

# Martensen's "Rationalism, Supernaturalism and the *principium exclusi medii*"

Translated and introduced by JON STEWART

The article presented here was first published by the then young theologian Hans Lassen Martensen (1808-84) as "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme og *principium exclusi medii* i Anledning af H. H. Biskop Mynsters Afhandling herom i dette Tidsskrifts forrige Hefte" in the *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* (vol. 1, 1839, pp. 456-473). This work has never been reprinted or translated. The page numbers indicated in the text thus refer to this original printing. As is indicated by the title, this essay is a response to Bishop Mynster's article, "Rationalism, Supernaturalism,"<sup>1</sup> in which Mynster defends the law of excluded middle against Hegel's critique. Both Mynster's and Martensen's articles were important for Kierkegaard's understanding of different aspects of Hegel's philosophy. Martensen's article in particular evoked his criticism for its claims that Hegelian mediation is a central point for Christian dogmatics.

Martensen studied theology at the University of Copenhagen, and, like so many other Danish intellectuals at the time, after his studies he travelled extensively in Germany and elsewhere on the Continent. He was in Berlin in the years immediately following Hegel's death.<sup>2</sup> When he returned to Copenhagen in 1836 he already had a good familiarity with Hegel and German philosophy. As a lecturer at the University, he offered popular courses in which Hegel played an important role. In a review from 1836 of one of Johan Ludvig Heiberg's (1791-1860) works, Martensen writes that Hegelian philosophy has "an infinite meaning for our times since it contains the most complete

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<sup>1</sup> Jakob Peter Mynster "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme" in *Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik*, 1, 1839, pp. 249-268. (Reprinted in Jakob Peter Mynster *Blandede Skrifter*, vols. 1-6, ed. by J. H. Paulli. Copenhagen 1852-57, vol. 2, pp. 95-115.)

<sup>2</sup> See Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, vols. 1-3, Copenhagen 1882-83, vol. 2, pp. 85ff.

and comprehensive development of rational knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Despite this, Martensen, unlike his fellow Dane Heiberg, did not regard himself as a Hegelian in a straightforward sense.<sup>4</sup> Most of his accounts of Hegel are balanced by critical comments.

Martensen's dissertation from 1837 entitled, *On the Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness*,<sup>5</sup> was at the beginning of the controversy about Hegelian mediation since it was this work which Johan Alfred Bornemann (1813-90) was reviewing when he made the claim that rationalism and supernaturalism were antiquated standpoints.<sup>6</sup> Thus, Martensen had a stake in the discussion about the laws of logic right from the beginning. His participation in the debate can be seen as an attempt to aid Heiberg in his defense of Hegel.<sup>7</sup> But Martensen was more interested than Heiberg in the theological implications of the Hegelian doctrine of mediation. He claims that Mynster in his theological works makes use of the concept of mediation to delineate hard dualisms, and thus it is striking that he should make a case for the validity of the law of excluded middle. Mynster is therefore caught in a tension between his views on theology and his views on logic. The upshot of Martensen's article is that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity ultimately rest on the concept of mediation. He contrasts Christianity to Judaism as follows,

<sup>3</sup> Hans Lassen Martensen "Indledningsforedrag til det i November 1834 begyndte logiske Cursus paa den kongelige militaire Høiskole. Af J. L. Heiberg, Lærer i Logik og æsthetik ved den kgl. militaire Høiskole" in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, vol. 16, 1836, p. 515.

<sup>4</sup> See Hans Lassen Martensen *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 5-7.

<sup>5</sup> 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. Cf. Leif Grane "Det Teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925" in *Københavns Universitet 1479-1979*, ed. by Leif Grane, vol. V: *Det Teologiske Fakultet*, Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag 1980, pp. 363-365.

<sup>6</sup> 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, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> 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*, vols. 1-11, Copenhagen 1861-62, vol. 2, pp. 167-190.)

