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THE FINALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION

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THE FINALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

The continued and sustained interest in the question of the finality or "absoluteness" of the Christian Religion is shown by the recent renewed discussion of the subject by Professors Hunzinger of Erlangen, and Ihmels of Leipzig,¹ carrying on the well known controversy in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* between Troeltsch on the one side and Kaftan, Wobbermin, Reischle, and Traub on the other.² The continued interest and renewed discussion of this subject, however, is not surprising when once we realize that it is not a new problem, but one that is as old as Christianity, and that the question raised is an absolutely vital one for the Christian religion.

The interest which Christianity has in this question is both scientific and religious. As regards the former, the truth of the Christian religion is involved in the question of its finality. We shall see that this claim is essential to Christianity, and that it is really the truth of the Christian religion which is involved in the discussion. Modern historical investigation is being applied to the sphere of religion and especially to the question of the relation of Christianity to the other religions, and the question necessarily arises whether Christianity is historically conditioned in such a way as to be only of relative value, or whether it is, as it claims to be, the one final religion.

¹ Hunzinger, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums, Probleme und Aufgaben der gegenwärtigen systematischen Theologie*, 1909, pp. 63-88; Ihmels, *Das Christentum, sein Wesen und seine Absolutheit, Centralfragen der Dogmatik in der Gegenwart*, 1911, pp. 31-54.

² Troeltsch, *Die Selbständigkeit der Religion, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, V. 1895, pp. 361 sq., VI. 1896, pp. 71 sq., 167 sq., VIII. 1898, *Geschichte und Metaphysik*, pp. 1 sq.; Kaftan, *Die Selbständigkeit des Christentums, ibid.* VI. pp. 373 sq.; *Erwiederung*, 1. *Die Methode*; 2. *der*

The interest which Christianity has in this question is also deeply religious and practical. This can be seen in a twofold way. The type of religious consciousness and life represented by Christianity is closely related to this question. Whoever thinks that there is in the natural man a power to save himself if only he have instruction or incentive, and whoever therefore sees in Jesus only a human teacher of the love of God, will not be able to see in him the only Saviour, and hence will not be able to regard Christianity as in a true sense the only and final religion. On the other hand, whoever recognizes in the natural and sinful man no power of self-salvation, will be in a position to see in Christ the only Saviour of man and the object of religious faith. And not only is this a question thus closely related to religious life, the way in which it is answered will likewise have a far reaching effect on the nature and value of foreign missions, as can be clearly seen from the recent discussions on this subject.³

Before discussing the finality of Christianity, it is necessary to state as briefly as possible what is meant by Christianity and what is meant by the term "finality" as applied to the Christian religion.

The question, What is Christianity? is a historical one. It is, accordingly, absolutely essential to answer this question in a

Supernaturalismus, *ibid.*, 1898, pp. 70 sq. (a reply to Troeltsch's Article on History and Metaphysics); Wobbermin, Das Verhältnis der Theologie zur modernen Wissenschaft und ihre Stellung im Gesamttrahmen der Wissenschaften, *ZTuK.* pp. 375 sq.; Traub, Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode und die systematische Theologie, *ibid.*, XI. 1901, pp. 301 sq.; Reischle, Historische und dogmatische Methode der Theologie, *Theologische Rundschau*, IV. 261 sq., 305 sq. Troeltsch replied by developing more fully his views in his work *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* 1902. For a comparison of the views of Troeltsch and Kaftan *vid.* Niebergall, Ueber die Absolutheit des Christentums, *Theologische Arbeiten aus dem Rheinischen Wissenschaftlichen Prediger-Verein*, N. F. Heft 4, 1900, pp. 46-86; to which Troeltsch replied in an Article Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode der Theologie, *ibid.*, pp. 87-108.

³ *Christliche Welt*, 1904, Nr. 52, 1906, Nrs. 1-3, for the discussion of Missions between Troeltsch, from the standpoint which denies the finality of Christianity, and his opponents. Cf. also von Walter, Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Mission, *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1906, pp. 817 sq.

historical way, and to keep it entirely distinct from the question as to the truth and finality of Christianity. Moreover the identification of Christianity with primitive Christianity, *i. e.* the Christianity of Christ and his Apostles, though it may ultimately depend upon the apologetic and dogmatic basis of their authority, yet quite apart from the settlement of the authority of Christ and his Apostles as teachers, does not depend upon any dogmatic judgment, but follows from the historical character of the Christian religion. In emphasizing this point Wendt⁴ is right against such a view as that of Foster⁵ who asserts that the question of the nature of Christianity is not a historical one, but that we have to "construct" Christianity, and that in doing this the constructive imagination plays a part. The issue involved in this question is not between "primitive Christianity" and some supposedly higher form of the Christian religion, but between Christianity and the natural religious sentiment of man. When, for example, Foster⁶ says that Jesus held the popular and erroneous view of the world, of miracles, of angels; that even his ethical views are temporally conditioned and not universally valid; in a word, that "what the Gospel that saves requires is that I confess, not Jesus' confession, but my own—with Jesus-like pains, courage, sincerity, and in the use of all the means at my disposal",⁷ it is quite evident that the "Gospel" as conceived by Foster is not Christianity, but the ethical spirit which we all naturally approve and which was manifested by Jesus. There is no justification whatever for the identification of Christianity with the natural moral or religious sentiment of man.

Approaching the question historically and putting the matter in a few words, Christianity involves the idea of a divine Saviour from sin. Christianity, therefore, as Drews has said in his *Christusmythe*, originated in the idea of a God who has become man; not in the idea of a man who was deified in the thought of his first disciples. Whether, with Drews, we

⁴ Wendt, *System der Christlichen Lehre*, 1906, pp. 23-25.

⁵ G. B. Foster, *The Finality of the Christian Religion*,² 1909, pp. 279 sq.

⁶ Foster, *op. cit.*, pp. 407 sq.

⁷ Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

hold this to be a myth or whether with Paul we believe in this "mystery of godliness", this is the only Christ and the only Christianity that we can discover. It is, as such men as Kalthoff, Drews and von Schnehen have shown over against the modern liberal Jesus-theologians, not only the Christ of Paul and John, not only the Christ of our Synoptic Gospels, but the Christ and the Christianity of the sources which are supposed to underlie the Synoptic Gospels. The attempt to get behind the earliest sources and to separate the so called historical Jesus from the Christ of faith, rests upon such arbitrary and subjective methods of criticism as to be without historical and scientific validity or justification, and to leave us without basis for belief in the existence of the human Jesus of the liberal theology. Furthermore this divine Christ, according to Christianity, is the Saviour of sinners. Jesus is, therefore, not only according to the Apostolic teaching, but according to his own (Mt. xi. 25-30; Lk. x. 21, 22), the only Revealer of God and the only Mediator between God and men. In a word, he is not simply the first and greatest example of saving faith, but its object.

In consequence of this, "finality" belongs to the essence of Christianity. If we start from the presupposition that man is, in his present state and by means of his own native powers, capable of attaining perfection and peace and fellowship with God; that he needs no new birth and no Saviour; then all that he needs is instruction and moral incentive. And man can derive this from other sources as well as from Jesus. Having thus started out from the presuppositions of the rationalistic and naturalistic Illumination, we have precluded the possibility of recognizing any "finality" in Christianity; for the very reason that our presuppositions are the opposite of those of Christianity. If, on the other hand, we are convinced that man is fallen and incapable of saving himself or of attaining communion with God, then we are able to see Jesus as he is portrayed in the Gospel as the Saviour from sin. And since fellowship with God is attainable only through this salvation, the finality of Christianity follows from the idea of the Mediatorship of Christ, and thus is seen to belong to the essence of the Christian religion. Von Walter is right in

affirming that we can really be Christians only by asserting the "absoluteness" of Christianity,⁸ by which statement he means simply that it is not only essential to historical Christianity, but is also an essential element in the Christian consciousness.

In view of what has been said, we can state very briefly what is meant by ascribing "finality" or "absoluteness" to Christianity. It is not intended in the Hegelian sense which would regard Christianity as the culmination of the process by which God is realizing himself in the world and history, so that it is 'absolute' as the final form of God's self-consciousness. Nor does it mean that in Christ the idea of the essential unity of God and man is fully realized. Nor does it mean that in the Christian revelation we have an exhaustive and fully adequate knowledge of God. Neither does it signify that the fellowship with God which the Christian has in Christ is incapable of growth and of a higher realization in the future life. When finality is predicated of Christianity, it is intended that Jesus Christ is the only revealer of God because he has such an exhaustive and adequate knowledge of God, and it is intended that though the Christian's communion with God is capable of a future perfection, the eternal life which is thus to be completed is absolutely bound to Jesus Christ and his saving work. The three ideas which seem to be implied in the term "finality" when applied to Christianity are, abstractly put, first that the Christian religion as the product of a special supernatural revelation is independent of and underrivable from other religions; secondly, that it is unsurpassable *i. e.* that no more perfect religion will be attained by any conceivable evolution of religion; and thirdly, that it is exclusive. This last idea does not mean that other religions contain no truth, but that since Christ is the only Saviour, Christianity is the only religion in which we can truly find communion with God. Applying these ideas to Christianity, it is at once clear that the finality of Christianity is essentially bound up with the distinctively supernatural character of the Christian religion. It claims in contradistinction to other religions, an exclusive supernaturalism. Its revelation claims to

⁸ von Walter, *op. cit.*, p. 824.

