

THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

VOLUME VIII

APRIL 1910

NUMBER 2

MODERN POSITIVE THEOLOGY.

During the last few years considerable interest has been aroused in theological circles in Germany over a movement which goes by the name of "Modern Positive Theology" or "Modern Theology of the Old Faith". This movement has originated in the conservative camp. Its demand is for a theology which shall preserve the Gospel or the "Old Faith", and restate it in terms of modern thought. It is contended that the modern liberal theology has really destroyed the Gospel in its attempt to modernize it, while the old evangelical theology has erred in identifying the Gospel with worn out forms of theological thought in which from age to age the Gospel has found expression. The Gospel or the Old Faith, it is said, can be maintained in its integrity and given a theological formulation which shall render it intelligible to the "modern consciousness"—whatever that may be. The leaders of this movement are General Superintendent Theodor Kaftan, and Professors Seeberg of Berlin, Grützmacher of Rostock, and Beth of Vienna.

In order to understand this movement it is necessary to take a brief survey of the theological situation in Germany.¹

¹On this subject *vid.* F. Traub, *Aus der dogmatischen Arbeit der Gegenwart, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche XVI*, pp. 429-483; also E. Troeltsch, *Rückblick auf ein halbes Jahrhundert der theol. Wissenschaft, Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, Jahrg. 51, N. F. 16, Heft 2, pp. 97-135.

So far as the various schools of theology are concerned, an attempt at classification is not so simple a matter as it was in the century which has just closed. Then there were practically just three groups—the liberal theology, the mediating theology, and the conservative theology, the last being again divided into three groups—the “Biblicists”, the confessional theology, and the Erlangen theology. At the present time the situation is complicated by the rise of newer theological movements, and by the indeterminateness of the lines between them. The old Mediating Theology has retired very much into the background; almost the only recent book from this standpoint which attempts an entire system of doctrine is the *Lehrbuch* of F. A. B. Nitzsch, published in 1893. The other theological groups have been modified through the influence of the Ritschlian theology and that of the school of Comparative Religions. Generally speaking, however, as Traub says, the attitude taken toward the new questions is such that one can still speak of a liberal and a conservative theology, to which Traub would add the Ritschlian theology and that of the School of Comparative Religions which took its start from the Ritschlian School. We shall for convenience sake, however, use the term “liberal theology”, not in the restricted sense which Traub thus gives it, as denoting the present followers of the old liberal theology represented by Biedermann and Pfeleiderer; but in a broad sense in which it is employed by the theologians of whom we are to speak. For in their use of the term, “liberal theology” denotes all the modern movements which, according to their idea, give up the “Old Faith”, or are not “positive” in their theology. In point of fact they usually mean by it the School of Comparative Religions. Whether the “Modern Positive Theology” exhibits any essential point of distinction, or belongs to one of the above mentioned groups, is a question which can be determined only when we shall have examined its fundamental principles.

The inner motives and fundamental principles which de-

termine this theological situation can best be seen from a short account of the genesis of the Ritschlian Theology, and of the School of Comparative Religions. To understand the origin of the Ritschlian Theology it is necessary to go back to Schleiermacher. The rapid development of the historical disciplines with their claim to objective, scientific, and exact knowledge, together with their attitude of indifference to Dogmatics, led to a virtual denial of the scientific character of the latter, and, indeed, to a sharp separation between History and Dogmatics. The historical group of theological disciplines was supposed to be scientific and to have no practical motive; while Dogmatics was supposed to serve the interests of the Church and of religious life in setting forth the truths of the Christian faith. Thus Dogmatics turned from the establishment of scientific and objectively valid doctrines, to set forth the doctrinal element implicated in Christian experience. It was this situation, as Troeltsch points out,² which led to an attempt to justify theoretically the separation between the theological disciplines which had already taken place as a matter of fact. What Troeltsch calls the "practical" and "mediating" character of Dogmatics had to be theoretically justified, and this was done by means of what has been termed the "agnostic" theory of the nature of religious knowledge, or the separation of theology and religion. This point of view is quite generally recognized as a distinguishing mark of the modern theology as contrasted with the old evangelical theology and the old Rationalism. Religious or theological "agnosticism" signifies, to use the words of Troeltsch, "the impossibility of exact and adequate knowledge in the religious sphere, the practical experiential (*die praktisch-bekennnisartig-gefühlsmässige*) grounding of all religious knowledge, and the inadequate symbolical form of all doctrinal statements in which such knowledge is set forth and imparted". Thus Dogmatics separated itself from the historical and exegetical disciplines, and assumed

² Cf. Troeltsch, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

a practical or experiential character. It based its right to existence upon this theory of the experiential origin of religious knowledge, defending the independence of such knowledge against Rationalism, and emphasizing the scientifically inadequate and symbolical character of religious knowledge. It was thus, also, that the historical disciplines were to be given absolute freedom, and at the same time the interests of the religious life preserved independently of their negative results. In order, however, to avoid falling into bare natural religion, Schleiermacher emphasized the fact that it was Christian experience, *i. e.*, an experience connected with the influence of Christ, that was the source and norm of Christian doctrine, though his emphasis on individual experience was so strong that he failed to do justice to the objective revelation in the historic Christ, so that the Ritschlian theologians separated themselves from Schleiermacher on this point, as well as on others. Schleiermacher, however, never succeeded in his effort to keep Christian doctrine free from philosophical speculation, and the Mediating Theology which followed, was a deliberate attempt to mediate between Christian doctrine and modern philosophy in a way which the Ritschlians regarded as an attempt to weld together two incompatible forms of "dogmatism" or "rationalism".

In order to avoid the danger of making all Christian doctrine purely subjective and of reducing Christianity to bare natural religious sentiment, it was necessary to emphasize more strongly the objective revelation in the historical Christ; and in order to avoid the speculative reconstruction of Christianity as seen in the Mediating Theology, it was necessary to keep more clearly in view the practical character of religious knowledge, and the separation of Christianity from science and philosophy. It is the significance of the Ritschlian school that it sought in these respects to carry out Schleiermacher's ideas more thoroughly than he himself did. In doing this Ritschl reacted from Schleiermacher's subjective tendency to such an extent that, al-

though he rejected the old doctrine of the authority of Scripture, he nevertheless laid so much stress on the teaching of Jesus and the Apostolic conception of Christianity, that he took a position inconsistent with his fundamental ideas. In this respect Herrmann is more consistent. Herrmann regards Christian faith as trust in God's love and providential care, brought about by the impression which Jesus Christ makes on the soul. The ideas about God and Christ, that is, the doctrinal content of faith, are simply expressions of the way we must think about these objects of faith, in view of the experience of God in Christ. Dogmatic Theology can only show how this faith is grounded in the inner life of Jesus, and state the doctrinal content of this faith, which, however, is a purely individual matter, and can lay no claim to universal validity.³ Thus this theology arose in opposition to the Mediating Theology and the old liberal theology, taking its standpoint within Christianity, and recognizing the importance of religious experience. It intended to be "conservative". But, as Troeltsch says, its conservatism was only apparent. It sought to escape naturalism, but let it in by the back door in giving up as unessential to Christianity all that naturalism demanded. The weaknesses of this theology have so frequently been pointed out that it is necessary only to mention them here. It will keep Christianity free from philosophy and metaphysics by the use of a philosophy. It makes its construction of Christianity dependent on a philosophical theory of knowledge, thus using just enough philosophical theory to ground its anti-metaphysical theology. It asserts its independence of historical criticism, using historical criticism just far enough to separate in the New Testament the so-called historic Christ from the midst of unhistorical surroundings. And in its determination of this historic Christ it is governed by the admission of the results of a criticism pre-determined by a naturalism the postulates of which go beyond the limits of

³ Cf. Herrmann, "Christl.-prot. Dogmatik, *Kultur der Gegenwart*, Teil I, Abt. 4, Lief. 3, pp. 583-630.

science into the forbidden sphere of metaphysics. It isolates Christianity and regards it as the final and absolute religion, in a way which is indefensible in view of its denial of the metaphysical supernaturalism of the New Testament writers.

In opposition to the Ritschlians, though taking their start from them, the school of Comparative Religions (*religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) arose, its systematic theologian being Ernst Troeltsch.⁴ This school asserts the strictly scientific character of Systematic Theology, not merely in the sense intended by J. Kaftan, but in a sense which forbids the application of any other method to Systematic Theology than that which is applied in all historical science. Historical science is affirmed to be free from all specifically Christian presuppositions. The isolation of Christianity from other religions, and of Christ from history, is declared to be but a remainder of "dogmatism." The thorough-going application of the historical method to the study of Christianity and of Christian Theology is therefore demanded. This historical method changes the history of the Church into a chapter in the history of religious cults; the history of Christian doctrine into a chapter in the evolution of religious ideas; and Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments respectively into the history of the Israelitish-Jewish and primitive Christian religions. It views everything as in a continuous, unbroken evolution, which it construes naturalistically. Thus the origin and historical development of Christianity becomes a moment in the universal history of human culture. This theology, therefore, illuminates Christian truth from the standpoint of universal laws and tendencies of the religious consciousness, finding not only analogies, but also points of real genetic derivation between Christianity and pagan religions. The religion of Israel is

⁴Cf. Troeltsch, Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode d. Theologie, Art. in *Theologische Arbeiten aus dem Rheinischen wissenschaftl. Prediger-Verein*, N. F., Heft 4, 1900, pp. 87-108; also *Die wissenschaftliche Lage und ihre Anforderungen an die Theologie*, 1900; also the Article already cited from the *Zeitschr. für wissenschaftl. Theol.*, 1908.

thus connected with the old oriental religious traditions ; late Judaism, which is regarded as the religion from which Christianity sprung, is held to be throughout determined by Gnostic influences and by both oriental and Greek thought ; and Christianity is conceived as the product of a great syncretistic religious movement. Thus the problem of the origin of Christianity becomes simply a problem in the history and comparison of religions.

With these ideas and with the denial of the supernaturalism of the New Testament Christianity accepted as an axiom of historical science, this theology approaches the study of the New Testament to reconstruct a merely human Jesus, and to maintain the historicity of this Jesus against those who, like A. Kalthoff, have seen the arbitrary character of its method of procedure. Bousset replied to Kalthoff ; but Troeltsch⁵ acknowledges that as a result of the application of these principles, one of the "extraordinarily heavy burdens" for any Christian theology becomes the uncertainty of its "portrait of Jesus". Troeltsch, moreover, points out how, in this respect, the position of the new school is more difficult than that of the old liberal theology. This theology was accustomed to set forth a supposedly historical picture of Christ, which it handed over to the theologian to dogmatize from the standpoint of faith. But on the application of the principles of the school of Comparative Religions, a number of questions become pressing. How is the Christ of the Apostolic tradition related to the actual Jesus ? To what extent do we get in the Gospels the dogma of the followers of Jesus concerning His person ? How did this dogma about Christ arise ? From such a point of view the Gospel account is treated more and more sceptically, until it is doubted if Jesus claimed to be Messiah ; the tradition in the so-called *Logia* is shattered ; the difference between the Johannine and the Synoptic tradition is laid aside ; and any certain historical knowledge of Jesus at all is questioned. In these circumstances the explanation of the genesis of the Christological

⁵ On this whole subject *vid.* Troeltsch, *op. cit.*, p. 119

dogma and worship becomes a truly perplexing problem. The old liberal theology had explained this from the inner dialectic movement of religious thought, but this explanation being now seen to be impossible, resort is had to mythical and Gnostic influences of many kinds. Thus the old liberal theology, which had as a datum a picture of Christ determined by a critical process, and then explained the Apostolic Christological dogma as an inner evolution of the religious idea, was better off, as Troeltsch acknowledges, than this modern liberal theology. The latter sees in the so-called historical Jesus a continually changing, even a vanishing quantity, so that problems are arising for this theological method which, as Troeltsch again acknowledges, "render difficult" faith in such an "uncertain reality" as the Jesus of these theologians.

