

THE CONCEPT OF NORMS IN THE THEOLOGY OF  
ERNST TROELTSCH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAP.

- I.    **Introductory -- The Place of Troeltsch as a Theological Thinker**
- II.   **The Necessity for Norms in the Field of Theology**
- III.  **Troeltsch's Determination of Norms in the General Field of History**
- IV.   **The Relation of Historical Norms to Theological Norms**
- V.    **The Determination of the Theological Norms**
- VI.   **Troeltsch's Construction of the Normative Essence of Christianity**
- VII.  **The Normative Significance of Jesus**
- VIII. **The Application of the Theological Norms in the General Field of the Religions of the World -- The Finality of Christianity**
- IX.   **Conclusion -- The Value of Troeltsch's Concept of Norms in Theology**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY -- THE PLACE OF TROELTSCH AS A THEOLOGICAL THINKER

Ernst Troeltsch was born February 17, 1865, in Augsburg, German.. His father was a physician; hence the son had the opportunity to familiarise himself with science in his parental home, and enjoyed the cultural advantages to which his family background made him heir. The classical culture became known to him in the Gymnasium, where he was prepared for the university. Following his own desire, he began the study of theology in 1885, and pursued his studies at Erlangen and Gottingen, where he sat at the feet of Frank, Ritschl, and Paul de Lagarde.<sup>1</sup> All three of these great teachers contributed to the theological development of the youthful Troeltsch, as he later acknowledged repeatedly; but it was Ritschl who was most influential in the formation of Troeltsch's own theology, -- even though the latter was largely a reaction from the Ritschlian School.<sup>2</sup>

At the conclusion of his theological studies in 1888, Troeltsch served as assistant minister in a Lutheran Church in Munich, where he had a taste of the practical work of the Christian Church, in which he was always to retain interest to a degree unusual among German theologians.<sup>3</sup> In 1891 his academic career began; for it was then that he became a lecturer (Privatdozent), at Göttingen. The following year

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<sup>1</sup> A. von Harnack, "Rede am Sarge Ernst Troeltschs, "Berliner Tageblatt, 6 Feb., 1923, reprinted in Die christliche Welt, 22 Feb., 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 1, Vorwort.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. his essays on church affairs such as Die Trennung von Staat und Kirche, Gewissensfreiheit, Die Mission in der modernen Welte, etc.

he was made Professor Extraordinarius at Bonn. In 1893 he was appointed full professor in systematic theology at Heidelberg, where he remained until 1915, when he was called to occupy the chair of philosophy at Berlin, which had once been held by Otto Pfleiderer. Troeltsch held this position until his untimely death on February 1, 1923.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his work as a university professor, and a prolific writer on theological and philosophic subjects, Troeltsch took an active part in the politics of his time. While at Heidelberg, he was a member of the Upper House of Baden for several years; and later, in Berlin, he was in the Prussian Landtag, besides serving as Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Public Worship. This practical interest and vital contact with the affairs of his time, both clerical and secular, had an energising effect upon his theological thinking; and made him aware beyond all others of his theological compatriots, of the acuteness and complexity of the problems which modern life presents to theology. Some of his most stimulating essays are those which treat of the conflicts between Christianity and the secular trends of modern civilisation, (for example, the famous one, Grundprobleme der Ethik), and indeed all of his work is permeated with a broad understanding of modern life and its divergent cultural tendencies with which the church must battle.

History from time to time presents us with figures which in their single persons embody the spirit of the age in which they live, -- Virgil in the Augustan age, Luther in the Reformation, and others too numerous to mention. Troeltsch was such an incarnation of the early

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Christian Thought, Introduction by Baron von Hugel; also R. S. Sleigh, The Sufficiency of Christianity, pp. 21-26.

twentieth century; for in his own person he epitomised both the strengths and the weaknesses of that era. As Kaftan well says, he is an epoch in himself,<sup>1</sup> -- the early twentieth century. Troeltsch's work mirrors his time with all its varied and conflicting trends, its appreciation of, and the attempt to synthesise the most divergent and incompatible influences. It is this feature of his own mind and temperament, as well as that of the era to which he belongs that made Troeltsch so many-sided, so inconsistent. It was the effort to express an age which caused him to change his mind so often, and to be so dissatisfied with any position he had adopted. In a personality of that type, we cannot expect a unified system, nor a large body of positive results, but rather a keen analysis of the problems, and a suggestive method of approach to them. These are what Troeltsch gives us in his theological writings, in which we have in heightened and intense form the Christian mind wrestling with the modern world.

To his task as a theologian and a philosopher in the fields of religion and history, Troeltsch brought not only the equipment of a powerful mind and a temperament which epitomised the modern world in their sweep, but also the indispensable qualification of a thoroughly religious mind and heart. Baron von Hügel, who was an intimate friend of his over a long period of years, tells us how Troeltsch saw in all the events of his own life the guidance and the goodness of God in Whose presence he felt himself to stand, whether in good or ill fortune,<sup>2</sup> but even if we did not have this confirmation from an in-

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Baron von Hügel, "Ernst Troeltsch," in The Times Literary Supplement, 29 March, 1923.

timate friend, we could not help inferring the presence of a deep and vital Christian experience from the man's own writings. Behind the involved and technical phraseology in which Troeltsch so often expresses himself is the unmistakable heart-beat of a warm and vital Christian faith, and frequently in the midst of some learned discussion comes an almost lyrical gem of religious insight. It was this religious spirit which would never allow him to rest content with the idea of a culture that was not Christian. Even when he seems to reach negative conclusions, Troeltsch is actuated by a sincerely religious desire to find the truth, for as Professor Henry N. Wieman reminds us, it is religion that craves and cherishes truth even more than science.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, no matter how relativistic Troeltsch's theoretical conclusions about the Christian religion might become, they never affected his practical devotion to it. As Baron von Hügel finely says, apropos of the extreme relativism and individualism which characterised Troeltsch's final book, "The wonder is that the conclusion does not appear more thin than it does in fact appear. But then we have to do with a soul of the rarest and finest richness, which in spite of every logical self-entrapment, does partly have its way; and again this soul retains certain grand convictions, alive still, from pre-individualistic days, -- its faith in God and its sense of Christ -- convictions assuredly not acquired from such a break-neck plunge."<sup>2</sup>

It is not only the comprehensiveness and power of Troeltsch's

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<sup>1</sup> Wieman, The Wrestle of Religion with Truth, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Troeltsch, Christian Thought, Introduction by Baron von Hügel, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

mind, and his vast understanding of modern culture, but his religious spirit as well that made him an inspiring teacher, whose memory his students still reverence; <sup>1</sup> and from whose books many of us who never knew the great master in life still derive light upon our problems and religious help towards their solution. During his lifetime, he enjoyed great respect not only in Germany, but in other countries as well, particularly in the English-speaking world, for whose culture he had great appreciation. Even the French Protestant, Vermeil, considered his thought of sufficient importance to make it the subject of a sympathetic monograph. The international recognition which Troeltsch received was due to the fact that he was free from the extreme nationalism which sometimes spoils the German intellectual. Indeed, while entertaining a true affection for his country, he preserved an objectivity of outlook upon German affairs which made him aware of the dangerous trends in the national and religious life of his fatherland, and also displayed a truly international and catholic outlook which enabled him to appreciate the excellencies of other peoples. His high estimate of Calvinism, in his Soziallehren is a case in point, as is the esteem in which he held the activist temper of the churches of the Anglo-American world.<sup>2</sup> He visited America in 1904, and wrote appreciatively of much he had seen of church life there; <sup>3</sup> His last book, Christian Thought, was a volume of lectures prepared for delivery in England,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Georg Wünsch, "Zum Gedächtnis an Ernst Troeltsch," in *Die Christliche Welt*, 22 Feb., 1923, and Albert Dieterich, "Ernst Troeltsch," in *Archiv für Politik und Geschichte*, März 1923.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. his essay, "Die Mission in der modernen Welt," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 783 ff., in which he commends the missionary activity of the churches in English-speaking lands, as opposed to the indifference of the German churches on the whole question of missions.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Religion im deutschen Staat," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 69-71.

although he was prevented from making this projected visit by his death. All through his life, he was a keen student of the culture and thought of the Anglo-American world, and his books testify abundantly to his knowledge and comprehension of our life, both religious and secular.

Although the radicalism which tinged his thinking along theological lines caused him to be viewed with suspicion by the more conservative and orthodox both in Germany and in other countries, his influence was apparent in the more liberal theological groups, and also in some very unexpected quarters. He enjoyed the high respect of the philosophers with whom he was associated, and influenced the thinking of some of them at a time when by no means all of philosophy was friendly towards theology and theologians.<sup>1</sup> Although thoroughly Protestant in his own thinking, Troeltsch also achieved the unusual distinction of having friends and partial adherents among Roman Catholic theologians. Besides his close friendship with Baron von Hügel, Troeltsch was admired by other Catholics, among whom is Emil Spiess, a priest. In a recent book entitled Die Religionstheorie von Ernst Troeltsch, Spiess ranks him as the greatest theologian of German Protestantism.<sup>2</sup>

Whether one agrees with Troeltsch or not, one must admire the breadth of his intellect, the wide range of his knowledge, and the diversity of his intellectual interest. He was almost equally at home in the three fields, theology, philosophy, and history, and in his work as a scholar, Prof. Troeltsch synthesised them all to an amazing degree.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, 1921 edition, p. 559, in which Rickert speaks gratefully of some of Troeltsch's criticisms of the first edition of his book. Also Josiah Royce, The Problem of Christianity, Vol I pp. 196 ff.

