In conclusion, our picture of eighteenth-century religious life has changed radically over the last century. This is in large part because of changing assumptions about the nature of Enlightenment and church life, careful and substantial archival work, and new impulses in the historical profession as a whole which have led to new subject areas being opened up for exploration. It may be, too, that the eighteenth century, which witnessed the birth of modernity, holds a particular fascination for our own age, which is witnessing the 'death' of modernity, and as we struggle with questions of faith and reason at this particular time, we look to the eighteenth century's own struggles with precisely those issues for insight.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Theology in the twentieth century
ROWAN WILLIAMS

At the beginning of the twentieth century, English theology was largely dominated by a set of issues generated ultimately by the diffusion of the critical approach to the Bible. Echoes of the mid-Victorian crisis around Essays and Reviews (1860) had not by any means died down; and most leading teachers in the universities and beyond recognised the unavoidability of questions to do with the evolution of religious understanding in different phases of scriptural composition, and the challenges to traditional Christology posed by new approaches to the historical accuracy of the Gospels—particularly the Fourth Gospel, source of most of the explicit scriptural witnesses to a 'high' Christology (a clear identification of Jesus as embodying direct divine agency or personality). In this respect at least, the theology of the Anglican Church in particular—and Anglicanism was still the majority ecclesiastical presence in academic theology—showed itself true to its heritage. Doctrinal issues had only rather seldom been treated as matters of concern in their own right: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, writing about Trinitarian theology had been stimulated by the need to defend the position of the established Church as representing a primitive doctrinal consensus against the attacks of those who refused to see clear evidences of credal orthodoxy in the earliest centuries of the church. The encyclopaedic works of apologists like Bull and Waterland, indispensable source books for generations to come, were essentially reactive confirmations of the credal stance of the Church of England rather than analytical or exploratory reflections on the meaning of the credal vocabulary, which could, for such writers, best be expounded in homiletic form. Somewhat similarly, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, the felt need was for a defence of a reasonably traditional piety (and morality) which still allowed for intellectual honesty about the evident difficulties in basing doctrine on the scriptural text. What was more rare was any attempt to state a theological methodology or to try and clarify how traditional dogmatic formulae had evolved, what pressures had shaped their vocabulary. These
characteristic omissions account for much of twentieth-century considerations of doctrine within English theology—though, as will become clear, Scottish theology is less easy to sum up in such terms.

However, this does not mean that doctrinal reflection at the beginning of the century lacked any systematic substrate. As has often been remarked, the influence in Oxford of T. H. Green and other English Hegelians was very powerful in religious circles. Several significant figures—Charles Gore, Henry Scott Holland, J. R. Illingworth—had absorbed from Green a strong reformist approach to social problems informed by convictions about the social good that were based ultimately upon metaphysical assumptions. This, combined with a gently evolutionist understanding of religious history, produced a very distinctive theological voice, pretty traditional in its devotional register but open to biblical criticism and engaged in meliorist programmes in society at large. The overlapping of Christian Socialism with residual Hegelian philosophy had shaped the 1889 collection Lux Mundi, which had been something of a watershed for Anglo-Catholic theological literature—marking out Charles Gore, for example, as an incorrigible liberal in the eyes of many. In the first decade of the twentieth century, this general trend, associated especially with Oxford, moved cautiously but perceptibly further away from traditional doctrinal allegiances, eventually producing the 1911 symposium Foundations, written by members of the Oxford theological faculty, mostly college chaplains. This collection included several challenges to the miraculous elements in the biblical narrative—including the empty tomb—on general philosophical principle, and what might be called an inductive approach to doctrinal issues (dogmatic formulae being developed out of reflection on historical experience). The Christological discussions of B. H. Streeter and William Temple in particular argued for a form of 'kenotic' doctrine (that the second person of the Trinity in becoming incarnate had assumed the limits of a historical human mind in respect of the knowledge of worldly particulars), and were highly critical of patristic and scholastic formulations of Christology, Temple famously declaring that the definitio of the Council of Chalcedon illustrated the 'bankruptcy' of Greek patristic thought.

