

Mynster's "Rationalism, Supernaturalism"

Translated and introduced by JON STEWART

The following is a translation of an article entitled, "Rationalisme. Supranaturalisme," by the Danish theologian, pastor and bishop, Jakob Peter Mynster (1775-1854). This article was originally published in the *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* (vol. 1, 1839, pp. 249-268),¹ and this is the textual basis used for this translation. The original pagination of this journal has been indicated in the present translation. This article was a part of a larger debate concerning the validity of the application of Hegelian logic to basic Christian dogmas such as the Trinity and the Incarnation.² This article and the debate in general were of some significance for Kierkegaard in particular for his polemic against both Hegel's philosophy of religion and Hegelian mediation.

In order to be fully understood, Mynster's article must be seen in its proper context. The immediate occasion for the article was a review by Johan Alfred Bornemann (1813-90)³ of Hans Lassen Martensen's

¹ This text is reprinted in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, vols. 1-6, ed. by J.H. Paulli, Copenhagen 1852-57, vol. 2, pp. 95-115. See Mynster's later comments on this text in his *Meddelelser om mit Levnet*, Copenhagen 1884, pp. 240f.

² For this debate in general, see V. Kuhr *Modsigelsens Grundsætning*, Copenhagen and Kristiania: Gyldendalske Boghandel Nordisk Forlag 1915. Anton Hügli "The Principle of Contradiction" in *Concepts and Alternatives in Kierkegaard*, ed. by Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (*Bibliotheca Kierkegardiana* vol. 3), Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Boghandel 1980, pp. 272-280. Skat Arildsen "Striden om de logiske Principer og om Rationalismens og Supranaturalismens Begreb," Chapter 8 in his *Biskop Hans Lassen Martensen. Hans Liv, Udvikling og Arbejde*, Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gads Forlag 1932, pp. 142-150. O. Waage "Strid om de logiske Principer og om Rationalismens of Supranaturalismens Begreb" in his *J. P. Mynster og de filosofiske Bevægelser paa hans Tid i Danmark*, Copenhagen 1867, pp. 123-152. Henning Høirup *Grundtvigs Syn paa Tro og Erkendelse. Modsigelsens Grundsætning som teologisk Aksiom hos Grundtvig*, Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel Nordisk Forlag 1949, pp. 73-75, pp. 85-89.

³ Johan Alfred Bornemann "De autonomia conscientiae sui humanæ, in theologiam dogmaticam nostri temporis introducta. Scripsit Ioh. Martensen. Haun. 1837. p. 135. (Hos Reitzel)" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, 1, 1839, pp. 1-40.

(1808-84) dissertation, *On the Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness*.⁴ In this review, Bornemann, a Hegelian student of theology, praises the achievements of speculative philosophy which demonstrated the conceptual unity of opposites. In this context he off-handedly claims that the opposition between rationalism and supernaturalism in theology has been rendered obsolete, presumably by Hegel's speculative logic which mediates or sublates such contradictory pairs. He writes, "In theology both rationalism and supernaturalism are antiquated standpoints which belong to a time which has disappeared."⁵ Thus, Bornemann seems to regard the matter as already established.

This supposition evoked the ire of Mynster, who responded to it with his article, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism."⁶ Mynster, one of the most respected theologians in Denmark at the time, was also well-read in German philosophy. He knew above all the works of Kant, Schelling and Jacobi, and when Hegel's philosophy came into vogue, he also made a careful study of it.⁷ He came to be one of Frederik Christian Sibbern's (1785-1872) main allies as an outspoken critic of Hegelianism, particularly as it was expounded by Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791-1860). He had already taken Heiberg to task in 1833 in an article entitled, "On Religious Conviction."⁸ In that work Mynster disputes the claims about Hegel's philosophy of religion that Heiberg had made in his controversial treatise, *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age*.⁹ Thus, one can regard Mynster's article, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism," as a continuation of his offensive against Hegelianism.

⁴ Hans Lassen Martensen *De autonomia conscientiae sui humanæ, in theologiam dogmaticam nostri temporis introducta*, Copenhagen 1837. ASKB 648. Danish translation: *Den menneskelige Selvbevidstheds Autonomie*, tr. by L. V. Petersen. Copenhagen 1841. ASKB 651. English translation: *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology in Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. by Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1997, pp. 73-147.

⁵ Johan Alfred Bornemann, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶ For an account of Mynster's participation in this debate, see O. Waage *J. P. Mynster og de filosofiske Bevægelser paa hans Tid i Danmark*, op. cit., pp. 123-152.

⁷ For Mynster's general view on Hegel's philosophy, see his *Meddelelser om mit Levnet*, op. cit., p. 240.

⁸ Jakob Peter Mynster "Om den religiøse Overbevisning" in *Dansk Ugeskrift*, no. 75-77, 1833, pp. 241-258. (Reprinted in Jakob Peter Mynster *Blandede Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 73-94.)

⁹ Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Om Philosophiens Betydning for den nuværende Tid*, Copenhagen 1833. ASKB 568. (Reprinted in Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Prosaiske Skrifter*, vols. 1-11, Copenhagen 1861-62, vol. 1, pp. 381-460.)