<sup>2</sup>E. Spiess, Die Religionstheorie von Ernst Troeltsch, 1927, Vorwort, viii. Cf. also Erich Przywara's "Ernst Troeltsch" in Stimmender Zeit, 1923, Heft 105, pp. 75 ff. for a favorable estimate of Troeltsch from the Catholic standpoint.



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His voluminous writings cover all three provinces, though he began with theology as the main interest. Most of his theological works were written before 1913, after which time the philosophy of history, which had always exercised a fascination over him, became his chief occupation. The transition was a natural one, for his theological studies had all been dominated by the historical and philosophic bents which were so strong in his mind. His very first book, Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Gerhard und Melanchthon, (1891), though a theological treatise, reveals the interaction of that interest with the historical and philosophic, which was to characterise all his scholarly activity. In fact the chief problem to which he devoted himself as a theologian and a philosopher of religion was the very pressing one of the relation between religion, particularly Christianity, and history.

Though Troeltsch's earliest work was primarily in the realm of theology, his philosophic and historic interests were always so strong that it is necessary to understand his philosophic background in order to comprehend his theological constructions, for although he always maintained religion's independence of philosophy, he considered that the goal of the two was the same,<sup>1</sup> -- that is, the philosophic Absolute is identical in the last analysis with God. However, of the two, it is philosophy that is subordinate rather than religion. Philosophically, Troeltsch was not entirely consistent, either during his entire life, or even during any one particular period. In general, he stood in the Kantian tradition; for he believed that Kantian idealism

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, p. 210. For the independence of religion, cf. the article, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," in Die Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1895-1896. Although the metaphysic underlying this article was not Troeltsch's final position, he maintained the independence of religion to the end.

provided the best metaphysical structure into which to fit the Weltanschauung<sup>u</sup> of the Christian faith as an independent force; but he was never a pure Kantian, and the modifications of Kantianism to which he gave his allegiance were not the same for all periods.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch himself tells us that he had no real system of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> What he did have was an eclecticism which varied from period to period, and was not altogether consistent with itself at any one time. He started out under the influence of Lotze and Leibniz, as he tells us in the biographical sketch to which reference has just been made. In this early period, represented by the Selbständigkeit der Religion, his metaphysical structure was a transcendent realism. He believed that knowledge dealt with real, and objective perceptions both in the sensuous and the transcendent realms. This position, was a compound of Lotze, Dilthey and Paulsen, with a strong flavor of Kant and Hegel. The object of this construction was a distinctly theological one; to provide a basis for the historical demonstration of the superiority of the Christian religion, yet without the metaphysical agnosticism of Ritschl in theology, or of Dilthey in philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 479.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. IV, "Meine Bücher," p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>R. S. Sleigh, The Sufficiency of Christianity, pp. 40-44, and Johannes Wendland, "Philosophie und Christentum bei Ernst Troeltsch" Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1914, give a very complete account of Troeltsch's metaphysical structure, upon which the present account is closely dependent.

Troeltsch had in his own temperament a combination of a strong rational bent and a vital appreciation of the fact that not all of life can be reduced to reason and logic; hence this early Hegelian position failed to satisfy him completely. In 1903 he changed his philosophical position to the Neo-Kantianism of Rickert and Windelband, whom he had formerly opposed because of the subjectivity which seemed to him inherent in their theories.<sup>1</sup> For his religious interest this shift meant a change from concern with the religious Object to the religious subject; but he believed that he escaped from the dangers of subjectivity by basing the validity of religion in the epistemological rather than the psychological subject, thereby making religion one of the independent constituents of reason. This accorded well with the strong interest he had in Kant, even though it involved some modifications of Kant's own position, which he discusses in Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, (final section). Also it provided a fitting philosophic structure for the subjective theological approach of Schleiermacher, to which he was more and more attracted.

Historically, the theory of Rickert and Windelband afforded the advantage of a system of logic for dealing with the material furnished by historical science, by which the results of that science could be worked over into a philosophy. This is not the place to describe Troeltsch's application of the Rickert-Windelband theory of the logic of history; for it will be the subject of a later chapter. Suffice it to say that it provided a suitable philosophic instrument for his

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch modified the Windelband-Rickert theory somewhat under the influence of Georg Simmel. His philosophy of history was also influenced by his association with the economist, Max Weber.

work in the field of theology from 1903 on through to the publication of the Soziallehren, his greatest book in that field, and was the basis of the studies in the philosophy of history which engaged him from 1915 to his death.

Troeltsch's appreciation of the non-rational and alogical elements in history was enhanced by his familiarity with the philosophy of Bergson, to whom he often refers with approval.<sup>1</sup> However, it seems fair to say that while this philosophy of Bergson did exert a certain attraction over Troeltsch's mind, he was too strong in his allegiance to the Kantian idealism to carry out fully this intuitional strain; although it seems to the present writer he might have evolved a more consistent system, had he done so.<sup>2</sup> Troeltsch, however, wished to be a rationalist and an intuitionist at the same time; but on the whole, his background in the Kantian system was usually dominant; for even in the early period, when his metaphysic was quite Hegelian, he seems to have believed that he was following Kant, with the consequence that the rational element usually won out in his thinking.

Troeltsch's own contributions in the sphere of philosophy were made in the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of history, but the two fall together to a large degree. Theologians have often differed about the question of the right of philosophy to touch the province of religion, but Troeltsch was of the number who believe that it

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Das neunzehnte Jahrhundert," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. IV, p. 631, where he speaks of the philosophy of Bergson as providing freedom from the grip of psychology on the latter's own ground.

<sup>2</sup>For a similar view, see D. C. MacIntosh, "Troeltsch's Theory of Religious Knowledge," American Journal of Theology, July, 1919.

is the function of philosophy of religion to take over from theology the normative experiences of the religious consciousness in the higher religions, and evaluate their truth and validity in relation to the assured results of knowledge furnished by the sciences, such as comparative religions, historical science and psychology.<sup>1</sup> Thus the task of philosophy of religion is, according to Troeltsch, to test and systematise the normative experiences of religion in connection with other provinces of knowledge, just as the general philosopher criticises and synthesises the results of any one of the natural or the social sciences the in light of the rest of knowledge.

Troeltsch's own contributions to philosophy of religion were made chiefly along the line of evaluating religion in the light of the results of historical science. Some of his work in this field has also to do with the questions raised by psychology, -- notably the essay, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, in which by means of a religious epistemology of a modified Kantian order, he hoped to assure the truth of religion as over against the conclusions of psychology of religion in the work of William James and others who used the psychological approach in that study. However, it was the problem of history to which Troeltsch devoted himself most assiduously, and it was this strong interest in that subject which finally led him to give himself to the field of the philosophy of history.

The problem formulated itself in his mind philosophically as the quest of the absolute values in the relative sphere of history.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Religionsphilosophie," in Die Philosophie im Beginn des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, Festschrift für Kuno Fischer, edited by Wilhelm Windelband, 1904.

Religiously it was the effort to discern revelation in the historical, the working of the Divine in the action of the human spirit. The psychological material with which the philosophy of religion must work is inextricably bound up with history. That is the field in which the religious consciousness is manifested, and where it interacts with social movements. If one attempts to make a philosophy which shall evaluate the workings of that religious consciousness, one must first make a philosophy of history itself; hence Troeltsch turned to the philosophy of history. The philosophy of history is not identical with the science of history; but the former works over and appraises the results of the latter. It was in his efforts to construct a philosophy of history that Troeltsch found the theories of Rickert and Windelband a convenient tool for his purpose.

These two philosophers, and also Dilthey, had worked on the problem of the differences of method between the natural and the social sciences, of which history is one. Rickert, depending somewhat on Windelband, had created a system of logic of history, which is set forth in his book, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, the original edition of which appeared in 1902. Troeltsch depends closely on this method, though with some departures from it. Rickert, in contrast to Dilthey, who had also worked on the problem of the differences between the natural and the social sciences, made an attempt to build a philosophy of history out of the analysis of the historical object by means of his logic of history; but Dilthey refused to attempt this because it led into the realm of metaphysics about which he was a skeptic.<sup>1</sup> Rickert, however, maintained that the values reached

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<sup>1</sup>Dilthey, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften, Dritter und Vierter Abschnitt.



through his philosophy of history were formally and rationally based, rather than metaphysically. Troeltsch, in the formulation of his own philosophy of history, differed from both Dilthey and Rickert. As a theologian and a philosopher, Troeltsch could not rest content with Dilthey's metaphysical agnosticism, nor could he be satisfied with Rickert's purely rational and formal grounding of the values which constituted his philosophy of history.<sup>1</sup> He therefore constructed a philosophy of history which frankly sought for the metaphysical implications in the finite realm of history, and in the absolute, metaphysical values that emerged in his analysis, he found the norms for the future cultural synthesis of the relative historical individualisation from which the analysis starts.

