



Antiquity and Christianity

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ANTIQUITY AND CHRISTIANITY

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Let me begin, if I may, with some personal remarks. The fact that I have been honored to be president of the Society of Biblical Literature is far from self-explanatory. When I came to this country in 1963, I was an unknown young immigrant from a country that not even twenty years earlier had been at war with the United States. In that same year, when James Robinson introduced me to the Society, I was welcomed as if this was the place where I belonged. I still see before me the faces of Henry Cadbury, Paul Schubert, Amos Wilder, John Knox (the president of that year), and Kendrick Grobel (the secretary), as they sat in the audience to listen to my first public lecture in English.

Nobody at that time told me, to be sure, that some day I would be president of this Society, although that possibility was certainly implied in being received as a member. Yet I may be forgiven, perhaps, if there are moments when I wonder whether all this is a dream or reality. There can be no doubt, however, about my deep gratitude for this great honor bestowed on me.

Dream or reality? This is also a question the Society might ask itself. When I joined the Society of Biblical Literature, its membership included a few hundred people. The annual meetings took place at Union Theological Seminary in New York, in whose dormitory rooms we all stayed and in whose refectory we all ate our meals. All those who attended listened to all the papers, the list of which was mimeographed on a few sheets of paper. Hardly anybody beyond the premises of Union Theological Seminary took notice of the meetings or the subject matters with which they dealt.

In 1997 membership stands at more than seven thousand who paid their annual dues. The programs for the annual meetings with hundreds of lectures and discussions have the size of a book, and there is only a limited number of

*Presidential address given at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Francisco, California. The footnotes were added later. See also my forthcoming article "Antike und Christentum," *RGK* 1 (4th ed.).

convention hotels in the country large enough to provide rooms and facilities adequate for these annual meetings. I am passing over comments on the size of the annual budget, the respectable investment capital, and the numerous research and publication projects that this Society is undertaking. We have every reason to be proud of our Society and to be grateful to those who contribute to its programs in so many ways. The evidence speaks for itself.

The fact that we have this fine Society should, however, not detract us from asking some tough questions. What are the real reasons that can explain the phenomenal success that this Society is enjoying? Or are we like fools simply taking advantage of the boom, fashion, or fad, as long as it lasts? Is our work undergirded by human seriousness as well as intellectual and social foundations that support the astonishing enthusiasm and interest in studying the biblical literature at this time in history? Can this Society articulate its mission and purpose in ways that make sense to those wondering what it all means? It is my view that the time has come that we give some serious thoughts to the questions concerning the intellectual foundations of our many activities and the aims and purposes that this Society pursues.

While there may be many viewpoints concerning the aims and purposes of the Society of Biblical Literature, there are some official statements that we all agree on. Let us begin with them:¹

The purpose of this not-for-profit organization is to:

- stimulate the critical investigation of biblical literature;
- illuminate the religions, histories, and literatures of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean regions;
- provide a wide range of support for students and educators of the Bible;
- widen the conversation partners of all interested in biblical literature.

These statements, however, regulate already existing interests and activities. Indeed, on the surface this Society provides a framework and space within which critical inquiry can take place, a space that has been created and is maintained by the membership. It is to be kept free from external interference by religious institutions, power politics, ideological warfare, and commercial exploitation.

These agreements, however, do not address the issues underlying biblical scholarship, such as: What are the subterranean forces that create and maintain our interest in biblical studies in all its aspects? What is it that enables the mind to be critical and that builds the scientific ethos without which the results of scholarship cannot have any validity?

One of the primary issues that to this day keeps this NT scholar excited

¹ Cited according to the 1996 program, p. 31.

and productive is summed up by the words “antiquity and Christianity.” As evidence I can refer to the paper I delivered at that 1963 meeting of the SBL mentioned above; it had the title “The Problem of the Relation between Antiquity and Christianity in the Acts of the Apostles.”² Further evidence is my long involvement in the international research project *Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti*.³ In my address tonight I would like to summarize why even after forty years I regard this topic to be of fundamental importance for our fields of study. I do not intend, however, to make everyone happy with a complete, finely balanced and absolutely unbiased survey of the concept of antiquity and Christianity in the history of its application. What I will do is highlight a number of historical events and periods when this concept became manifest in a decisive way.

I. Antiquity and Christianity: A Heuristic Concept

Since Franz Joseph Dölger (1879–1940), the great patristic scholar and historian of religion,⁴ the theme of “antiquity and Christianity” has established itself in scholarship as a heuristic concept.⁵ It is closely affiliated with the com-

² The 1963 meeting took place at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, January 1–2, 1964. The paper was not published.

³ For survey and bibliography, see my article “Hellenismus,” *TRE* 15.19–35, esp. 23–24; also Pieter W. van der Horst, “Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti,” *ABD* 1.1157–61; *Neuer Wettstein: Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechenland und Hellenismus*, vol. II/1–2 (ed. Udo Schnelle; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), with the “Einführung” by Gerald Seelig (pp. ix–xxiii).

⁴ See Theodor Klauser, *Franz Joseph Dölger, 1879–1940: Sein Leben und sein Forschungsprogramm “Antike und Christentum”* (*JAC*, Ergänzungsband 7; Münster: Aschendorff, 1980); Georg Schöllgen, “Franz Joseph Dölger und die Entstehung seines Forschungsprogramms ‘Antike und Christentum,’” *JAC* 36 (1993 [1994]) 7–23.

⁵ The bibliography on this topic is immense. See Carl Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments: Die Abhängigkeit des ältesten Christentums von nichtjüdischen Religionen und philosophischen Systemen* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909; 4th ed., 1924) esp. 1–18; Leopold Zscharnack, “Antike und Christentum (Nachleben der Antike im Christentum),” *RGG* 1.378–90 (2d ed., 1927); Rudolf Bultmann, “Zum Thema Christentum und Antike,” *TR* 16 (1944) 1–20; Carl Andresen, “Antike und Christentum,” *TRE* 3.50–99; Wolfgang Fauth, “Philosophische Tradition und geistige Begegnung mit der Antike im Schrifttum der Patristik,” *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 230 (1978) 69–120; Edwin A. Judge, “‘Antike und Christentum’: Towards a Definition of the Field; a Bibliographical Survey,” *ANRW* 2.23.1 (1979) 3–58; Alfred Schindler, “Antike und Christentum,” in *Antike und europäische Welt: Aspekte der Auseinandersetzung mit der Antike* (ed. Maja Svilar and Stefan Kunze; Bern/Frankfurt/New York: Lang, 1984) 85–101; for the history of research, see the articles assembled in *Patristique et Antiquité tardive en Allemagne et en France de 1870 à 1930: Actes du Colloque franco-allemand de Chantilly (25–27 octobre 1991)* (ed. Jacques Fontaines et al.; Paris: Institut d’études Augustiniennes, 1992) esp. 3–19; Gerhard May, “Das Konzept *Antike und Christentum* in der Patristik von 1870 bis 1930”; Walter Burkert, *Klassisches Altertum und antikes Christentum: Probleme einer übergreifenden Religionswissenschaft* (Hans-Lietzmann-Vorlesungen 1; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1996).

