

THE CONQUEST OF MYTHOS BY LOGOS: COUNTERING RELIGION WITHOUT FAITH IN IRENAEUS, COLERIDGE AND GADAMER

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Abstract. Irenaeus, Coleridge and Gadamer all wrote about religion in distinct historical periods, however the work that each produced reflects the anthropological condition of the middle position. Furthermore, each thinker provides an opportunity for self-reflection about the motivations of faith without requiring the individual to abandon their religious belief in order to do so. In this manner they present a productive alternative to the required external views of the social sciences. The individual's position in mid-creation, his moral freedom and his historical contingency all require the acceptance, commitment and trust of faith. Gnosticism, Empiricist thought and the desire to overcome historical contingency all reveal intellectual impatience in riposte to this condition. This intellectual impatience seeks the absolute without the need for faith. For Irenaeus, Coleridge and Gadamer such absolute, logocentric, complete systems end up alienating man from the reality of the incomplete condition that permeates his existence and the faith-requiring myths that ultimate realities necessitate in order to be communicated.

Xenophanes of Colophon criticized the anthropomorphic tendency of the religious thought familiar to him. To the gods of the Olympic religion, Homer and Hesiod had ascribed the characteristics of human nature, including deception, adultery and theft. Likewise, those at the antipodes of the known world, the Thracians and the Ethiopians, described the gods as having physical characteristics that reflected their own differing physical appearance (McKirahan 1994, DK31B16). For Xenophanes this illustrated man's tendency to ascribe, to the divine, aspects of his own nature, in order to make the gods more cognizable. In one of the pre-Socratic's surviving fragments (McKirahan 1994, DK21B15), he writes:

If oxen and horses and lions had hands
 and were able to draw with their hands and do the same things as men,
 horses would draw the shapes of gods to look like horses
 and oxen to look like oxen, and each would make the
 gods' bodies have the same shape as they themselves had.

Here in whimsical form, Xenophanes challenges the motivation behind the way humans conceive of God. In all of his examples, thought about the divine is carried out in forms amenable to the individual (or creature), culture, or period considering it. The point that Xenophanes sought to illustrate was not that God is a projection of the human imagination, or that the divine should not be an object of human inquiry; Xenophanes emphatically proclaimed his own monotheistic belief: „God is one, greatest among gods and men, / not at all like the mortals in his body or thought.” (McKirahan 1994, DK21B23).

Rather, he wished to realize a kind of self-reflection concerning religious thought, causing the individual to question his motivations: In considering the divine, do we seek a true understanding, or do we seek to overcome the uncertainty of faith in a God we cannot wholly comprehend by inventing a religion which is merely palatable to our given situation.

The question about motivation, which Xenophanes asks, therefore differs from the examination of religious motivation found in the social sciences. These view religious phenomena, its knowledge, practices and institutions, from without, as the products of human interaction and social construction. The difficulty with this position for religious adherents is that their beliefs are undermined by the claim that the object of devotion, revealed through scripture or experience, is in fact not what it seems, but what the social scientist claims it to be, that is, a human fabrication. Xenophanes' concern is not merely an archaic one; rather it realizes a deep and lasting question about the kind of motivations that dwell behind religious conceptions. Moreover, the kind of self-reflection which it demands can be engaged in within a religious context.

This paper will therefore take up the self-reflective exercise within the context of Christian anthropology, and, furthermore, do so by examining it through three temporally distant thinkers: Irenaeus of Lyons, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. The strategy behind the choice of these three figures is twofold: First, it illustrates that the topic is of enduring concern and second, that it manifests itself in a number of forms. Behind these lies the common question of whether religious thought is moti-

vated by a desire to be faithful to its subject, or to overcome the uncertainty inherent in contemplating the divine.

I. Christian Anthropology and Faith

Christian anthropology has a dual function for this undertaking, in that it both constitutes the heuristic model within which these thinkers worked, while it also has the function of focusing the complex psychological issues at work behind the consideration of the divine, clarifying them into two related conditions: man's *middle position* and the *intellectual impatience* that it gives rise to. It is the former that demands faith, while the latter attempts to escape its uncertainties. The paper will first set out these two anthropological conditions in relation to faith, and then proceed to a consideration of how Irenaeus, Coleridge and Gadamer critique the attempt to conceive of religion without faith, within their own historical contexts.