What has been said in regard to Christ and the foundations of Christianity, is true also of the entire sum of Christian truth. Not only the origin of Christianity, but also its further historical development is merged in the developing stream of religious thought and life. The old evangelical and the Ritschlian "isolation" of Christianity fade away at every point. The whole of historic Christianity is thus thrust into the stream of the natural development of human life and culture, and, as a result, it is not only the conception of revelation of the old evangelicalism which is abandoned, but even that of the old liberal theology which, though it rejected the supernaturalism that would place Christianity in a position separate from other religions as the product of a special, supernatural, divine intervention, nevertheless maintained the absoluteness of Christianity as the final religion and perfect expression of the religious ideal. In a word, the attempt to explain the transition from the natural knowledge of God, or the doctrinal content of natural religion, to Christianity, by a process of natural evolution, must result in explaining away all that is distinctive of supernatural Christianity, that is, of the Christianity of the New Testament. Christian truth is not the product of

man's religious nature, and every attempt to explain Christianity as the culmination of a naturalistic evolution of religious thought, must end in reducing the doctrinal content of Christianity to that of natural religion.

This, then, is the theological situation sketched very briefly and imperfectly. We agree with Theodor Kaftan that the issue of this modern liberal theology is to destroy the "Old Faith", though we cannot agree with the point of view of his criticism of this theology. That, however, need not concern us now. The question we raise is whether the "Modern Positive Theology" or the "Modern Theology of the Old Faith" offers an adequate conception of the task of Christian Dogmatics. Can we hold fast to the Gospel or the old faith, and state it in terms of modern thought? And if so, how can this be done?

It is best to postpone criticism until we have seen what actual forms this new idea has assumed. But at the outset three questions suggest themselves. What is the "modern consciousness" or "modern culture", and who is the type of the "modern man" to whom the "old faith" is thus to be rendered intelligible? Is this "modern consciousness" something which has any uniformity? How many of its elements are in accordance with truth and how many of its elements are the products of error and spiritual blindness or of a naturalistic mode of thought antagonistic to the Gospel? Shall we say with Th. Kaftan that Kant is the representative of modern thought, or, with Grützmacher, that Kant is antiquated, and that Nietzsche, Tolstoi, Ibsen and Gorki are its representatives? Could this question be determined, another one at once arises, namely, in what way is this modern thought to be applied in theology? Is its application to be merely formal, in the way of determining the method of theological science, or is the "modern culture" to have a material influence in determining the actual content of Christian doctrine? And apart from these questions, a more fundamental one suggests itself, whether, in general, what is undertaken by this movement can be the task and function

of Systematic Theology as a science. The task and method of any science are determined by the nature of its object, and a science can remain scientific only by adhering to this method and by developing itself from its own standpoint and by its own method. Since the object of theological science is God, and since God is known by revelation, the idea of revelation at once becomes determinative for Systematic Theology. In this respect both the old evangelical theology, the Ritschlian theology, and the modern liberal theology are consistent. If revelation involves the supernatural communication of truth or revealed doctrine, the task of Systematic Theology must be to formulate and systematize this truth, and theology will be scientific only as it is true to this task and to its own *principium*. On the other hand, if revelation is the impression on the believer made by Christ, theology must unfold the ideas about God involved in this experience. Herrmann has sought to do this, and he is not at all concerned whether or not his theology is modern. If, again, the revelation of God is to be found in the evolution of all human thought about God, then theology must consist chiefly in the psychology and metaphysics of religion. Troeltsch is concerned to keep theology true to this task, and seems to have no concern to make it "modern". Theology will be modern in a good sense when it uses all the light of modern knowledge in the defense of its idea of the nature of revelation, and in the exposition of its content of truth, whatever be its conception of revelation. But if theology starts out with its chief purpose to become modern, it may easily fall from its principle and method, and so cease to be scientific.

There are two forms in which a "Modern Positive Theology" or "Modern Theology of the Old Faith" is conceivable, and we shall find that it has assumed these two forms. One might adopt the Ritschlian distinction between religious and theoretic knowledge, and upon this basis seek to keep faith and theology entirely distinct and separate. Were this possible, it would then be possible also to retain

the old faith and state it in modern theological formulas. It would also be possible to say to the modern liberal theology that by confounding faith and theology, in its statement of a new theology it had introduced a "new faith". It would likewise be possible to say to the evangelical or "orthodox" theology that by the same confusion it had identified the Gospel with its worn out formulas and in this way had rendered it untenable by the modern man. In this way the old dogma held by the Christian Church would be entirely abandoned as not being a part of the "old faith", and a new dogma would be sought in harmony not only with the old faith, but also with modern thought. On the other hand, if these philosophical presuppositions are rejected, and the theologian sees that faith and theology are inseparable, and that the old doctrine is a part of the essence of the Gospel or old faith, then all that is possible will be a return to the method of the old Mediating Theology. The theologian must then take the old evangelical doctrines and modify them here, pare them down there, and in general seek to harmonize them with "modern culture" or "modern thought",—of course with such elements of the "modern consciousness" as are supposed to be assimilable by a "positive" Christian Theology. The former type must ask whether the Ritschlian method can be followed without giving up the positive elements of the Christian faith which the Ritschlian school abandoned. The latter type must ask whether the principle of the school of Comparative Religions may be followed, and Christian Theology be thus related to general philosophy and religious thought, without entirely abandoning the Church's doctrinal system, as is done by this modern liberal theology; and this attempt will be made by resorting to the method of the old Mediating Theology. When, now, we turn to the actual attempts at a "Modern Positive Theology", we shall find that these two types are fairly well marked in the forms which this theological movement has assumed.

The demand for a "Modern Positive Theology" was made

by R. Seeberg⁶ in his book *Die Kirche Deutschlands im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, published in 1903. A similar demand was given expression in the same year by Theodor Kaftan in his book *Vier Kapitel von der Landeskirche*, though Kaftan gave it the name of "Modern Theology of the Old Faith", which he also made the title of the book,⁷ published in 1905, in which he expounded his notion of such a theology. That the ideas of Seeberg and Kaftan were fundamentally the same was the opinion of Grützmacher⁸ in his *Studien*, in which he followed in general the idea of Seeberg, although he recognized a general agreement with Kaftan, which indeed he still affirms in the third volume of his *Studien* published in 1909.⁹ When, however, Kaftan in 1905 published his "Modern Theology of the Old Faith", it became evident that there was a very considerable difference between the "Modern Positive Theology" and the "Modern Theology of the Old Faith". This was immediately recognized and emphasized by Grützmacher in some articles written in opposition to Kaftan's idea and published in 1905 and 1906.¹⁰ Grützmacher set his idea of a Modern Positive Theology over against Kaftan's conception of a Modern Theology of the Old Faith. This difference was fully recognized also by Kaftan in the second edition of his book, and in two articles in reply to Grützmacher published in the same journal in which the latter wrote.¹¹ Here Kaftan affirms that the theology of Seeberg and Grützmacher

⁶ R. Seeberg, *Die Kirche Deutschlands im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 1903, pp. 307-321.

⁷ Th. Kaftan, *Moderne Theologie des alten Glaubens*, 1905; 2^{te} Aufl., 1906. Citations will be from the 2d edition.

⁸ R. H. Grützmacher, *Studien zur syst. Theologie*, Heft II, 1905, p. 53.

⁹ Grützmacher, *Studien u. s. w.*, Heft III, 1909, p. 40.

¹⁰ *Allgemeine evangelisch-lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, 1905, Nr. 44, 1906, Nr. 10.

¹¹ Th. Kaftan, *Allgemeine ev.-luth. Kirchenzeit.*, 1905, Nrs. 46 and 47. Cf. also *Moderne Theol.*² *Vorwort* p. iv, "The Theology of the School of Seeberg, so far as this is represented by Grützmacher, has thought it important to separate itself from my theology—rightly in so far as it understands by modern theology, not a new theology, but a continually (*jeweilig*) modernized old theology".

is not really a modern theology, but simply an attempt to modernize the old theology. This difference appears in one point especially. Kaftan conceives the Kantian distinction between theoretic and practical knowledge, and the primacy of the "Practical Reason", to be an especially characteristic mark of modern thought, which must have recognition in theology. The "practical" character of religious knowledge, and the independence of the Gospel in relation to philosophy and theology, are fundamental for Kaftan in his determination of what a modern theology should be. Grützmacher's idea on the contrary is that, while theology must be "positive", that is, must retain those essential evangelical truths which Kaftan reckons as part of the "old faith", nevertheless faith and theology are inseparable, and that the old dogma is to a certain extent essential to the old faith, so that modern theology must bring this dogma into harmony with modern thought. Grützmacher in other words sets himself in opposition to Kaftan's dependence on Kant and to his method in so far as it is similar to that of Ritschl.

These differences will come up in detail presently. Some account of the further literature of this movement must first be given. Grützmacher has just published the third volume of his *Studies in Systematic Theology*, to which reference has been made, in which he discusses first, the essential character of the "positive" theology over against the forms of modern theology which deny this "positive" element, and secondly the problems of "Modern Positive Theology". His work is chiefly concerned with principial questions. The ideas of the "Modern Positive Theology" on all points of Christian doctrine are, on the other hand, very fully set forth by Seeberg in the lectures which he delivered at Berlin in 1901-02, on the *Fundamental Truths of the Christian Religion*, an English translation of which was published in 1908. We shall be concerned, however, with Grützmacher rather than with Seeberg, since it is the fundamental principles of this theology which we wish to ex-

amine, and Grützmacher has written more fully on these points. Meanwhile a position differing somewhat from both Kaftan and Grützmacher has been taken by Karl Beth, Professor of Theology in Vienna, in a recent book,¹² in which he takes his place in this theological movement, and sets forth his own views at some length, after having examined critically the views of Kaftan, Seeberg, and Grützmacher. His chief points of difference from Kaftan and Grützmacher, concern the question of the relation of religious and theoretic knowledge, and of theological and religious knowledge. Grützmacher has replied to Beth in a recent article,¹³ which also constitutes the last part of the third volume of his *Studien*. Meanwhile this movement has been criticised adversely from all sides. From the conservative standpoint W. Schmidt, Professor in Breslau, and Dunkmann, Pastor in Greifswald, have criticised both the "Modern Theology of the Old Faith" and the "Modern Positive Theology".¹⁴ Both these writers conclude that Kaftan has given up the "old faith", and that Grützmacher's theology is neither "positive" nor self-consistent. On the other hand the theologians who have abandoned Lutheran orthodoxy conclude that the "old faith" of Kaftan and the "positive" element in Seeberg and Grützmacher are simply remnants of the old theology which are inconsistent with the application of the modern method in theology. From somewhat different standpoints, but generally speaking from the Ritschlian point of view, critical articles on this movement have appeared from Herrmann and Traub, and a small volume by Schian.¹⁵ The opposition to this theology from the

¹² Beth, *Die Moderne und die Prinzipien der Theologie*, 1907.

