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## A New Pietism: Hegel and Recent Christology

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ground.<sup>68</sup> Unless Christians at least *attempt* to show such constant attentiveness not only to Jesus' story but to Israel's also, then in their talk about God's action, trying to identify some act as being characteristically "divine" will be perhaps the least perplexing uncertainty confronting them. For even more disturbingly, they will encounter abiding doubts whether in uttering the name "God," they mean and refer to the same deity revealed as that central character in Israel's story—a story claimed, after all, to be their story, too.

<sup>68</sup> See Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1982), chap. 6.

## A New Pietism: Hegel and Recent Christology\*

Paul Lakeland / Fairfield University

Discussion of the putatively Christian character of Hegel's philosophy focuses on the question of the relation Hegel envisages between philosophy and religion.<sup>1</sup> There are those who argue that his philosophy is simply a foundational Christian metaphysic, a species of the philosophy of religion.<sup>2</sup> Others are no less convinced that Hegel's system is the end of religion,<sup>3</sup> and there are innumerable variations between the two extremes. This discussion dates back at least to the years immediately following Hegel's death in 1831, when those who interpreted him as a Christian philosopher and those who thought of him as at least implicitly atheistic were polarized into the so-called right and left wings of Hegelian philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Classical right-wing interpretation saw Hegel as a metaphysician, thus leaving room for the identification of the Hegelian absolute with the Christian God. On the left, Hegel was (at the "highest") an ontologist, and the Christian god could not survive. Still today, though in a severely modified way, it is possible to talk in mean-

\* In its original form this paper was delivered at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago in December 1984, under the auspices of the "Currents in Contemporary Christology" group.

<sup>1</sup> This, perhaps the most vexed of all interpretative questions about Hegel, is of necessity discussed by almost every major student of the system. A place to begin pursuing this matter further might be with Paul Lakeland, *The Politics of Salvation: The Hegelian Idea of the State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 93-103; and then follow up with the much fuller treatment in chapters one and seven of Quentin Lauer's book, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> For cogent recent representatives of this point of view, see Lauer, and James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> The best-known example of this point of view is, of course, Feuerbach. For a contemporary version that differs from Feuerbach yet seems to say that Hegel leads to atheism, see Walter Jaeschke, "Speculative and Anthropological Criticism of Religion: A Theological Orientation to Hegel and Feuerbach," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48, no. 3 (September 1980): 345-64.

<sup>4</sup> A recent work by John Edward Toews shows very convincingly that the seeds of this division were already present in the last decade of Hegel's life: see his *Hegelianism: The Post-Towson Dialectical Humanism, 1805-41* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

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ingful terms of right and left, even if those seeking a middle way have grown in strength.<sup>5</sup>

Hegel envisages religion as the penultimate moment in the progress of the human spirit toward its apogee in philosophy as the highest of human activities. Both religion and philosophy have truth as their object: the former possesses it in symbol or representation (*Vorstellung*), the latter as concept (*Begriff*). Religion is "sublated" (*aufgehoben*) in philosophy, that is, somehow superseded, and yet mysteriously preserved in this cancelation. The problem raised by the notion of sublation (*Aufhebung*) is simply expressed: is religion reduced to philosophy in this process, or is philosophy employed to explicate the truth religion contains? Clearly, the interpretation of Hegel as more or less religious or secular rests on the answer to this question. Was he "the Christian philosopher par excellence,"<sup>6</sup> or was he a proto-Marx who had not yet discovered his nerve?

A curiosity of the present moment in Hegel studies, and the stimulus to the current paper, is the shifting significance of "right" and "left" in the assessment of Hegel's mature thinking on religion. There was a time when the right could confidently be assumed to be Christian, while the left could with equal certainty be taken to be atheistic. Right-wing interpretation basically consisted in showing how Hegel remained a philosopher of religion, indeed, one of an "isolated order of priests" charged with the preservation of the truth content of religion at a time when theologians were either pietistic or had embraced a Romantic subjectivism. Left-wing interpretation tried to show to the contrary that the whole drift of Hegel's thinking led inexorably to the elimination of religion and the installation either of reason or of material totality in its place.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Peter Hodgson's essay, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, and Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:120.