Christian Anthropology interprets human existence in the light of Christian faith and its historical and covenantal schema. As such, it concerns man's creation and fall, his capacity to partake in divine nature through Jesus, and his ultimate destiny. (Rahner 1965, pp. 25-28). This *middle position* of the individual is not caused by a lack of general knowledge, nor is it the consequence of man's inability to understand an incomprehensible God, nor is it a form of religious obscurantism designed to evade rational philosophical discourse. Rather, it is the very nature of what it means to be human. The union of the divine and human in Jesus Christ, the second Adam (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22,45) completes the human form in both the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) and in doing so restores the capacity which man had lost in the Fall. Therefore, within this anthropology, the individual occupies a middle position between Adam and Christ, creation and destiny. This position demands faith from the individual in the form of *fides quae*, that is, acceptance and committed confidence in God's objective revelation to mankind, and in the form of *fides qua*, that is subjective personal commitment. Though the latter is possible only through the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18) there remains on the part of the individual the need for a willful desire to give assent and trust to the spirit.¹

¹ Augustine stressed the importance of willful ascent, while Luther articulated that the primary movement in justification by faith was the voluntarily trust of the individual in atonement.

For Christian anthropology, the middle position, and the faith it requires, places man in a dynamic and inherently incomplete position with which he finds it psychologically difficult to contend. Man desires to be whole, complete, and completely to understand, escaping the acceptance, commitment and trust that the middle position demands. As a result, a kind of *intellectual impatience* arises from a desire to circumscribe human existence and the divine within a completed system. Such forced conclusions, however, never satisfy since they never reflect the concept of God. Each of the three thinkers considered in this paper, whether in a Christian context or not, recognize the challenge of faith that the middle position demands and the need to check the impatient self.

II. Irenaeus

Irenaeus was the second century bishop of Lyons. Little is known of his life, however it is supposed that he was born at Greek-speaking Smyrna around 130 and studied at Rome before becoming a missionary and bishop in Gaul, where he died around 200. Irenaeus, focused on faith, intellectual impatience and man's middle position in the context of Christian anthropology in his principal work *Adversus Haereses*. This work grew out of his missionary and pastoral opposition to the period's strong Gnostic sects. In opposition to Gnostic dualism, its rejection of *salus carnis*, and its emphasis on privileged *gnosis*, Irenaeus's *magnum opus* stresses the redemptive power of creation and material being within the necessary limits that the middle position places on human consideration of God.

For Irenaeus, the absolute transcendence of God prevents humans from knowing Him directly. This however, does not prohibit the rational consideration of God. Irenaeus writes that, even without revelation, „all do know this one fact at least, because reason, implanted in their minds, moves them, and reveals to them that there is one God, the Lord of all.” (*Adversus Haereses*, II.6.1). He explains that God has made Himself finite and measurable through His creation, and has therefore been „revealed to men through many dispensations.” (*Adversus Haereses*, IV.20.7).

This includes created humans themselves, who reveal and glorify God as His most important creation: „For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God.” (*Adversus Haereses*, IV.20.7). Humanity, in its middle position which cannot fully comprehend God, does not therefore come between man and God, as Gnostic thought claimed,

rather humanity as God's creation is the primary source for knowledge of the divine.

Revelation through the created world occurs within a divine economy. In this plan, set out in the Old and New Testaments, man grows to perfection in stages through which God guides him in a caring, non-coercive, and vigilant way (Minns 1994, p. 56). The end goal of this process is the exultation of man, from the dust and clay of which he was first formed, to the image and likeness of God. In the divine plan, Adam and Eve are both real individual persons and symbolic of the whole of humanity's relationship to God. They occupied a middle position with respect to the divine and experienced intellectual impatience. Irenaeus establishes Adam and Eve's middle position in his interpretation of Genesis 1:26, „Let us make man in our image, after ourselves.” For Irenaeus, the first humans were not created perfect, but in the image of God, and intended to achieve God's likeness through a process of development. Irenaeus writes: „There had been a necessity that, in the first place, a human being should be fashioned, and that what was fashioned should receive the soul; afterwards that it should thus receive the communion of the Spirit.” (*Adversus Haereses*, V.12.2).