¹³ Grützmacher, Probleme in der modern-positiven Theologie, *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1907 (xviii), pp. 932-959.

¹⁴ W. Schmidt, *Moderne Theologie des alten Glaubens in kritischer Beleuchtung*, 1906; and *Die Forderung einer modernen positiven Theologie*, 1906. Dunkmann, *Moderne Theologie des alten Glaubens*, 1906.

¹⁵ Herrmann, *Moderne Theol. des alten Glaubens*, in *Zeitschr. für Theol. u. Kirche*, XVI, pp. 175-233. Traub, *Aus der dogmatischen Arbeit der Gegenwart*, *ibid.*, *vid.*, especially pp. 442-449. Also Schian, *Zur Beurteilung der modernen positiven Theologie*, 1907.

standpoint of the school of Comparative Religions has been given expression by Bousset¹⁶, who has criticised Th. Kaftan, Seeberg and Grützmacher.

Traub's discussion of the movement is both expository and critical.¹⁷ Schian agrees with Traub that Th. Kaftan has not carried out consistently the general Ritschlian standpoint. So far as his general position is concerned, they consider that there is no essential difference between him and his brother Julius Kaftan and the "right wing" of the Ritschlian school; and Schian finds this true "with certain modifications" also of Beth and Seeberg. "Is Julius Kaftan", Schian asks,¹⁸ "to be counted among the moderns, that is, assigned to the hitherto so-called modern theology? Yes, or No? If yes, then the Modern Positive Theology does not add much that is new to this (J. Kaftan's) theology, and it has no right to construct a principal difference between it and itself. If no, then in the theology of Julius Kaftan, Häring, and Reischle we have already a Modern Positive Theology in the sense of Th. Kaftan's, Seeberg's and Beth's".¹⁹ The point of Schian's criticism is that in Th. Kaftan, Seeberg, and Beth there is an inconsistency between their rejection of the principle of external authority in religious knowledge, and their actual theological doctrines

¹⁶ Bousset, *Moderne Positive Theol.*, I Th. Kaftan's moderne Theol. des alten Glaubens, *Theologische Rundschau*, 1906, pp. 287-302; 327-340. II A; Reinhold Seeberg's Grundwahrheiten der christlichen Religion, *ibid.* pp. 371-381; 413-424. II B; R. Grützmakers Studien zur syst. Theologie, *ibid.*, 1907, pp. 1-18.

¹⁷ Cf. Traub's Art. in the *Monatschr. f. Pastoraltheol.* This article I have been unable to obtain.

¹⁸ Cf. Schian, *op. cit.* p. 26.

¹⁹ In the introduction to the second edition of his book, as well as in his articles in the *Evangelische luth. Kirchenzeitung*, Th. Kaftan replies to this criticism, having Traub's, not Schian's in mind, and asserts that his theology is quite different from the Ritschlian theology, and that there is a very considerable difference between his views and those of J. Kaftan. But Traub's and Schian's views on this matter are not without support in Th. Kaftan's book.

which, Schian finds, depend largely on the Scriptures as an external authority.

The most interesting and searching criticisms of this theology are those of Herrmann and of Bousset. They agree that Th. Kaftan's idea of a modern theology and his idea of the old faith are two irreconcilable quantities. Bousset concludes that Kaftan goes too far with the modern liberal theology, and is too much in agreement with its standpoint and principles, to be able to establish an essential or "principal" difference between himself and it; and that he gives up too much in detail of the old faith to be able to call his theology a theology of the old faith. Herrmann emphasizes rather the fact that Kaftan retains too much of the old theology to be able to be consistent in the application of his modern principles or to have succeeded in giving a truly modern theology. Herrmann finds that Kaftan's statement of the old faith is really the old theology, so that it is destroyed by his modern principles. Bousset also criticises Seeberg and Grützmacher's theology as being simply a mediating theology with all the weakness inherent in such theology.

This sketch of the literature of this theological movement and the criticism which it has called forth, will give the reader some idea of the rise and growth of the movement, and put us in a position to examine it more in detail. In doing this, however, we must confine ourselves mainly to the fundamental questions of theological prolegomena, taking up special Christian doctrines only by way of illustration of our criticism. Let us look, then, more closely at the fundamental ideas of these theologians.

Theodor Kaftan is convinced that the need of the Christian Church is for a modern theology of the old faith. The need of this is disclosed in the facts that the modern liberal theology has really curtailed or destroyed the old faith, and that the old theology has expressed the old faith in the thought-forms of a by-gone age. It is necessary, then, to find a modern clothing for the old Gospel, or to state the

old faith in modern forms without destroying or curtailing it.²⁰ The possibility of such a theology depends on the idea that faith and religion on the one hand, and theology and metaphysics on the other hand, are quite distinct.

In explaining Kaftan's idea of the old faith, attention should be called to certain points which will be dwelt on later by way of criticism. It will be found that in Kaftan's exposition the principles of the modern theology are constantly cutting into the old faith; and that the old faith is constantly limiting the free application of the principles of his modern theology. Thus, the "old faith" is to be objectively and historically determined. Quite independently of the question whether or not the old faith is true, Kaftan says,²¹ it is a fixed historical quantity which must be objectively determined. It "lies in history", and hence its definition is a historical question. And yet, the divine Sonship of Christ, which Kaftan considers a part of the old faith, is affirmed to be not at all intended in any metaphysical sense. Here it would seem as if the principles of the modern theology were affecting the statement of the old faith which, however, Kaftan holds is to be first historically determined, and then dogmatized from the modern standpoint. Kaftan would reply to this that it is only the fact of the divine Sonship of Christ which belongs to the old faith, not any theory concerning it. But this distinction is impossible. As soon as we affirm divine Sonship of Christ, we mean it either metaphysically or non-metaphysically, and in either case we have asserted a definite Christological dogma. There is also a confusion in regard to Kaftan's use of the term faith. Thus, in one place he says that the question whether Christ is only a man or the "only begotten of the Father", is a question of faith, not of historical science. Here it is evident that he uses the term faith subjectively as in some sense equivalent to Christian experience, so that the subjective principle of his modern theology is here made to

²⁰ Th. Kaftan, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

settle a question which, according to his own view, belongs to the old faith, which ought to be determined by historical investigation. These points will illustrate the essential difficulty inherent in Kaftan's plan and method.

The "old faith", according to Kaftan, can be characterized by one word. It is faith in Christ (*Christusglaube*).²² The fundamental point of controversy between the "old faith" and the "new faith" is whether Christ is regarded as the object of Christian faith, or only as its first subject.²³ In order to understand the opposition between the old and new faiths, notice should be taken of the section in Kaftan's book following the exposition of the "old faith", in which he seeks to show that Christianity stands or falls with the old faith.²⁴ It is specifically from the standpoint of His revelation-value that Christ is considered. And it is the point of Kaftan's opposition to the "new faith", that it does not guarantee any revelation of God in Christ; and that it does not do this just because of its humanitarian conception of Jesus. It has committed the mistake of the "old theology" in identifying faith and theology, and so, because it cannot accept the old theological formulas, it denies that Jesus is "from above", and leaves us with only a human Christ. We may say, then, that in Jesus was a fulness of religious life as in no other man, but it does not follow that His ideas about God are adequate for us to-day, or that in Him we see God. Over against this "new faith" which is destructive of Christianity, Kaftan sets the "old faith" with which Christianity stands or falls. He first describes it as belief in God. To most of what he says about God, Bousset, a representative theologian of the "new faith", gives his assent.²⁵ "The old faith", says Kaftan, "is the faith in the Almighty Father who forgives us all our sins, and, in the power of such forgiveness, gives us

²² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-73.

²⁵ Cf. Kaftan, *op. cit.*, pp. 19ff., especially p. 24; and Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

eternal life, here in time and there in eternity." God is, moreover, the ground of all things, self-existent and absolute, and yet a Person. He governs the world, and performs miracles in accordance with His will. Kaftan means all this in earnest. How much, however, his idea of the "old faith" is affected by his modern theological views, can be seen when, over against the objection to conceiving God as absolute and also as personal, he affirms that all our thought about God is symbolical only. One is reminded of Sabatier and the Paris school. This type of religious agnosticism, however, is not adopted by Kaftan.

Thus far his opposition to the modern liberal theology does not come sharply into view, since Kaftan's remarks about miracles in this place are very brief. It is when he speaks about Christ that the difference appears most clearly. According to the "old faith" Jesus is the object of faith. Man is a sinner and needs forgiveness, and this he has only through Jesus Christ.²⁶ Here again Kaftan's statement of the "old faith" has a specifically modern tone. Nothing is said about the deity of Christ or His divine and human natures. All this is regarded as metaphysical theology. The chief emphasis is laid on the fact that in the person of Jesus the living God comes into our experience. This impression, however, is not supposed by Kaftan to be made by the ethical character or the inner life of Jesus; it is rather the Christ of the entire New Testament who is a revelation of God to us. There are three essential points here which mark the "old faith", namely, the divine Sonship of Jesus, His mediatorial death, and His resurrection.

The divine Sonship²⁷ means that the man Jesus stands in an absolutely unique relation to God; a relation in which no one else has ever stood or can ever stand, because "it was constitutive for His person". Here again it is very evident that the principles of Kaftan's modern theology are determining his supposedly historical statement of the "old

²⁶ Kaftan, *op. cit.*, pp. 24ff.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26.

faith". The statement that Jesus' peculiar relation to God was "constitutive for His person", Kaftan says, might naturally be taken in a metaphysical sense, but this he absolutely rejects. Instead of falling back on philosophy, he tells us, we must go to the Scriptures. But he apparently does not realize that which the theologians of the "new faith" fully recognize, namely, that the Scriptures assert the divine Sonship of Christ in a metaphysical sense. He goes on rather to affirm that the meaning of the divine Sonship of Jesus in Scripture is that God Himself "meets us" in Christ, and that Christ is the "personal revelation" of God to us. With these vague remarks he leaves the subject.

In this connection²⁸ he refers in a foot note to the Virgin birth in a very characteristic way. He does not himself appear to doubt its historicity, but he is modern enough to be quite ready to give this up. For even if not historical, it is, he says, of value as expressing the faith of the first Christians that Jesus was "from above". This, as Bousset remarks, is a mode of argument not easy to comprehend. How can Kaftan prove to those who on literary and historical grounds reject the virgin birth, that it is the poetical expression of the faith of the earliest Christians in the divine Sonship of Jesus? For that is just what is rejected, namely, that this does express the faith of the primitive Christian community. It is said that it is not found in Mark and the earliest Christian tradition lying back of Mark; nor in Paul, nor in the author of Acts. It is held that it represents a speculation probably late and of only a small part of the Christian Church. If, then, its historicity is rejected on these grounds, how can Kaftan prove that it represents "poetically" the belief of primitive Christianity that Christ is "from above"?²⁹

In regard to the mediatorial death of Christ,³⁰ Kaftan

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, note on p. 28.