plex of problems known as Hellenism,⁶ but more specifically it designates the contentious relationship between the culture of antiquity and emerging Christianity. In this respect, “antiquity,” a notion encompassing ancient historical, cultural, and religious phenomena generally,⁷ relates these to “Christianity” as a special entity. What Dölger meant is indicated by the subtitle of the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, which aptly describes it as a comprehensive process of the “Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt.”⁸ Dölger, however, never formulated his ideas in a systematic way, so that further clarification is needed at this point.⁹ Most importantly, this process did not begin only after the NT but included it. It even reaches back into the history prior to the rise of Christianity and comprises the entire environment with its political, social, economic, cultural, and religious phenomena. After the period we call antiquity came to its end in the sixth century,¹⁰ the process continued under different circumstances and in a multitude of different expressions until the present day. As we shall see later, in this process “antiquity” and “Christianity” do not simply stand in opposition to each other as monolithic blocks but as entities subject to mutual historical change. As Jacques Fontaine has pointed out in an important article, the continuous impact these entities have on each other occurs not only as *Auseinandersetzung*, that is, as opposition and confrontation between the culture of the Greco-Roman world and Christianity, but also as their *Ineinandersetzung*, that is, as “intraposition,” integration, and new creation.¹¹ One does well to realize, however, that this approach is implicitly opposed to the radically alternative views, still influential after more than a century, by Friedrich Nietzsche and Franz Overbeck.¹² According to them, Chris-

⁶ See my article “Hellenism,” *ABD* 3.127–35, with further bibliography; also my *Hellenismus und Urchristentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze I* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1990); Hans-Joachim Gehrke, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (Oldenbourg Grundriß der Geschichte 1A; Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990).

⁷ On the concept of “antiquity,” see W. Rüegg, A. Reckermann, A. Müller, “Antike,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 1 (1971) 385–92; Hubert Cancik, “Antike I–III,” *RGK* (4th ed., 1998), forthcoming.

⁸ Vol. 1 of the lexicon appeared in 1950. See Ernst Dassmann, ed., *Das Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum und das F. J. Dölger-Institut in Bonn*, Mit Registern der Stichwörter A bis Ianus sowie der Autoren, Bände 1–16 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1994).

⁹ See the pertinent remarks by Albrecht Dihle, “Antike und Christentum,” in *Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Beispiele, Kritik, Vorschläge* (ed. Christoph Schneider; Weinheim: Verlag Chemie, 1983) 31–37.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive survey, see Alexander Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diokletian bis Justinian 284–565 n. Chr.* (Handbuch der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Abt. 3, T. 3, Bd. 6; Munich: Beck, 1989).

¹¹ Jacques Fontaine, “Christentum ist auch Antike,” *JAC* 25 (1982) 5–27, esp. 9.

¹² See Paul Valadier, *Nietzsche et la critique du christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 1974); Heinrich Kutzner, “Friedrich Nietzsches Antichristentum und Neuheidentum: Zu ihrer psychohistorischen Dimension,” in *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (ed. Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier; Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1986) 88–104. See the reedi-

tianity ended with the death of Jesus, and any present claims to continuity by Christian churches are without foundation.¹³ Nietzsche dreamed of a revival of classical Hellenic antiquity, excluding Christianity.¹⁴ Present scholarship is guided, rather, by the complexities of history. Accordingly, the phenomena covered by the concept of “antiquity and Christianity” appear during the course of history as ever-changing configurations of discontinuity and continuity, destruction and conservation, and retroversion and progress. The thesis I am going to pursue in this lecture is that in this tumultuous course of history certain phases can be distinguished; these phases are marked by highly intense encounters between antiquity and Christianity, followed by high points of cultural renewal.

II. The New Testament

The theme of antiquity and Christianity permeates early Christian literature from its beginnings in all of its aspects. Christianity originated from within antiquity, but as a new phenomenon. More precisely, what became Christianity had its origins indirectly in the confrontation between Judaism and Hellenism, first in Hellenistic Judaism, and then through Paul directly in the confrontation with pagan polytheism. Thus, the earliest version of “antiquity and Christianity” occurs as part of the Jewish conflict with Hellenism and its imposition of Greek standards of culture and religion. The actual circumstances are mostly inaccessible to the historian, either because of the lack of reliable data, or even because of the dynamics intrinsic to history.¹⁵ It is clear from the extant sources that what

tion of Overbeck's work *Ueber die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie 1873, 1903*, with introduction, commentary, and bibliography in Franz Overbeck, *Werke und Nachlaß*, vol. 1, *Schriften bis 1873* (ed. Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Niklaus Peter; Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1994). For important essays, see *Franz Overbecks unerledigte Anfragen an das Christentum* (ed. Rudolf Brändle and Ekkehard W. Stegemann; Munich: Kaiser, 1988); Niklaus Peter, *Im Schatten der Modernität: Franz Overbecks Weg zur 'Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie'* (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1992).

¹³ See also my articles “The Birth of Christianity as a Hellenistic Religion,” *JR* 74 (1994) 1–25, esp. 15–24; and “Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis,” *JR* 74 (1994) 453–75.

¹⁴ See Hubert Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung* (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1995) esp. 134–49. For a post-Nietzschean statement regarding the legacy of Greek culture, see Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Sather Classical Lectures 57; Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993) esp. chap. 1: “The Liberation of Antiquity.”

¹⁵ Cf. Goethe's comment on the beginnings of the Royal Society of London in the early seventeenth century (*Geschichte der Farbenlehre*, 6. Abt., in *Werke* [Hamburger Ausgabe, ed. Erich Trunz, vol. 14, 7th ed.; Munich: Beck, 1982] 133): “Der Ursprung wichtiger Begebenheiten und Erzeugnisse tritt sehr oft in eine undurchdringliche mythologische Nacht zurück. Die Anfänge sind unscheinbar und unbemerkt und bleiben dem künftigen Forscher verborgen.” (“The origin of important events or inventions very often withdraws into an impenetrable mythological night. The beginnings are inconspicuous and unnoticed and remain hidden to the future researcher.” [Trans. mine.]

later became Christianity began with John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. They were Jews¹⁶ concerned about the theological and practical integrity of obedience toward the will of God as revealed in the Torah, concerns heightened in view of the external and internal provocations and challenges by the Hellenistic culture in the heartland of the Jews. As far as Jesus is concerned, his teachings and activities occurred as his response to the question of how the kingdom of God could be manifest in the midst of the Roman occupation and under the influence of pagan life in Palestine.¹⁷ This question was crucial among all Jews at the time, and a variety of answers was given by different Jewish groups. At this stage, therefore, it was a Jewish problem, not a Christian one, because Christianity as an identifiable entity did not yet exist.

