

# Week 8

- 1. The collapse of the 'syntheses' in WW I
- H. Martin Rumscheidt, *Revelation and Theology: An Analysis of the Barth-Harnack Correspondence of 1923*, Cambridge 1972
- P. van Veer/H. Lehmann (eds.), *Nation and Religion*, Princeton 1999
- O. Chadwick, *The Secularisation of the European Mind in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, Cambridge 1975
- H. McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914*, London et al. 2000

# 'Collapse' II

- WW I meant the end of the 'long 19<sup>th</sup> century'
- From there many ideals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became questionable: progress, civilization, culture etc.
- The entanglement of theologians in war time propaganda made their own past arguments about religion and culture the object of derision.
- While Barth and others oversimplified the state of affairs, the almost complete support of theologians for the war was more than mere coincidence.

# 'Collapse' III

- Background in alignment of religion and nation to substitute for 'secularisation'
- In a process of compartmentalization of society Christianity was untied from more and more areas of social life.
- Both 'nation' and 'culture' were concepts central to the 19<sup>th</sup> century search for identity
- → Christianity was proposed (and often suggested itself) as a backup in this search.

# 'Collapse' IV

- From Barth's point of view, all the 'syntheses' characteristic for the 19<sup>th</sup> century: 'religion and nation'; 'religion and culture' etc. had become delegitimised by the barbarism of WW I
- This made those who had been sceptical all along suddenly supremely relevant.

# Søren Abaye Kierkegaard (1831-1855)

- *Fear and Trembling* (1843)
- *The Concept of Fear* (1844) (online at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/dk/kierkega.htm> )
- Select writings are online at: <http://www.ccel.org/k/kierkegaard/selections/home.html> (including *Fear and Trembling*)
- P.L. Gardiner, *Kierkegaard*, Oxford 1988
- A. Hannay (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge 1997

# Kierkegaard II

- Born into wealthy, but otherwise difficult family
- Studied theology from age 17 at Copenhagen
- Lived the life of a dandy for many years in Copenhagen
- His publications were either without success or proved scandalous
- Overall: unable to cope with 'normal' life (breakdown of engagement; deep loneliness)

# Kierkegaard III

- Against Hegel focus on 'existence', not concepts
- Theory of three forms of human existence:
  1. Aesthetical: orientated towards pleasure and the satisfaction of the moment; genuinely instable.
  2. Ethical: orientated towards the 'true self'; ideal of self-formation, including its interaction with others in family and society
  3. Religious: Example is Abraham whose faith is often cited as exemplary but rarely understood.

# Kierkegaard IV

- From ethical point of view his sacrifice is inexplicable.
- Shows the fundamental difference between religion and ethics:
- Religious existence does not follow rules but the calling of God which, in each case is unique and not to be analogically subsumed.



# Kierkegaard V

- Religious existence is lonely and totally exposed to decision.
- It cannot therefore be understood in ethical or rational terms → this results in falsification (Hegel) or denial (Church of his time).
- Religious existence is foundational for the ethical one:
- ‘The individual determines his relation to the universal in the light of his relation to the absolute, and not his relation to the absolute in the light of his relation to the universal.’

# 3. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

- *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) Online at: <http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm>
- *The Antichrist* (1888)
- Excellent for biographical introduction (+ further reading) is the entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/>
- M. Tanner, *N.: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford 2001
- W. Kaufmann, *N.: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950)
- G. Deleuze, *N. and Philosophy* (1983)

# Nietzsche II

- Born into family of Lutheran ministers
- Became Professor of Classical Philology at age 24
- First major book: *Birth of the Tragedy* (1873)
- Influential friendship with R. Wagner (later: bitter antagonism)
- In his *Unfashionable Observations* (1873-6) he praises Wagner and Schopenhauer, but attacks David Strauss
- In 1879 he retires permanently due to health problems
- Major works in 1880s while N. lives with no fixed residence (and no citizenship at all!)
- 3 January 1889: total breakdown; N. never recovers.

# Nietzsche III

- Nietzsche saw contemporary culture as fundamentally unstable, largely due to its Christian background
- It was characterised by ‘resentment’ (French: *ressentiment*) a feeling of hatred developed from permanent experiences of inferiority.
- This feeling is capable of producing values, not ‘actively’, but ‘reactively’.

# Nietzsche IV

- Reactive values are dangerous as they are parasitic: they feed on active values which at the same time they wish to negate.
- Powerful ideas have been invented to protect and further those perverted values (e.g. 'justice').
- Crucial is the Jewish-Christian tradition:
- Its God offers ultimate ideological support for 'resentment values'.