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Fideist Apologetics: Reasons of the Heart

The term *fideist apologetics* strikes many apologists as an oxymoron (like *square circle* or, as the old joke goes, *military intelligence*); one can advocate fideism or apologetics, but not both. Actually, while some fideists attack apologetics without qualification, some of the thinkers we are considering as fideists do not. What they attack is apologetics as usual—apologetics as traditionally practiced. In their own way, though, fideists do offer a reasoned argument for Christian faith, even if they are loath to call it a "defense" or an "apologetic."

Look at it this way. If explaining how Christian faith relates to human knowledge and to questions about matters of faith constitutes apologetics, then fideists do engage in apologetics. In this chapter we will consider the approach they take to relating the Christian faith to human knowledge in general; to the disciplines of theology, philosophy, science, and history; and to human experience.

Divine Call to Obey the Truth

The three approaches to apologetics we have already considered all view truth essentially as a body of factual, propositional knowledge corresponding to reality. Where they differ is in their preferred or basic method of validating this truth and commending it to others. Thus classical apologists prefer deductive, rational tests for determining truth; evidentialists prefer

inductive, empirical methods used in the sciences and other disciplines; and Reformed apologists typically appeal to the Bible as the standard of truth, sometimes employing a transcendental method of reasoning to demonstrate its truth.

Fideists consider these approaches to knowledge of the truth of Christianity inadequate for two basic reasons. First, they take a different approach, not merely to how we can know or validate the truth, but more fundamentally to what is meant by *the truth*. For fideists, the truth accepted by Christians is fundamentally not some body of knowledge, but Somebody to know. In other words, the truth is ultimately a person, Jesus Christ (compare John 14:6), and it is not merely *about* the person of Jesus, but Jesus himself is the truth. As fideists rightly insist, the essence of Christian faith is not simply *knowledge about* Christ but *knowing* Christ, that is, knowing him personally. And it is just this aspect of Christianity that they argue renders traditional apologetics not merely inadequate but worse than useless. For if we know God personally in Christ, of what use are arguments proving his existence? If we have a personal relationship with the living Christ, will we not be offended at the suggestion that we need to provide evidence for his resurrection?

Kierkegaard, for example, compares the person who engages in the "defense of Christianity" to a person who professes to be a lover and offers "three reasons" for the greatness of his beloved (*JP* 474, 1:188). "There is an unholy inversion in all this business of having to prove everything first. I wonder if it would ever occur to anyone really in love to prove the blessedness of love with three basic reasons? But the fact is that men no longer believe—alas, and so they want to help themselves with the artificial legs of a little scientific scholarliness" (*JP* 1358, 2:102-103).

He ridicules the Augustinian idea of faith as an intellectual belief that falls short of and aspires to knowledge or understanding: "Christianly, faith is at home in the existential—God has not made his appearance in the character of an assistant professor who has a few axioms which one must first believe and afterward understand" (*JP* 180, 1:71). Faith should rather be understood as the "purely personal relationship between God as personality and the believer as *existing* personality" (*JP* 180, 1:72).

This emphasis on the personal dimension of faith is characteristic of fideism. Donald Bloesch writes, "The object of faith is neither true propositions (as in rationalism) nor an experience of the ineffable (as in mysticism) but the living Word of God who is revealed as well as hidden in the mystery of his self-disclosure in biblical history. . . . And the object of faith is not a propositional formula or a rational, ethical ideal but the living, redeeming God incarnate in Jesus Christ, attested nowhere more decisively than in Holy Scripture."[1]

Kierkegaard admits that an unbeliever might be helped by some reasons as he moves from unbelief to faith, but he insists that these will be unusable once he has made the personal commitment of faith. In fact, he will not or should not use them even to help other unbelievers make the same commitment:

> My development, or any man's development, proceeds in this way. Perhaps he does begin with a few reasons, but this is the power stage. Then he chooses; under the weight of responsibility before God a conviction comes into existence in him through God. Now he is in the positive position. Now he cannot defend or prove his conviction with reasons; it is a self-contradiction, since reasons are lower. No, the matter becomes more fully personal or a matter of personality: his conviction can be defended only ethically,

> personally—that is, by the sacrifices which he is able to make for it, the fearlessness with which he holds on to it. (*JP* 3608, 3:663-664)

We see here a major theme in fideist writings, and especially in Kierkegaard: the only real "apologetic" or defense of the Christian faith that a believer has to offer is his life. Consistent with this viewpoint, Kierkegaard argues that apologetics errs in treating the symptom of unbelief, intellectual doubt, while ignoring the real disease—disobedience and rebellion against God. "It is claimed that arguments against Christianity arise out of doubt. This is a total misunderstanding. The arguments against Christianity arise out of insubordination, reluctance to obey, mutiny against all authority. Therefore, until now the battle against objections has been shadow-boxing, because it has been intellectual combat with doubt instead of being ethical combat against mutiny" (*JP* 778, 1:359).

"Faith's conflict with the world is not a battle of thought with doubt, thought with thought. . . . Faith, the man of faith's conflict with the world, is a battle of character" (*JP* 1129, 2:14; cf. 1154, 2:25). Kierkegaard quotes with approval Pascal's statement, "The reason it is so difficult to believe is that it is so difficult to obey" (*JP* 3103, 3:418). Bloesch agrees, stating that "the basic problem in evangelism is not just lack of knowledge of the gospel—it is lack of the will to believe."[2] Karl Barth also views faith as essentially a response of obedience to the truth. Faith is "knowledge of the truth solely in virtue of the fact that the truth is spoken to us to which we respond in pure obedience."[3]

The personal, ethical, and relational factors involved in genuine faith, then, constitute one type of consideration that leads fideists to reject traditional apologetics. The second consideration is the nature of the object of faith. Not only is Christian faith trust in a person rather than mere intellectual agreement with a position, but it is also trust in a person whose

nature defies rational validation. Specifically, Christian faith is trust in God, the God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. We have here, according to fideists, triple trouble for apologists. For one thing, God in his intrinsic divine being is beyond our understanding. God is infinite, eternal, transcendent Being, and as such beyond the scope of our finite logical analyses. Second, the Christian revelation of this God shows him to be triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and this triunity of God eludes our logical powers of comprehension. Third, compounding the problem of God's own nature as the transcendent, triune God is the fact that God, in the person of the Son, has incarnated himself as immanent, finite man. And he, though omnipotent God, became incarnate in weakness, poverty, and obscurity, climaxing in his death on the cross.