Troeltsch's philosophy of history is set forth at length in his book, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, but long before the appearance of this work near the end of his life, he had been using the method described there in his historic analyses. He intended to follow this volume with a second analysing present-day European culture according to his own method; but he did not live to complete the task.<sup>2</sup> It is a matter of regret that we do not have this concrete application of his philosophy of history, but at least he has left us the legacy of a great method for the construction of a philosophy of history. No one has ever been completely successful in the creation of a philosophy about so vast an object as history, and perhaps Troeltsch would not have succeeded completely, had he lived to make the projected analysis. However, his method of ap-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Moderne Geschichtsphilosophie," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 709.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. IV, p. 14.

proach is sounder than the theoretical and dialectic one of Hegel; hence, if the method were applied, preferably by many hands rather than one, the success achieved would probably be greater than that of any previous attempt. Troeltsch's own Soziallehren is an effort to analyse the history of the Christian Church along the lines set forth later in Der Historismus. That work alone is the justification of the praise bestowed upon Troeltsch by von Harnack, who called him the greatest philosopher of history in Germany since Hegel.<sup>1</sup>

It is his construction of this method in philosophy of history which makes Troeltsch permanently significant in the field of history itself. As a historian in the strictly scientific sense of an investigator of the individual phenomenon, he is not nearly so important; for his own investigations were not so painstaking and exact as those of a scientific worker in that field should be; but that was not the purpose of his work. He never professed to do more than work over as a philosopher the results already obtained by the scientific historian, and use them in drawing the philosophic conclusions inherent in them. A passion for accuracy in the smallest details is seldom combined with the ability to see the broad sweep of great movements, their interrelations, and their general aims. Troeltsch possessed this latter faculty to a supreme degree. He has been much criticised for his presentations of particular historical phenomena and personalities, -- notably Luther,<sup>2</sup> -- in his Soziallehren. Nevertheless Die Soziallehren is an important and imposing effort to determine the interaction between Christianity and the civilisation in

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<sup>1</sup>Adolf von Harnack, "Rede am Sarge Ernst Troeltschs," in Die christliche Welt, 22 Feb. 1923, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>One of the most important of the criticisms of Troeltsch's presentation of Luther is that of Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, Vol. I, pp. 241, 251, 255, etc.

which it grew up. Although individual parts of the book may not stand the test of intense historical scrutiny, as a whole it is a masterly analysis of the relation between Christianity and western civilisation; and in this sense it is, and must remain, a very impressive attempt at the application of his own method as a theologian and a philosopher of history.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch himself confesses that he does not have a real philosophic system, but that he has instead a dominating interest.<sup>2</sup> This dominating interest is, of course, the historical. It motivated his philosophic structure to a very large degree, for his very philosophic inconsistencies are largely due to his efforts to find some system that does justice to this historical interest. He tells us himself in the autobiographical sketch at the beginning of the fourth volume of his Gesammelte Schriften that as a university student he was attracted to theology because at that time it presented exciting historical problems, an opportunity to pursue metaphysics, and satisfied the strong religious urge of his being.<sup>3</sup> His theological work is largely controlled by the historical interest, though this was not merely a theoretical one with him; for he felt the question of the relation between faith and history as a pressing, personal religious problem. The effort of his study along this line was to find the Divine revelation in the field of history.

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<sup>1</sup>A very fair and sober estimate of Troeltsch's Soziallehren is that of Prof. Georg Wünsch, Evangelische Wirtschaftsethik, p. 104, where he characterises the book as a "standard work".

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. IV, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

Theologically, as has been stated, Troeltsch started out as a disciple of Ritschl; but other influences contributed to his development as well. To his teacher, Paul de Lagarde, he owed, as he tells us in the preface to the second volume of his Gesammelte Schriften, (which he dedicated to the memory of that teacher), his breadth of historical perspective, his essentially historical conception of religion, his sureness of religion as <sup>a force</sup> interacting with the cultural factors and conditions of the ~~historical~~ background of which it is a part, yet independent of them all.<sup>1</sup> Both through Ritschl at Göttingen and through Baur at Erlangen, Troeltsch came under the influence of the theological tradition of Schleiermacher, to whose influence Troeltsch was greatly indebted in his theology as well as his ethical system, and to whom he turned more and more as he revolted from Ritschl. He repeatedly confesses his obligation to Schleiermacher, and the whole conception of his Glaubenslehre, both in method and content shows a marked dependence on the latter, as he himself states.<sup>2</sup> Like Schleiermacher's, Troeltsch's whole theological system is constructed on the plan of an analysis of the Christian consciousness, though as we shall see, Troeltsch's wider appreciation of history saved him from much of the extreme subjectivism that vitiates so much of Schleiermacher's dogmatic system.

To his great regard for history and philosophy, we must also ascribe Troeltsch's revolt from the Ritschlian school of theology. His chief disagreements with the Ritschlians were two: his philosophic sense was unsatisfied with their exclusion of metaphysics from theology; and

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, Vorwort, viii.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 130.

his feeling for history was offended by their Biblicism and the sharp dualism which they erected between Christ and the rest of the universe. He then turned to the theological method of the so-called religionsgeschichtliche Schule, which, although not strictly speaking a school of theology, had the historical method in that field as a common bond, and which numbered among its adherents the distinguished Biblical critics, Bousset and Gunkel. Troeltsch soon became the leading systematic theologian of this group.

As its name implies, the procedure of this group of thinkers was to consider Christianity not as something a priori apart from, and above, all the other religions of the world, but as one of the great religions like the others, a part of its historical background with which it interacts; and also as one great religion, not separate from, but one constituent of the general religious development of mankind.<sup>1</sup> Traces of this historical point of view may be discerned in Troeltsch's own thought as early as 1894, where it comes to the fore in the essay, "Die christliche Weltanschauung und ihre Gegenströmungen." From that time on, the historical setting of the Christian religion becomes increasingly the material from which he draws his theological conclusions, using the method of the historian and scientific thinker in the erection of his theological structure. Employing this method, he worked over the results of historical criticism in regard to the origin and development of the Christian religion, and addressed himself to the problem of the relation between the facts of history and the convictions of faith. The method not only satisfied Troeltsch's historical sense, which refused to

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 500 ff.

rest content with anything less than an honest and thorough attempt to face the problems which historical criticism sets to faith, but also, in the search for the absolute, the Divine values and action within the field of history, provided scope for the metaphysical within its theology. Thus the religionsgeschichtliche Methode<sup>1</sup> provided an approach to theology which corrected the two chief errors of the Ritschlian school, as Troeltsch viewed it.

At the time when Troeltsch began to work, the problem of the relation between Christianity and history was much to the fore. A flood of new light was being shed upon the historical connections of Christianity. A century of Biblical criticism was just drawing to its close.

This tide of criticism had brought many problems for faith in its wake. Besides the questions raised as to the revelation contained in the Old Testament brought questions as to the beginnings of Christianity, and even the figure of Jesus appeared quite other than that which the tradition of the Church had presented to faith. Although this New Testament criticism had a positive side, its effect had been largely negative; for various and competing portraits of Jesus were being offered to the world by the critics so that there was great need for a careful and systematic rethinking of the problems of Christology in the light of all this new knowledge. To this task Troeltsch addressed himself.

The Ritschlian church historian, von Harnack, was also endeavoring to answer the problems set to Christianity by historical criticism,

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<sup>1</sup>There is no exact English equivalent to the German expression, religionsgeschichtliche; therefore the German word is retained. Religio-historical, the corresponding English term, does not quite express the meaning of the original.

but under the influence of thoroughly Ritschlian presuppositions. Thus from his historical investigations, the figure of Jesus emerged as the sole center of authority, and most of the subsequent development in the Church was represented as a falling away from, or at best, a misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching. This position of von Harnack's was unsatisfactory to Troeltsch, who felt keenly that revelation was a continuing process throughout history, and that to find nothing valuable in the historical development of Christianity after Jesus was to disregard much that was valuable and enriching in the history of the church.<sup>1</sup> Therefore in his own grappling with the problem of Christianity and history, Troeltsch endeavored to discern the groundwork of revelation underlying the whole complex development of the Church, and to find in each period certain dominant trends, which carried forward the original revelation, and were therefore of normative significance not only for their own day, but for the future as well. Not everyone would agree that Troeltsch succeeded in discovering these normative trends in the various periods of the history of the Church, but his method has much to commend it as being a far more inclusive and positive evaluation of Christian history than Harnack's treatment.