Beginning with a complete and perfect man from the beginning was possible for God, but would have been irresponsible, akin to giving the powers of an adult to an infant. (*Ibid.*, IV.38.1).

In this context the first sin against this economy was that of impatient children who desired the likeness of their father immediately. In the varieties of Gnostic thought Irenaeus saw the same basic sin of disobedience that had been committed by Adam. Both, in their impatience, sought to invent programs of salvation to overcome the middle position of man and seek an understanding of divinity on their own terms. Against this, Irenaeus writes:

How, then, shall he be a God, who has not as yet been made a man? Or how can he be perfect who was but lately created? How, again, can he be immortal, who in his mortal nature did not obey his Maker? For it must be that thou, at the outset, shouldest hold the rank of a man, and then afterwards partake of the glory of God. For thou dost not make God, but God thee. If, then, thou art God's workmanship, await the hand of thy Maker which creates everything in due time; in due time as far as thou art concerned, whose creation is being carried out. Offer to Him thy heart in a soft and tractable state, and preserve the form in which the Creator has fashioned thee, having moisture in thyself, lest, by becoming hardened, thou lose the impressions of His fingers. But by preserving the framework thou shalt ascend to that which is perfect, for the moist clay which is in thee is hidden by the workmanship of God. (*Adversus Haereses*, IV.39.2-3).

The solution, as Irenaeus sets it out here is to accept the „tractable state” of the middle position, one „whose creation is [still] being carried out.” If man, in his impatience seeks to overcome this state he loses the impression that God has already made upon him, and renders himself insusceptible to furthering his relationship with God. In effect, the individual excludes God by rejecting the ongoing process of God’s work for his own person.

In identifying this trait in both Gnosticism and in Adamic sin, Irenaeus points towards the basic tendency to impatience caused by this middle position and its desire to obliterate the distinction between creator and created, leaving nothing uncomprehended:

[The Gnostics] go beyond the law of the human race, and before that they become men, they wish to be even now like God their Creator, and they who are more destitute of reason than dumb animals (insist) that there is no distinction between the uncreated God and man, a creature of today. (*Adversus Haereses*, IV.38.4).

What Irenaeus describes is a desire to invent religion within a comfortable context. In the case of Gnosticism it is a desire to gain a victory over the uncertainties of faith through the claim of secret revelation and the rejection of the vicissitudes of the created universe. To seek victory over the middle position of man, the journey from the dust from which he was first made to the image and likeness of God, is to seek to overcome the very means by which revelation is achieved – the created world. For Irenaeus, God alone is being, while man and all creation are in a state of becoming. It is the failure to recognize and have faith in the revelatory value of creation that is at the heart of every human sin. From its original transgression onward, all sin is an attempt to escape the uncertainty of faith and find fulfillment outside of the divine economy.

III. Coleridge

Though his theological output has often been overlooked, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was also concerned with the anthropology of the middle position. As one of the founders of English Romanticism, living from 1772 to 1834, Coleridge passionately engaged in the philosophical and religious issues of his time. He sought to mediate the Christian tradition, often drawing on Continental philosophy, for what he considered as an increasingly empiricist-minded Britain. His work addresses the problem of intellectual

impatience in the context of empiricism and its effect on religious thought. For Coleridge, the middle position entailed a further aspect to those named by Irenaeus, namely moral freedom, which affords the individual the possibility of moving closer to God.

In Coleridge's thought, the middle position not only defines the human condition, it provides a vocation. It calls upon the individual to use the freedom it provides to move toward God-likeness. Coleridge describes this situation as follows:

[The] synthesis of the individual with the given universal is the only conceivable likeness, or image, of the necessary identity of the absolute and self-originating universal. In the latter both factors pre-exist, each in the other, a perfect One as Prothesis: in man the analogous factors appeared severally as Thesis and Antithesis, and he himself is to complete the analogon by uniting them in a Synthesis. (*Opus Maximum*, p. 81).

Here Coleridge writes that the nature of God, who is both necessary and self-originating, consists in a synthesis of the individual and universal, or finite and infinite. Alternately, in man, these two factors are also present, however they are not united. Rather, the finite nature of man consists in his individual personhood, while the universal or infinite in man consists of his moral conscience. Man's middle position provides the freedom to unite the two by acting on his conscience.