According to fideists, these basic, essential truths of the Christian message show us that God, as the object of our faith, is beyond understanding and beyond proof. Some fideists have even said that God is *against* understanding, meaning not that he is actually illogical or irrational in his being and acts, but that he contradicts man's best reasoning. Knowing God is not like knowing another human being, about whom we may learn additional factual information, and thus begin closing the gap in our knowledge about that person. Rather, true knowledge about God consists in knowing that he is beyond our comprehension. As Kierkegaard explains:

> The rule for the relationship between man and humanness is: the more I think about it, the better I understand it. In the relationship between man and God, the rule is: the more I think about the divine, the less I understand it. . . . As a child I think I am very close to God; the older I become, the more I discover that we are infinitely different, the more deeply I feel the distance, and in *casu:* the less I understand God, that is, the more obvious it becomes to me how infinitely exalted he is. (*JP* 77, 1:29-30)

Kierkegaard explicitly uses the formula "faith against understanding" in this connection: "God cannot be the highest superlative of the human: he is qualitatively different. From this at first comes incomprehensibility, which grows with the development of man's understanding—and thereby *faith, which believes against understanding*, is again potentiated" (*JP* 77, 1:30, emphasis added).

Barth quotes with approval Luther's assertion that "we must not regard reason or its work when we speak of faith and God's work. Here God worketh alone and reason is dead, blind, and compared to this work an unreasoning block" (*CD* I/1, 245).[4] He also agrees with Luther's assertion that the Christian faith is "counter to all reason" (*CD* I/1, 246).[5] Barth warns that theology cannot claim to resolve the apparent contradictions it contains: "Even the minimum postulate of freedom from contradiction is acceptable by theology only when it is given a particular interpretation which the scientific theorist can hardly tolerate, namely, that theology does not affirm in principle that the 'contradictions' which it makes cannot be resolved" (*CD* I/1, 9).

Fideists believe it is impossible to construct a rational "system" in which all reality, including God and his world, is located, and thus their response to postmodernism is different from that of the other approaches. The classical apologist, evidentialist, and Reformed apologist all agree that it is possible and desirable for us to have a worldview (or more precisely, a God-and-world view), a systematic view of all reality, that is logically coherent as well as comprehensive. Thus, each approach is committed to refuting the postmodernist doctrine that a comprehensive, "objective" view of the world is unattainable. In varying ways each seeks to show that Christianity, and it alone, offers a true and satisfying worldview that meets these criteria, to show that the Christian faith offers a systematic view of reality that can and should be

accepted by all people. But the fideist thinks such an approach is ill-advised. Rather than advocating Christianity as the true worldview, fideists argue that we should advocate Christ as the true Word.

Gregory A. Clark makes this point in a recent essay entitled "The Nature of Conversion: How the Rhetoric of Worldview Philosophy Can Betray Evangelicals."[6] He contends that "when evangelicals articulate their faith in terms of worldviews, they make philosophy foundational to their theology, and this philosophy prevents them from grasping the literal message of Scripture" (202). Clark points out that the concept as well as the term *worldview* originate from Immanuel Kant, who used the German *Weltanschauung* to refer to the view that a human being has of the world through the imposition of structures that originate from the human mind (205-207). Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the term has been used to refer to human constructions of reality that cannot be affirmed to correspond with reality. Even evangelicals who use the term commonly claim that the Christian worldview should be accepted because it is the most coherent and livable of all the worldviews, a claim that stops short of asserting an actual correspondence between the Christian worldview and reality (208).

To show that this worldview approach to explaining and defending Christianity can betray evangelicals, Clark uses as a case study Jesus' statement in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." We can understand why Jesus claims to be the way and the life, but what can He mean by claiming to be the truth? Clark suggests that Jesus' claim here does not fit well with the standard evangelical worldview philosophy. In that model, conversion must be described as exchanging one worldview for another. But Jesus did not say that his worldview was the way, truth, and life, as He should have "if Christianity is a worldview and conversion to Christianity is a conversion to a Christian worldview." Jesus' words call us to convert, not from

one worldview to another, but "from worldview philosophy to Jesus" (215). "The best case for Christianity, then, is not the coherence and comprehensiveness of its worldview. Jesus himself is the most persuasive case for Christianity" (218).

The question remaining is how a person becomes convinced that Jesus is someone to whom he can and ought to be committed in a personal relationship of absolute faith. The fideist's answer is: through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The focus of this testimony is not on the truth of Scripture as a source of propositional revelation, as is characteristic of the other three approaches, but rather on the person of Jesus Christ as the personal revelation of God, to which Scripture is the authoritative, Spirit-inspired, and Spirit-illuminated witness as God's written Word. Fideism, then, of the type we are considering here, is a staunchly trinitarian position. Fideists view the objective revelation of God in the incarnate Son and the subjective revelation of God in the indwelling Spirit as inseparably united. Kierkegaard wrote:

> There is only one proof for the truth of Christianity—the inward argument, *argumentum spiritus sancti*.
>
> I John 5:9 intimates this: "If we receive the testimony of men" (this is all the historical proofs and considerations) "the testimony of God is greater"—that is, the inward testimony is greater. And then in verse 10: "He who believes in the son of God has the testimony in himself." (*JP* 3608, 3:664)

Bloesch repeatedly emphasizes the complementary roles of the Word and the Spirit in *A Theology of Word and Spirit*. In the foreword he explains: "When I speak of the Word and Spirit, I am not thinking primarily of a book that receives its stamp of approval from the Spirit, though I affirm the decisive role of the Spirit in the inspiration and illumination of Scripture. I am

thinking mainly of the living Word in its inseparable unity with Scripture and church proclamation as this is brought home to us by the Spirit in the awakening to faith."[7]

As fideists see it, the use of rational arguments to support or defend the Bible detracts from the true role and character of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Where this testimony is understood as a subjective experience enhancing our confidence in the message of Scripture, or serving as one proof among many, it tends to fade into the background. Barth argued that Calvin himself, despite his strong affirmation of the Spirit's testimony, laid the groundwork for this development by allowing rational proofs a place in his theology:

> The unarmed power of the one ground that in the Bible God has attested Himself to be God and still does so, came more and more to be regarded, as it was never meant to be regarded in the 16th century, as the power of a particular spiritual experience, which at some point we have to have of the Bible. But on this understanding, it could not have the force of a real ground. Calvin had seen in it only the power of an objective proof. But it was now suspected to be only subjective and in the strict sense not a proof at all. Therefore the witness of the Holy Spirit necessarily retired and finally disappeared behind the rational proofs which Calvin had treated only as luxuries. (*CD* I/2, 536-537)

