

with some further remarks from his journals where he reflects on the imitation of Christ in relation to the ideas that Christ is not simply the prototype but the Redeemer and that 'the Redeemer wants to save all'. These remarks indicate the profound significance that the Christian direct discourse has on the nature of the Christian life and on the very psychological possibility of living that way of life:

The Atonement and grace are and remain definitive. All striving toward imitation, when the moment of death brings it to an end and one stands before God, will be sheer paltriness—therefore Atonement and grace are needed. Furthermore, as long as there is striving, the Atonement will constantly be needed to prevent this striving from being transformed into agonising anxiety in which a man is burned up, so to speak, and less than ever begins to strive. Finally, while there is striving, every other second a mistake is made, something is neglected, there is sin—therefore the Atonement is unconditionally needed.

Although it is of the utmost seriousness, imitation should be like a jest, a childlike act—if it is to mean something in earnest, that is, be of any value before God—the Atonement is the earnestness. It is detestable, however, for a man to want to use grace, 'since all is grace', to avoid all striving.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Gregor Malantschuk in *Kierkegaard's Thought*, trs. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 364f.

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J. P. GABLER AND THE DISTINCTION  
BETWEEN BIBLICAL AND DOGMATIC  
THEOLOGY: TRANSLATION,  
COMMENTARY, AND DISCUSSION OF  
HIS ORIGINALITY

by DR JOHN SANDYS-WUNSCH

and

DR LAURENCE ELDREDGE

GABLER'S inaugural address *De justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus* was written in a very complex, classically-based Latin, but the ideas he expressed were those of eighteenth-century Enlightenment theology. The responsibility for this translation was shared in that Dr Eldredge dealt with the philological and idiomatic sense of the Latin, and Dr Sandys-Wunsch filled in the theological background to Gabler's thought. Dr Sandys-Wunsch alone is responsible for the commentary and discussion.

There is evidence that the address was published in 1787, but this edition may no longer be extant. The text used in this translation is that given in the second volume of Gabler's *Kleinere Theologische Schriften* (Ulm: 1831), pp. 179-98, edited by his sons after his death. For convenience of reference we have indicated approximately the pagination from this volume in the body of our translation.

An excellent translation into German is found in Otto Merk, *Biblische Theologie des neuen Testaments in ihrer Anfangszeit* (Marburg: Elwert, 1972), pp. 273-84. We have, however, on occasion differed from him in matters falling into that grey area that lies between etymology and interpretation. There is also a partial translation into English in W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (London: S.C.M., 1973), pp. 98-100.

Footnotes with Latin numerals are Gabler's; those with Arabic numerals are ours. Gabler's footnotes have been altered in two respects; they have been numbered consecutively

and the bibliographical details they contain have been enriched where possible.

Conventions referring to deceased scholars in the eighteenth century do not translate well into English. Faced with the choice between incongruity and anachronism we have opted for the latter; for example, 'the late Professor Zachariae' instead of 'the blessed Zachariae'.

## I. TRANSLATION

### An Oration

#### ON THE PROPER DISTINCTION BETWEEN BIBLICAL AND DOGMATIC THEOLOGY AND THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF EACH

which was given on March 30, 1787, by Magister Johann Philipp Gabler as part of the inaugural duty of the Professor Ordinarius of Theology in Alma Altorfina

Magnificent Lord, Rector of the Academy;

Most Generous Lord, prefect of this town and surrounding area;

Most revered, learned, experienced and esteemed men;

Most excellent and most celebrated professors of all faculties;

Patrons of the college, united in your support;

and you, students, a select group with respect to your nobility of both virtue and family;

Most splendid and worthy audience of all faculties:

All who are devoted to the sacred faith of Christianity, most worthy listeners, profess with one united voice that the sacred books, especially of the New Testament, are the one clear source from which //180 all true knowledge of the Christian religion is drawn. And they profess too that these books are the only secure sanctuary to which we can flee in the face of the ambiguity and vicissitude of human knowledge, if we aspire to a solid understanding of divine matters and if we wish to obtain a firm and certain hope of salvation. Given this agreement of all these religious opinions, why then do these points of contention arise? Why these fatal discords of the various sects? Doubtless this dissension originates in part from the occasional

obscurity of the sacred Scriptures themselves; in part from that depraved custom of reading one's own opinions and judgments into the Bible, or from a servile manner of interpreting it. Doubtless the dissension also arises from the neglected distinction between religion and theology; and finally it arises from an inappropriate combination of the simplicity and ease of biblical theology with the subtlety and difficulty of dogmatic theology.

Surely it is the case that the sacred books, whether we look at the words alone or at the concepts they convey, are frequently and in many places veiled by a deep obscurity—and this is easily demonstrated; for one thing it is self-evident and for another a host of useless exegetical works proclaims it. The causes of this state of affairs are many: first the very nature and quality of the matters transmitted in these books; second, the unusualness of the individual words and of the mode of expression as a whole; third, the way of thinking behind times and customs very different from our own; fourth and finally, the ignorance of many people of the proper way of interpreting these books, whether it is due to the ancient characteristics of the text as a whole or to the language peculiar to each scriptural writer. //181 But before this audience it is of little importance to describe each and every one of these causes, since it is self-evident that the obscurity of the Holy Scriptures, whatever its source, must give rise to a great variety of opinion. Also one need not discuss at length that unfortunate fellow who heedlessly dared to attribute some of his own most insubstantial opinions to the sacred writers themselves—how he increased the unhappy fate of our religion! There may even be some like him who would like to solidify the frothiness of such opinions about the sacred authors; for it is certainly something to give a divine appearance to their human ideas. Those completely unable to interpret correctly must inevitably inflict violence upon the sacred books; truly we even notice that often the wisest and most skilled of interpreters goes astray, so much so that, disregarding the laws of correct interpretation, they indulge their own ingenuity for its own sake. And let us not think then that it is suitable and legitimate for those who use the sacred words to tear what pleases them from its context in the sacred Scriptures; for it happens again and again that, when they cling to the words and do not pay attention to the mode

of expression peculiar to the sacred writers, they express something other than the true sense of these authors. And if they continue to use metaphors when the context demands universal notions, then they may persuade themselves to say that some meaning which they brought to the sacred texts in the first place, actually comes from the sacred texts.<sup>1</sup>

//182 Another cause of discord, a most serious one, is the neglected distinction between religion and theology; for if some people apply to religion what is proper to theology, it is easy to understand that there would be enormous room for the sharpest differences of opinion, and these differences will be even more destructive because each party to the quarrel will only with great reluctance surrender what he considers to pertain to religion. However, after the work of Ernesti, Semler, Spalding, Toellner, and others, most recently the venerable Tittmann<sup>11</sup> has shown us brilliantly that there is considerable difference between religion and theology. For, if I may quote this excellent scholar, religion is passed on by the doctrine in the Scriptures, teaching what each Christian ought to know and believe and do in order to secure happiness in this life and in the life to come. Religion then, is every-day, transparently clear knowledge; but theology is subtle, learned knowledge, surrounded by a retinue of many disciplines, and by the same token derived not only from the sacred Scripture but also from elsewhere, especially from the domain of philosophy and history. It is therefore a field elaborated by human discipline and ingenuity. It is also a field that is advanced by careful and discriminating observation //183 that experiences various changes along with other fields. Not only does theology deal with things proper to the Christian religion, but it also explains carefully and fully all connected matters; and finally it makes a place for them with the subtlety and rigor of logic. But religion for the common man has nothing to do with this abundance of literature and history.