be supernatural in this distinctive sense. While Christianity does not deny that God has revealed himself outside of its sphere, it nevertheless maintains that in Christianity God has directly communicated to man, in a supernatural manner, truth concerning himself. This is quite different from the pantheizing idea which obliterates the distinction between the natural and the supernatural in this high sense, and which asserts that all revelation is supernatural from the point of view of its source in God, and that all revelation is natural from the standpoint of its mode of occurrence. According to this latter view there can be nothing distinctive about the Christian revelation which distinguishes its revelation from that in other religions. In contradistinction to this view Christianity claims that, while all other religions are products of man's natural religious consciousness in direct contact with God, as Troeltsch asserts, in the Christian revelation God has directly spoken to man, giving him the final and authoritative interpretation of the great supernatural facts of the Christian religion. Christianity, moreover, claims finality because in the historical person and work of Christ, it has an exclusive and unsurpassable, because supernatural, Redeemer and redemption. It does not assert merely that Christ is the perfect revealer of God; it claims that he is the only Mediator between God and man, and that fellowship with God and eternal life are forever indissolubly connected with his person and work. Here again the finality of Christianity rests upon its supernatural character. It is, as was said, because of the inability of man to save himself, that this direct intervention of God for man's salvation is the only and final way by which he can have fellowship with God. This is not only the teaching of the Apostles (Acts iv. 12; I Cor. iii. 11; I Tim. ii. 5); it is the teaching of Jesus himself (Mt. xi. 25 sq). It is thus that finality is of the essence of Christianity, and any abatement of the claim of finality for Christianity is a denial of the exclusive Mediatorship of Christ.⁹

When we inquire into the presuppositions and grounds of this view, and ask whether it is still to be maintained, it is

⁹Cf. Hunzinger, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums, Probleme* usw. p. 74.

evident at once that a definite world-view, i. e. a definite conception of God and his relation to the world, underlies this idea of the finality of Christianity. It is the high supernaturalism which is characteristic of the Scripture doctrine of God and which is based upon a thoroughly consistent theism. It is the idea of God as an extramundane and infinite Person, infinitely exalted above the works of his hands, who preserves the universe and governs it in accordance with his will. This infinitely transcendent God, therefore, acts not only through and by second causes *i. e.* in his providential control of all things, but also is free to act directly upon or in the universe without and apart from the action of second causes. In other words, this view of God asserts the possibility of two different kinds or modes of activity in God, one through and concurring with natural causes, and one independent of these and immediate. This world-view, accordingly, asserts the possibility of events in the world of psychic life and in the world of external Nature which are due to the immediate efficiency of God. This view is called "dualistic" by its opponents. It is dualistic in the sense that God is not identified with the world, that some efficiency in second causes is recognized, and that in addition to God's providential action, his capacity for this directly supernatural mode of activity is asserted. It is not "dualistic", however, in any naïve or "mechanical" sense. Such a naïvely dualistic view is illustrated by a passage from Herodotus which Dr. McCosh has cited in his work *The Supernatural in Relation to the Natural*.¹⁰ According to this view the action of God is recognized only in events which supposedly interrupt the course of Nature. Thus the Egyptians told Herodotus that, since their fields were watered by the Nile, they were less dependent upon their God than the Greeks, whose lands were watered by showers which they thought were sent directly by Jupiter. This view sees God only in events which are inexplicable by natural causes. It therefore loses God in so far as science traces one series of events after another to their proximate natural causes. Hence

¹⁰ Herodotus, ii. 13; cf. McCosh, *The Supernatural in Relation to the Natural*, 1862, p. 8.

the progress of scientific knowledge becomes a progressive banishment of God from the world, the goal of such a process being atheism. In reaction from this mechanical and deistic conception, the recognition of God's providential control in all events has led so far in the opposite direction as to result in the denial of any action of God apart from his providential control through second causes.

This denial of direct supernaturalism is not only seen in pantheism which denies any efficiency to second causes, it is seen also in theistic writers who recognize both the efficiency of second causes and God's providential control of them. Such writers are accustomed to identify the high supernaturalism we have described with the naïve and mechanical view, and hence to pronounce it "unscientific" and directly opposed to the "modern consciousness". Some of these theologians, moreover, assert that their view of the world is supernaturalistic, so that it becomes necessary to have a clear understanding of the differences in the use of the terms supernatural and natural. Thus "naturalism" is often used to denote either materialism which seeks to derive all mental phenomena from matter and force, or the view which asserts that the mathematico-mechanical explanation of the universe is the ultimate one. It is this latter view which Ward opposes in his *Naturalism and Agnosticism*.¹¹ Over against such forms of naturalism, an idealistic pantheism might be called supernaturalistic in asserting a reality other than physical nature. Others would call any pantheistic view "naturalistic" because it recognizes no God above and distinct from Nature. Hence the recognition of the transcendence of God, of his providence, of teleology and of ethical and religious values is sometimes called supernaturalism and usually regarded as anti-naturalistic. Such a view recognizes the transcendence of God, but only his immanent and providential mode of action. Such, for example, is the view of Troeltsch who asserts what he calls a direct action of God on the human heart in all religions, but who clearly distinguishes his view from the direct supernaturalism of the older evangelical theology, and who

¹¹ James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*,² 1903.

recognizes fully that it is just this high supernaturalism alone which can justify the idea of the finality of Christianity.¹² Such also is the view of Pfeiderer who believes in the supernatural basis of the world, i. e. God; in a supernatural government of the world, i. e. divine providence; in a revelation which is supernatural simply as coming from God, but which is only the natural development of the religious nature of man; and yet will not admit anything miraculous or supernatural in the sense which implies an immediate activity of God apart from second causes.¹³ Foster's view is essentially the same, though his terminology is slightly different. He would not call his view of the world either naturalism or supernaturalism. The former he identifies with the assertion that the mechanical causal explanation of the world is final; the latter with immediate or direct supernaturalism. Both these views he explicitly rejects. He says that we may not suppose that there is a "twofold activity of God, a natural and a supernatural"; and that there is nothing which happens which is not in accordance with natural law.¹⁴ Here, then, are views which their authors call anti-naturalistic, but which definitely and consciously oppose the high supernaturalism of the Christianity of the New Testament and the whole Scripture idea of God; and which recognize in this high supernaturalism a view of the world diametrically opposite to their own.

Accordingly the view of God and the world which underlies the claim of Christianity to be the final religion is not merely in contradiction to "naturalism" in the philosophical sense of the term, but also to the "anti-supernaturalism" just described.

¹² Troeltsch, Ueber historische u. dogmatische Methode usw. in *Theologische Arbeiten aus dem Rheinischen wissenschaftlichen Prediger-Verein*, N. F. Heft 4, p. 100.

¹³ Pfeiderer, *The Philosophy and Development of Religion*, Gifford Lectures, 1894; and for his denial of direct supernaturalism *vid.* his Essay entitled *Evolution and Theology*, in *Evolution and Theology and Other Essays*, 1900, p. 1-26. For a criticism of Pfeiderer, cf. James Orr, *Can Prof. Pfeiderer's View Justify Itself, The Supernatural in Christianity*, 1894, pp. 35-67.

¹⁴ Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

This high supernaturalism was rejected through the influence of the English Deism of the 18th Century and the illumination rationalism in Germany. The reaction moreover from the naïve dualism of deistic types of thought led to an overemphasis of the immanence of God which also contributed to the rejection of this supernaturalism. This having taken place, it became no longer possible to distinguish the natural and the supernatural in this way, and the supernatural is reduced, as we have just seen, to the spiritual in contrast to the material, or the doctrine of Providence over against deism and pantheism, or teleology as against mechanical causation.

But the so-called principle of a wholly "immanent causality" which lies at the root of the abandonment of the Scriptural supernaturalism, necessarily and logically gives rise to the thoroughgoing type of Naturalism which will explain the entire universe by causes wholly immanent or within the developing series of second causes. It is this "naturalistic" philosophy which lies at the basis of what is called "historical relativism". This philosophy applies the idea of evolution through wholly immanent causes to the sphere of history as well as to that of Nature. Everything is in a continuous state of change or "becoming", and between all phenomena in Nature and history there is a genetic connection of a purely mechanical character. Hence there can be no absolute values of any kind in history, and no norms whether of truth, religion, or ethics. Since, therefore, everything in history is thus reducible to lower terms and likely to be surpassed in the process of evolution, and since Christianity is a historical phenomenon, it too, it would seem, must be of only relative and temporal significance and value. The finality of Christianity would appear to be lost.

It was out of this situation that the main attempts to vindicate the finality of the Christian religion arose. All of these attempts, generally speaking, have two things in common. They all point out the limitations and errors of thoroughgoing naturalism, and they all abandon the high supernaturalism which we have seen to be inseparably connected with the Christianity of the New Testament.

The first of these attempts may be loosely designated as the

Hegelian. This view will abandon to the sphere of relativity the entire historical element in Christianity, maintaining the finality of the "religious consciousness" which is expressed in these historically conditioned forms. This religious consciousness and its ideas are absolute and final because they realize the ideal of religion as the unity of God and man. Hence the evolution of religion reaches its climax in Christianity. The determining idea of this view, however, is not so much that of an evolution toward a goal, as it is the old rationalistic one of the distinction between the "kernel" and the "husk" in Christianity, the historical element being relegated to the latter category. The way for this was prepared by Lessing and Kant. The difficulty which was felt in regard to historical facts was not the modern one of attaining certitude of belief. The most undisputed fact, it was held, could neither support nor form the content of religious belief. Hence all positive religions were regarded as but the outward expression of the pure religion of reason. Lessing expressed this in his famous utterance that "accidental historical truths" can never be the ground of "eternal rational truths", the whole of historical Christianity being considered as "accidental". In the same manner Kant¹⁵ regarded moral truths as the kernel of all historical religions. This idea was taken up by Hegel and his followers, though they sought to do more justice to history. History, however, they regard not as an "outer" or "empirical" history, but as the history of the development of God's life in man. In the historical facts and truths of Christianity are found only symbols of eternal truths in a relative form. Hence Christianity is not separated from other religions as the product of a supernatural revelation, but its symbols are regarded as the most adequate expression of eternal religious truths.¹⁶

¹⁵ Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*.