Yet, while the sources agree that Jesus was a Jew, they also affirm that what later was labeled Christianity came into existence with him. The way the sources present the matter is that Jesus was not simply the bearer of a new message; his message largely agreed with that of John the Baptist, his mentor and teacher. Rather, the *Ursprung* was Jesus himself, his *persona*, not anything detachable from him.¹⁸ Clearly, Jesus was opposed to Hellenistic culture and its influences,¹⁹ although the Gospel narratives, being of Hellenistic origin themselves, have managed to tone down his anti-Hellenistic hostility and to shift the focus toward Jesus' disputes with the Jewish leadership. This shift creates the impression that Jesus was opposed to Judaism and implicitly friendly to Hellenism. However, it seems clear that his confrontation, as well as John the Baptist's, with the Jewish leadership grew out of the fact that they both saw the Jewish religion under the control of these leaders as having been corrupted by their assimilation to Greco-Roman culture.²⁰ There is, however, a deep-seated ambiguity as well, contained in stories admitting a strange openness on the part of Jesus toward Jews not living up to the standards and even toward non-Jews. At any rate, the immediate confrontations ended in John's and Jesus' defeat and death.

How matters developed after Jesus' death is to a large degree obscured by

¹⁶ See my article "Wellhausen's Dictum 'Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew' in Light of Present Scholarship," *ST* 45 (1991) 83–110.

¹⁷ A pivotal incident illustrating the problem was the story of the so-called Cleansing of the Temple, for which see my article "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple (Mark 11:15–18): A Comparative Religion Approach," *JBL* 116 (1997) 455–72.

¹⁸ See on this point my *Paulinische Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze III* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994) 281–85.

¹⁹ Note the polemics against assimilation to the ways of the Gentiles in early sources such as Matt 5:47; 6:7, 32; 10:5, 18; see my commentary *The Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain* (Matthew 5:3–7:27; Luke 6:20–49) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 320, 363–67, 480–81.

²⁰ See on this point my essay "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple," 469, with reference to the so-called Herodians.

the lack of unbiased source material. Jesus' opposition to Hellenism seems to have been continued, albeit ambiguously, by his disciples. Sources report about a mission to Jews under the leadership of Peter going beyond the Jewish heartland (Gal 2:1–10). Other sources contain evidence of opposition against contact with non-Jews (Matt 10:5–6; Gal 2:11–14; 2 Cor 6:14–7:1). John the Baptist, Jesus, and his disciples clearly were on the side of the Jewish opposition against the representatives of Hellenism among the Jewish leadership and the Roman military, but they seem to have pursued unconventional approaches in dealing with the loss of Jewish integrity due to the impact of Greco-Roman culture.

The apostle Paul and, later, the Gospels, however, legitimated Gentile Christianity by deriving its origins from the epiphanies of the crucified Jesus before his disciples (Gal 1:16; 1 Cor 15:3–8; Mark 16 parr.). From these epiphanies they drew the conclusion that Jesus had been raised from the dead and that he was alive. The debates about the interpretation of the death and the visions experienced by the disciples, however, immediately confronted them not only with Hellenistic-Jewish but also with Greco-Roman religious concepts regarding postmortem existence. Was the image of Jesus the disciples had seen in their visions the ghost of the dead master?²¹ Or had he been transferred to the heavenly realm like the pagan heroes and divine men (θεῖοι ἄνδρες)?²² These options, however, were rejected in favor of the older Jewish eschatological concept of the resurrection of the dead: Jesus was assumed to be the prophetic first instance of the general resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:4, 12, 20, 23) and to be enthroned in heaven “son of God” and κύριος (1 Thess 1:3; Phil 2:11; Rom 1:4; 10:9–10).

It remains doubtful whether the early appearances of the risen Jesus to Cephas, James, and others (1 Cor 15:5–7) revealed anything related to the questions of Hellenism or mission.²³ In this regard, Jesus' appearance to Paul was a complete novelty in that Paul received the commission to preach the Christ and the gospel to the non-Jews: ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Gal 1:16; 2:7; Rom 1:5, 13–14; 11:13). The clear implication of this commission was that the Greco-Roman world was to be won over by the conversion of the Gentiles (cf. Rom 15:15–24). The early mission kerygma cited by

²¹ For the following, see my article “Die Auferstehung Jesu im Lichte der griechischen magischen Papyri,” in *Hellenismus und Urchristentum*, 230–61, esp. 247–53.

²² On this point see my contribution “Heroenverehrung und Christusglaube: Religionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Philostrats *Heroicus*,” in *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996) 2.1–21, esp. 18–21.

²³ This is true for the vision reports by Paul in 1 Cor 15:5–7, but not for the later revelation in Gal 2:1–3, which has to do with mission, and so do the postresurrection appearances of Jesus in Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:47–48; John 20:21; Mark 16:14–18. In Acts (1:8; 9:10, 15; 10:3, 9–48, etc.) appearances of Jesus and of angels have to do with mission as well as with issues concerning paganism.

Paul in 1 Thess 1:9–10 stipulates the terms: the converts were to turn their backs on the pagan idols, to cease worshiping them, that is, to turn away from polytheism to the service of the one and only true God and to await the eschatological *parousia* of Christ.

The goal of Paul's mission to the Gentiles was not, however, to make them converts to (Christian) Judaism. As described in Gal 2:1–10 the conference of the Christian leaders in Jerusalem settled that issue after heated debates, especially with a minority opposition. The decision of the majority was that the Christian converts of the Pauline mission would constitute a new entity that was on the one hand a secondary extension of the Jewish-Christian mission to the Jews, while on the other hand not a part of the Jewish religion. This agreement had two consequences. First, Paul and his collaborators were now left with the task of developing new structures for the Gentile-Christian churches located between paganism and Judaism (“neither Jew nor Greek” [Gal 3:28; cf. 1 Cor 12:13]). These Gentile Christians remained culturally Greco-Roman, but ceased religiously being pagan polytheists. This position required the development of a new religious and cultural identity, including theological doctrines, rituals, and codes of behavior and ethics, which would establish and maintain their special place in the ancient world as a corporate entity (the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ). Second, this result also clarified that Jewish converts to Peter's mission were not to return simply to “conventional” Judaism but to a new entity within Judaism, a Christian-Jewish reform Judaism, perhaps called by Paul “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). As far as this world is concerned, therefore, both mission enterprises were culture-specific, but under an eschatological perspective they were both part of the one salvation of the world by the one God (Gal 2:8; Phil 2:11; Rom 11:25–36).

The authors of the Gospels reflect the religious struggle concerning antiquity and Christianity each in his own way. This comes to expression in the terms by which they make sense of the life and death of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark is the first attempt to compose a variety of sources into a biography of Jesus as both a human being and a divine redeemer.²⁴ The work boldly places Jesus in the center between Judaism, paganism, and in some sense even Christianity. He is shown to have emerged out of Judaism, appearing as a strange figure even to his closest relatives and disciples, dispensing revelatory wisdom and performing miracles like a Hellenistic θεῖος ἀνὴρ,²⁵ his true identity as Messiah

²⁴ In several studies Adela Yarbro Collins has rightly argued that the Gospel of Mark does not fit the genre of typical ancient biographies (*The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992]; eadem, “Rulers, Divine Men, and Walking on the Water (Mark 6:45–52),” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi* [ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, Angela Standhartinger; Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1994] 207–27; eadem, “From Noble Death to Crucified Messiah,” *NTS* 40 [1994] 481–503).