Mynster had a special interest in the issue of the laws of logic since as early as 1826 he had published a substantial essay on the law of identity in which he treated, among other things, Hegel's criticism of that law.¹⁰ Thus, like Sibbern he had already done work on logic and was in a position to appreciate the radical nature of Hegel's critique.

From the context it is clear that the debate was not primarily about Hegel's logic but rather about theology. In "Rationalism, Supernaturalism," Mynster's goal is to challenge Bornemann's claim that rationalism and supernaturalism are antiquated standpoints constituting a dichotomy which is no longer valid. His thesis is that both views are alive and well in contemporary debates about theology. His strategy is first to define what is meant by the terms "rationalism" and "supernaturalism" and then to ask whether or not these views, thus defined, are held by any of the leading figures in the contemporary discussions about theology. The bulk of his article is concerned with giving references to contemporary authors who still hold these views. He counts David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) as a leading exponent of rationalism and the younger Fichte, i. e., Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797-1879), as a leading supernaturalist. At the end of the article, almost as an afterthought, he brings in the issue of logic when he appeals to Aristotle's law of excluded middle in support of the split between rationalism and supernaturalism. He claims that if either view is really antiquated, "then the other would have to be that much more dominant, unless the *principium exclusi medii inter duo contradictoria* is also supposed to be antiquated."¹¹ These two views cannot be antiquated at the same time since they are opposites; thus, if the one were antiquated, the other would *ipso facto* be not antiquated but still current. Mynster notes that he is aware that Hegel has criticized the law of excluded middle, but nonetheless insists that rationalism and supernaturalism remain a fixed dichotomy, and any mediation of them results only in a partial and unsatisfying mixture of the one or the other. He thus reaffirms the Aristotelian view:

We do actually find [the law of excluded middle] treated with apparent disapproval in Hegel's *Logik* (*Werke*, IV, 66)...We note simply that when he explains the law in the sense in which it is usually understood...[h]e uses examples which make it clear that, for him, the law is laughable....When we say: "the revelation which Christianity rests

¹⁰ Jakob Peter Mynster "Logiske Bemærkninger om Identitet" in *Det skandinaviske Literaturselskabs Skrifter*, vol. 21, 1826, pp. 319-352. (Reprinted in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 249-271.)

¹¹ Jakob Peter Mynster "Rationalisme, Supranaturalism," p. 266.

upon either is supernatural or is not supernatural," it appears to be immediately clear that all mediation is impossible here and that all such attempts towards it can only lead to a halfway point, to a teetering and oscillation back and forth between rationalist supernaturalism and supernatural rationalism, as one often sees....*Aut/aut*; one can mediate between opposites but not between contradictions. Every basic scientific theory must decide for one or the other of mutually contradictory viewpoints.¹²

With this brief remark at the end of his essay, Mynster ventures a criticism of Hegel's speculative logic. As a slogan for his view, Mynster uses the Latin expression *aut/aut*, i. e., "either/or," which had traditionally been associated with the law of excluded middle. The expression was noted by Kierkegaard, who made use of its Danish form, *Enten-Eller*, for the title of his famous book from 1843.

Mynster's article initiated a full-fledged debate. Heiberg, as Hegel's self-appointed spokesman in Denmark, felt immediately called upon to respond. His article, "A Remark on Logic in Reference to the Right Reverend Bishop Mynster's Treatise on Rationalism and Supernaturalism," appeared in a later number of the same journal in which Mynster's article had been published.¹³ Heiberg's article was followed by another one in defense of the Hegelian position by Martensen, who was a friend of Heiberg and an important figure in the Hegelian movement in Denmark.¹⁴

These articles caused considerable controversy in philosophical and theological circles at the time. This can be clearly seen in a letter dated July 4, 1839, where Sibbern writes the following about these articles to his former student, the priest Frederik Ludvig Bang Zeuthen (1805-74):

Are you able to get hold of a copy of Petersen's *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* in your district? Recently, namely in the number for April, there was an article in it from Mynster under the title, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism." He tries to make good on the claim that the distinction between these two is in no way "antiquated," as was claimed in another article in the journal, and he thinks that here there is an *aut/aut*, between which everyone must decide. This article has caused some agitation among the young speculative theologians here, who have been rather dissatisfied with it. A few responses

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 266f.

¹³ Johan Ludvig Heiberg "En logisk Bemærkning i Anledning af H. H. Hr. Biskop Dr. Mynsters Afhandling om Rationalisme og Supranaturalisme i forrige Hefte af dette Tidsskrift" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, 1, 1839, pp. 441-456. (Reprinted in Johan Ludvig Heiberg *Prosaiske Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 167-190.)

