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1991

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An Appraisal Of The Leap Of Faith

Gary R. Habermas

Where has the leap of faith concept come from? What has it fostered? Does it provide an adequate foundation for the Christian faith? This article will critique the development of the leap of faith through Lessing, Kant and Kierkegaard. It will then evaluate the theological and philosophical positions that have grown from it and its present status in light of the Scriptures.

In contemporary theological thought, few concepts have had more influence than that of the leap of faith.¹ As formulated by philosophers like Gotthold Lessing, Immanuel Kant and Soren Kierkegaard,² such approaches have contributed to a fideistic foundation which has served at least as a partial epistemological basis for the theological systems of Karl Barth and others in the twentieth century theological spectrum.

We will first analyze the leap of faith as presented by these three thinkers. Then we will briefly address some of the influences that these teachings have had, followed by a general critique of this concept.

Analysis

Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781)

While working as a librarian at Wolfenbittel, Lessing acquired a 4,000 page manuscript entitled *An Apology for the Rational Worshippers of God*, written by German rationalist Hermann Reimarus. Lessing anonymously published seven fragments from this work between 1774 and 1778. In his manuscript, Reimarus had depicted Jesus not as the miracle per—

forming Son of God, but as a basically disillusioned apocalyptic preacher. Thus, Reimarus denied the supernatural aspects of the life of Jesus as they are depicted in the New Testament.³ In answer to Reimarus' denials, Lessing countered in a seeming halfhearted manner by saying that many replies could be given. But Lessing thought that it was not crucial that Reimarus' challenges be refuted because the truth of Christianity did not depend upon objective defenses of the faith, but on the value of Jesus' teachings. In other words, Lessing judged that Reimarus therefore provided no threat to Christianity because faith is not based upon history, and on whether certain events really occurred, but on the truthfulness of the teachings presented by Jesus.⁴

Lessing explained further that if he had lived during Christ's time and had witnessed His miracles and fulfilled prophecy firsthand, then he could accept these as proofs since he would have been an eyewitness to these evidences. Lessing's problem, however, was that he lived in the eighteenth century and believed that miracles were no longer observable, therefore meaning that the proof of eyewitnesses had now passed.⁵

Since the day of direct testimony was gone, modern man was left with only the records of these events. Lessing noted that he did not deny the biblical reports that Jesus both performed miracles and fulfilled prophecy. In fact, he asserted that the reports of these supernatural incidents were as trustworthy as any other historical truths. He even stated that the resurrection of Jesus was historically certain and that he had no historical grounds on which to doubt it.⁶ However, if all we have is the records of these events, Lessing was forced to decide whether such historical certainty provided any assurance on which to rest the

truthfulness of theology. He posed the question of whether history was a sufficient basis for matters of faith. Lessing's answer was that even historical certainty was not the same as the proof which was supplied to those who were

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actually eyewitnesses of these facts. Briefly, history is not an adequate replacement for the missing proof which is forever lost when it is no longer possible to be personal eyewitnesses to these events.

The basic problem behind this conclusion, as far as Lessing was concerned, was that history could only be known according to certain levels of probability. It is true that historical methodology could reveal knowledge concerning events which occurred in the past and thereby provide adequate grounds for accepting these events as fact. However, it is always possible that the data concerning a particular event were somehow in error. Accordingly, Lessing concluded that nothing could be proven, based on history, simply because historiography was not one hundred per cent accurate. This is especially the case when one endeavors to base theological truths upon history. Lessing complained that such would be to risk our most treasured beliefs on events which were known only according to the canons of probability. Therefore, one should not conclude that theological beliefs are true because of any historical basis which bears out this claim. To succinctly sum up Lessing's point in his own words, "accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."⁷

Therefore, Lessing thought that history could not support faith at all. In his own, now-celebrated, words:

That, then, is the ugly, broad ditch which I cannot get across, how ever often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap. If anyone can help me over it, let him do it, I beg him, I adjure him. He will deserve a divine reward from me.⁸

Regardless of the inability of history to provide a basis for faith, Lessing declared that he was still not deterred in believing the theological truths of Christianity. He declared his acceptance of Jesus' teachings on non-evidential grounds.⁹ As we will observe, Lessing provided an impetus for others who also desired to divorce history from faith. History was only capable of establishing events according to probability, while faith demanded a more solid foundation.