<sup>1</sup> The best things to read in this connexion are the observations truly and learnedly made by the late immortal J. A. Ernesti in his learned work *Pro grammatica interpretatione librorum sacrorum* and *De vanitate philosophantium in interpretatione librorum sacrorum*, in *Opuscula Philologica* (2nd ed.; Leiden, Luchman, 1764) 219-32 and 233-51; and the very distinguished Morus in *Prolus. de discrimine sensus et significationis in interpretando* (Leipzig, 1777).

<sup>11</sup> C. C. Tittmann, *Progr(amm) de discrimine theologiae et religionis* (Wittemberg, 1782).

But this sad and unfortunate difference of opinion has always been and, alas, always will be associated with that readiness to mix completely diverse things, for instance the simplicity of what they call biblical theology with the subtlety of dogmatic theology; although it certainly seems to me that the one thing must be more sharply distinguished from the other than has been common practice up to now. And what I should like to establish here is the necessity of making this distinction and the method to be followed. This is what I have decided to expound in this brief speech of mine in so far as the weakness of my powers allows and in so far as it can be done. Therefore, most honored listeners of all faculties<sup>1</sup> I strongly beg your indulgence. Would you grant me open ears and minds and be so kind as to follow me as I venture to consider these increasingly important matters. I pray and ask each and every one of you for your attention as far as is necessary so that I may speak my mind as clearly as possible.

There is truly a biblical theology, of historical origin, conveying what the holy writers felt about divine matters; on the other hand there is a dogmatic theology //184 of didactic origin, teaching what each theologian philosophises rationally about divine things, according to the measure of his ability or of the times, age, place, sect, school, and other similar factors. Biblical theology, as is proper to historical argument, is always in accord with itself when considered by itself—although even biblical theology when elaborated by one of the disciplines may be fashioned in one way by some and in another way by others. But dogmatic theology is subject to a multiplicity of change along with the rest of the humane disciplines; constant and perpetual observation over many centuries shows this enough and to spare. How greatly the churches of the learned differ from the first beginnings of the Christian religion; how many systems the fathers attributed to each variety of era and setting!<sup>2</sup> For history teaches that there is a chronology and a geography to theology itself. How much the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages, covered with the thick gloom of barbarity, differs from the discipline of the fathers! Even after the light

<sup>1</sup> A.O.O.H. Presumably an abbreviation for *Auditores omnium ordinum honorabiles*.

<sup>2</sup> The translation here represents a conjectural emendation of the untranslatable Latin text. *Quanta* has been added before *Patres*.

of the doctrine of salvation had emerged from these shadows, every point of difference in theology was endured even in the purified church, if I may refer to Socinian and Arminian factions. Or if I may refer to the Lutheran church alone, the teaching of Chemnitz and Gerhard is one thing, that of Calov another, that of Museus and Baier another, that of Budde another, that of Pfaff and Mosheim another, that of Baumgarten another, that of Carpov another, that of Michaelis and Heilmann another, that of Ernesti and Zachariae another, that of Teller another, that of Walch and Carpzov another, that of Semler another, and that of Doederlein finally another. But the sacred writers are surely not so changeable that they should in this fashion be able to assume these different types and forms of theological doctrine. What I do not wish to be said, however, //185 is that all things in theology should be considered uncertain or doubtful or that all things should be allowed according to human will alone. But let those things that have been said up to now be worth this much: that we distinguish carefully the divine from the human, that we establish some distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology, and after we have separated those things which in the sacred books refer most immediately to their own times and to the men of those times from those pure notions which divine providence wished to be characteristic of all times and places, let us then construct the foundation of our philosophy upon religion and let us designate with some care the objectives of divine and human wisdom. Exactly thus will our theology be made more certain and more firm, and there will be nothing further to be feared for it from the most savage attack from its enemies. The late Professor Zachariae did this very capably,<sup>111</sup> but I hardly need to remind you of the fact that he left some things for others to emend, define more correctly, and amplify. However, everything comes to this, that on the one hand we hold firmly to a just method for cautiously giving shape to our interpretations of the sacred authors; and on the other that we rightly establish the use in dogmatics of these interpretations and dogmatics' own objectives.

The first task then in this most serious matter is to gather

<sup>111</sup> G. T. Zachariae in his noted work *Biblische Theologie* (5 vols.; Göttingen and Kiel, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1775, 1786).

carefully the sacred ideas and, if they are not expressed in the sacred Scriptures, let us fashion them ourselves from passages that we compare with each other. In order that the task proceed productively and that nothing is done fearfully or with partiality, //186 it is necessary to use complete caution and circumspection in all respects. Before all else, the following will have to be taken into account: in the sacred books are contained the opinions not of a single man nor of one and the same era or religion. Yet all the sacred writers are holy men and are armed with divine authority; but not all attest to the same form of religion; some are doctors of the Old Testament of the same elements that Paul himself designated with the name 'basic elements';<sup>1</sup> others are of the newer and better Christian Testament. And so the sacred authors, however much we must cherish them with equal reverence because of the divine authority that has been imprinted on their writings, cannot all be considered in the same category if we are referring to their use in dogmatics. I would certainly not suggest that a holy man's own native intelligence and his natural way of knowing things are destroyed altogether by inspiration. Finally since especially in this context it is next asked what each of these men felt about divine things (this can be understood not from any traditional appeal to divine authority but from their books) I should judge it sufficient in any event that we do not appear to concede anything which lacks some proof. I should also judge that when it is a case of the use in dogmatics of biblical ideas, then it is of no consequence under what authority these men wrote, but what they perceived this occasion of divine inspiration clearly transmitted and what they perceived it finally meant. That being the case it is necessary, unless we want to labour uselessly, to distinguish among each of the periods in the Old and New Testaments, each of the authors, and each of the manners of speaking //187 which each used as a reflection of time and place, whether these manners are historical or didactic or poetic. If we abandon this straight road, even though it is troublesome and of little delight, it can only result in our wandering into some deviation or uncertainty. Therefore we

<sup>1</sup> The expression from Gal 4.9 is cited in Greek in Gabler's text. It is translated here as Gabler understood it but many modern commentators would interpret it otherwise.

must carefully collect and classify each of the ideas of each patriarch—Moses, David, and Solomon, and of each prophet with special attention to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Zachariah, Haggai, Malachi, and the rest; and for many reasons we ought to include the apocryphal books for this same purpose; also we should include the ideas from the epoch of the New Testament, those of Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, and James. Above all, this process is completed in two ways: the one is in the legitimate interpretation of passages pertinent to this procedure; the other is in the careful comparison of the ideas of all the sacred authors among themselves.