Christological controversy in fact played a major part in the theological debates of the period leading up to the First World War. William Sanday, Lady Margaret Professor at Oxford, though less radical than the Foundations group, shared with them a scepticism about miracle and about the classical Christological formulae; he did, however, attempt to salvage some grounds for theological construction in the historical self-consciousness of Jesus, and later turned to the vocabulary of psychology to clarify this, arguing for the location of divine-human unity in the psyche of Jesus within the 'subliminal consciousness'. Bishop Frank Weston of Zanzibar, a gifted and idiosyncratic Anglo-Catholic, produced in 1907 an essay (The One Christ) which attempted to do justice to the limitations of the incarnate consciousness of Jesus without jeopardising full Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Another rather idiosyncratic Anglo-Catholic was John Neville Figgis, whose academic career had originally been in the history of political thought (where he made a highly distinguished contribution): apart from some extremely interesting work on church-state relations and the theology of authority in both secular and ecclesiastical contexts, work that shows the marks of his Cambridge masters, Acton and Maitland, as well as his wide reading in German political philosophy, he produced a sophisticated response to Sanday on miracles and creeds. Despite the occasional and fragmentary character of most of his later production, he is the most original and profound of the more conservative theologians of the period. He is also the first English religious writer to offer a serious critique of Nietzsche, and he stands far closer to the world of Baron von Hügel and George Tyrrell than practically any of his academic contemporaries. He was certainly not a Catholic Modernist, and some of his work is a riposte to Tyrrell; but he has the same concern to draw upon the sacramental and corporate mysticism of the Catholic Church so as to address the crises of the wider culture.

Equally out of the mainstream was Peter Taylor Forsyth, a Congregationalist educated in Scotland. Not a professional university academic, most of his published work represents direct preaching and teaching in church contexts, but it has had strong influence on a number of later twentieth-century thinkers. Influenced initially by Albrecht Ritschl, he became increasingly distanced from liberal theology, laying heavy emphasis upon revelation and judgment while still retaining the Ritschlian sense that doctrine was necessary to do with transformations of behaviour. His version of kenotic Christology characteristically stressed the element of willing self-abandonment in the incarnation—not as a solution to the problems around the knowledge of the incarnate Christ but as a key to the nature of God's love, definitively revealed in the cross.

Forsyth is often spoken of as a 'prophetic' figure; and in the simplest sense of the word, he undoubtedly was so. His crisis-oriented and sometimes tragic vision seemed a good deal more plausible in the wake of the horrors of the Great War than the fairly untroubled Platonist and Hegelian idioms of pre-war theology, especially in the Anglican Church. The extent of the theological impact of the war is an intriguing question. It undoubtedly provoked a restlessness in ecclesiastical circles and a new eagerness for reform; but in strictly theological terms the main effect seems to have been a certain impetus
given to questions about suffering and providence. The passionate and raw devotional poetry of Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy, a celebrated forces chaplain and, later, industrial missionary, frequently focused upon the issue of God's suffering, God's direct involvement in human pain, and the hopeless inadequacy, as it seemed, of traditional language about divine impassibility. This took time to find its way into more academic discourse, although both Streeter and Temple were sympathetic to these concerns; but it was seen as a significant enough matter to require attention from the (Anglican) Archbishops' Doctrinal Commission in the mid-twenties. J. K. Mozley's little book of 1926 on the Impassibility of God was written originally for the Commission, and provides a fine survey of the discussion—a discussion that was to recur much later in the century.

Yet much immediate post-war theology showed remarkably little of the war's effect. The famous Girtin Conference of the Churchmen's Union (soon to become the Modern Churchmen's Union) in 1921 on Christology illustrated both the survival of the Foundations style and the relative lack of connection between this and the social and intellectual questions of those years. In many ways, it was the high water mark of Liberal Protestantism in Britain in the first half of the century, and the statements emerging from it alarmed many in the churches. But while the direct influence of theologians like Streeter or Hastings Rashdall, author of a major study of the doctrine of the atonement, waned in the twenties, many of the prevailing voices were still recognisably carrying on something of the style of Green's Hegelianism.