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Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Although somewhat differently, Kant also separated empirical knowledge from religious truth. However, such a study involves the broader topic of Kant's epistemology, which is far beyond the scope and intent of this essay. Therefore, it should be noted that we will specifically address Kant's contribution to the subject of the leap of faith as shown by his separation of history and faith.

For Kant, miracles in the life of Jesus, such as the virgin birth, do not provide practical benefit regarding the acceptance of Christianity. In fact, miracles are actually a hindrance in that they elevate Jesus so that he can no longer serve as a human example for us. If our doctrine depended on such historical events, that would be a different matter. But our beliefs do not rely on such historical confirmation, but upon the moral commands engraved on the heart and known by practical reason.

Therefore, miracles are superfluous; morality does not need historical vindication. Rather, morality is self-authenticating, derived by the pure faith of practical reason.¹⁰ The result is a distinct separation between historical events and moral commitment. A test case is Jesus' resurrection. Kant holds that this occurrence cannot be employed in the interest of a religion based on practical reason. This event is even burdensome to true faith, which requires no miraculous evidence.¹¹

Yet, it still does not follow that the facticity of miracles ought to be questioned. For Kant, sensible persons will recognize that miracles may occur; we need not dispense with them, especially in the life of Christ. But

we should also avoid basing our belief on their occurrence. Again, practical reason provides its own truthfulness and does not need objective evidences.¹² And like Lessing, Kant declares that historiography could always involve some efforts.¹³

So Kant regarded the empirical data of history as insufficient to communicate the reality of transcendent truths.

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Seemingly utilizing Lessing's analogy, Kant concluded that between these two categories exists "a mighty chasm, the overleaping of which leads at once to anthropomorphism."¹⁴ We note that Lessing's ugly ditch had become, for Kant, a "mighty chasm."

To conclude this brief section, Immanuel Kant agreed with Lessing that history provided no basis for faith. Miracles may actually have occurred, yet religious belief does not depend or build on them. The moral commands written on man's heart, revealed by practical reason, are all that is needed.

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

The writings of Kierkegaard contain one of the most indepth treatments of the concept of the leap of faith, even though the nature of this philosopher's own view on the subject is hotly disputed. Regardless, the view taken in this essay is that Kierkegaard was a major influence on the separation of history and faith, even if he did not mean to be so.¹⁵

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In spite of the fact that many philosophers had championed the cause of reason as the chief criteria for judging truthclaims, Kierkegaard's works argued that such approaches were invalid. He defended the dictum that "Truth is Subjectivity." This was especially true of eternal truth and values.¹⁶

Kierkegaard declared that disciplines such as mathematics or history could yield true, objective facts, but they cannot lead one to eternal truth. In this last sense, at least, objectivity fails, because, once again, "Truth is Subjectivity."

Subjectivity culminated in "passion," which is its highest expression. Faith, in turn, is said to be the ultimate passion.¹⁷ Therefore, faith is the apex of religious knowledge. In sum, since subjectivity is the way to Truth and faith is the ultimate expression of subjectivity, it follows that we can only learn truth about God by an inner process, by faith in Him.

Thus it is impossible to find God by any objective means; He is inaccessible by such approaches. God is Subject and can only be known subjectively. Emphasizing his point, Kierkegaard even argued that an objective faith is paganistic.¹⁸

So when reason attempts to prove God's existence, it reaches a dead end. Reason can be taken as far as possible, only to find that it cannot reveal God. In fact, after all attempts to make God known by such proofs, it is found that He is no closer than before. In short, reason does not reach God at all.¹⁹

But beyond philosophical arguments, Kierkegaard followed Lessing in stating that historical evidences also provide no support for believing religious truths. To state the position succinctly, "there can in all eternity be no direct transition from the historical to the eternal, whether the historical is contemporary or not."²⁰ So whether an individual was contemporary with the historical facts or whether he was removed by generations, it

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made no ultimate difference. Here Kierkegaard seemed to go even further than Lessing, who at least stated that being contemporary with Jesus' miracles and the fulfillment of prophecy would have provided a proof. For Kierkegaard, however, contemporaneity provided no advantage. Therefore, both proofs for God's

existence and historical evidences are disavowed as means by which to reach God. Since eternal truth is achieved by a subjective expression of faith, objective approaches such as these cannot yield either a true faith or eternal happiness.²¹

Kierkegaard was still clear in his belief that Jesus was an historical Person, having entered time as a man. Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again in history.²²