¹⁶ Modern examples of this view are seen in E. Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, 1894, and O. Pfleiderer, *Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*,³ 1896, though Pfleiderer does not adopt the pantheistic conception of God which is characteristic of Hegelianism. This is also the view taken in a more recent Article on the "Absoluteness" of Christianity, *vid.* E. Sulze, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums, Protestantische*

This whole conception has been subjected to a searching criticism by Troeltsch.¹⁷ He points out that three ideas underlie it, each of which he thinks unwarranted. It first abstracts from all religions the universal element. This is not possible because religious ideas are always inseparably connected with their historically conditioned form, so that the "kernel" and "husk" or the "form" and "content" cannot be separated. Secondly, this universal idea of religion is regarded as a normative ideal of religion as it ought to be. This involves a fallacy, since a universal idea abstracted from all religions is too abstract to be the ideal of religion. Thirdly, this ideal is supposed to be realized in Christianity. This Troeltsch regards as impossible because no ideal is ever fully attained in history, and because the "kernel" of religious truth is inseparable from its historical "husk" or clothing. Whether or not any historical religion can be final, is just the question at issue, and one upon which we shall take issue with Troeltsch. For the rest, he has uncovered some of the fallacies which underlie this method of maintaining the finality of Christianity. The fundamental mistake of this view, however, is that it is not the Christian religion for which finality is asserted. Having separated this so called Christianity from all historical events and also from the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, this view has not liberated true Christianity from its "husk", but has reduced it to the ideas of natural religion or of the natural religious sentiment. But Christianity is not the product of the natural human reason nor of the natural religious sentiment. Whatever, therefore, may be said as to the truth and finality of the Christian religion, it should be recognized that it is not the finality of Christianity which is here maintained.

It was out of this situation that the well known dispute

Monatshafte, VI. 1902, pp. 45-56. Sulze believes that evangelical supernaturalism is mistaken in supposing that anything "absolute" can be found in history, and that "historical relativism" is mistaken in supposing that we are chained to history. Christ and historical Christianity are simply a crutch to bring us to God, and then to be laid aside.

¹⁷ Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte*, 1902, pp. 9 sq., 23 sq.

on this subject between Kaftan and Troeltsch grew; and the second attempt to maintain the finality of Christianity may be called the Ritschlian. Kaftan wishes to show that Christianity is the final religion and at the same time to do justice to the historical element in Christianity. He will isolate the Christian religion from the application of the so called historical method which would reduce Christianity to the level of other religions. He maintains that there is something specifically different in Christianity; it is a "supernatural" religion in a unique sense.¹⁸ He opposes, therefore, the Hegelian conception which recognizes finality only in the ideas which historical Christianity is supposed to symbolize. He opposes also Troeltsch, the representative of the school of comparative religions, with whom Kaftan carried on this debate.¹⁹ Troeltsch starts from the entire phenomenon of human religion. In all religion there is a revelation from God, and to all religions alike must be applied the historical method. The history of religions shows a teleological movement, so that while the historical method forbids us to regard any religion as final, Christianity appears as the highest point in the evolution of religion. But this, according to Kaftan, is to push the historical method beyond its limits in two respects—both in affirming that Christianity is the highest or best religion, and in denying that it is anything more than this. From the historical point of view, Kaftan says, all different forms of religion are simply phenomena to be described and determined. The differences between different religions are simply facts to be recorded. On the basis of a strictly historical investigation there can be no absolute or final religion, but only different religions making this claim. The question as to the validity of this claim transcends the historical point of view altogether. It is a dogmatic and apologetic question, depending on other than historical considerations.²⁰ Hence historical science can

¹⁸ Kaftan, *ZTuK*. VII pp. 82 sq.

¹⁹ For a comparison of the views of Kaftan and Troeltsch *vid.* the Article of Niebergall already mentioned, *Ueber die Absolutheit des Christentums*, *Theologische Arbeiten aus dem Rheinischen wissenschaftlichen Prediger-Verein*, N. F. Heft 4, pp. 46-86.

²⁰ Kaftan, *ZTuK*. XIII. 1903, pp. 257 sq.

say nothing against the standpoint and method of Christian Dogmatics, in which the theologian takes his standpoint within Christianity and presupposes its final character which rests on other than historical grounds. In so far as historical method is supposed to contradict this, it rests upon the erroneous supposition that the judgment affirming the finality of Christianity is the more valid, the greater the amount of historical phenomena upon which it can be based. The mistake, Kaftan thinks, lies in overlooking the fact that the question as to the truth and finality of a religion is a question of an ideal, and one which, therefore, cannot be settled by the historical study of religions. We must, accordingly, take our starting point within Christianity, and recognize in it the final revelation of God. Kaftan does not deny that there is a revelation from God in other religions.²¹ He affirms, however, that Christ is in such a special sense the revealer of God, as that Christianity is to be recognized as the final religion. The claim that such a revelation is found in Christ does not require to be based on a philosophy of religion, because revelation does not consist in the supernatural communication of truth. Kant, he says, has shown the limits of theoretic reason, so that the judgment which affirms the finality of Christianity rests on the fact that in Christ we experience the satisfaction of our ethical and religious needs. It is true that, in stating the difference between himself and Troeltsch, Kaftan asserts that it lies in the fact that he recognizes a specifically supernatural revelation in Christianity not found in other religions, while "supernaturalism" for Troeltsch denotes only the relation of all religious life and thought to a transcendent God. This supernaturalness, moreover, Kaftan describes by saying that in Christianity God has entered the world in a way which has occurred only once and which is distinct from the ordinary course of events.²² But Kaftan explicitly repudiates the older or evangelical supernaturalism, and when one asks in what this supernaturalism which is ascribed to the Christian revelation consists, we are told that we meet God in Christ as we do nowhere else. Christianity is not super-

²¹ *ZTuK*. XIII. 1903, pp. 257 sq.

²² Kaftan, *ZTuK*. VI. p. 392.

natural because more immediately the product of the divine causality than other religions, but because there is experienced in Christ a satisfaction of our ethical needs such as is nowhere else to be found. Hence in seeking to show that Christianity is the absolute or final religion Kaftan says that we start with the heart and conscience, and recognizing in Christ the complete satisfaction of our ethical and religious needs, we see in him the only revelation of God, and hence can assert the finality of Christianity. Having thus from the standpoint of faith reached this decision, the science and philosophy of religion can confirm us in it, inasmuch as the ideals by which we reach this judgment are found to be those towards which the religious development of man is striving.

Wobbermin's position in his article in criticism of Troeltsch²³ is similar to that of Kaftan. Like Kaftan he asserts that Christianity claims to be the final religion, and like Kaftan he says that there is no "exact proof" of this. He asserts, however, that "scientific reflection" upon historical and psychological data of a religious character enable us to claim finality for Christianity, and that Troeltsch is mistaken in saying that from the scientific point of view nothing in support of this can be urged.²⁴ The "absolute values" of religion, which are matters of inner life, are found to be satisfied in Christianity, so that it appears not merely "absolute" in a negative sense that no higher or better religion is conceivable, but in the positive sense of the only and perfect religion.

Neither Kaftan nor Wobbermin have successfully defended the finality of Christianity against Troeltsch. The question is not whether they and Troeltsch use the word "scientific proof" in different senses. The question is whether the finality of Christianity in its full sense can be maintained on their premisses. Troeltsch is right in denying this, because entirely apart from the question whether this is a "scientific" or a "practical" proof, the religious and ethical consciousness may itself conceivably be subject to a development or evolution

²³ Wobbermin, *Das Verhältnis der Theologie zur modernen Wissenschaft und ihre Stellung im Gesamttrahmen der Wissenschaften*, *ZTuK*, 1900, X, 375 sq.

²⁴ Wobbermin, *ibid.*, p. 392.

which will carry it so high that Christianity will no longer satisfy it. Christianity may appear to our thinking as the perfect fulfilment of our religious and moral ideals, but according to the principles of a naturalistic evolutionary philosophy which denies the high supernaturalism of the old evangelical theology, these ideals are in a process of development, so that the moral and religious ideals of the Christian religion will be surpassed. Nor can the naturalistic philosophy be refuted by pointing out the limits of the "historical method" and its inability to pronounce upon these questions; it must be shown to be an inadequate view of the world, and Christian supernaturalism in the high sense of the old theology must be defended, if Christianity's claim is to be validated.

Wobbermin feels the force of this objection, but his reply is unsatisfactory. He seeks to show that religious and ethical life is distinct from other forms of human culture and life. Hence he concludes that while higher forms of mental life in other than the religious and moral sphere are conceivable, any attempt to conceive a form of religious life higher than that of Christianity ends by destroying the idea of religion and ethics altogether. Moreover, he says, that since religion involves the relation of the finite to the Infinite, no conclusion as to the development or perfectibility of the religious consciousness can be drawn.²⁵ This latter consideration may be true, but is purely negative and proves nothing in support of the claim of the finality of Christianity. As regards the first point, it must be said that the religious and ethical consciousness is not distinctive in this sense. There is no finality about our religious or ethical ideals which does not attach to other norms of human thought. A philosophy which makes no room for the direct supernaturalism of New Testament Christianity, will not be able to stand against one that is antisupernaturalistic in this sense, and which renders impossible a belief in the finality of the Christian religion.

