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# THE BASIS OF ASSURANCE IN RECENT PROTESTANT THEOLOGIES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN  
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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BY HENRY BURKE ROBINS

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KANSAS CITY  
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Part I of this Bibliography gives a limited number of books, each bearing upon some aspect of the subject as it has been developed in this essay. These are noted under four heads: General; Phases of the Doctrinal Situation, Past and Present; Sources; the Problem of Certainty. Part II supplies a limited bibliography of works of the ten modern theologians whose positions form the basis of this study, only books which bear in some way upon the subject under discussion being enumerated. Generally speaking, no attempt has been made to include contributions to the theological reviews. Where these have been noted, they are such as have been of use in this discussion. Works of the ten theologians whose thought forms the basis of this essay are given in Part II of the Bibliography, in no case being mentioned in Part I.

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## INTRODUCTION

The interest of this study is to show the place which chief types of recent Protestant theology give the classic Protestant doctrine of religious assurance. The undertaking is analytical and interpretative; only in so far can it be termed constructive, for solutions beyond those which will pass under review in a study of typical recent theologies are not here attempted.

In the systems which will be studied intellectual certainty (*Wahrheitsgewissheit*) and religious assurance (*Heilsgewissheit*) are inextricably interrelated; not only so, they are logically related. Hence a study of religious assurance within the field indicated will involve the wider problem of intellectual certainty. Only in so far as it is thus involved will it be here considered.

The First Division will sketch the history of the doctrine of assurance in Christian theology, as this forms the background of the current views. The Second Division will develop the content of four types of current theology, since these systems thus viewed in their various bearings afford the theological context of the doctrine of Christian assurance, or its equivalent. Further, in the Second Division, certain fundamental conceptions, as they are developed by the various theological types, will be considered in their bearing upon Christian assurance. And, in conclusion, the Third Division will define the alternative views which the results thus obtained suggest.

The types of theology chosen for investigation are: Conservative Orthodoxy, Ritschlianism, Modern Positivism, and the School of Comparative Religions. While other types may be discriminated, it is believed that these are the most significant recent or current types. The choice of theologians has been governed by the simple purpose of confining the study to theologians who are truly representative of the various groups. In some cases other theologians than those cited would have served the end in view quite as well; of Herrmann, Seeberg, and Troeltsch this could hardly be affirmed. The exposition of the various systems of theology has been carried only far enough to yield what seems a sufficient perspective for the purposes of this study. It aims at cardinal traits, and, while attempting to be fair, does not undertake exhaustive analysis.

## I. PRELIMINARY SURVEY

The note of religious assurance is characteristic of the New Testament, however variously it may be grounded. The exulting certainty of Romans viii will never be surpassed. We should expect to find a marked quality of personal assurance of the favor of God in all types of religion rooting in the Biblical literature. As a matter of fact, however, there have been marked fluctuations in quantity and variations in the quality of assurance in the Christian church in the course of its history.

## A. VIEWS OF THE BASIS OF ASSURANCE BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

## 1. In the Fathers.

Christianity took over the revelation theory of the Jews, and this, reinforced by the Alexandrian belief in revelation as the highest source of knowledge, became characteristic of Christianity. From the time of Irenæus and Tertullian this belief was definitely connected with the Old and New Testaments.<sup>1</sup> The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers are at one in the view that a true knowledge of God can be attained only through revelation, and in particular through Jesus Christ. In contradistinction to the more liberal view of the Apologists and of the Alexandrian Fathers, which recognized all truth, in whatever system, as from the Divine Logos, the Western Fathers limited revelation to the Christian Scriptures. The same motives, in large measure, which developed the Rule of Faith and the Catholic Church led to the formation of a Canon, which drew the line on all not *scripture* and hence not revelation. The *auctoritas* variously exercised by these three norms had ultimately to be readjusted to the exercise of human *ratio*. Tertullian held that the content of revelation is above reason, and, further, that reason cannot comprehend it. There must be unconditional surrender to revelation.<sup>2</sup>

In the West *auctoritas* and *ratio* remained side by side, their relations being undefined. As a matter of fact, Stoic and Aristotelian rationalism was carried over into Catholic Christianity and became characteristic of its dogmatics and morality.<sup>3</sup> With Ambrose faith

<sup>1</sup>Windelband, *History of Philos.*, E. Tr., 1901, p. 219 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup>Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. V, p. 20 f.

is the basic fact of the Christian life; it is faith which lays hold of the redemption in Christ, and not mere belief in authority; it builds upon the blood of Christ. The question of salvation is not one of deliverance from death, as with the Eastern theologians so largely, but is concerned with deliverance from sin and its consequences.<sup>1</sup> In Augustine, however, *ratio* is the organ by which God reveals Himself to man. This thought, which was clearly defined in his first period, he never surrendered; yet it was limited in a marked way by the admission that the knowledge due to faith will always be uncertain here below. The only thing that can supersede it is revelation. He constantly "appeased with revelation his hunger for the absolute." Revelation is not recommended alone or chiefly by its intrinsic worth. Its external attestation, its certification by the Church, is conclusive. "Man needs authority to discipline his mind and to support a certainty not to be obtained elsewhere." Augustine was never clear about the relation of faith and knowledge; but his formal appeal was to authority—now to the Scriptures as above the Church, now to the Church as guaranteeing the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> He was never able to rest his faith upon the rationality of Christian truth as revealed in the Scriptures alone. "As a Christian thinker he never gained the subjective certitude that Christian faith was clear, consistent, demonstrable. He declared that he believed in many articles of faith, yes, even in the Gospel itself, only on Church authority."<sup>3</sup> In his Confessions, especially Book IX, 8-12, we find the Psalmist's faith in possession of the living God expressed. He is the true father of that Catholic mysticism which was at home within the Church until after the Council of Trent. But the assurance which such a mysticism expresses did not become doctrinally articulate with Augustine. *Iustificatio ex fide*, as a subjective experience, is never complete in this life, for the simple reason that it contemplates the entire transformation of its subject. Grace, to be sure, is prevenient and irresistible; the external means of grace avail for the elect; but only perseverance to the end can reveal the real objects of irresistible grace. Even the called who do not possess this final grace of perseverance will be lost. In consequence, there is a wide range of contingency in this view. Yet for himself, Augustine was sure of communion with God; he really possessed the certainty of faith.

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, V., p. 20 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, V., p. 125 f., Note 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, V., p. 79 f.

Yet he held that no one can be certain that he is of the elect, and thus possessed of the *donum perseverantiae*.<sup>1</sup>

Harnack suggests that while he had a full horror of sin, he had not experienced the horror of the uncertainty of salvation; and that, in consequence, he did not give Christ the central place in his scheme of salvation by grace which he otherwise might.<sup>2</sup>

Augustine's philosophy is based upon the conviction of the immediate certainty of inner experience. And he regards the idea of God as involved in the certainty which individual consciousness has of itself. All rational knowledge is ultimately knowledge of God, though he far transcends all the forms of human thought. Such rational knowledge, even, as the illumination of the individual consciousness by the divine truth, is essentially an act of divine grace, for God bestows the revelation of his truths only upon him who through good effort and morals shows himself worthy. The appropriation of these truths is through faith rather than through insight. Full rational insight is to be the consummation; this complete beholding of the divine truth is the acme of blessedness; but in order of time, even if not in dignity, faith in revelation is first. And thus we are brought once again to the pathway of authority. Here the open question is not that which concerns the existence of a gracious God, but that which concerns the matter of individual election.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. In Scholasticism.

Scholasticism met at the threshold of its career a twofold doctrine of natural and revealed religion. It developed this doctrine extensively. The two are in the closest harmony; but natural theology must subordinate itself to revealed, for it has its foundation in revelation. As a matter of fact, the scholastic theologian alternated between reason and revelation, while reason really determined his method and the structure of his system. Aquinas, the formulator of classic Roman Catholicism, held revelation above reason, but not contrary to it. Their relation is that of different stages of development; philosophical knowledge is a possibility given in man's natural endowment, and is brought to full and entire realization only by the grace active in revelation. With Aquinas religion and theology are essentially speculative and not practical. He is an absolutist in

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, V., p. 204 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, V., p. 210, Note 1.

<sup>3</sup>Windelband, History of Philos., p. 276 f.

thought. He endeavors to demonstrate the Christian religion from principles, and when in any particular he fails, he falls back upon authority. His theological interest is that of Augustine; all the results of world-knowledge must lead to that knowledge of God which liberates the soul.<sup>1</sup>

There are truths accessible to reason, as e. g. that there is a God; yet this truth could be reached by only the few, after long effort and very imperfectly. There are truths above reason, e. g. the Trinity. Even the truths accessible to reason need to be confirmed by the testimony of revelation. At the same time, though reason unaided could not arrive at the highest truths, it is her function to set in order even that knowledge which is gained through revelation.<sup>2</sup> Philosophy, as secular science, is over against theology, which is divine science. But theology is above philosophy, the Church above the State, grace above natural ability, the supernatural above the natural, and faith above reason. "Faith is at bottom 'believing things true because God said them,' and is therefore a more certain basis of knowledge than science, because nothing is more certain than the word of God. At the same time, these things are given in articles whose acceptance and interpretation belong to the intellect."<sup>3</sup>

The type of piety developed by this view of things is mystical. In the mysticism of Aquinas all is intellectually conditioned. The vision of God is essential knowledge. "Knowledge is the means of reaching spiritual freedom, and the highest knowledge attained is nothing but the natural result of the absolute knowledge given in vision."<sup>4</sup> But just because everything is intellectually conditioned, *nihil prohibet id quod est certius secundam naturam, esse quod nos minus certum propter debilitatem intellectus nostri.*<sup>5</sup> The entire scheme in which this mysticism moves admits of only "a perpetually increasing approach to the Deity, and never allows the feeling of sure possession to arise." The debility of our intellect never allows the process of intellectual certification to become a demonstration.<sup>6</sup> As with Augustine, there is in the end a falling back upon authority, the churchly guarantee. To be sure, there remains the experience of

<sup>1</sup>Harnack, History of Dogma, VI., p. 152 f.

<sup>2</sup>Fisher, History of Doctrine, New York, 1896, p. 234 f.

<sup>3</sup>Hall, History of Christian Ethics, p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>Harnack, History of Dogma, VI., p. 106.

<sup>5</sup>Summa, Pars Prima, Quaest. I, Art. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Summa, Pars Tertia, Quaest. I, Art. 5, Resp.

beatific vision, *summum hominis bonum*.<sup>1</sup> But this is granted to only a very few. And beyond this there remain the judgment from experience, always vitiated by subjective doubts and defects; and the appeal to authority. As for the last of these, from the days of Augustine it forbade positive assurance of personal salvation, defining it as *praesumptio*. Yet the Church enjoined hope, of which Aquinas says, it is *media inter praesumptionem et desperationem ex parte nostra*. And further, *non potest esse superabundantia spei ex parte Dei, cuius bonitas est infinita*.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Standard Catholic View.

The Catholic view of faith and Christian assurance developed in the direction indicated by Augustine and Aquinas. Believers could have no full or complete assurance except through special revelation or by the witness of the Church. Chapter XII of the Decree of the the Council of Trent concerning Justification makes this matter explicit.

Nemo quoque quamdiu in hac mortalitate vivitur de arcano divinae praedestinationis mysterio usque adeo praesumere debet, ut certo statuatur, se omnino esse in numerum praedestinatorum, quasi verum esset, quod justificatus aut amplius peccare non possit, aut, si peccaverit, certam sibi resipiscentiam promittere debeat. Nam, nisi ex speciali revelatione, sciri non potest, quos Deus sibi eligerit.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter XIII, which deals with the gift of perseverance, enjoins that no one promise himself anything as certain with an absolute certainty, though all ought to have a most firm hope in God's help. Men ought to fear for the combat which remains with the world, the flesh, and the devil.<sup>4</sup> The accompanying Canons enforce this view.<sup>5</sup>

In his *Symbolik* Moehler has developed the Catholic view as over against the view of the Protestant Reformers, dwelling upon the grounds upon which the Catholic feeling of uncertainty rests. Catholics have no criterion by which to distinguish the operations of grace from the natural achievements of men, and even if they could distinguish the operation of Divine grace, the recollection of the frailty of men, who must coöperate with that grace in order to be saved, would render full assurance impossible. Thus the Catholic

<sup>1</sup>Summa, Prima Secundae, Quaest. III, Art. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Summa, Prima Secundae, Quaest. LXIV, Art. 4. Secundae Quaest. XVIII, Art. 4. Utrum spes viatorum habeat certitudinem.

<sup>3</sup>Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. II, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 103 f.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, p. 113, especially Canons XII and XIII.



Christian, "without false security, yet full of consolation, calm, and entirely resigned to the Divine mercy, awaits the day on which God shall pronounce His final award."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the Catholic view of Christian assurance has had no material development since Aquinas. The Tridentine Decree and Canons merely erected into formal dogma what had long been characteristic of Catholic piety and teaching. The effect of it was to make men feel their entire dependence upon the Church as the specially ordered channel of Divine grace. This was the pillar and ground of hope. And if any individual or body of believers cut themselves off from this channel of grace, they must of necessity seek some other practical basis of assurance.

## B. PROTESTANT VIEWS OF THE BASIS OF ASSURANCE.

### 1. Luther.

The whole scholastic Catholic view forms the background over against which the theology of Luther had its development. His views could never have been what they were but for the definition and answers which Catholicism afforded his intensest personal religious problems. The Reformation did not start from a criticism of doctrine, but from the imperative of religious experience. Overwhelmed by the sense of his sin, Luther fell back upon the agencies of the Church, upon the sacraments and the penitential system; but he found there no assurance of the favor of God. At length he found in Christ the evidence of the *gratia Dei* which is the forgiveness of sins *sine merito*. The incarnate, crucified and risen Christ is God's word, the message and revelation of the gracious God. "Out of a complex system of expiations, good deeds and comfortings, or strict statutes and uncertain apportionments of grace, out of magic and blind obedience, he led religion forth. The Christian religion is living assurance of the living God, who has revealed himself and opened his heart in Christ." Faith is thus no longer the acceptance of certain doctrines—*assensus*, it is nothing other than certainty of the forgiveness of sins.<sup>2</sup>

Luther never identified the Word of God with the Scriptures. It may be read in the Bible, or communicated by the preacher, or conveyed by visible signs, *i. e.*, by the sacraments. Luther distinguishes the revelation which the Word of God conveys from the general reve-

<sup>1</sup>Symbolik, pp. 154-156.

<sup>2</sup>Werke, Erl. Ed. 14:24.

lation contained in the Bible and preached, and which all who either read the Bible or hear preaching are acquainted with. This revelation is indeed made through the written and spoken Word, but it is not granted to all.<sup>1</sup>

On Heb. 11:1 he says, "der Glaube ist eine gewisse Zuversicht. . . . der Glaube ist und soll auch sein ein Standfest des Herzen, der nicht wanket, wackelt, bebet, zappelt, noch zweifelt, sondern fest stehet, und seiner Sachen gewisz ist."<sup>2</sup> The rise of such a faith in one's soul, through the reception of God's Word, is nothing other than the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ.<sup>3</sup> In addition to this inner witness, there are also external signs of the possession of the Spirit; and these signs confirm our certainty of being in grace.<sup>4</sup> The witness of the Spirit in our hearts is not to be confounded with or set aside for the testimony of our feelings. Our judgment should be according to the Word of God, that is, according to the Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

This joyous certainty of the Christian is the theme of all Scripture. The promises of God are pregnant with it. The gift of God's Son is the seal of it.<sup>6</sup> It is just this freedom and certainty of the Gospel which the Catholic Church denies; and thereby it renders the Gospel nugatory and the Christian a slave to dead works.<sup>7</sup>

The sacraments and the power of the keys are of great significance in Luther's thought. In the hour of uncertainty the Church becomes the refuge of the perplexed. The priest declares the penitent forgiven, and has full authority to declare this certainty. It is so hard to trust in mercy, the individual is not required to work out his assurance all for himself; he obtains it from the office of the keys. However, what endows the words of the priest with power is no ecclesiastical dignity or indelibility of office; it is Christ's word of promise alone.<sup>8</sup> The place from which assurance of the forgiveness of sins is regularly to be obtained is the Confessional. At the same time, forgiveness is not a function of the priest alone. "Where there is no priest, any Christian person, even a woman or child may do just as much."<sup>9</sup> Such a person brings to the penitent

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Werke, 1:246.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, 37:7 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ex. Opera, 30:161 f., on Gal. 2:16 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, pp. 172, 173.

<sup>6</sup>Ut supra, p. 180.

<sup>7</sup>Ut supra, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup>Küstlin, *The Theology of Luther*, Vol. I, p. 285 f.

<sup>9</sup>Ut supra.

the word of the Gospel, and pronounces the judgment, "Be of cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that Luther does not have in mind the Church as an institution and authority, but the Church or the Christian community as medium of the Gospel. The whole external structure is impotent unless the individual experiences within his soul the voice of the Spirit crying "Abba, Father!" This response is one of faith, and not the product of mere feeling. When feeling is at a low ebb, faith clings to the naked word of the Gospel. The Holy Ghost bids the agitated sinner find comfort and be joyous in the promised grace of God in Christ.<sup>2</sup> It is above all things the Gospel which makes the heart sure.<sup>3</sup>

The assurance of such a faith issues in the freedom of a Christian man, which frees not from works but from reliance upon works. We are all equally priests, and every man is bound to direct his works for the good of others. Luther overthrew the outward and formal authorities which the Catholics had set up. He declared the mediation of a priesthood, whether in confession or absolution, unnecessary; he made an end to the calculation of external and temporal penalties; he set aside the doctrines of Purgatory, indulgences, and the applied merits of saints; in short, he overturned the whole Catholic penitential system, and substituted for it the thought of justification by faith. The sacraments themselves, which he reduced to two (three), have efficacy only because they are a special and effective form of the saving Word of God.<sup>4</sup>

Everything centers for him in the self-certifying content of the Gospel, which is wholly independent of all the channels through which the Gospel comes; it is manifest in the power with which the Word lays hold upon the heart—a power so great that one would feel bound by it, would feel how just and true it is, "wengleich alle Welt, alle Engel, alle Fürsten der Höllen anders sagten, ja, wenn Gott gleich selbst anders sagte."<sup>5</sup> With Luther, then, the understanding of the content of Scripture as the divine promise and remission of sin is synonymous with trust in it; *assensus* and *fiducia* are resolved into one. In other words, there are not with Luther the two steps: the validation of the Scripture as formal authority,

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, where Luther's Werke are quoted. Erl. Ed., 20:185.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, 16:16 f. on Luke 10:23-37; also Werke, 12:229.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, 49:285.

<sup>4</sup>Harnack, *History of Dogma*, VII, p. 212.

<sup>5</sup>Luther, *Werke*, 10:163.

and the appropriation of the content of truth thus validated; we are certain of the Scripture only as we take home to our hearts this Gospel content.<sup>1</sup> Thus Luther does not offer the modern antithesis of personal certainty over against authority-faith in the Scriptures. The question had not arisen for him how, if the assurance of the individual decides for him what is divine, a greater certainty could arise from the Scriptures. Or, again, if the Scriptures be set up as objective authority, how is it possible to be subjectively certain of them, since all inquiries concerning their origin and authors can never make them certain. Logically, one would say, the Gospel ought, in Luther's view, to be self-validating to all who hear it; he recognizes that it wins no such assent, and holds that the outer Word is not sufficient without the inner operation of the Holy Spirit. This supernatural agency inscribes the outer Word within the heart.<sup>2</sup> Luther lands, as Heim points out, in this paradox: The witness of the Spirit is a transcendent factor over against the Word which lends to the Word a certainty whose nature it is to be wrought by no such transcendent factor.