Coleridge saw morality as representing this universal because it possessed a reality of its own, even independent of whether the individual acts upon its dictates or not (*Opus Maximum*, p. 9). Moral laws, Coleridge points out, are outside of the scientific laws operating in the finite empirical world: „In moral agents we cannot say, they necessarily will act according to the Law of Morality, yet we say, they *necessarily* should”. (*Shorter Works and Fragments*, pp. 689-690). In this sense, for Coleridge, the first act of faith is being faithful to one's own self by using the freedom of the middle position to act according to the universal law of morality already present in the self. For Coleridge, as for Luther, it was not the moral act that made the individual faithful, but faith itself that allowed the individual to act morally.

It is man's capacity „to transgress but still to acknowledge” (*Opus Maximum*, pp. 9-10) that illustrates the freedom that is inherent in his middle position. For Coleridge, this freedom of the will is a fundamental „postulate of humanity, and *a fortiori*, therefore of every code or religion and morality” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 11). The will has „the *power of originating a state*” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 18). It is an *ens simplicissimum* which „may

be known but cannot be understood.” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 18). Coleridge writes that „without such an idea as the ground or inceptive position of a system of Philosophy (...) a consistent Philosophy of any kind, as distinct from mere history and empirical classification, would be impossible” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 19). This was the error of British empiricist philosophy. For Coleridge, its failure to accept „the one great mystery of the mind” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 19) because of its intellectual impatience undermined the basic existential foundation of faith, as Coleridge outlines in his critique of Empiricism.

Empiricism had made knowledge entirely dependent upon the external world. This was the result of an overemphasis on the finite empirical world and the passive role the individual plays in it as a recipient of its impressions. For Coleridge, the „empty cabinet” (Locke 1991, p. 55) of the mind, as Locke had called it, passively collecting impressions of the external world and adding nothing to them, had made the self all but disappear, as Hume had noted (Hume 1978, p. 252). Closer to Coleridge’s own time, David Hartley, in his *Observations on Man* (1749), took Locke’s position further, combining the view that all knowledge derives from experience with the associationist utilitarianism of John Gay, which set out pleasure and pain as the key to the formation of opinions and action, thereby granting moral action not in freedom, but in what Hartley termed lasting vestiges that serve as the physical substrate for further action. Heteronomous and will-less, the self represented by empiricism was entirely unreflective of the human condition. For Coleridge, this was the result of an intellectual impatience that was entirely given over to a kind of „despotism of the eye” (*Biographia Literaria*, p. 107), where everything was reduced to empirical causes that allow the individual to escape the uncertainty of the middle position.

This flight from the middle position by means of the empirical also extended to religion and a desire to escape the uncertainty of faith. The empirical focus caused Christianity to turn entirely to evidence, subsequently leading to a kind of bibliolatry. The total externalization of Christianity is easily seen in Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, where he argues that we are obliged to believe „those holy men of old who had revelations from God” on the basis that mankind has been provided with „outward signs that convince of the Author of those revelations”. (Locke 1991, p. 705). This empirically focused Christianity must turn entirely toward the evidential proof of scripture in order to illustrate its validity.

This can especially be seen in the work of William Paley, an extremely popular theologian in Coleridge’s day, and whose work Coleridge devoted

considerable efforts to refuting. In his *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794), Paley assumes that God chose to reveal himself by performing miracles, and that the credibility of this revelation rests on whether there are good reasons for believing that these miracles occurred. He argues that the witness of the early Christians provides a reliable account of the miracles of Christianity on the basis of their suffering, as recorded in both Christian and non-Christian sources. Later, in his *Horae Paulinae* (1790) Paley outlines the many consistencies between Acts and the Pauline Epistles attempting to illustrate that neither account was falsified.

Coleridge, however, deemed this position considerably dangerous. Scripture alone could not carry the weight of faith; half of that weight rested with what the individual brought to the text in the form of their moral freedom. Without faith being informed by morality, in which „we represent to ourselves the idea of human nature in all its possible perfection” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 10) scripture was left to the ravages of higher criticism. It is this ideal of moral perfection that lends strength and cohesion to the text, overcoming those aberrations which otherwise would cause its trustworthiness and currency to falter.² Coleridge writes:

The facts that constitute the history of revelation awake the [moral]³ reason to the knowledge and possession of its powers. The fruits and attainments of the reason are at hand to compensate and make indemnification for whatever diminution, either of the proofs or their influence on the mind, may be inherent in the nature of all historical testimony by the ravages or even the mere lapse of time. (*Opus Maximum*, p. 16).