Making Theology Personal

If we cast about in Kierkegaard's writings for a single sentence that expresses the essence of his position, a good candidate would be this assertion: "But Christianity is not a doctrine; it is an existence-communication" (*JP* 517, 1:212). The statement is found repeatedly in his journals, and he even calls it his "thesis": "Here I come again to my thesis—Christianity is not a doctrine

but an existence-communication" (*JP* 1060, 1:463). We get a better idea of what he means when he explains that because "Christianity is not a doctrine . . . but an existential-communication," Christianity can be presented only by "existing" as one in whom Christianity is "reduplicated" (*JP* 484, 1:191). In Christianity God makes his existence known to us by communicating or sharing himself with us in the Incarnation, in such a way that our own existence or life is changed. Kierkegaard's point is that Christianity in its essence is the impartation not of a doctrinal system but of a new life in relationship to God in Christ.

It follows that the traditional goal of systematic theology, namely, to attain a theological system in which we can understand as much as possible of what we believe, needs to be radically revised. As we have seen, Kierkegaard and other fideists vigorously deny that we can attain a comprehensive, rational system within which to understand the mysteries of the faith. Here is Kierkegaard's proposal for a new guiding principle for theology, or dogmatics: "A dogmatic system ought not to be erected on the basis: *to comprehend faith*, but on the basis: *to comprehend that faith cannot be comprehended*" (*JP* 3564, 3:635).

According to fideists generally, the purpose of theology should be seen as the faithful exposition of the gospel in all its ramifications, not as the construction of a rational system of doctrine. The theologian's fidelity to the gospel will entail leaving the apparent contradictions or paradoxes of the Christian faith as they are rather than trying to resolve them logically.

Fideists who reject apologetics outright, at least in name, obviously consider the question of the relation between apologetics and theology to be pointless. Perhaps the most traditional account of this relation by a fideist is given by Donald Bloesch, who complains, "Too often in the past, apologetics occupied the central role in Roman Catholic and Reformed theology." Bloesch flatly rejects the classical view of apologetics as a discipline in some way preliminary to

or preparatory for theology. But he does not advocate abandoning apologetics. The church, he says, needs "to recover dogmatics as the central task in theology, though not to the exclusion of apologetics," which should "be seen as a branch of dogmatics, the branch that seeks to combat the attacks upon the faith from its cultured despisers."[8]

The most distinctively fideist account of the relation of apologetics to theology, and one of the most magisterial treatments in church history, is found in the second section (part of the first chapter) of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Here Barth explains why he distinguishes prolegomena—that branch of dogmatics that considers the method and presuppositions of theology—from apologetics. He notes that various theologians in his day and earlier were arguing that prolegomena was necessary now because of the widespread denial of the basic assumptions of dogmatics stemming from rationalism and naturalism. Emil Brunner, he observes, "proposes to give to this preparatory dogmatic discipline the name of eristics rather than apologetics." But Barth questions himself whether he does not "make out the older apologetics to be worse than it was" by characterizing it as a defensive self-justification before the world, in order to claim that Brunner avoided apologetics. "Would it not be clearer to accept the name apologetics without apology?" (*CD* I/1, 27).

Barth rejects this rationale for dogmatic prolegomena on three grounds. (1) Theology has always been done in the face of widespread rejection of its presupposition of God's revelation; the modern situation is not as different as Brunner and others have supposed. They argue that theology faces a more difficult task in a culture generally skeptical of religion than it did in a highly religious, if pagan, culture (as in the early church). To the contrary, Barth insists, the Christian revelation claim has always been at odds with non-Christian thought, whether religious or skeptical. "Knowledge of the revelation believed in the Church does not stand or fall with the

general religious possibility that is made easier by the ancient view of things and more difficult by the modern" (*CD* I/1, 28).

(2) To do dogmatic prolegomena as a means of justifying God's revelation is to abandon the dogmatic task for another; it is to stop speaking as the church. Barth objects to framing the epistemological question as "How is human knowledge of revelation possible?" because such a question implies that there is some question about "whether revelation is known." Rather, the epistemological question is, "What is true human knowledge of divine revelation?" This question presupposes that revelation itself creates man's knowledge of that revelation—which for Barth is the crucial point (*CD* I/1, 29).

(3) Barth argues that the desire to make theology responsible and up to date cannot be satisfied by engaging in the negative task of refuting unbelief, but only by engaging in its own proper and positive task of articulating the witness of faith. As Bromiley helpfully and succinctly puts it, "theology which does its own job will be the best apologetics."[9] Barth himself put it in almost the very same terms in another work late in his life: "Dogmatics will always have an apologetic side. In a certain sense all dogmatics is apologetics, namely, in the sense it is setting the limits. But God's revelation defends itself. . . . The best apologetic is a good dogmatics. Truth will speak for itself."[10]

Theology should refuse "to be drawn into discussion of its basis, of the question of the existence of God or of revelation." Dogmatics cannot produce an effective apologetic by trying to defend faith, but only by presenting a faithful witness of faith to God's self-revelation (*CD* I/1, 30).

> There can be no question, of course, that with the Christian Church generally dogmatics, too, has everywhere to speak in the antithesis of faith to unbelief and therefore

> apologetically and polemically. But there has never been any effective apologetics or polemics of faith against unbelief except that which is not deliberately planned, which simply happens as God Himself acknowledges the witness of faith. There are three reasons why all planned apologetics and polemics have obviously been irresponsible, irrelevant and therefore ineffective.

Barth then presents his three objections to intentional apologetics. "*(a)* In such apologetics faith must clearly take unbelief seriously. Hence it cannot take itself with full seriousness. Secretly or openly, therefore, it ceases to be faith." That is, apologetics as prolegomena either overtly or covertly treats unbelieving assumptions as serious options. "*(b)* In all independently ventured apologetics and polemics there may be discerned the opinion that dogmatics has done its work." That is, Barth contends that apologetics is a distraction of the theologian from his actual task, that of articulating the church's witness to God's revelation.