The first of these two involves many difficulties.<sup>iv</sup> For not only must we consider here the linguistic problem of the language then in use, which in the New Testament is both graeco-Hebrew and the vulgar Greek of the time; we must also consider that which is peculiar to each writer; that is, the uses of the meaning that a particular word may have in one certain place whether // 188 that meaning be broader or narrower. Also we should add the reason for the divergence of these uses and explain, if possible, the common meaning in which several instances of the same word fall together.<sup>v</sup> But we must also investigate the power and reason of the meaning itself; what is the primary idea of the word, and what merely added to it. For the interpreter who is on his guard must not stop short at the primary idea in the word, but he must also press on to the secondary idea which has been added to it either through long use or through ingenuity or through scholarly use of the word, and in so doing one may certainly make the most egregious of blunders. Let us not by applying tropes<sup>1</sup> forge new dogmas about which the authors themselves never thought. Not only in prophetic or poetic books but also in the writings of the Apostles there are often improper uses of words which should be traced either to an abundance of genius or to the traditional usage of opponents, or to the use of words familiar to the first

<sup>iv</sup> The late Professor Ernesti warned us of this problem in his distinguished fashion in his two works *De difficultatibus N.T. recte interpretandi* and *De difficultate interpretationis grammatica N.T.*, in *Opuscula Philologica*, 198-218 and 252-87.

<sup>v</sup> That excellent man S. F. N. Morus in his *Prolus. de nexu significationum eiusdem verbi* (Leipzig, 1776) has taught us what caution must be observed in interpreting the relationship amongst meanings of the same word.

<sup>1</sup> This is a technical term referring to allegorical or similar methods of extracting a 'spiritual' meaning from a text.

readers.<sup>vi</sup> Up to now this is mostly done when we are comparing carefully many opinions of the same author, such as Paul; in comparing many things and words, // 189 we reduce to one idea and thing the many passages which, although variously expressed, show the same meaning. Morus<sup>vii</sup> recently showed and illustrated all this in a distinguished fashion—a very great man whose reputation is his monument. Finally one must properly distinguish whether the Apostle is speaking his own words or those of others; whether he is moved only to describe some opinion or truly to prove it; and if he wants to do the latter, does he repeat the argument from the basic nature of the doctrine of salvation, or from the sayings of the books of the Old Testament, and even accommodating them to the sense of the first readers? For although the opinions of the Apostles deserve our trust, so that we may easily get along without some part of their argument, the first readers nonetheless wanted the proofs that were appropriate to their own sense and judgment. Therefore, it is of great interest whether the Apostle proposes some opinion as a part of Christian doctrine or some opinion that is shaped to the needs of the time, which must be considered merely premises, as the logicians call them. If we rightly hold on to all these things, then indeed we shall draw out the true sacred ideas typical of each author; certainly not all the ideas, for there is no place for everything in the books that have come down to us, but at least those ideas which the opportunity or the necessity for writing had shaped in their souls. Nonetheless, there is a sufficient number of ideas, and // 190 usually of such a kind that those that have been omitted can then be inferred without difficulty, if they constitute a single principle of opinion expressly declared, or if they are connected to the ideas that are stated in some necessary fashion. This process, however, requires considerable caution.

At this point we must pass on to the other part of the task, namely to a careful and sober comparison of the various parts attributed to each testament. Then, with Morus, the best of men, as our guide, each single opinion must be examined for its

<sup>vi</sup> The distinguished J. A. Noesselt did this in his *Disp. de discernenda propria et tropica dictione* (Halle, 1762).

<sup>vii</sup> That great man dealt with this first in his *Disp. de notionibus universis in Theologia* and then in his *Prog. de utilitate notionum universarum in Theologia* (Leipzig, 1782).

universal ideas, especially for those which are expressly read in this or that place in the Holy Scriptures, but according to this rule: that each of the ideas is consistent with its own era, its own testament, its own place of origin, and its own genius. Each one of these categories which is distinct in cause from the others should be kept separate. And if this cautionary note is disregarded, it may happen that the benefit from the universal ideas will give way to the worst sort of damage to the truth, and it will render useless and will destroy all the work which had been brought together in diligently isolating the opinions of each author. If, however, this comparison with the help of the universal notions is established in such a way that for each author his own work remains unimpaired, and it is clearly revealed wherein the separate authors agree in a friendly fashion, or differ among themselves; then finally there will be the happy appearance of biblical theology, pure and unmixed with foreign things, and we shall at last have the sort of system for biblical theology that Tiedemann elaborated with such distinction for Stoic philosophy.

When these opinions of the holy men //191 have been carefully collected from Holy Scripture and suitably digested, carefully referred to the universal notions, and cautiously compared among themselves, the question of their dogmatic use may then profitably be established, and the goals of both biblical and dogmatic theology correctly assigned. Under this heading one should investigate with great diligence which opinions have to do with the unchanging testament of Christian doctrine, and therefore pertain directly to us; and which are said only to men of some particular era or testament. For among other things it is evident that the universal argument within the holy books is not designed for men of every sort; but the great part of these books is rather restricted by God's own intention to a particular time, place, and sort of man. Who, I ask, would apply to our times the Mosaic rites which have been invalidated by Christ, or Paul's advice about women veiling themselves in church? Therefore the ideas of the Mosaic law have not been designated for any dogmatic use, neither by Jesus and his Apostles nor by reason itself. By the same token we must diligently investigate what in the books of the New Testament was said as an accommodation to the ideas or the

needs of the first Christians and what was said in reference to the unchanging idea of the doctrine of salvation; we must investigate what in the sayings of the Apostles is truly divine, and what perchance merely human. And at this point finally the question comes up most opportunely of the whys and wherefores of theopneustia.<sup>1</sup> This matter, to be sure very difficult, is, in my opinion at least, rather incorrectly inferred from the sayings of the Apostles, in which they make mention of a certain divine inspiration, since these individual passages are very obscure and ambiguous. //192 However, we must beware, if we wish to deal with these things with reason and not with fear or bias, not to press those meanings of the Apostles beyond their just limits, especially since only the effects of the inspirations and not their causes, are perceived by the senses. But if I am judge of anything, everything must be accomplished by exegetical observation only, and that with constant care, and compared with the things spoken of and promised by our Saviour in this matter. In this way it may finally be established whether all the opinions of the Apostles, of every type and sort altogether, are truly divine, or rather whether some of them, which have no bearing on salvation, were left to their own ingenuity.