²⁹ Cf. Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

³⁰ Kaftan, *op. cit.*, pp. 30ff.

is brief and obscure. Its explanation, he thinks, is to be sought along the line of the ideas of God's love and righteousness. The ideas of "expiation" and "satisfaction" are rejected as part of the "old theology". He rejects also the view of the modern liberal theology on this point, because it regards Jesus only as a prophet announcing the pardon of sin, and finds no place for His death. Kaftan emphasizes the death of Christ in relation to the pardon of sin, but does not explain this relation. He simply says that the old faith finds in the death of Christ the revelation of the love of God. In what respect this goes beyond the view of the liberal theology, he fails to explain.

The final element of the "old faith" in regard to Christ is His resurrection. It is, however, the fact of the resurrection, not the manner of it, which is essential.³¹ Hence, while Kaftan accepts the bodily resurrection of Christ, he would include under the old faith the objective vision hypothesis, and reject only the hypothesis of subjective visions.

Finally, the old faith asserts that in the Holy Spirit it experiences the power of God. And since it is God who touches us by His Spirit, we may say that the Spirit is God.

All this, Kaftan concludes, is simply the "old faith", and not theological speculation. It is, moreover, the old faith in its fulness and purity. And with this faith Christianity stands or falls.

This "old faith", now, demands a new and modern theological expression. And this is possible, Kaftan thinks, just because modern thought has taught us to distinguish faith from theology. What, then, are the determining principles of this theology?³² It is not a theology which follows each fleeting modern fashion. It is a theology determined by the peculiar characteristics of modern culture. Modern culture is not an affair of the last ten years, but is to be reckoned by centuries. It has three distinguishing marks—the auton-

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 73-105.

omy of the individual in all spheres, or freedom from all merely external authority; the revolution in thought brought about by Kant; and the "sense for reality" which gives absolute freedom to science. Consequently a modern theology is "a theology which bows to no merely external authority, which follows the paths of modern thought which is conscious of its nature and limitations, and which is open to all knowledge of reality".

Modern theology, then, should know nothing of an external authority in theological knowledge. The symbols of the Reformation are not binding upon it, for a theology which is not grounded in God's word ceases to be a theology. But the Bible is no doctrinal authority (*Lehrkodex*). In the Bible lies the word of God, like the soul in the body. And even to this word of God, the mind cannot yield as to an external authority, but only as it seizes hold of the mind and heart.

Moreover, this free theology must follow Kant. Kaftan says that Plato is the philosopher of the ancient world; Kant of the modern. Modern theology must recognize the distinction between theoretic and "practically conditioned" knowledge, and must acknowledge the primacy of the practical reason. In this way theology will gain independence of philosophy, will be able to see that every world-view is a matter of faith not knowledge, and will be able to separate between faith and theology. In fact, Kaftan considers this distinction so essential that he is forced to acknowledge that after all the Gospel or "old faith", is as indifferent to Kant as it is to Plato. The Gospel, he says, is a revelation from God; all theology is purely human. Modern theology, however, is especially favourable to the Gospel, since, according to Kaftan, it enables one to hold fast the old faith amidst all the changes of theological thought; but it would also seem to render the task of theology of very little importance.

Finally, modern theology must allow absolute freedom to "exact science". This principle Kaftan would carry out in a different way in the case of natural science and in that of

history. The interests of theology, he affirms, lie entirely beyond the sphere of natural science; not so, however, with historical criticism. The Christian faith is a historical faith, and this fact brings it into direct connection with historical criticism. The Church's dogma must be subjected to a critical process which shall separate the truth from error, and the Bible also must be subjected to a similar process.

In the last principle, abstractly stated, Kaftan is right. Freedom must be allowed to natural science and historical criticism. But whether the Gospel, even as Kaftan himself states it, is indifferent to the results of natural science is a very different matter. And as far as Kaftan's attitude to historical criticism is concerned, he does not remain true to the assertion that the Christian faith is historical and so concerned with the results of historical criticism. For in speaking of the historical criticism of the Bible he affirms that the question which interests faith is whether the entire content of the Bible is to be relegated to the category of husk or whether there is a kernel of truth in it, and then asserts that this is a question of faith and not of historical criticism, thus claiming an independence of historical criticism very similar to his asserted independence of natural science.

This is the program of the "Modern Theology of the Old Faith". Its validity obviously depends upon certain underlying ideas, and any real criticism of it must meet it at this point. It is not a matter of importance to take up the point of controversy between Kaftan and Grützmacher as to whether or not Kant is antiquated. What it really amounts to is that Kaftan and Grützmacher both point out certain modern ideas which are in conflict with one another. This only shows that the "modern consciousness" is not a unitary affair; in fact, its indeterminateness alone would prevent any scientific use being made of it. The term "modern theology" may have a historical significance, like the term "modern philosophy", but it has no value for

Systematic Theology as a science. The question is whether Kaftan's modern theological principles can harmonize with the Gospel.

Neither can we take time to discuss the question whether Kaftan is correct in claiming to go back to Kant in his distinction of theoretic and practical knowledge. We are inclined to agree with Beth and Bousset who, from their very different points of view, have found here a "one sided" interpretation of Kant, and even an exaggeration of the Ritschlian position. When, for example, Kaftan claims that scientific knowledge is universal, and a general view of the world only an individual expression of personal need, we think that Bousset is correct in affirming that this interpretation of Kant is enough to make him "turn over in his grave". In his discussion of the ultimate metaphysical problems from the standpoint of the "practical reason", there can be no doubt that Kant was seeking universal and objectively valid truth.

The fundamental difficulty is that Kaftan's "old faith" and his "modern theology" are two incommensurable quantities. And this difficulty, in turn, goes back to his distinction between faith and theology. Upon this distinction, as Kaftan himself affirms, depends the possibility of his modern theology of the old faith. But since faith and doctrine are inseparable, his old faith is, to a large extent, just the old theology. Consequently the old faith is not given scientific form, but is rather curtailed by the principles of his modern theology; and the old faith, in its turn, limits the consistent application of these modern principles.

The decisive question, therefore, is the sharp separation between faith and theology which Kaftan makes. This is impossible in the way in which he conceives it. The term "faith" may be used either subjectively or objectively. It denotes either, subjectively, an attitude of trust or belief on the part of the human soul, or else, objectively, the objects or truths believed in or trusted. In this latter or objective sense, it is simply a name for the doctrinal content of faith

in the former or subjective sense. When, therefore, Kaftan speaks of the "old faith", and says that it is to be historically determined, he can only mean the truths of the Christian faith. And these truths are simply the fundamental Christian doctrines or the "old theology", if you will. It is not possible, therefore, to separate so sharply "judgments of faith" and "judgments of knowledge", as Kaftan does. In other words, faith as trust—*fiducia*—involves knowledge of the truth believed and assent of the mind to it. And though these latter elements of faith need not be temporally precedent to trust, they are, nevertheless, implicated in the act of faith. That faith is an act of personal trust; that it cannot be produced by arguments; that its origin depends on the Spirit of God; all this does not alter the fact that it has a definite content of truth or doctrine. Hence it is impossible to state the "old faith" without the "old theology", and hence it is also impossible to state a modern theology, in the sense in which these theologians mean that term, without at the same time modernizing the "old faith". This sharp separation, then, between faith and theology could only have real meaning, if faith were conceived as a mere feeling or mystical impression of some kind. In that case theology could be regarded as its intellectual expression, after the manner of Sabatier. But this is not Kaftan's view. In the article³³ replying to Grützmacher, he says that the latter has misunderstood him; that nothing is farther from his meaning than to put "religion, faith, and the Gospel" on one side, and "theology, knowledge, dogma", on the other side. "By faith", he says, "I understand the immediate statement (*Wiedergabe*) of the revealed truth received by faith; by theology the temporally conditioned working over of faith, namely, of the revealed truth appropriated by faith". But if this is the case, then theological science simply formulates the truths of revelation, and there is a fixed doctrinal element given historically to theology. Hence, we repeat, Kaftan's "old faith", so far as he has left

³³ Cf. *Allgemeine ev.-luth. Kirchenseit.* 1905, pp. 1115, 1116.

it unmodified by his "modern theology", is the "old theology". His distinction, therefore, between faith and theology is simply one of a more and less definite doctrinal statement. Who, then, shall tell us where faith leaves off, and theology begins?

It is, then, impossible to keep faith and theology separate, and, as a result, Kaftan has found it impossible to keep his "old faith" unmodified, or to apply without restriction his modern principles. On the contrary, the "old faith", involving as it does the old theology, limits the free subjective tendency of the modern theology, which will know no "external authority", and in so far as the "modern theology" is strictly applied, it limits the historical determination of the "Gospel" or the "old faith".

This can be seen, first, in regard to the question of authority in theological knowledge. It is the first principle of this modern theology that its truths are to be deduced from experience; it can "bow" to no external authority. And yet the "old faith" is historically and objectively given. This would be possible, were faith and theology absolutely separable. But since they are inseparable, how can this be? In this respect, then, the old faith and the modern theology must mutually limit one another. Since the old faith involves the old theology, and since it is to be objectively and historically determined, there is an objective historically determined doctrine which is a fixed *datum* for the "modern theology". How, then, can modern theology with its free subjectivism really be in earnest in its rejection of an external authority? It is obvious that this modern theological principle can have only a very limited application. This freedom of theological thought really can only begin where the old faith leaves off. It dare not change the old faith which is a historically given quantity. But since the old faith involves theology, it is evident that a fixed doctrine is given to the Modern Theology, and this constitutes a limit to its freedom. The distinction, as was said, resolves itself simply into one of more or less definite doctrinal statement,

or else into the fallacious distinction between fact and theory. Thus one cannot permit a naturalistic philosophy to affirm that Christ is only a man, for that would destroy the "old faith" which affirms that Christ is "from above". But at this point the "old faith" leaves off and theology begins. Hence if one affirms that Christ is divine in any metaphysical sense, that is to be rejected as an application of Greek philosophy to theology, and Kant has forever delivered us modern men from the bondage of Plato and Greek metaphysics. Suppose, however, that one should say that a naturalistic philosophy is just as modern as and more valid than Kant's metaphysical agnosticism, then the autonomy of the individual reason and the rejection of all external authority in theology, would have to be very much curtailed by the supernaturalism of the old faith as stated by Kaftan. Indeed, in such a case, it is difficult to see how the "modern theology" could operate at all. If the old faith is historically and authoritatively given, theology can make no real use of the principle of subjectivity in theology. And on the other hand, since the truths of the "old faith" are the object of theological science, and since faith and theology are inseparable, it follows that, if theology is really liberated from all external authority, then the "old faith" must also be freed from external authority. Hence the principle of autonomy and freedom of theological thought must work back into the "old faith", as it has obviously done in Kaftan's statement of the "old faith", in which he has evidently had the fear of "Modern Theology" constantly before him. The virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of Jesus are accepted on historical grounds as part of the "old faith", but when Kaftan says that the former may be simply a "poetical" expression of the belief that Jesus is "from above", and, that, in regard to the latter, the "objective vision" hypothesis is to be included under the "old faith", it is evident that he is speaking no longer historically, but from the standpoint of his "modern theology". And when he says that the divine Sonship of Christ can have no metaphysical

meaning, this theological assertion cannot help cutting into the "old faith" which asserts that Jesus was "from above" and that the consciousness of a unique relation to God was "constitutive for His person". For if these are not metaphysical affirmations, they can have no real meaning beyond what Bousset would be ready to affirm, as can be seen from his statements on this point. Historically speaking the deity of Christ in a metaphysical sense goes back to the New Testament. If it is to be ruled out from a supposedly historical statement of the "old faith", it can only be done by a determination of what in the New Testament is really a revelation from God; and it is clear that Kant and the "modern theology" give the norm for this. The modern theology thus introduces a principle of subjectivity into the statement of the "old faith", as was to be expected.

