthusiastic character, objectified by itself. It was Ludwig Feuerbach who converted the Biblical statement, "God created man in His own image" into "Man created God in his own image."⁶ He also coined that well-known motto of materialism, "What man eats that he is."⁷ Feuerbach displays no interest in the question who or what Jesus Christ may have been. Christ, the real God of the Christians, is to him simply an idealized conglomerate of all the excellences admired by man.

In Bruno Bauer (1809-1882) we meet the extreme of the Hegelian left-wingers. Bauer, like Strauss, was also a teacher of theology until the radicalness of his views brought about the revocation of his license. Bauer put

⁶J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), II, 127.

⁷Ibid.

his critical mind to work on the New Testament and when he was finished he had disposed altogether of the historicity of Jesus by claiming that He was a mere idea produced by the Graeco-Roman world. The New Testament critics previous to Bauer, by using Hegel's method, had detracted much from the character of Christ, but they did not go as far as to deny the actual historicity of the person of Christ. In proposing this view, Bauer gives an interesting anticipation of ideas which were later developed more in detail in the Historico-Religious School where Christ appears as a working hypothesis of God's character. So from Strauss and his view of the mythical character of the Gospels, critical views of the New Testament have degenerated to the position held by men as Bruno Bauer who held that Jesus Christ Himself was nothing more than a myth and never had a real existence.

Another influential school that carried the banners of the historical views of Hegel was the famous Tuebingen School, founded by Ferdinand Christian von Baur (1792-1862). In von Baur we meet another remarkable representative of Hegelian philosophy in theology. Von Baur raised the historical questions: the problem of the history of dogma, the history of Christianity in the first centuries, and the history of the origin of the New Testament Canon. Von Baur's research was altogether governed by Hegelian ideas. He held that Christianity was not a finished

product expressed in the person of Christ, but it is the expression of an idea in progressive development. Baur then reconstructed the whole history of doctrine upon the basis of Hegel's scheme for historical development, the dialectical scheme of thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

In a large way, Baur saw an illustration of this scheme in the history of doctrine itself. Catholicism was succeeded by Old Protestantism, and this was succeeded by New Protestantism. In his New Testament criticism he came to the conclusion that ~~only~~ Romans, Galatians, and the two Corinthians were the only authentic epistles. Matthew is held to be a legendary narrative, Luke and Mark were supposedly written in the middle of the second century, and John was a work of high metaphysical speculation, relating no actual history, also written in the second century. John, the disciple of Christ, was the author of the Apocalypse, but not the author of the Gospel.

With regard to the influence of Baur and his New Tuebingen School of Theology, this school dominated the field of the New Testament research for a full generation to such an extent that all who refused to fall in line had to submit to the stamp of unwissenschaftlich. F. Lichtenberger characterizes Baur's work as a "purely logical movement which received no impulses from without and which notably remained without relation to the history of

Christian life and morals."⁸ Baur took too little account of the person of Christ and did his best to explain the historical origin of Christianity without ascribing anything supernatural to its character. R. Seeberg remarks of Baur's influence:

He gave work for two generations of theologians. One generation he forced to accept his lies, the other he forced into the work of refuting them.⁹

And with these men we see just briefly what an extensive influence the Hegelian system had upon the liberal trend of religious thought since the nineteenth century. In some theologians the Hegelian influence was greater, in others less. Some were satisfied by taking one or two points from the Hegelian system and resting their thought upon these; others would try to incorporate the whole of Hegel's system into their own. And one would meet these Hegelian theologians not only when he would delve directly into the so-called Hegelian school of thought, but in practically every religious movement from the nineteenth century on some phase of the Hegelian system of thought could be recognized exerting its influence.

During the revival of religion in the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany, the age of Confessional theology, we meet such men as Theodor Kliefoth (1810-1895).

⁸Ibid., p. 126.

⁹Ibid.

His thought clearly portrays the influence of Hegel. In him the development of dogma appears as a development divinely guided, as an actual progressive incarnation of Christ. The development of dogma comes about as one doctrine after the other enters into the dogmatic consciousness. In the Mediating Movement in the nineteenth century Richard Roth stands out. He was wholly devoted to the program of the mediating school to harmonize Christianity with philosophy. He combines in his system the formal principle of the Hegelian school, its dialectical method, with the theosophical tenets of Schelling and peculiarities of Schleiermacher's theology. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) was educated in the Tuebingen school and at first was an ardent follower of Hegel and Baur.