Thus, as soon as all these things have been properly observed and carefully arranged, at last a clear sacred Scripture will be selected with scarcely any doubtful readings, made up of passages which are appropriate to the Christian religion of all times. These passages will show with unambiguous words the form of faith that is truly divine; the *dicta classica*<sup>2</sup> properly so called, which can then be laid out as the fundamental basis for a more subtle dogmatic scrutiny. For only from these methods can those certain and undoubted universal ideas be singled out, those ideas which alone are useful in dogmatic theology. And if these universal notions are derived by a just interpretation from those *dicta classica*, and those notions that are derived are carefully compared, and those notions that are compared are

<sup>1</sup> This is a transcription of the term Gabler uses in Greek script. 'Theopneustia' was often used for 'inspiration' in the eighteenth-century debates on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> This is a technical expression that refers to the standard collection of proof texts in the orthodox theology of the eighteenth century. G. T. Zachariae had been the first to challenge the usefulness of these lists of texts isolated from their context.

suitably arranged, each in its own place, so that the proper connexion and provable order of doctrines that are truly divine may stand revealed; truly then the result is biblical theology in the stricter sense of the word //193 which we know the late Zachariae to have pursued in the preparation of his well-known work.<sup>1</sup> And finally, unless we want to follow uncertain arguments, we must so build only upon these firmly established foundations of biblical theology, again taken in the stricter sense as above, a dogmatic theology adapted to our own times. However, the nature of our age urgently demands that we then teach accurately the harmony of divine dogmatics and the principles of human reason; then, by means of art and ingenuity by which this can happen, let us so elaborate each and every chapter of doctrine that no abundance is lacking in any part—neither subtlety, whether in proper arrangement of passages or the correct handling of arguments, nor elegance in all its glory, nor human wisdom, primarily philosophy and history. Thus the manner and form of dogmatic theology should be varied, as Christian philosophy especially is,<sup>viii</sup> according to the variety both of philosophy and of every human point of view of that which is subtle, learned, suitable and appropriate, elegant and graceful; biblical theology itself remains the same, namely in that it deals only with those things which holy men perceived about matters pertinent to religion, and is not made to accommodate our point of view<sup>2</sup>.

## II. COMMENTARY AND SUMMARY

Gabler's inaugural address is so much a part of the late eighteenth-century theological debate that a short commentary and summary may be useful for understanding his argument.

It must first be realised that Gabler was writing in a period when there was a great deal of ferment and unrest in theology;

<sup>viii</sup> J. G. Toellner, *Theologische Untersuchungen* (Riga, 1772) I. 264ff.

<sup>1</sup> Here our translation differs from Merk's 'biblical theology in a stricter sense than Zachariae followed'. The Latin is ambiguous at this point, but in the next sentence the expression 'stricter sense' is used without any direct comparison. Furthermore, Gabler is very dependent on Zachariae here in his reference to the *dicta classica* and therefore he seems to be making this remark in connexion with rather than as a contrast to Zachariae's position. At all events there is no real difference between Gabler's and Zachariae's approach to biblical theology on this point.

<sup>2</sup> The remainder of Gabler's address is not concerned with biblical theology but with the polite formalities of the occasion. Merk translates this section in his work.

the word 'revolution' is applied to the state of theology in the late eighteenth century by more than one writer of that time. Therefore the principal aim of Gabler's address was not to discuss various types of theology in an academic atmosphere, but to indicate where firm truth could be found in a situation where all the old certainties seemed threatened. There were two basic problems. First, how could the Bible still be the final authority in Christian doctrine when so many critical studies seemed to be destroying its believability and its unity of doctrine? Secondly, even if the Bible were assumed to be the basis for Christian faith, could there be a role for any further development of Christian ideas, namely dogmatic theology?

Gabler begins by describing the variety of biblical interpretations which he feels are a source of confusion to his contemporaries. Obviously this situation of disagreement amongst interpreters of the Bible was scarcely new, however much Gabler may have felt it was getting worse. The important point is that he clearly feels that now there is a way out of it, through the new techniques in philology and exegesis which had been developed in his time. This hope of a new unity amongst Christians that was to be achieved by biblical scholarship was not unique to Gabler; roughly twenty years earlier J. G. Toellner had suggested that a certainty akin to that of mathematics could be achieved in exegesis, leading to the end of conflicts amongst Christians.<sup>1</sup> While Gabler may not have shared Toellner's optimism completely, it is clear that he hoped that the proper application of the new techniques would lead to objective results to which most intelligent, right-thinking people could agree.<sup>2</sup> This hope explains why he spends so much of his time in discussing the proper methods of interpretation. The chaos of scholarly opinion mocked by Kierkegaard had not yet shown itself for what it was.

This reliance on scholarly exegesis is the basis for Gabler's attack on three types of interpreter, namely the orthodox who cannot see beyond his own credal forms when interpreting the Bible; the ignorant biblicist-pietist who believes that one arrives at a biblical theology simply by using only biblical words, and

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Toellner, *Grundriss einer erwiesenen Hermeneutik der heiligen Schrift*, 1765.

<sup>2</sup> This hope of general agreement amongst sane, educated persons is widespread in eighteenth-century hermeneutic discussion. See, for example, C. (or K.) F. Bahrdt, *Versuch eines biblischen Systems der Dogmatik* (1769, 70) 1.28.

the rationalist theologian who neglects the rules he knows only too well in order to insert his own convictions into his exegesis of the biblical texts.<sup>1</sup>

Necessary for Gabler's plan for re-establishing unity amongst reasonable interpreters of the Bible is the distinction between religion and theology. This distinction had come to be used by many eighteenth-century theologians as Gabler points out himself.<sup>2</sup> What we should bear in mind is that what was meant by this distinction was not the difference between the deep convictions and feelings associated with religion and the words and formulae which are inadequate to express them. Rather the distinction in the eighteenth century was between the simple necessary beliefs which were needed for living in this world and attaining salvation in the next and the more elaborate statements of theology which indeed had their place but which were historically conditioned and therefore secondary to the timeless truths of religion. Gabler's address aimed to show amongst other things that the timeless truths of religion were to be gained  
\* from Scripture and that therefore these truths yielded by biblical theology were both different from and necessary to the more abstract constructions of dogmatics.