Even though these events are truly historical, however, they comprise the supreme Christian paradox because the incarnation is rationally inexplicable. Such occurrences may even be termed contradictory because human reason dictates that they are impossible. So even though the incarnation actually took place, miracles such as Jesus' resurrection cannot be established historically (or by other means). It is impossible to demonstrate a contradiction, even though it actually occurred! Neither can evidences make such paradoxes any less absurd or contradictory.²³

Kierkegaard did think that historical probabilities may be obtained in favor of events in Jesus' life. However, such really only complicate the issue because that which is known to be true according to probability cannot be believed. To the contrary, Christian truth demands faith, which is the only way to jump the probability gap and provide one with certainty. Only by faith in this ultimate paradox can a person find eternal happiness.²⁴

Kierkegaard's stress on the leap of faith came from this emphasis upon subjectivity. God cannot be reached by theistic proofs, historical evidences or any other objective means. As long as one insists on holding to such modes of verification, God's existence will never be accurately understood. Only when these demonstrations are forsaken and God is trusted by faith may one be assured that God does exist. For Kierkegaard,

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the leap of faith occurs in that moment when the individual renounces of his rational endeavors to reach God and embraces Him by faith alone. In this sense, Lessing's ugly ditch is bridged by faith, as one leaps to God without any verification.²⁵

So Kierkegaard emphasized the need for faith in God; all objective approaches fail to approach Him. One finds the way to eternal happiness at that moment at which he relinquishes these evidences and leaps to God by faith. For Kierkegaard, truth was subjectivity.

A Comparison of Viewpoints

In analyzing the viewpoints of Lessing, Kant and Kierkegaard on the subject of the leap of faith, there are at least three closely-related areas of agreement between these philosophers. First, the truthfulness of Christianity cannot be established by philosophical, historical or other objective approaches. So while history can establish events, it cannot convey eternal truth.

Second, the issue is further complicated in that historical facts can only be recognized as true according to the canons of probability; there may always be errors in historical reports. Further, Kierkegaard insists that if it can be ascertained that a given event such as a miracle actually occurred, it can no longer be trusted by faith alone.

Third, the essence of Christianity resides in a more subjective mode. For Lessing, the stress is on the truthfulness of Jesus' message apart from history. For Kant, the key is the moral standard written on one's heart. For Kierkegaard, the answer is found in a radical faith in God completely independent of any objective evidences.

This is not to minimize the differing systems of these three philosophers, but they agree that religious truth is not based on any objective, evidential approaches to God. But beyond the issue of evidences and faith, at least Kant seems to think that a factual basis is not even crucial. Specifically on their views concerning the leap of faith, there are some close similarities.

Influences

We have noted that the concept of the leap of faith, as formulated by Lessing, Kant and Kierkegaard, has had an immense influence on contemporary theology. Utilizing similar methodologies, many modern critical scholars have also assumed or asserted that one cannot require historical or other evidential reasoning on behalf of Christianity. One can only affirm the Christian faith independent of such demonstrations. Perhaps even a brief survey of a major strain in contemporary thought will reveal this thesis.

This influence can be seen very plainly in the twentieth century in the early writings of Karl Barth. For instance, in his epoch-making work *The Epistle to the Romans*, Barth addressed the need to exercise faith in Christ and His resurrection, asserting that this encounter is “the impossible possibility of all possibilities, as the abyss into which no man can leap and yet into which we do all leap.”²⁶ Lessing’s “ugly ditch” and Kant’s “mighty chasm,” which we do not jump, have become an “abyss” into which we take a leap by exercising faith in Christ.²⁷

In an early lecture delivered in 1920, Barth stated that the Easter message is the theme of Scripture. He explained that the resurrection actually happened, but not as normal history. For one thing, it ought to be believed, but is totally beyond proof. This distinction between the resurrection both being and not being history at the same time is also clearly present in *The Epistle to the Romans*²⁸ Then he declared:

But let us not for moment conceal from ourselves the fact that obedience to this vision — our actual acceptance of what the Bible proposes — is a step into space, an undertaking of unknown consequences, a venture into eternity. Better first to stop and count the cost, than to leap too short.²⁹

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These are not the only examples of Barth’s “leap language.” In a 1922 discourse, he made a theological reference to the “unbridgeable chasm,”³⁰ a phrase very much reminiscent of Kant’s. Significantly, Barth claimed that his inspiration for some of these ideas came from Kierkegaard.³¹

So Barth believed that Christians made a leap of faith when believing God’s message and that such was apart from any historical or other evidences. He pointed out often that events such as Jesus’ resurrection are “beyond proof”³² and are thus not open to historical investigation, but are to be grasped by faith alone.³³