Furthermore no such sharp distinction, as Kaftan appears to make, can be held to exist between the so called theoretic

²⁵ Wobbermin, *ibid.*, p. 393.

and practical reason. It is one reason which deals with data of various sorts, some of which are of a practical and religious character. The judgment which affirms the finality of Christianity must therefore be rationally, theoretically if you will, grounded. These grounds may be in part or to a large extent religious or ethical, they must nevertheless be grounds which are rationally valid. They may well be wider than any which a merely comparative study of religion will yield, but they must be reasonably and rationally, or theoretically sufficient grounds of belief.

There is another difficulty inherent in the Ritschlian position. If, as those who deny all "natural theology" suppose, the whole course of Providence does not reveal God, how can Christ, regarded simply as one fact or event in God's providence, reveal him, if Christ's deity in the sense of the metaphysical supernaturalism of Christian theology be abandoned? On the other hand, if God is revealed in history and providence, as Kaftan would seem to affirm,²⁶ then the question arises upon what ground the Christian revelation is separated from and held superior to the revelation of God in other religions. Kaftan would reply that the Christian revelation with its ideas of the kingdom of God and reconciliation through Christ perfectly satisfies our religious ideals and needs. But the selection of certain ideas from the religious consciousness, which Christianity is supposed to satisfy, will depend either upon a religious philosophy or upon the Christian revelation itself. In the former case the question of the absolute finality of this philosophy rather than of Christianity is the result whereas in the latter case no proof of the finality of Christianity is given unless these ideals are the product of a directly supernatural revelation. Only the supernaturalism of the old theology, which Kaftan abandons, can ground adequately the finality of Christianity.

When we turn from these religious "norms" or "values" to the historical Christ who is supposed to satisfy them, we meet with new difficulties. Traub,²⁷ in an article on the

²⁶ Kaftan, *ZTuK*. VI. p. 392.

²⁷ Traub, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode und die systematische Theologie*, *ZTuK*. XI. 1901, pp. 301-340.

method of comparative religions in its application to theology, took issue with Troeltsch on the question of the finality of the Christian religion. Traub's contention is that the ground of certitude as to the finality of Christianity is one with the ground of certitude as to its truth, and is given with this through the revelation of God in Christ. But since Christ is a historical person, Traub is compelled to ask whether historical criticism does not render uncertain this basis of certitude. Traub asserts that historical criticism cannot touch this ground of Christian certitude because the question does not concern "the details of the external events, but the life-content of the entire person".²⁸ Historical criticism, therefore, can say nothing against the historicity of Jesus, because of the originality of his personality. To deny the historicity of such a personality, according to Traub, is pure dogmatism. This follows, he thinks, from the nature of the historical method which cannot speak either affirmatively or negatively on such a point. The ground of certitude that there is in Christ the final revelation of God is a matter of faith, and is quite independent of historical criticism and of the historical method.

In reply to Traub, however, it must be said that this separation of the question of the ground of belief in Christianity as a divine revelation and the final religion, from the questions of historical criticism, is impossible. This follows from the simple fact that Christianity is a historical religion. The question whether in Christ is found the final revelation of God is one that is inseparably connected with questions of a historical nature. It is quite impossible, moreover, to regard the "external details" of Christ's life as matters for historical criticism to pronounce upon, and to suppose that Jesus' inner life is quite independent of historical questions. Traub asks us to let the inner life of Christ "work upon us". This may of course be done, but not if historical questions are simply brushed to one side. All difficulties, Traub says, are overcome by "faith". But the question necessarily arises as to the content of such faith. If an historical person, or his-

²⁸ Traub, *ibid.*, p. 323.

torical events, or an "inner life" which is inseparably connected with historical matters and is itself a historical phenomenon, be the content or object of such faith, then the question of its grounds of certitude cannot be independent of considerations of a historical kind. Notwithstanding Traub's assertion to the contrary, historical criticism can conceivably reach negative results on points which are absolutely essential to Christianity, even to the extent of denying the historicity of Jesus himself. Christian faith, therefore, cannot simply "demand" that historical criticism shall not discuss the realities of such faith. Traub admits²⁹ that it would make an end to the Christian faith if Christ should be shown not to be a historical figure; but this is just the logical result of a historical criticism determined by anti-supernaturalistic principles, as Kalthoff and Drews have pointed out against Bousset and J. Weiss. Traub's criticism of Troeltsch, therefore, would have been more to the point, had he driven to its logical conclusion the naturalism which determines Troeltsch's so-called historical method, rather than have resorted to a vain attempt to prove the independence of the Christian faith in this respect.

To make this perfectly clear it is only necessary to notice two facts which are evident from the earliest historical sources of the life of Jesus. One is that in Christ's inner life we find a distinctly supernatural element, and the other is that his entire Messianic consciousness is inseparably and essentially related to the miracles which he performed and to the great miraculous events of his life. Accordingly we cannot escape from a supernatural Christ by turning to his inner life. In order to separate Christ's life from all that is supernatural, it is necessary to proceed by a process of elimination which must deny the historicity of certain elements in the Gospel portrait of Jesus, elements which on purely objective historical grounds are on the same footing with those parts of the Gospels from which a merely natural Christ is to be reconstructed. This means that the Christ which remains after such a criticism has done its work is a Christ of whose historicity there is no

²⁹ Traub, *ibid.*, p. 324.

evidence. This means that Traub and the other Ritschlian theologians, no less than Troeltsch, must face the question of the direct supernaturalism of the evangelical theology. If such a supernatural revelation and such a supernatural Christ be impossible, the finality of the Christian religion cannot be maintained, since even the historicity of the Christ on which the claim is based, is rendered uncertain. The conclusion of all this is simply that Christianity in its essence is a supernatural religion in the high sense of the old theology, and therefore that the question of its truth and finality depends upon the reality of such a supernatural action of God in the world. If one abandons this high supernaturalism, one cannot maintain the truth or finality of Christianity, just because historically it is through and through a supernatural religion in this high sense. Even the religious value of a so called "natural Christianity" is being rightly questioned. Upon such grounds the affirmation that it is unsurpassable is entirely without warrant.

This is fully recognized and emphasized by Troeltsch who, in abandoning this high supernaturalism, frankly gives up the finality of Christianity, so that the issue really lies between a naturalism which denies the supernatural in the sense of the direct action of God in the world apart from second causes, and the supernaturalism of the Christianity of the New Testament which affirms the supernatural nature and origin of Christianity in this sense.

Before, however, considering the view which Troeltsch maintains over against that of Kaftan, something must be said concerning the recent attempt to maintain the finality of Christianity on the basis of Christian experience. This attempt has recently been made by Professors Hunzinger and Ihmels.³⁰ In some respects their way of approaching the question is like that of the Ritschlian theologians whose views have

³⁰ Hunzinger, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums, Probleme und Aufgaben der gegenwärtigen systematischen Theologie*, 1909, pp. 63-88; also *Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode, Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen*, 1908, Serie IV. Heft 11; Ihmels, *Centralfragen der Dogmatik in der Gegenwart*, 1911, pp. 44-54, on *Die Absolutheit des Christentums im Licht moderner Fragestellung*; and pp. 54-80 on *Das Wesen der Offenbarung*.

just been discussed. The Essays of Hunzinger and Ihmels are written in direct opposition to Troeltsch. And, like the Ritschlians, Hunzinger and Ihmels wish to rest the finality of Christianity in the fullest sense upon the Christian's experience of Christ, denying the right of the historical comparison of religions to speak either positively or negatively upon the question. The difference between these theologians and those of the Ritschlian school in regard to this subject consists chiefly in two points,—first, in the fuller recognition of the directly supernatural influence of the Spirit of God on the heart in the production of Christian experience, and secondly in the circumstance that in resting the claim of the truth and finality of Christianity on the inner experience of the soul, these theologians do not suppose that the "essence of Christianity" is independent of the supernatural events of the historic Christianity of the New Testament.