## 2. Melanchthon.

The distinction which Luther made between the Scriptures and the Word of God was soon lost. Melanchthon has no formal doctrine of Scripture, but quotes from all parts of it as if it were of equal authority, as he seems to feel. There is good reason for this. He had no such religious experience as Luther, and, furthermore, he was face to face with a situation which, as gauged by the common world-view of the time, demanded an external authority.<sup>3</sup> The evangelical position of Melanchthon, especially in his early years, was essentially that of Luther.<sup>4</sup>

Successive editions of the *Loci*, in proportion as they offered a comprehensive and articulated system of theology, obscured the simplicity of Luther's gospel. At first, the bold outline of the new Reformation position, to which he had given assent, the presence, influence, and warm friendship of Luther, and the simplicity of the situation in the church which felt itself engaged merely in a reform movement, led Melanchthon to neglect his humanistic antecedents

<sup>1</sup>Heim, *Das Gewissheitsproblem*, 1911, p. 257 f., where reference is made to Ihmels.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup>McGiffert, *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup>Compare his utterances on Grace, *Corpus Reformatorum*, xiii, Col. 630; Effect of Grace, *ibidem*; Good Works, *ibidem*, vii, Col. 411 f.; "The Security of God's Children," Fish, *Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence*, p. 457 f.; Justification, *Loci*, Plitt's Ed., p. 170.

and bent, to a relative contempt of reason. But as time passed, he experienced a revulsion, and began to restore reason, making it, alongside revelation, even if subordinate to it, a source of religious truth. The issue of this was a natural theology, reinforced and corrected by a revealed. The sharp distinction which Luther had maintained between *fides acquisita ex testimoniis auctoritatum* and the *inniti veritati propter se ipsam* is no longer maintained by Melanchthon. He coördinates reason and Law on the one hand with revelation and Gospel on the other. The Law is based upon the essential nature of man, the Gospel issues as a pure mystery from the secret wisdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

It is in harmony with this distinction that Melanchthon lays down a four-fold criterion of certainty, or rather four distinct criteria:

Sunt normae certitudinis juxta philosophiam tres: experientia universalis, noticiæ principiorum, et intellectus ordinis in syllogismo. In ecclesia habemus quartam normam certitudinis, patefactionem divinam, quae extat in libris prophetis et apostolicis.<sup>2</sup>

It is maintained that the certainty yielded by this last criterion is equally valid with mathematical certainty.<sup>3</sup>

In this view there are three moments in the attainment of certainty. There is first the exercise of reason. This has a merely chronological precedence, and is decidedly limited in its function. Secondly, the Word of God, confirmed by miracle and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And, thirdly, the inner witness of the Spirit. In many regards the second and third factors wholly transcend the first. In the last analysis, *causa certitudinis est revelatio Dei, qui est verax*.<sup>4</sup>

According to Luther, the promise was the particular correlate of faith. Not so with Melanchthon, faith is not merely *fiducia misericordiae Dei promissae propter Christum mediatorem*, but is—at least, according to the Loci of 1559 and thereafter—an *assentiri universo verbo Dei nobis proposito*. This body of truth Melanchthon came to designate as including “the whole doctrine handed down in the books of the prophets and apostles, and comprehended in the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds.” Thus, from being *fiducia*, repose upon the promise of the Gospel, faith has come to be *assensus* to “the whole teaching of the Word of God.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Heim, *Das Gewissheitsproblem*, pp. 263, 265.

<sup>2</sup>Corpus Reformatorum, 13:151.

<sup>3</sup>Citation by Heim, *ut supra*, p. 266.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup>McGiffert, *ut supra*, p. 77.

The concern seems to be with certainty concerning "the articles of faith" rather than with personal assurance of salvation; or, rather, assent to "the articles of faith," with a perception that they are divinely guaranteed as true, is the real basis of such *fiducia* as personal experience may yield.

Melanchthon seems not to have realized to how great an extent the use of his fourth form of certainty rendered the first three superfluous, and their use illogical. He believed that revelation yields a sum of truths which are to be accepted, even although they may not seem according to reason, since they are certified by a veracious God. While he preached evangelical assurance somewhat in the fashion of Luther, Melanchthon was more interested in the certainty of truth, and was thus at heart a rationalist and scholastic.

### 3. Calvin.

It is the will of God, rather than his grace, which is central for Calvin, and the Bible is a publication of that will rather than a manifesto of grace. The distinction which Luther made between the Bible and the Word of God is wholly wanting; the Bible is always and everywhere the Word of God, and of equal authority in all its parts. This Bible, in order to be Word of God in any given case, must be reinforced for the individual's experience by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. This testimony is superior to all reason, and is equal to an intuitive perception of God himself in the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin marks the character of rational proof as wholly secondary, when he treats its function in establishing belief in the Scripture.<sup>2</sup> The operation of the Holy Spirit is in the foreground, but is not held to be such as sets aside the normal activities of the individual. It rather quickens the understanding and the will to fresh activities.<sup>3</sup> It is quite clear that the whole movement of the soul is viewed as autonomous, though induced by a power above and objective to the individual, the power of the Divine Spirit. In the case of the elect, to whom alone the Spirit is given, that witness is coincident with the unique impression, the self-certifying effect, which the Scriptures make upon them. Faith is defined as consisting in a knowledge of God and of Christ; it is not reverence for and submission to the Church. The heart is not excited to faith by every

<sup>1</sup>Institutes, Bk. I, Chap. vii:iv:v.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, Bk. I, Chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, i:vii:v.

part of the Word of God; that which it finds in the divine Word upon which to rest its dependence and confidence is Christ, the pledge of the Divine benevolence toward us. Faith is a "steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence toward us," and in the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

It is only the elect who have the witness of the Spirit to the Scriptures, and they alone, as matter of course, have full assurance of personal salvation; yet the two are by no means identical. Calvin remarks that "full assurance" (plerophoria) is always attributed to faith in the Scriptures. The real believer is persuaded that he has a propitious and benevolent Father. Yet the assurance of faith is not unattended by doubts, a fact which Luther emphasized.<sup>2</sup> The dogma of the Schoolmen that it is impossible to decide concerning the favor of God is rejected. Faith and hope go together, they are sometimes used in the Scripture, it is urged, without any distinction.<sup>3</sup>

Against enthusiasts who proclaimed a witness of the Spirit independent of the Scriptures and affording fresh revelations of divine truth, Calvin had but one answer: God displays and exerts his power only where his word is received with due reverence and honor.<sup>4</sup> The witness of the Spirit not only attests the truth, but the new estate of the elect believer; his work underlies all assurance.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Pietism and English Evangelicalism.

That dogmatic Protestantism which succeeded the Reformation brought to full fruition the scholastic tendencies which were already manifest in the first formulators of Protestant theology, Melancthon and Calvin. The inwardness and vitality which characterized the faith of the Reformers were in large measure exchanged for formal intellectualism and orthodoxy. There is no more barren chapter in the history of Christian thought than that which deals with Protestant scholasticism. The theology of this period developed the doctrine of the Scriptures in particular. The need of a clearly defined objective standard which should avail against the common Catholic use of tradition led to the acceptance of the Bible as such an objective standard entirely apart from the inward witness of the Spirit. The witness of the Spirit in the heart of the believer

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, iii:ii:vii.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, iii:ii:xvi and xvii.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, iii:ii:xlili.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, i:x:iii.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, iii:i:iii.

was set aside as too highly subjective. The individual was held to be in no need of investigating the inspired character of the Bible, since that had already been attested to the Church by many infallible proofs. As such a book, the Bible came to be used as a collection of proof-tests for the establishment of a doctrinal code. In harmony with this point of view, it was not evangelical assurance which the period was interested in; it was, rather, intellectual certainty, based upon the universally assumed divine authority of the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the historical background over against which the Pietistic movement had its rise. German Pietism combined the mystical and the practical, and depreciated polemical and dogmatic theology. It had, in fact, only such rudiments of a theology as its fundamental opposition to Protestant dogmatism demanded; the center of its interest lay in personal religion. Philip Jacob Spener was probably the most influential formative influence in German Pietism. He was an orthodox Lutheran, and never attacked the current theology. Yet he emphasized individual piety and sought to give it a sufficient authoritative basis. He felt that the Protestantism of his day accepted justification by faith in much too formal a way, and divorced it from sanctification to an unwarranted degree. His ideal of a sanctified life was ascetic and other-worldly. But his insistence upon real piety was undoubtedly justified by the lax and formal morality of the time, and the way in which the doctrine of justification by faith was made to serve as a substitute for personal purity and goodness. Justification, as Spener looked upon it, has no meaning apart from a regenerate and sanctified life. Assurance which builds upon any other foundation than a holy life is a delusion. The main thing is not to have peace and to be conscious that one is a child of God; it is, rather, to have a holy life through the indwelling Spirit of God.<sup>2</sup>

The position of Spener may be gathered from his little volume *Das geistliche Priesterthum*, in which he elaborates a fundamental aspect of his thought in the form of a brief catechism upon the universal priesthood of believers. Not all exercise the same priestly function, to be sure, but all Christians are, in one sense or another, priests unto God. All are to go directly to the Scriptures, where— even though they lack the manifold linguistic and other aids to

<sup>1</sup>McGiffert, *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, Chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup>McGiffert, *Ut supra*, Chap. xi:l.



interpretation which the learned possess—they may learn and understand the truth. They may know all that has to do with their salvation and growth in the inner man according to the rule of grace; and all this comes about through the operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The function of the Holy Spirit is not one of certifying to the truth of the Word, which is everywhere assumed. It is, rather, an illumination of the Word, or of the minds of Christian readers, that he effects. In answer to the question how the Christian must conduct himself to be assured of the truth, Spener lays down (Sec. 37) a number of simple rules. The Scripture must be read in dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, and with the purpose of applying its truth to life. Christians must see to it that they do not let reason act as master, but pay attention rather to the Holy Ghost, and believe that there is not a single word or syllable which the Holy Ghost sets forth without its peculiar meaning.<sup>2</sup>

English Evangelicalism was the child of German Pietism, and, like German Pietism, it was practical in its aims. As Pietism was a reaction against scholasticism, it was a reaction against rationalism. While not intended as a theological reformation, the Evangelical movement had far-reaching effects in the field of theology, especially in that portion of theology which deals with religious experience. By far the most eminent figure in the field of English Evangelical history is John Wesley. He laid emphasis upon just those doctrines which were being discredited by the current theological rationalism. The center of emphasis was removed from the external revelation embodied in the Scriptures to the internal miracle by which the soul is born anew of the Spirit of God. A rationalizing orthodoxy was inclined to concede a large place to the revelation in nature, making the revelation in the Bible supplementary. But in the view of Wesley no amount of mere revelation could meet the need of sinful man. Christ, as the divine Redeemer who makes a vicarious atonement for sin, and the Holy Spirit, as the quickening instrument of God who renews the heart of the believer and abides therein, became the two cardinal points of Evangelical preaching and belief.

In Wesley's view, salvation is no mere forensic transaction; it is a vital renewal of the heart, a "present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity,

<sup>1</sup>Spener, *Das geistliche Priesterthum*, 1677, p. 38 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 41.

a recovery of the divine nature." This is the basis of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection. The "perfect Christian" Wesley describes in the following terms:

He loves the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength. . . . He is anxiously careful for nothing, . . . prays without ceasing, . . . his heart is ever with the Lord, . . . and, loving God, he loves his neighbor as himself; . . . his heart is pure; . . . his one design in life is "to do not his own will, but the will of him who sent him" . . . . As he loves God, so he keeps his commandments, not only some, or most, but all, from the least to the greatest . . . . Nor do the customs of the world at all hinder his running the race which is set before him.<sup>1</sup>

The "perfect Christian" has the unmistakable witness of the Spirit. This witness Wesley distinguishes from the witness of our own spirit, which we experience jointly with it. The foundation of the latter is laid in many texts of Scripture, by the ministry of the Word, by meditating before God in secret, and by conversing with those who are familiar with his ways. That natural reason which religion does not supplant but perfects, every man may put to service, "applying those scriptural marks to himself," and may know whether he is a child of God or not.

Thus, if he know, first, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," into all holy tempers and actions, "they are the sons of God;" (for which he has the infallible assurance of holy writ); secondly, "I am led by the Spirit of God;" he will easily conclude, therefore, I am a son of God.<sup>2</sup>

The witness of the Divine Spirit which is conjoined with this witness of our own spirits is really antecedent thereto. The Spirit of God, in a manner which Wesley will not undertake to describe, gives the believer such testimony of his adoption that "he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship than he can doubt the reality of the shining of the sun while he stands in the full blaze of its beams."<sup>3</sup>

With Wesley the witness of the Spirit is of central importance; and it is to be noted that he restores to the doctrine the meaning which Luther attached to it: that of a witness to the favor of God toward the individual who experiences it. This is quite another sense than that in which Calvin applied the term when he made it certify to the truth of the Scriptures. We have in Wesley a revival of interest in personal religion; and it is quite natural that he should seek a

<sup>1</sup>Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, pp. 13-19.

<sup>2</sup>Wesley, *Sermons*, Eaton and Mains' Ed., Vol. I, Sermon X: "The Witness of the Spirit."

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, Vol. I, p. 89.

firm basis for personal assurance. This he finds in the witness of the Spirit; "what he testifies to is that we are the children of God." And the immediate result of this witness is "the fruit of the Spirit."

As soon as ever the grace of God (in the sense of his pardoning love) is manifested in our souls, the grace of God in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit, takes place therein. And now we can perform through God what to man was impossible. Now we can order our conversation aright. . . We now have "the testimony of our conscience" which we could never have by fleshly wisdom, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world" . . . This is properly the ground of the Christian's joy.<sup>1</sup>

##### 5. Schleiermacher.

Religion is native to the human soul, and makes its appearance in consciousness in the form of feeling, according to Schleiermacher. Specifically, this feeling is one of dependence upon the absolute world-ground; *i. e.*, upon God, who is known only through this medium, and can never be scientifically apprehended. By thus defining religion, Schleiermacher felt that he preserved its freedom from philosophical complication and its integrity as an essential of human experience.<sup>2</sup> With such a fundamental postulate, it is at once apparent that the problem of religious certainty will be solved by Schleiermacher upon no basis of dogmatic or Scriptural authority, but in harmony with his philosophy. He belonged to a group of whom Kant, Fichte, and Schelling were members, who sought certainty concerning the transcendent Reality not by recourse to the facts which lie at the basis of sense-experience, nor by means of a supernatural revelation in the Scriptures; but by analysis and exclusion they sought the ultimate forms of thought in which all reality is given. With Kant, the result was the antinomy of the Theoretical and the Practical Reason, the former yielding only a contentless *Ding-an-sich*, while the latter, whose primacy over the Theoretical Reason he held, gave, as ground of the moral order of the world, the Supreme Reason—God. With Fichte, Schelling and Schleiermacher, the distinction between Theoretical and Practical Reason is not maintained; the two combine and yield directly a number of certainties concerning the Absolute Reality.

Being and thinking emerge in consciousness; their real adjustment would give knowledge, but they remain always in a state of difference—the complete adjustment of the real and the ideal is

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Cross, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, 1911, p. 108 f.

nowhere attained in cognition. This is rather the infinitely removed goal of thinking which desires to become knowledge, but never will succeed. At the same time, it presupposes the reality of this unattained goal, the identity of thought and being; this reality Schleiermacher calls God.<sup>1</sup>

To put it another way:

... in religion man is not primarily active but receptive. It must be so, for though in all consciousness there is a double element, namely, the self-consciousness or ego, and a determination of the self-consciousness, or experience, it is impossible that the latter should be produced by the former, because the ego is ever self-identical, but experience is variable. Nor could we ever have a self-consciousness of the ever-identical self, because such a consciousness would be destitute of all determination or of quality; and consequently consciousness of self is dependent upon experience. But this is just to say that all consciousness, our objective self-consciousness included, is dependent upon a prior influence exerted upon our receptivity. We are compelled therefore to seek the common source of our being and experience in an Other.<sup>2</sup>

God is not an inference; he is not arrived at after a process of reasoning, but is immediately given in the sense of dependence which we feel toward the ultimate world-ground. "The true God denotes the *whence* of our sensible and self-active existence."<sup>3</sup>

While the sense of dependence upon God is not wanting in mankind in general, it is only within the Christian community and through Christ himself that it is exalted to a place of dominance. That state of being in which the God-consciousness is depressed and dominated by the sensuous consciousness is denominated sin. The conflict between the submerged God-consciousness and the dominant sensuous consciousness produces pain. Through the Christian community we are brought into contact with Christ, through whom we gain a controlling God-consciousness. That God-consciousness, which was his entire personal consciousness, is mediated to the individual through the Christian community. Faith is the act of receiving Christ as he is presented by the Christian community. He who has thus received Christ is conscious of participation in his blessedness. The common spirit of the Christian community, which is the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Spirit, uttered itself in the writings of the New Testament, the form of all subsequent presentations of the person of Christ. Faith in Christ is not, however, to be reposed upon the authority of the Scriptures;

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 582.

<sup>2</sup>Cross, *ut supra*, p. 120 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Der christliche Glaube*, Sec. 4:4.

at the same time, the Scriptures may be the means of its awakening. Faith is an inner certainty accompanying the higher self-consciousness; yet it is not an objective certainty based upon demonstration.<sup>1</sup>

Da nun aber Jeder nur mittelst eines eigenen freien Entschlusses hincintreten kann; so musz diesem die Gewissheit vorangehen dasz durch die Einwirkung Christi der Zustand der Erlösungsbedürftigkeit aufgehoben und jener herbeigeführt werde, und diese Gewissheit ist eben der Glaube an Christum.<sup>2</sup>

Schleiermacher's discussion makes certain things clear. He is using conventional terms in an unconventional sense; and just as this yields a new result for the general view of Christian doctrine, so it does in the matter of Christian assurance. It is clear that with him the Scriptures hold no such place as they had before held in Protestant theology, either as touch-stone of truth, or as norm of the certainty of personal salvation. Further, personal assurance is directly related to Christ. At the same time, it must be recognized that Schleiermacher the philosopher, and Schleiermacher the theologian never really got together.<sup>3</sup> For his philosophy, as Heim points out, seeks the *a priori* of universal logical validity, while his theology starts with a contingent historic figure—that of Christ; and that which, from the philosophical side, he views as inadequate symbol, from the churchly side he allows universal speculative validity. Schleiermacher has far more significance for the method of Christian theology as a whole than for any specific contribution to the problem of personal assurance.

### C. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

The advent of an inductively-grounded scientific theory of evolution was, beyond question, the most far-reaching and significant development in the field of thought witnessed by the Nineteenth Century. The broad, present-day conception of organic world-process, as over against the earlier view of static mechanism, was of comparatively slow development. As theory, it had won its place before 1830, but it was not tested out in the laboratory until much later. Charles Darwin's epoch-making "Origin of Species," 1859, afforded this confirmation, while Herbert Spencer in his *Synthetic Philosophy* gave the theory a wider currency and a more extensive application. Thus, hand in hand with the development of the evo-

<sup>1</sup>Das Gewissheitsproblem, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Cross, ut supra, p. 139 f.

<sup>3</sup>Der christliche Glaube, Sec. 14:1.

lutionary hypothesis went the application of the method of induction. As the theory of genetic process was at length accepted as the fundamental working hypothesis of all the sciences, and has found its application in the broad field of philosophy and religion as well, so also the method of induction has supplanted the deductive method in all these fields. The impulse to examine data had led to extensive activities in many fields—as archeology, philology, biology—before the general acceptance of the theory of evolution; but when once this theory became an actual working hypothesis of the scientific world, investigation in all these, and in numerous virgin fields, was vastly increased, and the process was directed and results coördinated in a manner unparalleled. And today the method of observation and induction holds the field in every department of science.

The adoption of a new method carried with it the reorganization of all the developed sciences, and the creation of sciences before unheard of. “Geology, embryology, comparative philology, the history of religion, of social institutions, of art, of politics, anthropological research, sociological generalization—these are the great new achievements of Nineteenth-Century science.”<sup>1</sup> It would be too much to claim that all these had their rise from the impulse given by the newly-framed theory of evolution. They did not; but they received an extension and gained a significance therefrom which would have been impossible otherwise.