William Temple was among the most prominent, producing in the twenties and early thirties several books on the borderlands of theology and metaphysics, looking for the kinds of cosmic narratives of convergence and interdependence that had been typical of late Victorian and pre-war writing. From the Free Church communities, notably the Presbyterians with their strong Scottish connections, came a series of highly disciplined, serious and humane theologians, whose work has a more pragmatic philosophical orientation. To call them 'liberal' is not actually very illuminating; they are largely unconcerned with the highly particular controversies over points of the Creed that dominated much Anglican writing, and give the reader the sense of a rather more relaxed intellectual world. Yet they tend to work from Christian experience and religious phenomenology towards doctrinal formulation rather than the other way around, and to give a pivotal place to the moral dimension of doctrine. The work of F. R. Tennant in fundamental theology had already begun to give some definition to this. But the tone is authoritatively set by John Oman's classic of 1917, Grace and Personality, which resolves the tension between the dependence required by religion and the autonomy required by ethics (conceived in a strongly Kantian framework) by appeal to 'gracious personal relationship' as the means of revelation, offering us compelling insight but never overruling the processes of human motivation. There are many echoes of Forsyth, and some things in common with the doyen of Scottish systematicians, H. R. Mackintosh; the whole tenor of the work is reproduced many times in what might be called classical Free Church theologies in England (the books of the Baptist H. Wheeler Robinson are a case in point, and the philosophical theology of H. H. Farmer), and the brothers John and D. M. Baillie represent the continuance of a very similar style in Scotland through to the fifties. D. M. Baillie's God was in Christ (1948) is a fine example of this tradition; it is tempting to read it as a long footnote to Oman, and none the worse for that.

Only fairly slowly in the twenties and early thirties did the new trends from continental Europe begin to make any impression. O. C. Quick, author of some magisterial work on credal doctrine, showed little sign of interest in the wider European discussion, though he had written on the contrasts of Liberal Protestantism and Catholic Modernism; it is likely that he was more familiar than he looked with continental thinking, and his doctrinal exposition was serious and sophisticated, but he is not much in conversation with the non-Anglican intellectual world of the post-war years. Sanday too had written quite sympathetically, though not uncritically, about Harnack and his followers. But contact with the German faculties was not extensive in the years after the war. Intellectual xenophobia had been given a good deal of respectability by the tragedies of those years. E. C. Hoskyns at Cambridge (yet another maverick Anglo-Catholic, who had—unusually—studied in Berlin) was perhaps the first in England to see the immense importance of Barth, and his translation of Barth's Romans commentary appeared in 1933, before a somewhat baffled English theological public. But there had already been some attention to Barth in Scotland: John McConnell of Dundee had published an essay in 1927 on Barth's thought, and followed it up with two monographs in 1931 and 1933. Some other younger Scottish theologians responded fairly sympathetically to Barth—and, once again, their influence on English Free Church theology was important in this connection. H. R. Mackintosh had also studied Barth, and published some comments in the mid-twenties; and his encounter with Barth had reinforced his journey away from the world of Ritschl and his pupils. It is interesting to see how in the twenties Barth's gradually increasing presence in the awareness of some (largely non-Anglican) British theologians provided a kind of rallying-point for those vaguely unhappy with too experientialist a method, those marked by Forsyth's concerns and by the bankruptcy of some kinds of liberalism in the
wake of the war. The foundations were being laid for the far more thorough-going appropriation of Barth in Scottish theology after the Second World War.

Brunner’s work was also read by some British theologians in the inter-war years, but its impact is far harder to trace. Curiously, one of those who initially found Brunner attractive was a young Anglican (a former Baptist, whose father was a friend of Wheeler Robinson) who was to make a very distinctive mark indeed in the period following the Second World War. Austin Farrer spent some months studying in Germany in 1931 and 1932, and his correspondence shows how positive an impact Brunner made—and how little he was at that time impressed by Barth. Farrer was already much influenced by the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition—though there is surprisingly little evidence that he had studied the French Thomists of the twenties and thirties in any depth. His commitment was initially to developing a viable and sophisticated natural theology, and he never found any variety of dialectical or existentalist theology at all sympathetic. The final point of this natural theology was a robust doctrine of divine freedom, with will and agency seen as the essentials of any analogy between the created and the uncreated subject. There are both parallels and immense gaps between this and Barth’s thought: Farrer concludes his monumental essay of 1943, _Finite and Infinite_, by emphasising that natural theology can do no more than clarify the ‘grammar’ of divine action; only historical contingency can prompt the conviction that such action has occurred. This is not Barth; but neither is it the anthropocentrism that Barth repudiated.