²⁵ See, also for bibliography, Bernd Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Stu-*

hidden except for the demons and angels, and his role as the first Christian becoming apparent only in hindsight. Mark's Gospel proved intriguing and provoked revisions and further developments involving the search for the appropriate literary genre, the literary arrangement of disparate sources, clarifications regarding Christology, the transition of the gospel from the Jewish to the Gentile world, and the mission of the church. Only in Luke-Acts are the problems of facing not only Judaism but also pagan polytheism and philosophy, in connection with the expansion of Christianity, made major themes.²⁶

III. The Patristic Period

The Apologists

While the New Testament writings and those of the apostolic fathers are preoccupied with the formation of Christianity, from the second century onward the church presupposes the existence of Christianity. The so-called apologists continue to discuss many of the issues raised by the New Testament writings, but they do so in a new context and with different purposes.²⁷ The main problem concerning antiquity and Christianity that the patristic theologians had to solve was to secure a legitimate space for Christianity in the Greco-Roman society and culture. At the beginning, Christianity, much like Judaism earlier, found itself in the position of a minority regarded with suspicion. As the name "apologists" indicates, these authors attempted to demonstrate the injustice and unfairness of persecuting the new religion, and they did so in writings explaining Christian teachings to outsiders, in particular to the rulers, as compatible with the ancient culture at large. The dilemma was that Christianity refused to be simply integrated into pagan antiquity as just another cult. The apologists justified the Christian rejection of pagan polytheism by endorsing and exploiting the critique of polytheistic religion that had been part of Greek and Roman philosophy since classical times. Positively, the apologists proclaimed Christianity as a new religion, which, however, they described in terms and concepts current and acceptable at the time. Whatever their immediate success may have been, the main result of these enormous efforts in the second to the fourth century was that comprehensive theologies were worked out in

dien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum (FRLANT 170; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

²⁶ See Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magie und Heidentum in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* (SBS 167; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996), where further bibliography is provided.

²⁷ See Leslie W. Barnard, "Apologetik I: Alte Kirche," *TRE* 3.371–411; Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988); Reinhart Herzog, *Restauration und Erneuerung: Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n. Chr.* (Handbuch der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Abt. 8, Bd. 5; Munich: Beck, 1989) 11, 363–407; Oskar Skarsaune, "Apologetik, IV. 1: Alte Kirche," *RGK* 1 (4th ed.), forthcoming.

competition with the philosophical schools of thought. While some of these theologies opposed the philosophical systems, others were adapted to or merged with them. In this process, so-called Middle Platonism proved especially useful.

The Gnostics

A very different course was pursued by Christian Gnosticism, a kind of intellectual movement that entered into religions and philosophies at the time of nascent Christianity.²⁸ While not originating in Christianity, its early influences can be detected in some New Testament texts, such as the Pauline and the Johannine writings. Based on a radical dualism, Gnosticism rejected the ancient world in its entirety as the realm of evil, including the Christian *Großkirche*. Their stance was, therefore: Neither antiquity nor world-related Christianity.

The Church Fathers

The Christian theologians of the patristic period in turn challenged non-Christian thinkers to come up with new and pointedly pagan conceptions. "Antiquity and Christianity" in this period meant a theological and philosophical contest that in the end decided where the Greco-Roman world was going to go. The extensive writings of the Hermetica and of Neoplatonism contain, in fact, pagan theologies combining older traditions of Egyptian theology and forms of Platonism. While prominent philosophical authors like Celsus, Porphyry, or the emperor Julian openly attacked Christian theology, others simply ignored it but worked ardently at the renewal of Greek and Roman culture and religion. A turning point was reached when in the year 325 the emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Thereafter, paganism was deprived of its official status and privileges of support, and it declined rather rapidly. When Augustine wrote his *De civitate Dei libri XXII* in the years 413–426,²⁹ it represented the climax of the confrontation of Chris-

²⁸ For survey and bibliography, see Kurt Rudolph, "Gnosticism," *ABD* 2.1033–40.

²⁹ For commentary, see Heinrich Scholz, *Glaube und Unglaube in der Weltgeschichte: Ein Kommentar zu Augustins De civitate dei* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911); Ernst Troeltsch, *Augustin, die christliche Antike und das Mittelalter* (Historische Bibliothek 36; Munich/Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1915); Wilhelm Kamlah, *Christentum und Geschichtlichkeit: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des Christentums und zu Augustins "Bürgerschaft Gottes"* (2d ed.; Stuttgart/Cologne: Kohlhammer, 1951) 133–340; for more recent discussion and bibliography, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Society of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Klaus Thraede, "Das antike Rom in Augustins De civitate dei: Recht und Grenzen eines verjährten Themas," *JAC* 20 (1977) 90–148; John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

tian theology with pagan antiquity, but in the many towns and villages of the empire the battle had been decided much earlier. The conquest of the city of Rome by Alaric in 410 and the charge by pagans that this was the fault of Christianity³⁰ moved Augustine to his final reckoning of the struggle against pagan antiquity. To a large extent Augustine's work also laid the intellectual foundations for the history of the Latin West until the Middle Ages.

IV. The Culture of Byzantium

After the victory of Christianity and the relocation of the capital from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople),³¹ what we call the Byzantine culture developed in the eastern parts of the empire.³² The more this culture flourished, the more different it became from the Latin West. Regarding "antiquity and Christianity," Byzantium not only preserved much of the Greek heritage, whether Christian or non-Christian, but it also transformed it into a new symbiosis. In one sense, the Byzantine authors looked back on antiquity as their pagan past, but in another sense they allowed their Greek heritage to play an active role in the formation of the culture. Especially in the christological controversies, Byzantine theology consisted of Christian adaptations of Neoplatonic ideas, notwithstanding the official condemnation of Neoplatonism by the Council of Constantinople of 553.³³ Scholars like the Patriarch Photios (ca. 810–893/4),³⁴ Michael Psellos (1018–1096/7),³⁵ Barlaam of Calabria (ca. 1290–1348),³⁶ and Bessarion of Nicaea (1403–1472)³⁷ consciously cultivated the intellectual heritage of Hellenism. Even shortly before the collapse of the

³⁰ See on this issue Alexander Demandt, *Der Fall Roms: Die Auflösung des römischen Reiches im Urteil der Nachwelt* (Munich: Beck, 1984); idem, *Die Spätantike*, 471–92.

³¹ See Demandt, *Die Spätantike*, 75–76, 391–99.

³² For comprehensive surveys and bibliography, see Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Handbuch der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Abt. 12, T. 2, Bd. 1 [Byzantinisches Handbuch 2.1]; Munich: Beck, 1959); idem, *Geschichte der orthodoxen Kirche im byzantinischen Reich*, in *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte* (vol. 1, Lieferung D 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980); John Meyendorff, "Byzanz," *TRE* 7.500–531; Demandt, *Die Spätantike*, 75–76, 391–99.

³³ See Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14./15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung* (Byzantinisches Archiv 15; Munich: Beck, 1977); Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (2 vols.; Handbuch der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Abt. 12, T. 5, Bd. 1–2 [Byzantinisches Handbuch 5.1–2]; Munich: Beck, 1978) 1.4–58; Meyendorff, "Byzanz," 517–19.

³⁴ See Franz Tinnefeld, "Photius," *TRE* 26.586–89 (bibliography).

³⁵ See Emmanuel Kriaras, "Psellos," *PWSup* 11 (1968) 1124–82.