It was already brought out how the historico-religious school depended upon the evolutionary theory of Hegel. Beside the name of Wellhausen, such members of this school as Otto Pfleiderer, K. H. Graf, Hugo Gressman, and Hermann Gunkel stand out. Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1925) was a pupil of Ritschl and realizing the need of a metaphysical foundation of religion finally went back to Hegel and the older liberal theology. Adolph Deissmann (1866-1937) came under the influence of Wellhausen and his main work sought to explain the essence of Christianity in terms of a cult-worship. John and Edward Caird, Hutchinson Stirling, and Thomas Green gave Hegel's idealistic philosophy impetus in

England in the nineteenth century. Glasgow, Oxford and Cambridge became strongholds of English idealism. The Hegelian background is still the common possession of the English Modernists and Anglo-Catholics.

The influence of Hegelian thought has also reached into our own century into our own country. The thought of William Brown of Union Theological Seminary is classed as being modified by Schleiermacher and Hegelian idealism. Walter Rauschenbush of the Rochester Theological Seminary relied heavily upon Hegel to give the social meaning of the Gospel full force. Rauschenbush's conception of eschatology also was that of the left wing of the Hegelians. A towering figure among the Modernists was Shailer Mathews of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He held that religion developed the same way as civilization progressed. God must be thought of as an activity that is both creative and environing. Douglas C. Macintosh of Yale combined his system with the best of the Kantian and Hegelian tradition. Harry E. Fosdick of New York City is thoroughly modernistic, philosophic idealism taking the place of Biblical realism.

And so, the list may be made to include many more prominent theologians who give evidence of Hegelian influence, but this already existing list should suffice in convincing the reader of the problem and the threat that Hegelian thought does pose to the Christian today who

**believes the doctrine of Christ as presented in the Bible
and expounded in historic Christianity.**

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century we see therefore that the Hegelian system exerted an extreme amount of influence among theologians of practically every school. In the Hegelian school itself there was both positive (so-called) and negative construction resulting from individual application of Hegel's system. There were those who still followed Hegel's main purpose and wanted to show that theology and philosophy were actually one, and there were those (the majority) who used Hegel's system negatively to denounce and devalue Christianity, holding that only philosophical wisdom were eternal and philosophy and Christianity had nothing in common.

But as we looked into the theology of these Hegelians such as Biedermann, the thought produced was usually still along the negative vein, still detracting from the biblical concept of Christianity. As brought out earlier, the labor of Biedermann was spent in showing the mythical character of the dogma of the Church, so the labor of Biedermann was against Conservative Theology, against Chalcedonian theology; it was negative. As a result, I feel that we will be safe in saying that by far the thought produced in the nineteenth century by the Hegelian system was negative thought, at least as far as orthodox Christianity is

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century we see therefore that the Hegelian system exerted an extreme amount of influence among theologians of practically every school. In the Hegelian school itself there was both positive (so-called) and negative construction resulting from individual application of Hegel's system. There were those who still followed Hegel's main purpose and wanted to show that theology and philosophy were actually one, and there were those (the majority) who used Hegel's system negatively to denounce and devaluate Christianity, holding that only philosophical axioms were eternal and philosophy and Christianity had nothing in common.

But as we looked into the theology of these Hegelians such as Biedermann, the thought produced was actually still along the negative vein, still detracting from the Biblical concept of Christianity. As brought out earlier, the labor of Biedermann was spent in showing the mythical foundation of the dogma of the Church, so the labor of Biedermann was against Conservative Theology, against Confessional Theology; it was negative. As a result, I feel that we would be safe in saying that by far the thought produced in the nineteenth century by the Hegelian system was negative thought, at least as far as orthodox Christianity is

concerned. Starting with Hegel's theory of the evolution of religion, both the Old and the New Testaments were cast aside by these theologians as simply a record of a collection of myths. The belief in Christ, His teachings, His miracles, are all held as myths produced in the early centuries. This led to the final extreme expression of Bruno Bauer, that the historical Jesus was not historical at all, but Christ Himself was simply a myth, a fable of the human mind.

Throughout the Hegelian school, and in many instances outside of this school, the system of Hegel is used to cast aside all the Confessions of the Church. The system is used by these men to show that the Confessions actually have no valid foundation whatsoever, that their foundations rest on no more than weak mythology. Of course, if the Holy Book of God is reduced to nothing more than a product of the minds of men, as these theologians do, then there is no foundation for the Confessions of the Church. In line with this premise there then is no consideration for the efficacy of the Word, there is no such thing as Means of Grace, the Sacraments are mere ego-satisfying symbols. Through the Hegelian thought, the personality of God is reduced practically to the stage of pantheism. Man himself becomes the beginning, the center, and the end of all and any consideration. As this is advanced, sin and evil are no longer held as real, humility before God is done away

with, man no longer needs "a Redeemer."