¹⁴ Hans Lassen Martensen "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme og *principium exclusi medii* i Anledning af H. H. Biskop Mynsters Afhandling herom i dette Tidsskrifts forrige Hefte" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 1, 1839, pp. 456-473. See Skat Arildsen "Striden om de logiske Principer og om Rationalismens og Supranaturalismens Begreb," op. cit.

will come in the next number, one from Prof. Heiberg and another from Lecturer Martensen, who in particular must have seen the article as a challenge to themselves.¹⁵

Given the nature of the controversy, it is not surprising that in 1842 Mynster took up the issue again and responded to the challenges from Heiberg and Martensen. As an occasion for this rejoinder Mynster uses two works on Hegel's logic in Latin, one by Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) and one by the younger Fichte, which he purports to review. But his article can hardly be conceived as a book-review since he concentrates on the debate and uses the books in question only when convenient. This is reflected in the fact that in Mynster's *Collected Works* the article was given the title, "On the Laws of Logic."¹⁶

As a student at the University of Copenhagen, Kierkegaard followed this debate closely. It involved a number of the intellectual personalities who were closest to him. He had published short articles in Heiberg's journals and had hoped to be a part of the Heiberg's school of aestheticians. He had taken tutorials from Martensen. Sibbern was his professor and the advisor for his dissertation. Mynster was his family's pastor and was deeply revered by Kierkegaard's father. Thus, it is little wonder that Kierkegaard became passionately involved in this debate or that the notion of mediation in Hegel came to be a central theme in his works.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Breve fra og til F. C. Sibbern*, vols. 1-2, ed. by C. L. N. Mynster, Copenhagen 1866, vol. 2, pp. 194-195. See also the letter dated July 9, 1839 from Nikolai Fogtmann (1788-1851) to Mynster in *Af efterladte Breve til J. P. Mynster*, ed. by C. L. N. Mynster, Copenhagen 1862, pp. 194-196.

¹⁶ Jakob Peter Mynster "De principio logico exclusi medii inter contradictoria non negligendo commentatio, qua ad audiendam orationem --invitat-- Jo. Fr. Herbart. Gottingæ 1833. 29 S. 8[°]. De principiorum contradictionis, identitatis, exclusi tertii in logicis dignitate et ordine commentatio. Scripsit I. H. Fichte. Bonnæ 1840. 31 S. 8[°]" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, vol. 7, 1842, pp. 325-352. (Reprinted as "Om de logiske Principer" in Mynster's *Blandede Skrifter*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 116-144.)

¹⁷ See Dietrich Ritschl "Kierkegaards Kritik an Hegels Logik" in *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 11, 1955, pp. 437-465. Reprinted in *Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. by Heinz-Horst Schrey, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1971, pp. 240-272. Justus Hartnack "Kierkegaards angreb på Hegel" in *Sprogets mesterskab. Festskrift til Johannes Sløks 70-årsdag*, ed. by Kjeld Holm and Jan Lindhardt, Viby: Centrum 1986, pp. 30-39. Paul L. Holmer "Kierkegaard and Logic" *Kierkegaardiana* 2, pp. 25-42. In Kierkegaard's published works, see the following: *EO2*, 170-176 / *SKS* 3, 166-172. *R*, 148 / *SKS* 4, 25. *R*, 186 / *SKS* 4, 56f. *PF*, 37 / *SKS* 4, 243. *PF*, 86fn. / *SKS* 4, 285fn. *PF*, 109f. / *SKS* 4, 305f. *CA*, 12-14 / *SKS* 4, 320-322. *CA*, 81-85 / *SKS* 4, 384-388. *P*, 35f. / *SKS* 4, 497f. *CUPI*, 109f. / *SKS* 7, 106f. *CUPI*, 113 / *SKS* 7, 109f. *CUPI*, 189-198 / *SKS* 7, 173-181. *CUPI*, 304-310 / *SKS* 7, 277-282. *CUPI*, 399-422 / *SKS* 7, 363-384. In Kierkegaard's *Nachlass*, see the following: *R*, Supplement, p. 308 / *Pap.* IV B 117, pp. 288f. *JP* 3, 3072 / *SKS* 19, Not7:22, p. 211. *JP* 3, 3073 / *SKS* 19, Not13:23, p. 390. *JP* 2, 2277 / *SKS* 18, HH:2, p. 125.

Rationalism, Supernaturalism

There are times when assertions, to which we have hitherto paid little attention, suddenly awaken our full attention and reflection. This may be due to the mood of the moment or, as is more often the case, to the fact that these assertions have forced their way into the narrower sphere in which we circulate, so that we hear them in our native language, whereas we formerly perceived them only in a foreign tongue. Thus, we hear them from those in whom we recognize academic life and ability, and from men to whom we feel bound in relations of friendship. This is what happened to the author of these lines, when he read this sentence in this journal's first number, p. 3: "In theology both rationalism and supernaturalism are antiquated standpoints, which belong to an age which has disappeared."

In reading these words, he did not feel himself challenged to investigate the ground or lack thereof of rationalism or supernaturalism. He has long held his own convictions with regard to these questions and would not be tempted to abandon them even if it were to be proved to him that he alone still held them, and, as a result, he had become for his contemporaries a museum piece or a relic from a bygone age. But are these standpoints really antiquated? Is it really the case that the present age has torn itself free from both of these views and has found a new one, which naturally has its own conflict to resolve, but which settles the old conflict between rationalism and supernaturalism, so that it will henceforth be of purely historical interest? [250]

This question concerns only the facts; in answering it, we need not give reasons for why the one or the other ought to be accepted or rejected. We thus need not be in agreement about the principles from which we start. We need only impartially interrogate the witnesses for both parties, for even if we were to prove that there are presently few partisans of the one opinion or the other, such a proof would not gain us a victory. For it is obvious that what is important is not the quantity of the witnesses but their character. The case is not decided based on each side's ability to present a number of authors who advocate this or that -ism, for an author is not always an authority, and it could be that these authors neither influence nor are influenced by the present age, being fundamentally dead to it even though no death certificate is yet available. The testimony must thus be sought where life stirs, where the academic powers collect themselves for attack and defense. – For a variety of reasons we will pass over the Danish literature and concern ourselves with the German literature here.