Precisely the same thing can be seen when we turn from the formal principle of authority in religion, to the second principle of this modern theology—the influence of Kant, or "knowledge conscious of its own limits". Here again the "modern theology" affects the "old faith", and the "old faith" gives to "modern theology" elements inconsistent with its principles. That the "modern theology" has worked back into Kaftan's statement of the "old faith", can be observed from his view of what the latter affirms concerning Christ. We have seen that, in stating the "old faith", Kaftan wishes to distinguish his view from the humanitarianism of what he calls the theology of the "new faith" as represented by Weinel or Bousset. He asserts that the "old faith" maintains the divine Sonship of Jesus, and that this means that Jesus stood in an absolutely unique relation to God, a relation which no man has ever attained or can ever attain, "because it was constitutive for His person". Kaftan's new theology, however, requires him to deny that this last sentence is intended in any real, metaphysical sense, since the second principle of the modern theology is the rejection of metaphysics. But both Herrmann and Bousset, from their respective standpoints, could

accept the first part of Kaftan's definition of the divine Sonship of Jesus, while Bousset has pointed out that the last part of it can have no meaning beyond that which the theologians of the "new faith" could accept, if a metaphysical interpretation of it is rejected. It is certainly not the Jesus of the old faith, which Kaftan has given us. Go back as far as you will in the history of Christian thought, back to the belief of the first disciples of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament; nowhere can you find the Jesus of Kaftan, but always a Jesus who is divine in a metaphysical sense. Kaftan might follow the theologians of the "new faith", and seek to show that this belief was only the "dogmatics" of the first believers in Jesus, and that Jesus did not Himself teach His deity; but he cannot affirm historically that his Jesus is the Jesus of the old faith, no matter how far back he goes. It is not, therefore, simply the theological formula of a Christology, which his rejection of metaphysics has affected, but the "old faith" itself. Precisely the same thing could be shown, did the limits of this article permit, in regard to Kaftan's statement of the "old faith" concerning the atonement, where the principles of his theology have modified very decidedly his statement of what he supposed to be the "old faith".³⁴

On the other hand, it is just as true that Kaftan's statement of the "old faith" limits the application of his anti-metaphysical theology, and that his separation between religious and theoretic knowledge cannot be held in harmony with the distinct supernaturalism which his old faith asserts in regard to supernatural revelation, miracles, and the absolute and final character of Christianity. In other words, his view of the nature of religious knowledge and his rejection of metaphysics in theology afford no adequate apologetic basis for his view of the final character of the Christian religion as resting on supernatural revelation, and, in general, for the amount of Christian supernaturalism which he retains. He adopts the old Ritschlian position on this sub-

³⁴ On this point *cf. Bousset, op. cit.*, 1906, p. 301.

ject, apparently unconscious of the fact that many of the modern Ritschlians have materially modified this position. Kaftan asserts such a sharp distinction between "religious" and "theoretic" knowledge as to result in those consequences which have so often been pointed out. In regard to this point, Beth's criticism does not go far enough or deep enough. This criticism is to the effect that while Kaftan has distinguished in the main correctly between "religious" and "scientific" or "theoretic" knowledge, he has confused religious and theological knowledge and thus has failed to recognize the objective and scientific character of theological knowledge. Consequently he has failed to relate theology to the rest of the sciences, and therefore cannot maintain its scientific character or the objective validity of its knowledge. This objection is justified by Kaftan's statements,³⁵ but is the result of the dualism between religious and theoretic knowledge which Beth himself accepts. It is not merely Systematic Theology as a science that is involved; it is the Christian faith itself, which cannot thus be separated from philosophy and science, as is attempted by both Beth and Kaftan. It is Christianity, or the Christian faith, or the Gospel, and not simply scientific theology, which has its own view of God and man and the world. And this Christian view of the world, together with the whole of Christian truth, brings the Christian faith into direct relation to philosophical knowledge. It is, therefore, impossible to separate "religious knowledge" from philosophical knowledge, and to isolate Christianity from the rest of our knowledge, as Kaftan seeks to do; in so doing, he isolates not only scientific theology, but the objects of the Christian faith, from all the rest of our knowledge. He seeks to do this by claiming that all that transcends the world of phenomenal reality, is known only in a "practically conditioned" way. This, however, is an ambiguous expression which may have a true meaning or not. What

³⁵ Cf. *Allgem. ev.-luth. Kirchengzeit.*, 1905, p. 1115; and *Moderne Theol.*, p. 87.

Kaftan means is that objectively and theoretically valid knowledge does not extend to the sphere to which the objects of faith belong, so that the practical experiential knowledge of those objects is independent of general philosophical knowledge. But philosophy cannot be thus restrained from having its view of the world which may conceivably conflict with that of Christianity. In this case the usual result is that the impossible attempt to have two world-views—a religious and a scientific—both equally valid, breaks down, and the “theoretic” or “scientific” view is regarded as “objective”, and the religious view as “subjective”. Hence it is characteristic of recent apologetic literature, written from the general Ritschlian standpoint, to endeavor to relate the Christian view of God and the world to philosophy, and to reach a final unity of truth, as can be seen in the case of Wobbermin and especially Hunzinger.³⁶

But this is not the whole of the matter. It is not simply that an adequate Apologetic for Christianity is thus rendered impossible. The “old faith”, as Kaftan himself conceives it, cannot be maintained upon the basis of this theory of religious knowledge. For Kaftan’s “practically conditioned” knowledge or value judgment, is not a knowledge of metaphysical reality asserted on ethical grounds. It is a knowledge which rejects metaphysics and hence can make no affirmations of a metaphysical character. It is a knowledge which, if consistent, must reduce its truths to practical values. If, therefore, it is consistent, it will not be able to maintain supernatural Christianity, for that can be done only upon a metaphysical basis. The consistent application of these principles is to be found in Herrmann, not in Theodor Kaftan. For if we are to have no metaphysical elements in Christianity, it must surely be reduced to small dimensions; in a word, it must be desuper-

³⁶ Cf. Wobbermin, *Der christliche Gottesglaube*,² 1907; also Hunzinger, *Apologetik u. Religionsphil. in unserer Zeit*, *Zeitschr. für wissenschaftl. Theol.*, Jahrg. 51, Heft 3, pp. 193-216.

naturalized. And this means, not to escape naturalism, but to yield to its demands. Kaftan, of course, has not done this. But he is inconsistent, and in so far as he has adopted the old Ritschlian premises and rejected their conclusions, he has permitted the "old faith" to limit the application of the principles of his "modern theology".

There is, it is true, a distinction between the knowledge of the Christian man and purely theoretic knowledge, but it is not the distinction that is drawn by Kant, or Ritschl, or Th. Kaftan. These distinctions introduce a species of dualism into human nature and experience which tends to rob religious knowledge of theoretic validity, and so to result in religious agnosticism. The actual distinction is that expressed by the opposition of sin and grace, the natural consciousness and the regenerate consciousness. It is a distinction, then, which makes a cleavage through all of our knowledge, and is not a division according to the spheres of its objects or the nature of its validity. It is, moreover, a distinction which it should be possible for Kaftan to maintain in view of the supernaturalism which he asserts, and the remarks he makes concerning sin and grace.³⁷

The same kind of contradiction is found to exist between Kaftan's statement of the "old faith" and the third principle of his "modern theology". This principle he calls a "sense for reality" (*Wirklichkeitssinn*), by which he means an open mind toward natural science and history. Stated thus, everyone must agree with him. But he discusses this principle in regard to the question of natural science and miracles in a way that is far from satisfactory.³⁸ He affirms that it goes without saying that for the "old faith", "God performs miracles in accordance with His will and plan"; and he wishes to harmonize this with natural science by saying that belief in miracles and natural science "have nothing to do with each other". But what does this mean and what can it mean in accordance with Kaftan's prin-

³⁷ Th. Kaftan, *Moderne Theol.*, pp. 84-85.

³⁸ *Cf. op. cit.*, pp. 20, 21, especially the note on p. 21.

ciples? It must mean either that natural science and the Christian view of the world have reference to two different spheres, or else that they are two different ways of looking at the same sphere of reality, that is, nature. If Kaftan meant the former of these two things, then he would simply be asserting that there exists a world of spiritual values and realities to which the method and laws of natural science have no application. In this way the miracle would be removed from nature altogether, and a harmony between the so-called scientific and Christian world-views asserted which Bousset would approve.³⁹ But this would not be sufficient for Kaftan, who asserts such miracles as the virgin birth and resurrection of our Lord. Kaftan must mean, then, that natural science and Christianity look at nature from two different points of view. If this difference in the way of viewing nature is affirmed on the basis of a metaphysical and supernaturalistic view of God's relation to the world, then the limits of knowledge in natural science could be pointed out, and it could be shown that its view is not ultimate or final. If all the series of second causes is dependent on a personal and transcendent God, He may introduce effects into the series of second causes which they cannot produce. But to this, the only adequate vindication of the possibility of miracles, Kaftan is not entitled, because it is through and through metaphysical. Nor does it seem to be his meaning, for he says⁴⁰ that what natural science concludes about the world has no interest for theology. And that by this he does not intend a criticism and limitation of knowledge in natural science, would seem to appear from his statement that "to know nature and to know her absolute uniformity is the same thing".⁴¹ He appears to agree with Herrmann who puts it thus: "in nature only that can be real which happens in accordance with natural law", and "that which can appear as real in nature, must

³⁹ Cf. Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kaftan, *op. cit.*, pp. 88ff.

⁴¹ Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 20.

validate itself as in accordance with natural law";⁴² and with Bousset who also says⁴³ that natural science cannot be satisfied with the statement that she cannot but view nature as an unbroken chain of causes and effects, but the entire sphere of nature must be claimed by natural science, and her point of view regarded as final in this sphere. In accordance with this both Herrmann and Bousset clearly recognize that this view excludes the possibility of miracles in the sense of the "old faith". This is quite a different matter from recognizing the validity of natural science and pointing out its limits. It is really a naturalistic philosophy from the standpoint of natural science, resulting from the mistake of supposing that its categories are ultimate. And it results either in the attempt to put the so-called scientific and Christian world-views side by side as two equally valid views, or, since this is impossible to maintain, in regarding the so-called scientific view as objective and the Christian view as subjective, as is done by Herrmann in his recent essay, *Der Christ und das Wunder*. This is really the necessary consequence of Kaftan's modern principles, which are thus seen to be in conflict with the belief in miracles in the sense of the "old faith".