The French Thomist revival had made some impact in English Roman Catholic circles by the mid-thirties, particularly among the English Dominicans and their associates; the work of Jacques Maritain had begun to be translated, and Etienne Gilson’s expositions of St Thomas were being studied. On the whole, however, Maritain’s influence fell chiefly within the sphere of aesthetic (and to a lesser extent political) theory. Gilson’s restatement of Thomist natural theology, and his emphasis on the centrality in St Thomas of the concept of the ‘act of being’, were well received in some Anglican circles as well, however, and E. L. Mascall emerged as a lucid and magisterial defender of this approach by the beginning of the forties. His 1943 treatise, _He Who Is_, was a very significant contribution to the ongoing debates on natural theology; but he was also to write a number of distinguished works on more strictly dogmatic subjects, making use of contemporary Roman Catholic work: _Christ, the Christian and the Church_ (1946) has a good claim to be the most comprehensive and coherent Anglican essay on the interconnections between doctrine, liturgy and spirituality of the twentieth century. Its concern to integrate these superficially diverse interests bore obvious parallels to the aims of many post-Second World War Roman Catholic divines in Europe; and although Mascall does not engage all that closely with the French _nouvelle théologie_ (which was for him too overtly in reaction against certain varieties of scholasticism), he helped a good deal in his later years, especially in the seventies, to familiarise British readers with Karl Rahner. This integrative passion is also evident in another Anglican writer, who produced only one really full-scale book, but a book of decisive and far-reaching influence: Gregory Dix’s 1944 _The Shape of the Liturgy_ was ostensively a study of the origins of the eucharistic prayer, but in its pages of massive (if sometimes rather flawed) erudition and brilliant (if sometimes rather perverse) interpretation, the reader would also find an impressively coherent Christology and anthropology.

Mascall’s espousal of Thomism is a reminder that the inter-war years were a period of great philosophical upheaval. The Idealist consensus of the turn of the century was long since gone, and nothing had really taken its place; but the advent of Logical Positivism as a powerful presence in the academy in the thirties was bringing home to some theologians at least that a theology without some credible philosophical grounding was more vulnerable than ever in an intellectual world fully prepared to write off the entire enterprise as empty. However, finding a philosophical ally was not easy. L. S. Thornton, like Figgis a member of the Anglican Community of the Resurrection, attempted in a series of solid and complex books, the first of them published in 1928, to effect a rapprochement with A. N. Whitehead’s evolutionary metaphysics. The result has some things in common with the residual Hegelianism of Temple, but with a far more ambitious approach to building a detailed cosmological theory on Christian and theistic grounds. The appropriation of Whitehead in the form of ‘Process Theology’ lay well in the future (the late sixties), and Thornton was regarded as a good deal out of the mainstream in his own day. But his work remains as a strikingly bold venture. Like others who resisted the rising tides of Thomism and some approximation to Barthianism—such as Charles Raven—he also reminded the wider theological establishment of the need for some kind of dialogue with the largely alien world of scientific cosmology. Barth’s impact was increasingly felt in several diverse circles in the forties and fifties. In Scotland, T. F. Torrance was beginning to develop a systematic Barthian school—which by the sixties was also showing itself remarkably interested in just that scientific cosmology and epistemology that might have been supposed the natural partner of a more ‘liberal’ theology. Torrance’s direct involvement in the monumental project of translating Barth’s _Church Dogmatics_ rendered incalculable service to English-language
impressionistic. Further afield, however, Bultmann’s existentialist concerns had a dramatically revitalising effect on some theological writing, especially in the USA. Another distinguished Scottish (Glasgow-trained) émigré, John Macquarrie, working in America until the late sixties, produced a number of essays on the issues raised by Bultmann, collaborated in the translation of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, and completed the nearest thing for decades to a British systematic in the shape of the much-reprinted *Principles of Christian Theology*, a sustained statement of traditional dogmatic themes in a Heideggerian vocabulary.