The metaphysics of the Jewish religion must...stringently maintain this law precisely because Judaism's standpoint is pure, *unmediated supernaturalism*, which can conceive God only in a distant infinity beyond the world and human consciousness, as the absolutely supernatural Creator of heaven and earth, and can conceive man only as a being eternally restricted by the limitations of finitude and being something created.<sup>8</sup>

Martensen argues that the notion of mediation is precisely what distinguishes Christianity from Judaism. While the latter relies on the conception of a transcendent God and insists on a radical split between the divine and the human, the former offers a concept of mediation in the doctrine of the Incarnation. Martensen argues that the Jews' rejection of Christ was based, consciously or unconsciously, on Aristotelian logic: "Seen from the point of view of logic, their accusation rested on the *principium exclusi medii* or on the assumption that the contradicting predicates 'God' and 'man' could not be mediated in the selfsame subject. But with the same logic, one could attack every fundamental dogma of Christianity."<sup>9</sup> Martensen argues that the very nature of the Incarnation requires abandoning the law of excluded middle since it implies mediation: "The central point of Christianity – the doctrine of Incarnation, the doctrine of the God-man – shows precisely that Christian metaphysics cannot remain in an either/or, but that it must find its truth in the third, which [the law of excluded middle] excludes."<sup>10</sup>

Martensen tries to follow up on Bornemann's thought and argues that the notions of supernaturalism and rationalism constitute complementary concepts. In order to understand God as supernatural and transcendent, one must simultaneously have a conception of Him as immanent. Christ is, on his view, the immanent conception of God in this world. He is no longer the transcendent other dwelling in the abstract beyond but rather has entered into the human sphere. Martensen claims that the project of modern theology is to grasp this notion of an immanent God conceptually:

The thinking human spirit is unable to reconcile itself with the great mystery and, instead of thinking it as revelation, finds itself pondering its own createdness and the inconceivability of what is divine. The immanent thinking inspired by the dialectic, by contrast, finds no rest until it knows the mystery as revelation. If the Trinity is really to have meaning for thought, as the absolute truth, then it must become the key to the en-

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<sup>8</sup> Hans Lassen Martensen "Rationalism, Supernaturalism and the *principium exclusi medii*," p. 458.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.

tire system of the world. All actuality in heaven and on earth must be taken up into its circle, and it must be known as the Concept which conceives everything and itself.<sup>11</sup>

Through the modern philosophies of consciousness, in particular those of Fichte and Hegel, it is now possible to appreciate and think through the significance of the Christian faith, which in the past had merely been felt. Now one can come to appreciate it at the level of the intellect as well.

It should be noted that, in his article, Martensen often employs the expression "*aut/aut*," i. e., "either/or," and its Danish equivalent "*enten-eller*." Of particular importance is the way in which he characterizes Mynster's position as an either/or since Mynster insists on an absolute dichotomy between rationalism and supernaturalism. Martensen writes, "But can one stop with the opposition between pantheism and theism, with an *aut/aut*? Is it not the task of our age to sublimate this disastrous *aut/aut*...?"<sup>12</sup> This explains some of Kierkegaard's motivation for using this expression as the title of his book. Through the course of the debate, the phrase "either/or" had become something of a slogan. By using it as the title of his work, Kierkegaard indicated his solidarity with Mynster, whose position was characterized by Martensen by this very expression. Moreover, Kierkegaard had nothing but disdain for Martensen whose defense of the "both/and" he could likewise oppose with his title. Most significantly, Kierkegaard has theological objections to Martensen's use of Hegelian logic in his understanding of the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation. In *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard has his pseudonymous author sketch a view that is in critical opposition to that of Martensen. In the *Postscript*, this debate about mediation is mentioned directly:

As is well known, Hegelian philosophy sublimes the law of contradiction, and Hegel more than once emphatically held judgment day on those thinkers who remained in the sphere of the understanding and reflection and who thus claimed there was an either/or. Since that time, it has become a favorite game that as soon as someone even suggests an *aut/aut*, then along comes a Hegelian on a horse, clop, clop, clop, who...wins a victory and rides home again. The Hegelians have many times been active here, particularly against Bishop Mynster, in order to win brilliant victories for speculation.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, this exchange of articles was highly significant for Kierkegaard. This article remained a defining moment for Martensen since years

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

<sup>13</sup> *CUPI*, 304f. / *SKS*, 7, 277f. Translation modified.