<sup>6</sup> Errol Harris's opinion, in his "Hegel and Christianity," *Owl of Minerva* 13, no. 4 (June 1982): 1.

<sup>7</sup> Although by no means the only locus of this discussion, it is clearly in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that the issue of the significance of religion and its relation to philosophy is most directly addressed. It is also here that Hegel makes fullest use of Christian theological symbols, including that of the Incarnation. Hegel lectured on the philosophy of religion four times during the last ten years of his life at the University of Berlin. After his death what notes and student transcripts were available were rapidly gathered together and edited for the *Werke* by Philipp Marheineke and for a second edition a few years later by Bruno Bauer. As the thoughts of the mature Hegel on the relation of his system to religion, they are clearly of primary importance for anyone who would utilize Hegel's work in doing theology. The lectures are now finally available in a reliable edition, published simultaneously in German, English, and Spanish under the joint editorship of Walter Jaeschke, Peter Hodgson, and Ricardo Ferrara. The German edition comprises four volumes (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983-85), the American edition only three (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984-86). A further complete and, it is to be hoped, definitive critical edition of the German text will eventually appear, under Jaeschke's editorship, as part of the *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968-).

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Today, the labels of "left" and "right" must be assigned, if at all, with much more subtlety. In particular, it is no longer possible to assert or assume that the Christian interpreter of Hegel is necessarily toward the right-wing end of the spectrum. In the late twentieth century, and largely thanks to Hegel himself, a left-Hegelian Christian is more than a possibility. One could even imagine a dispute between a Christian Hegelian, inspired by Hegel's incorporation of the "death of God" into his philosophical system, and a right-wing Hegelian committed to the view that Hegel's system, while it had used Christian symbols, had rapidly transcended any dependent relationship. One might then be treated to the spectacle of the left defending a religious interpretation of Hegel's work against the secular drift of the right. Of course, this would be due as much to a shifting understanding of the meaning of the Christian religion as it would to changes in Hegelian scholarship, though it should be added that the movement within religious thinking is at least partially inspired by the legacy of Hegel.

I propose in this article to examine one example of the shifting configurations of right and left wing religious interpretation of Hegel. I shall begin by outlining the role of religion in the mature Hegelian system and the traditional positions of right and left interpretation. Then I shall examine in some detail two recent attempts, one from the right and one from the left, of scholars whose work in theology has clearly been conducted in dialogue with Hegel's philosophy of religion but whose attitudes to Hegel demonstrate the reconfiguration of "right" and "left." We shall see that although these two work with Hegel in very different ways and have learned from Hegel in accordance with their positions on the right and the left, there is a curious convergence in the way they finally distance themselves from him. Both criticize Hegel for reducing religion to philosophy, and I shall designate their common position a "new pietism." Hegel's defense of his work against the pietism of his own times will provide the occasion for a concluding section in which a differing reading of Hegel will reveal evidence of his continuing value to Christian theology.

Even a superficial reading of Hegel's works should excite the imagination of the theologian. As Walter Kasper has written, because christology has to inquire into existence in general, "a Christian is so to speak compelled to become a metaphysician on account of his faith."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 21.

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Hegel's system, in outward appearance at least, is both clearly Christian and undoubtedly metaphysical. However, Hegel's suitability to the theologian's purpose goes far beyond this. In Hegel's mind the structure of self-consciousness, the structure of reason, and the structure of Spirit are identical, and, if we were to seek out a religious symbol that would represent that structure perfectly, it would be the Christian symbol of the Trinity. For reasons such as this, many thinkers would concur in Errol Harris's judgment quoted above, that Hegel is the Christian philosopher above all others.

Hegel's philosophy is not only trinitarian in shape. It also leans heavily on the figure of Christ and the notion of the Incarnation. Such emphases, of course, follow from the trinitarian structure, not least because, since Hegel's system is philosophical, and cannot therefore simply accept this or any other datum of Christian revelation without question, the entry into trinitarian thought, *ordo cognoscendi*, must be by way of the expression of the absolute in history. As James Yerkes has shown in his outstanding study, *The Christology of Hegel*, it is important to take seriously Hegel's statement that the crucified Christ is the speculative midpoint of his system.<sup>9</sup> It is clearly not necessary to accept Hegel's own valuation of his philosophy or of Christ, but that he believed the Incarnation to be of central importance to his thought is beyond doubt.