Robinson had also introduced many readers to Tillich and Bonhoeffer (though translations of some of their work had been available for a few years); but their impact seems not at that time to have been as powerful as Bultmann’s. At the end of the sixties and in the early seventies, there was much interest in the relation of theological assertion to history (Lessing’s ‘ugly ditch’ between contingent historical events and credal belief was much invoked); and while Bultmann could resolve this by a very Lutheran appeal to the *theologia crucis*, the intrinsic and costly risk of self-commitment, British theologians were less eager to resolve it at all. A new interest in the sociology of knowledge (and in some cases a belated study of Durkheim and Troeltsch) encouraged some theologians towards a more radical relativism. Dennis Nineham, who had begun his career as a New Testament specialist and written an influential commentary on Mark in the sixties, pressed the question through the seventies in a number of essays and a book on *The Use and Abuse of the Bible* (1976).

But the mention of this work and its date might alert us to an unexpected phenomenon of that decade, in which two ‘graph lines’ appear to cross. The middle seventies saw the publication of the symposium, *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977), arguing for a comprehensive rethink of classical Christological language. Its authors in fact represented a wide spectrum of approaches—from the comparatively conservative work of Frances Young (already a much respected patristic exponent) and the cautious reformation of Maurice Wiles through to Nineham’s negative assessment of the role of the gospel record as basic in Christology and Don Cupitt’s Kierkegaardian insistence on the importance of keeping Jesus at a distance from God, to avoid idolatry. Central to the enterprise was the guiding hand of John Hick, an authoritative presence in the world of the philosophy of religion (especially after his 1966 book, *Evil and the God of Love*) who was increasingly interested in how to theologise about religious diversity. His intellectual development is one of the first signs of how the major changes in British society were affecting church and theology; earlier generations had not had other religious
communities to concern themselves about as part of the daily and local scene. Hick continued to explore this area, producing a number of influential, accessible and impassioned books on the need for a theological perspective beyond religious particularism. Another weighty theological presence of the period, G. W. H. Lampe, a patrologist of immense attainment, added his voice to the chorus of pleas for theological reconstruction in his 1977 God as Spirit, a finely written apologia for dismantling most of the structure and vocabulary of classical Trinitarian theology, while retaining what he saw as the fundamental conviction about God as self-diffusing and self-besetting ‘spirit’.

So an observer at the time might have concluded that a broadly liberal and revisionist approach had triumphed at the highest professional levels of British (or at least English) theology. The truth was more complex. The year 1977 was another high water mark, after which the assumptions and conclusions of the authors of the Myth symposium began to shift or fade in the overall intellectual map. That broadly Christocentric (but not Chalcedonian), morally serious, doctrinally agnostic theism which represented a quite long tradition in English theological liberalism was sharply challenged on two fronts. The seventies had also seen a substantial increase in the translation of major theological works in German, and the writings of Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg became widely available. A number of younger theologians—mostly pupils or junior colleagues of Donald MacKinnon—began to take a strong interest in Barth and von Balthasar (the translation of Balthasar’s longer works into English was initiated in the late seventies). In this light, the almost total lack of reference in works like the Myth to continental European work suggested some insularities to be overcome. But at the same time, different pressures from the ‘left’ of the liberal centre were evident. The sociology of knowledge can be a dangerous partner; the whole theological enterprise as classically conceived was challenged from several points of view in the light of various analyses of its ideological interest. Liberation theology, again becoming increasingly well known in Britain in the seventies, saw the academic system, liberal or conservative, as failing to realise the need for an emancipatory practice to accompany, even to ground, theological statement. A number of enterprises outside the academy developed models of such a method, notably John Vincent’s Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield; the influence of this within the academic ‘household’ can be seen, for example, in the work of the New Testament scholar Christopher Rowland, who has written on apocalyptic in the context of political conflict. The (very) gradual entry of feminist concerns into British theological discourse again challenged both liberal and conservative strategies. And, in the early eighties, the presence of postmodernist theory began to make itself felt;