later as an established theologian he claimed that he never abandoned the basic ideas set forth in this early piece.<sup>14</sup>

## Rationalism, Supernaturalism and the *principium exclusi medii*

(In Reference to His Right Reverend Bishop Mynster's Treatise on  
this Subject in the Previous Number of this Journal)

It is natural for each brilliant and enlightened word spoken about the highest matters of life and science to command our attention, all the more so when they are uttered by a man, whose words have long stimulated our intellects and whose influence has, as it were, become a necessary and indispensable part of our essence, a man whom we have to thank for much of what is best in our intellectual life. It is thus natural that his dissenting opinion on important points can awaken doubt and misgivings among us. Certainly many people had the same experience as I had when reading the interesting and instructive treatise to be discussed here. It ends with the claim that every rigorous theory must decide *either* [457] for supernaturalism *or* for rationalism, and that there is no third. We had believed that there was a third and thought we even found it in our excellent teacher's own religious view of life, which so often dissolved the contradiction for us. Since we thought we were in agreement with him about religion and Christianity, it is natural for us to have misgivings in response to the sharp dissenting opinion he has expressed regarding knowledge of them. For although we were aware that the right reverend author designated his system as supernaturalism, we had never understood this in the sense of a dualistic either/or which excluded all continuity and mediation with other standpoints. The author of the present article has thus been compelled to reconsider what he previously regarded as decided. In the hope that it might be of more general interest, he puts forth these remarks.

The right reverend author designates the contradiction, which presently exercises the theological world, as that between supernaturalism and rationalism, and supports his proof for the impossibility of mediation with the *principium exclusi medii inter duo contradictoria*. It is

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<sup>14</sup> See Hans Lassen Martensen *Dogmatiske Oplysninger. Et Leilighedsskrift*, Copenhagen 1850, p. 69. See also his *Af mit Levnet*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 72-75.

difficult to see how this law can be applied to theology, the task of which has always been to grasp the identity of what is contradictory for the understanding. This law and the law of contradiction seem to say only that contradictions, as long as they remain what they are, namely contradictions, and as long as they are maintained in their abstraction or untruth, necessarily exclude one another. Since the law contains only the empty proposition that contradictions are contradictions and that, as long as they remain contradictions, they exclude the third, then judgments regarding the possible sublation of contradictions would appear to fall completely outside [458] its jurisdiction. That this law cannot be a final court of appeals for theology appears obvious in practice when we see how Christianity continually sublates it. This must make us suspicious about its application where what is at issue is the truth of spirit. The central point of Christianity – the doctrine of Incarnation, the doctrine of the God-man – shows precisely that Christian metaphysics cannot remain in an either/or, but that it must find its truth in the third which this law excludes.

The metaphysics of the Jewish religion must, by contrast, stringently maintain this law precisely because Judaism's standpoint is pure, *unmediated supernaturalism*, which can conceive God only in a distant infinity beyond the world and human consciousness, as the absolutely supernatural Creator of heaven and earth, and can conceive man only as a being eternally restricted by the limitations of finitude and as something created. When, in John 10, it is said that the Jews wanted to stone the savior because he "who was a human being, would make himself a God," these individuals were driven not merely by subjective wickedness but also by their fanatic maintaining of their religion's strict supernatural standpoint. For certainly it must have produced a shocking effect on this consciousness, imprisoned by the standpoint of created being and fear, when a human being arose and declared himself to be God. It understandably struck them as a blasphemy that the supernatural Lord of heaven and earth should appear here in a natural, human form. Seen from the point of view of logic, their accusation rested on the *principium exclusi medii* or on the assumption that the contradicting predicates "God" and "man" could not be mediated in the selfsame subject. But with the same logic, one could attack every fundamental dogma of Christianity. The right reverend author remarks that the dogma [459] of the Trinity is no longer exposed to the criticisms with which it was contested some years ago. But that now antiquated attack was limited to the argument that one had to think of *either* three gods *or* a so-called pure unity, and that the Church contra-

dicted all sound logic by teaching that there was a third. The same is true of the now antiquated attack on the doctrine of reconciliation and other dogmas – regardless of whether the antinomies which have prevailed are those between the divine and the human or those within the divine being itself, such as divine grace and justice.