The application of the idea of process in the provinces of philosophy, psychology, ethics, history, and the new science of sociology, has brought about results undreamed of by the classic formulators of these sciences. Philosophy today studies life instead of proceeding deductively from a *priori* principles; psychology goes back of psychic phenomena to seek the physical and social conditions which make possible the observed spiritual process; ethics seeks to view the field of morals in connection with developing situations which gave rise to successive standards; history no longer devotes itself to isolated great men, but recognizes the sway of social movements and seeks to trace the powerful undercurrents of the common life; while sociology devotes itself to no mere gathering of anthropological data, but, recognizing society’s common responsibility, seeks in his-

<sup>1</sup>Royce, Herbert Spencer, p. 41.

tory and environment the causes of social need and distress, and indications of social solutions.

We need do no more here than remind ourselves of theology's struggle with the changing world-view. She could not maintain herself in isolation, and little by little, in one department and another, altered both her method and her content; the whole trend of her progress, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century particularly, was toward the exchange of the method of authority for the method of free induction from the data of history and experience. The common principles of modern historical science were applied to the Biblical history, there arose a more humanitarian interest in Biblical personages and situations, followed by an attempt to conceive the conditions and social influences which could give rise to the movements and controlling concepts of the Biblical history and literature. In other words, from being treated as detached and divine in essence, the Biblical literature and history, with its great ideas, personages, and movements, came to be thought of as a section of universal history, to be understood and interpreted as such. To be sure, this trend was not universal, even at the end of the Nineteenth Century, but it was the new and dominant aspect of the historical study of the Biblical literature.

The passing of the authority method was accompanied by the breakdown of systems of theology. If the assumption underlying systems of theology, that the Scriptures afford a content of revealed truth, which is the chief fabric from which theology must shape its formulae, be set aside, then the formal shaping of such systems must come to an end. Quite in harmony with this necessity, those Nineteenth Century types of theology which passed beyond the merely mediating stage did not develop fully articulated systems. This was true of the Ritschlian school; it was also true of those liberal theologians whose theological position was determined by a thorough-going acceptance of philosophical postulates. Upon whatever basis, these systems sought to legitimate such elements of religious faith as seemed to them essential to its perpetuation. It is true, however, that the numerical majority continued to use the authority method, with such modifications of philosophical or scientific views as seemed not to destroy the fundamental postulates of authority religion, introduced in an entirely subordinate relation. Thus, evolution, after a sort, found its way into many

conservative systems, as did likewise the philosophical concept of immanence. Certain results of the inductive process, too, were felt to have a place and value as corroborative of revealed truth. At the same time, the real essentials of faith and experience were held to be a gift of divine grace from the supernatural realm. Whatever concessions in detail here and there have been made, this is the essential position of Conservative Orthodoxy; and when it recedes from this position it ceases to be Conservative Orthodoxy. It cannot be otherwise, for Conservative Orthodoxy proceeds from the assumption of a final content of truth revealed in the Scriptures and interpreted by the great ecumenical creeds.

Modern Positivism has scarcely passed beyond the mere business of mediation. Though feeling very strongly the pull of the modern scientific world-view, the Modern Positive is an absolutist and an authoritarian at heart. Not the Bible but "the Gospel" is his final norm. The Ritschlian endeavors to keep his scientific truth and his religious experience in two sealed compartments, each with a validity norm of its own, and each quite independent of the other. If Christianity were a system of truths, it would have to be related to the truths of science, but being fundamentally an experience, it is under no such imperative; neither science nor philosophy can predetermine it, only a fact of history can do so.

The rise of a science of Comparative Religion, which seeks in the religious ideas, customs, and experiences of humanity a basis for its generalizations, indicates a cutting loose from the authority method and the thorough-going application of the method of induction. Should this become general, should expounders of the Christian faith, rejecting a static authority basis, seek to ground faith and to satisfy religious needs by a broad induction from the field of religious history, it is manifest that a restatement of every doctrine vital to such a life would be demanded, and that the passing of elements not thus vital would be involved. Liberal Protestant theology has already taken that step.

The doctrine of personal religious assurance has, as we shall see, been seriously affected by the movements of thought of the Nineteenth Century. Conservative Orthodoxy still grounds it supernaturally upon the whole series of Divine interpositions in human history and experience. Ritschlianism grounds it in the person of Jesus, a historical fact, which—mediated through the Christian



community—becomes the basis of individual experience of the gracious God. Modern Positivism grounds it in the Gospel of the Son of God, an experience of whom carries with it the validation of a certain content of truth, as well as assurance of personal salvation. The school of Comparative Religions necessarily has no evangelical doctrine of assurance; yet it has a basis of confidence in the *a priori* of reason and the *a posteriori* of experience. It makes a thorough-going application to religion of the fundamental scientific hypothesis of continuous progressive change; and yet it reads this continuous progressive change as the operation of an infinite and absolute God. A yet further step is to abandon all absolutism and ground confidence in the method of experimentation. Some are taking this step.

## II. PRESENT-DAY PROTESTANT TYPES.

The four general types of theology to be considered in the present survey are the Conservative Orthodox, Ritschlian, Modern Positive, and *Religionsgeschichtliche*. Conservative Orthodoxy is clearly a survival of the dogmatic outcome of the Protestant Reformation. It represents the same general world-view and the same theological method that produced Protestant scholasticism. At the same time, it has faithfully conserved the chief religious values achieved by the Protestant Reformation as a whole. Ritschlianism was born of the Protestant line, and can show many actual affinities for the religious faith of Martin Luther, but it is very far removed from scholastic Protestantism, and from the whole rationalistic, system-making tendency. It was born of a Nineteenth Century situation characterized by a somewhat rigid view of science and a mechanical view of the universe, over against which it sought a firm basis for faith by positing a realm of religion which it is no part of the province of science to enter, and whose judgments of value are of equal validity with scientific determinations in the physical realm. A sufficient norm of judgment is found in the historical Jesus meditated by the Christian community. Modern Positivism is the fruit of a meditating and conserving impulse. It had its rise with a group of men who are interested in a body of positive Christian truth, and who at the same time have been more or less influenced by the Ritschlian plea for the historical and by the claims of the modern scientific world-view. The *Religionsgeschichtliche* school developed under the direct influence of the Ritschlian group, and has a kindred interest in the historical—rather, it has a more profound interest in the historical, being convinced that a scientific study of religions will yield data which can be used constructively for the guidance of the religious life of today, while at the same time the particular forms of religion, and the influence and memory of religious personages pass with the lapse of time.

### A. GENERAL SURVEY OF REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEMS.

#### 1. Conservative Orthodoxy: James Orr and B. B. Warfield.

An extended statement of the positions of Conservative Orthodoxy need not be presented here; the general outline of this system

is quite familiar. Yet a brief review of the main features of this type of theology will afford us, when taken in relation to the other theological systems to be reviewed, the necessary perspective for our study of the basis of assurance. Such an outline James Orr affords us in his *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 37 f., from which the following section is condensed:

(The Christian view) is a system of theism; affirms the creation of the world by God, his immanent presence in it, his transcendence over it; the creation of man in the divine image; the fact of sin and disorder in the world, due to the voluntary turning aside of man from his allegiance to God—a Fall in other words; affirms the self-revelation of God to the patriarchs, to Israel, of a gracious purpose of salvation in Jesus Christ, his Son; that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, to be honored, worshiped, trusted, even as God is; that the Incarnation reveals the nature of God as triune, the activity of Christ in creation, the potential nature of man, the purpose of creation and redemption; affirms the redemption of the world through the Atonement, availing for all who do not reject its grace; the historical aim of Christ's work as the founding of the Kingdom of God; that the present order will be terminated by the appearance of the Son of Man for judgment.

Professor Orr's work in the field of Dogmatics has been in the exposition and defense of this scheme. The very topics upon which he has written are suggestive of the field of his interest. *The Christian View of God and the World, God's Image in Man and Its Defacement in the Light of Modern Denials, The Bible Under Trial, The Virgin Birth of Christ, The Resurrection of Jesus, Revelation and Inspiration*. There are at least four cardinal points in the general scheme of his theology: the Fall, Revelation, Incarnation, Atonement; all the minor details of the system are involved in these.

His work on *Revelation and Inspiration* enters the field of this study more directly. Here the position is taken that any tenable Theism must complete itself in a doctrine of special revelation (p. 51). Prophecy and miracle were common forms of revelation. But Jesus Christ is the supreme revealer and the supreme miracle (p. 131). He assumed a true humanity, was limited but did not err; yet his subliminal consciousness was Godhead itself (p. 151). The Scriptures, as the record of the whole divinely-guided history of Israel and the apostolic action in the founding of the Church, are revelation—God's complete word for us (p. 150). This record is sufficient to bring us, faithfully and purely, the complete will of God for our salvation and guidance (p. 175). The Bible is free

from demonstrable error in its statements to a degree that of itself creates an irresistible impression of a supernatural factor in its origin (p. 216). Only upon the basis of such a revelation can man intelligently coöperate with God in his redemptive purpose (p. 52).

Professor Warfield's theological system is practically identical with that of Dr. Orr; but his somewhat different emphasis reveals another interest which they have in common, viz., the development of the doctrinal system of Christianity, which they consider as all the while implicit in the revealed Word of God. Prof. Warfield says:

The development of the doctrinal system of Christianity in the apprehension of the Church has actually run through a regular and logical course. First, attention was absorbed in the contemplation of the objective elements of the Christian deposit, and only afterward were the subjective elements taken into fuller consideration (the doctrine of God issuing in the Trinity; the God-Man; Sin; the Work of Christ; the Holy Spirit). This is the logical order of development, and this is the actual order in which the Church has slowly and amid the throes of all sorts of conflicts . . . worked its way into the whole truth revealed to it in the Word. The order is . . . : Theology, Christology, Anthropology (Hamartology), Impetration of Redemption, Application of Redemption.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Warfield insists that Christianity is built upon facts which are doctrines; that Christianity therefore is constituted not by the facts, but by the *dogmas*, i. e., by a specific interpretation of the facts.<sup>2</sup> To be indifferent to doctrine is to be indifferent to Christianity itself. In his Introduction to Professor Warfield's *Right of Systematic Theology* Dr. Orr expresses his hearty agreement with this view:

. . . . if what men have is at best vague yearnings, intuitions, aspirations, guesses, imaginings, hypotheses, about God, assuming that this name itself can be anything more than a symbol of the dim feeling of mystery at the root of the universe,—if these emotional states and the conceptions to which they give rise are ever changing with men's changeful fancies and the varying stages of culture,—then it is as vain to attempt to construct a science of theology out of such materials as it would be to weave a solid tissue out of sunbeams, or to erect a temple out of the changing shapes and hues of cloudland.<sup>3</sup>

In this view certainty is grounded upon revelation, and not upon revelation in experience chiefly, but upon authoritatively attested external revelation which conveys to us a body of truths about God,

<sup>1</sup>Introduction to "The Work of the Holy Spirit," Abraham Kuyper, E. Tr., New York, 1900, pp. xxv, xxvi.

<sup>2</sup>The Right of Systematic Theology, pp. 34, 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 9.

an authoritative interpretation of Jesus Christ, and a theological scheme apart from which his life and death could not have their wonted significance for our faith. We are, first of all, certain of the truth; and that is of greater urgency, even, than personal assurance of the divine favor; and, in any event, it is prerequisite thereto. Personal assurance rests ultimately upon this basis of objective revelation, but is mediated through the psychological miracle of regeneration and the subsequent ministry of the Holy Spirit.

## 2. Ritschlianism: Herrmann, Kaftan, and Harnack.

The most influential Ritschlian of today is doubtless Professor Herrmann, from whose volume *Communion with God* the following is condensed:

The Christian has a positive revelation of God in the person of Jesus (p. 34). Our confidence in God needs no other support. We are Christians because in the human Jesus we have met with a fact which makes us so certain of God that our conviction of being in communion with him can justify itself at the bar of reason and of conscience (p. 36). We see ourselves compelled to recognize the spiritual power of Jesus as the only thing in the world to which we surrender in utter reverence and trust (p. 82). In this experience we lay hold of Jesus himself as the ground of our salvation. Jesus differs from all who follow him by his conscious rising to his own ideal (p. 92), and he knows no more sacred task than to point men to his own ideal person (p. 93). In our confidence in the person and cause of Jesus is implied the idea of a Power greater than all things, which will see to it that Jesus, who lost his life in this world, shall be none the less victorious over the world. The thought of such a Power lays hold upon us as firmly as did the impression of the person of Jesus by which we were overwhelmed (p. 97). It is the beginning of the consciousness within us that there is the living God (p. 98). Through the strength of Jesus the Christian is made to acknowledge the reality of an Omnipotence which gives this Man victory, and from the friendship of Jesus for the sinners whom he humbles, he gathers courage to believe that all these things mean God's love seeking him out, poor sinner that he is (p. 115). We know that in Christ we meet with God, and we know what sort of meeting it is; we know that this God gives us comfort and courage to meet the world, joy in facing the demands of duty, and, with all this, eternal life in our hearts (p. 173).

Certainty can never arise from an equipment of supernatural power, which equipment is, moreover, entirely concealed, but, on the contrary, it does arise from the vision of a fact, when the understanding of that fact is accompanied by a complete change of the inner life, a rearrangement of our conscious relation towards God (p. 175). Every devout man knows that he cannot bring about communion with God, but that God does it for him. This act of God is the revelation on which the reality of all religion rests (p. 199). Thus of the Christ that tradition hands down to us we can say, "In thy light do we see

light" (p. 283). This is the only presence of Christ and of God which we can experience, and we desire no other (p. 284). Through the heartfelt desire for God that is kindled by his revelation, the Christian is driven to commune with the world in work and in the service of his fellows (p. 321).

When a man puts clearly before him what Christ means for him, namely, the God who turns toward him and fills him with a new mind for life, then at the same moment he makes it plain to himself that he has become a new creature, full of that strength that flows from the one great fact that God has revealed himself to us in the flesh (p. 346). This remains for him a miracle which lies beyond all experience, inasmuch as he never exhausts its meaning in any moment of conscious experience (p. 346). Two different powers combine to bring about the certainty of faith; one, the impression made upon us by a historical personage and fact which comes to us in time; and the other, the moral law whose eternal truth we learn to know at once when we are aware of that law. Religious faith in general arises when a man runs against an undeniable fact which compels him by force of what lies in it to recognize that in it God is touching his life (p. 355).

All Herrmann's theological views are in harmony with the positions indicated above. The conventional terminology which he uses is given a new content. He feels that the positive theologians, against whom he particularly inveighs, have not acknowledged nor even felt "the spiritual requirements which science creates." He himself feels them so keenly that he seeks a way of escape by positing religion as a thought that science cannot ground, but which itself grounds the inner life of each individual. Science must recognize in religion another way of comprehending and ordering reality, standing alongside itself. And in turn religion must give like place to science as yielding demonstrable knowledge, the two together forming the interrelated yet profoundly distinct forms of our existence, the revelations to us of a hidden whole.<sup>1</sup>

Our need for the revelation which we have in the historical Jesus arises from the conflict of all the forces of our existence with the good. To meet our need, God touches us in a historical fact, through the intrinsic qualities and immediate effects of which we are assured of its Divine source; we no longer have need of miracles; the deity of Christ is not a term to be contended for, it can mean at most only that in the human life of Jesus God turns to sinners and opens his heart to them; "redemption" is fulfilled by Jesus in the revelation which he affords of the blessedness of the man who is in fellowship with God; but in order to make such a revelation, he had

<sup>1</sup>Zeitschr. f. T. u. K. Vol. 17 (1907), p. 197 f.; Lage und Aufgabe der evangelischen Dogmatik.

to be perfected through suffering, and in that sense he won redemption by his vicarious suffering.

In this scheme the starting-point is sin; redemption is by revelation, in a unique human life so indwelt and motivated as to thought one with God; this unity, however, is not one of substance, nor can it be described by any conventional terms referring to divine and human nature. The experience of this revelation gives us power and impulse to will the right, an activity which is the counterpart of our life of faith and dependence upon God. Doctrines are not antecedent to faith, but are its product; it is not they which perpetuate Christianity, but the community of experience arising from contact with the historical Jesus, who affords a vision of God.

The twofold basis of certainty in this view is that the demands of the moral nature yield as postulate a God through whom the moral spirit reaches freedom and autonomy, and that this postulate of the practical reason is confirmed by the experience which one has when he meets the historical Jesus, the rise of a conviction within him that in Jesus God is seeking to commune with him.

In his more philosophical treatise *The Truth of the Christian Religion* Julius Kaftan concludes that it is impossible by means of common knowledge or positive science to attain to an apprehension of the First Cause and Final Purpose of all things. Only an idealistic philosophy can give us the highest knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Our method must start with the primacy of the will in our self-consciousness and of the practical reason in our philosophical speculation (p. 302). Only an idea of the chief good can serve as the principle of a philosophy based on practice (p. 222). And only the idea of the Kingdom of God as the chief good of humanity answers all the demands of truth, rationality and validity upon such an idea (p. 325); for the chief good must secure perfect and unconditional satisfaction for the human soul (p. 328). As the idea of the highest good, the Kingdom of God is a postulate of reason; Kant's distinction between the theoretical and practical reason is here intentionally dropped, for all reason is practical in one aspect of it (p. 381). Kant does not go beyond the postulate as such; if we are not to end there, the eternal Kingdom of God must have been proclaimed in the world, in history, by a Divine revelation (p. 381 f). That inner experience by which the fact of the

<sup>1</sup>Cf. p. 422 f.

Kingdom of God becomes certainty to the individual is possible only in relation to revelation (p. 385). Thus reason and revelation meet in the chief good (p. 386), yet only where the subjective need lays hold of revelation as objectively given and self-announcing is certainty attained (p. 387). This revelation objectively given is Jesus Christ. Jesus is a historical person, that history of which he was center is an inseparable unity of word and deed, of teaching and life, and that history is God's revelation to us. The revelation does not lie in a teaching concerning the life and deeds, the death and resurrection of Jesus, but just in these things themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The Scriptures are sources of the divine revelation, but Jesus is in the highest sense that revelation itself. Hence we ask what he announced as life's highest good. From the New Testament we learn that it was the Kingdom of God. This is essentially what every religion proclaims as the chief fact. The Kingdom of God is, therefore, our highest good and our supreme ideal, both in one.

The uniqueness of Christianity lies in the fact that while it remains most closely united with its historical origin, it is yet universal as no other religion is. Though based upon the revelation of the highest good revealed by the historical Jesus, yet it reckons only upon what is universal among mankind—the religious need and the ethical tendency of man.<sup>2</sup>

Over against the highest good is the fact of human sin; man is by nature unfree and under the rule of sin. Sin is defined as "alles menschliche Wollen und Handeln, welches in tatsächlichem Widerspruch mit dem göttlichen Willen steht."<sup>3</sup> In the Christian religion it is made clear that the natural life of man is sin and wretchedness. We become aware of the divine anger. At the same time, God is revealed to us in Christ as willing our salvation, and calling us, in spite of our guilt, into his Kingdom. We are Christians when we receive in faith the offered justification, and, as partakers in the reconciliation, win the eternal life in participation in the transfigured life of the risen Lord.<sup>4</sup>

Thus Kaftan makes a use of the risen Christ which Herrmann declines. He also makes a place for the mystical element of Christianity, which Herrmann declines to do.<sup>5</sup> The apologetic start-

<sup>1</sup>Wesen der christlichen Religion, p. 340 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 317.