Don Cupitt, probably the most original and eloquent contributor to the Myth, moved rapidly from an early rather Kantian style, ethical and apophatic but still within the broad boundaries of classical theology, to the dialectical drama of his 1977 Myth essay, and then to the radically voluntarist and anti-realist scheme of Taking Leave of God in 1980; from this point onwards, the influence of European postmodernism becomes more and more powerful, as he engages with Derridean themes as well as important elements of the Nietzschean heritage. In his way as superb a stylist as Nietzsche himself, Cupitt has continued to define a position shared in full by few but with quite remarkable resonance for many in its simultaneously playful and intense appeals for a drastically new religious consciousness.

The older liberalism was not, then, an entirely easy territory to inhabit after around 1980, and the diversification of styles developed rapidly—also assisted to some extent by a growing familiarity in Britain with ‘post-liberal’ theologies from the USA, especially the work of Yale theologians like George Lindbeck and Hans Frei. By this time, the Roman Catholic presence in British theology had become more significant than anyone could have predicted a decade before. MacKinnon’s successor at Cambridge, Nicholas Lash, pursued a distinctive course with studies of Newman, of Marxism, and of various accounts of religious experience; the influence of Rahner is evident early on, that of Wittgenstein increasingly to be seen as his work matures. In sharp contrast to John Hick, he has developed a detailed critique of any idea of ‘pre-theological’ (ideologically innocent) religious experience. The Scottish Dominican, Fergus Kerr, has shared some of his concerns; while retaining a relatively low profile among many theologians, he has in fact played a unique part in stimulating discussion of the impact of post-positivist philosophies—Wittgenstein (his book of 1986 on Theology After Wittgenstein is a very substantial work indeed), Heidegger, Derrida, even some American analytic philosophers like Davidson. Several lay Roman Catholic intellectuals made striking contributions to theological discussion in the late sixties and early seventies (Brian Wicker, the young Terry Eagleton before his disenchantment with the church), and they form part of the background to the emergence of a philosophically very sophisticated and culturally literate Catholic theology in the last decades of the twentieth century. Younger Catholic contributors in the eighties and nineties also represented something of the radical ideological critique of feminism and liberationism; several of the best minds in feminist theology—Angela West, Mary Grey, Elizabeth Stuart—were Roman Catholics. Gerard Loughlin and Gavin d’Costa likewise have worked on the frontiers of traditional dogmatics and the world of contemporary culture, producing work of real originality, strongly attuned to gender issues. D’Costa has also written
clearly and authoritatively on questions of inter-religious dialogue, developing another alternative voice to that of John Hick, again one that is suspicious of any search for religious 'essences' to be abstracted from specific communities and practices.

However, the study of traditional systematics had established itself on the scene in some strength during the eighties. More German theological work became available in English; John Webster translated and interpreted Eberhard Jüngel with great clarity, and research on Moltmann flourished in several university departments. The prolific Alister McGrath produced some solid work on Luther and on German systematics, initiating a career of very professional and sophisticated popularisation and synthesis, issuing in several very highly regarded textbooks and survey volumes on systematics and doctrinal history. Colin Gunton at King's College, London, built up an impressive research tradition, while pursuing his own writing in systematics; this concentrates on the centrality of Trinitarian themes, showing an eclectic interest in philosophy, an impeccable literacy in European theology and an increasing concern with the theological ontology of the Greek Fathers and modern Orthodox theologians. These interests appear also in the work of Alan Torrance and Alastair McFadyen, highly creative younger writers who have stayed within the style and agenda of classical theology rather more than Loughlin or d'Costa. Research on Barth has by no means dried up. Several major theologians cut their teeth on themes in Barth—including Gunton himself, David Ford, whose thesis on Barth as narrative theologian was a definitive contribution, and Richard Roberts, who has written in some depth about the borderlands between theology and social science, as well as discussing (critically) many British and European divines of recent decades. The American Dan Hardy, who has spent his entire teaching career in the UK, has consistently brought the concerns of this kind of mainstream systematics into conversation with the philosophy of science and related areas, and has worked intensively on producing what British theology has historically not been very good at, a serious and critical ecclesiology.