These most obvious criticisms may already have occurred to the right reverend author himself, as one can see from his remark that one can mediate between opposites but not between contradictions. How we would have liked to have seen a more extensive development of this important distinction in logic! But he only refers us to the immediate evidence for the law of excluded middle in the given case. "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." I confess that this is by no means immediately clear to me. On the contrary, I cannot help but see how the concept of the supernatural can become actual except through the mediation of what is natural. If this is so, the latter is contained in the former as one of its moments. The important insight of logic, that every concept contains its other or its negative, has already proven its usefulness for science and demands its due here. Hegelian logic no more permits the aforementioned law to be valid in the immediate first stage than Schleiermacher let himself be bothered by it when he advanced the well-known formula which can and has been appropriated by those left unsatisfied with his [460] overall standpoint: "*Die Erscheinung des Erlösers in der Geschichte ist als göttliche Offenbarung weder etwas schlechthin Uebernaturliches, noch etwas schlechthin Uebernünftiges*" (*D. chr. Gl.* vol. 1, 613). This appears to mean that the revelation, upon which Christianity depends is both supernatural and not supernatural. It would not be difficult to find similar statements in the right reverend author's own works which sublimate the law of excluded middle. Certainly all mediation between the natural and the supernatural view is impossible when one permits them to remain opposites *vis-à-vis* each other, that is to say, when one does *not* mediate. Thus, one cannot simultaneously use the so-called natural explanation of the savior's miracles, while regarding them as manifestations of his almighty will, which is one with the will of the Creator. One cannot simultaneously regard the resurrection of Christ as both a genuine miracle and a myth. One likewise cannot mediate by entering into a compromise, by wanting to smooth over and quantitatively diminish the opposites in some external way. One cannot say that something is both natural and supernatural, or that it is both historical and

mythical. Even if this latter proposition were partially correct, it would be wholly insufficient to give it the mediation required here. The right reverend author is thus correct to criticize the bad indecision which oscillates between rationalist supernaturalism and supernatural rationalism. For what these now antiquated points of view were designed to furnish was only a mechanical syncretism, a unity where the disagreement remained because each of the opposites was maintained in its crass immediacy where one refused to let go of abstraction. But we cannot agree with the claim that every attempt to mediate the proposition, "Christianity is either supernatural or not supernatural," leads only to indecision of this kind. For as certainly as [461] Christianity, by teaching that the Word has become flesh, teaches that the supernatural has become *nature*, and as certainly as the supernatural and the not-supernatural are mediated not partly but wholly in Christianity itself, so certainly must science also strive after a complete mediation.

The right reverend author has in himself furnished many examples of the way to mediate this opposition. When, in his Introduction to *Dogmatics*, he acknowledges the theological proposition that Christ, the most noble and superior being in the world, would still have come even if sin had not entered the world,<sup>15</sup> he seems to have sublated supernaturalism's strict opposition to naturalism or its *exclusive* character by pointing to the third, which is excluded in formal logic. For however one regards the confusion which arose with sin, there nevertheless lies in this proposition, which was already apparent to a few ancient theologians but had no lasting influence, that the significance of Christ's coming is not relative but absolute, that the necessity of the incarnation is not merely practical or, as Daub was accustomed to call this point of view, "*eine Armensündernothwendigkeit*," but purely metaphysical. Christianity's *metaphysical necessity*, which is hereby admitted, only need be developed in order to sublimate the opposition between supernaturalism and rationalism, reason and revelation, and faith and knowledge. Opposing scholarly tendencies must be mediated when they enter into the forum of metaphysics, where thought, regardless of how one has come to it, is regarded in and for itself, and must reveal its nature and its source, be that human or divine or divine-human. [462] *Verum index sui et falsi*. Rationalism always cries out for a reason. It already possesses many good reasons but lacks the final and true reason, to which they need only ascend for their polemical relation to disappear. Supernaturalism seeks to abandon its em-

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<sup>15</sup> *On the Concept of Dogmatics*, p. 44.

piricism and positivism, and instead of stopping with its inner or outer experiences or with the divine's inscrutable *benepiacitum*, refuses to rest until it has made the truth of Christianity known as "grounded in God's thought and God's nature." But once it has actually abandoned the merely historical, psychological and anthropological standpoints or, put more correctly, has raised them up to the theological standpoint and sees not merely from below upwards, but also from above downwards, it must recognize rationalism and naturalism as necessary middle terms through which the road to the standpoint of the Idea must be cleared. These spirits would, as Hegel says, be preserved in *memory*, not in any historical sense of the word, but in the sense, according to which they have lost their empirical extremity and have become idealities. They would presumably no longer have independent validity, but would be retained as an ideal essence in spirit's inwardness, as invisible concomitant factors in the universal process of thought.