But in order to interrogate the witnesses, we must pose our question clearly, and, in this case, this is not without difficulty.

First, what is rationalism? Although this word has been in use for two centuries, we nevertheless cannot affirm that its meaning has been completely decided. Indeed, many theologians have recently attempted to avoid the word, not only those who fear bringing their own doctrine into disrepute by calling it by its proper name, but also sensible supernaturalists, who do not want to be confused with those who mistakenly argue against the use of reason in religious matters. The former have always recognized [251] a *usus formalis* of reason; they know that only reason can enable man to perceive the voices of the supersensible. They assumed with Fr. Baader that the first moment of all revelation, not just as a given but also a task, is only a principle or beginning of knowledge, rather than its completion (*Vorlesungen über speculative Dogmatik*, vol. 1, p. 34). They further assumed that this completion can only occur by means of thought and that man can thus only appropriate the revelation by reason and understanding. Finally, they thought therefore that the word "rationalism" did not express a determinate opposition to their view. However, the term has become too powerful for them, and the contending parties have been compelled to designate things "rationalist," regardless of whether they attracted or repelled them.

Since we are seeking a definition of the concept, we cannot stop with such uncertain statements, as Buddeus' assertion, "*Rationi plus quam decet tribuunt omnes, qui hodie rationalistarum et latitudinari-orum nomine veniunt*" (*Isagoge historico-theologica*, I, 236), or J. Møller's conclusion that the parties of both supernaturalism and rationalism honor both reason and the Holy Scripture, although the former has a tendency to place revelation above reason, and the latter to place reason above the Bible (*Nyt theol. Bibl.* XVI. 322). Prof. Clausen (op. cit. p. 288) says more pointedly and more correctly: "By 'consistent rationalism' one is accustomed to understand the belief and doctrine which assumes reason as the sole source of religion and the sole measuring rod and rule of truth, the doctrine which rejects the necessity and actuality of a revelation as a message brought about in a supernatural manner by God to His human beings, the doctrine which therefore finds in Christ only man's virtue and the teacher's wisdom. It places at the foundation of the interpretation and use of the Holy Scripture a number of principles of reason, and claims as Christianity [252] as much of the content of the Holy Scripture as can be regarded as expression and designation of these principles, while

rejecting whatever cannot be made conceivable and transparent on the path of human thinking." Wegscheider (*Institutiones theol. christ. Dogmaticae*, 5th ed., p. 39), Hahn (*De Rationalismi vera indole*, p. 45 and *Lehrbuch des christlichen Glaubens*, p. 56) and many others are essentially in agreement with this. The author, whose statement has given the occasion for these remarks, must also be presumed to be in agreement with it since he says (*Tidsskrift*, vol. 1, p. 23): "Rationalism consists in the fact that reason is regarded as constituting all knowledge; it removes all other authority."

We would like to stop with this definition, and we assume it thus to be an inconsistency when rationalism is sometimes unable to decide whether every supernatural revelation is impossible and objectionable (Stäudlin, *Geschichte des Rationalismus und Supernaturalismus*, p. 3). On the other hand, it is doubtless incorrect when Hahn (in his aforementioned dissertation) and Bretschneider (*Entwicklung aller in der Dogmatik vorkommenden Begriffe*, 3rd edition, p. 199) make it virtually synonymous with naturalism. We will treat this later. But whereas naturalism is assumed to tear itself away from and oppose Christianity, this is not the case with rationalism, which, on the contrary, usually prefers to maintain some connection with it. We meet the rationalists on the ground which at least is called "Christian." Their books usually carry the title of Christian investigations, and they regard Christianity in general as a special arrangement of Providence for a true introduction and dissemination of religion (Hase *Hutterus redivivus*, 2nd edition, pp. 58, 82).

Regardless of how one regards the function of reason, no one will claim that it exercises its function unhindered. [253] Although reason is the same in all human beings, it is constantly found to be befuddled, confused, or unfit for grasping the truth with clarity and completeness. It must, whether by its own power alone or by divine aid, progress toward the development of knowledge, but, in order to reach this, toward its own more complete development. In the course of this progress it comes upon different standpoints, which it then abandons. There was a time when reason made itself exceedingly comfortable. It was satisfied with nothing but everyday thoughts, which it expanded in all diffuseness, and it met criticisms with worn-out jokes. Fortunately, this standpoint can probably be regarded as antiquated; if some people still insist on it, it is because they have stopped to rest, while others continued on. Now, for example, nobody would lightly propose such criticisms against the doctrine of the Trinity as those which even 30 or 40 years ago were regarded as irrefutable.

But even if reason has been raised to a higher standpoint in those people who can be seen as the representatives of the present age, has it therefore abandoned that which we have portrayed as the standpoint of rationalism? Or, since rationalism has changed form, is it therefore itself antiquated? On the contrary, it has presented itself as new, youthful, and adorned with all the colors of the age, and therefore is all the more suitable for making an impression on easily moved hearts.