Actually, the aim of these men was not at all at a religion, but at a new view of world and life. They did like the ideas of "Protestantism" in religion, and on this ground they did admire Luther. At the beginning they thought that a proper interpretation would put Luther on their side. But they and their followers in the field of theology soon found that the Lutheran Reformation was hopelessly against them. These idealists felt that their new movement had to complete the Reformation by setting up new and independent fundamentals. The result was, as we have seen, a complete rejection of almost all the fundamental Christian beliefs, a rejection of all the principles of the Reformation. Confessional theology was held as obsolete, and those who still clung to the Confessions of the Church were looked down upon and were held as unworthy to hold the title "Theologian."

In the final analysis, the real positive element of the influence of Hegel's system I feel lies in the fact that the Conservatives and Confessionalists were awakened and were forced to react against this Hegelian influence and thereby strengthen their own stand and beliefs. The road of the Hegelian school led only in one direction, to complete apostacy; the direction was downward. One by one "reject" was stamped on the tenets of Christianity by these thinkers: there was the final rejection of revelation,

the final rejection of the Bible as the Word of God, until it led to the final rejection of Christ Himself--the only possible result when man attempts to raise himself to the level of God and rationally systematize truths that only faith can grasp. Let us conclude, then, letting the words of Paul again suffice:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.¹

¹Romans 11:33-36.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Primary Sources

Hegel, G. W. F. Phenomenology of Mind. Translated from the German by J. B. Baillie. 2 vols. London: Swan Sonnenschein and Company, Limited, 1910.

----- . Philosophy of Religion. Translated from the second German edition by E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson. 3 vols. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., Ltd., 1895.

B. Secondary Sources

Aiken, H. D. The Age of Ideology. New York: The New American Library, 1956.

Allbeck, Willard Dow. Studies in the Lutheran Confessions. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952.

Baillie, J. B. "Hegel," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. VI. Edited by James Hastings. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928. Pp. 568-587.

Bible, Holy. Authorized Version.

Book of Concord: The Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952.

Chang, W. S. Hegel's Ethical Teaching. Shanghai, China: Commercial Press, Ltd., 1925.

Croce, Benedetto. What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel. Translated from the original text of the third Italian edition, 1912, by Douglas Ainslie. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1915.

Driver, S. P. An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.

Durant, Will. The Pleasures of Philosophy. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953.

----- . The Story of Philosophy. New York: The Pocket Books, Inc., 1926.

- Frost, S. E., Jr. Great Philosophers. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1942.
- Basic Teachings of Great Philosophers. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1942.
- Haldane, E. S. The Wisdom and Religion of a German Philosopher. London: Kegan, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1897.
- Hoenigswald, Richard. "Philosophy of Hegel," Living Schools of Philosophy. Edited by Dagobert Runes. Ames, Ia.: Littlefield, Adams, and Co., 1956.
- Knox, T. M. Early Theological Writings. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932.
- Lion, A. The Idealistic Conception of Religion. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.
- Mackintosh, H. R. Hegel and Hegelianism. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903.
- Types of Modern Theology. London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1932.
- McTaggart, J. Studies in Hegelian Cosmology. Cambridge: University Press, 1901.
- Meade, Hunter. Types and Problems of Philosophy. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1946.
- Menant, D. "Parsis," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. IX. Edited by James Hastings. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928. Pp. 65-69.
- Mueller, John Theodore. Christian Dogmatics. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934.
- Neve, J. D. A History of Christian Thought. 2 vols. Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. The Nature and Destiny of Man. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.
- Orr, James. Sin As A Problem of Today. London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1919.
- Philosophy of Hegel, The. Edited by Carl J. Friedrich. New York: Random House, Inc., 1953.

- Reyburn, H. A. The Ethical Theory of Hegel. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.
- Royce, Josiah. "Hegel," The Americana. XIV. Edited by G. E. Rines. New York and Chicago: Americana Corp., 1938. Pp. 65-69.
- Runes, D. Dagobert. Living Schools of Philosophy. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams, and Co., 1956.
- Russell, Bertrand. A History of Western Philosophy. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945.
- Stace, W. T. The Philosophy of Hegel. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924.
- Sterrett, J. Macbride. Studies in Hegel's Philosophy of Religion. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890.
- Thilly, Frank, and Ledger Wood. A History of Philosophy. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1914.
- Turner, W. "Hegelianism," The Catholic Encyclopedia. VII. Edited by C. G. Hervermann and Associates. New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1910. Pp. 192-194.
- Wildelband, Wilhelm. A History of Philosophy. II. New York: Harper and Bros., 1901.