The most determined critique of liberal methodology, however, has come from a theologian whose formation and interests have been very much at an angle to those of the Gunton–Hardy–Ford axis or axes. John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* (1990) offers a comprehensive re-reading of enormous tracts of intellectual history from antiquity to modernity, and argues that most post-thirteenth-century theology has definitively lost its way, by refusing to make claims for the comprehensiveness of the Christian narrative, that is, refusing the challenges of a properly theological ontology. The result is the pseudo-theologies of modern secularity, from Descartes through to modern sociology; and the greater part of Christian theology has colluded with this secularity. Milbank's strategy is to allow a Nietzschean or Derridean criticism to expose the ideological corruptions of modernity (including modern theology), to clear the space for an authentically theological and ecclesial vision: postmodernism harnessed to a strongly traditional but also radical project.

Few books of theology in the last couple of decades have attracted such a mixture of admiration and exasperation. But Milbank is not easily written off as a reactionary, and has drawn around him an exceptionally gifted group of slightly younger scholars, including Graham Ward (whose thesis was on Derrida and Barth) and Catherine Pickstock (who has written a groundbreaking book on liturgy). The group has adopted the designation 'Radical Orthodoxy' for their style, and their influence has been quite strongly felt in the USA as well as in Britain. Several who have not been directly identified with the group have sympathies and affiliations, as well as some questions—Loughlin and Kerr, for example, and Rowan Williams. The whole scheme has been criticised by those of Gunton's school for its negativity about most Protestant theology and its Platonist elements; by others like Roberts for its supposed sociological totalism; and by those who have attempted to preserve or revive something of the liberal tradition.

These include names such as those of Gareth Jones and Ian Markham; but a senior figure like Keith Ward might also be included. Ward's early work in the philosophy of religion developed into broader studies of both the future of religion and the rational grounding of various aspects of doctrinal language. He has pursued the dialogue with scientific theory and has evidently taken on board the inter-religious agenda, without quite following Hick's lead. Where exactly to locate John Bowker on this map is far from clear. His early work in religious studies, from the late sixties onwards, established his intellectual individuality (and wide learning), but he has never appeared as a 'revisionist' in respect of doctrine—so much was clear in his Wilde Lectures in Oxford in the early seventies (The Sense of God, Oxford 1973; 2nd edn. 1995). Subsequently, his interest in the theology and science frontier produced a number of shorter books that are hard to classify but might best be seen as an extraordinarily intelligent apologetic. David Brown of Durham, after publishing in 1985 a study, somewhat in the analytical manner, of Trinitarian doctrine which met with a rather mixed reception, has now completed two volumes, *Tradition and Imagination* (1999) and *Discipleship and Imagination* (2001), which expound with great sophistication and broad cultural reference a gently evolutionist approach to doctrinal questions and a fresh and intriguing hermeneutic of the reception of biblical narrative.
Despite the attrition of the older university departments (a number disappeared or were amalgamated into larger units during the eighties and nineties), the more recently augmented institutions of higher education proved surprisingly hospitable to theology—especially those with strong historic church connections (Liverpool Hope, St Mark and St John in Plymouth, Roehampton, Cheltenham and Gloucester, and others). These departments were in a sense obliged to respond more briskly to the student ‘market’; hence the increase in courses on less traditional areas—ecology, art, gender issues; the proportion of women teaching in these institutions is probably rather larger than in the historic faculties. However, some women scholars have more than held their own in such faculties: Frances Young, who has continued to produce work of distinction in both patristics and systematics, as well as some exceptional writing in the area of what may loosely be called spirituality, is one of the most well known, but Janet Martin Sokice at Cambridge has established a solid international reputation, and Daphne Hampson at St Andrews has written one of the most sustained and provocative studies in feminist theology to appear in Britain (Theology and Feminism, 1990), as well as a major recent study in the history of confessional debates between Protestants and Catholics. She is one of the relatively few British theologians whom the label ‘post-Christian’ fits (a contrast to the situation in the USA). Sarah Coakley, though currently teaching at Harvard, should be mentioned as another very serious contributor in the feminist field, though she brings to bear her research on Troeltsch and a profound interest in and knowledge of patristic and medieval theology. On the borders of theology, ethics and religious phenomenology, Linda Woodhead of Lancaster has marked out a significant territory.