As we have said, Hegel considers the structure of self-consciousness, of the concept, of reason (i.e., nondiscursive knowledge), and of Spirit to be identical. This structure is most clearly exemplified by the paradigm of self-knowledge. Truly to know the self entails the ability to identify a difference between the self and that which is not-self. The process of coming to self-knowledge is then a process of moving from an inchoate self-possession to a knowledge of the other, as other (negation), to a consequent recognition that I am other than other, that is, I am I (negation of the negation). In becoming a true knowing subject, the individual passes through a moment of dependence on the other, on what it is not, at which moment of dependence lies the pivot beyond which begins the return to self. This structure is appropriate to the theoretical discussion of the birth of self-consciousness (in the development, e.g., of the human infant), to any act of knowing, and to knowing itself.<sup>10</sup> If knowing itself has the structure described, then Spirit is not some impersonal substance but subject. Spirit is Subject,

<sup>9</sup> Yerkes explains his decision to take Hegel at his word on this matter on p. 3 of his introduction. Hegel's own remark can be found in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. E. G. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson (reprint, New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 1:151.

<sup>10</sup> The structure is also used by Hegel phylogenetically, to explain the progress of Reason in history.

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fully self-conscious knowing achieved through self-othering and return to self.

To argue for a close relationship between Hegel's Spirit and the Christian God involves a view of the Christian God that not all Christians would recognize, just as it requires an interpretation of the Hegelian Spirit that not all Hegelian scholars can stomach.<sup>11</sup> In Hegel, the Christian God achieves the moment of negation in the creation, then becoming present in the other as finite spirit, in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God is both other than God and yet God. The otherness of God is most complete, the point of total negation of self is reached, in the subjection of Christ to death. In the crucifixion God is dead. However, the furthest point of negation is the pivot in the return to self; from crucifixion follows resurrection, as the Spirit comes to life in the faith of the community, and as Christ is taken up into God. Moreover, the soteriological significance of Christ is identical with his ontological status. As God in history, Christ reveals the nature of the relationship of Spirit and finite spirits precisely by being the unique and normative example of that relationship.

This outline of Hegel's dependence on Christian symbols is not the end but the beginning of the problems. Such a description of the nature of reality is clearly in a sense dependent on Christianity for the fullest possible *representation* of what Hegel called the concept of religion. It remains, however, representation and requires the advent of speculative philosophy for its conceptual elucidation. But, as Walter Jaeschke has perceptively argued, the elucidation of the theological symbol is the comprehension of religious truth by philosophy.<sup>12</sup> In comprehending revelation, the philosopher seems to be giving the priority to human reason over the specificity and supposedly privileged nature of religious revelation.

The right/left division in Hegel studies is perhaps most marked among interpreters whose principal interest in Hegel is in his religious thought. On the right, the fascination with Hegel seems to be largely with the idea of a system. Since Hegel's system can with some justification be claimed for Christianity, its conceptual rigor and its confident claim to comprehensiveness are attractive to those of a more scholastic disposition. In addition, Hegel's claim to read history as the medium in

<sup>11</sup> The clearest recent statement of the relationship is the central thesis of Lauer, p. 1 and *passim*. In short compass, the best presentation of the complexity of the dialectical nature of God/Spirit is Hodgson's essay on Hegel in Smart et al., pp. 81-121. Although the whole of Hodgson's article is important, a perusal of his n. 6 and of the brief bibliographical appendix clarifies the respectability of the claim for such a relationship between Absolute Spirit and the Christian God.

<sup>12</sup> See Jaeschke, esp. p. 354.