<sup>5</sup>Garvie, *The Ritschlian Theology*, p. 158.



ing-point of Herrmann is the human consciousness of the unconditioned moral law; while with Kaftan it is the "supermundane Kingdom of God," or the highest good, as a postulate of reason.<sup>1</sup>

According to Kaftan, the work of the Holy Spirit takes place in the inner life of the human spirit. Here the Spirit of God lays hold of man, and under this influence he first appreciates what the revelation of God in Christ really signifies; consequently this work of the Holy Spirit is to be understood as the continuation of the revelation, and as in a certain sense its fulfillment.<sup>2</sup>

Der Geist Gottes, welcher da erleuchtet, ist der Geist des Herrn, und die Erleuchtung selbst ist ihrem Inhalt nach nichts anderes als die heilsame Erkenntnis Jesu Christi, d. h. nicht eines Principis, das er in die Welt gebracht, sondern seiner geschichtlichen Person.<sup>3</sup>

No man can have the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit independently of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; this knowledge is primary, for otherwise Christ would not be the perfect revelation of God, but would be superseded by the Holy Spirit.

Like Herrmann, Kaftan holds that faith has a province of its own. "Der Glaube ist selbst ein Erkennen, das sich auf das Ganze der uns gegebenen Wirklichkeit richtet..."

Das der Glaube seine Logik für sich habe, auf den ihn beherrschenden Ideen begründet, heiszt, dasz er im Erkennen anderen Gesetzen folgt als die theoretische Welterklärung der Wissenschaft.<sup>4</sup>

While Kaftan uses more of the conventional terms, or makes an effort to give these terms a more conventional content than Herrmann does, his view is not fundamentally different in its main outlines. While the rational at one end of the line and the mystical at the other receive more emphasis than with Herrmann, certainty is grounded preëminently in the revelation of God in history in the person of Jesus, a revelation which takes up the thought supplied by natural reason—the idea of the highest good—and confirms and gives content to it.

Harnack manifests the same insistence upon the historical Jesus which we find in Herrmann and Kaftan. The New Testament phenomena are such that Jesus must be honored as a unique per-

<sup>1</sup>Orr, *Ritschlianism*, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Wesen der christlichen Religion, p. 345.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 347.

<sup>4</sup>Zur Dogmatik, p. 51.

sonality.<sup>1</sup> He believes that since the days of Strauss historical criticism has succeeded in restoring the credibility of the portrait of Jesus in its main outlines. The Gospels afford us a plain picture of the main features and application of Jesus' teaching; they tell us how his life issued in the service of his vocation; and they report the impression which he made upon his disciples and which they transmitted.<sup>2</sup> There were three moments in the message of Jesus, as Harnack interprets it, viz.: (1) The Kingdom of God and its Coming, (2) God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul, (3) The higher righteousness and the commandment of love.<sup>3</sup> The Kingdom of God, as Harnack understands it, is

Firstly, . . . something supernatural, a gift from above, not a product of ordinary life. Secondly, it is a purely religious blessing, the inner link with the living God; thirdly, it is the most important experience a man can have, that on which everything else depends; it permeates and dominates his whole existence, because sin is forgiven and misery banished.<sup>4</sup>

The Fatherhood of God carries with it the infinite value of the human soul. The Gospel is the Fatherhood of God "applied to the whole of life; (it is) and inner union with God's will and God's kingdom, and a joyous certainty of the possession of earthly blessings and protection from evil."<sup>5</sup> The higher righteousness causes love and mercy to displace empty ritual acts, makes the crux of morality to lie in disposition and intention, reduces morality to one principle—love, and frees morals from all alien connections, while revealing religion as its soul.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the Gospel is not in all respects identical with its earliest form, but that earliest form contained something which, under different historical forms, is of permanent validity.<sup>7</sup> The Gospel as Jesus preached it had to do with the Son, and not with the Father only. He is the way to the Father, appointed by the Father, and thus he is the Judge of all. He was, and is still felt to be, the personal realization and strength of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup>

The Gospel is no system of theoretical doctrines of universal philosophy; it is doctrine only in so far "as it proclaims the reality

<sup>1</sup>Harnack, *Christianity and History*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup>What is Christianity, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Ut supra, pp. 71, 72.

<sup>7</sup>Ut supra, p. 13 f.

<sup>8</sup>Ut supra, pp. 130, 144, 145.

of God the Father. It is a glad message assuring us of the life eternal," teaching us how to lead our lives aright. The Protestant Reformation went far toward the restoration of this Gospel. It was a "critical reduction to principle," releasing religion from "the vast and monstrous fabric which had been previously called by its name," and reducing it to its essential factors—the Word of God and faith.<sup>1</sup>

In the sense in which Luther took them, both can be embraced in one phrase: the confident belief in a God of grace. They put an end—such was his own inner experience, and such was what he taught—to all inner discord in a man; they overcome the burden of every ill; they destroy the sense of guilt; and, despite the imperfection of a man's acts, they give him the certainty of being inseparably united with the holy God.<sup>2</sup>

The tendency to turn aside from the validating of objective doctrine to the development of the implications of Christian experience goes back to Schleiermacher. The rapidly developing historical disciplines virtually denied the scientific character of dogmatics. With Schleiermacher the historical disciplines were given entire freedom and their negative issue disregarded, since it was held that religious knowledge goes back to experience. This position toward science was assumed by Ritschl; but he avoided the pitfall of mere subjectivism by emphasizing the objective revelation in Jesus Christ.

Ritschlianism found no way to reconcile the demands of thought with the convictions of the Christian community other than the postulation of a distinct sundering of the province of religion from that of philosophy. It set forth a reasonable, practical, manly Christianity as over against a weakly Pietism. The positive elements of Christianity which Ritschl sought to ground, especially his grounding of theology upon the relation of God in Christ, have exercised a profound and widespread influence upon religious thought.<sup>3</sup>

It is a common feature of the Ritschlian theology that it believes itself to have discovered a way to certainty which exactly meets the twofold demand for moral and intellectual autonomy, and which, at the same time, avoids the pitfalls of a dogmatic supernaturalism. Jesus as a historical figure has unique and God-revealing significance for us. And this meaning is not to be pressed back upon details dependent upon the more or less uncertain results of criticism.

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Wendland, *Ritschl und seine Schüler*, p. 133 f.

The Christ of community tradition, the main outlines of whose portrait are historically certain, suffices. That figure overcomes us, masters us, brings us assurance of the highest good, proclaims to us a gospel of grace, indeed. But he is himself the revelation, without which what he said would have no weight of revelation; and the impress of his personality, mediated to us through the Christian tradition, through the community life, brings us a sense of the gracious God, his Father, and affords us moral strength to will and to do the Divine will in the common walk of life. There again we meet the gracious God, whose will our daily lives thus bring to realization.

Ritschlianism refuses to put its faith in revelation into conventional formulae, and will not at all define the uniqueness of Jesus by means of the old categories. Its rock of certainty is, nevertheless, the supernatural revealing activity of God.

### 3. Modern Positivism: Forsyth, Seeberg, Beth.

Logically Modern Positivism stands much closer to Conservative Orthodoxy than Ritschlianism does, but chronologically Ritschlianism anticipates it. Like Conservative Orthodoxy, Modern Positivism is convinced that revelation guarantees certain cardinal *truths*, that Christianity is not a series of facts or a single supreme event in the midst of history, but that it is supremely a certain way of understanding the facts.

Of the three representatives of the Modern Positive group with whom this study concerns itself, Forsyth approaches most nearly the scope and emphasis of Conservative Orthodoxy. In his *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* he expresses himself as wishing to be understood as a Modern Positive theologian. He defines this type of theology thus:

(It is) a theology which begins with God's gift of a superlogical revelation in Christ's historic person and cross, whose object was not to adjust a contradiction, but to resolve a crisis and save a situation of the human soul (p. 210).

Dr. Forsyth makes a number of concessions to the demands of science and modern thought. The Gospel is distinguished from the Bible as having created the Bible (p. 15); verbal inspiration is hopelessly gone (p. 165); a fixed and final system of theology is admitted to be inconsistent with the genius of the Gospel (p. 208); we

are counselled to distinguish between theoretical and practical knowledge and to fall in with the stress upon the latter which is characteristic of our times (p. 204); demand as to the Bible must be reduced, but demand as to the Gospel pressed (p. 373). In practically all these matters there is ostensible agreement with the Ritschlian school; but the limit of such agreement soon becomes evident. Forsyth is an insistent supernaturalist:

The Church must descend on the world out of heaven from God. Her note is the supernatural note which distinguishes incarnation from immanence, redemption from evolution, the Kingdom of God from mere spiritual progress, and the Holy Spirit from mere spiritual process (p. 122). The preacher has to be sure of a knowledge that creates experience and does not rise out of it. His burden is something given, something that reports a world beyond experience (p. 200).

Forsyth is also a pronounced anti-evolutionist, holding that evolution is very much overworked, and even treated as *vera causa*. It is to be feared, however, only when it becomes monistic (p. 266). When evolution escapes from the bondage of the physical sciences and its mesalliance with monistic dogma, it may well serve the ends of the modern church (p. 269).

A positive Gospel will emphasize a real supernatural revelation, a fundamental perdition, a radical evil in human nature, and a rescue from without (p. 234). There must be a new nature, a new world, a new creation (p. 56). The only possible revelation to such a world is an act of redemption (p. 344). Atonement must be made, and only God can make it (p. 365).

The revealing and redeeming act of God "was grafted into the great psychology of the race."<sup>1</sup> Christ does not simply reveal God; he is God in revelation, the gracious God revealed (p. 213). He is to be set apart from the race in kind as well as in function (p. 252). He does not help us to God, but himself brings God. He is not the agent of God; he is God the Son (p. 353).

It is through the Christian community that Christ arises from his cross and from his grave (p. 77).<sup>2</sup> When thus God comes to us, he brings more than a mere extension of our previous horizon, and enrichment of our previous mentality; his is a new creation, a free gift (p. 54). It is an invasion, not an emergence from us. In Chris-

<sup>1</sup>Hibbert Journal, October, 1911, Revelation and the Bible.

<sup>2</sup>Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind.

tian experience we are conscious of the living Christ; it is evoked by contact with Christ (p. 67).

The man who is living in intercourse with the risen Christ is in possession of a fact of experience as real as any mere historic fact, or any experience of reality, that the critic has to found on and make a standard (p. 276).

Thus Principal Forsyth's theology is supernaturalistic, non-evolutionary, holds humanity lost in sin, and salvable only by Divine intervention; believes that such intervention occurred when Christ became incarnate and died a redeeming and thus revealing death; holds that the Bible hands down in the Christian community a record of this revelation—a revelation which is the instrument of a new creation that brings the soul into vital contact with the living Christ. From the point of view of a liberal theologian, this would appear as essentially the earlier conservative Protestant orthodoxy.

Forsyth's dependence is manifestly upon the supernatural in history, for we are sure of the living Christ in experience; we have communion with him and know him as the creator of our experience. The only respect in which Forsyth differs particularly from the Conservative Orthodoxy is in his willingness to limit the extent of revelation so that it shall no longer be considered coëxtensive with the Bible, but be limited to the *Gospel*. Forsyth also exhibits an apparent willingness to come to terms with the modern world-view, but this he does in no thorough-going fashion. He is unlike the Ritschlians, on the other hand, in his belief that a certain theological and forensic construction must be put upon the life of Jesus, and in particular upon his death, in order to make it Gospel; and in his belief that the certainty of Jesus carries with it a body of truths and the present-day experience of communion with the risen Lord. In all essentials, he bases personal assurance as the Conservative Orthodox does.

Seeberg's main positions may easily be gathered from his *Fundamental Truths of Christianity*. To be a Christian is to have faith and love (p. 69). Faith corresponds to the sovereignty of God, love to the Kingdom of God (p. 70). Christ is the expression of the Divine will; his words awaken faith and give it content (p. 96). He is the revelation of God, God's action, his word (p. 139). He shows us God as merciful, loving, holy, almighty (p. 145). Humanity says No to God because it says Yes to the empirical world. Sin is guilt

(p. 188), it is the fundamental bent of the human soul, from which neither the individual nor the race can redeem itself (p. 195).

Jesus was a man, not empty abstract humanity (p. 218); yet at the same time he was conscious of being Lord of the world (p. 207). In him the God-will which guides human history to salvation entered into history (p. 222); that is, the Divine Person himself entered so into Jesus as to become one spiritual personal life with him (p. 224). The expression of this life had the limitation of human nature as such (p. 225); but the union of God was in Jesus fixed and lasting (p. 230). The human soul of Jesus is in God and God is in it (p. 236). Thus Jesus was God and man (p. 237). Because Christ alone among all the figures of life constrains us to faith and love (p. 241), he is our Lord, and we pray to him; and we know that prayer can be made to God alone (p. 244).

The way of redemption is the way of the cross; only as being necessary for man was it necessary for God (p. 215). Jesus' work may be summed up in the conception of vicarious atonement and vicarious surety (p. 255). He made atonement by remaining true against the heaviest odds (p. 255); and the cross is just the sign of the unyielding power of the good in the last hour of wickedness and pain (p. 258). Through the divine power of his Holy Spirit, Jesus breaks the power of sin in us, and overcomes the consequences of guilt in us through his holy humanity proved true on the cross (p. 253).

Our individual Christianity was not effected by the instreaming of holy magic into our nature. Our souls receive a new content from the deeds and words of Jesus which live in history and in the church. We experience the operation of God, giving faith and love and assuring us of the forgiveness of sins. Thus we are born again; yet nothing happens to the soul that is not through the soul (p. 292). Through communion with Christ we are preserved and shielded (p. 296). Marvelous means of help in the soul's struggle are not to be expected; in the new content of faith and love lie the means by which the world is overcome (p. 309).

In another connection Seeberg develops the truth of Christianity in the following propositions:

1. We are sinners, simply unfree for the good, and enemies of God. We are therefore lost and condemned.
2. Christ is true God, as the holy Power of Love which changes us through our faith

and love into new creatures, by the Holy Ghost, whom he sent and through whom he works. 3. Christ is true man who became our representative and surety before God, and thereby established a new relation between us and God. 4. Thus also the holy Trinity, as well as the divinity of Christ, as well the work of Christ in salvation as the lost condition of the natural man, are made sure.<sup>1</sup>

Seeberg feels the pressure of science and the historical; he will not debate about miracles, inspiration, Athanasian formulae and the like, but seeks a *modus vivendi* for the Christian system. He is a good deal more willing than Forsyth to part with a detail here and there; he will not debate about terminology. Yet for him the person of Jesus is unique; in short, both human and divine. Sin is of human origin; it is guilt. Man cannot redeem himself from it. God in Jesus is vicarious surety and Redeemer; yet the atonement was not a matter of quantitative satisfaction, however necessary for man. The Christian is preserved through communion with Christ. Thus, Seeberg makes essential use of sin, inability, revelation, incarnation, redemption, and communion with an almighty Redeemer. Though he will not argue about miracles, he believes that Jesus possessed powers which slip from our hands (p. 226).

Here again, as with Forsyth, the basis of personal salvation lies in contact with God's supernatural revelation in Christ. There is the same faith that this revelation carries with it the certainty of revealed truths, but a greater desire to meet the demands of a modern scientific world-view. Instead of separating the realms of science and religion, as Ritschlianism proposes, they are to be harmonized. In keeping with the Ritschlian contention, the revelation of God is mediated through a historical personage, but there is an affirmation of certainty concerning the risen Christ which the typical Ritschlian will not make, and a use of conventional definition which is likewise foreign to Ritschlian usage. The real affinity of Conservative Orthodox views underlying the garb of modernism is quite indubitable.

After Seeberg, perhaps no more significant representative of the Modern Positive point of view has appeared than Karl Beth. He has been described as a "critical realist," holding as he does not simply that we know real objects in sense perception, but that a criticism of experience yields us knowledge of the ultimate realities,

<sup>1</sup>Zur systematischen Theologie, p. 81 f.



God, self, world.<sup>1</sup> With Seeberg, he agrees that a metaphysics is necessary, and this metaphysics he seeks to ground by means of his critical realism.

He makes a sharp distinction, however, between theological knowledge, which is scientific, and religious knowledge, which is practical; if religious knowledge were based upon grounds of a theoretical or rational character, instead of upon the ground of personal experience and conviction, Christian faith would have to change with every change in theological science. Christian faith is, however, independent of theological science and theoretical validation. At the same time, Christianity has a world-view peculiar to itself, each generation develops a world-view of its own, and just here the function of Christian theology appears—the function of bringing Christian truth into harmony with the particular world-view of a given age.<sup>2</sup> A positive theology starts with something given; in this case it is the supernatural origin and resurrection of Christ, his deity and atoning death.<sup>3</sup> This essence of Christianity must now be stated by scientific theology in harmony with modern thought. The Christian world-view must receive an apologetic handling which will bring it into harmony with modern science and philosophy.

In keeping with this fundamental position, Beth attacks the problem of harmonizing Christianity with the chief concept of modern science, that of development. In his discussion of *empirische Teleologie*, the newest tendency in science,<sup>4</sup> Beth shows his interest in contemporary science, the reason for which is the fancied discovery there of a *modus vivendi* for a theology with equal claims to a scientific character. Just as his late-born scientific hypothesis of empirical teleology asserts the impossibility of comprehending the organism with which it deals within the limits of physico-chemico formulae, and disclaims a complete analysis of it by laboratory means, so theology must recognize that its path lies in no mere mechanical analysis of past situations, but in an organic study of life's functions.<sup>5</sup> A particular application of this principle appears in Beth's handling of the idea of evolution. It is seen to be teleological, involving from the beginning the idea of the goal; but that idea of a goal does not

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Hodge, *Princeton Review*, Vol. 8, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Die Modern und d. Prinzipien d. Theologie, p. 98 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 105; also p. 199 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Neue kirchl. Zeitschr., Vol. 18, pp. 23 f., 115 f.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, espec. pp. 133, 134.

signify that the goal itself was in some inchoate and embryonic fashion present from the beginning. A wide distinction is to be made between development and unfolding. The old idea of evolution held, in common parlance, that there is "nothing new under the sun."<sup>1</sup> The present view of scientific biology is that development is something else than mere unfolding; new forms are seen to appear which *in no wise* existed before.<sup>2</sup> Development by no means excludes the spontaneous, unexpected, unprepared for, and independent. Beth feels that Troeltsch has employed the old notion of *unfolding*, and consequently encounters great difficulty in relating the high points of human achievement to independent higher powers—God, etc.—which cannot be harmonized with any forecast of ours. If Troeltsch had employed the modern scientific notion, he would not have encountered this difficulty, for the thought of a divine-human religious history falls in with that of the activity of God in the progress of religion (to which latter idea Troeltsch holds).<sup>3</sup> In the nature of religion and its progress there will always be a *remainder* which must be recognized as its decisive factor. Just as in biology the nature of the organism and of life is not explicable down to the last remainder, so also with religion.

The significance of this is not far to seek. As in science there have been discovered factors which transcend analysis, but are yet determinative; so in religion. In other words, through this door the supernatural enters, and by this means the inter-working of God in the presence of the soul and the progress of history finds validation. Beth quotes with approval Lessing's dictum that "Religion is shaped according to the schema of descendance;" yet it has a developmental history, a history expressed in the comprehensive education of humanity by God, who operates now by environment, now by the understanding, now by a temporary method of propaedeutic, calling and drawing men out of the world nearer and nearer to himself.<sup>4</sup>

In this connection the attitude of Beth toward miracle becomes significant. He holds that the faith that Jesus is our Savior cannot be complete without the idea that Jesus had absolute power over everything earthly. This means no breaking through or setting

<sup>1</sup>Zeitschr. f. T. u. K., 1910, p. 410. Cf. also Beth, *Die Moderne u. s. w.*, p. 313 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 411, where appeal is made to the experiments of Jacques Loeb, W Roux, Driesch, et al.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 414.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 417.

aside of natural law; it means simply the governing of the course and appearance of natural processes. However, it is a question whether such control as Beth postulates is not equivalent to a real setting aside of natural law. Many of the miracles are validated as historically certain.<sup>1</sup> Yet the evangelists did not base their faith upon miracles any more than we do.<sup>2</sup>

As above indicated, Beth holds the Virgin Birth of Jesus; he holds also to the resurrection of Jesus, though he inclines to the vision theory to account for the post-resurrection appearances.<sup>3</sup> The accounts of the appearances cannot be harmonized. Peter and Paul knew nothing of a distinction between a period in which Jesus still appeared to the disciples and another in which he remained at the right hand of God. The speculation about the two natures does not find place in the modern view. The death of Jesus is the culminating point of revelation, disclosing his true divinity.<sup>4</sup>

Schian holds that Beth exhibits two contradictory tendencies: first, the holding of no external authority which we must follow, but dependence upon positions which spring from faith alone; secondly, the tendency to hold fast a quite definite complex of facts and views to which the character of the "given" is assigned, and established particularly by reference to the authority of the Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

Though the items of truth which are directly given in the revelation in Christ are few in number, they are of such significance that they logically carry with them a much larger context of truth, which—if they themselves are valid—must be equally so. This seems to be the natural outcome of Beth's position, and it is consequently very difficult to maintain the distinction between theological and religious knowledge, in view of the fact that just these items which religious knowledge validates become the materials which theological knowledge must present to a given age in terms of its own thinking. Neither Beth nor Seeberg really maintains the distinction in practice.