A precisely similar weakness and vacillation is to be seen in Kaftan's discussion of this third principle of his "modern theology", that is, the "sense for reality", in relation to the question of historical criticism. He quite correctly allows the necessity and validity of the historical criticism of the Bible. He justly asserts that Christianity is a historical religion, and that Christ is a historical person and so comes within the sphere of historical investigation. But the school of Comparative Religions affirms that it is an axiom of historical science that all past events must be in "analogy" with our present experience, and that all historical events and ideas are genetically related to others in a way that absolutely excludes supernatural events and revelation from the

⁴² Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁴³ Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

sphere of historical reality. Does Kaftan, then, escape the dogmatic naturalism which determines the rules of this so-called historical method, and does he seek to defend a truly historical method free from dogmatic presuppositions of this character? Not at all. This could be done only on the basis of a metaphysics which should adequately ground Christian supernaturalism. On the contrary he goes directly against his principle of open-mindedness to historical investigation and to his statement that Christ and Christianity are historical matters, by saying that the question whether Christ is "from above", that is, the question in which the "old faith" is interested, is a matter of faith and not of history, and that the "old faith" is independent of historical criticism. This independence of the results of historical criticism is impossible to maintain. The results of the modern historical method, if consistently applied, will issue in removing even the human Jesus from history, as Kalthoff has shown over against Bousset. It will not be possible for Herrmann to hold fast to the "inner life of Jesus", much less for Th. Kaftan to maintain his "entire Biblical Christ". Hence the "old faith", through this assertion of its independence of historical criticism, constitutes a dogmatic limitation of the "modern" principle of keeping open minded to its results.

It will now be sufficiently plain, we think, that Kaftan's "old faith" and his "modern theology", are not harmonious one with the other, and that, since faith and theology are inseparable, each must curtail or destroy the other, when a "modern theology of the old faith" is thus attempted. And it is also evident that such a separation between faith and theology as Kaftan asserts is not possible. If this is so, and if the "old theology" is essential to the "old faith", then the only way to carry out this new program is to resort to the method of the old Mediating Theology, that is, to take the old doctrinal system and seek to modernize it. This is what Seeberg and Grützmacher have done.

Before, however, considering their "Modern Positive

Theology", the intermediate view of Beth must be briefly considered. Seeberg's position, it must be recognized, is in certain respects very like that of Beth, and differs somewhat from that of Grützmacher. In fact, quite different opinions have been held as to the general character of Seeberg's theology. Beth,⁴⁴ for example, finds that Seeberg has attempted anything rather than a "Mediating Theology"; that he has simply applied modern scientific method to theology—in which Beth accords with him. Bousset, on the other hand, finds in Seeberg nothing but a mediating theology which takes the old doctrines, and simply changes them to suit modern ways of thinking.⁴⁵ The explanation of this difference of opinion, it seems to us, results from the fact that Seeberg's statement of his fundamental principles resembles the position of Beth, while his working out of these principles, as seen especially in his "Fundamental Truths of the Christian Religion", is practically a return to the old Mediating Theology.

In general, this demand for a "Modern Positive Theology" resembles that for the "Modern Theology of the Old Faith". According to Beth, each generation has its own world-view, as has also Christianity. Hence a modern theology must bring Christian truth into harmony with the world-view of the particular age.⁴⁶ A "positive" theology is one that holds that the supernatural origin and resurrection of Christ, His deity and atoning death, are essential to Christianity.⁴⁷ A modern positive theology, therefore, must take this as something given, and from its own standpoint and method state this Christian truth in harmony with modern thought. Similarly Seeberg⁴⁸ holds that the task of such a theology is to express the revealed truth of

⁴⁴ Beth, *Die Moderne u. die Prinzipien d. Theol.*, pp. 134ff.

⁴⁵ Bousset, *op. cit.*, 1906, p. 374.

⁴⁶ Cf. Beth, *op. cit.*, p. 102. The term used is *Weltbild*, which is distinguished from *Weltanschauung*, the former being the view which science takes of the world, recognized as not final,—and the latter denoting an ultimate philosophical view.

⁴⁷ Beth, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁴⁸ Seeberg, *Die Kirche Deutschlands u. s. w.*, pp. 305 ff.

Christianity in the forms of thought of a particular age. His idea of the specific problems of this theology is determined by two things. First, Christianity is a historical religion, and therefore open to historical investigation. If, then, one's view of history is that of a naturalistic development, the Christian idea of revealed truth is impossible. Hence the theologian must face the problem of evolution and revelation. Secondly, we "experience" revelation, and in each age Christian experience will find some new truth. Hence old ideas must be restated in the light of the soul's experience. It becomes, therefore, a question whether such ideas are objectively valid. Thus questions of the nature of religious knowledge also press upon modern theology.

Thus far there is a general agreement between these theologians and Th. Kaftan. It is in respect to the underlying ideas of principle and method that the differences emerge, and it is these points alone that we can stop very briefly to discuss. Beth and Seeberg both agree with Grützmacher⁴⁹ against Kaftan in asserting the possibility of metaphysics and the necessary inclusion of a metaphysical element in theology. They agree, moreover, in affirming the "theoretic" or "scientific" and "objective" character of theological knowledge, and its necessary contact with scientific and philosophical knowledge. They agree also as to the impossibility of "isolating" Christian theology from the rest of our knowledge, in the way in which this is done by Kaftan. On the other hand, both Seeberg and Beth agree with Kaftan against Grützmacher, in laying more emphasis on the distinction between religious and theoretic knowledge, and in denying Grützmacher's contention that faith and theology are inseparable. In this latter respect Grützmacher has more reason than they for preferring the term "Modern Positive Theology" to "Modern Theology of the Old Faith"; and this is one reason why Herrmann and Schian prefer Kaftan's name for his theology, since it expresses the distinction between

⁴⁹ Cf. Article already cited from *Allgem. ev.-luth. Kirchenzeit.*, 1905.

faith and theology. On these points Beth has expressed himself more fully and clearly than Seeberg, and we shall do best to examine Beth's position in order to see whether he is justified in going as far as he does with Kaftan, and whether his position is free from the objections to which that of Kaftan is exposed.

Beth,⁵⁰ then, adopts Kaftan's distinction between faith and theology, and between religious and theoretic knowledge. But he criticises Kaftan for confounding theological knowledge with religious knowledge. The result of this is, Beth says, that the scientific character of theology cannot be maintained, and no adequate Christian Apologetics is possible. In this respect Beth differs from both Th. Kaftan and Grützmacher. Beth's philosophical position is "critical realism". By this he means to affirm, not simply that we can know real objects in sense perception, but that by a criticism of experience we can obtain a knowledge of ultimate reality, that is, of God, self, and the world. Since, therefore, in this extension of theoretic or philosophical knowledge to the metaphysical sphere, this critical realism claims theoretic validity for its knowledge, Kaftan's separation of theological knowledge from scientific knowledge, is regarded as erroneous by Beth. Accordingly he rejects Kaftan's attempt to keep Christian theology out of relation to science and philosophy, and demands an Apologetic which shall bring Christianity and its world view into positive relations with philosophy and science. But while in this respect Beth agrees with Grützmacher against Kaftan, in another respect he differs from Grützmacher, and agrees with Kaftan. Beth affirms the sharp distinction and separation between faith and theology, and between religious and theoretic or scientific knowledge, which Kaftan asserts. According to Beth theological knowledge is "objective", "scientific" and "theoretic", and is not determined by "practical" considerations, whereas religious knowledge, that is, the knowledge which faith has of its objects, is of a totally

⁵⁰ Beth, *op. cit.*, pp. 244ff.

different character, being "practically conditioned" in its nature and neither demanding nor capable of objective and scientific grounds. In this Beth finds the possibility of a "Modern Positive Theology", and argues, against Grützmaker, that when this distinction is not made, each change in theological science means a change of the Christian faith.⁵¹ Theological knowledge must seek "theoretically and objectively valid" truths, while religious knowledge is experiential and practical in character and cannot be defended "scientifically" or "theoretically". Religious knowledge is not subjective in the sense of being illusory, but in its independence of all theoretically or rationally valid grounds. In a word, it is a matter of personal conviction.⁵²

⁵¹ Beth attaches his view to that of Lipsius, *Lehrbuch der ev. prot. Dogmatik*² 372, p. 68. Beth says: "Theological knowledge is scientific knowledge, and differs thus essentially from religious knowledge, which lies at its basis, and which is to be worked over by it. One can, therefore, suppose, in regard to religious knowledge, that it is preëminently practically conditioned, and is completed in a process in which the primacy of the practical reason is to be acknowledged; nevertheless, theological knowledge, as scientific, is of a theoretic character. It is not any more dependent on subjective considerations, and cannot be so, than other scientific knowledge, and it must work out objectively valid truths". Cf. Beth, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

⁵² In the points where Beth differs from Kaftan, Seeberg agrees entirely with Beth. He agrees, moreover, with Beth and Kaftan in emphasizing more strongly than does Grützmaker the practical, experiential character of religious knowledge. But on this point Seeberg seems neither sufficiently clear nor self-consistent. He affirms that Grützmaker is right in his affirmation that the "Gospel" contains "theological" and "theoretic" elements, but immediately adds that the soul which believes in these, experiences in them "no satisfaction of its impulse for knowledge". Cf. the passage quoted by Grützmaker, *Studien*, 1909, p. 124, from articles on Beth in the *Allgem. ev.-luth. Kirchenzeit.*, 1907: these articles we have not been able to obtain. Cf. also Seeberg's remarks on the nature of dogma in his *Fundamental Truths of the Christian Religion*, E. T., pp. 120 ff. Here he approaches very nearly the position of Sabatier in conceiving Christian doctrine as but an intellectual expression of Christian "life" or "experience" conceived as mere feeling. In this way Seeberg goes further than Th. Kaftan in reducing the Christian consciousness to a state of feeling, and Christian doctrine to a merely temporally conditioned statement

In this respect Beth has gone too far with Kaftan and the old Ritschlian theology, to be able to gain the end he has in view. It is not necessary to repeat what has been said by way of criticism of Kaftan on the impossibility of this separation between Christian faith and theology, and of the impossibility of constructing a theology on this basis. We must ask, rather, whether Beth is consistent as regards those points which differentiate him from Kaftan, and whether he can thus overcome the weakness which he finds in Kaftan's position. This question, we think, must be answered in the negative. Faith, subjectively, as has already been said, is just a psychological attitude of trust; faith objectively is a name for the objects trusted in or the truths believed, that is, for the doctrinal content of faith as a mental attitude. As Beth himself affirms, it is a fact that in religious faith and experience, there is involved a knowledge of the objects of faith, a knowledge, that is, of God and Christ in relation to the world and self. Hence, not merely in scientific theology, but also in religious knowledge and faith, there is involved a series of "theoretic assertions", as Grützmacher calls them. These assertions relate, as has been said, to the objects with which science and philosophy deal, and as a consequence involve a definite relation of our faith or religious knowledge to the rest of our knowledge. It is not, then, simply that theological science conceived in a purely formal manner demands that its objective validity be justified in relation to science and philosophy, but the Christian faith and the Christian's faith themselves involve a view of God and the world, which must be maintained as true in relation to science and philosophy, that is, to so-called "theoretic knowledge". In fact this seems to be acknowledged by both Beth and Seeberg. Thus Beth says,⁵³ speaking of Grützmacher, that if the latter had

of this life. This idea appears to be quite inconsistent with his actual theological method, in which he follows Grützmacher in accepting the old Christian doctrine as containing an element of eternally valid truth, and in seeking to modify this in accordance with "modern thought."