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which Spirit comes to fuller self-possession conforms neatly to the salvation history perspective of much Christian thought. For these reasons, if for no others, the right is predominantly Catholic.<sup>13</sup> The left, however, is left because it retains that fascination with negation, with Hegel's proclamation of the death of God to which Feuerbach and Marx were both attracted. However, Hegel's focus on the crucified God has to be seen as at least partially inspired by that of Luther. In Hegel's thought, the death of God is at one and the same time an announcement of radical human autonomy and a profound theological statement. It is this tension and ambiguity that explains to a large extent the Protestant interest in Hegel. Hegel's thought seems to allow for faith despite the death of God, indeed, it even incorporates atheism as a moment in the dialectic.<sup>14</sup>

The christological orientation of left and right follows much the same pattern. From the right, the incarnation of God in Christ is seen as the linchpin of a Christian metaphysics through which Hegel at least thought that reality as a whole could be explained. On the left, Hegel's treatment of the incarnation is a glimpse of an awesome, unfathomable mystery, one in which sheer atheism and the divinization of the human race are locked in a struggle within a system that is a historically conditioned and ultimately dispensable ontology. The right takes Hegel seriously on his own terms, but at the risk of seeming anachronistic. The left is freer with Hegel, mainly unconcerned with his larger schema, but perhaps allowing Hegel more of a voice in a distressed world he did not himself foresee.

## II

Only with the Hegelian renaissance of the past thirty or so years has it become intellectually respectable to take anything other than a dismiss-

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., in addition to Lauer, many of the essays collected in *Hegel et la théologie contemporaine: L'absolu dans l'histoire?* (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1977). The work is edited by no one individual but contains essays by André Leonard, Albert Chapelle, Claude Bruaire, and Louis Rumpf, among others (subsequently cited as "Rumpf").

<sup>14</sup> From the Protestant "left" the list is a little longer and more Germanic. Walter Pannenberg's most direct discussion will be found in *The Idea of God and Human Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), which contains an essay entitled "The Significance of Christianity in the Philosophy of Hegel" (pp. 144-77), but much of Pannenberg's other work continues the conversation with Hegel. Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) is also significant in this connection, and both Pannenberg and Moltmann have short essays in Rumpf bringing some of their thinking up to date. A christology deeply influenced by Hegelian thought patterns is Dorothee Soelle's *Christ the Representative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). A recent and interesting attempt to take Jaeschke and perhaps Eberhard Juergel a little further can be found in Rolf Ahlers, "Hegel's Theological Atheism," *Heythrop Journal* 25, no. 2 (April 1984): 158-77. See

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sive attitude to the role of Christianity in Hegel's writings. The initiative here was largely that of a group of French Catholic thinkers, principally Albert Chapelle, André Leonard, and Claude Bruaire. Chapelle's book, *Hegel et la religion*, was the most significant contribution, combining as it did a deep and scholarly knowledge of the texts, fascination with the idea of a system, and conviction that Hegel was a truly Christian thinker.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Chapelle has written clearly and briefly of his valuation of Hegel for defending Christianity as the consummate religion.<sup>16</sup> Characteristically for this Catholic school, he subordinates Hegel's other conclusions: "We shall relate the speculative thought to a more complete and integrated view. Our proposal, to be precise, is that of a Catholic theologian."<sup>17</sup> In the same volume of essays, Leonard concludes his article with the opinion that Hegel's view of history needs to be complemented by "a logic which is closer to that of ecclesial tradition."<sup>18</sup> Bruaire defends Hegel from the perversity of those who would interpret him atheistically, adding that great benefits would arise from inserting Hegel's approach to religion into the context of "a way of thinking that is more open and faithful to the thought of revelation."<sup>19</sup>

The most recent exponent of this rightist Catholic approach is Emilio Brito. Brito's position is laid out at considerable length in two recent books, *Hegel et la tâche actuelle de la christologie*, and *La christologie de Hegel: Verbum Crucis*.<sup>20</sup> The latter amplifies the former and shows no discernible variation in interpretation. In the earlier work Brito discusses three Hegelian christologies, which he links to three different works of the corpus. A subjective christology is developed in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, an objective christology in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, and an "absolute" christology in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.<sup>21</sup> Brito uses these different perspectives to develop a typology and critique of contemporary Christology. In the second book he ampli-

also Donald M. Borchert, "The Influence of Hegel in Contemporary God-Is-Dead Theology," *Praxis* (Zagreb), 1971, pp. 203-14.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Chapelle, *Hegel et la religion* (Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1963).

<sup>16</sup> Albert Chapelle, "L'absolu et l'histoire," in Rumpf, pp. 205-18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>18</sup> André Leonard, "L'absolu et l'histoire selon Hegel," in Rumpf, p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Claude Bruaire, "Hegel et le problème de la théologie," in Rumpf, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Emilio Brito, *Hegel et la tâche actuelle de la christologie* (Paris: Éditions Lethielleux, 1979), and *La christologie de Hegel: Verbum Crucis* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983).