Such a position is not only a feature of the early Barth. In this theologian’s later stages he did not alter his fundamental position. For example, he thought that Jesus’ resurrection should not be proven, because the gospel message is based on faith, not on historical verification.³⁴ But to be clear (and similar to Kierkegaard), Barth still believed that Jesus literally rose from the dead. In fact, he appears to be more clear about this in his later writings.³⁵

Whether speaking of the early or the later Barth, then, the truth of Christianity is to be accepted by faith and not by any type of historical or other verification. In this conclusion Barth especially follows the teachings of Kierkegaard. Further, both conceive of miracles such as the resurrection as actually occurring but in a somewhat different order of history than that of normal events.³⁶

Many neo-orthodox theologians also agreed with Barth’s

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position concerning the lack of any need for verification of the gospel, thereby keeping faith separate from evidences. For instance, Emil Brunner appears to struggle in his answer to the question of whether and in what sense it might be said that Jesus really did rise from the dead. It is quite plain, however, that he believed that faith cannot be based on any type of historical investigation at all. Much like Lessing and Kierkegaard, Brunner thought that the uncertainty of history made it a precarious basis for faith.³⁷

Similarly, Dietrich Bonhoeffer held that knowledge concerning Jesus Christ cannot be grounded in historical inquiry. Such objective confirmation is irrelevant to the Christian faith, which needs no such verification. Accordingly, Jesus Christ remains a paradox to human reason.³⁸

Reinhold Niebuhr held a similar view. Efforts to bolster the Christian faith by historical investigation were actually expressions of skepticism. Such a practice was in opposition to true faith because Jesus Christ cannot be known by history, but only by the exercise of faith.³⁹

Even this brief survey provides an example of how certain neo-orthodox theologians followed Barth on the separation of faith and historical investigation. Barth, in turn, had been strongly influenced by the position of earlier scholars such as Kierkegaard. Others in the twentieth century were likewise convinced of the validity of these views.⁴⁰

The separation of faith from historical evidences, if not from the actual facts themselves,⁴¹ has perhaps been the prevail—

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ing attitude on this subject through a large portion of the twentieth century. But there are a number of signs that what had perhaps been the most influential attitude for so much of this century is much less popular today. This is partially because the contemporary theological fragmentation has manifested varying amounts of dissatisfaction with the formerly predominant existential tendencies in critical theology earlier this century.

However, even our brief survey has argued that the theses of Lessing, Kant and Kierkegaard concerning the inability of historical verification to bolster faith have exercised tremendous influence on twentieth century theological thought and still continue to do so. A critique of this general viewpoint will serve as a conclusion for this study.

Critique

Initially, it must be admitted that certain fideistic approaches to Christian truth have contributed some positive emphases to theology. For example, these scholars are certainly correct in insisting that objective investigations are not substitutes for faith in God. Also, the emphasis on a believer's radical commitment to God is quite a welcome facet of such systems. Additionally, many fideistic believers do accept the God of the Scriptures and His Self-revelation to man.

Yet, in spite of these positive emphases, there are several major criticisms which plague the general attitude outlined in this essay. Three such problems will be outlined here.

First, apart from some sort of basis for belief, how can it be known if a faith system is legitimate or not? Granted, scholars such as Lessing and Kierkegaard reject the need for such validation. However, apart from such objective data, how can their claims even be judged?

For example, how can it be known that Christianity is the only true religion? Faith in another system could as easily be urged by these fideistic means. Or how do we choose between competing options? Should we urge others to "simply believe?" And are Muslims free to believe in their own revelation?⁴²

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So it ought to be plain that such methodologies never allow us to be sure if our faith is spurious or not. Perhaps faith was not exercised in the correct way. What if the object of ones faith was ultimately incapable of sustaining that belief, such as would be the case if another religion was chosen?

Another problem is that such faith cannot even be distinguished from human emotions. In brief, "I feel" could easily be substituted for "I know," apart from any testable criteria.