> *(c)* An independent eristics at least runs the risk that once its task is completed dogmatics will think that its conflict with unbelief has been brought to an end in the form of such prolegomena, and that it will thus lose the necessary awareness of the constant exposure to assault of all its statements. In other words, dogmatics may well come to act as an eristics which is *praenumerando* assured, and thus be guilty of a genuine Chinese Wall mentality, the building of the Great Wall of China being obviously a thoroughly eristic enterprise. (*CD* I/1, 30-31)

That is, eristics, as an independent effort preceding dogmatics, implies that dogmatics can then proceed without concern for unbelieving thought.

> Theology is genuinely and effectively apologetic and polemic to the extent that its proper work, which cannot be done except at the heart of the conflict between faith and unbelief, is recognised, empowered and blessed by God as the witness of faith, but not to the extent that it adopts particular forms in which it finally becomes only too clear to the opposing partner that it is either deceiving him when it proposes to deal with him on the ground of common presuppositions, or that it is not quite sure of its own cause in so doing. Either way, there can be no shattering of the axiom of reason along these lines, but only as theology goes its own way sincerely and with no pretence. Apologetics and polemics can only be an event and not a programme. (*CD* I/1, 31)

If the purpose of dogmatic prolegomena is not to engage in an intentional apologetic discussion with unbelief outside of a faith position, then what is its purpose? According to Barth, it is to give an account of the path of knowledge properly taken by dogmatics, over against alternative accounts vying within the church. That is, its purpose is to oppose not the avowed unbelief of those outside the church, but the materially defective faith of those within the church. Prolegomena, in short, deals with heresy. The two main heresies Barth identifies are Roman Catholicism and Protestant modernism, over against which he favors what he considers to be an evangelical theology (*CD* I/1, 31-34).

Critiquing the God of the Philosophers

The inability of human reason to make a rational, coherent account of the paradoxes of the Trinity and especially the Incarnation exposes a serious limitation for philosophy. Fideists do not necessarily reject philosophy outright, but they do cordon it off from theology in the sharpest

possible way. Moreover, they reject the project of developing a "Christian philosophy," whether conceived as a foundation, companion, or product of Christian theology.

This fideist view of philosophy was clearly anticipated by Martin Luther. The seeming irrationality of the gospel message cannot, Luther concludes, be overcome by developing a superior philosophy. Rather, Luther insists that philosophy must be completely separated from theology, lest the gospel that theology seeks to propound be corrupted. "Philosophy deals with matters that are understood by human reason. Theology deals with matters of belief, that is, matters which are apprehended by faith."[11] Ironically, this distinction is itself a Scholastic one, going back to Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas himself. Some later Scholastics, notably Robert Holcot (a student of the famous Ockham), took this distinction so far as to maintain that "a proposition may be false in theology and true in philosophy, and *vice versa*."[12] Luther comes close to this view, arguing that Catholic theologians who insisted "that truth is the same in philosophy and theology" were really teaching "that articles of faith are subject to the judgment of human reason." In opposition to this approach, Luther maintains that such truths as the doctrine of the Incarnation are true "in theology," but "in philosophy" they are "impossible and absurd." For Luther the bottom line is that "God is not subject to reason and syllogisms but to the word of God and faith."[13]

A sharp opposition between what philosophers can speculate about God and what God has himself revealed is characteristic of fideism. Pascal is well known for his personal motto (which he carried on his person for years):

> "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob," not of philosophers and scholars.
>
> Certainty, certainty, heartfelt, joy, peace.

God of Jesus Christ.

God of Jesus Christ.[14]

There is some evidence in Kierkegaard's writings that he was not opposed to philosophy per se. "Johannes Climacus" in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, while criticizing philosophical speculation, hastens to add that within its proper sphere, philosophy served a very beneficial function. "All honor to philosophy, all praise to everyone who brings a genuine devotion to its service."[15] What Kierkegaard does, though, is use the critical tools of philosophy to show that philosophy cannot be used to prove or defend the rationality of Christianity. Philosophy has its uses, but it cannot help us in our relationship with the living God: "Philosophy is life's dry-nurse, who can take care of us—but not suckle us" (*JP* 3252, 3:500). Kierkegaard scholar Peter Rhode observes: "Using the subtlest weapons of logic and philosophy . . . Kierkegaard performed the feat of demonstrating the impotence of logic and philosophy to deal with the ultimate problems of existence. This demonstration is really his title to fame."[16]

Kierkegaard roots his rejection of Christian philosophy or philosophical theology in the paradox of the Incarnation. "Philosophy's idea is mediation—Christianity's, the paradox" (*JP* 3072, 3:399). He asserts that "because all Christianity is rooted in the paradox, one must accept it (i.e. become a believer) or reject it (precisely because it is paradoxical), but above all one is not to think it out speculatively, for then the result is definitely not Christianity" (*JP* 3083, 3:403-404). At one point he stated emphatically, *"Philosophy and Christianity can never be united"* (*JP* 3245, 3:496). Echoing Luther and the Scholastic dualism between philosophy and theology, Kierkegaard comments in a note: "Compare the scholastic thesis: 'Something can be true in philosophy which is false in theology'" (*JP* 3245, 3:497).

For Kierkegaard, the philosophy of the German thinker Georg W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) epitomized the attempt to formulate a conceptual scheme by which all reality could be ordered. Hegel sought to deduce all categories of reality from an original abstract category of being, and maintained that there is a metaphysical continuity between God and man. He reinterpreted the New Testament concept of the Incarnation in symbolic terms to fit his philosophical system. Kierkegaard comments: "Thus there is no philosophy which has been so harmful to Christianity as Hegel's. For the earlier philosophies were still honest enough to let Christianity be what it is—but Hegel was stupidly impudent enough to solve the problem of speculation and Christianity in such a way that he altered Christianity—and then everything went beautifully" (*JP* 1619, 2:226-227).

Kierkegaard was impressed enough with Hegel's intellectual brilliance. His claim was not that Hegel had done a poor job of giving a philosophical account of Christianity, but that the whole enterprise was an improper use of reason. His assertion that "Hegel was stupidly impudent" is a judgment on the ethics of Hegel's use of reason, not an evaluation of his mental ability. Thus in another place Kierkegaard could write: "If Hegel had written his whole logic and had written in the preface that it was only a thought-experiment, in which at many points he still steered clear of some things, he undoubtedly would have been the greatest thinker who has ever lived. As it is he is comic" (*JP* 1605, 2:217).

Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel, which we cannot explore here, is one of his major contributions to the history of Christian thought. Indeed, at least one author has spoken of it as an exercise in Christian apologetics:

> Quite in the spirit of Pascal, Kierkegaard has used reason to teach us reason's limits, to show that there is nothing more irrational than the pretenses of the autonomous human

> reason, and thus to bring us to "the borders of the marvellous." That is, to prepare us for the reception of divine revelation—a revelation not volatilized, as in the case of theological liberalism, nor made synonymous with an evolutionary process culminating in the State, as in Hegel, but a revelation uniquely focused in the God-Man and in the Church his coming created. Kierkegaard's attack on Hegel is, therefore, equally an apology for the Christian faith.[17]

Christianity and the Reality Beyond Science

We have emphasized that fideists, while disavowing the use of reason to defend or prove Christianity true, are not thereby irrationalists. This is demonstrable from the view of science most fideists take. They do not reject science, and generally do not dispute the findings of mainstream science. Rather, they argue that the findings of science in principle can neither confirm nor disprove the truth of Christianity. They generally hold to some form of **complementarianism**, according to which science and theology deal with different questions, perhaps even different subject matters, so that as a matter of principle neither discipline can properly yield results in conflict with the other.

The foundations of this approach appear in the writings of Kierkegaard. As he himself acknowledged, modern science was beginning to call into question some things found in Scripture (at least, as they were commonly understood), although he died before the modern conflict heated up over evolution. In the main, Kierkegaard scolded people for giving too much reverence to science and consequently expecting Christianity to be validated by science. He spoke of this trend as "a curious misunderstanding, a consequence of the deification of the

scholarly and the scientific—namely, this desire to apply the scientific also to the portrayal of the existential" (*JP* 1058, 1:461). Kierkegaard decried the exaltation of science at the expense of theology:

> Once upon a time all the other branches of knowledge drew their prestige from Christianity, from theology: a natural scientist, a physician, etc.—for him to be a doctor of theology as well was a recommendation. Alas, men have turned this almost completely around. The fact that Pascal was a famous mathematician is almost a benefit to Christianity, because of that people feel that they can listen to and reflect on what he says. Alas, what a change. (*JP* 3118, 3:423)

A scientific approach to matters of the spirit is positively dangerous, Kierkegaard warns, indicating that while science deals with the physical, it is incompetent to deal with the spiritual:

> Many admirers . . . believe that carrying out investigations microscopically is synonymous with scientific earnestness. . . . But all such scientificalness becomes especially dangerous and corruptive when it wants to enter into the realm of the spirit. Let them treat plants, animals, and stars that way, but to treat the human spirit in this way is blasphemy, which only weakens the passion of the ethical and of the religious. (*JP* 2809, 3:242-243)

Not only is he not interested in natural theology, he actually sees anything along that line as offensive and negating of genuine faith:

> To me there is something repulsive when a natural scientist, after having pointed to some ingenious design in nature, sententiously declares that this reminds us of the verse that God has counted every hair of our heads. O, the fool and his science, he has never known

> what faith is! Faith believes it without all his science, and it would only become disgusted with itself in reading all his volumes if these, please note, were supposed to lead to faith, strengthen faith, etc. (*JP* 2810, 3:246)

Admitting that there appear to be scientific errors in Scripture, Kierkegaard asks us to imagine a revelation given in our time. Assuming that we acknowledge that modern science is not perfect and that many of its current notions will one day be set aside, he suggests that a revelation given to us today would not concern itself with correcting such scientific errors. Rather, it "will speak about natural phenomena in exactly the same way we do, for there is no time to waste on such matters, and the teacher (God) is not like a conceited human teacher who wants to show what he knows" (*JP* 2823, 3:253).

> At present natural science shows that a whole range of ideas about natural phenomena found in Holy Scripture are not scientifically defensible: ergo, Holy Scripture is not God's Word, is not a revelation.
>
> Here theological scholarship gets into trouble, for the natural sciences are perhaps right in what they say—and theological scholarship is also eager to be a science, but then it loses the game here, too. If the whole thing were not so serious, it would be extremely comical to consider theology's painful situation, which it certainly deserves, for this is its nemesis for wanting to be a science. (*JP* 2823, 3:252)

In general, fideists are open to theistic evolution as an explanation of origins, though not all fideists actually embrace evolutionary theory. They tend to read Genesis 1 as a poetic, theological account of origins, relating the truth of what occurred in prehistory, but in a nonliteral narrative. Karl Barth, for example, treats Genesis 1–3 as "a legitimate non-historical

and pre-historical view of history, and its non-historical and pre-historical depiction in the form of saga." By *saga* he means a narrative of historical truth conveyed using a nonhistorical genre or form; saga in this sense is to be sharply distinguished from myth, in which a fictional narrative symbolizes nonhistorical truth. "In what follows I am using saga in the sense of an intuitive and poetic picture of a pre-historical reality of history which is enacted once for all within the confines of space and time" (*CD* III/1, 81).

Donald Bloesch exemplifies a moderate application of the fideistic position to matters of science. "The Bible is a document concerning not science, history or religion as such but a divine-human encounter, which we find above all in Jesus Christ. . . . The biblical culture is prescientific, but the truth that the Bible attests is suprascientific."[18] Like apologists of other approaches, though, Bloesch reserves judgment on whether Scripture is actually contradicted by the physical facts. "I readily grant that forms of expression in Scripture may conflict with science, but science is not the final norm, for scientific theories are constantly in flux."[19] Bloesch is serious about this critical view of science, for he commends fundamentalists for their "opposition to the myth of evolution, which continues to beguile earnest Christians seeking a satisfactory rational explanation of the origin of species."[20] But he also criticizes fundamentalists for insisting on interpreting the Bible to teach a young earth in the teeth of the scientific evidence.[21]

Revelation as Transcending History

While fideism opposes the other three apologetic approaches considered in this book, it is arguably most opposed to evidentialism. The evidentialist project of persuading non-Christians to put their faith in Christ on the basis of factual evidence—especially historical evidence—

strikes the fideist as a most foolhardy undertaking. While rumblings against such an approach were sounded before him, Kierkegaard raised the first loud, clear cry against basing Christian belief on historical argument.

The issue is raised, but not directly answered, in *Philosophical Fragments* (1844). A brief, simplified overview of this important work will make clear the approach taken in fideism to historical apologetics. The question is posed on the title page of the work: "Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest; can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?"[22]

The book opens, though, with a more general question: "Can the truth be learned?" (9). From this question Kierkegaard (or his pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus) develops throughout the first two chapters a "thought experiment." In it he represents the Incarnation as the coming into the world of God himself to be our Savior and Teacher—a Savior to bring us back to acceptance of the truth and a Teacher to actually communicate it (9-36). Such a God become man would be the "absolute paradox," one that is an offense to man (37-54).