For Coleridge, the Bible indeed contains the truths of the Christian religion, but what is contained in the Bible alone is not the Christian religion. Rather Christianity is actualised by the living morality in the individual that confirms the written testimony of the Scriptures. The possibility of any event is partly based on its historic evidence, and partly based on its *a priori* probability. It was this probability that Empiricism had dismissed.

² Though Coleridge was largely writing before David Strauss' *Leben Jesu* (1835) and Ernst Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1860), he was writing well after such works as Spinoza's *Tractatus Philosophico-Politicus* (1670) and Reimarus' *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, both of which point out numerous contradictions and discrepancies in the Biblical text.

³ In the *Opus Maximum*, Coleridge establishes morality as a form of pure reason; it is this form of reason to which he here refers.

Coleridge here takes up Lessing's challenge that „The accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.” (Lessing 1967, p. 309). Instead, the necessary truths of reason are present in the individual, but are awakened and confirmed by history, such as in the perfection of the individual in Jesus. This position allows Coleridge to argue that the Scriptures, „though composed by so many different men, in ages so different and under such different circumstances, do yet contain so uniform a correspondence to the prescript of pure reason.” (*Opus Maximum*, p. 96).

In this manner, Coleridge relegates the threat of higher criticism to the realm of the empirical understanding, and in so doing straddles, rather than jumps, that „ugly broad ditch” (Lessing 1967, p. 311), which Lessing could not negotiate.

Written by incomplete humans, the Bible carries the same incompleteness that is man, its nature reflecting man's middle position. If it were the reverse, Coleridge argues in one of his letters, this would in fact diminish the value of the scriptures. They are, like man, a finite thing that has been invested with infinite properties. „Reducing the Sacred Writers to passive instruments, *pens* in the hand of an invisible Agent, might be called the *Automaton Scheme*”. (*Collected Letters*, p. 617). Despite being mere humans the writers of the Bible were able to pen these texts, bringing together the universal and the individual through accepting the middle position.

IV. Gadamer

The twentieth century hermeneutist Hans-Georg Gadamer also examined the impatient self and its desire to overcome faith. Gadamer was born at Marburg in 1900, and died at Heidelberg in 2002. He earned his doctorate under Heidegger in 1922, and went on to develop a system of philosophical hermeneutics that was derived in part from phenomenology. His primary work was *Truth and Method* (1960), in which he sets out his general theory of understanding and interpretation.

However, unlike Irenaeus and Coleridge, Gadamer does not do this in a specifically Christian context. For Gadamer, the middle position in which man is placed is the historicity of his understanding. The desire to escape the uncertainty of this position is manifest in two ways: First, in a passive flight to authority and second, its opposite, an overhasty desire to overcome all authority and establish a new ultimate principle of certainty upon which all knowledge rests.

For Gadamer, hermeneutics allows for the „recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 268). In *Truth and Method* Gadamer takes for his example „the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 268). Though this example has its origins in the Enlightenment this is not Gadamer’s specific target. Rather it is the means whereby he approaches the two more general and interrelated problems of overhastiness and authority: „Overhastiness is the source of errors that arise in the use of one’s own reason. Authority, however, is responsible for one’s not using one’s own reason at all.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 279).

For Gadamer, both show intellectual impatience in action. The Enlightenment, writes Gadamer, defines itself by a single prejudice: „The prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 273). Under this Cartesian principle everything must be viewed from a pure, a-historical, and unprejudiced rational position. This single prejudice is in opposition to the multifarious, opaque, and often conflicting prejudices of tradition and authority. Enlightenment accepts no traditional forms of judgment, taking everything before the tribunal of reason. Therefore scripture, the favored target of the *Philosophes*, is a historical document like any other, and has no claim to anymore validity or authority than reason is willing to afford it.