Unfortunately we do not have any entirely complete account of Troeltsch's theological system. We know it at first hand only as it is scattered through his shorter essays and articles; and in the Glaubenslehre, which was published in 1925 from notes taken on his lectures in systematic theology at Heidelberg during the years 1911-12, by one of his students, Gertrud von le Fort. Although the Glaubenslehre was com-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften Bd. II, essay "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" pp. 386-391.

piled in this manner, it accords sufficiently well with his thought as we can discern it from his own writings to be regarded as an accurate presentation of his theology. After 1915, Troeltsch wrote very little in the field of theology; but towards the close of his life, he did contemplate a third volume on the philosophy of religion in the series of which Der Historismus was to have been the first, which should embody the results of his historical studies applied to Christianity, and containing his theological system; but his death prevented him from carrying out this purpose.<sup>1</sup>

His theology, so far as we do have it, is what any liberal theologian of his day might have written, except that the historical interest bulks larger in it than is usually the case with such presentations of Christian doctrine. He maintains a Christian theistic position in regard to God and His relations to the world,

The theological structure is cast along broad enough lines to give room for the convictions of faith in regard to creation, the origin and nature of man, <sup>and</sup> to prevent them from conflicting with the results of science. In his effort to be fair to the results of historical investigation, Troeltsch rather overdoes the matter and gives us a somewhat low, though by no means Unitarian Christology. He regards Christ as an historical personality who is the greatest historical revealer of God, the Mediator of redemption, and the center and symbol of the collective worship, fellowship and work of the Church. The approach to the whole subject of theology is essentially that of Schleiermacher, an analysis of the Christian consciousness of the present-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. IV, pp. 14-15.



day; but Troeltsch's historical emphasis saves him from the complete subjectivism which usually accompanies such an approach.

Some have denied to Troeltsch the right to the title of theologian at all. Theodor Kaftan, writing in the interests of ecclesiastical Lutheranism, finds in Troeltsch's system nothing which entitles him to call himself a theologian, but merely a philosopher of religion of Neo-Platonic stamp.<sup>1</sup> This criticism is deserved only in the very qualified sense, that in his effort to be fair to the historical considerations involved in his theological construction, Troeltsch sometimes left too far behind some of the positive convictions of the Church in regard to the nature of revelation as a supernatural manifestation, and that his Christology is too much dominated by the historical approach to do complete justice to the real significance of Jesus for the Christian community.

Moreover, Troeltsch is not a theologian in the sense that he created a great dogmatic structure of his own. To develop such a system is usually the work of less all-seeing minds than his, for they can concentrate upon a single aspect or emphasis of a subject, and build systems of their own, without being drawn aside from their own line by the sweep of the whole. With his comprehensive mind, it is unlikely that Troeltsch would ever have produced such a system, even had he lived to complete the contemplated volume on religion. His contribution in theology was rather to point out with amazing sharpness the problems which confront theology in the modern world, and to devise a method for their treatment, rather than to achieve results and conclusions of his own which

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<sup>1</sup>T. Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, 1912, pp. 55 ff.

could be knit together into a compact and simple system.

With Troeltsch's essential contribution to theology, that of a method of approach, we come to the subject of the present treatment; for the concept of norms in theology which he devised is an epistemological contribution of no mean order. This theory was one that only such a person as Troeltsch could have made; for in the shaping of this theory, his wide knowledge of history, theology and philosophy are all united. The concept itself has to do with both philosophy and theology. History forms the groundwork from which the norms emerge. The norms are philosophical in character in that they provide the means by which to evaluate the results of historical investigations with a view to understanding the aims and ends implicit in the historic object of investigation itself, and they are also the standards by which to direct its future development. The norms indicate the ideal direction of the progress of the historical object towards the absolute values already partially embodied in it. In the hands of Troeltsch the norms are more than philosophic; they are theological. The ideals toward which they point are not only metaphysical absolutes, grounded upon the great Absolute of philosophy; they point towards the God of the Christian faith, Whose revelation in finite history they are.

For the complete understanding of the working of the theory of the norms, an extensive treatment of the subject is needed. Here only a few preliminary considerations as to the significance of the theory as a theological contribution can be given. The concept of the norms is important not only because it provides a means of dealing with the prob-

lems which historical criticism raises for theology; but also because it is in itself a valuable answer to the whole problem of authority in religion. At the time in which Troeltsch lived, the traditional standards of authority in religion had been badly shattered for his contemporaries. The criticism of the Bible made it impossible for them to view it as the Reformers had done, as an infallible and absolute guide to faith and practice. To substitute a return to the authority of the Church is not a solution that is acceptable to Protestants, since the claims upon which such a position rested had been destroyed once for all for the Protestant world at the time of the Reformation. Yet there was need for some authority to save from utter subjectivism in which every individual would be a law unto himself. True the Ritschlians were suggesting the figure of Christ as the sole center of authority; but that idea, too, presented difficulties, since nearly every New Testament critic made a different reconstruction of the personality and teachings of Jesus.

Into this chaos came Troeltsch with a solution to the problem of authority in his concept of the norms which emerge through historical analysis of Christianity. This solution, as we shall see, is not without its difficulties; but it did provide a way of meeting the need for authority which avoided a number of the difficulties of the other solutions. It had no flavor of Catholicism upon it, such as any return to the Church as the final authority must have. It preserved the central place of Jesus without resting the entire weight of authority upon him, and thereby disregarding the trends of development set in motion by Paul and the other leaders of the church, who faced new difficulties and found solutions to problems which Jesus never confronted. The historical emphasis saved it from the subjectivism of allowing the religious experience of

the individual to form the sole standard of authority, unchecked by the social and historic aspects of the Christian faith.

In our day we are still wrestling with the problem of authority, to which we have found no complete solution. The method which Troeltsch proposed has much in it which should commend it to our careful consideration. Just what it has to give us is the theme of this treatment. Although the method is not without difficulties, it is a very important step along the way towards an authority in Christianity which the modern mind can accept.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NECESSITY FOR NORMS IN THE FIELD OF THEOLOGY

We are living in an age which at one and the same time spurns and craves authority. Our generation hates authority, not only because it is selfish and impatient of restraint, but because it has witnessed the complete break-down of a number of sanctions which had been regarded by former generations as infallible guides to conduct and action, but which are now seen to be outworn and useless in the modern world. This collapse of authority has affected almost every realm of life, -- politics, economics, manners, morals, religion, -- with the result that many people are throwing aside all authority, and hoping to find freedom through entire absence of restraint. Others, finding so many of the traditional sanctions gone or inadequate, but realising the hopelessness of trying to get on without any authorities at all, are seeking for something to put in the place of those which have gone. Of course, the war hastened the dissolution of authority; but the process was already at work before the war.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps nowhere can the effects of the shattering of authority be more clearly discerned than in the sphere of religion; since religion, by its very nature and essence, is to a large extent dependent on authority, for otherwise every individual would be obliged to recreate the re-

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<sup>1</sup>A most penetrating analysis of the problem of the break-down of authority in our age is that of Walter Lippmann, in his book, A Preface to Morals, Chaps. I, II.

religious heritage for himself. Also, the process took place in that field somewhat before it was so marked in other provinces; and although the war revealed in a startling light, religion's appalling lack of authority, it did not cause it. Troeltsch's analyses of the situation,<sup>1</sup> written in the last decade of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century, might have been written today, for the conditions he describes are essentially those which we <sup>still</sup> face today. Much of the weakness of the Church in the modern world may be ascribed to its lack of adequate authority upon which to base its claims to speak on modern problems. It must prove to the world all over again that it speaks with Divine authority. In the old days, the Church had no lack of support for its claim. The Catholic Church early forged weapons with which to enforce its pronouncements. In its very beginning, it took over the canon of the Old Testament from Judaism, and developed a new body of authoritative Scripture in the definition of the Canon of the New Testament. Gradually, also, it added the further weight of its own position as the ark of salvation, with the pope as the vicar of Christ on earth, and the whole hierarchy of the priesthood ordained to apostolic succession. It had also the decrees of oecumenical councils as authoritative pronouncements of the whole Church on any moot points, and the councils, along with the pope, could serve as living interpreters of the Scripture.

When the Reformation discredited the elaborate claims of the Church of Rome to Divine authority for itself as the custodian of salvation, with the pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth, the Reformers had the Bible as an infallible authority of Divine origin to replace the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II, the first nine essays, which deal with the state of religion in the modern world, particularly in Germany, all of which were written before 1914. Cf. also his lecture, Die wissenschaftliche und ihre Anforderungen an die Theologie, 1900.

Church, and assert the right to speak to the world from the Scripture, interpreted by the testimonium Spiritus Sancti. Protestantism was thus able to equip itself with an authority even more unassailable than that of the Church of Rome. However, in order to use the Bible as such an authority, it was necessary to maintain its inerrancy, and infallibility, and even in the day of Luther, the Copernican astronomy struck at the Biblical cosmology.

