Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1830)

- *Faith and Knowledge* (1801)
- *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1832)
- *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, esp. contributions by H.S. Harris and L. Dickey
- M. Inwood, *Hegel* (excellent introduction to his philosophy)
- T. Pinkard, *Hegel. A Biography*
- P.C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology* (full text available at Oxford Scholarship Online)
Hegel
Hegel II

• Like Schleiermacher, H. had concurrent interests in philosophy and theology, but always wrote as philosopher
• Yet: hugely influential for theology in 19\textsuperscript{th}/20\textsuperscript{th} centuries
• Also: H.’s own thought is deeply informed by his theological background
Hegel III

• Unlike Kant, H. saw the task of thinking God
• Otherwise philosophy would separate itself from most central issues and leave them to theology
• H. connects the new separation of faith and knowledge with the rise of Protestantism and its strong notion of faith (subjectivism)
Hegel IV

- This was to be shielded from analytical reason
- Solution: philosophy can think God again by mediating his transcendence with his immanence
- Adopts from theology the idea of ‘death of God’
- → ‘Speculative Good Friday’
Hegel V

- Characteristics: H. finds interesting those doctrines which Enlightenment thought had rejected (also: Incarnation, Trinity)
- Is his philosophy thus a vindication of orthodoxy?
- For H. the truth of all these doctrines becomes apparent *in philosophy*
Consequence: his school (made up of theologians, historians, jurists among others) split into a conservative and a ‘left-wing’ part over precisely this issue in the 1830s.
Week 4: Critique of Bible, Revelation, Religion

• A) David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874)
• *Life of Jesus* (1835) in English translation by ‘Marian Evans’ (=George Elliot) available online
• Ch. on Strauss in:
• A. Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (online at
David Strauss
Strauss II

- Extremely prolific and successful religious author
- In the *Life of Jesus* St. put biblical criticism back on the agenda (1835)
- Basic idea: to confront the traditional (‘supernaturalist’) and modern (‘rationalist’) exegesis of all gospel passages
- Aim: to show that both are wrong insofar as they assume the gospel narrative is meant to be historical
Strauss III

- The truth is that they are ‘mythical’
- They express an idea in the form of a story
- This idea is the coming together of God and man (Hegelian influence!)
- So to ask how ‘historical’ they are is beside the point
- St. saw this initially as a way of achieving a religiously satisfying reading of the Bible
• Strauss was a pioneer of historical criticism – many of his insights became currency
• Yet his theology too is influencing his criticism:
  • ‘The less historical the better for true faith’
  • Violent reactions followed the publication
  • In its wake St. moved ever further away from Christianity, became sharp opponent of organised religion
b) Ludwig Feuerbach (1904-1872)

- K. Ameriks (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, final ch.
- K. Barth, *Protestant Theology in the 19th Century*, ch. on Feuerbach (important for Barth’s own theology!)
Ludwig Feuerbach
Feuerbach II

• Basic idea: religion is projection:
  • God does not make man in his image, man makes God
  • Not a projection though of the individual man, but of ideal, universal man
  • All religions are inherently anthropomorphic
  • Theological attempts to purge this notion of God are rejected as ‘a subtle, devious kind of atheism’
Feuerbach III

• If all the attributes, then, are human, there is no reason there is a transcendent subject to them
• From *Essence of Christianity* (§ 2):
  ‘What is God to man, that is man’s own spirit, man’s own soul; what is man’s spirit, soul, and heart – that is his God. God is the manifestation of man’s inner nature, his expressed self; religion is the solemn unveiling of man’s hidden treasures, the avowal of his innermost thoughts, the open confession of the secrets of his love.’
Feuerbach IV

- Shift in concept of religion
- For Hegel religion was ultimately a kind of cognition
- Feuerbach sees it as essentially ‘practical’, a matter of our desire for certain goods we wish to obtain
- Religion is ‘relish’
Feuerbach V

• F. claimed this was in line with Luther
• Cf. the *Large Catechism* (on the 1st commandment):
  • ‘that upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god’
• Later theology (esp. Barth) accepted that theology had to be careful there
Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- Most works online at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/index.htm
- ‘Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right’ (1844)
- ‘Theses on Feuerbach’ (1845; published only in 1924!)
- P. Singer, Marx. A very short Introduction
- Breckman, op cit, ch. 7
Karl Marx
Marx II

- Mocking the intellectual debates of his time:
- ‘As we hear from German ideologists, Germany has in the last few years gone through an unparalleled revolution. … It was a revolution beside which the French Revolution was child’s play, a world struggle beside which the struggles of the Diadochi [successors of Alexander the Great] appear insignificant. Principles ousted one another, heroes of the mind overthrew each other with unheard-of rapidity, and in the three years 1842-45 more of the past was swept away in Germany than at other times in three centuries. All this is supposed to have taken place in the realm of pure thought.’ (The German Ideology, 1845)
Marx III

• M. essentially accepts the validity of Feuerbach’s critique of religion:
• ‘for Germany the criticism has been essentially completed’ (1844)
• Correction is needed of the underlying anthropology though:
• ‘the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.’ (1845)
Marx IV

- Man is either free or estranged, depending on the economic situation
- Thus the Hegelian idea of liberating of man to his true humanity must be achieved via a social revolution
- Consequence for religion: it is an inversion or reality which necessarily belongs to an ‘inverted’ world
Marx V

• ‘Religion is ... the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.’ (1844)

• Consequences are ambiguous: fight against religion is mistaken, but fight for social revolution will do away with religion alongside
Marx VI

• ‘Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.’ (1844)

• Opium is here almost a medication which is needed in the estranged world

• Where Feuerbach had criticised theology for its answers, M. criticises them (including F.) for asking the wrong question.