In chapter 4 Climacus points out that even a contemporary of this hypothetical "god," that is, the God-man, could not base his faith in him on his knowledge of the historical facts. Even a contemporary would not know every historical detail about the God-man, and even if he did, that would not make him a follower (55-71, especially 59). In an "Interlude" Climacus argues that the passage of time does not make the historical "necessary" (72-88). As Kierkegaard wrote elsewhere: "Contemporaneity or noncontemporaneity makes no essential difference; a historical point of departure (and this it is also for the contemporary, the historical, that the God exists—that is, exists by having come into the sphere of actuality)—for an eternal decision is and remains a leap" (*JP* 2354, 3:20).

In the fifth and final chapter, Climacus considers the position of "the follower at second hand" (89-110). No matter how increasingly probable the evidence for the coming of the God-man might seem with the passing of time and the unfolding consequences of his coming, the sheer improbability of "the absolute paradox" overwhelms the positive evidence for it (94-95). The only way for a person to become a follower of the God-man is for him to "receive the condition" from the God-man directly. But in that case the person has this faith "at first hand," and cannot be considered a follower at second hand (100). No amount of historical knowledge derived from those who did receive faith at first hand from the God-man will make faith reasonable, because "its absurdity completely absorbs minor matters." What matters is the humanly unbelievable, paradoxical fact that God became a man, not the relatively believable facts of the circumstances surrounding his coming.

> Even if the contemporary generation had not left anything behind except these words, "We have believed that in such and such a year the god appeared in the humble form of a servant, lived and taught among us, and then died"—this is more than enough. The contemporary generation would have done what is needful; for this little announcement, this world-historical *nota bene*, is enough to become an occasion for someone who comes later, and the most prolix report can never in all eternity become more for the person who comes later. (104)

Kierkegaard makes the same point elsewhere, writing more directly about faith and historical knowledge about Christ:

> It is nonsense that the significance of historical details should be decisive with respect to faith in Him who is present with one and with whom one speaks daily and to whom one

> turns. . . . Yet Christ is actually treated as if He were merely a historical figure who lived 1,800 years ago. . . .
>
> A merely historical person, a human being, is present only historically—therefore every detail is of great importance. It certainly does not help me to pray to Socrates: what I am to know about him I must learn from history or shape it out of my own head. But Christ is present in an entirely different way. Once again it is seen how strict orthodoxy really downgrades Christ. For however paradoxical it is, it is true and it is Christian that with regard to Christ the historical details are not nearly so important as with Socrates and the like, simply because Christ is Christ, an eternally present one for He is true God. (*JP* 318, 1:133-134)

Throughout *Philosophical Fragments* up to this point, Climacus has coyly avoided any direct reference to Jesus or to Christianity, speaking entirely hypothetically. At the very end of the book he admits that his interest is in Christianity, and comments that he will deal with the question more concretely in a sequel, if he ever gets around to writing it.

> As is well known, Christianity is the only historical phenomenon that despite the historical—indeed, precisely by means of the historical—has wanted to be the single individual's point of departure for his eternal consciousness, has wanted to interest him otherwise than merely historically, has wanted to base his happiness on his relation to something historical. No philosophy (for it is only for thought), no mythology (for it is only for the imagination), no historical knowledge (which is for memory) has ever had this idea—of which in this connection one can say with all multiple meanings that it did not arise in any human heart. (109)

Here we have, as C. Stephen Evans has pointed out, an indirect apologetic argument for the truth of Christianity: it is not something anyone would make up. From the impossibility of arriving at faith via the historical evidence because of the absurdity of the Incarnation to the human mind, Kierkegaard, through Climacus, slyly infers that the very absurdity of the idea, in the light of its uniqueness, suggests its divine origin.[23]

The sequel to which Climacus refers at the end of *Philosophical Fragments* was produced just two years later as *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments"* (1846).[24] In his introduction Climacus explains that how an historical point of departure can be the basis of eternal happiness is *not* a question "about the truth of Christianity but about the individual's relation to Christianity" (15). He will consider the question of the truth of Christianity, but only as a prelude to the critical question of how one can receive the benefits of that truth: "The objective issue, then, would be about the truth of Christianity. The subjective issue is about the individual's relation to Christianity. Simply stated: How can I, Johannes Climacus, share in the happiness that Christianity promises?" (17).

Climacus here indicates in outline form the plan of the book: in the first part he will consider the objective question of the truth of Christianity; in the second part he will consider the subjective issue of the individual's relation to Christianity. Part One turns out to be by far the shorter portion of the book (19-57). Here Climacus argues that every effort to secure a knowledge of the truth of Christianity through reason not only fails to attain faith, but in fact undermines it. For example, even if every historical problem relating to the Bible could be resolved, the person acquiring such knowledge would be no closer to faith: "Faith does not result from straightforward scholarly deliberation, nor does it come directly; on the contrary, in this objectivity one loses that infinite, personal, impassioned interestedness, which is the condition of

faith, the *ubique et nusquam* [everywhere and nowhere] in which faith can come into existence" (29).

Under the most ideal conditions, historical knowledge can never produce certainty. "If all the angels united, they would still be able to produce only an approximation, because in historical knowledge an approximation is the only certainty—but also too little on which to build an eternal happiness" (30).

Part Two of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is divided into two sections. In the first Climacus interacts with the thought of **Lessing**, who alerted Kierkegaard to the problem of historical knowledge and faith (61-125). Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) was an Enlightenment thinker who introduced some of the earliest works of liberal biblical criticism. He is best known for his axiom, which Kierkegaard quotes and discusses at length, *"that contingent historical truths can never become a demonstration of eternal truths of reason"* (93). Kierkegaard had alluded to this axiom with his question on the title page of *Philosophical Fragments*, quoted earlier, and which he asked again toward the beginning of this book (15). Working from a deistic assumption that all essential religious truths had the character of necessary truths of universal reason, Lessing concluded that the historical events of the life of Jesus could not prove religious truth. He could not see how one could reason from the occurrence of a past event, even a reported miracle, to a conclusion about God or eternal issues. Climacus quotes Lessing's conclusion: "That, that is the ugly broad ditch that I cannot cross, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap" (98). **Lessing's ditch,** as this principle came to be known, plays a prominent part in Kierkegaard's critique of historical apologetics. Elsewhere, writing in his own name, Kierkegaard makes it clear that he thinks Lessing raised a critical issue: "This [an historical point of departure for an eternal

consciousness] is and remains the main problem with respect to the relationship between Christianity and philosophy. Lessing is the only one who has dealt with it. But Lessing knew considerably more what the issue is about than the common herd of modern philosophers" (*JP* 2370, 3:27).