<sup>21</sup> Accessible English texts of these works are the following: *The Phenomenology of Mind*, ed. and trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). See n. 7 above for the edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

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fies his justification for the distinctions and follows with an outline of a "post-Hegelian" christology.

In Brito's constructive, "post-Hegelian" christology, sketched out in *La christologie de Hegel: Verbum Crucis*, a philosophy of concept is systematically subordinated to a theology of symbol.<sup>22</sup> Reason, says Brito, is transcended in prayer, and it is prayer that he holds to be the primary mode in which the truth of faith can be expressed symbolically.<sup>23</sup> Though informed by his study of Hegel, the structure of Brito's christology comes from his close acquaintance with the thought of Ignatius of Loyola. The dynamics of Ignatian prayer—gift, presence, work, and communion, in Brito's formulation—are paralleled by the dynamics of christology—kenosis, incarnation, passion, resurrected glory. Hegel's rationality is simply too closed-ended for Brito, and "the dynamics of freedom ends in emptying out all contemplative reality."<sup>24</sup>

Brito clearly believes that theology cannot be contained within a rational system. The notion of necessity, he thinks, restricts the radical freedom of God. In Hegel's thought, the process of Spirit needs the incarnation. Christ is the necessary link in the chain that makes God dependent for fullness of self-comprehension on that which God has created. Moreover, since Hegel's God dies on the cross and is resurrected in the faith of the community, the pivotal point has been reached, and God's return to self is in principle complete. Hence, according to Brito, there is no role for a parousia in Hegel's thought: a further return to the world would be irrelevant.

In the discussion of kenosis the extent of the differences between Brito and Hegel becomes apparent.<sup>25</sup> Not only is Hegel's idea of kenosis one of a necessary stage in Spirit (hence, in God), but it is expressed as a negative product of love, a negativity out of which, Spirit truly emerges. For Brito, kenosis has to be seen as a product of disinterested love.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, created nature for Hegel seems only to achieve its purpose in being negated, in being the negative moment in the process by which God returns to self. God, says Brito, surely does not need to destroy "son receptacle precare."<sup>27</sup> On the question of the hypostatic union, Hegel is accused of following radically Lutheran lines, seeing the Logos as union of God and human being rather than as God.<sup>28</sup> On the matter of preexistence, both of Trinity in general and of the Logos in partic-

<sup>22</sup> Brito, *La christologie de Hegel*, pp. 536-656.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 550-57.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 552.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 561.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 575.

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ular, Hegel gets good marks, although the preexistent Logos/Trinity is an abstraction to be overcome in a concrete actualization in which God is fully revealed. Hegel's christology, says Brito, is a kind of "reverse Arianism" in which the Father is subordinated to the more concrete moments of Son and Spirit.<sup>29</sup> In its turn, the earthly presence of Jesus is gone forever with the coming of the Spirit, and Brito argues that this is the most anti-Christian aspect of Hegel's christology.<sup>30</sup> The self-consciousness of Jesus Christ is relativized to the complete knowledge of Spirit and to the faith of the community.<sup>31</sup>

There are good reasons to sympathize with Brito's point that theology needs more room for novelty and the freedom of God than a philosophy of concept can permit. Hegel's God is certainly philosophically comprehended, and as Jaeschke has pointed out in another context, that is hard for the Christian theologian to accept. However, Hegel wishes only to claim that the freedom that is not possible to God is that of sheer caprice, the freedom that would be self-contradictory and thus impossible in the case of Spirit itself.<sup>32</sup> Overall, Brito's struggle with Hegel teaches an important lesson about the limitations of Hegel's views. Hegel's christology frankly sees the Christ event in the service of a truth that has its most perfect expression (i.e., its clearest) in the categories of speculative philosophy. For Hegel, unlike Brito, the concept surpasses the symbol.<sup>33</sup>

Hegel, it will be remembered, was of the opinion (probably rightly) that in view of the lack of intellectual nerve among the dominant theologians of Pietism and Romanticism in his own terms, theology that was unafraid to ask the truth question about God could only be found within a speculative philosophy. Theology in the narrow sense took too much for granted and would not or could not reexamine its own presuppositions. Foundational theology, he felt, had not only given way to systematic theology but also to a form of systematic theology that saw no need for philosophical rigor and was content to shuffle the concepts inherited from the tradition. The twin evils Hegel saw himself combating were those of subjectivism and confessionalism.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 582.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 585.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 589-90.