<sup>1</sup> To understand how Gabler works out this argument, it is necessary to be aware of his idea of history. For Gabler history was more than just facts; history was concerned with the whole outlook of an age, its ways of perceiving and expressing truth. He may have derived this insight from his study of mythology under Heyne and Eichhorn who had emphasised that mythology was not just primitive stupidity but rather the mode in which earlier ages had expressed truth. In his lecture Gabler is drawing out the consequences of his conception of the historically bound nature of human understanding; he assumes that every age including his own has its particular and limited ways of expressing the truth it has discovered. This explains both why dogmatic or systematic theology varies so much even within a single tradition and why rather than being something to be despaired about, this state of affairs is only to be expected.

<sup>1</sup> Bahrtdt's book was a good example of this. Gabler's reference to that 'unfortunate fellow' (181) may be to Bahrtdt.

<sup>2</sup> This distinction between the simplicity of the Bible and the complexity of theology was not confined to the eighteenth century. See Michael Hurley, 'Scriptura Sola: Wyclif and his Critics', *Traditio* 16 (1960), pp. 275-352.

It is when one confuses the truth with a particular expression of it that trouble arises; simple truth found in religion must be kept separate from attempts to express it in the thought-forms of a given era.

Gabler is making two assumptions which are integral to his argument. First, for him what is historical is secondary to what is true; however much it may accompany and even transmit the truth, the historical remains the rind on the orange and not the fruit itself. Here Gabler is very much a child of the Enlightenment; one can compare his outlook with the similar one of Lessing that the necessary truths of philosophy cannot depend on the contingent truths of history. Secondly, the importance of the Bible for Gabler is that it is a revealed source of truth whose authority stems from the fact that Providence has ensured that parts of it are trans-historical, that is exempt from the limitations of the particular times in which they were written. It is this emphasis on revelation which distinguishes Gabler and other 'neologians'<sup>1</sup> from rationalists such as Lessing.

For Gabler, then, the task of biblical theology is to work out what the truth contained in Scripture is. When he says that biblical theology is of historical origin, then, what he means is that biblical theology by proper investigation of the documents in the Bible should aim at isolating their purely historical characteristics in order to eliminate them and leave the truth exposed. History on its own has no significance for biblical theology.

The truth which Gabler sees as coming from the Bible in this way is clearly propositional in form; it is made up of teachings about God and the appropriate duties of man in relation to God. Here again Gabler is very much an Enlightenment figure.

In order to separate this truth from the Bible one has to proceed in two stages. First, since the Holy Spirit in inspiring the men of the Bible did not destroy their habitual ways of thinking and expressing themselves, one must begin one's investigation by working out by philological and other methods

<sup>1</sup> This term has been used by modern historians since Wilhelm Mauer to designate the theologians who steered a middle way between defending the whole of orthodox theology on rational principles and those who denied that there was any revelation apart from reason alone. In the eighteenth century 'neologian' was usually a term of abuse. The development of this term has not been adequately chartered by historians; however, Gabler appears to have been one of the first to use 'neologian' in a purely descriptive sense free from pejorative overtones.

what it was that these men of the Bible actually meant in the books they wrote. This first stage will preserve us from attributing ideas to them which they never had. Then the ideas which emerge from this first process must be compared with the ideas that are found in other biblical authors. This comparison will show that not all that the biblical authors said was meant for our times; for example, the Mosaic law was meant for ancient Israel but not us. Only ideas which are common throughout the Bible are the true doctrines of religion. Having once separated these doctrines, biblical theology then has the task of ordering them into a coherent whole; this is biblical theology in the narrower sense of the word, even as Zachariae described it.

Such a biblical theology then is religion, a firm basis for a Christian's life. The legitimacy of dogmatic theology, on the other hand, comes not only from the fact that it is based on biblical theology but from its attempt to cope with the needs of the times in which it is written. Since Gabler's understanding of history extended to his own day, he points out that his age like any other needs its special dogmatic theology, a Christian philosophy which combined the truths of religion with its own habit of thought and insights into truth from all sources. Gabler saw the particular need of his period to be for a dogmatic theology that was in agreement with reason, clearly expressed, and aware of the new human wisdom especially in philosophy and history.<sup>1</sup>

This then is Gabler's basic position in his address. He assumes that Scripture contains the truth of religion but not of theology. However, this truth has to be derived from Scripture by careful and painstaking exegesis in which the historical circumstances which surrounded the giving of this truth are recognised and separated from it. Once this truth is isolated, it is put into a coherent order and made available for the subsequent work of the dogmatists. The working out of biblical theology, if done properly, would lead to the settling of the confusions and differences amongst biblical interpreters and, though this is a by-product of the process, to the establishing of

<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that for Gabler, as for most theologians of his day, 'reason' was a far more inclusive term than 'logic'. Reason was man's natural faculty for becoming aware of many things including God and his demands.

biblical theology as an independent discipline in theology that was methodologically prior to dogmatic theology. At the same time the legitimacy of dogmatic theology would also be guaranteed.

### III. GABLER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

This theme falls logically into two parts, namely the historical question of the effect Gabler had on his contemporaries in the development of the discipline of biblical theology and the interpretative question of the extent to which Gabler added something new to what had gone before him.

In most summaries of the history of biblical theology, Gabler's inaugural address is seen as an important turning-point, but rightly or wrongly it was not so seen by his contemporaries. Not until D. C. G. von Cölln<sup>2</sup> did Gabler receive the patriarchal status which he has since enjoyed. In fact theological opinion was slow to accept biblical theology itself as a discipline. Up to the time of G. T. Zachariae who first gave 'biblical Theology' its modern sense of the description of the theology of the Bible in the Bible's own terms, 'biblical theology' had been a vague expression used for different things. 'The name biblical theology has not without grounds become suspicious', said a reviewer of Zachariae's work.<sup>3</sup> Even after Zachariae 'biblical theology' did not occur frequently in theological debate and the next book to use the title was Hufnagel's *Handbuch der biblischen Theologie* of 1785.<sup>4</sup> Thus J. A. Noesselt's *Anweisung zur Kenntnis der besten allgemeinen Bücher in aller Theilen der Theologie*,<sup>5</sup> the standard guide for theological students of the day, does not have a section on biblical theology although Zachariae's book was included amongst those recommended. Even in the last edition

<sup>1</sup> There is no extensive treatment of Gabler in English. The best German works on him are: R. Smend, 'Johann Philipp Gabler's Begründung der biblischen Theologie', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), pp. 345-57; and sections in O. Merk, *Biblische Theologie*, and K. Leder, *Universität Altdorf: Zur Theologie der Aufklärung in Franken* (Nürnberg: Spindler, 1965). H. J. Kraus, *Die Biblische Theologie: Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1970), needs to be treated with caution.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblische Theologie* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Barth, 1836), pp. 22-3. W. M. L. de Wette was the first writer of a biblical theology to mention Gabler's address explicitly in his *Lehrbuch der Christlichen Dogmatik I: Biblische Dogmatik Alten und Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1813), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Neueste Theologische Bibliothek* 2 (1772), p. 509.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. 2, part 1, 1789; the work was never completed.