Although Kierkegaard accepts Lessing's premise that one cannot base eternal or necessary truths on contingent historical fact, he rejects his conclusion that the historical aspect of Christianity is nonessential. This is because Kierkegaard rejects the idea that the truths of Christianity are timeless truths that existed before Christianity itself. Such an idea treats Christianity as an abstract system of truth. "But Christianity is an historical truth; it appears at a certain time and a certain place and consequently it is relevant to a certain time and place" (*JP* 1635, 2:232). If one rigorously maintains that Christianity existed as a timeless abstract truth before Christianity itself came into existence, "then the essence of Christianity is enervated, because in Christianity it is precisely the historical which is the essential; whereas with the other ideas this is accidental" (*JP* 1635, 2:233).

Where Kierkegaard follows Lessing is in affirming that truths bearing on one's eternal happiness cannot be held on the basis of historical knowledge. He insists that "even if it were the surest thing in all history, this does not help; no *direct* transition from the historical can be made as the basis for an eternal happiness." The person who would turn to Jesus Christ for his eternal happiness "must beware of taking the wrong turn into scientific rummaging and reconnoitering to see if it is historically entirely certain" (*JP* 73, 1:27). Instead, a person must "choose" to "venture" his whole life on the historical person of Jesus Christ. "This is called *venturing*, and without venturing faith is an impossibility." Unlike Socrates, who wagered his whole life on his

own inherent immortality, the Christian is wagering his whole life on another, on Jesus Christ. "Thus the historical is the occasion and still also the object of faith" (*JP* 73, 1:28).

The second section of the second part of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and by far the largest portion of the work, is taken up with "the subjective issue" of an individual actually becoming a Christian in light of the problem raised by Lessing (127-616). At the risk of oversimplification, we may say that Kierkegaard's burden here, as really throughout the work, is to show that people who imagine themselves to be Christians because they have accepted the Gospel reports about Jesus and assented to the Christian doctrine are deceived. Recall that Kierkegaard saw his primary mission as awakening the nominally Christian culture of Denmark to the fact that being a Christian was not the automatic, easy thing they took it to be. The issue here is not the apologetic problem of persuading non-Christians that Jesus rose from the dead or even that He was God incarnate. Rather, the problem is persuading people who affirm those truths that their affirmations do not make them genuine Christians. Climacus asserts that "the difficulty is to become Christian, because every Christian is Christian only by being nailed to the paradox of having based his eternal happiness on the relation to something historical" (578). Thus, Climacus concludes, "The present work has made it difficult to become a Christian" (587).

The thrust of Kierkegaard's efforts in these and other works is not so much to provide the positive answer to how one becomes a Christian—he struggled with this question for himself to the end of his life—but to expose the fraudulent character of nominal Christianity. Fideists following Kierkegaard have sought to build on his insights and to develop answers to his searching questions. Chief among these in the twentieth century was Karl Barth, who gave considerable attention to the relationship between faith and history. Barth fully agrees with Kierkegaard's critique of Lessing's reduction of Christianity to timeless, universal ideas:

> The revelations attested in the Bible do not purport to be manifestations of a universal or an idea which are special by nature but which can then be comfortably compared with the idea and understood and evaluated in their particularity.
>
> Because this is not the case, the philosophy of religion of the Enlightenment from Lessing by way of Kant and Herder to Fichte and Hegel, with its intolerable distinction between the eternal content and the historical "vehicle," can only be described as the nadir of the modern misunderstanding of the Bible. (*CD* I/1, 329)

Barth affirms that revelation reaches man in history and is therefore an historical event, but cautions that it is not "historical" in the Enlightenment sense of something that could be recognized and proved by a neutral observer:

> Historical does not mean historically demonstrable or historically demonstrated. Hence it does not mean what is usually called "historical" *(historisch)*. We should be discarding again all that we have said earlier about the mystery in revelation if we were now to describe any of the events of revelation attested in the Bible as "historical" *(historisch);* i.e., apprehensible by a neutral observer or apprehended by such an observer. What a neutral observer could apprehend or may have apprehended of these events was the form of revelation which he did not and could not understand as such. It was an event that took place in the human sphere with all the possibilities of interpretation corresponding to this sphere. In no case was it revelation as such. . . . The "historical" element in the resurrection of Christ, the empty tomb as an aspect of this event that might be established, was not revelation. This "historical" element, like all else that is "historical" on this level, is admittedly open to very trivial interpretations too. (*CD* I/1, 325)

Barth contends that "we have to speak about an indirect *identity*" between revelation and the Bible. In this regard he warns against "modern theological historicism," which seeks "to penetrate past the biblical texts to the facts which lie behind the texts," in which facts, rather than in the text of the Bible itself, revelation is found (*CD* I/2, 492). The attempt to subject the Bible to historicist canons "was a mistake from the very first," even when the intent was to vindicate the Bible's truth rather than to challenge it. Reading the Bible in this way was a mistake because it meant reading it as something other than what it is. The Bible does not purport to be a collection of sources from which the revelation given to Israel can be extracted using neutral historical methods. "We cannot therefore put the question of truth in the direct way that it was arbitrarily thought it should be put" (*CD* I/2, 493).

This is not to say that historical scholarship does not have its place; but its place is in illuminating the meaning of the texts, not in sifting through them to find an alleged truth behind them. "All relevant, historical questions must be put to the biblical texts, considered as witnesses in accordance with their literary form." The answers to these questions are valuable so long as they are not being used in the service of "the foolish end of mediating an historical truth lying behind the texts. The historical truth which in its own way biblical scholarship does have to mediate is the true meaning and context of the biblical texts as such. Therefore it is not different from the biblical truth which has to be mediated" (*CD* I/2, 494).

In review, fideists deny that we can lead people to faith in Christ through presentations of the empirical, historical evidence. Such historical apologetics will always fall short of certainty and will fail to engage the revelatory character of the events. But fideists do not deny that the central events of the Christian gospel occurred in real history, nor do they minimize the

importance of those events. Their claim is that their significance as revelation is beyond the competence of historical scholarship, and so must be grasped by faith alone.