As in the case of Seeberg and Forsyth, Beth grounds certainty upon revelation. Forsyth scarcely attempts, and Seeberg does not carry so far, the endeavor to ground modern theology in strictly

<sup>1</sup>Biblische Zeit— u. Streit-fragen IV, 5; review in Theologischer Jahresbericht, XXVIII, II, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, II Ser., 1 H., review in Theolog. Jahresb., XXV, p. 281.

<sup>3</sup>Die Moderne u. s. w., p. 230 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup>Zur Beurteilung der mod. pos. Theologie, pp. 86, 87; cf. also Beth, Die Moderne u. s. w., p. 197 f.

scientific terms. What Seeberg does in rather broad generalizations in his *Grundwahrheiten*, for example, Beth endeavors to make scientifically detailed and explicit. This is evident in his handling of evolution particularly; and he handles evolution thus carefully for the reason that the whole issue of a supernatural activity turns upon the definition given to the evolutionary process. The supernatural comes in with the overplus, and may be quite unique in manifestation and independent of what has gone before. What Beth does is, in the last analysis, to make everything depend upon revelation. Revelation is objective in the person of Jesus; but revelation is experienced, too, and it is just here—as with Seeberg—that assurance enters. No apologetic grounding can yield it; it must be won through experience. At the same time, the criticism which Schian brings against both Seeberg and Beth, that—though rejecting the principle of authority—both of them insist upon a group of doctrines which rest chiefly upon Scripture as an external authority, is a valid criticism. While this still leaves revelation as the basis of assurance, it places a decided limitation upon subjective experience and the sort of “religious” knowledge which may be obtained thereby.

Thus, as a group, the Modern Positive theologians are believers in supernatural revelation which communicates essential truths. These essential truths are to be harmonized apologetically with modern culture; the product of such harmonization, however, will not constitute the basis of faith; that will in any case be the historical Jesus viewed through the medium of certain fundamental aspects of his person and work: his supernatural origin and resurrection, his deity and atoning work. Assurance is not less dependent upon history than in the Ritschlian view, but is more dependent upon a theological construction of the person of Jesus. The general endeavor is to hold faith and science apart for experimental purposes, but to bring them together for apologetic purposes. Either Ritschlianism, which holds that they are—for us—incommensurables, or Conservative Orthodoxy—which is satisfied with revelation and proposes no scientific explanation—is more consistent at this point. At the same time, one feels that faith and science must be harmonious interpretations of the same reality.

#### 4. The *Religionsgeschichtliche* School: Troeltsch, Bousset.

Here the general view is that Christianity is the product of a prodigious religious syncretism, product—in other words—of a

natural evolution. In the view of Troeltsch, the fundamental demand which science makes upon theology is just the investigation and understanding of Christianity in connection with the universal science of religion.<sup>1</sup> The results of science are gathered up in a world-view, the chief facts of which are these: The Copernican revolution has enormously extended our apparent world, and has brought to an end the old geo- and anthropocentric view; the theory of descent now develops the whole organic world, from the first bit of protoplasm up to man, out of the cell; the law of the conservation of energy and of matter points to a monstrous unity of nature expressed through the interrelation of all its forces; the law of struggle for existence has shown that every class value arises and augments itself by struggle against heavy odds and by the sacrifice of individuals, and that this is the basic law of all living reality.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, man is not thereby reduced to a mere cog in the machine; he is at the summit of this development, showing that the process leads ultimately to a final absolutely worthwhile spiritual goal. It is the task of theology to fuse the characteristic religious expressions of humanity so situated with the Christian faith in God, to overcome a narrow and petty anthropocentrism, and to bring to view the holy Divine Love in this infinitely enlarged world-view.<sup>3</sup>

Troeltsch denies the right of monism, holding that there are as clear indications of non-rationalistic motives as of rationalistic in modern world-thought. Modern thought offers no single decisive ground of opposition to prophetic-Christian personalism. This view of God is today, as ever, at the basis of every assertion of the value of personal life. It is the summation of all efforts after a spiritual content of life lasting beyond the flux of things.<sup>4</sup> Prophetic-Christian personalism is set forth in the following terms:

(Es ist) der Glaube an erreichbare, ewige und absolute Werte der Persönlichkeit, an den Bestand eines absoluten Maszstabes des Wahren und Guten gegenüber allem Tasten, Suchen, und Irren der Kreatur, and die Verankerung der idealen Persönlichkeitswerte in einem ihnen verwandten Wesen der Gottheit, an die Möglichkeit der Vollendung der Persönlichkeit in der Gemeinschaft mit dem göttlichen Personleben.<sup>5</sup>

As an immanent theism this view is a radical irrationalism, dualism, and personalism; so much the more because sin and suffering are to

<sup>1</sup>Die wissenschaftliche Lage u. s. w., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress für freies Christentum: Protokoll, p. 336 f.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, p. 335.

be thought of not as mere issue from the totality, but as opposition to the highest values—an opposition willed with the world itself.<sup>1</sup>

The question concerning the person of Jesus is of special interest for the purpose of this study. Troeltsch finds that the whole notion of world-Savior has suffered under the removal of the geocentric and the anthropocentric.

Wo man das Dasein der Menschheit auf der Erde um Jahrhunderttausende rückwärts und vorwärts verlängert denkt, wo man den Wechsel und Niedergang der grossen Geistes—und Kultursysteme vor Augen hat, da ist es unmöglich, diese einzelne Persönlichkeit als Zentrum der ganzen Menschheitsgeschichte überhaupt zu denken.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the common confession of Jesus holds the Christian community together; there can be no vital confession of Jesus unless one see in him the incarnation of the peculiarly Christian thought of God. If Christian faith in God were severed in every respect from the person of Jesus, it would be cut loose from all rootage in the past and would at length dissolve. No, the pious man is not at all hindered from placing Jesus, surrounded and interpreted by the choir of Old Testament prophets, and the great religious personalities of the following times, before his believing imagination, and acknowledging his as the source of his religious power and certainty. But one thing must be resigned, the construing of Jesus as the center of the world, or even of human history. However, even though there be other cycles of history and circles of light in the great world-process, *our* highest human powers and convictions remain bound up with surrender to the historical community-life of which Jesus was the founder.<sup>3</sup>

The world-view with which Troeltsch works is essentially other than that of which Conservative Orthodoxy makes use, and it is not that of Modern Positivism or of Ritschlianism. The problem of assurance in the old form does not arise. At bottom, the significance of Jesus lies in the fact that he is the embodiment of superior religious power. Only in the vision of such a personality will faith rise to full power and certainty; and thus all the power of the Christian faith in God remains inseparable from the portrait of Jesus. This certainty of faith is not, however, supernatural.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 337.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 338 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 338.

While Bousset's work has not been in the field of systematic theology, he is a significant representative of the point of view of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* School. His opinions which are of significance for the present purpose may nowhere be better viewed than in his little volume, *The Faith of a Modern Protestant*.

The modern world-view impresses us with a sense of our insignificance (p. 5); we are between the two infinities of the macrocosmos and the microcosmos (p. 6). The human spirit has penetrated far; yet, however life conforms to law and evolution, there is at bottom something inexplicable about it (p. 9). Are we only like falling leaves after the brief summer? We feel that we transcend nature (p. 13), that our true self is never satisfied but stretches forth beyond this finite and imperfect existence to something perfect and absolute. Some try to shelve the question; some put faith in a coming superman; some are lost in the intellectual problem of it; some surrender to it, and resolve to make the best of life; some preach a gospel of beauty; but others have found the way of faith (pp. 13-19).

The man of faith accepts the universe courageously as part of an intelligent unity, behind which he finds an Absolute which supports his life (p. 20): the Father of Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth (p. 23). Daily we are surrounded with the mystery of it; governed by law as we are, the ineffable remains (p. 25). Faith tells us, too, that the almighty God inclines to us, he is *our* God (p. 29). The Gospel announces God as seeking the individual soul.

Kant taught us that we should seek in vain for a support for the Absolute in the world of things limited by space and time; that we should find the Absolute in the self-existent law within our souls. Kant is the philosopher of Protestantism (p. 43 f).

We recognize that to speak of God as personal and Father is to use symbolism; but we need symbolism, and can never resolve it into pure thought (p. 49). To call God *Father* is an act of daring faith, transcending knowledge (p. 49). It requires utmost religious energy to live in faith in the personal providence of God; we must shut our eyes to the terrible reality around us (p. 52). But when we take the first step of faith the way gets easier (p. 54).

Faith denies a view of the universe which makes it resemble an artificially constructed machine; the Almighty is present in all that happens in the world; out of the depths of his being new manifesta-

tions continually stream into the ever-going creation (p. 56). Yet God keeps within the ordinances he has himself decreed (p. 58).

We think of God through the symbol of a transfigured personality. The Gospel shows moral good and our own impotence (p. 87). But the Gospel frees us from that impotence which it discovers, through redemption and the forgiveness of sins (p. 88). Redemption means to get free from the sensually-inclined self, to be caught up by the power of God (p. 91). We accept the law of our life from his hand (p. 91). Something within us must be cast away if the new life is to arise; in and with redemption our powers for good are freed (p. 93).

Our conscience will always make us responsible for sin (p. 98), and so we say that our faith is a faith in the forgiveness of sins (p. 99). The Gospel of Jesus makes us certain and secure of a God who forgives sin. Jesus not merely taught the forgiveness of sins; he poured it forth upon the world (p. 99). A stream of certainty concerning the forgiveness of sins has flowed into the world through him (p. 101). The believer needs the certainty that in spite of all opposition and hindrances God belongs to him and he to God; and he gains this when he joins the stream of religious certainty which issued from Jesus of Nazareth (p. 104).

Christian belief is completed in hope. Beyond stretches an infinite kingdom of personal spirits, in which each generation has its place (p. 116). We are brought to this faith through the great personalities to whom God's word was comprehensible, and revealed with inward certainty, among whom the figure of Jesus of Nazareth towers preëminent (p. 118). We have and hold our faith in God in the spiritual communion created by Jesus of Nazareth (p. 118).

Bousset shows more interest in the problem of forgiveness of sins than Troeltsch manifests; but even so, the forgiveness of sins is far from being the forensic matter which it is with Conservative Orthodoxy. Since in this view the forgiveness of sins—or the assurance of forgiveness, at any rate—is grounded in Jesus, it is of interest to discover what further he has to say of the insignificance of Jesus. In an address delivered before the Congress of Liberal Religions in 1910, he discussed the theme *The Significance of the Person of Jesus for Faith*. He points out in this address that Nineteenth Century theology, while building so largely upon Schleiermacher, dropped his view of immanence in favor of a supernatural



conception. Religion comes into humanity by revelation, instead of unfolding from human nature. This occasions insupportable difficulties.<sup>1</sup> All endeavors to base the content of our belief by reflection merely on history meet with peculiar difficulties. Over against this one-sided historicism, Bousset lays down the proposition that religion rests on supernatural revelation in no strict sense; it is an original faculty which only expands in history. Following Fries, it is held that the existence of the religious idea is based upon pure reason; it is an indispensable necessity consequent upon human mind.<sup>2</sup> Religious ideas are not logically deducible and provable; they are a constituent part of our reason.

But just here the significance of the historical for religion comes to light; pure ideas are intangible, impalpable phantoms; they need symbolic clothing. The higher religions live on the revelation of God in history, which weaves the coverings and symbols for religious ideas. The leaders of religious evolution are the great religious personages of history; they flash light into the depths of man's nature. The great religious personality becomes itself a symbol to the believing community. Thus the faith of Israel was based upon the person of Moses, the Iranian religion upon Zarathustra, the Chinese upon Confucius; thus Buddhism conquered Brahminism because it was centered in the being of a personal founder. Thus Jesus became himself a symbol of the presence and nearness of God, a symbol of God, indeed; and yet only a symbol.<sup>3</sup>

The symbol serves for illustration, not for demonstration; and the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels will always be more effective than any historical attempt. Even should science pass the ultimate verdict that Jesus never lived, faith would not be lost, for it has foundations of its own. But, even so, the portrait of Jesus would abide as of eternal symbolic significance. However, the historic reality of Jesus will stand as "das andauernde wirkungskräftigste Symbol unseres Glaubens."<sup>4</sup>

Thus Troeltsch and Bousset are in practical accord, not only in their theory of religious knowledge, but also in their evaluation of Jesus. The apologetic validation of the content of religious faith rests upon a theory of knowledge which yields the God-idea as

<sup>1</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress u. s. w., p. 294 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 299 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 304.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 221.

rational. But the actual engendering of religious certainty is by the non-supernaturalistic method of inspiring contact, either mediate or immediate, with great religious personalities. As related to the types of theology previously passed under review, the theology of Troeltsch is non-supernaturalistic; yet it is not non-absolutistic. The ultimate basis of faith is the absolute and infinite God, who carries forward the universal process by the immanent law of progressive change, and who is essentially revealed by outstanding moral and personal aspects of that process—chiefly, indeed, by its production of impressive religious personalities. The character of such personalities gives content to the moral ideal, and their faith becomes the faith of the rank and file; in their light we see light. Jesus is, in this sense, and in no other, a revelation of God. The confidence which we gain from him is essentially that which we gain from all inspiring personality; its content, however, may vary from faith in his mercy to faith in his help, from trust in himself to confidence in the teleology of the world-process which expresses his will, the variation in content depending upon the differences of medium and environment in which individual faith is realized.

Conservative Orthodoxy recognizes science, but declares it subordinate to revelation. Ritschlianism says that science and the content of revelation belong to distinct provinces for us—though they deal with aspects of the same ultimate reality, it is not our business to reconcile them; Modern Positivism says that science and the content of revelation cannot be kept in separate compartments, they must be reconciled; while the Comparative-Religionists say that the only revelation is the ordered empirical universe, from which alone must be won the data of our certainty of God.

## B. SPECIAL CONCEPTIONS AND THEIR USE.

### 1. Theory of Knowledge.

The particular application of a developed theory of knowledge in all the theological types passed under review in this study is rather to the problem of the existence of God than to the problem of personal assurance. The latter problem, however, implies an answer to the former; so that the question of a theory of knowledge, even though applied as has been indicated, becomes germane to our inquiry.

It is not uncommon for Conservative Orthodoxy of the type we have surveyed to have recourse to the Common Sense philosophy of the Scottish School, which holds that experience gives us objects beyond. Upon the basis of this view a catalogue of intuitions is drawn up. Among these first truths—whose criteria are simplicity, universality, and necessity—the idea of God is found. The knowledge of God, accordingly, is not due to a process of reasoning.<sup>1</sup> What the mind perceives, either intuitively or discursively, it knows. The knowledge of God is an intuitive perception. Equipped as he is with this intuitive means of knowledge, fallen man is not able to give that content to the idea of God which will serve his religious needs; hence the necessity of revelation. Fallen man can never, unaided, attain to the knowledge of God necessary to salvation; he cannot, apart from revelation, know what is necessary to salvation. At the same time, his natural endowment of reason is divinely adapted to the reception of revelation; its office is the apprehension of the truths offered by revelation.

In the opinion of Dr. Orr, there is no logical halting-place short of agnosticism, if the ground of revelation be once left behind. A real theism cannot long remain a bare theism.<sup>2</sup> We must believe in a God who has a word and message for mankind, a God who, having the power and will to bless mankind, does it.<sup>3</sup> In the Christian view, God does thus enter history, giving man such knowledge of himself as enables him to attain the ends of his existence and to coöperate in carrying out the Divine purpose.

In unscholastic phrase, man is undone by his ignorance and depravity. God comes across the boundaries of his knowledge and brings him, by means of successive theophanies and inspirations, a sufficient body of truths to serve his religious needs. But man needs power as well as knowledge; this he receives as the sequel of a course of Divine activity—an activity which clears the Divine docket and frees man from all liability thereunder. Upon the basis of this, God enters the individual soul directly, and by repeated contacts infuses power. This impartation is, however, conditioned by, or the occasion of, a reciprocal activity of faith and obedience.

It is clear that a theory of religious knowledge cannot have the same significance where the idea of revelation is taken seriously that it has where the contrary is true.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 191 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Christian View*, p. 64. <sup>3</sup>*Ut supra*, p. 92 f.

The Ritschlian theology adopts the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge—a distinction which goes back to Schleiermacher, as has already been indicated. But it encounters the danger, on the one hand, of making all Christian doctrine purely subjective and thus reducing Christianity to mere natural religious sentiment; and, on the other hand, the danger of over-elaborating the speculative element, as the mediating theology does. In order to steer a straight course, Ritschlianism strongly affirms an objective revelation in the historical Christ, while at the same time making all religious knowledge of a practical character. This emphasis upon the practical character of religious knowledge intends merely to recognize that proof cannot mean in theology what it does in natural science, but that in theology knowledge must be a matter of personal conviction growing out of individual experience.<sup>1</sup>

Herrmann, as we have seen, is careful to guard this practical character of religious knowledge from the implications of mysticism. God is a reality to us only when through our own experiences we feel ourselves to acknowledge him as real. Herrmann's second objective ground of certainty is very significant—viz., the fact that we have within us the demand of the moral law. Ritschl found here what he felt to be the most impressive argument for the existence of God. At the same time, he came to feel that all theoretic proofs are inadequate, and stated that the acceptance of the idea of God is, as Kant declared, a practical belief, and not an act of theoretic knowledge. Herrmann, likewise, goes back to Kant, when he declares that the Christian idea of God is but a function of the moral spirit, which seeks and experiences in it a freedom from guilt and evil.<sup>2</sup>

But Herrmann's second objective basis of certainty demands the mediation of the first, the historical Jesus. In him we meet with a fact which makes us able to justify at the bar of reason and conscience our conviction that we are in communion with God. We might be aware, even apart from Christ, of our dependence upon an infinite Power, but we could never reach certainty that this Power is the Will of the gracious God. Jesus so interprets to us the love of God that he turns our rebellion and despair into humility and consolation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mozley, *Ritschlianism*, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>*Metaphysik der Theologie*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>*Communion with God*, pp. 277, 289.

Kaftan does not separate the sphere of Christian thought so widely from that of rational knowledge.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he holds that it is only by looking at the practical side that we can discover what is real, and in some sense objective.<sup>2</sup> The genius of Kant is revealed in his going back to the idea of the chief good; that idea alone is fitted to serve as the basis of a practical philosophy. The chief good must secure perfect satisfaction for the soul; but there is no such chief good in the world. (*Truth of the Christian Religion*, II, 328, 329.) The Christian idea of the Kingdom of God is the rational idea of the chief good, a postulate of reason (pp. 378-380). This expression *postulate of reason* is borrowed from Kant, who described the existence of God and the immortality of the human soul as postulates of practical reason. But the distinction between theoretical and practical reason is not to be retained, because reason is always practical in one aspect of it. Starting from knowledge determined by the interposition of reason, the way to the highest knowledge must be sought. At the same time, a fundamental leaning upon Kant is acknowledged (p. 381).