<sup>32</sup> For Jaeschke's point, see p. 354 (n. 3 above). For an interesting and informative discussion of Hegel's notion of freedom written from a non-Hegelian perspective, see M. J. Inwood, *Hegel* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), esp. pp. 469-84.

<sup>33</sup> I am indebted to a colleague, Cyril O'Regan, for the illuminating thought that the link between Brito's Catholic dogmatism and his preference for symbol over concept may lie in an understanding of "symbol" as always already interpreted (by the teaching magisterium?) rather than as, in Ricoeur's phrase, "giving rise to thought." Clearly, Hegel's *Aufhebung* of religion in philosophy requires the latter understanding.

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It seems probable that Brito's final refusal to take what we might call the "leap of thought" places him in a position so close to the Pietism of Hegel's time that he is open to the criticisms of that kind of theology expressed by Hegel. When Brito reaches his constructive theological proposal, he lapses into a contemplative, mystical approach that seems to find no place for the kind of questioning of presuppositions that Hegel's method emphasizes. If prayer is indeed the heart of theology, as it well may be, prayer does not show what is good and bad theology. Here the real divergence lies, because where Hegel (and we) would want to argue that discernment of good theology must involve philosophical rigor, and where others would make a case for the control of the scripture principle over what theology can say, Brito remains woefully faithful to the tradition from which he emerges and resubmits the Hegelian christology from which he has learned so much to the a priori of institutional Catholic theology.<sup>34</sup>

The heart of Brito's critique is his resistance to the idea that the christological understanding of scripture and tradition can be filtered through a philosophical system that does not derive from the same hallowed sources. Brito's christology remains Hegelian in the way in which he tries to balance the subjective, historical, and absolute standpoints, in which he seeks a comprehensiveness of approach for which there is no greater model than Hegel. In the final analysis, however, Brito seems to fall into the same category as the Romantics and Pietists of Hegel's own day. Because of presuppositions about the nature of theology, above all because of an unwillingness to subject the theological traditions itself to critical scrutiny, he must exclude on a priori grounds the legitimacy of the Hegelian approach. For Brito, the *Aufhebung* of religion in philosophy is nothing more than the conceptual explication of something that not only continues to exist but also retains its full richness. The *Aufhebung* is effectively denied. Hegel's work is "only" a philosophy of religion and, as such, inadequate to preserve, let alone cancel, the reality of that religion it purports to explain.

III

Although Hegel figures far less prominently in Eberhard Juengel's most recent work<sup>35</sup> than in either of Brito's books, Juengel's christology is the more deeply indebted to Hegel, and in the final analysis he is

<sup>34</sup> The introductions to both of Brito's works situate him firmly in the Chapel/Leonard/Braire tradition, which would seek to put Hegel in a "larger" (i.e., more Catholic) context.

<sup>35</sup> Eberhard Juengel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983).

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undoubtedly the more sympathetic to his great predecessor. Juengel's Lutheranism and his overriding theological concern mean, of course, that he too cannot go along with Hegel on the *Aufhebung* of religion in philosophy. In fact, from Juengel's point of view, Hegel is to be applauded for having engineered what is almost diametrically the opposite, namely, the incorporation of a central Lutheran insight into philosophy. Hegel found a place for the death of God in his philosophy without implying the demise of the philosophical absolute, just as Luther's notion of the death of God is not equivalent to the end of God.<sup>36</sup> It is this that makes Hegel so profoundly important for Juengel and, perhaps, for all theologians concerned with belief in a secularized world. By putting the death of God at the heart of an idealist philosophy inspired (to say the least) by Christian symbols, Hegel demonstrates that atheism is not so much a philosophical resting place as a moment in Christian theology. The death of God is the necessary negation through which the Resurrection comes about.