<sup>5</sup> Leipzig: Weygand, 1779.

of Noesselt published in 1800 there is no category of biblical theology. Not until the successor of Noesselt, Simon's *Literatur der Theologie hauptsächlich des neunzehnjahrhunderts* in 1813 is there a section under that title.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that in the 1790s 'biblical theology' appears more often as a title in books and articles, but even as late as 1797 J. O. Thiess could remark that in the face of so many disagreements about the subject one might give up the attempt even to develop a theory about it; still, a collection of the religious notions scattered in Scripture would be useful for teaching children and the general public.<sup>2</sup> Clearly Thiess did not feel the subject had any future in serious, academic theology.

On the whole, then, the concept of biblical theology as a legitimate theological discipline made slow headway even after Gabler's inaugural address. As far as Gabler's own influence is concerned, it is not sure that developments in the 1790's were due altogether to his ideas on the subject. The form of Ammon's work is undoubtedly closer to Hufnagel's example than to Gabler's prescription.<sup>3</sup> G. L. Bauer's work can be seen as parallel to rather than dependent on Gabler.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless it is clear that apart from his inaugural address Gabler continued to keep biblical theology before the attention of the theological public both by his controversy with Ammon and by his footnotes which he added to articles while editor of three successive journals. By such means and later indirectly by his influence on de Wette and von Cölln, Gabler can be said to have done more than any other single figure to make biblical theology a separate discipline.

However, it is the issue of Gabler's originality that is the main interest of this article. Where was Gabler's starting-point and what did he add that was new?

It is first necessary to examine the possibility that Gabler was influenced by J. G. Hofmann, a predecessor of his at Altdorf whose inaugural address in 1770 was entitled *Oratio de Theologiae biblicae praestantia*. Kraus<sup>5</sup> states that undoubtedly Gabler was

<sup>1</sup> Leipzig: Kohler, 1813.

<sup>2</sup> *Einleitung in die neuere Geschichte der Religion, der Kirche und der theologischen Wissenschaften* (Schleswig: Roehss, 1797), p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Entwurf einer Reinen biblischen Theologie* (Erlangen: Palm, 1792).

<sup>4</sup> *Theologie des alten Testaments oder Abriss der religiösen Begriffe der alten Hebräer* (Leipzig: Wegand, 1796). See Merk, *Biblische Theologie*, pp. 164-7.

<sup>5</sup> Kraus, *Biblische Theologie*, p. 52.

inspired by Hofmann. Unfortunately this statement is difficult to prove; the text of Hofmann's address is to our knowledge no longer extant and only references to parts of its themes appear in other writers. Apart from this lack of direct evidence, there is a further consideration against this theory: whereas the text of Gabler's lecture contains a reasonable number of references to those who influenced him, nowhere is Hofmann mentioned. It may be that Hofmann did not even determine the choice of subject, for Gabler might well have been influenced by the appearance of the fifth volume of Zachariae's *Biblische Theologie* and the first volume of Hufnagel's *Handbuch* shortly before he took up his appointment in Altdorf.

The substantial issue in the question of the originality of Gabler's ideas is that of their relation to the work of G. T. Zachariae. Admittedly other interpreters have not seen the problem this way. For example, Otto Merk finds Gabler's respect for Zachariae difficult to explain either as a personal link between the two or as a basic resemblance between their ideas.<sup>1</sup> The evidence must be examined.

Gabler did in fact have a personal interest in Zachariae. At one time he was engaged in editing Zachariae's posthumous paraphrase on Corinthians, but was forced to give up this work by his move to Dortmund. Gabler was succeeded by J. C. Vollborth who also went on to edit the fifth volume of Zachariae's *Biblische Theologie*.<sup>2</sup> While one cannot conclude that Gabler was ever associated with the latter task, there can be no doubt that he must have been both familiar with and well disposed to Zachariae's work.

Apart from this historical connexion, the influence of Zachariae's ideas on Gabler is evident not only from Gabler's specific references to him in the text of his lecture, but also from an examination of the resemblances between Gabler's and Zachariae's notions on biblical theology. It will be argued that Gabler's address is in effect a revision of Zachariae's views with the aim of indicating where they should be emended, defined

<sup>1</sup> Merk, *Biblische Theologie*, p. 42. Smend considers that Gabler's references to Zachariae spring more from courtesy than conviction, 'Gablers Begründung', p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Zachariae, *Paraphrastische Erklärung der beyden Briefe an die Corinthier* (Göttingen: Brose, 1786) \*5 r. (Often leaves but not sides are numbered in eighteenth-century prefaces; 'r' and 'v' refer to *recto* and *verso* respectively.) This is confirmed by a note of Gabler's in *Journal für Theologische Literatur* 2 (1801), pp. 40-1.

more correctly, and amplified. The following essential points of agreement can be seen.

1. Gabler adopts a position like Zachariae's that a biblical theology must be more than a collection of proof texts; it must be a coherent picture of what the Bible as a whole has to say; yet this is not the same as dogmatic theology. Zachariae says at the beginning of his work: 'One can easily see that I do not intend to write a systematic treatment of the whole of theology, but that I also have a more extensive purpose than simply to interpret the most important proof texts of theology.'<sup>1</sup>

2. Gabler like Zachariae assumes the Bible is divinely inspired as a means of providing sure guidance to men. Gabler refers to the Bible as 'the only secure sanctuary to which we can flee in the face of the ambiguity and vicissitude of human knowledge'; Zachariae insists that the divine intention of preserving the Church for all times allowed for the preservation of the teachings of the biblical authors as a reliable basis for belief.<sup>2</sup>

3. Nonetheless the fact that the Bible is inspired does not affect the method of exegesis and interpretation. Gabler insists on careful, scholarly work throughout his address; Zachariae points out that while the divine inspiration of Scripture means one can assume the correctness of doctrines derived from it in a thorough way, 'All this does not in any way affect the methods of proof'.<sup>3</sup> In explaining words then, one must proceed according to the best methods of philology and pay attention to the form of a passage, whether it is in prose, poetry, etc.<sup>4</sup>

4. Gabler assumes the validity of deriving doctrines from Scripture by comparing passages even when no single passage

<sup>1</sup> 'Man siehet leicht, dass ich keine systematische Abhandlung der gesamten Theologie zu schreiben gedenke, aber auch eine weitere Absicht habe, als bloss die vornehmsten Beweisstellen der Theologie zu erklären.' (*Biblische Theologie* I: \*1 v.) An unfortunate misprint in Kraus' citation of this passage (*Biblische Theologie*, pp. 33) reads 'keine weitere Absicht' thus inverting Zachariae's meaning.