But Kant does not go beyond the postulate as such. If we are not to stop there, says Kaftan, the eternal Kingdom of God must have been made known in history, by a divine revelation (pp. 381, 382). Thus it comes about that the postulate of a supermundane Kingdom of God at the goal of human history is simply the postulate of a special revelation of that Kingdom in history. Thus reason and revelation meet in the conception of the chief good (p. 386). But a theory of knowledge alone can take us no farther than the human, finite, relative: only an idealistic philosophy which finds the key to the world's interpretation in the spiritual content of life can here avail; and it will lead us to God by the path of moral activity. Even so, man can realize the ethical ideal and hold fast the theoretical faith in God only by means of the faith reposed in the Christian revelation (p. 422 f). Thus Kaftan's somewhat more elaborate theory of knowledge finds supplementation in revelation, somewhat as Herrmann's did. And the sort of knowledge at which one arrives is practical religious knowledge, not theoretical scientific knowledge.

The Modern Positive theologian takes a somewhat different course. Seeberg admits that the idea of God as innate is as great a figment

<sup>1</sup>Cf. *Truth of the Christian Religion*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 176.

as, for example, that of innate right (Fundamental Truths, p. 4). At the same time, the thought of God is universal; man cannot have produced it, nor can he have arrived at it by the process of induction; it is given him from without (p. 10). All judgments as to the objective are, however, subjectively based; the content is from without, the cognition from within. The content is made up of conceptions and perceptions which belong to history; God has revealed himself historically (p. 69). Only he who already has the thought of God understands the language of nature in a religious sense. A knowledge of God presupposes a revelation; God's doings are his revelation (p. 138). At Christianity's beginning, the deeds and words by which God became manifest, entered into history in Jesus Christ, and live on in the church. But heaven was not rent asunder, nor does a supernatural nature stream by holy magic into us. Nothing happens in the soul which is not through the soul (p. 292).

Forsyth does not take so much time showing that his supernaturalism is perfectly natural. He frankly says that there is a knowledge by faith which is as sound of its kind as is the knowledge by experience, by science, and it is much superior and more momentous. The preacher must be sure of a kind of knowledge which creates experience; his message reports a world beyond experience.<sup>1</sup> In these positions Forsyth displays diverse tendencies; he is strongly influenced by the Ritschlian differentiation between religious and scientific knowledge. On the other hand, he is too much interested in the realm beyond experience, believing as he does that the preacher must dogmatize about the whole of it, to follow out the Ritschlian suggestion.<sup>2</sup> His great divergence from the Ritschlian position is in relation to the content of revelation; here he discovers a considerable body of truths. This is in spite of the fact that he maintains the necessity of recognizing the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge, and of falling in with the modern stress upon the latter.<sup>3</sup>

With Beth we discover, as has already been pointed out, the Ritschlian distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge. That sort of knowledge which experience yields us, that is to say, our religious experience, is not capable of any scientific or theo-

<sup>1</sup>Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 200 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 204.

retical validation, indeed does not need any such validation. At the same time, Beth holds to the necessity of recognizing theoretic or scientific knowledge *in theology*; that sort of knowledge, the kind of which apologetic makes use, must ground itself in the modern world-view and validate itself to the modern mind. However, assurance rests upon religious knowledge, that is, the personal conviction which faith engenders in experience can be gained in no other way. Religious knowledge is conditioned simply in this practical way: it completes itself in a process which acknowledges the primacy of the practical reason.<sup>1</sup>

When we pass to the sphere of theoretical knowledge, where scientific theology must ground itself, we discover Beth's position to be that a criticism of experience yields us ultimate reality, that we know real objects, we know God; a position akin to that of Troeltsch.

Troeltsch says that the most such an inquiry into the validity of religious ideas as is proposed by the theory of religious knowledge can yield is testimony to an *a priori* law of the formation of religious ideas. That law lies in the nature of reason; and the religious Apriori stands in organic relation to the other Aprioris of reason. The existence of such a religious Apriori does not immediately guarantee the existence of the religious Object as such, however. It validates only the actual content of consciousness, and offers no basis for existential judgments.<sup>2</sup>

Very important is the question concerning the origin and content of the religious Apriori. In the nature of reason, all values are referred to an absolute Substance as source and norm.<sup>3</sup> Among the other Aprioris the ethical appears next after the religious, and the logical and aesthetic follow it closely. Consequently, if the religious Apriori harmonizes with the ethical, logical, and aesthetic, we gain a further criterion of its validity.

Die Gültigkeit einer religiösen Idee kann grösser oder geringer sein, je nachdem sie die Harmonie des Bewusstseins sich einfügt oder etwa gar die Führung in dieser Harmonisierung übernimmt. So ergibt sich von hier aus auch eine innere Beweglichkeit des Gültigkeitskriteriums, das dem verschiedenen Masz von Gültigkeit verschiedener Religionsformen gerecht werden kann.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Beth, *Die Moderne u. s. w.*, p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Kultur der Gegenwart, II, p. 485.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, II, p. 486.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, II, p. 486.

The religious Apriori is the idea of God. In another connection, Troeltsch says that the idea of God is not gained from Jesus, nor is it attained through deductive metaphysics; it yields itself with the metaphysical Aposterioris which arise from the revision and unifying of experience into final notions (letzten Begriffen). At the same time, the religious value of the God-idea is realized for us through Jesus.<sup>1</sup> A metaphysics of religion Troeltsch regards as indispensable.

Eine streng erkenntnistheoretisch-angelegte Philosophie wird, wenn sie nicht in Psychologismus und Skepsis stecken bleiben will, in ihren Begriffen der Gültigkeit und der "Vernunft überhaupt" immer die Ansätze zu einer solchen Metaphysik enthalten, bei der nur die Frage ist, wie weit sie führen kann.<sup>2</sup>

It is not enough to reach the God-idea by the road of religious faith; it must be grounded in the reality of a transcendent world-Reason in which the values of the spiritual life of man find their common anchorage.<sup>3</sup>

For Conservative Orthodoxy, Ritschlianism, and Modern Positivism, in one way or another, the God-idea is confirmed and validated by revelation. However far the postulates of the practical reason, or of reason in general—whether theoretical or practical—may carry us, the God whom we know is made known to us through revelation. To be sure, what we gain is, on the one hand, held to be a body of truths about God, while on the other it is the personal attitude and impress of God himself which revelation yields; in either case, however, revelation is indispensable. The *Religions-geschichtliche* group make no such fundamental and constructive use of the concept of revelation. Indeed, as we shall see, revelation in the only sense in which they recognize it at all is quite another thing than the conventional.

## 2. The Conception of Science and Reality.

Conservative Orthodoxy has a sense of the perils involved in any thorough-going acceptance of the scientific-developmental view, and usually insists upon rejecting the hypothesis of genetic continuity with which science works, or upon some modification such as totally remakes the hypothesis. Dr. Orr very frankly says:

It need not further be denied that between this view of the world involved in Christianity, and what is sometimes termed the "modern view of the world," there exists a deep and radical antagonism. . . . The phrase ("modern

<sup>1</sup>Absolutheit des Christentums, p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Kultur der Gegenwart, II, p. 487.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Diehl, Zeitschrift für T. u. K., 1908, p. 474 f.



world-view") points to a homogeneity of these various modern systems . . . their refusal to recognize anything in nature, life or history, outside the lines of natural development.<sup>1</sup>

His Note D on Lecture I of the above series makes the scope of the scientific claim coëxtensive with the aspiration of Mr. Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy. Science is somewhat darkly pictured in the terms of Mr. Huxley as engaged in "the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant banishment from all regions of human thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity."<sup>2</sup> If one take this view, instead of holding that science is engaged in a progressive comprehension of reality and the concomitant elaboration of a technique by means of which the highest human values may be achieved and conserved, then the picture may well seem dark.

The view of reality to which the ordinary Conservative Orthodox view of science above indicated is related is a plain dualism, the belief in two realms of existence—the natural and the supernatural—over against each other and impinging upon each other. The issue between the conservative and the liberal camps is, in another definition of it, just that of the supernatural.

The question is not about isolated miracles, but about the whole conception of Christianity—what it is, and whether the supernatural does not enter into the very essence of it? It is the general question of a supernatural or non-supernatural conception of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

To the Ritschlian, especially one of Herrmann's type, science and religion exist side by side as separate realms of knowledge. Religion is the personal and individual method of ordering and interpreting reality; science deals with the realm of demonstrable and universally valid knowledge. Both of these branches of human thought,

the normative and peculiar life of selfhood, the demonstrable and experientiable reality, one must hold valid as the two interlaced and yet widely distinguishable forms of our thought. They are the revelations to us of a hidden whole.<sup>4</sup>

In keeping with this view, Herrmann holds that nature is not independent of the directing and even altering Divine hand.

Essential to this view of the separate provinces of religion and science is a dualism very like that which underlies the Conservative Orthodoxy. Herrmann argues for it that while the ardor of the

<sup>1</sup>Christian View, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Zeitschr. für T. u. K., 1907, p. 197 f.

scientist may impel him to try to circumscribe by his method all that he conceives as reality, yet that realm of reality mocks at his ardor. The world in which we actually live is quite another from that which the scientists shape with their concepts.<sup>1</sup>

Kaftan says that science aims at the extension and correction of our common knowledge; but that its explanation of reality does not carry us beyond the knowledge of what is actually given, and does not give us the "why" and the "wherefore" at all. Even the laws themselves are nothing but an expression for the actual organization of our knowledge given us by scientific technique.<sup>2</sup> We look in totally different quarters when engaged with the real world extending in space and time, and when asking the cause and purpose of the world.<sup>3</sup> Thus religion has a peculiar province of its own: the meaning and value side of reality. But religion can never perform this function without the aid of revelation. There is a supermundane Kingdom of God, and a special revelation of that Kingdom in history.<sup>4</sup>

The Modern Positive group endeavors to meet the demand of science somewhat variously. Seeberg holds that the religious-historical development is not purely immanent, but is conditioned by transcendent factors. He holds that the naturalism of the evolution theory will never satisfy the human soul.<sup>5</sup> He speaks of "the iron laws of the evolution of the world" as over against the free development of the human spirit. The order of nature does not, however, stand opposed to man as an enemy; it represents simply "the columns and chains which His power builds in the world." There is no motion of nature nor movement of the human soul which God does not work. The Christian religion changes the mechanical causal order into a spiritual causal order, or dependence upon nature to dependence upon God.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, nothing willed or accomplished by God in human history is unnatural, since God himself created human nature as the organ of his will.<sup>7</sup>

From Seeberg's point of view, Christian theology is not to be isolated from the rest of our knowledge; it must be articulated with the rest of our scientific and objective knowledge. Forsyth

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra.

<sup>2</sup>Truth of the Christian Religion, pp. 72, 114.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 395.

<sup>5</sup>Fundamental Truths, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup>Ut supra, p. 165.

<sup>7</sup>Ut supra, p. 267.

is more conservative than Seeberg, and—while holding that Jesus was “grafted into the great psychology of the race”—objects to the modern theory of evolution, and to the liberal theology which is interested in cosmology and not in redemption.<sup>1</sup> He explains that he has no quarrel with evolution until, from being a method, it is treated as *vera causa*, serving to explain not simply the mode of change, but the principle of change. Evolution must escape from its bondage to the physical sciences and its mesalliance with monistic dogma, and then it may well serve the ends of the Christian church. With both Seeberg and Forsyth there is the postulate of an ultimate dualism of world-view; and the endeavor to harmonize the claims of the Christian religion with the claims of modern thought has, at the hands of both, constant recourse to this postulate. But science receives rather short shrift at the hands of Forsyth; he is interested in the realities of another world.

The interest which Beth has in science is not essentially different from that of Seeberg, the apologetic interest, the endeavor to justify Christianity in the eyes of the modern world. But Beth makes a rather more specific use of certain aspects of science, particularly the chemical and the biological, in order to show that the scientific theory of evolution is distinctly friendly to Christian supernaturalism. This resembles a much more strenuous procedure of the same sort by Grützmacher, which puts a construction upon science that the scientist could not accept, and alters the concept of revelation to such an extent that the only other school of theologians who make large use of it—the Conservative Orthodox—would not recognize it. Beth is not a mediator in any such sense, but in his use of science he is an apologist.

A fundamentally different attitude toward science is assumed by the *Religionsgeschichtliche* school. There is no attempt to wrest the postulates of science into conformity with the demands or pre-suppositions of the Christian faith. It is proposed in earnest to proceed scientifically. The change in world-view which the progress of science has brought about is frankly acknowledged. History and the phenomenal order can afford us no absolutes; it is impossible longer to take a single generation, or a single individual, as absolute norm, over against all time and all cycles of spiritual existence. The age of the anthropocentric and geocentric has passed.<sup>2</sup> In harmony

<sup>1</sup>Positive Preaching, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup>Die Wissenschaftliche Lage, p. 53 f.

with the unity of reality postulated by science, Christianity must be studied along with other religions by the aid of the science of Comparative Religions. This science approaches the matter of the essence of religion by resolving the issue into four problems: psychology of religion, theory of religious knowledge, philosophy of religious history, and the metaphysics of religion. Christianity must be submitted to the same tests which are imposed upon the religious phenomena of all other faiths, and must stand upon whatever merit the process reveals. The scientific study of religions, ending with a religious metaphysics, transforms the religious God-idea and brings it into harmony with the modern scientific world-view.<sup>1</sup> So much for the general view of Troeltsch.

Bousset inclines somewhat to the Ritschlian distinction between science and religion as distinct provinces, limiting science to the physical and material universe. Religion, on the other hand, is concerned with the meaning and value side of existence.<sup>2</sup> Religious ideas are not scientific theorems, deducible and provable; they are final truths. Science relies upon what can be measured, counted, weighed:

letzte Wirklichkeit ist für sie Substanz, das in Raum und Zeit Beharrende, der Geist kann vor ihrem Forum höchstens als Akzidenz erscheinen—Religion geht auf letzte schöpferische Ursächlichkeit der Freiheit, die Wissenschaft lässt uns stecken in der endlosen Kette der Kausalität.<sup>3</sup>

Bousset proposes to break with all historic supernaturalism. At the same time, religious ideas are even somewhat antagonistic to science, and they far surpass its province.

Für den, der Wissenschaft und Erkenntnis der Welt-Wirklichkeit in eins setzt, gilt Religion überhaupt nicht und kann nicht gelten. Vielmehr musz gegen den Versuch wissenschaftlicher Alleinherrschaft das Urvermögen und tiefste Empfinden unserer Gesamt-Vernunft zu Hilfe gerufen werden, vor deren Forum dann die wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung ihrer Beschränktheit und Bedingtheit erscheint.<sup>4</sup>

There is thus a wide range of view in the handling of the conceptions of science and reality by the four groups of theologians under review. Conservative Orthodoxy and the Ritschlians quite generally hold a rather rigid conventional notion of science, are inclined to attribute to it a somewhat mechanical notion of law; the Ritschlians of Herrmann's type yield it in addition the function of producing

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Troeltsch, *Kultur der Gegenwart*, II, p. 461 f.

<sup>2</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress: Protoköll, p. 300.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 301.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 301.

*demonstrable* knowledge. The Modern Positives seize upon the main postulate of science—that of continuous process—and seek either to effect a harmony of science with religion through a modification of that postulate, or to show that upon certain terms it is possible to live with the idea and at the same time retain the notion of a revealed religion. The school of Comparative Religions means to take science as just what it is, to make earnest with its claims upon religion, and to secure thereby a reading of the fundamental religious phenomena native to the human race which shall be truly scientific. These men have come closer than the representatives of any other group to the modern conception of science as a technique for the mastery of reality and not a mere apparatus for knowing; as a method which proceeds by the use of postulates, but which knows nothing whatever about “iron laws.” However, this is not quite the notion of Troeltsch even, though he makes the nearest approach to it.

The general conception of reality held by these four groups is dualistic; there is another world of the permanent and perfect over against this transient finite world. All but the Comparative Religionists are willing to call it the supernatural; they are not, they will not admit Jesus to it; but God dwells there, thus making it the goal of our hope. It is that from which and unto which the process proceeds—the realm of the Absolute.

### 3. The Idea of History.

It will not be necessary to dwell at length upon the idea of history cherished by Conservative Orthodoxy. There is a divine plan of the world, and history is merely the unfolding of that plan. That plan provides for a natural unfoldment and for supernatural interventions at crucial points—interventions which lift life to a higher plane and eventually alter the whole course of history. God chose to create a universe into which it was seen that sin would enter; the Incarnation was a part of that plan, indeed the very pivot of it; “creation itself is built upon redemption lines.”<sup>1</sup> This is the conventional view.

The Ritschlian idea of history and its function is wholly different. It is only out of life in history that God can come to us, Herrmann declares. Just in proportion as the essential elements in our his-

<sup>1</sup>Orr, *Christian View*, p. 323.

torical environment become elements in our consciousness are we led into the presence of those facts which reveal God to us.<sup>1</sup> Now Jesus is the historical fact by which God communes with us. The question how a tradition subject to historical criticism can yield any certain content is dealt with by asserting that those elements which abide are just the more general features of Jesus' life which all hold to be correct. This portrait is a part of the historical reality amid which we live, and this makes us independent of the authority of the chroniclers.<sup>2</sup> Repose upon the work of the historian is a false repose. All are willing to admit that Jesus really appeared in the world in which we live. This historical fact of the person of Jesus, mediated to us by the Christian community, is the great basis of our Christian certainty.<sup>3</sup> It is quite apparent that this view is tied up very intimately with history. If the historicity of Jesus were disproven, Ritschlianism would lose its platform, its basis of assurance. Conservative Orthodoxy on principle sets limits to the province of historical criticism, Ritschlianism does not profess to do so, but as a matter of fact must if it would tie us up to history as exclusively as Herrmann does. Harnack sees the point, and asks the question whether it is possible to pick out a single phenomenon and saddle it with the whole weight of eternity, especially when that phenomenon is past.<sup>4</sup> But in his answer he shows much the same view of things manifested by Herrmann, declaring that in history we have received all that we possess. Even though all history is a record of development, it does not have to be understood as a process of mechanical change; personality brings about development, great personalities in particular. The fact of Jesus lies open to the light of day upon the page of history, and it requires that he be honored as unique.<sup>5</sup> He stands at the end of the series of messengers and prophets; all live on him and through him. But alas for us if our faith were based upon a number of details established by the historian; no historian has ever attained such a goal. At the same time, the spiritual purport of the life of Jesus is an historical fact, and it has reality in the effect which it produces; this is the link which binds us to Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Communion with God, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 102.

<sup>4</sup>Christianity and History, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, pp. 37, 38.

<sup>6</sup>Ut supra, pp. 60-62.

When we pass to the Modern Positive view, we find a large emphasis upon the historical, due in part to the Ritschlian influence. Seeberg says that God has revealed himself historically in words and actions; and that even today we experience him thus. Yet Christ does not speak to us today in other or new terms as opposed to his revelation.<sup>1</sup> It will not do to hold that the whole historical evolution of mankind affords deeper insight into the nature of God than is afforded by the one human life of Jesus. For the God-will that guides human history to a redemptive goal entered into history in Jesus, and in his words and deeds worked after the method of history.<sup>2</sup> When we become Christians, a historical form arose before our souls, and from it there came to us the power of a personal life, an almighty Will which subdued us. Jesus alone, among all the figures of life, constrains us to faith and love.<sup>3</sup>

Forsyth is less mediating in his statements. He declares plainly that Jesus is an insert into history. To be sure, he comes before us through the medium of the Christian community; but redemption is not evolution, nor is the Kingdom of God mere spiritual progress. We have a superlogical revelation in Christ's historic person.<sup>4</sup> A theology which places us in a spiritual process, a native movement between the finite and the infinite, depreciates the value of the spiritual act, and makes us independent of the grace of God.<sup>5</sup> But this is not to be thought of. The course of religion is not an immanent evolution. Mere process ends in mechanism; that real unfolding—which is an infinite concursus—demands a focusing in an act to constitute actual revelation; for such a power cannot adequately reveal itself dispersed through history.<sup>6</sup>

Beth would join the Ritschlian movement for independence from the dicta of mere historical inquiry concerning the person of Jesus. Faith cannot base itself upon any great historical figure whatever which historical inquiry can pass judgment upon.<sup>7</sup> What insignificance, then, can Jesus have for our present-day faith? The question can never be answered by a reference to all the possible features of Jesus, but only through maintaining the image of the New Testament Jesus. This is the Jesus who has actually wrought in Chris-

<sup>1</sup>Truths of the Christian Religion, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 241.