³⁶ See Franz Tinnefeld, "Barlaam von Kalabrien," *TRE* 5.212–15 (bibliography).

³⁷ See Ludwig Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann* (3 vols.; Paderborn: Schöningh, 1923–40); Joseph Gill, "Bessarion," *TRE* 5.725–30 (bibliography).

empire, the influential Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452)³⁸ established in Mistra on the Peloponnesos a new state that was based on Plato's political ideas and also reestablished Greek religion. The activities by the Byzantine scholars as well as the transfer to Italy of their immensely valuable libraries of ancient Greek and Latin literature proved to be a decisive factor in the emergence of the Italian Renaissance, in particular the creation of the Platonic Academy in Florence (1474).³⁹

V. Renaissance, Humanism, Reformation

The tensions between antiquity and Christianity shaped also the humanism of the Renaissance and the Reformation.⁴⁰ Again, the result was a fundamental cultural renewal. The decisive turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in the fourteenth century is associated with the names of Francesco Petrarca, Dante Alighieri, and Giovanni Boccaccio. It was their rediscovery of famous Latin literary works that led to the revival of Roman cultural ideals, followed by a renewed interest in Greek literature, philosophy, and language, and as a consequence of it, a new appreciation of the patristic literature. With the cultural and religious institutions of paganism gone, the cultural revolutions of the fifteenth century took place within the institutional structures of the church. This fact is all the more noteworthy, though it is sometimes overlooked, because the renewed interest in antiquity included the so-called occult sciences (alchemy, astrology, magic, and miracles) as well.⁴¹ The leading minds of the time, men like Nicolaus Cusanus,⁴² Marsilio

³⁸ See also, for texts and bibliography, C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); Norbert Wokart, "'Hellenische Theologie': Die Religionsform des Georgios Gemistos Plethon," in *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (ed. Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier; Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1986) 183–97; Wilhelm Blum, *Georgios Gemistos Plethon: Politik, Philosophie und Rhetorik im spätbyzantinischen Reich (1355–1452)* (Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur 25; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988).

³⁹ For the later developments, see Gerhard Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Türkenherrschaft (1453–1821): Die Orthodoxie im Spannungsfeld der nachreformatorischen Konfessionen des Westens* (Munich: Beck, 1988).

⁴⁰ For a survey of humanism and rich bibliography, see Lewis W. Spitz, "Humanismus/Humanismusforschung," *TRE* 15.639–61.

⁴¹ See the essays and bibliographies in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (ed. Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus; London/Toronto: Associated University Presses; Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988); *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (ed. Brian Vickers; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); *Die okkulten Wissenschaften in der Renaissance* (ed. August Buck; Wolfenbütteler Mitteilungen zur Renaissanceforschung 12; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992).

⁴² For Nicolaus's idea about an "oecumene of religions," agreeing on monotheism while tolerating variety in observing rituals, see Michael Seidlmayer, "'Una religio in rituum varietate': Zur Religionsauffassung des Nikolaus von Kues," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 36 (1954) 145–207;

Ficino,⁴³ and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola⁴⁴ intended nothing but a new synthesis of Christian faith and Platonism (i.e., Neoplatonism). The title of Ficino's main work *Theologia Platonica*, written 1469–1474, indicates programmatically what the result of the synthesis was: Christian faith and Platonic love were to melt into a new reality altogether. It took a figure like Laurentius Valla to point out that ancient Platonism and Christianity presented fundamental alternatives between which choices had to be made. While Valla's work *On the Free Will (De libero arbitrio)*⁴⁵ pointed to the central problem, the world-historical controversy in the years 1524–1525 between Desiderius Erasmus (*De libero arbitrio*) and Martin Luther (*De servo arbitrio*) exposed the full extent of the conflict.⁴⁶

Although the Reformers did not repudiate the Renaissance and humanism, in which they all were deeply rooted, the Reformation marked for them the historical event in which under Luther's leadership they saw the rediscovery and revival of what was the *proprium* in Christianity, the *viva vox evangelii*.⁴⁷ To some extent, it can be argued, the Reformation appears to be simply another step in the course of the Renaissance. In reality, however, the Reformation opened up a new era with a wide variety of new configurations of "antiquity and Christianity." Important for the translation of the Bible became the Reformers' study of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin philology and literature (Johannes Reuchlin [1455–1522], Philipp Melanchthon [1497–1560]), because these interests opened the door to the scholarly investigation of the Bible.

Only the so-called left wing of the Reformation understood the Reforma-

Wolfgang Heinemann, *Einheit in Verschiedenheit: Das Konzept eines intellektuellen Religionsfriedens in der Schrift "De pace fidei" des Nikolaus von Kues* (Altenberge: Christlich-Islamisches Schrifttum, 1987). On Nicolaus and for bibliography, see Hans Gerhard Senger, "Nikolaus von Kues (Nicolaus de Cusa, Nicolaus Cusanus) (1401–1664)," *TRE* 24.554–64.

⁴³ See Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943); idem, *Die Philosophie des Marsilio Ficino* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1972); Ilana Klutstein, *Marsilio Ficino et la théologie ancienne: Oracles chaldaiques—Hymnes Orphiques—Hymnes de Proclus* (Istituto nazionale di studi sul rinascimento 5; [Florence]: Olschki, 1987); Josef Nolte, "Ficino, Marsilio (1433–1499)," *TRE* 11.171–75; Gian Carlo Garfagnini, *Marsilio Ficino e il Ritorno di Platone: Studi e documenti* (2 vols.; Istituto nazionale di studi sul rinascimento: studi e testi 15; Florence: Olschki, 1986).

⁴⁴ For current scholarship and bibliography, see Pico, *Poliziano e l'Umanesimo di fine Quattrocento: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana 4 novembre–31 dicembre 1994* (ed. Paolo Viti; Centro internazionale di cultura 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola': studi Pichiani 2; Florence: Olschki, 1994); Gian Carlo Garfagnini, "Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni," *TRE* 26.602–6.

⁴⁵ Laurentius Valla, *De libero arbitrio* (ed. Maria Anfosso; Florence: Olschki, 1934).

⁴⁶ See Gerhard Ebeling, "Luthers Kampf gegen die Moralisierung des Christlichen," in his *Lutherstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1985) 3.44–73, esp. 63–70: "Die Auseinandersetzung mit Erasmus."

⁴⁷ See Gerhard Ebeling, "Luther und der Anbruch der Neuzeit," in his *Wort und Glaube* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975) 3.29–59.

tion to imply an apocalyptic repudiation of all ancient history, culture, and forms of Christianity, and the call to return to the New Testament with its plain and uncorrupted gospel of Jesus. Destroyed by military defeat or forced into emigration, the left wing of the Reformation had little influence on the predominant direction of European culture.

The major changes in the post-Reformation period came with the social and cultural emergence of a new profession, the university-related scholar largely independent of the church and its dogmas. In many different ways, "antiquity and Christianity" became the subject of scholarly and scientific study or of artistic and literary representations.