<sup>2</sup> Gabler, p. 179; Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie* I. XI-XII.

<sup>3</sup> Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie* I. XXXIII. The whole quotation is: 'Zwar kann man nach ausgemachten göttlichen Eingebung der heiligen Schriftstelle die Richtigkeit des wirklich in ihr enthaltenen Satzes voraussetzen, wenn nur das gewiss ist, dass der aus ihr hergeleitete Satz bey einer richtigen Auslegung wirklich in ihr angetroffen worde, welches man bey menschlichen Schriften nicht allemal sicher voraussetzen kan. Es ändert dis aber in der Art zu beweisen nichts.'

<sup>4</sup> Both rely heavily on Ernesti: Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie* I. CXXXIX; Gabler, pp. 181, 187.

contains the doctrine in question in so many words. This reads like a summary of Zachariae's hermeneutic rule that a doctrine is Scriptural when it is contained expressly in Scripture, when it is expressed in Scripture though not in the exact terminology, or when it can be derived reasonably by comparing various Scriptural statements no one of which would be adequate by itself for a convincing proof.<sup>1</sup>

5. Most significantly of all, Gabler and Zachariae both have a similar position about history and the historical approach to Scripture.<sup>2</sup> One must recognise that our times are very different from the biblical thought world and therefore we must be careful not to misinterpret biblical texts by carelessly reading into them our own thoughts.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some of the ideas in the Bible were to be attributed to the primitive outlook of the writers rather than to divine inspiration. Gabler of course had a sense of Hebrew mythology which he had derived from Heyne and Eichhorn, but Zachariae was quite aware that some biblical ideas such as God's resting on the seventh day were to be explained in terms of the stages in the development of human thought rather than as factual statements about God.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Gabler and Zachariae agree that one must take into account historical circumstances and realise that although the Bible as a whole is meant by divine Providence to be our guide, nonetheless the individual authors wrote primarily for their own times and included much in their work that is no longer relevant.<sup>5</sup>

This emphasis on historical methods of interpretation has two consequences. First one must be aware that there are stages in the development of revelation in the Bible; Gabler's insistence

<sup>1</sup> Gabler, p. 185; Zachariae, *Philosophische-Theologische Abhandlungen als Beilagen zur biblischen Theologie zu gebrauchen* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1776), p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Merk (*Biblische Theologie*, p. 25) has argued that Zachariae did not attribute any importance to history. However, I have argued in a forthcoming article on Zachariae that Merk has misinterpreted a statement of Zachariae's which referred not to history as such but to church history as a branch of theology.

<sup>3</sup> Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie* I. \*2 v.: 'Denn überhaupt machet die von unserer Art zu denken und zu reden stark abweichende hebraische Denkungs- und Schreibart des A. T. welche notwendig auch die Denkungs- und Schreibart der Apostel im N. T. besonders in Glaubenslehren, bestimmen müssen, die grösste Schwürigkeit bey Vergleichung unserer gewohnten Vorstellungen mit den biblischen.'

<sup>4</sup> Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie* I, p. 217: 'Die Ruhe Gottes war bey ihm selbst nichts besonderes, sondern sie wird ihm blos nach der Denkungsart der damaligen Völker und in Beziehung auf diese verordnete strenge Ruhe der Israeliten am Sabbath beygelegt.'

<sup>5</sup> Gabler, 186; Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie*, I, XI-XII.

on separating out the various types of doctrines within the Bible itself is basically identical with Zachariae's insistence on the manner of the successive announcements of the divine institutions and with his practice of distinguishing between Abraham's and Moses' ideas about God.<sup>1</sup> The second consequence of historical interpretation is that history becomes the key to separating the divine from the human in the Bible. By recognising what was specific to each biblical period one discovers at the same time what was meant for all times. However, Gabler never faces the question of whether some historical events might themselves be important in revelation whereas Zachariae does consider that the central events in the life of Jesus are doctrinally significant.<sup>2</sup>

Given then that there is sufficient resemblance between their points of view to confirm Gabler's statement that he relied heavily on Zachariae, where and why did Gabler differ?

Gabler's improvements on Zachariae can be divided into the philological and the philosophical. Philologically Gabler was doing little more than dotting 'i's' and crossing 't's' in hermeneutical theory. Zachariae had followed Ernesti very closely, but since Ernesti's time Morus had suggested certain refinements in philological technique and Gabler incorporates these into his text.

It is the changed intellectual climate between Zachariae's day and Gabler's that explains Gabler's major changes. Zachariae was working at a time when S. J. Baumgarten's adaptation of Wolf's reconciliation between reason and revelation was still sufficiently established to be assumed without argument. The form the theological debate took was to discuss which of the traditional doctrines were essential to Christianity and which could be disposed of. This might show itself in the form of an attack on a less important doctrine in specific symbolic books or by more radical attempts to show that even central doctrines such as the Trinity were not really biblically based. But for Zachariae, and indeed most of his

<sup>1</sup> Zachariae, *Biblische Theologie I*. \*4 v.: 'Art der successiven Kundmachung der göttlichen Anstalten . . .', Gabler, 191.

<sup>2</sup> This explains his extensive treatment of the life of Jesus in his *Biblische Theologie*. In his *Philosophische-Theologische Abhandlungen*, p. 74, he states: 'Ich sage aber deshalb, dass auch historische Sätze zu den theologischen gehören, weil niemand in Zweifel ziehn wird, dass die Sätze von der Geburt, dem Leiden and Tode des Erlösers historische Sätze seyn, und doch notwendig zu den theologischen gerechnet werden müssen.'

contemporaries, the framework for the discussion was the official doctrines of the church or the commentaries on them, however much he objected to the polemical tone of the dogmatics of his day. He saw his task, then, as the working out of biblical doctrines, independently of dogmatic formulations it is true, but with the aim of providing a firm basis for dogmatic thought as it existed in his period.