<sup>4</sup>Positive Preaching, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup>Ut supra, p. 214.

<sup>6</sup>Ut supra, p. 235.

<sup>7</sup>Theol. Rundschau, 1912, p. 9.

tianity. Now if Jesus never lived, all relation of faith to him is impossible; we can use neither the "symbolic Christ" nor the "historical Jesus." These great ideas stand or fall with the historicity of Jesus. It would be all over, not only for orthodox Christianity, but with liberal Christianity—as Christianity—if Jesus never lived.<sup>1</sup>

The *Religionsgeschichtliche* theologians have a very definite view of history. Its enormous extent leads them to conclude the impossibility of making any cross-section normative. There may exist besides Christianity many other religious connections with their own prototypes and redeemers; in some milleniums to come new and great forms of religion may arise. This would leave Jesus a relative function as center of the European-Christian world. But truth for other spheres and ages would not be bound up with the person of Jesus, although *for us* it is so related.<sup>2</sup>

This brings us to the question of the historical Jesus. Troeltsch recognizes the difficulty of the inquiry, but he believes that it will make progress, and that when the dust has cleared away, the old portrait of Jesus will so far remain that he will continue the source and power of Christianity. This will be the case, even if the historian cease to describe him as the absolutely central personality, the opening of a new stage of humanity, or as sinless and religiously complete.<sup>3</sup>

Bousset also recognizes the difficulty of the historical question, and asks whether we are willing to base our religious certainty upon the instability of it. The belief of the Conservative Orthodox view, as he points out, stands or falls with the reality of the God-Man, Jesus. But the historical view, he maintains, is one-sided and impossible. Historicism is always confronted by the unsolvable problem: What are the essential elements in the portrait of Jesus; was Jesus an eschatologist or not? Doubtless there is much of eternal value in the teaching of Jesus, but historical science lacks the measure and the means of pointing out these elements with any convincing power. One might, then, abandon the attempt at a detailed portrait, and keep in mind the personal impulse which went out from Jesus and lives in the Christian community; but that is to abandon the historical attempt. Another way would be to take the whole movement of history as a progressive unity of revelation, culminat-

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, p. 19 f.

<sup>2</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress: Protokoll, p. 339 f.

<sup>3</sup>Zeitschr. für wissenschaftl. Theol., Vol. 51, p. 123.



ing in the individual; but, even so, the historical investigation of the life of that individual—Jesus—leads to uncertainty. The outcome of it is that history points beyond itself to another foundation for certainty. That foundation is reason; the religious consciousness must attain clearness concerning itself. It does not need the authority of history, but is itself a standard by which we measure mere historical events, and so also the eternal elements in Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, we have and hold our faith in God in the spiritual communion created by Jesus; He stands towering high above all other teachers favored by God, as every eye can see.<sup>2</sup>

Very briefly summarized, the Ritschlian view bases assurance fundamentally upon history, but upon history which centers in an ineffable activity of God in the person of Jesus; Modern Positivism and Conservative Orthodoxy rest fundamentally upon revelation, which, however interpreted, is an insert into the natural unfoldment of events; while the *Religionsgeschichtliche* view is grounded in the adequacy of human reason for the interpretation of the divine meaning in history and personal life.

#### 4. Revelation and the Supernatural.

The discussion of this topic has necessarily been anticipated in part in the preceding sections. In consequence it need not occupy us long in this connection. With the Conservative Orthodox revelation is found in nature, in history—especially that of Israel—in predictive prophecy, in miracle as the intervention of God, but supremely in the Incarnation of the Son of God from heaven, who alone can work redemption—the final end of all revelation. The record of this series of special manifestations is also revelation, being the work of inspired men, and affords a system of divine truth not otherwise attainable. This system of truths conferred by divine revelation is fundamental with Conservative Orthodoxy.

Ritschlianism of Herrmann's type finds a positive vision of God in the historical Jesus, through whom God seeks communion with us. This revelation is not to be identified with any content of doctrines. We value the human elements of Jesus according to this view; yet Jesus is unique—unique in achievement of his ideal and in his consciousness of being humanity's sole Redeemer. In a word, how-

<sup>1</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress: Protokoll, p. 295 f.

<sup>2</sup>Faith of a Modern Protestant, p. 118 f.

ever human we find Jesus, we cannot avoid the impression that in him God is speaking to us. This revelation is a special divine activity, limited in time, positive, sufficient, final; and it is mediated to us through the Bible and the Christian community.<sup>1</sup> Kaftan likewise views the revelation of God in Christ as an interposition of God in human history.<sup>2</sup> He argues at great length in his *Truth of the Christian Religion* to show that the Christian idea of revelation is perfectly rational; reason and revelation meet in the same conception of the chief good. Both Herrmann and Kaftan distinguish the Scriptures from the revelation enclosed therein. Neither their narratives nor their doctrines are to be unquestionably accepted as true; the revelation is Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures are simply an intermediary between him and the faith of later generations.<sup>3</sup>

To the Modern Positive theologians revelation is by action rather than in any sum of revealed truths. Yet the Modern Positive feels the need of maintaining certain truths which are certified in the revelation, such truths as the supernatural origin and resurrection of Jesus, his deity and atoning death. These are considered essential by Forsyth, and, as a matter of fact, by Seeberg and Beth as well. With Seeberg, Christ is God's action, or God in action; He is thus the revelation. Forsyth singles out the Cross as focusing the redemptive function of Christ; redemption is revelation, and revelation is redemption. Seeberg states the matter of atonement in other terms—as the culmination of a redemptive career. Both Seeberg and Forsyth believe in miracle, but neither makes a constructive use of it.<sup>4</sup> Seeberg declares Christ both God and man. Forsyth sees in him God the Son, a superlogical revelation.<sup>5</sup>

Both Forsyth and Seeberg distinguish the revelation from the Bible. Forsyth says:

The word of God is the Gospel which is in the Bible, but it is not identical with the Bible. . . . Revelation's compass is very small, smaller than the Bible; simply the message of the Christ living on earth, dying, risen, and living in glory, and all for God's glory in our reconciliation.<sup>6</sup> In somewhat similar fashion, Seeberg declares that "Jesus Christ is the content of Scripture."<sup>7</sup> Yet, with both, God's doings are his

<sup>1</sup>Mozley, *Ritschlianism*, Chap. iv.

<sup>2</sup>*Truth of the Christian Religion*, I, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Kaftan, *Das Wesen der christl. Religion*, p. 437.

<sup>4</sup>*Fundamental Truths*, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup>*Positive Preaching*, p. 213.

<sup>6</sup>*Revelation and the Bible*, *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911.

<sup>7</sup>*Fundamental Truths*, p. 113; cf. also Beth, *Die Moderne u. s. w.*, p. 199 f.

revelation. Doctrine is not given directly in the revelation, but arises when the revelation is made an object of reflection; doctrines are not the revelation, but follow it as a consequence. God's deeds are his revelation.<sup>1</sup> Christ is God's working, God's action. Under the stress of the Ritschlian insistence, both Forsyth and Seeberg hold that revelation yields immediately no content of doctrines; yet they both feel the conservative pressure for a specific interpretation of the *facts*, and are thus led to the immediate sequence of doctrine upon revelation—yielding it a far greater consequence than the Ritschlians do. What we finally have is a number of cardinal doctrines which make clear the content of the divine revelation; and to this content of truth, faith is fundamentally related. These doctrines must be adapted to the current world-view.<sup>2</sup> It is just this nucleus of cardinal truths in which Beth is really interested, and he endeavors to show that the scientific postulate of evolution actually opens the door for revelation.

The school of Comparative Religions really makes no use of the conventional conception of revelation. Troeltsch, to be sure, does not deny the ineffable in our experience of reality, and he does in a way relate Jesus to that ineffable.

The fact of such a union of human life with the certainty of the Divine is, like all naive experience, a final and insoluble element of reality, a mystery like the mystery of all that is real. Thus the personality of Jesus belongs to the great basal mysteries of reality. For him who bows before the God of Jesus, it is the greatest.<sup>3</sup>

When Troeltsch uses the term *revelation*, it is with a different connotation than that which conventionally attaches to the term. Revelation, in his sense, is a product of the religious imagination. Even so, Jesus is for us the high-water mark of spiritual attainment, the embodiment of transcendent religious power. Though not in a different category from other religious geniuses, he is, for us, the divine revelation, reinforced by the historical process of the centuries. From the fact that we are in the circle of light that streams from him, we see in him a revelation of God; for us he is in some sense Redeemer.<sup>4</sup>

One confesses that such expressions are elusive and unsatisfactory. The fact which they bring to light is that Jesus is not an

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, pp. 138, 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 281.

<sup>3</sup>Absolutheit des Christentums, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress. Protokoll, p. 337 f.

*absolute* for Troeltsch, even though exalted very much above the rank and file of us. Only religious mysticism, and that always defies analysis, may find in Jesus a revelation of God.

Bousset has the same sense of the ineffable in religious experience. He declares that our faith credits God with knowing a thousand ways and means, within the limits of the given laws, of approaching the individual and surrounding him with goodness and care.<sup>1</sup> And he even admits that a new and vital element came into the world with the advent of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> Jesus brought a stream of certainty concerning the forgiveness of sins into the world. He towers high above the other religious teachers favored of God, as the one who reveals the Divine light with inward certainty.<sup>3</sup> Whatever matter of revelation he may have made, it is—in the view of Bousset and Troeltsch—only common religious truth passed through the alembic of a superior personality; it is no disclosure made by one in whom God dwells uniquely because he is different in kind from us, much less is it an impartation of objective theological truths.

Coördinated with the issue of revelation is the question of the supernatural. In the view of Conservative Orthodoxy, the temporal and eternal stand over against each other, two distinct orders; and the eternal now and again inserts into the temporal fresh quantities of energy, new forms of existence, unique modes of operation, which—though they may be in harmony with the “law” of the higher realm, the supernatural—nevertheless constitute a break with the natural order, and introduce results which it could never have produced. Revelation is only a single aspect of this intervening activity of a world otherwise beyond experience. The whole series of theophanies and impartations, of miracles and inspirations, falls into this general setting.

The number of such elements which one system or another acknowledges varies greatly. Conservative Orthodoxy finds no barrier to and large need for a great number of them. In the ancient world, within the special area of revelation, such happenings were not infrequent; they include divinely-guided history, prophetic inspiration, theophany, miracle, the whole series of events which constituted the life of Jesus a unique phenomenon—especially the super-

<sup>1</sup>Faith of a Modern Protestant, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 118.

natural conception and the resurrection—the peculiar enduements of the Spirit, and the ancient and modern psychological miracle of regeneration. To this list one might add marvelous answer to prayer—an experience not quite so generally insisted upon as regeneration.

Ritschlianism contents itself with one, or at least two, of the series as constructive elements in its system. To be sure, miracle is recognized. Herrmann makes the very existence of such a tradition as that Jesus was ideal and perfect a miraculous fact, seeing that it is reported by men who did not have that ideal experience in their own lives.<sup>1</sup> Only a miraculous transformation can bring us to the experience of the sovereignty of God.<sup>2</sup> There is a unity of Christ with God which is not describable in human categories.<sup>3</sup> The miracles which appear in the evangelic record serve no real apologetic purpose with the Christian man of today, though a conviction of their historicity may be held without real detriment to faith.<sup>4</sup> Miracle is used in a new sense, and yet to express an activity and results which are uniquely due to the divine operation. It is, however, experienced miracle, not recorded miracle, in which Herrmann believes.<sup>5</sup> When one has experienced the inward miracle, he knows that Christ transcends the natural order, and he need not then doubt the miracles of the Bible. But the Biblical miracles are no way of approach to Christ. Herrmann's is the most extensive Ritschlian handling of the conception of miracle, which has for the Ritschlians generally no constructive significance. Even Herrmann has nothing to affirm concerning particular miracles, if the resurrection of Jesus be made an exception.<sup>6</sup>

Among those who define themselves as Modern Positivists, Forsyth is the most outspoken in his affirmation of the supernatural. Men's natural resources are so inadequate that they need not only aid from the supernatural, they need a Savior (Positive Preaching, p. 5); the saving act of God is an invasion of us, however inward (p. 63); the note of the church's message is the note of the supernatural (p. 122); the preacher's burthen is a world beyond experience (p. 200); he preaches a real rescue by a hand from heaven

<sup>1</sup>Communion with God, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Ut supra, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Ut supra, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, pp. 233-235.

<sup>5</sup>Der Christ und das Wunder, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Die Religion im Verhältniss z. Welterkennen, p. 386.

(p. 218); Christ overrode natural law (p. 223).<sup>1</sup> There are two culminating points in the series of supernatural communications: the one is God's final redemption of us by a permanently superhistorical act in the historical Christ,<sup>2</sup> the other is the advent of our personal faith, which is "the uprising in us of a totally new world."<sup>3</sup> Forsyth is really favorable to the acceptance of the whole series of supernatural phenomena which the Gospels report as accompanying the career and ministry of Jesus, and he lays great stress upon communion with the risen Christ; he is not simply known in experience, but as the creator of experience.<sup>4</sup>

Seeberg is less outspoken, or perhaps one might say less conventional. He is much concerned to temper the aspect of "invasion" and to put his view into terms which shall make it scientifically acceptable. Faith has nothing to do with isolated miraculous events (Fundamental Truths, p. 78); nevertheless faith is always faith in the marvelous (p. 83); thus faith is the first miracle to be dealt with in the miracle problem (p. 100); God's doings are His revelation (p. 138); they appear in the course of human history, but with such force as to carry the immediate conviction that they are divine; God is in fact directing the whole course of history toward the goal of redemption (p. 150). God effects all; and yet somehow it becomes operative only through ourselves (p. 168). Jesus was the conscious servant of God and Lord of the World (pp. 205, 207). He had a unique soul, a peculiar mode of perception, thought, and speech (p. 281 f). In fact, in Him the God-will that guides human history to redemption's goal entered human history and worked after the manner of history in His words and deeds (p. 222). We pray to Christ and have communion with Him (pp. 245, 246). Yet there is nothing in the whole revelation-redemption series which is not according to nature (p. 267).

Here we have a good example of the real Modern Positive method of mediation. Beth goes about it in even more thorough-going fashion, yet to the same intent. The view is at bottom supernaturalistic, and the end of the mediating process is to gain a hearing for the gospel. Forsyth says that the true way is not to start with a

<sup>1</sup>Cf. also p. 289.

<sup>2</sup>Hibbert Journal, Oct., 1911: Revelation and the Bible.

<sup>3</sup>Positive Preaching, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup>Ut supra, p. 68.

world-view, but to begin with revelation, which is autonomous, whatever the world-view to which it is related.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch and Bousset both have that dualism in which God is set over against the world, a dualism which, presumably, is at the basis of all non-monistic religious faith. But the general world-view is rather that of a single homogeneous universe the fringes of whose reality fall back into the ineffable, than of a dual universe of natural and supernatural mutually impinging and sometimes interpenetrating. Evolution is the universal principle; knowledge comes concomitantly with development and the application of human reason, and not otherwise. Religion is an original endowment of human nature, not a donation from the other world. As Bousset says, in this view, "one will have to break with all historic supernaturalism."<sup>2</sup> Troeltsch holds fundamentally the same view; and yet both feel that such a type of Christian mysticism as makes large use of symbol is not only justified, but is the only course actually open to the religious man. This is not to say that such a mysticism can afford him knowledge concerning God and the ineffable, for the only certainty which remains to him is not a supernatural certainty at all, but the certainty of faith.<sup>3</sup>

### C. RELATION OF THESE CONCEPTIONS TO THE BASIS OF ASSURANCE.

#### 1. Theory of Knowledge.

In this discussion, as in the previous section where the theory of knowledge expressed or implied by each particular point of view was discussed (see B 1 above), there is no attempt to maintain the technical distinction between epistemology or the theory of knowledge and metaphysics. The two are so interrelated, either by implication or expressly, that this is scarcely practicable. The theory of knowledge is related to metaphysics thus immediately in all the schools, unless an exception be made of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* handling, where it is sometimes—as in the case of Troeltsch—very definitely distinguished.

The three other types of theology passed under review make no constructive use of a theory of knowledge. Ritschlianism, in the form set forth by Herrmann, will permit no alliance between theology and metaphysics—however close an alliance between theology

<sup>1</sup>Positive Preaching, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup>Fünfter Weltkongress, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, *Absolutheit d. Christentums*, p. xiv.

and ethics may be insisted upon. Reality in Christianity and in metaphysics are for him two essentially different things; they cannot be mixed.<sup>1</sup>

Kaftan, on the other hand, regards the two fields of thought—that of Christian faith and that of rational knowledge of reality—as capable of combination.<sup>2</sup> But even Kaftan makes no thoroughgoing use of this view. The “value judgments” of Ritschlianism are distinguished from theoretical or existential judgments—though some later Ritschlians hold that value-judgments have to do with objective truth. Revelation in the historic Jesus is brought in by all types of Ritschlianism to supplement that which the moral intuition yields. The term *judgment of value*, which is falling into disuse among Ritschlians, means simply to express a conviction, which Ritschlianism has by no means yielded, that “proof cannot mean in theology what it means in natural science, but that in theology knowledge must be a matter of personal conviction arising from individual experience.” The path to certainty, then, can be no metaphysical highway, but the way of religious experience aroused by contact with the historical Jesus mediated through the Christian community.<sup>3</sup>

Conservative Orthodoxy forgets its theory of knowledge, or suffers it to be swallowed up, by its confidence in revelation. Whether the philosophy be intuitional or deductive, it cannot get us very far. The certainty of the truths of the Christian religion, which is essential to Christianity, comes in through revelation and contact of the soul with the supernatural. Though a psychology of this knowledge process is more elaborated by Modern Positivism, its view is essentially one of the creation and supplementation of human knowledge by revelation. In all three types, Ritschlian, Conservative Orthodox, and Modern Positive, revelation brings up all arrears of essential knowledge, and—interpreted by experience—becomes the basis of religious assurance.

The School of Comparative Religions, especially such a theologian as Troeltsch, makes earnest with a theory of knowledge and with a metaphysics. There can be no apologetic grounding of the Christian faith without the development of both a theory of knowledge and a metaphysics. A theory of knowledge will show us how

<sup>1</sup>Metaphysik in der Theologie, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Mozley, Ritschlianism, Chap. V.



the God-idea arises as the religious Apriori, itself in relation to the other Aprioris of reason. But this affords that Apriori no ontological basis; and it must have, to meet the demands of religious faith, an ontological basis. This can be supplied only by an inductive metaphysics, a metaphysics *a posteriori*. The spiritual values are anchored in the world-ground by such a process. This will be the method of religious apologetic; but it is not the route which the ordinary Christian will travel to gain his confidence of God. His confidence will come from contact, either mediate or immediate, with great revealing personalities, personalities which bring to light the religious and moral possibilities of the soul, and in whose light we see light. Bousset manifests the same confidence in natural reason to validate the content which religious faith gives to the God-idea. He holds, likewise, to the religious significance of great personalities. "Our faith in God is entirely based on personality;" we gain it from the mighty ones into whose consciousness there flashed the certainty of God.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Science and Reality.