Faith Is Experience

Reformed apologetics and fideism are often confused because of their similar demand that faith be placed firmly in God's revelation without reliance on any reasoning. Both also speak of God's revelation as "self-attesting," which adds to the similarities. However, one significant difference between the two approaches is found in their view of faith. For fideists, faith is also in some sense self-attesting. That is, fideists believe that faith is, or carries with it, its own evidence or basis of assurance. Kierkegaard states this idea rather plainly: "Away with all this world history and reasons and proofs for the truth of Christianity: there is only one proof—that of faith. If I actually have a firm conviction (and this, to be sure, is a qualification of intense inwardness oriented to spirit), then to me my firm conviction is higher than reasons: it is actually the conviction which sustains the reasons, not the reasons which sustain the convictions" (*JP* 3608, 3:663).

In saying that faith is its own proof, Kierkegaard does not mean that simply believing, in and of itself, is self-attesting. Remember that for him faith is not mere intellectual assent but a passionate commitment to Jesus Christ, which must be the result of a person's despairing of self and turning in helplessness to Christ. "There is only one, and quite rightly pathological, proof of the truth of Christianity—when the anxiety of sin and the burdened conscience constrain a man to cross the narrow line between despair unto madness—and Christianity" (*JP* 503, 1:201-202). Thus the faith that is its own proof is the faith that expresses itself in a person's life in such a way that there can be no doubting one's relationship with Christ. "According to the New

Testament, is there not only one proof, only one thing that convinces—the fact that one's life expresses it?" (*JP* 3580, 3:646). "A witness is a person who directly demonstrates the truth of the doctrine he proclaims—directly, yes, in part by its being truth in him and blessedness, in part by volunteering his personal self and saying: Now see if you can force me to deny this doctrine. . . . But a teacher! He has proofs and arguments—but he stands outside, and the whole thing becomes ridiculous, all the objections triumphant" (*JP* 4967, 4:558-559).

Kierkegaard points out that others in the past have held up the changed lives of Christians as proof of Christianity. (The argument is still often used.) Unfortunately, he is rather pessimistic about its validity, since so few professing Christians really live the authentic, transformed life spoken of in the New Testament: "This is, after all, an apologetic for Christianity. He [Savonarola] proves the truth and divinity of Christianity by the transformation which occurs to those who become Christians—the proud become humble, the voluptuous chaste, etc. . . . Such an apologetic in our time would be a satire on us Christians" (*JP* 3842, 4:9-10).

Donald Bloesch advocates a nuanced approach to the place of experience in Christian faith. His main concern is to avoid both objectivism and subjectivism and to find a basis of certainty that "is neither subjective nor objective." This basis is God's revelation: "The ground of certainty is God speaking through the objective event and the subjective experience."[25] Bloesch's view derives from P. T. Forsyth:

> What Christians have is not self-certainty but "soul-certainty" (Forsyth), or even better, God-certainty. It is not the fact of our experience but the fact *which* we experience that shapes and determines Christian faith (Forsyth). . . . What Forsyth says is quite sound: "We have not two certitudes about these supreme matters, produced by authority *and* experience, but one, produced by authority *in* experience; not a certitude produced by

authority and then corroborated by experience, but one produced by an authority active only in experience, and especially the corporate experience of a Church."[26]

Here we see that evangelical fideism seeks to uphold the objective revelation of God as the ground of our confidence or certainty, but at the same time views the inner assurance of faith produced by the Spirit as closely integrated with that objective ground.

For Further Study

Bloesch, Donald G. *The Ground of Certainty*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971. Programmatic articulation of an evangelical fideist approach, discussing faith and reason, theology, philosophy, and experience.

McLaren, Brian D. *Finding Faith: A Self-Discovery Guide for Your Spiritual Quest*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. Maryland pastor and leader in the Willow Creek movement presents a fideist apologetic aimed at seekers.

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[1]Donald G. Bloesch, *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992), 60-61.

[2]Bloesch, *Word and Spirit*, 231.

[3]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thompson, Harold Knight, et. al., 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-1958), I/1, 31. References in the text to Barth's *Church*

Dogmatics will hereafter be cited with *CD,* followed by the volume and part number, and the page reference.

[4]Citing *Fastenpost*. (1525), Sermon on Matt. 8:1f., *WA* 17, Part II, 85, line 10. *WA* refers to the 1910 Weimar edition *(Weimarer Ausgabe)* of *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, the standard reference.

[5]Citing Sermon on Acts 2:14f. (1534).

[6]Gregory A. Clark, "The Nature of Conversion: How the Rhetoric of Worldview Philosophy Can Betray Evangelicals," in *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals and Postliberals in Conversation*, ed. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Ockholm (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), 201-218. Parenthetical page references in the text are to this essay.

[7]Bloesch, *Word and Spirit*, 14.

[8]Donald G. Bloesch, *Future of Evangelical Theology: A Call for Unity amid Diversity* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1988), 122-23.

[9]Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 5.

[10]Karl Barth, "Karl Barth's Table Talk," in *Scottish Journal of Occasional Papers* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), 44, 62.

[11]Luther, *The Disputation Concerning the Passage: "The Word Was Made Flesh"* (1539), in *LW* 38:238-44. *LW* refers to the fifty-six-volume American Edition in English of *Luther's Works*, co-published by Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press.

[12]Cited in Gerrish, *Grace and Reason*, 52.

[13]Luther, *Disputation*, in *LW* 38:239-244.

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[14]Often cited; for example, in Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1966), 309.

[15]Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments,"* vol. 1, *Text*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 54.

[16]Peter F. Rhode, quoted by Howard A. Johnson, introduction to Kierkegaard, *JP*, 1:xxv.

[17]Johnson, introduction to Kierkegaard, *JP*, 1:xxvi.

[18]Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), 113, 114.

[19]Ibid., 117.

[20]Ibid., 98.

[21]Ibid., 37.

[22]Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments; Johannes Climacus*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 179; parenthetical page references in the text are to this work.

[23]C. Stephen Evans, "Apologetic Arguments in *Philosophical Fragments*," in *"Philosophical Fragments" and "Johannes Climacus,"* ed. Robert L. Perkins, International Kierkegaard Commentary, vol. 7 (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1994), 63-83; see discussion in previous chapter.

[24]Parenthetical page references in text are to this work.

[25]Bloesch, *Word and Spirit*, 202.

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[26]Ibid., 203, citing P. T. Forsyth, *The Principle of Authority*, 2d ed. (London: Independent Press, 1952), 55, 328.