Hunzinger is more typical of the "experiential theology" in regard to this question than is Ihmels. For while the latter asserts a twofold basis of the finality of Christianity—the immediate experience of communion with God through Christ, and the objective revelation in Christ—the former bases the claim of Christianity to be the final religion upon experience alone. In addition to this, Hunzinger draws a sharp distinction between the revelation which gives us Christianity, which he calls a purely "formal" matter, and the "content" of Christianity, insisting that the nature as well as the ground of the finality of Christianity lies in the final character of its truths as experienced by us, rather than in the fact that Christianity rests upon a supernatural revelation, though this latter truth is apparently accepted. The finality of Christianity, then, attaches to its centre,—Jesus Christ. And not simply to Christ as the perfect revelation of God, but in the sense that in Christ's Person and Work is found the only means of communion with God.³¹ The basis of such a claim, therefore, cannot be determined by asking in what sense Christianity rests on a special revelation, but rather depends upon the fact that a critical analysis of Christian experience shows that "abso-

³¹ Hunzinger, *Probleme u. Aufgaben* usw. pp. 68, 69.

luteness" or finality is a "constitutive factor" of it. Hence the method of proof is simply to show that the finality of Christianity is necessarily involved in the experience of fellowship with God through Christ.³²

This separation of the question of the nature and grounds of the finality of the Christian religion, from the question of Christian supernaturalism and especially of supernatural revelation, cannot be carried out. It is not necessary to dwell on the reason which Hunzinger gives for taking his position. The alleged fact that all other religions claim finality only in respect to resting on a divine revelation, besides being questionable, affords no valid reason for seeking the finality of Christianity only where it might not be a claim of other religions. Hunzinger's position, however, is impossible because of the nature of Christian experience. No doubt the experience of reconciliation and communion with God which is given in Christian experience, is in its nature final and absolute in the fullest sense. But still it is not possible to avoid the question of the supernatural character of the Christian revelation, just because of the nature and presuppositions of Christian experience. Its nature is determined by the opposition of sin and grace, the natural consciousness and the regenerate consciousness. That sin has obscured our natural knowledge of God and destroyed communion with God, is a fact of experience no less than a truth of Scripture. It is for this reason that the change from the natural religious consciousness to the regenerate or Christian religious consciousness, cannot be explained as a natural evolution, as Hunzinger would fully admit. It is, however, on the full recognition of this fact, that the argument from Christian experience must proceed. But this shows that the validity of the argument depends upon presuppositions. The efficient cause of Christian experience, on this view, is the Holy Spirit. But from the human side Christian experience springs from faith, the doctrinal content of which faith is determined by the special Christian revelation. For just as the general religious consciousness of man is determined by a conception of God, so the Christian consciousness and exper-

³² Hunzinger, *ibid.*, p. 79.

ience is determined by the conception of God given in the Christian revelation. From this it follows that the question of the nature of this Christian revelation is fundamental for the determination of the question of the truth and finality of the Christian religion. This is a presupposition of the argument from Christian experience, which is a strong argument in connection with the "external" arguments for Christianity, but which cannot be independent of them. Troeltsch is right in asserting that the claim of the finality of Christianity rests ultimately upon this basis of supernatural revelation, and Hunzinger cannot escape this by resorting to the argument from Christian experience, for the reasons just given. Nor is it easy to see why he does so, since he apparently admits the claims of the old theology as to the supernatural character of the Christian religion. It only weakens his position, then, to turn from this and to seek in Christian experience alone the ground of Christianity's claim to be the final religion. Moreover, his idea that the question as to the finality of Christianity has to do with the "content" of Christian truth rather than with the "formal" question of revelation, erects too sharp and artificial a distinction between the truths of Christianity and the revelation of which they are the product. The claim that these religious truths are absolute and final, rests upon the supernatural character of the revelation which gives them to man. They determine Christian experience and are implicated in it, and therefore this experience witnesses to the finality of this revelation, but this is ultimately dependent on the supernatural and hence final character of the revelation which gives us Christianity rather than on the experience which Christianity produces.

In this respect the position of Ihmels is more adequate. After affirming against Troeltsch, that the finality of Christianity is a matter of faith and that it depends on the experience of the satisfaction of our religious needs by Christ, Ihmels goes on to show³³ that this subjective ground of belief in the finality of Christianity, must be supplemented by an objective ground, which he finds in the final character of the Christian

³³ Ihmels, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

revelation. The weakness of Ihmel's position, however, lies in the inadequacy of his discussion of the whole subject of revelation.³⁴ He gives no clear distinguishing mark between the special revelation which he claims for Christianity and the general revelation which he recognizes in other religions. His conception of the "special" and final character of the Christian revelation is not clearly thought out nor adequately grounded over against the school of comparative religions. In the section on the idea of revelation,³⁵ after rejecting explicitly the idea of the "old Dogmatics" which conceived of Revelation as "the communication of supernatural truth", (the supernatural communication of truth would express the idea more accurately), and after asserting that the Christian revelation consists chiefly in the "facts" of the Gospel, Ihmel goes on to point out the necessity of what he calls a "word-revelation" in order that the "fact-revelation" may be understood. And in speaking of the way in which this comes to man, he speaks of it, in some undefined way, as from God's Spirit and as "created by God in the sphere of history", thus apparently recognizing its supernatural character. In all this it is difficult to see the point which discriminates Ihmel's view from the older evangelical view which he rejects, and which would have afforded a basis for his claim of the finality of Christianity. But in the immediately following section of this chapter, in which he discusses the claim of Christianity to be the religion of a special revelation,³⁶ Ihmel apparently changes his view. He raises the question whether the fact of the historically conditioned character of Christianity is compatible with its claim to a specifically supernatural origin. He asserts that it is, but bases this upon what he calls a "universal supernaturalism" which maintains that in all historical events, notwithstanding their historical relations and conditions, God is directly operative. But if all history and all revelation is thus immediately or directly from God, the question arises whether, in view of this, and especially in view of the analogies between Christian ideas and those of other religions, the specific and

³⁴ Ihmel, *ibid.*, pp. 55-80.

³⁵ Ihmel, *ibid.*, pp. 55-72.

³⁶ Ihmel, *ibid.*, pp. 72-80.

final character of the Christian revelation can be maintained. This so called "universal supernaturalism" or the idea that God is providentially back of all history is just what Troeltsch would assert. Indeed Ihmels is compelled to fall back on Christian experience after all, for he says that the specifically supernatural character of Christianity rests on the supernatural character of Christ, and belief in this is based ultimately on Christian experience.

In this Ihmels appears to be moving in a circle in affirming that the experience of the finality of Christianity depends on the supernatural character of the Christian revelation, and in conceiving that this depends on the Christian's experience of the power of Christ. Moreover in affirming that all revelation is supernatural and that all revelation, including the Christian, is "psychologically mediated", he removes all basis for maintaining the specifically supernatural character of Christianity, and all essential distinction between his view and that of Troeltsch who asserts a direct mystical revelation of God in all religions. This leaves Ihmels no basis upon which to defend his view of the final character of Christianity against Troeltsch who maintains that Christianity is simply the highest point yet attained in the evolution of religion, and only relatively higher than other religions. In attempting to find any point of discrimination, therefore, between Christianity and other religions, Ihmels falls back on Christian experience, so that we never escape from the circular reasoning to which attention was called. If all revelation in all religions is "supernatural" as resulting from a general mystical contact of God with the soul, and if the Christian revelation is "psychologically mediated" *i. e.* natural as regards its mode of occurrence, there is no basis for belief in the specifically supernatural character of Christianity, and no essential difference between Ihmels and his opponent Troeltsch, for this is just what Troeltsch would assert. The conclusion which Troeltsch draws in regard to the relation of Christianity to other religions must logically result.

Accordingly the question of the finality of the Christian religion depends upon that of the validity of the claim of Christianity to rest upon a specifically supernatural revelation, and

that not merely in regard to the great supernatural facts of Christianity, but also in regard to the doctrinal interpretation of these facts in the Scripture. This revelation claims to differ from the general revelation of God in human religious thought in this respect, that while other revelation is natural in its mode of occurrence, this special revelation is given in a supernatural manner, coming directly from God.

This, as has been said, is fully recognized by Troeltsch, the spokesman on this question for the school of comparative religion. He denies the finality of Christianity in the fullest sense, just because he denies the supernaturalism upon which it rests. This, indeed, is the main point of his criticism of the Ritschlian school, that they make claims as regards the finality of Christianity, after they have abandoned the only possible basis of these claims. Troeltsch affirms that the "old supernaturalism" affords the only basis for the claim that Christianity is the final religion. The old theology can, he says, logically escape the results of the application of the "historical method" because its view of the nature of the Christian history is thoroughly supernaturalistic. The finality of Christianity cannot be based upon a "value judging" interpretation of certain historical facts, but requires historical facts which, by reason of the "concentration" in them of "absolute" values, are separate and distinct from all other history. It requires, moreover, a separation of Christianity from any causal connection with the general evolution of religion. Troeltsch says that "in all these respects the traditional dogmatic method has an absolutely consequent and correct sense. Everything, therefore, depends upon the proof of the supernaturalism which shall ground this claim, and abolish the relativity of the historical method".³⁷ He also asserts that "it is only by this proof that the dogmatic method wins a secure basis and the character of a methodical principle".³⁸ In this respect it resembles the historical method, for just as "the historical method starts with a metaphysical assumption of an immanent causal interconnection of all human pheno-

³⁷ Troeltsch, Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode der Theologie, *Theologische Arbeiten aus dem Rheinischen wissenschaftlichen Prediger-Verein*, N. F. Heft 4, 1900, p. 98.

³⁸ Troeltsch, *ibid.*, p. 99.

mena", so the dogmatic method starts with a metaphysical principle which lies at its basis. This is the high supernaturalism of the old evangelical theology, without which the claim of the finality of Christianity, is, according to Troeltsch, no better than "a knife without handle and without blade".

This supernaturalism, moreover, as Troeltsch correctly perceives, must find its ground in a conception of God, of man, and of the world. Upon this view, Troeltsch says, God is not confined to the merely immanent mode of action through second causes, but in addition to this is conceived "as capable also of an extraordinary mode of action which interrupts and breaks through this plexus of second causes"; and man is conceived of as fallen and sinful, and in need of such a supernatural salvation.³⁹ This is what Troeltsch calls the "dualistic" idea of God and the world: and he is right in regarding it as the indispensable foundation of the finality of Christianity. He finds it strange that the Ritschlians should maintain the finality of the Christian religion, having abandoned this view of the world.