We trace a very similar course when we come to the relation of religious assurance to science and to the conception of reality. Conservative Orthodoxy denies the authority of science to form postulates which shall determine religious interpretations. Conservative Orthodoxy challenges the fully developed form of the chief postulate of modern science, the concept of evolution, of continuous progressive change. Science is remanded to the cataloging business and denied the right to advance the larger and more ultimate interpretations of reality. Thus science is looked upon with suspicion to such an extent that it finds no place in the grounding of personal religious assurance. The supreme basis of assurance is, as we shall see, the direct gift of interposing divine grace.

The Ritschlian view holds that man lives in another world than that which science shapes with its ideas. The two are different modes of comprehending reality, standing alongside each other. Consequently religion is free from science and wholly autonomous. The two somehow fit into a hidden whole; but for the present they ought not to be mixed.<sup>2</sup> "The idea of a living God who through his revelation creates true life in man cannot be related to the uni-

<sup>1</sup>Faith of a Modern Protestant, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Herrmann, *Zeitschr. f. T. u. K.*, 1907, p. 197 f.

versally valid thoughts of science."<sup>1</sup> Personal assurance does not base, at all, in this view, upon the scientific findings of any age. It is even more independent than in the view of Conservative Orthodoxy, which undertakes to say what science ought to be, while this view leaves science to go on its way unimpeded. Religious certainty, to put it in a word, bases upon revelation in history.

Modern Positivism of the Seeberg type is distinctly friendly to current world-views. The truths of the Christian religion must be harmonized therewith. This, however, is a big undertaking, and the result cannot be said to be satisfactory to those who look upon Christianity as a sum of truths, or to those who understand what the modern scientific world-view is. The matter of mediation is clearly an apologetic procedure. The path to religious certainty is essentially the Ritschlian path of revelation in history. More is made of revelation, *i. e.*, it has a broader scope. The kind of assurance is different; it is not mere assurance of a gracious God, it is also certainty of the truths of the Christian religion. Because the person of Jesus has so overwhelming an effect upon us, the truth of the Gospel which proclaims him and interprets his mission is certified.

Troeltsch and Bousset recognize the right of science to go beyond the mere business of exact causal explanation and analysis to the formulation of comprehensive hypotheses. Just this right it is which demands that the study of Christianity shall be undertaken upon the common platform of a study of world religions by the methods which govern the science of Comparative Religions. No theory of religion or doctrine of validity will hold which is not based upon the view of the world established by science.<sup>2</sup> This is the way to the apologetic certainty of truth. Personal assurance comes, however, through the illuminating presence of great personalities and that natural religious mysticism which is enforced thereby. He who is confident of God in the prophetic measure becomes a medium of assurance to the common man.

### 3. History.

Conservative Orthodoxy does not tie up assurance of the good God with the normal unfoldment of history, but rather with supernatural interferences in the course of history, or with a history

<sup>1</sup>Ut supra, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, *Die wissenschaftliche Lage*, p. 52 f.

which is the product of a combination of natural and supernatural elements, such as the merely natural could never have brought about.

Ritschlianism will have nothing to do with the sort of supernatural activity which does not become articulate and human in the course of history. Religious mysticism is foreign to the genius of Christianity, and faith is forbidden to base thereon, but summoned to ground itself upon the sure historical Divine manifestation in Jesus. Ritschlianism shuns equally the path of pure science and the path of mysticism, if one for the moment disregard Kaftan's concessions to mysticism. It is felt that history keeps us close to experience and at the same time saves us from mere subjectivism. Our assurance is thus the assurance of a community of individuals each of whom in his experience of moral defeat and schism has met with the historical Jesus, through the mediation of the community, and has been overwhelmed with the conviction that in him God was seeking communion with his needy spirit.

Modern Positivism follows somewhat the same course with reference to Jesus as a historical personage whose influence is mediated by the community; but it makes a place for communion with the risen Christ which Ritschlianism does not recognize; so that it does not hold sheerly to the historical Jesus, but through the medium of the historical Jesus achieves a super-historical Jesus, who is, after all, the real Jesus.

While the Ritschlians hold firmly to the historical Jesus, this Jesus is for them, as for the Conservative Orthodox and the Modern Positives, an Absolute inserted into the relative order of the world. He is God's final word for them all.

With the School of Comparative Religions the very nature of scientific historical inquiry renders it impossible to tie religious faith up with historical detail. Even the Ritschlian attempt to preserve an effective portrait of Jesus is subject to grave perils. What we really have is the impulse which went out from Jesus and lives in the Christian community of our time; and, in addition, the Gospel portrait or portraits, many elements of which will always have an ideal value for us. It is the Jesus who is thus interpreted whom we really have; and in the light of his religious genius we see light. But this does not hold for all time and every cycle of existence; rather, merely for us who are the heirs of a Christian tradition and members of the Christian community.

## 4. Revelation.

In all but our fourth group, personal assurance is very intimately related to revelation. In Conservative Orthodoxy and Modern Positivism, revelation brings both a new experience and new truths, however the latter may be defined; in the Ritschlian view, revelation occasions a new moral experience. In all three, it is revelation and the ensuing experience which guarantee whatever religious truth may be disclosed. Personal assurance comes in each case through Jesus; in Conservative Orthodoxy, through Jesus interpreted very definitely as redeeming Son of God, who died for us and arose, and with whom we now have conscious communion; in Modern Positivism, interpreted in more mediating terms, but to the same intent; in Ritschlianism, interpreted as a man with a unique religious consciousness, particularly a consciousness of sinlessness and Lordship, about whose state beyond the grave we have no data in experience, but who awakens in us the consciousness that through him God is seeking us.

While both Bousset and Troeltsch use the term *revelation*, they do not mean an activity of the Divine different in kind from that which inheres in all religious experience. If Jesus towers above us—and he does—it is as the supreme religious genius whom our own cycle of existence knows. He sheds upon our pathway just that light and imparts just that certainty which always arises from contact with superior religious personalities. He kindles a kindred faith in us; but there is no justification for calling it supernatural certainty; it is the assurance of faith, gathered from an attitude toward that Reality in which all our highest values are grounded, an attitude which we see exhibited triumphantly in the career of such a supreme personality as Jesus.

Such in outline is the bearing of the fundamental notions distinguished upon the problem of religious assurance, as that problem is met—either expressly or by implication—by the systems under review. The concluding section of this essay attempts to indicate alternatives to which the tendencies disclosed point.

### III. ALTERNATIVE VIEWS.

The pendulum swings all the way from supreme distrust of the natural order, coupled with intimate dependence upon the arm of supernatural intervention, to a religious interpretation of the natural order and a unitary view of the world which renders the concept of the supernatural superfluous. Again, it swings all the way from dependence upon a series of absolutes over against the relative and conditioned in experience, to a calm acceptance of progressive change as the one order which rules whatever worlds and aspects of reality there be; so that there are no absolutes to depend upon, but only relatively greater magnitudes, who are together with us in the universal flux; so that the religious man is driven back upon his successful use of the method of experimentation, the same method which obtains in the scientific realm, as basis of his confidence. That is, however, a very different thing from personal assurance of the forgiveness and favor of God—a fact which needs no further emphasis.

The movements which we have traced are all absolutistic, the Conservative Orthodox view maintaining a whole series of absolutes grounded in the one Absolute—God, while, on the other hand, such theologians as Troeltsch dispense with all absolutes intermediary between the individual and the infinite God. Nowhere has the idea of a God who is also himself a struggling and achieving being in a universe not wholly pliant to His will been dealt with. Since this view, in one form or another long familiar in the field of philosophy, has begun to arouse a certain speculative interest in the field of theology, it presents itself as a possible alternative basis for the grounding of religious life. Beyond this a world-view could not pass and continue theistic, though it might continue religious, in so far as religion is a social and personal phenomenon. Every theism, in whatever terms defined, is—if it preserve the idea of personality—a positive dualism. With the idea of a God for whom the universe is an adventure and its mastery a goal, it may become pluralism. But no system whose Deity is less than the Absolute and Infinite God can afford the individual evangelical assurance.

## A. THE SUPERNATURALISTIC VIEW OF THE WORLD AS GROUND OF ASSURANCE.

It will not be questioned that the view of the universe which the Bible, whether Old or New Testament, represents is a dualistic one, with a temporal, created, finite, natural order on the one hand, and an eternal, creative, infinite, supernatural order on the other; nor that God is conceived of as inhabiting the eternities characteristically, and as now and again, by the angel of His presence, by a theophany, by an incarnation, through the dream of seer or the inspiration of prophet, or through the presence of his Holy Spirit, making himself known in the temporal order. Nor will it be questioned that this view of the universe obtained during the long period of creed and confession-making in the Christian church. It is equally certain that, with some adaptations, it is the characteristic view of the Conservative Orthodoxy of today. The modifications look in the direction of a doctrine of the Divine Immanence. But Conservative Orthodoxy has never accepted a thorough-going view of immanence; for it conceives the characteristically Divine as somehow being brought into the natural order from without. God may dwell in nature and in humanity, but when he wants to make us sure of his presence, or to produce any momentous alteration in things, he must make the approach from without the natural order.

It is equally true that this dualism of the natural and the supernatural has been from time immemorial coupled with a moral dualism; this lower realm is the abode of evil; the perfect, the ideal, the absolute good is in the supernatural realm, and can enter the natural only as something extraneous, something foreign, the capacity for whose reception even must be a donation from the other world. In such a view, the greatest need of the individual is to be forgiven for his sin, and to be assured of this. This is something other than the feeling of dependence and the cry for help; it is the feeling of guilt which many aspects of this general view tend to impress upon the individual. Unless adjustment can be effected, eternal ruin, loss and death will ensue. One must be a great stranger to both Bible and historic Christian thought not to grasp the reality and gravity of this situation. The power of all priesthoods has lain here, the significance of all penance, the mystery of all atonement. Let it be understood that God so loved the

world that he gave his Son to be crucified as the substitute for guilty humanity—and thus Conservative Orthodoxy understands the case—and it will be seen that no man can treat sin as a light matter. Besides being guilt, sin is hereditary and entails a racial vitiation, one that cannot be got rid of by anything its poor inheritor can do. Only God can forgive the guilty and cleanse the defiled, and memorable the hour when He does!

From his peculiar abode in the supernatural realm God grants forgiveness, and from thence as well he sends renewing grace into the sinful heart; and by the experience of this grace, by the promises of his revealed Word, by the witness of his Holy Spirit, grants assurance of his forgiving and restoring favor. Protestantism has characteristically made the witness of the Word of God the chief basis of assurance of a gracious God; the promises of God, the whole history of redemption.

Other systems than the Conservative Orthodox are rather variously related to this general scheme. Modern Positivism makes the nearest approach to preserving it intact, its chief departure being in the direction of immanence—making all that happens “perfectly natural.” At the same time, it has not done so to the extent of denying that the act of redemption is a divine donation, a rescue by a hand let down from above, or that in Christ the God-will that moves history toward a redemption goal entered into history. Ritschlianism refuses to discuss theories of the universe, but manifestly has one—for the greater part, just the very general outlines of the one we have been discussing. That is, there is the same fundamental dualism of absolute and relative, infinite and finite, perfect Good and sinner; and God makes, once for all, in history, an absolute revelation, contact with which brings, as it alone can, assurance of the gracious God. The view which Troeltsch and Bousset, with some differences of detail, share is described as a fundamental religious dualism (Troeltsch’s term). God is the Absolute Reason, a postulate of our finite reason. But both feel the pull of the unitary conception of science, and make no use of supernatural intervention. What God brings to pass he does by the use of that common method of his working which we call law. The only likeness to the Biblical world-view which this scheme manifests is that it has God the Absolute and unconditioned over against a world of the finite, relative and conditioned. It makes no use of

theophany, incarnation, or the supernatural in general, though it allows for the quest of the soul after God, and a response through the ordained natural means.

It seems evident that no mediating scheme will be able to bring about an improvement of the biblical view by its modification here and there. It is a self-consistent view, in its general outline; the only question being whether one who is in any considerable degree either aware of or a sharer of the common scientific world-view of our time can also continue to hold the biblical as a religious view of the world. It may as well be recognized that the elements of that static, dualistic world-view belong together and are not to be bartered away piecemeal for a little evolution here and a bit of immanence there. For one who is able to live in that atmosphere of Biblicism, the plan for gaining personal assurance works perfectly well. In the same way the Ritschlian method works for him who is able to keep his thinking in two distinct compartments, his science in one, his religion in another. Anyone in vital touch with the representatives of either type knows that splendid Christian character has been attained by those who have whole-heartedly lived out its counsels.

#### B. THE EQUIVALENT OF ASSURANCE IN A VIEW OF THE WORLD-PROCESS AS EXPRESSION OF PERSONAL WILL.

This view still maintains the existence of the Infinite and Absolute God, unconditioned except by the method of his creative activity—an activity which brings his will to expression in the world-process, and which as a unitary conception needs no supplementation by an extraordinary activity interrupting or setting aside that process. The personal will of the Highest is, in this view, known through the process, and not by means of something spectacular breaking into it from without. In this sense of the term, all our highest values become revelation. In this view, then, it is not exclusively the rational, but the ethical, the volitional, the aesthetic as well, which proclaim to us the reality and nature of God.

In this view, however, there can manifestly be no such doctrine of evangelical assurance as in older view demands; a fundamental postulate of such evangelical assurance is belief in a dualistic, supernaturalistic universe. There is no such place for a doctrine of depravity with its correlated guilt, in this view, though it by no means



excludes the concept of sin, and makes a great deal of the notions of limitation and insufficiency.

The ethical demand is not defined chiefly by the sense of sin, as in the Conservative Orthodox view. In so far, however, as a sense of sin becomes a pronounced element in the moral consciousness of the individual, assurance of the favor of God will emerge with the ethical resolution, and in so far as a loftier or perfect ideal is demanded, a sense of God will suffuse that ideal. It must be recognized that this view allows for as real a conception of God and as genuine an attitude of faith in Him as the view which holds a static universe with "iron laws." In such a faith in the cosmic process as expressive of the will of the personal God, certainty will appear most clearly defined in connection with the moral and spiritual, the realms where our highest individual and social values lie; nor will it be confined to those experiences which stand out as associated with a crisis, but will be extended to those capable of being induced at will, or practically constant in experience. Personality, in this view, especially in its higher types and loftier manifestations, becomes "revelatory." Thus Jesus may be found a surpassing center of spiritual illumination, lighting up the spiritual pathway, and in so far, revealing and assuring of a gracious God who makes possible such a life in such a universe.

This view of the matter demands of religion a friendly relation with science, not only for the reason that it is engaged in interpretation of the same reality which religion endeavors to read, but, and chiefly, because—since there is no revelation bringing us by supernatural means the content of the unexhausted remainders beyond present experience, and the unappreciated reality within present experience—the religious interpretation is directly conditioned by such a world-view as science justifies.

Such a view will also demand a stronger rational grounding of the God-idea than would be the case if some sort of supernatural revelation were affirmed. At the same time, religion will not, in this view, be grounded directly upon reason, any more than in a supernaturalistic view. The effect of the rational upon the religious view will be mediated chiefly by the construction of a scientific world-view. There will still remain to religion the function of reading the higher value-side of existence, and of interpreting reality to us from this point of view. It is only to be remembered

that religion will proceed to this task, under the present view, very much more closely related to reason and to science than if the supernatural mode of procedure were employed.

The method of proceeding from the postulate of an infinite Personal Will whose revelation lies in the world-process goes about its business of gaining a religious interpretation by a process of induction from the data of religious experience and the observation of the phenomena of religion, contemporary and historical; holding to the concept of continuous progressive change, it believes that there is discoverable a teleology which discloses the religious meaning of the world.

In general this is the view of the school of Comparative Religions. But the point of view as such is possible independently of such a relation to Kant as members of this school assume; indeed, it is bound up with no single theoretical construction of reality, but is possible from any point of view which combines an absolutistic postulate of reason or a personalistic postulate of religion with the application of the inductive method in interpreting the total world-process. The confidence which it permits is confidence in the world-process, through which the personal will of its postulate comes to expression for our experience; this confidence is both limited and reinforced by such a religious experience as this view engenders. It is a confidence that those things which the religious consciousness recognizes as our highest values are themselves expressions of the personal will of the Highest, and that we may build our lives upon them.

#### C. NON-ABSOLUTISTIC CONFIDENCE IN THE METHOD OF EXPERIMENTATION.

This view may be grounded in a pluralistic relativism, or it may refuse all generalizations in the realm of the met-empirical. Characteristically, it takes the latter point of view. It keeps in very close touch with science, at the same time being aware that this method which it proposes to employ in religion is just the method which modern science is employing in its reading of reality. Science no longer claims that its *laws* are more than working hypotheses; formulae and "laws" are a part of the scientific technique for a successful handling of certain aspects of reality. So, also, with the religious formulae; they are not held to be photographs of real-

ity, they are related only to certain aspects of it. And with both science and religion, it is recognized, in this view, that the "law"-elaborating, "truth"-discovering activities of each are experimental procedures for the achievement of certain definite and specific ends. Thus, it is argued, all the recognized "results" of both science and religion have been achieved, as means to specific ends. This does not at all mean that they are to be erected into forms for the positive government of all future investigation in these realms. Just as science feels not only at liberty, but obliged to overhaul the whole series of her postulates with every fresh undertaking, and actually does so with every new scientific generation, so religion, in this view, takes the same attitude toward the whole series of values which the past has hallowed. These will survive and be employed just so long as they contribute to the conceived needs of the generation making use of them.

The method of experimentation, by its very nature, must keep pushing out the fringe of reality; by its very nature it must reread that portion of reality already supposed to have been adequately surveyed. But, whether as science or as religion, it goes about this matter not at all with a view to a compendium of universal knowledge, but rather to meet certain very definite and acute situations.

If, then, the hypothesis of a personal God yield certain very concrete values for the religious life, it will be made a working part of such a religious system; when it ceases to yield such results, having been made an impossible postulate by virtue of the religious or scientific movement in some other direction, it will pass, and will be replaced—should that time ever come—by a real effective hypothesis. So, also, with the belief and practice of prayer. If it be found a sort of religious technique actually ministrant to religious need, it will be maintained; when it fails to yield such results, there is no inherent authority of the practice itself which can maintain it.

The point of view recognizes religion as a practically universal factor of human life as we know it. It is a social fact, as well, and not a mere product of the individual religious consciousness. As a social phenomenon, independently of its origin or of any final interpretation, religion is to be viewed as an integral constituent of our common life. As such, it is recognized as a valid method of

achieving recognized ends. It brings certain aesthetic and moral reinforcements to personal life which would otherwise be wanting. But no single type of religion can, on this hypothesis, be prescribed as of universal validity. At the same time, this point of view recognizes the intimate social and genetic development of all religious life, and holds that no generation can tear itself asunder from its past, living thus—so to speak—*in vacuo*. Ends will persist, felt wants will survive, like will beget like—though with a difference; and, as a result, each succeeding generation will take up and use much that the past generation has wrought out.

The point of view thus represented is, in short, that since we get on in all other realms by the method of experimentation, we can do so, and must needs do so, in the field of religion as well; for it holds that life is all of a piece, and that religion has to do with the value side of it. Since we do not have absolutes in science, and are, notwithstanding, able to order our world in such a way as to achieve a Twentieth Century civilization, may we not, it inquires, do a similar thing in the field of religion, with the value side of life, without any other than the experimental method, with no postulate of the supernatural, and with no hypothesis of the Infinite and Absolute which can be ereted into a norm?

It is not the object of this study to decide the basis of assurance or the ground of certainty. There are sincere advocates of each of the above-indicated points of view and it is quite manifest that what would satisfy one group as a logical demonstration would fall far short with another. At any rate, there can be no assurance that is not experimental; if it be but a matter of theory and not of practice with a working place in one's life, it can never serve as basis for the achievement of higher religious values. Faith arises and makes headway through the actual achievement of values.

