The aforementioned statement set forth by the right reverend author belongs to the most fruitful *fermenta cognitionis* of speculative theology because it proceeds from a purely metaphysical interest and, by an immediate stroke of genius, allows the speculative to come forth for intuition. It can also be expressed by saying that not only did the new creation come forth in order to set right a disturbed relation or to redress an injury – as is one-sidedly maintained by exclusive supernaturalism – but that, on the contrary, the world's entire development was directed toward the second creation, which negated the first. The revelation of Christ and the community life founded by him thus emerge not merely as [463] something inevitable but as something absolutely necessary, as the central point of the universe, and the goal of the entire teleological development of the world, to which everything else is related only as a midway and transitory point. Another way of expressing it is that the creation exists only for the sake of the incarnation, or that God created the world only as the negative of Himself in order to objectify Himself through it, a proposition which, when fully developed, leads to the doctrine of the Trinity as Christian speculation's solution to the task of thinking God as the identity of subject and object. These well-known views have opened up a horizon – which, in our time, has become broader than ever before, which permits one to view Christianity as the *immanent* determination of God's essence and the divine world order.

It must be admitted and indeed strongly urged that Christ did not appear "according to the course of nature, and that the new creation in Christ is the first link in a new chain, a new immediate pouring of

the divine life into the human." Christ is not the human race's *product*; his appearance in history is not the *result* of the race's process of development, although it is, to be sure, mediated by it. Although he can indeed be said to have descended from heaven and thereby has a supernatural character, nevertheless one must equally maintain that Christ is the second *Adam* or, as Schleiermacher puts it, the first perfect creation of *human nature*. Hereby he is also seen to arise from the midst of the human world. He is then recognized as the holy root which invisibly bears the entire human race, which without him would be destroyed in its created nothingness, and also as the human race's purest and most noble flower. One must, to be sure, maintain the *fact* of the incarnation, but [464] in doing so, one must not forget that this fact has as its presupposition the originally existing, eternal unity of divine and human nature. Just as one must teach about the historical Christ, so also one must maintain the thought of the ideal, universal God-man, who in the historical Christ was concentrated in existence in a single *point*. When the right reverend author says that our salvation lies not in any act of humanity but rather that it must be that "our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth," his assertion must in our time be strongly supported against the views of pantheism. But it cannot be understood in the sense of the *principium exclusi medii*, for then it would belong to the standpoint of the Old Testament, which conceives man's relation to God as exclusively that of creation to *the Creator*, while not recognizing the unity of the divine and human nature and the doctrine of the Trinity connected with it, in which the dogma of the creation is only a moment. It is Christian rather than pantheistic to think that our salvation lies neither in a divine nor a human act but rather in a divine-human act.

The above discussion of immanence is crucial to theological cognition since this science cannot be wholly reconciled with dogma before it is seen in its dialectical necessity in the system. The old supernaturalism, as is well known, lacked this immanence. Although it was supposed to present *in abstracto* the true forms of the relation between the divine and the human, in actuality the divine element was so preponderant that Christianity was reduced to a foreign authority for consciousness, an impenetrable mystery which could be grasped by faith but not knowledge. The dogma of the Trinity [465] expounded by clerical supernatural dogmatics can be considered true, but its truth is revealed in hard scholastic forms which lack the *copula* of the living dialectic. The thinking human spirit is unable to reconcile itself with the great mystery and, instead of thinking it as revelation, finds itself