VI. Enlightenment and Rationalism

One result of the Reformation was that henceforth no further attempts were made to harmonize antiquity and Christianity. The Enlightenment⁴⁸ cast the relationship between the two within elaborate categories of historical periodization.⁴⁹ In this respect, the most important thinkers were Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768),⁵⁰ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781),⁵¹ and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803).⁵² Instead of juxtaposing antiquity and Christianity, both were divided into historical epochs. Classical antiquity was distinguished, on the one side, from the so-called prehistoric times (*Urgeschichte*) and the ancient Orient, and, on the other side, from Hellenism, Romanism, and the ethnic religions of the Germans, Celts, Slavs, and so on. Within Christianity, the period of the historical Jesus⁵³ was distinguished from

⁴⁸ For an overview and rich bibliographies, see Rainer Piepmeier, Martin Schmidt, Hermann Greive, "Aufklärung I–III," *TRE* 4.575–615; Horst Stuke, "Aufklärung," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck; Stuttgart: Klett, 1972) 1.243–342. For important essays, see *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung* (ed. Henning Graf Reventlow, Walter Sparr, John Woodbridge; Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 41; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988).

⁴⁹ See Reinhart Koselleck, "Fortschritt," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 2 (1975) 351–423; Christian Meier, Odilo Engels, Horst Günther, "Geschichte," *ibid.*, 593–717; Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen: Zur Kritik der Geschichtsphilosophie*, in his *Sämtliche Schriften* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983) vol. 2.

⁵⁰ Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* (ed. Gerhard Alexander; 2 vols.; Frankfurt: Insel, 1972).

⁵¹ See Karl Aner, *Theologie der Lessingzeit* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1929); Leopold Zscharnack, *Lessing und Semler: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Rationalismus und der kritischen Theologie* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1905); R. F. Merkel, "Lessing und Herder als Religionshistoriker," *Theologisch Tijdschrift* 25 (1936) 129–44.

⁵² See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Johann Gottfried Herder, Werke in zehn Bänden* (ed. Martin Bollacher; Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989) vol. 6.

⁵³ For the origin of the juxtaposition of Jesus and Paul since Reimarus and Lessing, see

primitive Christianity (*Urchristentum*)⁵⁴ that included both Jewish and Gentile Christianity. The idea that hellenized Christianity began with Paul also originated in the eighteenth century.⁵⁵ As exemplified by the works of Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706–1757),⁵⁶ his student Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791),⁵⁷ and Johann Jakob Wettstein (1693–1754),⁵⁸ mere juxtaposition of antiquity and Christianity was now changed to religio-historical comparison between them. This approach resulted in a relativizing of both antiquity and Christianity in that they were distinguished from a primordial, purely natural *Urreligion* of reason. A special place in that history was attributed to Socrates and Jesus by identifying the natural religion of reason with both these preeminent teachers.⁵⁹ By contrast, later Christian dogma and Hellenistic philosophy were both seen as showing the marks of decline from the master.

VII. The New Humanism

These views were soon to be contested. Against the devaluation of Greek and Roman antiquity arose a thoroughgoing reevaluation of Greek art and cul-

Friedemann Regner, *"Paulus und Jesus" im neunzehnten Jahrhundert: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Themas "Paulus und Jesus" in der neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Studien zur Theologie- und Geistesgeschichte des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977). For a review of this important work, see Otto Merk, *TLZ* 115 (1990) 350–51.

⁵⁴ See Stefan Alkier, *Urchristentum: Zur Geschichte und Theologie einer exegetischen Disziplin* (BHT 83; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993).

⁵⁵ For the origins of Paulinism and Antipaulinism, see Regner, *"Paulus und Jesus,"* 74ff., 103ff.

⁵⁶ For a comprehensive overview of the literature of the sixteenth to eighteenth century regarding the "religious parties" (including atheists, pagans, Jews, Muslims, Christian heretics and denominations), see Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten, *Geschichte der Religionsparteyen* (ed. Johann Salomo Semler; Halle: Gebauer, 1766; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1966); on Baumgarten, with further bibliography, see Martin Schloemann, *Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten: System und Geschichte in der Theologie des Übergangs zum Neuprottestantismus* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 26; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

⁵⁷ Semler was one of the first to look at the history of religions comparatively. He proposed that from the beginning Christianity existed in several varieties, all going back to the historical Jesus. See his self-apology, *Joh[ann] Sal[omo] Semlers Versuch einer freieren theologischen Lehrart, zur Bestätigung und Erläuterung seines lateinischen Buches* (Halle: Hemmerde, 1777). On Semler see Hartmut H. R. Schulz, *Johann Salomo Semlers Wesensbestimmung des Christentums: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Theologie Semlers* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988); Alkier, *Urchristentum*, 34–44.

⁵⁸ For introduction and bibliography, see C. L. Hulbert-Powell, *John James Wettstein 1693–1754: An Account of his Life, Work and Some of His Contemporaries* (London: SPCK, 1937 [1938]); *Neuer Wettstein: Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechentum und Hellenismus*, Band II/1–2, *Texte zur Briefliteratur und zur Johannesapokalypse* (ed. Georg Strecker and Udo Schnelle; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996).

⁵⁹ See Benno Böhm, *Sokrates im 18. Jahrhundert: Studien zum Werdegang des modernen Persönlichkeitsbewußtseins* (2d ed.; Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1966).

ture in the eighteenth century, begun by Johann Joachim Winckelmann⁶⁰ and elevated to prominence by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich von Schiller, and Friedrich Hölderlin. The discovery of antique art works (*Antiken*)⁶¹ in Italy was taken as evidence that antiquity was by no means extinct and gone, but that it was a present and living reality, a splendid foundation for the renewal of an emerging European culture.⁶² Idealizing classical antiquity and articulating its literary and philosophical values as a new humanism (*Neuhumanismus*)⁶³ were consciously positioned against the Christian churches and their culture. While Herder as *Generalsuperintendent* still acted as an official of Protestantism, Winckelmann and Goethe proudly but ambiguously declared themselves to be “pagans” (*Heiden*).⁶⁴ This kind of humanistic neopaganism became popular especially among educated Protestants, the very people whom Friedrich Schleiermacher addressed as the “cultured among the despisers” in his *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*.⁶⁵ Such efforts by Schleiermacher and, in a different way, by Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel⁶⁶ could not prevent the new humanistic ideal of being a cultured person (*Gebildeter*),⁶⁷ contemptuous of Christian religion, from becoming part of the

⁶⁰ Of great influence was Goethe's essay “Winckelmann”; see *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Werke* (ed. Erich Trunz; Hamburger Ausgabe; 11th ed.; Munich: Beck, 1989) 12.96–129; further, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768)* (ed. Thomas W. Gaethgens; Studien zum 18. Jahrhundert 7; Hamburg: Meiner, 1986).

⁶¹ For the origin of the concept of *Antike*, see Walter Müri, “Die Antike: Untersuchung über den Ursprung und die Entwicklung einer geschichtlichen Epoche,” *Antike und Abendland* 7 (1958) 7–45.

⁶² So Goethe's interpretation (“Winckelmann,” 100–101).

⁶³ See Klaus Prange, “Neuhumanismus,” *TRE* 24.315–18.