The end of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth brought with them a flood of new knowledge about the Bible which made it impossible any longer to uphold its inerrancy and infallibility. Various factors contributed to this change. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, Biblical criticism as a science began to arise, changing the conception of the composition of the Bible itself. The work of Lessing and Reimarus in Germany took place at this time. The beginning of the nineteenth century saw great strides in this science through the investigations of critics like Strauss in Germany, and Coleridge in England. The middle of the century gave rise to the contributions of great Old Testament scholars such as Wellhausen and Robertson Smith. The researches of these and many other critics too numerous to mention assured to Biblical criticism its position as a science.

By a careful study of the texts of the Bible manuscripts, many inaccuracies and breaks in the text itself were discovered. The work of the so-called higher critics revealed contradictions in the narrative, inconsistencies, and disagreements of one section of the Scriptures with other parts. The work of all this criticism made it clear that the Old Testament was/<sup>a</sup> composite document, written at various periods by many hands, often containing divergent accounts of the same event, instead of

a unified and inerrant record consistent with itself at all points. Nor was the process of criticism confined to the Old Testament. New Testament scholars subjected the gospel narratives to the same rigid scrutiny, with the result that discrepancies in some of the records in the gospels came to light, so that it became increasingly difficult to establish the details of the life and teachings of Jesus, and to disentangle his sayings and doings from the thoughts and feelings of the gospel writers.

Other influences such as the progress of archaeology, the newly acquired ability to decipher Egyptian, Babylonian and other ancient languages, and the development of the science of historical criticism also added new knowledge of the historical background of the Bible. The study of comparative religions revealed the kinship between the Biblical usages and observances and those of other religions. The sciences brought other shocks to the inerrancy of the Bible. Darwin promulgated the theory of evolution about this time. Geologists, biologists, astronomers, and anthropologists were producing an overwhelming mass of evidence about the way in which man and the universe came to be, that stood in direct contradiction to the Genesis accounts of creation. In time the view of the scientists in regard to these matters established itself in Protestant circles, though not without a bitter struggle.

The combined force of Biblical criticism and the evidence of the scientists completely changed Protestant thought about the nature of the authority of the Bible. Instead of an absolute, inerrant and wholly consistent authority, they came to view it as the record of a progressive revelation, starting on a very primitive level and culminating in the work of Jesus, but with the gold of this revelation was mingled much human dross. The authority of the revelation itself was



seen to be wholly religious and ethical in character, instead of a disclosure of scientific knowledge about the structure of the cosmos and the origin and place of man in it. Thus the Bible could no longer hold the position of absolute authority which the earlier Protestants had attributed to it. This left Protestantism bereft of a complete and final norm for its faith and practice; for although the Bible retained a place of authority as the vehicle of revelation, there were endless differences as to how much could be regarded as real revelation, and where to draw the line between the human and the divine even in the gospels themselves.

A number of solutions to the problem of authority were, and are still being proposed; for many modern Christians feel acutely the need to replace the old authorities with new ones. The individual can no more be a law unto himself religiously now than in the past. He must have some standard for his faith which he respects, and which holds him when he cannot hold himself. We see various indications of the quest for a final authority about us. The fact that the Roman Catholic Church is gaining strength where the grip of the Protestant church is loosening is one of <sup>these.</sup> The Fundamentalist, in the very despair with which he clings to the infallibility of the Bible is another symptom of the widespread quest for authority. The Anglo-Catholic's enthusiasm for the authority of the Church, and reunion with Rome, represents another form of the craving.

The whole program of the Anglo-Catholic movement is one proposed solution to the problem of authority. Unfortunately, it has the drawback of reunion with Rome, which makes it unacceptable to those who do not wish to sacrifice the gains of Protestantism. Another way out is essentially individualistic and mystical in character, - that of making

the individual's own religious experience the final seat of authority. That every religious soul must have a first-hand experience of religion, no one could or would wish to deny, otherwise religion would lose all immediacy and present value, but to erect the experience of the individual to the position of the only ultimate norm would mean chaos. The individual must have the confirmation of his religious experience from other and greater souls, and there must be some exterior social and historical standard to guard him and the Christian community against all sorts of aberrations and heresies into which religious mysticism left to itself can easily run. Moreover, if the Christian is to speak to his world, he must have behind him something more convincing to others than the subjective force of his own conviction.

A far more important solution to the problem of authority in Christianity was that of Ritschl. Following Schleiermacher, Ritschl placed weight of authority upon the figure of Jesus, but he went farther in making Jesus the central, objective and exclusive authority than Schleiermacher, with his greater subjectivism, was willing to do. Ritschl's answer to the problem of authority had the great merits of providing an authority that was really objective, and was thoroughly Christian in according to Jesus the central place in the religion he founded. However, in the form in which Ritschl stated his position, Christianity appeared as a supernatural religion quite apart from, and superior to, all the rest of the religious development of mankind; and his apologetic rigidly excluded metaphysics from theology.<sup>1</sup> Instead, he based his claim for the supernaturalism of Christianity on the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. W. Adams Brown, The Essence of Christianity, Chap. VII.

famous theory of value judgments. According to this, religious judgments, like those of ethics, are of a wholly practical nature. We know the truth of Christianity and its distinctive character because in Christ we find the power of God unto salvation, which lifts us up to a redeemed position of moral power and freedom which we find nowhere else.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Ritschlian theology involved a marked dualism between Christianity and the rest of the religious history of mankind, and its exclusion of metaphysics was unsatisfactory to the more philosophically-minded. It was exactly these points that Troeltsch saw as weaknesses, and endeavored to correct.

The Ritschlian Biblicism shown in the separation of Christianity from the rest of religious history did not satisfy Troeltsch's strong historical sense, and since he possessed a more philosophic mind than Ritschl had had, he could not rest content with the exclusion of metaphysics. He says in criticism of that school, "It is a fundamentally unphilosophic and anti-philosophic theology, which uses only as much philosophy or epistemology as it needs to free itself from philosophical and metaphysical competition."<sup>2</sup> For this purpose they appeal to Kant and those Neo-Kantians who are critical of metaphysics to the extreme of denying it altogether, and ignore the positive theories of religion of both Kant and the Neo-Kantians. Instead of using metaphysics, the Ritschlians prefer to turn to history, but here, too, Troeltsch goes on to say, "They concern themselves with free, scientific history only

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<sup>1</sup>Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, (translation by H.R. Mackintosh), pp. 203 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Rückblick auf ein halbes Jahrhundert der theologischen Wissenschaft," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 204.

in so far as it offers support for the ideational structure of religion in the great centers of the history of Christianity, and is adapted to the justification of a metaphysically agnostic theology."<sup>1</sup>

This selective use of history to serve the ends of Biblicism and supernaturalism also vitiates the theory of the value judgments, according to Troeltsch, for unless these value judgments are to become wholly subjective in character, they need the objective support of a thorough historical grounding.<sup>2</sup> In order to furnish such historic supplement for the inadequacies of the Ritschlian use of history, Troeltsch turned to the method of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Working on this historical approach to religion, he endeavored to discover a method that would overcome the difficulties of the Ritschlian theology.

The presuppositions of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule are quite different from those of the Ritschlians in regard to the relation of Christianity to history, and the whole theological method is in consequence quite dissimilar. Troeltsch, it is true, denied that this religionsgeschichtliche Schule was a school in the sense that it had a common theological viewpoint; but rather the group was comprised of thinkers with dissimilar aims who had merely a common method of approach as their bond of unity. (In fact, the group included among its modern representatives individuals of such divergent aims as himself and Otto Pfleiderer.)<sup>3</sup> Troeltsch himself was the chief systematic theologian of the school. The essence of the method, according to him, is

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Rückblick auf ein halbes Jahrhundert der theologischen Wissenschaft," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 217

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp., 502-505.

that in the construction of a dogmatic, one renounced all efforts to base it upon a supernatural apologetic for one's own religion, and approached Christianity and Judaism as a constituent part of the religious development of mankind, not something a priori distinct from, and superior to the other religions of the world. In this historical light, one could then survey and decide the competing claims of the world religions to finality.<sup>1</sup> (His own Absolutheit des Christentums is a good example of the application of the theory.)