⁵³ Beth, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

said that in all the "doctrines of faith" (*Glaubenssätze*) certain elements of philosophical knowledge (*Welterkennen*) are always involved, he could agree with him. But this is precisely what Grützmaker does affirm. In fact he points out that Beth agrees with him on this point, and rightly affirms that Beth's absolute separation between faith and theology, and between religious and theoretic knowledge, cannot be carried out in harmony with these admissions. In this respect also Seeberg^{53a} makes statements in regard to the close relation of "faith" and "theoretic thought", which render it impossible for him also to carry out the sharp distinction which he, like Beth, draws between religious and theoretic knowledge, and between faith and theology. And in point of fact he has not carried this out in his theology.

If, then, faith involves a metaphysic or view of God and the world, which renders necessary a Christian Apologetics which shall relate Christianity to philosophy and defend it in the light of philosophical thought, it will follow that the distinction between religious and theoretic knowledge, as held by Kaftan, is still less possible for Beth and Seeberg. In other words if such an Apologetics as Beth and Seeberg conceive is necessary, it is not because theological science is formally like all science, but because the Christian faith involves a metaphysical doctrine and is inseparable from such doctrine. And if this is so, then the separation between faith and theology, besides being intrinsically impossible, is not in harmony with the position of Beth and Seeberg on this point. If faith and theology were so distinct and separate, not only would there result the "isolation" of Christian faith in reference to the rest of knowledge, but also the limitation of theology to the ideas implicated in such faith, and, as a consequence, the "isolation" of Christian theology in the same respects. In a word the position of Herrmann and Th. Kaftan in this respect is more consistent than that of Beth and Seeberg.

^{53a} See the passage already cited in the footnote 52.

Moreover, Grützmacher⁵⁴ is right in calling attention to the fact that Lipsius, to whom Beth attaches himself, is more consistent than Beth. When Lipsius asserted that religious knowledge necessarily assumes the form of "intuitive representations" (*Anschauungsbilder*), he held that these were true only as symbols of religious feeling (true only "*in unmittelbarer Einheit mit der Gefühlsbestimmtheit*"), and not adequate when considered as real expressions of religious truth. That is, Lipsius concludes from his view of the purely "practical" character of religious knowledge, that *theological* knowledge which deals with these religious truths can never attain ultimate truth. Hence theology occupies a kind of *Zwischenland*, to use Grützmacher's term, between faith and knowledge. If the distinction between religious and theoretic knowledge is made after the fashion of these theologians, it must affect the scientific character of theology. If by faith we do not and cannot know God in an objectively valid way, theological science cannot bring us such knowledge of God, for theology deals with the same revelation of God upon which faith and the religious life rests.

If, then, it is impossible thus to separate faith and theology, if it is seen that the Christian faith involves a theology, then the only way in which a "Modern Positive Theology" can be sought, is after the fashion of the old "Mediating Theology", which took over the old theology, and sought to modify and modernize it, to suit what was then supposed to be the "modern consciousness" or "modern thought". This is the way which Grützmacher has taken, and Seeberg also, in practice if not in theory.

Grützmacher, generally speaking, is a disciple of Seeberg's, and his theology is really a mediating theology. This characteristic of his theological method can be clearly perceived in his articles against Theodor Kaftan, already cited.⁵⁵ He distinctly rejects the idea of an entirely new

⁵⁴ Cf. *Studien*, Heft 3, p. 129.

⁵⁵ Cf. Grützmacher, Articles in the *Allgem. ev. luth. K. Z.*, Nr. 44.

dogma, and considers it the task of the "Modern Positive Theology" to accept the old doctrinal system of the Christian Church, and to give it a modern form or to modify it so that it can "assimilate" modern culture. Grützmacher expressly denies that, in this attempt, the modern thought is the fixed norm in accordance with which the "positive" element of revealed Christian truth is to be modified. On the contrary, he affirms that the right of the "Modern Positive Theology" depends on the fact that "modern culture" contains elements which can be assimilated by the Christian revelation.⁵⁶ What he really attempts, however, is to show a harmony between Christian doctrine and modern thought, and to restate the old truths in forms of modern thought. Along with the recognition of the fact that Christian truth rests on supernatural revelation and is something fixed, is found the old rationalistic distinction between the "form" and "content" of Christian truth, and this is what makes possible Grützmacher's attempt at a "Modern Positive Theology".

His idea of what are the characteristics of a truly "positive" theology, he has set forth most clearly in the first part of the third volume of his *Studien*.⁵⁷ He has expounded his conception of a "positive" theology both from its formal side and from the point of view of its ideas about the nature of Christianity and specific Christian doctrines, and has set it over against those of the Ritschlian school and the school of Comparative Religions. Much of his criticism of these schools is valid, and his opposition to them is clearly set forth. He shows how, in their respective views of theological method, they fail to do justice to the essential nature of Christian truth; and passes on to discuss his conception of the nature of Christianity, in opposition to these two schools. Here he points out how the "positive" theology differs from modern liberal theology

⁵⁶ Cf. Grützmacher, *Die Forderung einer mod. pos. Theol.*, *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschr.*, 1904, pp. 271-273.

⁵⁷ *Studien u. s. w.*, Heft 3, 1909, pp. 1-40.

in three fundamental points—the emphasis on the specifically religious character of Christianity in the place it gives to the question of man's relation to God, the assertion of the finality of the Christian religion, and the determination of the truths of Christianity from the Trinitarian point of view. He seeks to point out how the school of Comparative Religions, by reason of the naturalistic presuppositions which govern its so-called historical method, has abandoned the finality of the Christian religion, and how the Ritschlian school leaves insufficient grounds for maintaining it. Over against these two theological schools, he sets forth his idea of Christian truth, accepting to a large extent the Church's doctrinal system. This is that "positive" element which he thinks must be maintained and restated in the light of modern thought. In the way in which he works out his thesis, however, Grützmacher differs from both Th. Kaftan and Beth. In the article against Kaftan, already cited, he criticises that scholar's dependence upon Kant and Ritschl; his separation between religious and theoretic knowledge; and his separation between faith and theology. He shows that faith involves theology, that this theology contains a metaphysical element, and that Christian faith and Christian theology must be related to the rest of our knowledge. "Modern Positive Theology", therefore, takes the old doctrine and seeks to harmonize it with modern thought.

The modifications of Kaftan's position, moreover, which were made by Beth, Grützmacher rejects also, and points out that the mere emphasis on the theoretic or scientific character of theological knowledge is inadequate and cannot really escape the difficulties which attach to the position of Ritschl and of Th. Kaftan.⁵⁸

In regard to what he thinks is "modern" also, Grützmacher differs from Kaftan and from the modern liberal theology. If this theology is not "positive" enough, neither is it sufficiently modern. These modern liberal theologians who suppose that Kant, Goethe, and the great names of

⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 120 ff.

German idealism are the determining forces of modern culture, are very far behind the times. They write, so Grützmaker says, from the standpoint of the "narrow" (*kleinen*) German professor. And this is also true of Th. Kaftan who goes back to Kant. Ibsen with his theory of heredity, Oscar Wilde, Tolstoi, Gorki, and Nietzsche, the mystics and theosophists—these are the truly modern forces. A leaning toward mysticism and metaphysics, not ethical rationalism, is the mark of the "modern man". It is not surprising that Herrmann should describe this as "a somewhat motley crew" (*eine etwas bunte Gesellschaft*) and that Bousset should disclaim all desire of being, then, "truly modern".⁵⁹ And just at this point Grützmaker's method of procedure makes a most unpleasant impression. He believes that a modern theology must be modern, not simply in the negative sense that its polemic is directed against current forms of thought hostile to the Gospel, but in the sense that a modern theology must find in modern thought something which it can assimilate; and Grützmaker has too clear a conception of the nature of Christianity to suppose that he can positively relate the truths of the Gospel to a passing and decadent mood of modern thought. Of course he does not attempt to do so. His attempted mediation between the Gospel and modern thought lies in quite a different direction. It would seem, then, as if the mention of these names were only a desire or trick to antiquate, by an appeal to a pessimistic phase of modern thought, those who adhere to what Bousset has called "the heroes of German idealism", whose optimistic doctrine of the natural perfectability of man, however, is nearly as far removed from the truth of the Gospel as is this wearied and decadent phase of modern thought. In contrast with this it is, of course, easy for Grützmaker to magnify the great truths of Christianity and to hold up the Christian revelation as a light indeed, shining in a dark

⁵⁹ Cf. Herrmann, *op. cit.*, p. 179; Bousset, *op. cit.*, 1907, p. 6.

place. But it is very artificial to find in a doctrine of heredity or in a pessimistic mood expressions of ideas which can be related to the doctrines of original sin and representation; or to make use of Nietzsche or the modern evolutionary theory as a means to get rid of the autonomy of ethical rationalism; or to see in modern pessimism and theosophy expressions of the need of the Christian salvation. We agree with Bousset that these ideas and moods are opposed to the Church's doctrine, and only weaken the sense of guilt and responsibility, and that modern pessimism can lead to the doctrine of Nirvana, but not to the Christian doctrine of salvation. It betrays an amazing want of insight to seek "to harness Nietzsche to the wagon of Apologetics", to use Bousset's words, and Grützmaker himself realizes that these modern tendencies are not the ones of which he can make any positive use. It is, in fact, for this reason that Schian has said that Grützmaker has made it impossible to discuss with him his idea of a "Modern Positive Theology".⁶⁰

In this, however, Schian does Grützmaker an injustice. It may be true that the use of such tendencies of thought to show that Kaftan, Bousset, and Weinel are antiquated, looks like a mere trick. Nevertheless Grützmaker does attempt a "Modern Positive Theology" in the sense which he proposed. He has not worked out a system of Christian doctrine in which a modern form of statement is sought for each point of Christian truth; but he has singled out one point as all important and determinative for a "Modern Positive Theology". In the articles cited and in the third volume of his *Studien*,⁶¹ he discusses the question of revelation and evolution as the main problem of a modern positive theology. "A Modern Positive Theology", he says, "will seek as its first task to give absolute recognition to the facts which might lead to the assumption of an evolu-

⁶⁰ Schian, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶¹ Cf. *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschr.*, 1904, pp. 440 ff.; and *Studien*, Heft 3, pp. 51-78.

tion in the ethical and religious sphere". Hence the main task of a "Modern Positive Theology" is to show that the idea of supernatural Revelation and the modern idea of evolution as applied to the sphere of religious thought do not contradict each other. This, he supposes, can be readily done. His attempted harmony is, briefly, as follows: The idea of evolution is by no means identical with a series of blind mechanical causes. Even in the sphere of nature, the idea of teleology is being recognized. And when we come to the sphere of history and mental life, the character of the causes at work brings out even more clearly the purposive character of the evolution, so that this idea, as applied to history, is simply that of the realization of purpose by the causes at work in the process (*zusammenhängender Zweckverwirklichung*). From this point of view, so Grützmacher thinks, it is a simple matter to conceive of revelation itself as being such a development by interconnected causes and effects, and to conceive of the entire revelation itself as an element in the development of nature and history, an element "conformable" to the rest of the developing series. The determining point, he says,⁶² which usually leads to the idea that evolution and revelation are contradictory, is the fact that it is customary to conceive of evolution proceeding by "merely natural causes", and revelation by "supernatural" ones. But this assumption is not necessary since the idea of evolution in natural science is not the only possible kind of evolution. Hence, though we may affirm that each element in the series is "causally conditioned", it may also be conceived as the result of revelation. Moreover, the realization of purpose through revelation, is not related as "something neutral" to the realization of purpose in nature and history, but the latter is subordinate to the former. Since all nature and history exist for the sake of the Kingdom of God which is the final cause of all revelation, "a unitary, grand development spreads itself before our eyes: all nature and history in their

⁶² Cf. *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschr.*, 1904, pp. 450 ff.

unfolding serve for the realization of the purpose of the Kingdom of God made known through revelation". And though revelation is "supernatural" in "origin" and "development", it is not foreign to the entire evolutionary process,—(*zwingt sie sich doch nicht als Fremdkörper in die Weltentwicklung hinein*).