To sketch the basic features of the doctrine which we suspect must be called "the more recent rationalism," we will primarily look to Strauss' final section in his *Leben Jesu* (translated in the *Tidsskrift for udenlandsk theol. Litteratur*, 1836, pp. 180ff.), without doubt the most noteworthy part of his diffuse book, where we find the essential point of this doctrine concisely and freely expressed. At bottom lies the proposition [254] that the essence of spirit is the same in God and in man; God is man, man is God ὁμοουσιος (Rosenkranz *Encyclopädie der theol. Wissenschaften*, p. 37. Strauss, p. 212). In man, God steps from His infinity into finitude and thereby has actuality; but from finitude He steps eternally back to Himself. With this identity of the divine and the human arises the idea of the God-man, which we perhaps could call God's only begotten Son, born of the Father from eternity. This idea, this basic picture, is also the model of man, the ideal in accordance with which he should worship and cultivate himself and by which he should be heartened, consoled, and strengthened. But the idea here is not an empty ideal. It is realized, not at any final point in time or in any individual human being, but in all humanity, and this is God's becoming human in eternity. "As subject to the predicates which the church attributes to Christ, an idea instead of an individual must be posited, but a real one and not an unreal one. Humanity is the unity of two natures; it is God, who has become man. It is the child of the visible mother and the invisible father, of spirit and of nature. Humanity is the miracle worker, insofar as the development of human history shows spirit taking possession of nature more and more completely. Humanity is without sin, insofar as its course of development is faultless and the pollution sticks only to individuals and is sublated in the race and its history. It is the one dying, being resurrected, and going to heaven, insofar as a progressively higher spiritual life for it emerges from the negation of its naturalness, insofar as its unity with heaven's infinite spirit emerges by the sublation of its finitude as personal, national and world spirit. With faith in this Christ, man is justified before God, i. e., by making the idea of humanity [255] living in him, every individual human being becomes involved in the race's divine-human life" (p. 217f.).

Although this doctrine thus makes use of Christian expressions and images, and does not deny that it was Christ's historical appearance which was the occasion for the fact that the content of the doctrine came to universal consciousness, nevertheless "this individual's personality and fate" are in many ways a hindrance to this doctrine. "The idea of humanity in its relation to the divine was unconsciously in the mind of the congregation so that, occasioned by the person and fate of Jesus, it sketched the picture of its Christ" (op. cit., p. 219). This picture has for many centuries engraved itself in the imagination of humanity. Recent progress now permits us to sketch a newer and far more complete picture of Christ, but the prevalence of the old picture obstructs the adoption of the new one. To that end, evangelical history must be dissolved into legends and myths, so that as little residue of it as possible remains. One should "much rather make the Gospels' deviations from each other noticeable than seek to unify them." (De Wette, *Erklärung des Ev. Matthäi*. Vorwort). We should not be concerned to see the books of the Holy Scriptures subjected to critical doubt one after the other, for faith rests on a wholly different ground than the letter (Baur, "Abgenöthigte Erklärung" in *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie*, 1836, Heft 3, p. 208f.).

Is this doctrine now antiquated? It is true that Strauss has not presented anything essentially new. His distinction consists only in saying wholly what others have long said only partly and in collecting what was previously scattered. But what was old he was thus able to connect with the new. It seems that recent times have brought it about that here the old and the new stand in close relation. [256] The great accord and the great opposition he has found demonstrate that he knew how to make an impact on his time, and the chords he struck have by no means died out. We do not aim here at completeness and will therefore introduce no more witnesses. We likewise do not claim that either the few authors we have mentioned or the many we could mention stand wholly on the same ground or wholly agree with one another. We leave it to them to answer how far they are in agreement with themselves. A common spirit is easily recognized, and anyone at all familiar with the most recent German literature must admit that it is not with bygone spirits that we are concerned.

Or is this doctrine not rationalism? The question arises because we are used to conceiving of rationalism in other forms and one particular form of it is even refuted by Strauss – a quite superfluous task, since however much it was once thought valid, now it really is antiquated. Nevertheless, without wanting to follow Weisse's extensive

account in its entirety (*Die evangelische Geschichte*, II, 464ff.), we cannot help sharing his conclusion that the direction intended here is the same for which the designation "rationalism" was invented. If rationalism consists in assuming reason to be religion's only source and faith's only norm, then it cannot be denied that the aforementioned doctrine meets the definition. The manner in which the rationalists believe reason comes to knowledge – whether from inference, from the fact that ideas are originally imprinted on it, or from the immanence of the Divine – does not concern us. In each case, subjective human reason is the sole organ through which the truth expresses itself. And if this reason – which is [257] subordinated to the limitations and other conditions of finite existence – is not sufficiently identified with the divine, if its thoughts do not grasp divine reason correctly, purely, clearly, and completely, then it has nothing which can lead, correct, confirm or perfect it, for the source of divine love does not flow through rationalism's dry regions. Rationalism in its most recent form only repeats what Spinoza, one of its most distinguished, and heretofore unsurpassed, originators, has said previously: "*Dei aeternum verbum et pactum veramque religionem hominum cordibus, hoc est, humanae menti divinitus inscriptam esse, eamque verum esse Dei syngraphum, quod ipse suo sigillo, nempe Sui idea, tanquam imagine suae divinitatis consignavit.*" (*Tractatus theologico-politicus*, p. 144.)¹⁸