Historically, the method has affinities with the approach of Locke and Hegel; but its real father is Schleiermacher. Since his time, however, a much larger body of knowledge about the genesis of religion has come to hand from the investigations of anthropologists, ethnologists, and psychologists so that the results of the application of the method are much surer than in his day, when comparatively little was known in these fields, and the science of history was still in a very undeveloped state. The increased knowledge of the subject of comparative religions enables the present-day investigator to make an historical analysis of the great religions of the world, and to measure them all by a common standard which arises out of the process itself. By this norm that emerges from the historical analysis itself, the claim to truth and validity of the various great religions can be decided, although it is impossible to prove on this historical basis that any one of the present world religions is final. All that can be done is to discern the presumption as to ultimate victory of the one which best conforms to this inherent norm arising from the analysis. As far as the norm by which to

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule,"  
Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 501.

measure the claims of the religions itself is concerned, it cannot be scientifically established, but in the investigation of the several religions, <sup>norm</sup> the/urges itself upon the consciousness of the competent investigator with self-evidencing force as the ideal inherent in them all, but realised in varying degrees in its several historic manifestations. The one that most fully actualises this norm would therefore be the one with the greatest presumption of finality in its favor.<sup>1</sup>

The second theological aim of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule concerns Christianity more particularly. It is the construction of the normative essence of Christianity through the historical analysis, or in other words building a dogmatic structure for the present time. Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre is the first attempt which uses the historical approach. Hegel also tried to construct such a system for the Christianity of his day. Both of these efforts contained defects due to the inferior historical knowledge of their times, and in the case of Hegel to a rational approach to history rather than a factual one; but these theologies served their day and generation, -- which is all we can hope for, or expect of any formulation of dogmatics, including our own. In fact the aim of the construction of the ~~normative construction of~~ ~~the~~ essence of Christianity is exactly this: to determine what Christianity really is for our own time, and to make a consistent and convincing statement of it which shall include both the historical sources of revelation which have come down to us from the past, and the religious convictions of the present-day Christian community, systematised and criticised in the light of the best knowledge of our time.<sup>2</sup> It was

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 509.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 510-515.

in the effort to construct such a dogmatic that Troeltsch developed his concept of norms in theology.

Before giving an exact definition of the norms, and the method by which Troeltsch evolved the concept, it will be necessary to consider the problems which the idea was intended to meet. We have spoken at some length of the break-down of the authorities that had been regarded as absolute and final in religion, and the resultant confusion among religiously inclined people. No one realised this situation more clearly than did Troeltsch. He saw that the old authorities had lost all hold upon the mind of at least his educated contemporaries; and that the newer substitutes for the old standards were unsatisfactory, as we have pointed out in his criticism of the Ritschlian school. He comprehended also that the search for any single seat of authority had been rendered futile by the progress of the historical criticism which had affected the theological world; that a marked trend towards scepticism was abroad in some quarters, and <sup>that</sup> in others the whole body of religious convictions had become unsure and relative. Those who were not content with the popular secular attitude of living in this world alone were turning to artificial religious fads of a purely modern sort: monistic pantheism of an aesthetic character, humanism, enthusiasm for eastern cults, theosophy and even Buddhism under the influence of Schopenhauer, or were <sup>forming</sup> / groups, who under the sway of Nietzsche, or the materialistic natural scientists, had given up any belief in God, but still clung to ethics.<sup>1</sup>

At the time in which Troeltsch began to work, the trend away

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die christliche Weltanschauung und ihre Gegenströmungen," "Die theologische und religiöse Lage der Gegenwart," and "Atheistische Ethik," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II. Also Die wissenschaftliche Lage und ihre Anforderungen an die Theologie.

from Christianity had doubtless gone farther in Germany than in the English-speaking world, but his description of the groups who were seeking some new religious solution sounds very like **similar groups** - at least in the American world - today. Since the problems to which he addressed himself / **so** closely resemble our own, it seems probable that the solutions he endeavored to give for them are worth careful consideration in our time. It was to this group who were already confused and for whom the old religious positions were shattered that Troeltsch particularly directed his efforts.<sup>1</sup> The points of attack on the Christian position were then, as now, from three chief sources: the onslaughts of the natural sciences, **psychology,** and historical criticism. With the problems of natural science and its relation to the Christian world view, Troeltsch did little more than to try to build a framework for theology large enough to afford scope for the results of their findings, and to emphasize the metaphysical aspects of the ultimate problems involved in those questions which were beyond the power of science to settle. The psychological side was subsumed / **under** the historical and epistemological part of his contribution.

There remained the historical problems as his chief center of effort. In order to give a real answer to the questions in this sphere, he tried to put aside all remnants of the older dogmatic method in theology which had the a priori criterion of the supernatural by which to judge all historical phenomena connected with the Christian religion, and to give an answer to the questions set by historical criticism on their own ground. The interconnections between history and the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Logos und Mythos in der Theologie," Gesammelte Schriften, p. 817.



Christian religion are numerous and inextricable. The Christian church, following the example of its Master, took over the Old Testament religious heritage, whose revelation was contained in the long historic process through which the Hebrew people gradually came to understand the character of the God Who was revealing Himself to them. That in itself brought a train of connections between faith and history. Moreover, the redemption which Christianity promises, and its chief revelation of God center in the historic figure of Jesus, its Founder; hence the faith of the Church must always have the sure basis of that historic figure from which to draw its most vital experience of the character of God, its certainty of redemption, and the inspiration for its worship, education and missionary activity for the extension of the Kingdom of God in the world. The fact that the Christian church goes back to its Founder as a historical personality is, of course, the greatest connection between faith and history. Not only these considerations, but also the facts concerning the rise of the early church make it necessary for the Christians to face the need for a firm historic basis for its whole heritage.<sup>1</sup>

There are further questions to be decided on historical grounds: such as how much of the later elements which the Church assimilated from the ancient and the medieval world are in accord with its essential ideal and the trends inherent in it from the beginning, and how much is extraneous and foreign to its spirit; and finally, the problem of what elements in the historic heritage are vital and necessary to the present-day Christian community. Now in the old days, no one

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Troeltsch, Article, "Glaube und Geschichte," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by Schiele, 1910 edition.

thought of questioning the facts recorded in the Bible, nor was there much difficulty in accepting naively the traditional heritage of the Church. Questions about matters of this kind are quite largely a modern affair, raised by the progress of historical science and Biblical criticism. Of course, the systematic theologian must leave to the Biblical critics and the Church historian the task of ascertaining the facts about these matters, but he must appraise the significance of their findings for faith. Out of the complex historical phenomenon that history shows Christianity to be, the theologian must determine what elements are really essential, vital and normative for the present-day, in other words: erect a theological structure for the modern church.

But how can any decision be reached as to what these normative, vital and essential elements in the Christian heritage are? The great historian, von Harnack, in his Wesen des Christentums (English translation entitled What is Christianity?) had given the answer that the essence of Christianity was to be found in the life and teachings of Jesus. Troeltsch, however, believed that no single answer of this kind could be given; since in a historical phenomenon so vast and complex, it is impossible to point to one element or one period, even though that be Jesus and his teaching, as the essence and weight of authority for the whole.<sup>1</sup> Instead, one must determine the essence of Christianity for each separate period, for this essence is different for each era of Christian history. The theologian must determine it for his own day, considering the historical trends which have moulded

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule, pp. 511-512.

the present, and the present-day religious consciousness of the Christian community. Only thus can he do adequate justice to the historical heritage of revelation, and to the living character of the latter as a present fact of the religious consciousness.

Two further questions arise in connection with the determination of essence of Christianity: How can the field of history, which is really relativistic in character, furnish normative and therefore authoritative standards for theology? And secondly, how are these norms derived? The answer which Troeltsch gives to the first of these questions is that although the province of history does relate to facts, to temporary individualisations, and relative forms, these individualisations nevertheless are incarnations of, and approximations to an ideal which is inherent in them, and towards whose fuller embodiment they strive. This ideal is never to be found in the abstract, but only in the concrete. Thus the separate eras of Christianity are efforts to embody the ideal inherent in its historical heritage, and also <sup>to</sup> incarnate whatever new aspects of the continuing revelation of the Divine Spirit that age has apprehended for itself. Even revelation is not to be found detached from the personalities who are its historical bearers.<sup>1</sup> The effort of the method is then to discern this absolute element in its relative form, and to separate the Divine working from the human dross surrounding it.

The answer to the second question concerns the derivation of the norms themselves. Troeltsch saw in history not a chaos, a mass of relative and fleeting forms without purpose or meaning, but the scene

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 747.

of the Divine activity, moving towards definite goals and ends of its own, of which all the individual forms were constituent and contributing factors.<sup>1</sup> The investigator who seeks the norms by which to judge this vast historical object must abandon himself to it, for the norms are inherent in the object itself. He starts from the data furnished to him by history; but instead of finding the object a disordered mass of divergent trends that lead nowhere, he finds norms, directive trends, emerging from it. Indeed they arise almost spontaneously out of it; and are discerned as the ideals which are inherent in it, and which it is striving to express. The norms in the historical analysis are never external standards such as the canons of logic, which are applied from without; they are intrinsic to the object, and can be discerned in no other way than through the analysis of the object itself. Of course, with the discerning of the norms, history as an empirical science has been left behind, and the investigator has passed over into the sphere of philosophy, or more properly metaphysics; but only through this transition can the full meaning and ultimate ends inherent in the historic object be understood, the truly absolute values be reached, and the divine ends be apprehended through the concrete forms that partially express them.

The process of ascertaining the theological norms is not only a philosophic one, it is a theological or religious act as well; for Troeltsch always maintained that knowledge of the religious Object, the God Who thus reveals Himself in history could be reached only

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 747.

through religion.<sup>1</sup> The investigator who would discern this Divine revelation must therefore be religious himself, or he will miss the norms, these trends which show the Divine activity in the historical process. An illustration may help to clarify this point. Let us suppose that a Beethoven symphony is being played at a concert. The layman who listens to it may hear nothing but a pleasing melody. A mathematician who is present may understand the rhythmic structure behind it. But if a trained musician is there, he will not only be pleased by the melody, and understand the rhythmic structure, he will penetrate behind them both to the theme which the piece expresses, to the idea it incarnates. So also when the theologian comes to the analysis of the historic object, he sees in it more than a mass of facts as the empirical historian does, he sees more than an ordered structure as the philosopher might, he penetrates to the Divine activity which motivates it behind its concrete form.