Since therefore, according to Troeltsch, this supernaturalistic view of the world must be abandoned, the demand of the "scientific situation" at the present time is that the "historical method" be stringently applied to theology. And since the standards or "values" by means of which the Ritschlians separate Christianity as the final religion from all other religions are subjective, we must start, not from a position within Christianity, but from the entire phenomenon of human religion. All religion rests on divine revelation, and in all is found a similar religious consciousness.⁴⁰ The separation of Christianity from the evolution of religion is a remnant of the old dualistic view of the world. Troeltsch, however, is fully aware that the so called historical method rests on philosophical presuppositions. His idea is that the Illumination of the 18th Century rendered necessary a new idea of scientific method and a new view of God and the world. Its essential nature is expressed by the words "immanence" and "anti-

³⁹ Troeltsch, *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁴⁰ Troeltsch, *Die wissenschaftliche Lage und ihre Anforderungen an die Theologie*, 1900, p. 37.

supernaturalism", or a world-view which explains everything by a causality which acts only through and within the evolving world. This view is to take the place of the idea of a transcendent and supernatural causality, which acts upon and independently of the evolving series of phenomena. This renders impossible belief in the supernatural origin of Christianity, which must be regarded as a natural phenomenon and as absolutely conditioned by the complex of causes in the midst of which it arose.

This "modern view" of the world, as Hunzinger says,⁴¹ has as its watchwords, immanence, evolution, and relativity. The principle of "immanence" calls for the explanation of every event and every thought in the world's history by causes solely within the world. Everything supernatural is excluded. The means by which such a naturalistic explanation of Christianity is made, is the idea of an evolution which would show that Christianity is the product of the general evolutionary process which operates by purely immanent causes, so that the limits which separate Christianity from other religions are done away with. The resulting principle of "relativity" will recognize no absolute or fixed religious values in this religious evolution, so that Christianity cannot be regarded as the final religion in the sense of being unsurpassable. This philosophy really determines the so called historical method which accordingly makes use of three principles,—⁴²"criticism", "analogy", and "correlation" or the mutual interdependence of all phenomena. "Criticism" renders uncertain all historical events. It operates by "analogy" which lays it down as a rule of historical criticism that all past history is to be judged as to its possibility by its analogy with our present experience. The principle of "correlation", being likewise predetermined by the naturalistic philosophy, asserts that all historical events form one unbroken stream to the exclusion of everything supernatural in the sense of being immediately produced by God.

The "scientific situation" calls for the stringent application of this method to the study of Christianity, and makes three

⁴¹ Hunzinger, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode* usw. p. 7.

⁴² Troeltsch, *Ueber historische u. dogmatische Methode* usw. cf. *Theol. Arbeiten* usw. N. F. Heft 4, pp. 89 sq.

demands—:⁴³ First, that Christianity be studied in its relation to other religions. Secondly, that this historical study of religion must proceed to a philosophy of religion which shall interpret the meaning of this religious evolution. This religious development is not a chaotic affair, ⁴⁴ but exhibits a scale of values which are not merely subjective nor yet mere abstractions from the different religions, but which are the guiding ideals towards which the development of religions is tending. Christianity will thus appear as the highest of all religions because most fully realizing these ideals. Thirdly, the Christian faith must be stated in the light of modern science, so that the old doctrines will disappear, and Christianity will assume a form determined by the scientific culture of the present age.⁴⁵ Applied concretely to Christianity these so called historical principles do away with the supernatural Christianity of the New Testament. They forbid belief in a supernatural revelation, a supernatural Redeemer, and a supernatural salvation. They demand a purely “natural” explanation of Christianity, which must reduce its truths to the basis of natural religion.

The result of the application of these principles to the question of the finality or “absoluteness” of Christianity is obvious. In earlier writings Troeltsch asserted that Christianity is the “absolute” religion since it is the highest and best of all religions. Later, however, he published an elaborate discussion of the whole idea of “absoluteness” or finality, in which he abandons the claim that Christianity is the “absolute” religion, except in what he calls a “näive” sense,⁴⁶ which is only expressive of the feeling of satisfaction in Christ which the Christian possesses. This becomes “artificial” and invalid when the attempt is made to rationalize it, either after the manner of the “old theology”, of Hegelianism, or of Ritschlianism.

The result, of course, is that every element in Christianity is of relative significance only. This is not intended in the “un-

⁴³ Troeltsch, *Die wissenschaftliche Lage* usw. pp. 47 sq.

⁴⁴ Troeltsch, *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴⁵ Troeltsch, *ibid.*, pp. 47-56.

⁴⁶ Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte*, 1902, pp. 100 sq.

limited" sense that all religious values and ideas are illusions, nor that Christianity is genetically derivable from the other religions, which Troeltsch roundly denies.⁴⁷ He means simply that everything in history, including Christ and Christianity, can only be understood in connection with its historical environment; that Christianity and every other religion, is the product of the mystical contact between God and the human soul, the specific differences between them being determined by the religious receptivity of the bearers of the divine revelation. The philosophy of religion, however, can show, that, while the primitive Christian doctrines were stated in the forms of thought of the past, Christianity is nevertheless the highest level of man's religious development because most nearly approaching the realization of the religious ideals which are guiding the historical evolution, but which can never be fully realized by it.⁴⁸ Troeltsch means what Bousset does when he affirms that history shows the "absolute superiority" of Christianity over other religions.⁴⁹

The inconsistency and defects of this view are apparent. In the first place, the question of the validity of the religious view of the world and the question whether Christianity is the highest and best religion, are questions which transcend the limits of purely historical investigation and of the historical method. The demand for the application of a comparative and historical method to the study of religion and Christianity may intend either the study of religion as a psychological phenomenon, or the question of the objective validity of religious knowledge. From the former point of view the question as to whether or not the religious consciousness is illusory cannot be raised. On the other hand, if this latter question is raised, then the so called historical method proceeds upon certain metaphysical assumptions which transcend the sphere of "historical science" altogether. The application of the principle of "immanent causality", therefore, may only denote the limitation of the investigation to the study of religious phenomena from this standpoint of their human con-

⁴⁷ Troeltsch, *ibid.*, p. 50 sq.

⁴⁸ Troeltsch, *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴⁹ Bousset, *Wesen der Religion*, p. 237.

ditions, in which case the question of the objective validity of the religious consciousness cannot be raised—much less the question of the supernatural claims and nature of Christianity; or, on the other hand, if this principle of “immanent causality” is to deny the possibility of the supernatural modes of God’s activity, then it must proceed upon a metaphysical basis which will cut so deeply as to do away with Religion in so far as it involves a relation of man to God. In other words, the consequent carrying out of this anti-supernaturalism is to be found, as Hunzinger says,⁵⁰ in Monism whether materialistic or idealistic, and in positivism. The latter philosophy asserts that the purely phenomenalistic point of view, which science may take, is the only possible and ultimate one. Since it recognizes only phenomena and their relations, no affirmations about religion, considered as a relation of man to God, are possible. Monism in both its forms is also destructive of religion. Materialism resolves religious life into a “mechanism of the atoms”, and idealistic monism makes no adequate distinction between man and God. Its God is simply a name for the sum total of spiritual life in the world. However vigorously, therefore, this philosophy may protest against what it calls the “naturalism” of materialistic monism, it itself not merely sets aside the supernaturalism of the New Testament Christianity, but is destructive of religion itself considered as a relation of man to God. To follow a method which will really know of nothing but immanent causes, must result in the destruction of the basis of religion, or in a merely phenomenalistic study of religious phenomena, which makes no assertions in regard to the ultimate religious problems. In attempting to answer these questions Troeltsch transcends the limits of his method altogether.

In the second place, it is, therefore, only a necessary result of this that Troeltsch is quite inconsistent in the application of his so called historical method. He uses this method only so far as to enable him to do away with the claim of Christianity to rest upon a supernatural revelation and to come more directly from God than do other religions, and to be the final

⁵⁰ Hunzinger, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Methode* usw. p. 9.

religion. He abandons the application of his method in order to affirm the independence of religion and its underivability from other forms of life, the objective validity of our religious knowledge as resting on divine revelation, and the superiority of Christianity to all other religions. This inconsistency can be illustrated by the way in which Troeltsch arbitrarily limits the application of each of his principles of method. Thus, the principle of "correlation" demands the derivation of all religious phenomena from causes wholly within the Universe. This would do away with the underivability or "independence" of religion in human life. It would demand its explanation from lower and simpler elements in human nature. But Troeltsch asserts over and over again in his Article on "The Independence of Religion" and in his more recent work on "Psychology and Epistemology",⁵¹ that religion cannot be reduced to lower terms and that it is the result of a revealing act of God which "breaks through" the natural phenomena of our psychic life. The "principle of method", therefore, which is applied in order to reduce Christianity to the level of other religions, is not applied to the explanation of religion in general. In the same way the principle of a wholly immanent causality is not consistently applied in reference to the evolution of religion. Perceiving the impossibility of a genetic derivation of all religions, one from the other, Troeltsch affirms that each religion springs independently from the direct contact of God with the soul of man. This is not equivalent to the universalizing of the principle of Christian supernaturalism, but it is a conception which evidently far transcends the limits of Troeltsch's method.

The same inconsistent limiting of his method is seen in his assertion that Christianity is the highest religion. Troeltsch does not, as some of his critics have affirmed, proceed by a standard which is wholly subjective. The ideal by which he ascribes this place to Christianity is supposedly determined by the historical and comparative study of religion. It is not a general abstraction from all religions, but rather the ideal

⁵¹ Troeltsch, *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft*, p. 38.

toward which they all strive, and which Christianity most fully realizes. But the religious value and the validity of this ideal is dependent on the fact that it is supposed to transcend the whole historical evolution of religion and every historical religion. It is only, therefore, because Troeltsch's religious consciousness is under the influence of historical Christianity, that he recognizes this ideal as most fully realized in it. The comparative study of religions could never yield this result, as Troeltsch fully realizes and explicitly affirms. The question of the place of Christianity among the world's religions is one that cannot be answered by such a method.