pondering its own createdness and the inconceivability of what is divine. The immanent thinking inspired by the dialectic, by contrast, finds no rest until it knows the mystery as revelation. If the Trinity is really to have meaning for thought, as the absolute truth, then it must become the key to the entire system of the world. All actuality in heaven and on earth must be taken up into its circle, and it must be known as the Concept which conceives everything and itself. When *consciousness*' one-sided relation to dogma thus disappears, abstract supernaturalism disappears with it, and when consciousness gives up its false autonomy and thereby finds itself absorbed in the sphere of revelation, there can be no talk of a one-sided rationalism. In the Christology of the old supernaturalism the divine has such superiority over the human that the true human nature of Christ is not adequately recognized. The old theology had the admirable tact to reject all abstractions of the understanding in the doctrine of Christ, and the Church's symbols can be said to have established for all time the precautions and regulative determinations which thought must keep in mind in order to avoid both the Scylla of heresy and its Charybdis. Nevertheless it must be said that the homoousia of Christ with human nature, while decreed and expressed, had yet to be truly *thought*.

Only in the realm of *self-consciousness*, which was opened by Kant and Fichte and has since been developed further, could a deeper actual immanent development of Christology be prepared [466] and introduced, though I am far from being of the opinion that we already have a completed one. The human spirit dragged everything into the circle of self-consciousness and, in its happiness over having grasped a higher meaning than ever before, was antagonistic towards supernaturalism. The old saying that "*man*" is the measure of things received new validity. It was now only the "*purely human*" that one wanted to see in Christ; the divine was abandoned, although it was still necessary to approach it to the extent that human consciousness achieved a more complete self-knowledge. All these accounts of Christology – from moral theology's naive parallel between Christ and Socrates up to Schleiermacher's profound view of Christ as the second *Adam* and the first perfect creation of human nature – are to be regarded as moments of mediation in the dogma of the homoousia of the nature of Christ with the human, as stages which must be passed through so that the proposition "*man* is the measure of things" can be put into its Christian and thereby true meaning. The Hegelian Christology also comes to the divine nature only through its view of human nature. But the Christology of Schleiermacher and Hegel cannot be considered the final word on the

matter. The results of the Hegelian system have yet to surpass the one-sidedness of rationalism or the autonomy of self-consciousness, which, as long as it is maintained, is unreconcilable with the revelation. But all these representations of Christology have their justification as necessary moments in Christian dogma's *own* development, first, because they contain the necessary corrective against the old supernaturalism's one-sidedness and emphasize the moment it repressed, and, second and most importantly, because they lead to an [467] immanent knowledge of Christology or to the identity of the divine nature and the human nature in Christ, an identity which is actually *thought*.

If we regard the matter from this point of view, then no rigorous Christology can be introduced which does not contain as moments these relative ways of conceiving. This includes the Straussian Christology, although here I naturally mean not that it should be swallowed, as it were, hook, line and sinker, in its crass abstraction but that it should be absorbed as a sublated ideality. The significance of Strauss' work is due not just to the fact that it expresses in its entirety what others have long expressed only partly, but also probably to the fact that it asserts as a general *principle* what had previously been asserted only in individual empirical applications. For this reason, despite its great one-sidedness, which must be considered among the *significant* errors mentioned in the Bible, the work will have a cleansing influence on theology since it has dealt a certain finite theological empiricism its mortal wound and compelled theologians to enter into questions of principle. The right reverend author's treatise focuses mainly on Christology as the point about which contemporary theological disputes are concerned. On this point certainly the opposed world-views must be clearly exhibited, and each system's most obscure ideas must be revealed. These world-views are, as the author also states, the systems of pantheism and personality. But can one stop with the opposition between pantheism and theism, with an *aut/aut*? Is it not the task of our age to sublate this disastrous *aut/aut*, in which Jacobi's noble, truth-loving spirit was ensnared, and from which he could find no deliverance! The *Christian* thinker – intellectually related to Jacobi – whose words have occasioned these remarks has often with a noble, speculative spirit contested various forms of dualism in religion, scholarship, [468] and life, so that by setting forth these criticisms against him, I must almost fear that I have kept more to the letter than to the spirit of his treatise!