Kierkegaard was fond of encouraging others to accept the truth of Christianity by faith, thereby achieving "eternal happiness." But again, if he objected to demonstration, how can belief be enjoined upon others? As

summarized elsewhere:

to abandon a rational basis for faith can lead to eternal happiness only if one simply ignores any faith-related questions that might arise, such as these which have been raised here. One would have to wear earmuffs and blinders of irrationality in order to forsake all needs and desires to rationalize just so that one might achieve a temporary and fleeting “eternal happiness” which lasts only until the next doubt arises. And the questions raised here would still remain unanswered — one would never know if one’s faith-commitment was valid or even if it was warranted in the first place.⁴³

This first criticism may be summarized:

faith is not simply a cerebral exercise devoid of consequences if it just happened to be false. Much is at risk for those who place high value (indeed, eternal value) in their faith if it is found to be illegitimate.⁴⁴

A second major criticism of systems which espouse the leap of faith concerns the rejection of history as a legitimate basis for faith. In opposition to this thesis, history is a valid foundation for faith for several reasons.

Initially, just because historical research may be in error does not mean that it must be so; it could also be accurate. So it would be incumbent upon the critic to show where the error is located.

Also, to describe history in terms of probability language

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is misleading. As Lessing and Kierkegaard acknowledge, history can basically be known like other objective disciplines. But to opt for “faith language” in light of the very nonrational and answerable problems in historiography does not somehow magically transport us above the vagaries of history. In other words, to flee to the realm of some sort of self-authenticating faith does not solve the pithy problems raised above. But history does constitute a valid process of inquiry.⁴⁵ Subsequently, while Lessing is correct that historical records are not the same as personally being an eyewitness, it does not follow that history is somehow incompetent to discover data of the past. As we have said, even Lessing thought that such historical data was discoverable. So the issue of eyewitness observance versus history is a smoke screen. Indeed, historiography largely attempts to investigate eyewitness records.

Further, to reject history would be to reject inductive principles similar to those which we accept in everyday life. Actually, inductive grounds are used daily in regards to decision-making, our health, choosing food to eat, or which job to accept.

Additionally, historical principles such as eyewitness testimony are employed in Scripture itself. How do we even preach the gospel data of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ without using some of the same standards?

Continuing, the New Testament cites the historical evidence for the gospel on many occasions, specifically encouraging belief in this data.⁴⁶ Why should Christians have problems with such an historical basis when Scripture encourages it? These last two points alone should be sufficient for believers to note significant problems with this entire methodology.

Earlier we differentiated between fideistic approaches which deny evidences and those which denounce both facts and evidences. The third major critique especially concerns the latter group, but sometimes applies to the former, as well. To question or disallow the facts is ultimately to question the gospel data itself.

In other words, when one attempts too strenuously to

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separate facts from faith, the New Testament teaching that salvation depends on both the gospel facts and

faith is in jeopardy. Although faith is undeniably an indispensable part of the salvation message (Heb. 11:6), so is the factual content also necessary. Without the latter, there is also no biblical salvation; faith, without a basis, is vain and cannot stand alone (1 Cor. 15:14, 17).

The lesson of history is that even to begin to play down either one side of salvation or the other (gospel facts + faith=salvation⁴⁷) is to tip the scales precariously out of balance. But neither side of the “equation” should be elevated above the other. Yet, while some “leapers” still affirmed the historicity of the gospel facts (Kierkegaard, Barth), others concluded that these data were either not true or were at least superfluous (Kant, R. Niebuhr, Bultmann).

One side-lesson here is that some confuse evidences with the facts themselves. While one can certainly deny the pursuit of evidence and be a believer, denying the gospel facts would rule out that possibility (1 Cor. 15:1–5). But fideism denies at least the first, and sometimes the second, as well. To trifle with the factual basis of the gospel is indeed a risky undertaking, even in terms of eternity!

This critique may be summarized briefly. First, in terms of legitimation, the Christian faith needs an objective foundation, even in order to enjoin it upon others. Second, history provides an adequate basis, especially when we find it utilized repeatedly in Scripture. Third, fideism comes precariously close to denying the gospel facts themselves, and even does so in a number of scholars.

In short, fideistic approaches have been very popular and have had an immense influence. However, to assert that such views are extremely dangerous is not just to make a theoretical critique; the problem strikes at the very heart of the central Christian message of the gospel. Such leap of faith positions fail to provide the Christian faith with an adequate biblical, theological, philosophical or apologetic foundation.

¹An earlier version of this article in a somewhat different form was published in *The Bulletin of the Evangelical Philosophical Society*, volume 11, 1979. Used by permission.

²The interpretation of Kierkegaard that he did not hold the position outlined below but was actually offering a critique or even a parody of it will be discussed below.

³Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, translated by W. Montgomery from the first German edition of 1906 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 13–26.

⁴Gotthold Lessing, “On the Proof of the Spirit and Power,” *Lessing’s Theological Writings*, edited by Henry Chadwick (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956), 9–29.