We are unable to go from rationalism to supernaturalism because we lack a middle term. For it has often been noted that the concept opposed to supernaturalism is not rationalism but rather naturalism. If the word "naturalism" designated only the doctrine of those who advocate what is called natural religion and reject the entire Christian revelation, then at bottom it would differ from rationalism only by a more express opposition to [258] Christianity. For however condescendingly many rationalists look down on so-called natural religion, it designates the essence of the knowledge of God and divine things, which reason can provide so that it too makes reason the sole source of religion and the norm of faith. But naturalism is always accompanied by the pan-

¹⁸ [257fn.] For the reader's amusement I quote the following bookseller's advertisement which just fell into my hands: "*In einem Augenblick, wo der in alle Höhen und Tiefen der socialen und individuellen Zustände so mächtig eingreifende Rationalismus alle verdammenden Urtheile bereits siegreich überlebt hat und wissenschaftlich gesichtet und geläutert zum eigentlichen Geist der Zeit sich erhob, kann ein Buch, welches dieselbe Richtung bei einer bedeutenden Zahl französischer und zwar katholischer Gelehrten unumwunden darlegt, jedem Gebildeten nur willkommen und interessant erscheinen.*" It is clear that this publisher is far from regarding rationalism as antiquated.

theistic concept which De Wette describes as the doctrine that everything – including reason and everything else that is highest in human life – is an effect of necessary natural causes (*Ueber die Religion*, p. 450). If this were to be understood in a wholly crass and materialist manner, then we could have nothing to do with naturalism. But in more recent times a certain Christian naturalism has developed, which without a doubt stands closer to Christianity than mere rationalism, regardless of however many Christian words it adorns itself with.

If, as Weisse correctly notes (*op. cit.*, pp. 465, 485), it lies in the nature of rationalism that it cannot grant any actual religious significance to the historical as such, and if therefore, any value it attributes to the Christian revelation is limited to the doctrine of Christ, and the religious and ethical truth expressed by him, because it seeks to minimize the importance of historical facts, then in our day, rationalists are perhaps outnumbered by those who more nearly share the Church's view in that they recognize the significance and activity of the personality of Christ, his works, his fate and his entire existence. If those who cannot be counted among the rationalists nevertheless do not want to count themselves among the supernaturalists, then it is because the revelation in Christ is something natural to them. (Cf. Rätze, *Erläuterungen zu Schleiermachers christl. Glauben*, p. 115.) [259]

In order to depict this Christian naturalism, we must proceed from the proposition that consciousness of the absolute dependence of all finitude on God coincides with the insight that everything is conditioned by and grounded in the context of nature, and that religious interest should never feel the need to conceive a fact in such a way that it is no longer understood as conditioned by this context. It follows from this that sin must also be, in a certain respect, derived from divine causality, and its existence grounded in God's decree. But with sin redemption must be decreed as well, and according to the Christian consciousness this redemption is only in Jesus of Nazareth, in whom the basic picture of humanity, at least with respect to the all-powerful consciousness of God, has become completely historical, and whose absolute sinless perfection and holiness in the community of belief are expressed as an activity freely proceeding from him, which is then freely taken up by the redeemed. Nevertheless the appearance of Christ must also be conditioned by the context of nature, and even the strictest separation between him and other human beings cannot keep us from saying that his revelation, as the becoming-human of the Son of God, is something natural, or that his temporal appearance must be regarded as a work of human nature, which is

grounded in its original constitution and was prepared by everything that came before it, therefore as the highest development of its spiritual power. Since the revelation of Christ and the communal life founded by him result from the divine action, they may be regarded as the only perfect creation of human nature to date.

One will easily note that this doctrine is a summary of Schleiermacher's presentation (the passages to which I have paid particular attention are found in his *Glaubenslehre*, 2nd edition, I, 243, 248, 256, 489ff., II, 31, 25, I, 90, II, 17). But the reason we [260] have reservations about numbering Schleiermacher among those whom we have called "Christian naturalists," is that his account contains numerous words and phrases which render his meaning more or less ambivalent, and inconsistencies that generally recommend the excellent man's feeling for Christianity more than his system. Thus, for example, Jul. Müller (*Die christl. Lehre von der Sünde*, I, 213) is able to demonstrate that several of Schl.'s premises render sin completely impossible.

We need not develop the inconsistencies of Schleiermacher's system in more detail since we have used the aforementioned passages only in order to exemplify the doctrine we think may be designated a "Christian naturalism." To further elaborate, we will add some more statements by a previously mentioned author (Weisse *Die ev. Geschichte*, II, 512ff.). He too believes that God's becoming-human in Christ is just as much an act of humanity as of the divine and that it lies within the series of other remarkable occurrences in humanity's world-historical process of development. "We deny," he says, "the miracles by which God, first before Christ, but only to the Israelite people, and later through Christ himself, is supposed to have revealed his external power over nature by a breach of the lawful course of nature, and we recognize only such miracles which consist in the manifestation of spirit's power within limits which are normally inaccessible for it. We further claim that these miracles occurred no less among the heathens than among the Jews, and that they occurred in Christ only in a more excellent manner than elsewhere."