It now becomes necessary to attempt a definition of the norms in the sense in which Troeltsch uses the term. The norms are directive trends or tendencies which arise spontaneously from the analysis of the historic object, striking the observer with an inescapable force that makes them self-authenticating in their cogency. The norms may be values, meanings, ideals or tendencies towards an ideal/<sup>in the direction</sup>of which the object is moving. They may be incorporated in the life of a certain group, within the historic object, or common to the whole object at a certain period or periods, or they may be incarnated in a historic personality within the object. The norms are a priori and self-validating in character; but are not necessarily timeless, universally valid and absolute,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," in Zeitschrift für Theology und Kirche, Heft 5, 1896, p. 432.

since they inhere in individual historical aggregates, and may vary from one epoch to another.<sup>1</sup> The norms for the Christianity of the Middle Ages, for example, might be very different according to Troeltsch's view from those for twentieth century or primitive Christianity. Also, if China or India should become Christian, the norms for their Christianity might be entirely unlike those for the Christianity of the European-American world at the same time; since the historic aggregates out of which the norms arise would be different in each case.

The authoritative nature of the norms rests principally upon two of their characteristics. The first of these is the fact that they are inherent in the object itself, instead of external standards applied from without. The second is their objective, or self-authenticating quality. Even in the realm of sense perceptions, the norms for some particular concept derive their authority from these two aspects of their nature. They are inherent in the object, and they strike the observer with a force that is compelling, or as Troeltsch would say, a priori, or self-authenticating. If one wishes to form an ordinary sense-concept, like cat, it is only necessary to examine individuals of that species, and one can soon determine entirely to one's own satisfaction what the norms, the indispensable characteristics of that genus are; but there is no process in the world by which one could learn from applying the canons of logic to the object what that animal really is. Its norms are inherent in the object, and binding and cogent in their force.

Nor is the process of the discovery of norms different in the less tangible realms such as art and religion. There, too, the norms

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, p. 166.

are inherent in the object. The concept of the beautiful cannot be discovered by the application of logic to the object. One derives the norms for the beautiful in art from examining the works of the masters, from which certain indispensable characteristics such as harmony, symmetry, balance, and a subtle but compelling quality suggestive of an ideal truth beyond the concrete expression embodied in the object emerge as the norms for the beautiful and strike the observer with self-authenticating force.

The same kind of process goes on determining the norms in the sphere of religion. Here history furnishes the object of investigation from which the standards are derived, for it presents the pageant of the interaction of the Divine with the human spirit both in the consciousness of groups and in the consciousness of individuals. Through the contemplation of the historic object, the norms, that is, the absolutes, the Divine characteristics, meanings and ends do emerge from the human dross with which they are intermingled, and strike the investigator with inescapable force. The Reformation is a good example of a period in which one can see how Troeltsch's concept works. The analysis of it, of course, reveals human failings and faults, but it shows larger values, absolutes in their partial expression, and the undoubted action of the Divine behind them, which no religious observer can miss.

The matter of the validation of the theological norms is the final point in the explanation of the working of the whole concept. How are we to guard against the possibility of error upon the part of the investigator? Is there not a chance that he may be mistaken in his apprehension of the norms which thus arise from his investigation of the historic object? Troeltsch frankly admits that there is a certain danger of subjectivism attendant upon the ascertaining of the norms, and that

there is the possibility of various investigators disagreeing about the norms for a given period. However, he feels that the normative elements are so compelling in themselves, and the force of the *Zeitgeist* is so strong in the object of investigation at any particular period as to insure fundamental agreement among the investigators.<sup>1</sup> Not content with this objective validation for the norms from the nature of the object, he has a further subjective validation in the religious a priori, a form in the epistemological subject by which the human reason acting in the religious sphere is able to recognise the working of the Divine reason in the object of investigation. This theory of the religious a priori will engage our attention at length later on, but here it must suffice to say that by means of this postulate of the religious a priori, Troeltsch tried to insure to religion an independent position among the constituents of the human reason, and also to minimize the possibility of subjective error in the discerning of the norms which constitute the essence of Christianity.

Such in brief is Troeltsch's construction of the concept of norms. It is this group of norms which constitute the essence of Christianity which he would substitute for the single authorities of the older theologies. His claims for his authority are modest. He nowhere promises from it the absolute certainty that the older religious authorities seemed to assure. He does not assert that the norms are necessarily absolutes for more than the particular period from which they are derived, although they may be. Nor does he maintain that they are always applicable to other historical aggregates than the one from

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 512.



which they arise, although in some cases they may prove capable of this wider application, and become absorbed into the historical continuum of the Christian heritage. Their real function is to provide a normative essence of Christianity for the present, by revealing the ideals passed on from the historical heritage in a manner authoritative for the present, and indication the directions along which the future should be shaped in order to attain a fuller expression of the ideal inherent in the object.<sup>1</sup> Their authority is a living, growing one, but it also preserves the ideals and the urges inherent in historic Christianity, from which they spring.

Furthermore Troeltsch claims for the construction of the normative essence of Christianity, the authority of a science only in so far as the material with which it starts, the historic data, are scientific, and in so far as theology always works with the concepts of theoretical knowledge and philosophy. The rest of the structure rests upon faith, which is necessarily personal; hence theology cannot be a pure science, (Wissenschaft)<sup>2</sup> Faith does, according to him, furnish the believer with real knowledge of the religious Object, but it is a personal assurance resting upon experience, and therefore incapable of scientific demonstration.<sup>3</sup>

This double nature of theology is a logical outgrowth of Troeltsch's position. He was not content to base theology upon the experience of faith alone, lest one run into the danger of self-deception; therefore he felt that it is necessary to criticise and check this personal/experi-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 423 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Dogmatik," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Glaube," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

ence of religion with the best knowledge of the time upon matters relevant to it. On the other hand theology could never be entirely a matter of science or philosophy, since only through religious faith could the religious Object ever be known.<sup>1</sup>

At the time when Troeltsch first formulated the main outlines of his approach to theology, with its method of the norms, in the essay, Die Selbständigkeit der Religion, which appeared in the Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche in 1895-96, there were many who questioned the possibility of building a dogmatic along the lines he suggested. Julius Kaftan replied to his article by raising grave doubts as to the carrying out of Troeltsch's approach without granting the unique supernaturalism of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> A somewhat similar criticism is that of Prof. H. R. Mackintosh, who expresses the opinion that a method of constructing a dogmatic such as Troeltsch suggests, a priori excludes the possibility of recognising the absoluteness of Jesus, since the relative field of history knows no absolutes, and that <sup>this would be</sup> to cut the very nerve of the Christian religion from the start.<sup>3</sup> Certainly Troeltsch's own normative construction of theology did work out much as these theologians prophesied; but that effect was due more to a failing in Troeltsch's own temperament than to the inherent logic of his method. Troeltsch, in his great conscientiousness, as an objective thinker, sometimes failed to recognise the absolutes as such, even when the logic of his concept of norms demanded it.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Heft 5, 1896, p. 432.

<sup>2</sup>J. Kaftan, "Die Selbständigkeit des Christentums," and "Die Methode; der Supranaturalismus," in Die Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Heft 5, 1896 and Heft 1, 1898.

<sup>3</sup>H. R. Mackintosh, "Does the Historical Study of Religion Yield a Dogmatic Theology?" in American Journal of Theology, 1909, pp. 505-519,

The concept of the norms as a method promises more authority and greater assurance for Christianity than it actually attained in Troeltsch's own hands. If this were not so, the method would be, like Troeltsch's own personal quest for certainty, a glorious yet tragic failure. Troeltsch himself was never content with anything he devised, and at the end of his life, as at the beginning, was still seeking the truth along new lines, tearing down with his own hands what he had previously built up. Yet he had within his grasp the possibility of achieving the certainty he craved, had he been content to concentrate, to systematise, and to think through to their ultimate consequences the positions he had reached. Since he himself did not do this, it is for those of us who feel the greatness of the main outlines of his work to endeavor to shape and focus it so as to bring out its inherent possibilities and the values for the future which lie in it. It is in the hope of making a small and humble contribution towards the better understanding of Troeltsch's concept of norms as indicating the lines along which a solution of the vexed problem of authority in religion might be reached that the present paper is undertaken.