⁵*Ibid.*, especially 51–52.

⁶*Ibid.*, especially 53–55.

⁷*Ibid.*, 53; cf. 53–54.

⁸*Ibid.*, 55.

⁹*Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, translated by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1960), 57–58, 79, 120.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 119, footnote.

¹²*Ibid.*, especially 79–83, 120.

¹³*Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 59, footnote. See Daniel Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 37.

¹⁵A major issue concerns whether Kierkegaard actually favored the separation of history and faith, or if he

was conversely offering a critique or even a parody of that position. An important element in this discussion turns on Kierkegaard's usage of pseudonymous authorship in his writings and what portions of these writings truly represent his own views. But if *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is attributed to Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard's *Training in Christianity* (translated by Walter Lowrie [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941]), issued under his own name, still includes some of the same crucial language which characterizes the texts we mention below. (See pages 388–393 in the Princeton University Press edition.) Compare also R. Friedman, "Kierkegaard: First Existentialist or Last Kantian?" *Religious Studies*, volume 18 (1982), 159–170. The issue will not be argued here, except to say that even if Kierkegaard did not hold the position espoused in this essay, he is still one of the most influential proponents of it in that it is the predominant interpretation of his views and because the alternative position does not appear to be overly clear from his writings. In other words, we will argue here that Kierkegaard provided further influence for the separation of faith and history whether he meant to or not. So if he was attempting to somehow critique the position, he disguised it so cleverly that the predominant interpretation holds that he actually held that historical investigation should be disengaged from faith.

¹⁶Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), Part Two, Chapter 11. See p. 173, for instance.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 118, 176–179.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 42, 116–117, 178–179.

¹⁹Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by David Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 49–57.

²⁰Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 89; cf. 47.

²¹*Ibid.*, 33, 42, 45.

²²*Ibid.*, 188, 194; *Training in Christianity* (Princeton Edition), 261–271, for examples.

²³*Ibid.*, 189–190; cf. 30.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 42–43, 189–190.

²⁵Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, especially 53.

²⁶Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 381.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 381–382.

²⁸This distinction between the resurrection both being and not being history at the same time is also clearly present in *The Epistle to the Romans*. See 29–30, for example.

²⁹Karl Barth, "Biblical Questions, Insights, and Vistas," *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated by Douglas Horton (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 51–96. This quote is from 86.

³⁰Karl Barth, "The Problem of Ethics Today", *Ibid.*, 136–182. This quote is from 168; cf. 170.

³¹Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 10.

³²Barth, "Biblical Questions, Insights and Vistas," 90–92.

³³See Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, translated by H. J. Sterming (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933), 130–145.

³⁴See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, translated by G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1961), volume IV, Part 1, 334–336; Karl Barth, *The Faith of The Church*, translated by Gabriel Vahanian, edited by Jean-Louis Leuba (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), 105–108.

³⁵Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 351–352.

³⁶Compare the above passages from Barth (especially those in footnote 35) with Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity* (Princeton edition), 392.

³⁷Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), volume II, 366–372.

³⁸Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, translated by John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), 71–77.

³⁹Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 148, for example.

⁴⁰For examples, see Gunther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), 131, 180, 184, and Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 61–62, 71–72, 80.

⁴¹Here we are distinguishing between the views of those who think that faith need not rest upon any evidential basis and those who hold the far more radical belief that faith needs neither evidences nor the facts themselves. Both opinions are found among those cited in this essay.

⁴²Some Christians may be properly inclined to argue that Scripture provides just such a basis. But it must be remembered that most (if not all) of the scholars mentioned above would argue that strict adherence to the Bible would simply constitute another form of objectivity which is not an adequate basis for faith. So we continue to perceive the far-reaching affects of the leap of faith position.

⁴³Gary R. Habermas, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Rational Inquiry* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1976), 193.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 192.

⁴⁵For details, see Gary R. Habermas, "Probability Calculus, Proof, and Christian Apologetics," *The Simon Greenleaf Law Review* forthcoming.

⁴⁶For examples in the Book of Acts alone, see Acts 2:22–24; 10:29–43; 13:27–39; 17:1–4, 22–34; 26:4–23, 26–27. But see also footnote 47.

⁴⁷We wish to note here very clearly that while the gospel facts are indispensable in the schema of salvation, saving faith is not placed only in the facts themselves, but chiefly in the Jesus Christ of the facts. In short, saving faith is placed in a Person who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again, not just in the historical facts per se.

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