⁶⁴ Goethe points to Winckelmann's “paganism” as well as his Lutheran piety (“Winckelmann,” 101, 120). On Winckelmann's and Goethe's “paganism,” see Peter Meinhold, *Goethe zur Geschichte des Christentums* (Freiburg/Munich: Albig, 1958) esp. 238–46; Jörg Baur, “‘Alles Verzeihlich ist verwerflich’: Überlegungen zu Goethe,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 33 (1991) 152–66.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Ueber die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: Unger, 1799; reprinted in Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit 1800–1802* [ed. Günter Meckenstock; Kritische Gesamtausgabe 1/3; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1988]; Eng. trans. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* [Introduction, translation and notes by Richard Crouter; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988]). On Schleiermacher, see esp. Gerhard Ebeling, “Frömmigkeit und Bildung,” in his *Wort und Glaube* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975) 3.60–95; idem, “Zum Religionsbegriff Schleiermachers,” in *Wort und Glaube*, vol. 4, *Theologie in den Gegensätzen des Lebens* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995) 55–75; Markus Schröder, *Die kritische Identität des neuzeitlichen Christentums: Schleiermachers Wesensbestimmung der christlichen Religion* (BHT 96; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996).

⁶⁶ See the summary of Hegel's philosophy of history by Erich Weichel, “Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 33 (1991) 23–43.

⁶⁷ See on the concept of “Bildung” (“culturedness”) Ebeling, “Frömmigkeit und Bildung,” 76–95.

mentality of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶⁸ Characteristically, this mentality consists of wavering loyalties. In many ways, Goethe was a prototype of what was then imitated by many; for instance, he is reported to have described himself thus: “in the natural sciences and philosophy he is an atheist, in art a pagan, and in his intuitive feelings a Christian.”⁶⁹ This mentality was soon to be coopted by political ideologies that also moved toward implementing the consequences of these commitments for the political, cultural, and religious institutions.⁷⁰ Most influential in these developments were Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche,⁷¹ and Franz Overbeck.⁷² On the Christian side, Adolf von Harnack tried to meet the challenge with his thesis concerning the “Hellenization of Christianity”⁷³ and his inaugural lectures in Berlin, published under the title “The Essence of Christianity” (*Das Wesen des Christentums*).⁷⁴ He argued for a critical distinction to be made

⁶⁸ On the developments from Schleiermacher to Albrecht Ritschl, see Franz Courth, *Das Wesen des Christentums in der Liberalen Theologie, dargestellt am Werk Friedrich Schleiermachers, Ferdinand Christian Baur und Albrecht Ritschls* (Theologie im Übergang 3; Frankfurt/Bern/Las Vegas: Lang, 1977); Berthold Lannert, *Die Wiederentdeckung der neutestamentlichen Eschatologie durch Johannes Weiß* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 2; Tübingen: Francke, 1989).

⁶⁹ Reported by Dorothea von Schlegel: “Goethe hat einem Durchreisenden offenbart, er sei in der Naturkunde und Philosophy ein Atheist, in der Kunst eine Heide und dem Gefühl nach ein Christ!—Jetzt wissen wir es also ganz naiv von ihm selber, wie so er es nirgends zur Wahrheit bringt. Der arme Mann! mich dauert er sehr” (Dorothea von Schlegel, 18th November 1817, cited according to *Dorothea v. Schlegel geb. Mendelssohn und deren Söhne Johannes und Philipp Veit: Briefwechsel* [ed. J. M. Reich; Mainz: Kirchheim, 1881] 2.452; translation mine). Dorothea was the second daughter of Moses Mendelssohn; she was swept up in the early romanticists’ wave of conversions, first to Protestant Pietism, then to Roman Catholicism, to all of which Goethe was fiercely opposed.

⁷⁰ For important essays dealing with these problems, see *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert: Zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Geisteswissenschaften* (ed. Hellmut Flashar, Karlfried Gründer, Axel Horstmann; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

⁷¹ See Heinrich Kutzner, “Friedrich Nietzsches Antichristentum und Neuheidentum: Zu ihrer psychohistorischen Dimension,” in *Die Restauration der Götter*, 88–104. See also nn. 13, 14 above.

⁷² See n. 12 above.

⁷³ For this hypothesis, its historical background and bibliography, see Walther Glawe, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums in der Geschichte der Theologie von Luther bis auf die Gegenwart* (Neue Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche 15; Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1912); E. P. Meijering, *Die Hellenisierung des Christentums im Urteil Adolf von Harnacks* (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, deel 128; Amsterdam: North Holland, 1985); idem, “Adolf von Harnack und das Problem des Platonismus,” in *Patristique et Antiquité tardive*, 155–64.

⁷⁴ Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1900; republished by Rudolf Bultmann; Stuttgart: Klotz, 1950); Eng. trans. *What is Christianity?* (New York: Harper, 1957). For the history and background, see Hans Wagenhammer, *Das Wesen des Christentums: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1972); Johanna Jantsch, *Die Entstehung des Christentums bei Adolf von Harnack und Eduard Meyer* (Bonn: Habelt, 1990); Schröder, *Die kritische Identität*, 1–11, 158–59, 231.

between the simple and undogmatic gospel of Jesus and hellenized Christianity, qualified negatively because of its institutionalized dogmatism. In opposition to the goals of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* Harnack argued vigorously against secular departments of religious studies, as we would call them, and for the retaining of the traditional faculties of theology.⁷⁵ At the same time, his colleague at the Humboldt University in Berlin, the influential classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff wanted to institute the idealized values of Greek culture as the foundation for the modern educational system.⁷⁶ On this point, Wilamowitz agreed even with Nietzsche,⁷⁷ although the latter was different from the former because of his eschatological expectation that after the end of Christianity there would occur a rebirth of the ancient Hellenic culture, and it would be under the sign of Dionysos.⁷⁸

VIII. The Twentieth Century

These ideals and utopias collapsed as a result of the catastrophes of two World Wars and the aftermath of social and political revolutions inside and outside of Europe. Institutionally, the established churches survived the catastrophes as well as the unprecedented anti-Christian propaganda and repression campaigns by the quasi-religious ideologies of National Socialism and Marxism-Leninism. Yet it took a series of comprehensive new theologies

⁷⁵ Adolf Harnack, "Die Aufgabe der theologischen Fakultäten und die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte: Nebst einem Nachwort," in his *Reden und Aufsätze* (2d ed.; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1906) 2.159–87; see also Karl Holl, "Urchristentum und Religionsgeschichte," in his *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1928) 2.1–32.