This method, moreover, if it is to observe its limits as a method which seeks to explain historical phenomena from purely immanent causes, may explain that which may be explained in this way; it cannot affirm that supernatural events, which cannot be thus explained, are impossible, without going beyond its limits and becoming dogmatically anti-supernaturalistic.

In the third place, therefore, it should be noted that this is precisely what Troeltsch has done. This so-called historical method is not historical; it is dogmatic, that is, determined by naturalistic metaphysical presuppositions. In this lies the fundamental inconsistency of Troeltsch's position. At times it is made to appear as if the denial of any direct supernaturalism were the result of the application of a purely unbiased historical method to the investigation of the different religions. But in point of fact this naturalistic philosophy underlies and pre-determines the rules of the so-called historical method. It is, therefore, a foregone conclusion that only naturalism will be read out of any study of the history of religions, which is prosecuted under the control of these rules. Thus, to take but one example, the principle of "analogy" affirms that nothing can have happened in the past that we do not experience to happen in the present. But this is a pure assumption begging the question and involving the very point at issue. It is conceivable that there might be historical evidence which would lead us to the opposite conclusion, unless we have pre-judged the whole question. In other words, if we base our conclusions on a study of the

entire experience of the human race instead of on a mere section of that experience, we may find that it is fallacious to erect one section of that experience into a norm for the determination of the character of the whole. It is no historical judgment to assert that Jesus never rose from the dead because we now do not see dead men rising again. In a word, the method which is supposed to yield a naturalistic result, is itself the product of an anti-supernaturalistic metaphysics which must justify itself as a view of the world, and cannot rest upon any so-called historical study which it itself pre-determines.

At times Troeltsch recognizes this. We have seen how, in comparing what he calls the "dogmatic method" with what he calls the "historical method", he asserts that just as the former proceeds upon the metaphysical basis of supernaturalism, so the latter is based upon the metaphysical idea of an "immanent causation" which he says is the precise opposite of supernaturalism.⁵²

It is the great defect of Troeltsch's whole mode of procedure that he gives no adequate defense of this metaphysics over against the supernaturalism of evangelical Christianity. He simply asserts that the Illumination of the 18th Century has rendered belief in it impossible; or that "historical science" has rendered it untenable. But he gives no adequate refutation of it, and in every case his anti-supernaturalism appears as an unwarranted assumption which pre-determines the so-called scientific investigation, which is in turn called upon to serve as its support.

This is true not only of Troeltsch, it is true of all naturalism which is not based upon materialism or pantheism. Bousset affirms⁵³ that it is a fundamental characteristic of modern thought to explain everything in the world by purely immanent causes (*von innen heraus*), and that the modern view of the world postulates the universal reign of law in nature and also in spiritual life.⁵⁴ No really adequate reason

⁵² Troeltsch, *Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode der Theol., Theol. Arbeiten* usw. p. 99.

⁵³ Bousset, *Das Wesen der Religion*, 1903, p. 243.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

however, is given to justify this postulate or to show why a transcendent and personal God may not act in a supernatural manner in the Universe which he created. The same thing is illustrated in the case of the late Prof. Pfleiderer. He differs from Troeltsch in that he asserts the finality of Christianity somewhat after the Hegelian fashion. But his method of getting rid of historical and supernatural Christianity is similar to that of Troeltsch. It is in the name of "history", of "science", and of "method", that Pfleiderer would do away with supernatural Christianity,⁵⁵ and yet it is perfectly evident that an anti-supernaturalistic philosophy is at the bottom of the so-called "scientific method". For it is said to be a method of "causal thinking", according to which "every event is the necessary effect of causes whose operation is determined by their connection with other causes, or by their place in the totality of a reciprocal action of forces in accordance with law".⁵⁶ This method is to be applied to Christian theology and renders impossible miracles in nature and such supernatural events as regeneration. These are declared to be "unscientific" and "impossible".⁵⁷ Pfleiderer is too clear a thinker not to see that this view is the precise opposite of that of the Christianity of the New Testament and of the "old theology" which recognizes the direct or supernatural activity of God apart from all natural or second causes, and which regards the great Christian facts as "effected by causes which are outside the causal connections of finite forces". It is clear, then, that it is not "science", but this naturalistic philosophy which is at the bottom of Pfleiderer's rejection of the supernatural Christianity of the New Testament.

Accordingly the real issue in reference to the truth and finality of Christianity is whether the high supernaturalism of the Christianity of the New Testament can be maintained, or whether a naturalistic philosophy expresses the ultimate truth concerning God's relation to the world. Troeltsch, moreover, is right in affirming that this supernaturalism presupposes a

⁵⁵ Pfleiderer, *Evolution and Theology and Other Essays*, 1900, pp. 1-26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

definite conception of God and of his relation to the world; and Troeltsch states this conception correctly when he says that according to this view God is not confined to his action through second causes, but is capable of "breaking through" these causes and "intruding" directly in the world to produce effects which the whole course of Nature and history could not produce even under God's providential control.⁵⁸ Can God thus "intrude"? Can he intervene in the world to save man from sin? This is the question upon which the very life of Christianity depends, for Christianity is through and through a supernatural religion in just this sense.

That this question of the possibility of such a supernatural mode of God's activity is the fundamental question, can be seen from the fact that most of the denials of the supernatural character and origin of Christianity rest ultimately on the assumption of the impossibility of the supernatural in this sense. We have seen, for example, that this assumption is supposed to be a rule of method of "modern historical science". That it is a mere assumption follows from the fact that no valid objection to events supernatural in this sense, can be made if their possibility be granted. A miracle, to take one instance of such a supernatural event, can be said to be incredible only if incapable of proof, or if impossible. It can be held to be incapable of proof, however, only if it is supposed to be impossible. Two arguments have been advanced to show that a miracle, though possible, is nevertheless incapable of proof, neither of which is valid. One of these is that which Hume advanced in his famous *Essay on Miracles*.⁵⁹ It is, in a word, that there is always a uniform experience

⁵⁸ Ueber historische u. dogmatische Methode, usw., *Theol. Arbeiten* usw. p. 100. Troeltsch here gives a clear description of the old evangelical supernaturalism when he says that God is not confined to an action through second causes, but can directly intrude into the complex of such causes. His words are that, according to this view, "Gott ist nicht in den Zusammenhang eines correlativen, sich überall gegenseitig bedingenden Wirkens und eines jede lebendige Bewegung nur als Bewegung des Gesamtzusammenhangs schaffenden Zweckwollens eingeschlossen, sondern seiner regelmässigen Wirkungsweise gegenüber auch zu ausserordentlichen, diesen Zusammenhang aufhebenden und durchbrechenden Wirkungen fähig."

⁵⁹ Hume, *Works*, vol. IV. pp. 124 sq.

against the occurrence of any such event which amounts to a proof of its non-occurrence. The nerve of this argument is expressed in Hume's statement "that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish." The fallacy here is obvious. The question at issue is precisely whether human experience as a whole has or has not included such events. Huxley criticised Hume's argument, pointing out how it amounts to a denial of the possibility of miraculous events and giving it a more plausible form of statement.⁶⁰ Regarding simply the concrete question of the grounds of belief in such events, Huxley asserted that "the more a statement of fact conflicts with previous experience, the more complete must be the evidence which is to justify us in believing it." This demands that we require an amount of evidence equal to the improbability of the event, which is just a "miraculous" amount of evidence. Hence a miracle is in the nature of the case incapable of proof. But this argument is not valid. Notice what one must prove. Is it simply the occurrence of the event, or the supernatural character of the cause? Obviously it is primarily the former. Rothe⁶¹ insisted on this distinction, and Warfield has called attention to it very pointedly.⁶² We are not required to give evidence to show that an event which has occurred is due to a supernatural cause, but simply that an event which must be due to a supernatural cause has taken place. But if the evidence is only to establish the fact of the occurrence of the event, there is no reason to demand any miraculous amount of evidence, unless we have some *a priori* notion regarding its causality which really makes us regard it as impossible. And even granting that the evidence must not only establish the occurrence of the event, but also show that its cause is supernatural, no argument from a uniform past experience can be sufficient to render the event incapable of having sufficient evidence for it presented, unless the impossibility of such an event be presupposed. This whole line of argument amounts simply

⁶⁰ Huxley, *Hume*, pp. 131, 132.

⁶¹ Rothe, *Zur Dogmatik*, pp. 88 sq.

⁶² B. B. Warfield, On Miracles; *Bible Student*, VII. pp. 121-126.

to this—that while in the abstract the possibility of supernatural events is admitted, one is nevertheless so convinced by his own small section of experience that such events cannot happen that no amount of evidence can convince him.

The other main argument to show that while miracles are possible, they are nevertheless incapable of proof, is that there is always the possibility that they are due to some unknown higher natural laws. This argument has plausibility only upon the supposition of the impossibility of the direct action of God within the sphere of and apart from second causes. Once grant the occurrence of the Resurrection of Christ; it is more reasonable to refer it to the immediate power of God than to any unknown natural laws, unless we presuppose the impossibility of such action by God. And if we do, we will scarcely be convinced of the Resurrection of Christ by any amount of evidence.

The question, therefore, as was said, is whether God can act in this directly supernatural manner; or whether events due to this direct Divine power are possible. The answer to the question may be briefly put as follows—that the impossibility of the supernatural in this sense, can be maintained only upon grounds that transcend not only actual and possible experience, but also any supposed necessity arising from the causal judgment or the idea of natural law; in a word only on the basis of some anti-theistic view of the world.