There are many growth points at present—not only in the popular new areas just outlined but in other and perhaps more demanding territories. Theology in Britain is still catching up with the revival in Hegelian scholarship, and this is likely to produce more work in the near future. Andrew Shank’s books on Hegel and on ‘civic theology’, the possibilities of theological discourse outside the confessional structure, yet still in conversation with doctrinal and liturgical tradition, are as yet the only really serious appropriations of a Hegelian agenda on the British scene, but they are of remarkable power and originality. Work on Barth and other major Catholic writers has increased in volume, and interest shows little sign of falling off. Not unrelated to this, there has been a substantial growth in the serious study of spirituality, ranging from Denys Turner’s groundbreaking work of 1995, The Darkness of God, to the beginnings of an engagement with Michel de Certeau in some of the work of Graham Ward, Rowan Williams, and one or two others. And the frontiers of religion and the arts (including now film as well as literature and the traditional visual arts) have been visited with increasing frequency, and with assistance from David Jasper’s Glasgow-based research institute.

One of the things that this survey has perhaps brought out is that ‘dogmatic’ or ‘systematic’ theology in England and Wales (Scotland is another matter) has both suffered and benefited from its slightly tangential relation to what many would think of as mainstream academic theology. Because—especially in the earlier periods examined—it was often developed in the context of religious and ecclesial controversy, it could be impressionistic and under-resourced in terms of understanding of classical definitions and conventions. There can be an amateurish air to some English essays in doctrine in the twentieth century, a somewhat bewildered focusing on problems that a better acquaintance with the traditional vocabulary of patristic, scholastic or Reformation thought might have dissolved. But at the same time, this marginality has encouraged an interdisciplinary boldness and a willingness to find fresh idioms which a more rigorous theology could have missed; and even a theologian like Austin Farrer, who was anything but ignorant of classical theological debate, could, when discussing theological problems, use strikingly novel language precisely because he could not take for granted a knowledge of the detail of the tradition. It is in some ways the most problematic and vulnerable area of the curriculum, suspect in the eyes of some because of its obvious connections with the life of faith communities, and in the eyes of others because of the methodological uncertainties that surround it. Yet it is also the area where connections with public discourse can, surprisingly often, be made, and where otherwise apparently dislocated spheres of scholarship may be drawn into conversation. It need not be least among the princes of Judah as we survey the tribal territories that make up the typical landscape of modern theology and religious studies.

General Reading

CHAPTER NINE

Philosophy of religion in the twentieth century

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The twentieth century differs from its predecessors in many ways. But in one respect it does not. It has a preceding history. This is as true of the interaction between philosophy and theology as it is of any other intellectual or indeed manual activity.

In Europe and North America, and certainly within Britain, much of the discussion of theological and religious issues by philosophers was shaped either implicitly or explicitly by the writings of Immanuel Kant, and with varying degrees of prominence, standing behind him, David Hume. Kant famously highlighted this in his introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with his tribute to the Hume who ‘woke me from my dogmatic slumbers’. Kant’s use of language in that remark served notice of a reshaping of the debate between rationality and belief in all contexts, philosophical, scientific, moral and religious. He wrote of limiting knowledge in order to make room for belief, and this was read by some as opening the door to a form of religious apologetic. It is easy to be na"ive in such matters, and Kant is not the place to start!

Kant’s influence has been enormous, and we shall encounter it at many points within this chapter. This is particularly true of British philosophical thought in the twentieth century. One of the overt signs of this was the reassertion of empiricism as the dominant philosophical currency after a period in the engagement with various forms of idealism both in Germany

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