⁷⁶ The role and significance of Wilamowitz has recently been investigated in a number of important contributions. See, also for bibliography, Manfred Landfester, "Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff und die hermeneutische Tradition des 19. Jahrhunderts," in Flashar, *Philologie und Hermeneutik*, 156–80; *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren* (ed. William M. Calder III, Hellmut Flashar, and Theodor Lindken; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), esp. Albert Henrichs, "'Der Glaube der Hellenen': Religionsgeschichte als Glaubensbekenntnis und Kulturkritik" (pp. 263–305); Luciano Canfora, "Wilamowitz und die Schulreform: Das 'Griechische Lesebuch'" (pp. 632–48). Important are further contributions by Bernhard vom Brocke, "'Von des attischen Reiches Herrlichkeit' oder die 'Modernisierung' der Antike im Zeitalter des Nationalstaates: Mit einem Exkurs über die Zerschlagung der Wilamowitz-Schule durch den Nationalsozialismus," *Historische Zeitschrift* 243 (1986) 101–36; Rudolf Kassel, review of William M. Calder, *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren*, in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 239 (1987) 188–228; Arnaldo Momigliano, *New Paths of Classicism in the Nineteenth Century* (History and Theory 21.4; Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

⁷⁷ Wilamowitz's disavowal of Christianity and his dedication to Plato's religion was revealed in an unpublished autobiography. See William Calder III, "Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff: An Unpublished Latin Autobiography," *Antike und Abendland* 27 (1981) 34–51; idem, *Studies in the Modern History of Classical Scholarship* (Antiqua 27; Naples: Jovene Editore, 1984), esp. part 2, "Wilamowitziana."

⁷⁸ On "neopaganism" in the twentieth century, see the essays assembled in the volume edited by Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier, *Die Restauration der Götter*.

worked out by leading Protestants like Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Paul Tillich to renew possibilities of credibility for Christian faith and life.

These theologians no longer argued in confrontation with classical antiquity and its humanistic interpretations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but against the political ideologies and new beliefs based on the progress made by science, medicine, and technology. Apparently, after World War II the heritage of classical antiquity was finally lost.⁷⁹ The attempts at a “Third Humanism” by Werner Jaeger, and in different ways by the leading philosophers Jean Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, to legitimate existentialist philosophy as a humanism had no chance of a lasting success.⁸⁰ The combined forces of ideological criticism inspired by Marxism, popular modernism of a society oriented toward consumerism, and new directions in art and literature seemed to have extinguished any enthusiasm for antiquity.⁸¹ By implication, classical antiquity was declared totally antiquated.⁸² Not so for Bultmann, however!⁸³ For him the dialogue between antiquity and Christianity constituted the heart

⁷⁹ See the provocative inaugural lecture by Manfred Fuhrmann, *Die Antike und ihre Vermittler: Bemerkungen zur gegenwärtigen Situation der Klassischen Philologie* (Konstanz Universitätsverlag, 1969); cf. the review by Wolfgang Schmid (*Gnomon* 42 [1970] 507–14) and the debate between Manfred Fuhrmann and Hermann Tränkle, *Wie klassisch ist die Antike?* (Zurich/Stuttgart: Artemis, 1970).

⁸⁰ See esp. Werner Jaeger, *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1937; 2d ed., 1960); Jean Paul Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Collection Pensées; Paris: Nagel, 1946); Eng. trans. *Existentialism and Humanism* (Brooklyn: Haskell House, 1977); Martin Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus” [1947], in his *Wegmarken* (2d ed.; Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1978) 311–60; see Robert Henri Cousineau, *Humanism and Ethics: An Introduction to Heidegger's letter on humanism, with a critical bibliography* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1972).

⁸¹ See Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus,” 318: “Der Humanismus von Marx bedarf keines Rückgangs zur Antike, ebensowenig der Humanismus, als welchen Sartre den Existenzialismus begreift.” (“The humanism advocated by Marx has no need for a recourse to antiquity, just as little as the humanism Sartre understands existentialism to be” [translation mine].)

⁸² Also for Heidegger (“Brief über den Humanismus,” 341) the word humanism has lost its meaning (“dieses Wort [hat] seinen Sinn verloren”). “Es hat ihn verloren durch die Einsicht, daß das Wesen des Humanismus metaphysisch ist und das heißt jetzt, daß die Metaphysik die Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seins nicht nur nicht stellt, sondern verbaut, insofern die Metaphysik in der Seinsvergessenheit verharrt.” (“It lost its meaning because of the insight, that the essence of humanism is metaphysical, and this now means that metaphysics not only fails to raise the quest for the truth of being but precludes it, insofar as metaphysics remains in the state of forgetfulness of being.”) This is, of course, not Heidegger’s last word. See also Karl Jaspers, *Über Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten eines neuen Humanismus* (1951; reprint, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1962).

⁸³ See Bultmann’s *Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen* (Zurich: Artemis, 1949); Eng. trans. *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting* (New York: Meridian, 1959). The theme “antiquity and Christianity” continuously occurs in titles of his publications; see the bibliography in his *Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments* (ed. Erich Dinkler; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1967) 483–507.

of the historical and cultural debate between the present and the past.⁸⁴ In a memorandum from 1946 concerning the reorganization of German universities after World War II, Bultmann declared: "The question of the *relationship of the university to antiquity and Christianity* for the most part coincides with the question of the *unity of the university*. Is our university only a random collection of specialized scientific enterprises, or is it truly a 'universitas,' a unity, the parts of which—the specialized scientific enterprises—belong together as the members of an organism?"⁸⁵

At the end of the twentieth century, the situation appears to be changing again. The postmodern world is characterized by deep-seated disillusionment. The promises of political-social ideologies and utopias of progressivism have turned out to be mostly fabricated myths and illusions of the credulous masses. This disenchantment has laid bare the ills of an impoverished quality of life, in particular inner emptiness, purposeless activism, breakdown of ethical and social values, and cultural deterioration. Barbarity, supposedly eradicated by a mature civilization, was back. The older mentality of progressive optimism has given way to a cynical pessimism concerning the possibilities of human fulfillment and to a gloomy prospect of apocalyptic cataclysm in the future.

This description, however, reflects only the most conspicuous side of present public mentality. There are other factors, the strength of which can hardly escape the alert observer. Information about the ancient world and access to it have expanded in a breadth and depth unimaginable only a few decades ago. Public interest and participation in archaeological discoveries, visits to museum exhibitions of ancient art, and tourists traveling to ancient sites and monuments are at an all-time high. The number of scholars involved in the many fields of research on antiquity as well as the volume and quality of scholarly publications have never been larger and better than they are in the present generation. Stimulated by the awareness of the worldwide pluralism of cultures and religions past and present, the study of antiquity and Christianity has apparently entered into a new phase. Given this new awareness of a global symbiosis of religious cultures, seen in their historical, social, and cultural dimensions, one can reasonably hope that the study of antiquity and Christianity may again provide criteria of interpretation and conduct for a world that is in danger of losing all meaning and measure.

⁸⁴ This was rightly emphasized by Erich Dinkler in his lecture in memory of Bultmann, given on November 16, 1976, "Die christliche Wahrheitsfrage und die Unabgeschlossenheit der Theologie als Wissenschaft: Bemerkungen zum wissenschaftlichen Werk Rudolf Bultmanns." The lecture was published in *Gedenken an Rudolf Bultmann* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1977) 15–40, esp. 35–40.

⁸⁵ Cited according to Dinkler, "Die Wahrheitsfrage," 37 n. 28: "Die Frage nach dem *Verhältnis der Universität zu Antike und Christentum* fällt weithin zusammen mit der Frage nach der *Einheit der Universität*. Ist unsere Universität nur eine Sammelstätte für alle möglichen Einzelwissenschaften, oder ist sie eine wirkliche 'Universitas,' eine Einheit, deren Teile—die Einzelwissenschaften—als die Glieder eines Organismus zusammengehören?"