Gabler was living in different times and was well aware of the changes in thought which had taken place. Kant had loosened the old bonds between revelation and philosophy, and more radical ideas were becoming better known, to judge from the periodical literature of the day such as the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*. This does not mean that radical ideas had suddenly developed, still less that Gabler himself was partial to them. However, the old Leibnitz-Wolffian settlement between religion and philosophy had broken down and even amongst theologians attacks on the inspiration of the Old Testament at least were becoming common. Gabler who insisted to his last day on the compatibility of reason and revelation nonetheless could no longer assume this as Zachariae had done; he would have to explain why revelation could be found in Scripture. Furthermore, although Gabler later came to cherish the symbolic books of the protestant churches, when he thought of dogmatics he did not think of the symbolic books but of individual formulations by individual theologians. This point cannot be emphasised too firmly, for in discussions about the emergence of biblical theology it has sometimes been lost to sight that dogmatics too developed in the eighteenth century, and in the opinion of at least one eighteenth-century author, it was dogmatics that needed to be freed from the control of the traditional teaching of the church.<sup>1</sup>

While Zachariae could work towards the statements of the symbolic books, Gabler had a different problem, namely: how could he justify what he thought of as dogmatics? Bad as the symbolic books of the church might have been, most of them were at least in a form that was succinct enough to be repeated or learned by ordinary people, however little they might understand of them. But what about the new, elaborate works on dogmatics? Given the new type of dogmatic work that was

<sup>1</sup> Thiess, *Einleitung*, 89.

emerging, how did it relate to theology derived from the Bible? The old church formulations simply needed to be proved, or disproved if all else failed; now matters were more complicated for re-statements of Christian doctrine in terms of the thought of the day were very different from the rather chaotic state of doctrine in the Bible and yet there had to be some connexion. Gabler solved this problem by adopting the distinction between religion and theology as formulated by Tittmann. Religion was the basic truths of faith which everyone should know and believe; theology on the other hand was the attempt to relate these to the thought world of the day. By identifying religion with the truth of Scripture and dogmatics with the new theologies, Gabler had solved his problem. Biblical theology and dogmatic theology were both legitimate pursuits in their own right.

However, the question of the truths of Scripture still had to be settled. While Zachariae recognised that much in Scripture was irrelevant and therefore not inspired according to his criterion, he does not seem to have grasped the full significance of the problem. Zachariae simply suggests that a saying is revelation when it comes directly from God or from someone undoubtedly inspired by God without grasping the nettle of how one ascertains that such is the case. Gabler requires a standard for judging revelation that would be philosophically grounded in contrast to the inadequate formal criterion of Zachariae. The criterion Gabler adopts from Morus is based on the philosophical doctrine that universal truths are more real than the particulars from which they are derived; this philosophical assumption is explicit in Morus' article where he compares the process of eliciting universal truth from Scripture with the process of eliciting universals from particulars in philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This appeal to universality fitted in well with the general drift of Enlightenment thought; one only has to compare Kant's grounding of ethical principles on the foundations of universal law.

Gabler thus had the answer to his problem about revelation; what was particular to a specific time in the history of the Bible was not of significance for all time; what was universal repre-

<sup>1</sup> 'De notionibus universis in theologia' (in *Dissertationes theologicae et philologicae*. Leipzig: Grieshammer, 1798, 1, pp. 239-307), p. 239.

sented the revelation of God and therefore was the substance of further thought in Christian dogmatics. The result of Gabler's theology, then, is to postulate a double biblical theology, one setting out biblical religion as it appeared in history and the other setting out God's eternal truths enclosed in this historical shell.<sup>1</sup> While Zachariae had had a similar goal, it is clear that by applying the notions of religion and theology, universal and particular, Gabler shored up the weaker sections of Zachariae's theology and preserved the independence of dogmatic theology from the biblical conceptions on which it was based. While it was Zachariae, then, who founded biblical theology as a different discipline from dogmatics in practice, it was Gabler who first made the theoretical distinction between the two disciplines. One should, however, admit that the way in which Gabler based this distinction on two different sorts of biblical theology did not really appeal to most of his contemporaries and few today would wish to follow the path he indicated.

As a postscript it can be added that one is struck by both the resemblances and the differences between Gabler's views and modern approaches to biblical theology. On the one hand Gabler is the spiritual ancestor of those who look for a centre in the Bible as a guide to its enduring message; on the other hand his emphasis on the universal rather than the particular in Israel's religion has long ceased to appeal.<sup>2</sup> When the Romantics inverted the Enlightenment's preference for the universal and stressed the importance of the individual, they were in a better position to appreciate the Bible which on the whole is stubbornly particularist both in its view of God's relationship to Israel and God's special revelation in the individual Jesus. However, when Gabler made the distinction between a biblical theology which describes the views biblical authors actually held and a biblical theology which represents the distillation of the enduring truth of these views, he was actually making the sort of distinction often made today between the history of biblical religion and biblical theology in the proper sense of the

<sup>1</sup> Later Gabler came to describe this as the difference between *wahre* and *reine* biblical theology; for example, *Journal für Theologische Literatur* 1 (1801), p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Smend, 'Universalismus und Partikularismus in der Alttestamentlichen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), pp. 169-79.

word. In this respect Gabler has perhaps a better claim to be considered the father of the study of biblical religion than the father of biblical theology.

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## THE YOUNG PERSON'S RELIGION: A CRISIS OF ATTITUDE?

by THE REV. DR LESLIE FRANCIS

FOR many people the period of junior and secondary schooling establishes a pattern of attitudes which persists well into adult life, and, for some, throughout the whole of life. Attitudes are important. Attitudes function as a determinant both of overt behaviour and of personal self-development. It is not surprising, therefore, that educationalists have begun to take the training of attitudes seriously.

In the area of religion, attitudes are of particular importance, and this is the case for two reasons. First, religion is an area regarding which people still feel strongly. A positive attitude towards religion results in commitment to religious practice and a valuing of the religious perspective. A negative attitude against religion results in the dismissal of both the institutions and the tenets of the believing community. Second, the religious perspective itself is a perspective which is concerned with the training of attitudes. It is reasonable to expect that the attitudes of a religious person should differ significantly from the attitudes of a person who is not religious.

For some time both the churches and religious educationalists have been asking questions about the attitudes towards religion held by young people. The answers given to these questions have been disappointing in two ways. They have been disappointing because they have tended to suggest that the attitudes of the young are not favourably disposed towards the religious perspective. They have been disappointing and frustrating because they have not enabled us to see clearly either the extent and significance of this negative attitude, or the social, cultural and developmental features associated with it.

A recent description of the young person's attitudes towards religion is provided by the report produced for the Church of England General Synod Board of Education by Bernice Martin and Ronald Pluck.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B. Martin and R. Pluck, *Young People's Beliefs* (London: General Synod Board of Education, 1977).