Still I must permit myself to respond to the assertion claimed in the first number of this journal that rationalism and supernaturalism are

antiquated standpoints in theology and belong to a bygone era. In this proposition a common linguistic usage has without doubt been employed, by which the author has in mind a certain form of opposition, namely, the form of opposition which has become antiquated in Schleiermacher's, Daub's and Marheineke's works on dogmatics. This is typified by the famous monument which Marheineke raised to the antiquated supernaturalism and rationalism in the Preface to his *Dogmatics*. If, by contrast, one believes these names exemplify the form of theology's great antinomy which our age strives to *mediate*, then they can be accused of nothing worse than having their categories superseded by more recent categories having more of the age's own color. When employing these terms to discuss the present rather than the past, one also adds some epithet in order to designate their place in the context of the present age. The right reverend author regards Baader, the younger Fichte and others as representatives of supernaturalism in our age, and these speculative thinkers would doubtless agree with him in the essential parts of Christian doctrine but would hardly consent to a scientific "*aut/aut*." Indeed, this supernaturalism or what Fichte and others generally call the system of "the *absolute personality*" mediates its standpoint with what may be called "the new rationalism," namely, Hegel's system, in opposition to the new supernaturalism. When, in the quoted treatise, Fichte says that science returns to the recognition of an essential divine [469] proclamation to man's free spirit, which is different from the subjective consciousness of God in human reason and conscience, and lies beyond the divine revelation deposited in the visible creation, he then adds that this has happened with a *necessary turn, which lies in the philosophy of our age*. Herein lies the scientific meaning since otherwise a return of this kind, however important from the point of view of life, could not be a scientific *advance*. If this is the case, then this supernaturalism is not related exclusively to rationalism and has rationalism within rather than outside itself. Otherwise, everything would still be as it was years ago. Baader too has distilled his Christian world-view with Hegelian speculation. Even though he has not himself carried out any extensive mediation, he has at least recognized the need for it since he finds Hegel's characteristic and everlasting value in this thought. Twenty years ago he remarked with respect to the character of the Hegelian dialectic, which drives forward and conquers all scientific particularism, that after Hegel had kindled the dialectical fire, no one could be saved without going through it. This has increasingly been confirmed; for the fire is still burning, and it becomes more difficult each day to avoid

it. On the same occasion this truly Christian thinker remarked that this dialectical fire also must be regarded as an *auto-da-fé* erected to consume the age's unspeculative systems. This too has been increasingly confirmed.

What is epoch-making in the new endeavor produced by Hegel is that the more recent efforts in the field of religion are speculative and *dialectical*. One must not think that it has already achieved its goal, that the treasure of all knowledge is already open to it, or that there does not remain [470] many an *aut/aut*, which are still not mediated. This endeavor would lack all reality if it were true that science contains objective, universal contradictions, which can by no means be mediated. Although supernaturalism and rationalism, or whatever other scientific opposites one cares to name may, when regarded empirically, appear divided between different consciousnesses, as for example when thinking people scientifically assert one side or the other – although it may seem as if the contradiction is not and cannot be found in the *same* consciousness – nevertheless, it can hardly be denied that they are ultimately united in a single consciousness, the *universal* human self-consciousness, the one human spirit, which is the universal medium for all individual I's and which cannot be reduced to a nominalist abstraction. All oppositions of life and science fall within the circle of the selfsame single, universal, *thinking* I, and are posited by the selfsame act of thought. The selfsame I is therefore both supernatural and rational, and is reflected in these and all other contradictions. As long as *the thought* is the same fluid copula for all contradictions, they cannot be fixed and insurmountable.

The sphere of science also contains a redeeming *logos*. This view of the realm of self-consciousness lies at the foundation of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. This thought about the *continuity* of self-consciousness in all its forms and their absolute penetrability for each other must be freed from all pantheistic and autotheistic one-sidedness; but in itself it can no longer be excluded from science. It should be noted, under this view, a contradiction can still maintain its contradictory character for isolated individuals even though it has already been mediated with respect to the whole. In this sense [471] *aut/aut* remains valid in the infinite; but there can be no talk of this when science is regarded in and for itself.