Equally, Gadamer writes that Romanticism, the „mirror image of Enlightenment,” shares the same presuppositions and only reverses its values, „seeking to establish the validity of what is old simply in the fact that it is old.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 275). In contrast to the Enlightenment’s search for a pristine freedom, divorced from all superstition and prejudice, there arises a desire to reconstruct the old because it is so, „the conscious return to the unconscious, culminating in the recognition of the superior wisdom of the primeval age of myth.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 275). As the mirror image of Enlightenment, „belief in the perfectibility of reason suddenly changes into the perfection of the ‘mythical’ consciousness and finds itself reflected in a paradisiacal primal state before the ‘fall’ of thought.” (Gadamer 2004, pp. 275-276).

Romanticism and Enlightenment share „the fundamental schema of the philosophy of history,” what Gadamer calls, „the conquest of mythos by logos.” (Gadamer 2004, p. 275). The conquest which Gadamer writes of is one of intellectual impatience seeking to overcome the middle position. Because man’s situation in the divine plan renders him historically contingent, the individual’s limitation requires that ultimate realities be commu-

nicated in symbolic and imaginative language in order to be comprehended. Alternately, logos can offer a rational account of reality and its causes, providing a certainty that does not require faith. However, the attempt to render everything by logos loses the truths that can only be communicated by faith-requiring mythos.

For Gadamer, these two systems of thought commit different errors-subservience to authority and overhastiness-in the name of the same conquest and with the same result. Both deny the historicity, and therefore contingent nature of understanding while submitting themselves to a form of authority that allows them to avoid what Gadamer describes as the finitude which dominates both our human being and our historical consciousness.

All human experience is limited and qualified in some way by historical temporality, for there is no Archimedean point from which to view the whole of being. For Gadamer, what appeared to the Enlightenment (and its mirror opposite Romanticism) as limiting prejudice in actuality belongs to man's historical reality. To do justice to the finite and historical nature of being human, it is necessary to recognize the value of prejudice. However, this does not mean that prejudice is static. The individual begins with prejudices that provide preliminary expectations about the object of inquiry. While some are confirmed, others need to be revised or are replaced by new prejudices. This is an infinite dialectical process and recurs each time that the same, or a different, object is revisited. This dialectical process, Gadamer claims, supports the process of Enlightenment as described by Kant. Gadamer cites a passage from *What is Enlightenment?* in support of his position: „Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of men (...) nevertheless remain all their lives minors, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so comfortable not to be of age.” (Kant 1912, p. 35). The dialectical process allows this to be overcome. Gadamer continues, „I appeal with Kant to practical reason and the practice of the faculty of judgment. That is what I call hermeneutics as philosophy.” (Detmer 1997, p. 287).

In the same way that physical reality is necessary for Irenaeus, Gadamer argues that our prejudices are „not necessarily unjustified or erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth.” (Gadamer 1976, p. 6). Rather they constitute the concrete, historical reality and initial directedness of our whole ability to experience the world. Rather than limiting man's knowledge of the world they are the basis of his understanding of it. Gadamer's rehabilitation of prejudice, and his critique of both authority and overhastiness have the function of stressing the ontological finitude and historically con-

tingent nature of systems of thought. Human rational abilities never exist independently of the history, custom, or tradition that surround the finite self, and this conclusion demands both the continued use of the symbolic and uncertain language of mythos and restraint from its conquest.

V. Faithful Religion

Irenaeus, Coleridge and Gadamer all wrote about religion in distinct historical periods, however the work that each produced reflects the anthropological condition of the middle position. Furthermore, each thinker provides an opportunity for self-reflection about the motivations of faith without requiring the individual to abandon their religious belief in order to do so. In this manner they present a productive alternative to the required external views of the social sciences. The individual's position in mid-creation, his moral freedom and his historical contingency all require the acceptance, commitment and trust of faith. Gnosticism, Empiricist thought and the desire to overcome historical contingency all reveal intellectual impatience in riposte to this condition. This intellectual impatience seeks the absolute without the need for faith.

For Irenaeus, Coleridge and Gadamer such absolute, logocentric, complete systems end up alienating man from the reality of the incomplete condition that permeates his existence and the faith-requiring mythos that ultimate realities necessitate in order to be communicated. As with Xenophanes, each of these thinkers demand a true representation of religion, not one clothed to suit human impatience:

Give us no fights with Titans, no, nor Giants
 Nor Centaurs—the forgeries of our fathers—
 Nor civil brawls in which no advantage is.
 But always to be mindful of the gods is good. (McKirahan 1994, DK21B11).

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