What we have here called "naturalism" seems, in the preceding statement, to fall within the scope of rationalism, and although we may think we find an essential difference [261] between these views, both clearly stand opposed to supernaturalism.

Whereas rationalism thus thinks that reason can help itself, and naturalism thinks that nature can help itself, supernaturalism is recognized as man's drive to another and higher help. What supernaturalism is, lies in the word; we are not satisfied with the miracles with which na-

ture everywhere surrounds us, and we are not satisfied with the miracle of reason in our inner being. We do, however, confess to what Hagenbach (*Encyclopädie d. theol. Wissenschaften*, p. 76), reproaches us for, i. e., that, in the midst of this world of miracles of manifold divine revelations, we build a second world of miracles, which is distinguishable from the first one. The author of these pages still admits to the conviction which he elsewhere set forth in more detail (*On the Concept of Christian Dogmatics*, 20ff.), i. e., if Christ, absolutely free of sin, holy and blessed, could come forth pursuant to humanity's natural process of development according to the course of nature, then human nature would not be corrupted, but would remain what it originally was, a pure emanation or manifestation of divinity. The root which bears humanity's great tree would be holy, and the tree would of itself produce a divine shoot. What develops from it might be better or worse, but would be altogether good according to its kind, and its place, and all sin and all pain would be dissolved in a paean to the honor of God. But if not, then our salvation does not result from any act of humanity, but "our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth," and just as the first creation could not have emerged from any previous series or could not have had what we call "context of nature" – though it was certainly from the context with the divine nature – so also the new creation is in Christ, although prepared by divine [262] arrangements, the first member in a new series, and a new immediate inspiration of the divine life in the human. Thought demands praise for finally achieving a knowledge of God's personality, but what is this personality if God's actions are nevertheless represented as conditioned and His appearance as merely mediated, when He is not allowed in the normal course of life to immediately lend an ear to prayers or to look at humanity's misery at the turning point of the ages, or to respond to humanity's sighs with immediate salvation? The drive in man's heart, on account of which supernaturalism has never disappeared, indeed, can never disappear. It seeks not merely salvation, but also the savior, not merely the fruit of love, but love itself. It therefore does not rest until it has broken the chains of all syllogisms and natural laws, and receives the fact, known to be grounded in God's thought and God's nature, that "Christ, being in God's form, did not use it to be God's equal, in order to command things, but humbled himself, became man's equal, and became obedient until death, indeed, the death on the cross."¹⁹ – Just as

¹⁹ [262fn.] For the justification of this translation, see the *Scientific Proceedings from the National Meeting of the Diocese of Zealand*, II, 32.

supernaturalism must recognize these words as one of the most genuine expressions of the Christian gospel, so also must those holding opposing views either regard them as empty rhetoric or – as recently happened in a wild critical assassination – declare the apostolic writing, in which they are found, to be inauthentic.

Our goal here is not to justify supernaturalism further but merely to show what it is in order to better consider our actual question of [263] whether it is antiquated. It is not easy to see how this question can be answered in a satisfactory manner. The matter cannot be settled by stringing together some *testimonia auctorum* to demonstrate that the author's supernaturalist views may still be found here and there, or even less by referring to the fermenting mass, which undeniably is more attached to and feels more zeal for supernaturalism at the present moment than has recently been the case. Rather we hope that the well-informed reader might attain clarity concerning what he may have heard about this movement, which presents its claims alongside the rationalist and the naturalist ones, where there is academic life and skill in the present age. It will not then escape his attention that just as the Hegelian school has divided itself into several branches, among which one is of such a definite supernatural color that it is disputed whether it can belong to the trunk, so also the age's thought has not stopped at the Hegelian standpoint. It will not be unknown to the reader that Schelling still stands there as an intellectual power of great influence, and there are indeed indications suggesting his standpoint now resembles that treated here. But since Schelling continues to withhold from us any written communication about his newly won insight, and since we dare not trust what his followers, legally or illegally, communicate about it, all that we know with certainty is that he calls his view of the world "the historical" in opposition to "the logical," which the more recent philosophy would like to promote (Stahl, *Philosophie des Rechts*, I, 55). Hereby he has without doubt made room for Christianity in his philosophy and proceeds from a positive given, not merely from something thought; but we lack more precise information. Alongside him [264] stands the old giant Fr. Baader, without a doubt also a powerful personality. But from the cloud with which he surrounds himself, he sends for the most part only epigrammatic lightning, which, to be sure, illuminates the fact that he does not stand at the same place as the others but hardly makes clear the nature of the standpoint he himself has adopted. Moreover, maturing independently, albeit under manifold influences, there are a number of young men, who have found a rallying point in the *Zeitschrift für Phi-*