The identity of the subjective and the objective, of self-consciousness and revelation is the presupposition of all speculative theology. It is not pantheistic but truly Christian to believe that God would not be Spirit if He, who is the object of our knowledge, were not Himself also

the true knowledge in us. This insight has shown what is illusory in the merely human reason of Kantian theology – the *ratio sibi relicta* – and given new theological recognition to the ontological proof.

To this degree supernaturalist theology's merely *formal* use of reason has likewise been recognized as an invalid limitation. For the opposition between content and form is invalid, where it is a matter of Idea and spirit. The supernaturalist theology's merely formal use of reason, which moves around the theological object without assimilating it, is equivalent in the sphere of objectivity to Kant's regulative use of reason in the sphere of subjectivity. To say that what is above reason is therefore not against it, fails to provide a satisfactory solution. It merely places revelation and self-consciousness on a neutral footing alongside each other, where each exists for itself, with no actual reconciliation coming about. What exists only beyond reason without also existing for it – and nothing can be for thought which does not also exist in it – is reduced to a theoretically indifferent X, which can at best be claimed in a practical sense. Many supernaturalist theologians treat many important dogmas in this way wholly in analogy with Kantianism. The dogma's metaphysical side stops as a "*Ding an sich*," and its anthropological and [472] practical side receives all the emphasis.

Likewise, the merely positive and receptive relation, which Jacobi posited between reason and revelation when he one-sidedly likened reason to the eye and the revelation to the light, could not bring about a true unity. In Jacobi the revelation is conceived one-sidedly as object and is not recognized in its subjective immanence in consciousness. Its ray falls indeed into the soul, but the identity is only apparent, more imagined than thought. The revelation is not known as self-consciousness' own *essence*, its inner true self. Jacobi failed to recognize that the eye itself is light. (Cf. Baader *Über die Vernünftigkeit der drei Fundamentaldogmen des Christenthums*, p. 29.) This one-sided view of reason's relation to revelation produced the same one-sidedness in the relation between faith and knowledge. For since Jacobi maintained reason's merely receptive character, faith existed without regard to knowledge, which was limited to a formal use of reason. His doctrine of faith would have been valid if he had instead conceived of it as the necessary point of departure and beginning of mediation, which contains all knowledge in itself. When speculative theology seeks knowledge on the strength of the divine thought itself, the kind of knowledge which can be designated by the (p. 258) aforementioned words of Spinoza, "*quam ipse (deus) suo sigillo nempe Sui idea tamquam imagine suae divinitatis consignavit*," then this doctrine about the im-

manence of divine thought in human thought appears to many people in our age as rationalism. But although these words evidence only the beginnings of a rigorous rationalism which (in opposition to the rationalist systems of subjectivity) has just begun recognize the truth, it already contains the seed of the revelation hidden within itself. The immanence which is thought through is transcendence, because the divine thought, which [473] is the immanent principle in human thought, cannot itself be without subject or without spirit. Therefore, as Baader in particular has emphasized, human knowledge can only be regarded as having slipped into a higher knowledge, his vision into a higher vision, into the region in which all true thinking circulates. Likewise, the object and content of human knowledge in this region is itself only knowledge. But when the in-existence<sup>16</sup> of not only the impersonal divine thought but also the divine knowledge is recognized in the in-existence of human thought and human knowledge, both rationalism and the exclusive supernaturalism appear sublated at least from the standpoint of knowledge. Certainly a standpoint of this kind, which teaches "that the eye with which God sees man, is the same eye, with which man sees God," becomes *mystical* if this identity is perceived as immediate. As such it withdraws the positive factual revelation, history's highest objectivity, from the mediation of and continuity with the entire objective realm of consciousness. If theology wants to yield results, it cannot be presuppositionless, either *ab exteriori* or *ab interiori*. But with respect to the historical revelation, where the opposition between rationalism and supernaturalism now appears as the opposition between idea and fact, where it can be "either" idea "or" fact, here thought must mediate and will not rest until it discovers the invisible copula which connects fact with the idea.

This is not the place to go into the details about the present state of theology, and since I have set forth what seems to me to be the main issue, I close these remarks. May the right reverend author receive them with benevolence and recognize herein an interest in the question which his treatise has brought about!

H. Martensen

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<sup>16</sup> [in-existence: the fact or condition of enclosure or inherence in something. Translator.]