A discussion of the death of God in Luther or Hegel is of course a christological investigation. Juengel's major aim in his long and rich treatment is to show how a focus on the crucified God leads to clarity about belief in God. The metaphysical notion of God was of some value but in fact is at the root of atheism since in the end God is made subordinate to the human mind (Brito's subjective christology again). Access to the God who is "more than necessary" (i.e., whose presence in the world is gratuitous, given out of a love that cannot be constrained in logical categories) is via the Word of God in history, in Juengel's view. He goes on to argue that the privileged historical moment of the revelation of that Word is the "theology of the crucified One," the God who is dead on the cross.<sup>37</sup>

Juengel's dialogue with Hegel is by no means the center of his book. It occupies, in fact, no more than about forty pages,<sup>38</sup> and it concludes in a distancing from Hegel since Hegel's attempt to use philosophy to rehabilitate theology is unacceptable to Juengel. Nevertheless, the theology of the crucified espoused by Juengel owes a lot to this dialogue with Hegel. Juengel writes approvingly, for example, of Hegel's designation of the death of Jesus as the parting of the ways between belief and unbelief. Without faith, the death of Jesus is like the death of Socrates. "Faith, on the other hand," Juengel goes on, "perceives, in contrast with unbelief, the historicity of the eternal God in the mortal

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-100.



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history of Christ.<sup>39</sup> Later in the book, beyond the explicitly Hegelian section, the legacy is evident: "The self-relatedness of the deity of God takes place in an unsurpassable way in the very selflessness of the incarnation of God. That is the meaning of talk about the humanity of God. It is not a second thing next to the eternal God, but rather the event of the deity of God. For that reason, the economic is the immanent Trinity and vice-versa. And thus the crucified one belongs to the concept of God."<sup>40</sup> Such a comment could not have been written before Hegel.

Juengel's difficulties with Hegel, like those of Brito, seem in large part to arise from attempting to impose theological a priori on his thought. Because of Hegel's failure, as Juengel sees it, to recognize that for Luther the *communicatio idiomatum* extends only to the unity of divine and human in Jesus Christ and cannot be made into a universal, the logic of his position leads him to postulate the divinization of human beings. Against Juengel, however, it has to be pointed out that Hegel's project was not to be faithful to Luther. He was engaged in a philosophical re-presentation of the ideas that thus far in history had been most successfully presented in the symbol system of (German Protestant) Christianity. "Incarnation" is *both* a moment in the life of God *and* the explanation of the existence of finite spirits. If this is unfaithful to Luther, it is not thereby necessarily unfaithful to Christianity.

To say that Hegel does not agree with Luther does not of course amount to sufficient evidence to establish Hegel's being in error, any more than it establishes Luther's being in error. In Juengel's opinion, Christ "is both divine and human in that he prevents man from becoming God and liberates him to be man and nothing other than man."<sup>41</sup> Why so? Hegel would surely reply (as might Karl Rahner) that the Incarnation is the revelation that there is no definitive and absolute gulf between divine and human. There is undoubtedly a difference, above all in the fact that although God can choose to become human, a human being cannot choose to become God. Nevertheless, God's adoption of one human being to be God amounts to the clear revelation of a relationship of nonexclusiveness between God and human beings. That this formulation would be unacceptable to Juengel is evidence in his case of what we have already seen in that of Brito, namely, a shying away from the Hegelian *Aufhebung* of religion to philosophy. Unlike Brito, however, Juengel admires the philosophical step of the incorpo-

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

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ration of a theological notion in philosophy, but only the symbol of the death of God, not the whole of religion, is *aufgehoben*.

Juengel and Brito both learn from Hegel in ways appropriate to their fundamental theological orientations as Catholic and Protestant. There is a disappointingly dogmatic element in the work of both, not only in their critique of Hegel (Hegel is insufficiently Lutheran or insufficiently Catholic) but also in their a prioristic options for Lutheranism or for Catholicism. Moreover, there is a curious convergence in the way in which both finally part company with him. Behind their recourse to a relatively uncritical dogmatism lies the unwillingness of these particular theologians to grant philosophy the kind of role that Hegel claims for it. This "new pietism" fails to take seriously the ability of Hegel's philosophical program itself to provide resources for meaningful theological insights. In the remainder of this article I propose to consider whether Hegel's own understanding of the religion/philosophy relation can be christologically and theologically valuable.