losophie und spekulative Theologie edited by I. H. Fichte. This journal opens with a lead article by the editor ("Spekulation und Offenbarung" translated in *Tidsskrift for udenlandsk theologisk Literatur*, 1837), which begins thus: "The belief that beyond the divine revelation laid down in the visible creation and in addition to the subjective consciousness of God in human reason and conscience, there has come yet a higher, essentially divine proclamation for man's free spirit, along with a special doctrine concerning knowledge of Him, and a message about His will, is as old as history and a common heritage for our race, a heritage which we cannot abandon. Since philosophy claims to be attentive and all-encompassing, and dares not disregard what is given, the striking testimony of such a belief held by all peoples and all centuries must compel it to ask what is its position with regard to this revelation, and how can it be in a position to understand and interpret it." "This concept about an actual personal revelation," the author continues, "follows just as unsolicited and naturally, indeed even as an imperative conclusion, in the context of thought of the new (post-Hegelian) philosophy, as it showed itself, at least in its correct specific meaning (*in der Aufrichtigkeit seiner spezifischen Bedeutung*), [265] foreign and inaccessible for the previous system....Herewith man is confirmed and restored in his inalienable right. He has always demanded this right, led by an instinct which, notwithstanding his confidence, he could not justify, even when a vulgar deism and an abstract speculation vied to dissuade him from it as from a superstition. This is the right to ask about concrete divine facts and commands, about 'God's finger' in world history and his own life. It is not satisfied with the usual references to a sufficiently documented presence of God in the ordinary laws of nature, or in the irresistible necessity of a progress to perfection, which the human race's course of education is supposed to expose" (pp. 4, 5). "Our age's philosophy has, by a necessary and immanent turn, returned to this great recognition, which is both old and present, and which must constantly be won anew and with a deeper study. A new circle of investigations has thus been opened, which the world of learning heretofore has passed by with apparent disdain....If the reason in us, which is related to God, is supposed to recognize and appropriate for itself the divine objective reason outside of us, then it dare not disregard any of its manifestations. It must receive rather than refuse it. It must recognize it in its whole objectivity rather than make presumptions about it. Why then should not reason, i. e., philosophy, with equal confidence feel compelled to yield to this revelation, which is at least as objective as any other phe-

nomenon of nature or spirit?" (pp. 24, 25). Is not this doctrine – which the author already has previously presented in his *Vorschule der Theologie*, 113ff. – supernatural? And if one wants to hear the word expressly, then [266] one of his colleagues in this journal declares in its most recent issue (vol. 3, no. 1, p. 58), "to the correct concept of Christianity belongs a complete break from nature, and thus supernaturalism is the gate to the entry into it."

Let us concede that many of those working on philosophy's new edifice are not in agreement with each other and are not in agreement each with himself. We are nonetheless certain that anyone acquainted with the position assumed by this new philosophy will admit that there is much concerning supernaturalism which is seriously discussed and is thus not antiquated in the scholarly activity of the present age. And this was the only thing we sought to prove with what we have cited, just as we think we proved above that rationalism is not antiquated.

These two views can exist and flourish at the same time, as people align themselves with the one or the other according to their intellectual disposition. But can they also be antiquated at the same time? If it is characteristic for consistent rationalism – and in this, as was shown above, naturalism makes common cause with it – "to reject the necessity and the actuality of a revelation as communication from God to man carried out in a supernatural manner," and if, by contrast, supernaturalism grounds itself in precisely such a revelation, then it seems that religion must always be regarded under one of these views, and that if one of them really were antiquated, then the other would have to be that much more dominant, unless the *principium exclusi medii inter duo contradictoria* is also supposed to be antiquated.

We do actually find this law treated with apparent disapproval in Hegel's *Logik* (*Werke*, IV, 66). His discussions of it elsewhere need not concern us here. We note simply that when he explains the law in the sense in which it is usually understood, he declares it to be so trivial as to be unworthy [267] of discussion. He uses examples which make it clear that, for him, the law is laughable: "When the determinations sweet, green, square are taken and then it is said that spirit is either sweet or not sweet, green or not green, and so on, then this is a triviality leading nowhere." But doubtless when developing the laws for the activity of the soul, as thinking is called, it is presumably worth the trouble to clarify the first principles, upon which all thought rests and without which thought is impossible. There is also no doubt that examples could be chosen so that it is obvious that the law is not fruitless. When we say "the revelation which Christianity rests upon either

is supernatural or is not supernatural," it presumably is immediately clear that all mediation is impossible here and that all such attempts towards it can only lead to a halfway point, to a teetering and oscillation back and forth between rationalist supernaturalism and supernatural rationalism, as one often sees and can find exemplified in full detail in, to name but one work, the last of Schott's *Briefe über Religion und christlichen Offenbarungsglauben*, which lacks only a discussion of the above-mentioned naturalistic supernaturalism.

Aut/aut; one can mediate between opposites but not between contradictions. Every basic scientific theory must decide for one or the other of mutually contradictory viewpoints. Here the well-informed and seriously industrious scholar, from whose discussion we have limited ourselves to a single statement, will be in perfect agreement with us that it is not a question of asking about what is old or new but about what is true. One not infrequently hears, in the absence of more substantial arguments, appeals to the progress of science, and these even from those who hardly know what the age has brought. [286] But even if the truth could be viewed as temporarily antiquated, it will rise up again in a rejuvenated shape.

*Multa renascentur quae jam cecidere, cadentque
Quae nunc sunt in honore.*

Mynster