We have given Grützmacher's idea as nearly as possible in his own language because his whole discussion of this point is lacking in clearness to an extraordinary degree. When he speaks of revelation being supernatural, he means supernatural in both its cause and mode of occurrence, as due to the immediate revealing activity of God, that is, as supernatural in the highest sense. Of this, we think, his language leaves little room for doubt. But his idea of the harmony of evolution and revelation appears to hang on the view that evolution, when conceived teleologically, does not conflict with revelation. But this by no means follows. The "modern idea" of evolution, as applied to the sphere of religious thought, is marked by two characteristics. It is an evolution which takes place through the operation of purely immanent causes, to the exclusion of every transcendent cause; and so to the exclusion of all direct intrusion of the activity of God. And it is a continuous upward progress which takes no account of, and leaves no room for, any process of degeneration or any effect of sin on the human mind. It is evident that, so conceived, evolution, even when teleologically conceived, does exclude supernatural revelation,—in which case it is indeed simply a name for divine Providence. The case is analogous to that of creation and evolution. Creation implies the immediate activity of God; evolution is simply the unfolding of things by second causes under the divine control. One can speak of creation and evolution, but it is only a confusion of thought to speak of "creation by evolution" or "creative evolution". In this sense, they are mutually exclusive terms. Just so supernatural revelation and evolution are mutually exclusive. Where any thought about God is the product of

evolution from other thoughts about God, it is not the product of supernatural revelation in the sense in which Grützmacher maintains that revelation is supernatural. And similarly, whenever any system of religious thought is the product of revelation, it is not the product of evolution. To conceive of the evolution of religious thought as part of a teleological process, is not sufficient to make room for supernatural revelation. When this is clearly kept in mind the inconsequent character of Grützmacher's argumentation will be evident. This its inconsistent character, moreover, is all that can be called specifically new about this argumentation. One need only recall the work of Reischle on this same subject, to see that the problem has been seriously discussed before.⁶³

Whatever may be new about Grützmacher's method of harmonizing evolution and revelation, it is very unsatisfactory. At one time he applies the idea of evolution to the history of revelation itself within the Old and New Testaments, but not to the history of religious thought in general, or to the Christian religion in relation to this history. Here he separates religion into two entirely distinct spheres. And here he even operates with the ideas of an original revelation, the effect of sin on this, and of a special soteriological revelation. All human religion is but the gradual darkening of the natural knowledge of God; the Christian religion, on the other hand, is the product of a special supernatural revelation. He affirms, moreover, that the modern liberal theology is not in earnest with the idea of revelation, and that revelation is a disclosure by God, explainable by no purely immanent causes, but on the contrary is "absolutely supernatural and miraculous". But in so conceiving revelation as applied to Christianity and other religions it is evident that he is not harmonizing the idea of supernatural revelation and the modern

⁶³ Reischle, *Wissenschaftliche Entwicklungsforschung und evolutionistische Weltanschauung in ihrem Verhältnis zum Christentum*, *Zeitschr. f. Theol. u. Kirche*, 1902.

idea of evolution, but is parting company altogether with the modern idea of an absolutely continuous evolution by purely immanent causes. This evolutionary idea, then, is only applied *within* the sphere of revelation, so that this may be conceived of as a development, and one in which there is a progressive correction of error. But again at other times, though not so characteristically or frequently, he speaks of revelation as an element "conformable to" the evolutionary process, and of religion as one "unitary and interrelated phenomenon", and says that this implies that each single element in this one development is "causally conditioned", that is, the product of preceding second causes. In this case his idea of evolution is modern and is applied to the progress of religious thought; but so applied as to leave absolutely no room for supernatural revelation. In this case he can only resort to calling the evolutionary process teleological, in which sense Bousset would of course be willing to affirm that revelation is supernatural and extends to all religions. In a word, Grützmacher's modern idea of evolution and his idea of supernatural revelation are mutually exclusive, so that he does not "harmonize" the two, but in affirming that Christianity is the product of supernatural revelation, he simply withdraws it altogether from the sphere of evolution.

In this respect, moreover, Grützmacher is far behind the old evangelical theology and the modern liberal theology in clearness and consistency, as Bousset has fully recognized.⁶⁴ According to the "old theology" we have on one side the religions of the world, their religious ideas being the result of the natural knowledge of God mingled with error due to sin, and on the other side Christianity and Christian truth as the product of special supernatural revelation and consequently free from error. Grützmacher, however, has gone so far with the idea of naturalistic evolution as to assert imperfection and error within the sphere of special revelation in both Old and New Testaments alike,—

⁶⁴ Bousset, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

error which belongs to the "early stages" of revelation. But with this concession he has removed the foundation from his sharp separation of revealed religion from all other religions. For if within the sphere of supernatural revelation we find error in its early stages, and if this is not inconsistent with its being a revelation from God, what is to hinder our conceiving all of the other religions as also first and imperfect stages in this one great process of the evolution of religious thought, and all religion as due in the same sense to revelation? This is the idea of Bousset and Troeltsch, who extend the idea of revelation to cover all the development of religious thought, and deny the specific character of the Christian revelation.

What Grützmacher has really done is to refrain from extending or applying the modern idea of evolution to the question of the relation of the Christian revelation as a whole to the rest of religious thought, and instead of this to apply it within the sphere of special revelation. But here again his application of the modern evolutionary idea is inconsistent with his idea of the supernatural character of revelation. A supernatural revelation in the high sense in which Grützmacher conceives it, since it is a revelation unfolding in a historic process, will naturally be the subject of an organic development in which each stage, though perfect as the bud is perfect, leads on to the perfection of the full blown flower. Such an evolution in revelation is not inconsistent with its being strictly supernatural. But a growth in which the Old Testament errors are to be corrected by the truer views of the New Testament, and in which even the teaching of Jesus is considered imperfect because not so full concerning justification as that of Paul, such an evolution is inconsistent with the supernatural character of revelation as that is defined by Grützmacher himself. And his views on this subject of evolution within revelation are concessions to the naturalism which is part of his "modern" idea of evolution.

Furthermore, just as Th. Kaftan goes too far with the

Ritschlian theology to be able logically to escape its results, so Grützmacher goes so far with the old evangelical theology as to cut away the basis for such a modern theology as he attempts. If all that is essential to Christianity is a life, and if Christian doctrine is only a temporally conditioned and relatively valid expression of that life, as Sabatier conceived it; or if the Christian revelation is an inward impression from the so-called historical Christ, and all Christian doctrine is an individual and personal matter, after the fashion of Herrmann's conception; then the "thought forms" which Christian theology employs will be continually changing. Grützmacher, however, rejects the distinction between faith and theology. He recognizes a dogmatic element as essential to the Gospel. He affirms, moreover, that the "Gospel" rests on a divine revelation which is supernatural in the highest sense. There is, therefore, a divinely revealed "dogma" or "theology". How, then, can this doctrine be changed and made to fit a "modern consciousness" which may be determined by "forms of thought" inconsistent with those of the Gospel? And how can the "form" and "content" of Christian truth be any longer kept separate on these presuppositions? If there is a doctrinal element essential to the "Gospel" and if the "Gospel" is a divine revelation, then the doctrinal content of Christianity is given and fixed. If, on the other hand, this doctrinal element is purely human and relative, then how will it be maintained that the Gospel is divine? Any theology which recognizes a dogmatic element as an essential part of the Gospel, and then sets itself the task of stating this in "forms of modern thought", necessarily becomes, to use a phrase of Traub's, the "most miserable mediating theology".⁶⁵ Such a theology can only ask how much of Christian truth can be maintained in the light of modern thought. And if the Christian truth is held to rest on a divine and supernatural revelation, as is the case with Grützmacher, then the ground is taken away from even

⁶⁵ Traub, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

such a "miserable mediating theology". The "modern consciousness" and its evolutionary idea with which Grützmacher seeks to operate is predominantly naturalistic. It is, therefore, only in opposition to it, not in harmony with it, that the truths of Christianity can be maintained. They have their own thought-forms which are essential and which are through and through supernaturalistic. We may follow the school of Comparative Religions and discard these Christian truths as antiquated, in which case we will have reduced Christianity to "natural religion", or we may retain the supernatural Christianity of the New Testament. But Grützmacher's mediating theology is inconsistent. It fails to satisfy the naturalism which is lurking in the "modern thought" with which he operates, and it fails to satisfy the supernaturalism of the Christianity of the New Testament.

It would seem, then, that neither the "Modern Theology of the Old Faith" nor the "Modern Positive Theology" can fulfill the task of Systematic Theology as a science. Let it not be supposed, however, that this is because "ancient thought" is supernaturalistic, and "modern thought" naturalistic. The so-called "modern world-view" which is naturalistic, is not really modern. Only the form in which it expresses itself and the method by which it is constructed, can thus be characterized. From the first Christian centuries there has always been a naturalistic view of God and the world standing in opposition to Christianity and its supernaturalistic world-view. Nor is Christian supernaturalism outworn or antiquated. The advance which modern science makes in the knowledge of the method of divine Providence can never affect the supernatural modes of God's action. And the greater and more adequate our view of the Almighty God becomes, the more will our minds see the greatness of the Christian view of God and the world.

The Modern Positive Theology is unsatisfactory simply because it does not undertake the necessary task of Sys-

tematic Theology. The object of this science is God. And since God is known only as He reveals Himself, revelation becomes the *principium* of theology, and one's idea of the nature and method of theology is determined by one's idea of the nature of revelation. Theology will be scientific, therefore, and fulfill its function, only by determining its method from its idea of revelation. And in doing this theology must use all the light of modern knowledge in defense of its idea of the nature of revelation, and in the exposition of its truths. If the revelation of God is only through an inner experience produced by historic facts, then theology must determine its method in accordance with this idea. If, however, there is a doctrinal element in revelation, and if revelation is supernatural, then this idea of the nature of revelation will determine the task and method of Systematic Theology. But in no case can it be the function of Systematic Theology to mediate between the Gospel and that imposing abstraction—the "modern consciousness".

Princeton.

C. WISTAR HODGE.