It goes without saying that there can be no question of anything supernatural on the basis of the old fashioned materialism. There being no God and no human soul except as a perishable product of the body, it is useless to talk of any religion, not to speak of Christianity.

This view of the world is very largely abandoned, and its place has been taken by what goes by the name of Naturalism. This, in a word, is the view of the world which dogmatically asserts that the mathematico-mechanical description of the world is the only and ultimate explanation of the entire universe. Its principles are, as James Ward says,⁶³ the mechanical theory of the universe, the evolution theory in a mechanical

⁶³ James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, 1903, I. Preface.

form, and the theory that mental states are shadows, "epiphenomena" of physical phenomena. Though too sceptical to assert the existence of any "substance", and hence rejecting materialism, naturalism, as Ward says, abandons neither the materialistic standpoint, nor the materialistic attempt to give a purely mechanical explanation of all the facts of life and mind. Its method consists simply in taking the ideas of abstract mathematical mechanics, and applying them to the real world of concrete experience. The mechanical scientist simply leaves all qualitative distinctions unexplained; the naturalist explains them all away by reducing them to merely quantitative and mathematical ones. It is simply mechanical science become dogmatic and offering a final explanation of everything. This view leaves no room for teleology, for religious or any other ideals. It rules out the supernatural in any sense, and is essentially anti-theistic. It has been ably criticised by James Ward in his well known Gifford Lectures. On the other hand, idealistic pantheism, or "spiritualistic monism" as it is sometimes called, is just as much opposed to the directly supernatural action of God and to the distinction between the natural and the supernatural as above set forth, as is materialism and naturalism. It is true that it interprets the world in terms of spirit, but since it identifies God and the world and allows no existence or activity transcendent to the universe, any distinction whatever between the natural and the supernatural is impossible. There is really no basis for any religion since the distinction between God and man, and with it the personality of God is denied.

It is not our purpose, however, nor would it be possible within the limits of this essay, to give any criticism or discussion of the anti-theistic theories. Those theories, as has been said, leave no room for any religion, if religion is a relation of man to God, since they do away with any distinction between God and man. It is of course impossible to discuss the question of the finality of Christianity or of the possibility of the supernatural modes of God's activity with one who does not believe in God. The theological writers whose views we have been discussing, however, are theists. What we wish to do, therefore, is to show that upon a theistic view of the world

the possibility of this directly supernatural activity of God, implied in the Christian view of the world, cannot be denied. In saying this, it is a truly theistic view that is meant; a view which is in earnest with the idea of the personality and transcendence of God. But since the main reasons which theists urge against pantheism are just those reasons which lead us to regard God as personal and transcendent, this is the only theism which can maintain itself against pantheism. The evidences of teleology or purpose which mind is called on to explain, are explained only if this finality or purposiveness is intentional. In other words a "pantheistic theism", to use a phrase of Rashdall's,⁶⁴ is untenable. To say that God is a Person, but "God is all", is not possible. If finite spirits are all parts of God, then theism is abandoned, for, as Rashdall says, upon such a view we could only call God good by maintaining that the deliverances of our moral consciousness have no validity for God, and this Bradley would have us believe. But a God who is "beyond good and evil" is not God and assuredly not an object of worship.⁶⁵ Moreover the formula "God is all" is really unmeaning. Such an all inclusive consciousness swallows up all distinctions including its own personality as well as that of man. It is really meaningless to speak of one consciousness as "included in another consciousness". It is the characteristic of consciousness "to exist for itself". The finite spirit is not independent of God, but its consciousness cannot be "included" in God's consciousness without losing the personality of both God and man. We agree with Rashdall that McTaggart is right in asserting that if God is to include in himself all other spirits, and if the personality and self consciousness of those spirits is not to be denied, then this absolute or so-called God in which they are to be included, cannot be considered as conscious or self-conscious or have the attributes of God. We thus lose God and fall into "non-theistic idealism" and pluralism. Hence a truly theistic view asserts the personality of God and also that he infinitely transcends the entire universe, the entire sum of

⁶⁴ H. Rashdall, *Philosophy and Religion*, 1910, p. 101.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

whose energies is as nothing compared with the infinite power of God.

Theism, moreover, not only asserts the personality and transcendence of God, it regards him as the Creator of the universe. The world cannot be regarded simply as an "experience" or "thought" of God, as the idealist would have us believe, for then it could not be distinguished from all the thoughts of God which are not actually realized, nor would its relative independence be explained. The world is the created product of God's power, upheld and governed by him. This is the theistic view, and it is our contention that no theist can deny the directly supernatural modes of God's activity, because in the act of Creation itself is given the first instance of such activity, and since God, being the Creator of the world, cannot be entangled in his created product.

We have to ask, then, upon what grounds the transcendence of God is affirmed and the transcendent modes of his action on the world denied; or upon what grounds it is held that God is not only immanent and yet that only his immanent mode of action is possible. This is done usually upon two grounds. In the first place, supernatural events are said to be impossible because they imply a suspension of or interference with natural laws. But what is a natural law? The term is sometimes used simply as an empirical statement or description of the way in which events uniformly happen. If this is the meaning of natural law, it is obvious that it does not render impossible miracles or any other class of supernatural events. A miracle, for example, being *ex hypothesi* an event outside of the natural empirical order of things, cannot be proven either possible or impossible by any experience of this natural order. If experience includes such events, it is no longer an experience based on the purely natural order of things, while on the other hand we cannot infer from any merely uniform experience that events cannot occur which will transcend this hitherto experienced uniformity. Sometimes the term natural law is used to denote a necessary mathematical equation, and is applied in an attempt to describe phenomena from the idea of a number of mass points in motion. But the science of mechanics is fully aware that this

mechanical view is not an ultimate explanation of everything. If this latter supposition is made, then the view point of natural science is transcended, and we fall into naturalism which is an anti-theistic speculative theory. Or once more, a natural law is sometimes supposed to be an efficient force which causes the observed phenomena to follow the uniformity which is observed. In this case the uniformity could be predicted, and would be more than an empirical generalization. But even this idea of natural law does not render supernatural events impossible. We may not suppose that God the Creator of the universe is so subjected to the laws of his creation that he cannot act in the world directly. If God is not simply a name for nature, but is the Creator of nature, he cannot be entangled in his creation. Nor can the sum of the energies in the universe in any way express the totality of his power. It was infinite power that brought the world into being, and that world whose laws simply express the providential control of the Creator, cannot constitute a limit to the Omnipotence which gave rise to it. Neither does this providential control exhaust the ways by which God may act upon his creation. The possibility of the directly supernatural mode of God's action follows from the idea of the divine transcendence which is the center of an adequately theistic conception of God. It is not necessary to go with the pantheist and deny all efficiency to second causes, in order to realize that they cannot limit God. If we believe that God is infinite and the universe finite, there is absolutely no basis for the assertion that God's action through second causes is the only way he can act. Moreover the immanent activities of God are rooted in his transcendence. If we resolve his providential control into a mere name for the forces of Nature, we are really giving up the idea of God's providence and falling into a pantheism which does not distinguish God from the world. On the other hand, if the real nature of God's Providence, according to theism, be recognized it will be seen to involve the personality and the transcendence of God. In a word, the reasons for belief in God as against pantheism, are reasons for belief in an infinite Person, infinitely transcending the world. The affirmation that God is infinitely transcendent of the world, and yet can only

act through natural causes is one that cannot stand against pantheism.

In the second place, it is sometimes affirmed that supernatural events are impossible because they contradict the causal judgment as a necessary law of thought which presupposes that nature is an absolutely closed and concatenated system of second causes. Any intrusion into this system is supposed to violate a necessary law of thought. This objection, which appears still more serious, is still less plausible than the former. All that the causal judgment asserts is that there is no effect without an adequate cause. There is no possible way by which this can be made to exclude the immediate causality of God, if it be granted that there is a God. It will be replied that the idea of cause is one that applies only to relations between phenomena, and does not apply to the relation of God to the world. But this can only mean that the idea of cause which is valid for natural science cannot be applied to God. If God is the Creator of the world, he can be the efficient agent of effects in the world, call this by what name you will.

The conclusion of all this is that upon no ground other than that offered by an anti-theistic view of the world, can be based a denial of the possibility of the supernatural modes of God's activity.

If this be so, then the question of the supernatural origin and character of Christianity which lies at the basis of its claim to finality, is simply one of evidence. Into the question of Christian evidences we cannot enter. The question ultimately reduces itself to this—is it more reasonable to believe that the divine Christ of the New Testament, who has transformed the world, is a myth or a reality. The idea that Jesus was a mere man who spake no mighty words and wrought no mighty deeds, who was deceived by current Messianic notions, who was killed by his enemies and never rose again;—this idea is that of a Jesus who cannot be found in the historical sources of Christianity, and who, if he could be so found, could never have inspired his followers to deify him, nor be the cause of the rise and progress of historical Christianity. The only Christ of the earliest sources is a

supernatural and divine Christ,—the Christ of Peter, of Paul, of John, of the Synoptists, and of the sources which are supposed to underlie the Synoptists—a Christ, in a word, who claimed to be God, who lived like God, and who has wrought effects which only God could, and who is an adequate explanation of the Christian religion in its rise and progress. The question of the truth and consequently of the finality of Christianity, therefore, reduces itself to this—whether in view of the possibility of the supernatural and of a theistic view of the world, and of the evidences for the reality of this Christ, it is more reasonable to suppose that Christianity is a product of the myth building fantasy, or that the Christ of the New Testament is a reality.