### IV

Hegel's *Aufhebung* of religion in philosophy means neither the reduction of religion to philosophy nor the mere description in philosophical terms of what religion is and does. To accept either of these approaches is to opt for left- or right-wing interpretation. However, the impossibility of achieving consensus on either of these understandings is *prima facie* evidence against the validity of such a univocal perception. What we have to seek is some form of compromise that pays more attention to the dialectical character of Hegel's thinking.

Philosophy brings the truth of religion to explicit consciousness. It does not remove or reduce that truth. It is truth presented in a different mode, that of the concept rather than the symbol or representation. Indeed, philosophy owes to religion the fundamental symbols that inspire it in its conceptual explication of reality. The interrelations and mutual need of Idea, Nature, and Spirit, for example, are explained on the model of the symbol of trinity. Just as all three "modes of subsistence" of the Christian God are interdependent and in a sense equal, so all three moments of the Hegelian system are similarly related.

Although Hegel conceptualizes philosophical reality on the analogy of the Christian trinity, both philosophy and theology are done from the standpoint of finite spirits within the world (the moment of objective spirit, or human history). The "immanent" trinity of Christian theology is known only through the "economic." Just so, philosophy and theology exist only within the objective moment. They are histor-



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ical conceptualizations of the truth of the whole, from the only perspective from which finite spirits can view truth. In its christocentricity, its acceptance of the symbol of Christ as the hermeneutic of history, Christian theology expresses the cognitive primacy of the historical moment. For philosophy, the anthropology inspired by the symbol of Christ, the incarnate Lord and God, amounts to a particular view of the relation between consciousness and history.

Much earlier in the article I discussed Hegel's understanding of the process of coming to self-knowledge through the moment of alienation. History is the context of God's self-alienation through which God "finally" becomes in-and-for-self and arrives at full self-knowledge. On the same paradigm, the individual human being and the human community come to consciousness in and through immersion in the not-self of the other or of nature. History is the context of growth in consciousness and understanding. A truly Hegelian christology, then, just as it makes God and history interdependent, points to the interdependence of the individual and the community and of nature and history.

Theology and religion, like any other realities that exist within history, are subject to their historical condition, even and perhaps especially when they claim some point of contact with some reality beyond history. Hegel's expression of the relation between religion and philosophy was an attempt to address this issue. The dominant theologues of the times would not countenance his seemingly blasphemous approach, and his theological followers trivialized his solution. Left Hegelians performed radical surgery on the Hegelian corpus and removed the need for any relation between theology and philosophy at all. Thus they did singular if unwitting service to generations of Barthians to come.

In the century and a half since Hegel's time, we have come to see history as the place in which we struggle for truth, to believe in truth and human consciousness as thoroughly historical. A critical view of history and human society and a reflexive understanding of human knowing are no longer optional. Unfortunately, it seems to me that this critical perspective is exactly what Brito's position resists, as would any attempt to argue that theology is exempt from philosophical critique. The logic of Juengel's assessment of Hegel, at the point at which he rejects him in favor of Luther, renders him suspect, too. What the Catholic magisterium has done for Brito, Barth has effected on Juengel.

The theologian cannot be expected, of course, simply to accept a reduction of theological symbols to philosophical concepts. If this is what Brito and Juengel argue, then we are in agreement. However, in the last analysis only philosophy can place religion in its appropriate

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historical and cultural context. In this sense, religion cannot do without philosophy. Critical philosophy, of which Hegel's system is an early example, simply investigates the implications of the historicity of theology, religion, and the church. The truth of religion is not self-evident, and the leap of faith should not be invoked prematurely. Hegelian philosophy "knows the truth," but in the end requires a quasi-religious act of faith in the identity of Reason, history, and Spirit. The genius of Hegel is that he makes the possibility of arriving at this realization dependent on the *theological anthropology that grows out of reflection on the Christ symbol*. Hegel would have no problem accepting the notion that the spirit of Christ will lead us into the fullness of truth. Similarly, the theologian who wishes to be comfortable with belief in a post-modern world owes Hegel an immense debt. He continues to make it possible to be both a committed believer and a humanist at home in a world come of age.