With that aim in view, it will first become necessary to show how Troeltsch evolved the concept of norms in the field of philosophy of history, then the relation of the norms of philosophy of history to those of theology. The relation of the historical norms to the theological ones will lead into the peculiarities of the derivation of the theological norms themselves, and the application of the method in the construction of the normative essence of Christianity, with particular attention to the unique normative position of Jesus. Although the application of the norms to the general field of the world religions from

some points of view belongs to the sphere of philosophy of religion, it is included here partly because no account of Troeltsch's method

would be complete without it, but also because this phase raises the question of the finality of Christianity, which is a theological concern as well as an interest of philosophy of religion. Finally, we shall endeavor to appraise the concept as a contribution towards the solution of the problem of authority, with some criticisms of, and supplements to the theory with a view to clarifying its real intent and indicating some of its applications. It is not the intention of this criticism to go beyond the broad outline which Troeltsch set, but only, so far as possible to fill in the fine points which the grand scale of his outline leaves bare, in the hope of illuminating thereby the greatness of the original a little more fully.

### CHAPTER III

#### TROELTSCH'S DETERMINATION OF NORMS IN THE GENERAL FIELD OF HISTORY

We have seen that Troeltsch considered history of vital importance to the theologian, because revelation takes place within that sphere. The Divine self-manifestation has been made chiefly through the medium of personality rather than the world of nature.<sup>1</sup> Even Jesus can be understood only in the light of the historic development of the religion of Israel, which preceded Him, and His greatness can be fully estimated only in connection with the succession of the great figures of the Christian Church, whom He inspired. Christianity itself can be best interpreted as it is seen in the setting of the general religious history of mankind. Yet not all of the sweep of history is of equal importance to the theologian. Troeltsch believed that only the history of the higher religions can yield material that is of real significance in understanding the true nature of religion. The more primitive side of the history of religion, while it does throw some light on the later development

from a psychological point of view, is too intermingled with myth of an uncritical sort to display the real aims of religion.<sup>2</sup> He therefore confined his attention to the more developed forms, where the motivations and ideals that underlie the separate manifestations of religions could be clearly perceived.

The more he studied the higher religions, the more Troeltsch came to feel that it was impossible to understand them fully without

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Religionsphilosophie," in Die Philosophie im Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, Festschrift für Kuno Fischer, edited by Wilhelm Windelband, p. 139.

investigating the cultures of which they were a part. This was one main consideration which caused him to shift over from theology to the study of philosophy of history; but, as Bornhausen points out, his interest in the latter field always remained that of a theologian.<sup>1</sup> The same motive, the search for the absolute in its relative historical embodiment, dominated Troeltsch's historical studies, as it had engaged him in his theological pursuits. Although a philosopher of history, he sought the Divine ground of revelation behind the human activities which make up history. The quest of the normative elements ever engaged him. It is therefore necessary to trace his method of discerning the norms in the field of history itself in order to understand his concept of norms in theology; for in his historical studies, the method which he had long been using in his theological research reached its final fruition.

Troeltsch's philosophy of history is set forth at length in his book, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, which he published in 1922, just a few months before his death. Several of the shorter essays such as Moderne Geschichtsphilosophie, Geschichte und Metaphysik and Die Bedeutung des Begriffes der Kontingenz also deal with the subject; and an outline of his method is available in English in the article on Historiography in the Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. The discussion of this chapter is based mostly upon Der Historismus, which is by far the most exhaustive treatment of the subject which Troeltsch left, with such reference to the other essays as is necessary or desirable to supplement the lengthier work.

The method of the derivation of the norms in the field of the

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Bornhausen, "Ernst Troeltsch und das Problem der wissenschaftlichen Theologie," in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1923-24, p. 198.

philosophy of history throws much light upon the concept of norms in theology, for the method is much the same in the two cases. In fact one might almost say that the theological norms are one aspect of the historical. This does not mean that the norms in the two fields are identical, though at times they are; but merely that the method of determination is much the same in both cases. First of all, it will be necessary to the understanding of the workings of the norms in the field of history to survey the method of historical science as Troeltsch conceived it, then to see how the transition from the science of history to the philosophy of history takes place, and finally how the norms are derived, and what their purpose is.

In Der Historismus, Troeltsch begins by a discussion of the science of history, and how it passes over into the philosophy of history. The science of history belongs to the general group of the social sciences, which includes others such as anthropology, sociology and ethnology. Like the other social sciences, historical science can be best understood by contrasting it with the natural sciences.<sup>1</sup> The natural or physical sciences have as their object of investigation the physical universe, whose laws they trace with great exactness. The social sciences, on the other hand, investigate the complex activities of mankind. History as a science has its special province in the endeavor to understand the pursuits of men in the past, both as individuals influencing the currents of group life, and as social units acting collectively upon other groups or individuals. The results of its investigations must

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<sup>1</sup>For an extended discussion of the contrasts between the social and the natural sciences, see Dilthey, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften Erster Teil. Troeltsch follows Dilthey closely in his discussion. The same general distinctions between the two groups were made by Wilhelm Windelband in his Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft, 1894.



from the nature of its object, be less precise and exact than those of the natural sciences, whose object, the material universe, is rational and law-abiding, instead of complex, dynamic, and creative as the historical object is.<sup>1</sup>

Since the object of investigation with which history deals is so different from that of the natural sciences, its method also presents a marked contrast to theirs. The natural sciences employ the concept of causation, and go on the presupposition that their object is capable of rationalisation by the laws of mathematics and logic.<sup>2</sup> The object of history is free, creative, and incalculable. At times it can be understood only through intuition, and, in comparison with the physical universe, one might almost venture to call the historical object irrational, if that be understood to mean that it is alogical, and contains incalculable elements of freewill.<sup>3</sup> The concern of the science of history must therefore be to penetrate into the nature of its object, to find its meaning, to interpret it, and to find the values it contains.

When questions of meaning and value emerge, history passes over from the realm of pure science into that of philosophy and metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> Up to this point in his discussion, Troeltsch follows very closely the theories of Dilthey and Rickert as to the nature of history, but here he diverges from them. Dilthey was skeptical about going into the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 83-84.

<sup>2</sup>Of course, most of Troeltsch's work was done at a time when natural law was regarded as much more fixed than is the case at present.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 42-43, 49.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 77.



metaphysical aspects of history at all, as he sets forth at length in the two final sections of his work, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften; and Rickert, in his Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, had tried to ground the values he discovered through the philosophy of history upon the scientific facts involved in the situation rather than upon any metaphysical implications behind them. Troeltsch criticises this caution of Rickert's; for he believed that it was quite impossible to find such a scientific ground for these meanings and values, which by their very nature, must be rooted in some higher metaphysical or religious Absolute behind the historic facts.<sup>1</sup>

From the standpoint of religion Troeltsch was undoubtedly right in upholding this metaphysical and religious interest in the values inherent in the historical object. Not only in the interests of theology is Troeltsch correct in holding to the necessity for this transition to metaphysics, but also as a philosopher of history, he was true to a conviction that he had held for years, that one of the main purposes of that study is to determine the most valuable trends in the past and present around which to shape the future, rather than to lay the whole weight on the factual side, which leads only to relativism and skepticism. Since the process discerns value and meaning, the indications of the Sein-sollen in the Sein, (that which ought to be in that which is), it naturally leads into the realm of the ideal, that is the metaphysical, the superempirical.<sup>2</sup>

What is then the method by which philosophy of history proceeds in the interpretation and evaluation of its object? It starts

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Moderne Geschichtsphilosophie," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 677, 688.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, Vorwort, p. vii.

with a logic of history, quite distinct from ordinary epistemological logic, and composed of categories and concepts derived from the object itself. This logic of history differs from ordinary logic in several important particulars. Its contact with its object is immediate; for it has its source in the object instead of being an external canon, like those of ordinary logic. Instead of having only one method of procedure, like formal logic, the logic of history has a variety of methods, which are used from time to time as the inner necessities of the object demand. Finally the logic of history may even contain contradictions and antinomies quite impossible to epistemological logic. In spite of this fact, the principles or categories of historical logic emerge from their object with sufficient clarity so that they can be formulated into a system of their own.<sup>1</sup>

The logic of history is formal in its nature, and yields certain categories and concepts by which to interpret the material of history. When the categories are applied to the material, they produce the results and evaluations which constitute the philosophy of history. In his work upon the formal logic of history and its categories, Troeltsch acknowledges his indebtedness to Windelband, Simmel, and Rickert, whose general method he follows; for the system is largely the creation of these three men.<sup>2</sup> The categories are presuppositions, and principles of selection, construction, and combination which are originated by the inherent necessities of their object, which they in turn interpret. They are not general principles or laws which are

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 27-29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

capable of universal application; they belong only to their own object.

There are two main categories: that of the historical aggregate or historical entity and that of development. The historical entity or aggregate is the unit of historical investigation, a group with similar historical and cultural antecedents, such as the state, the nation, or some other homogeneous social unit. History is concerned with groups and their activities rather than with the individuals as such; hence it is the group as an entity that is the center of the investigation, and its real object. The category of the historical individualisation is interpreted by means of several concepts or sub-categories which further illuminate the activities and significance of the object. These are: originality and irreproducibility, (Einmaligkeit); the representative; the essential; unity of significance or value, (Sinn- oder Werteinheit); the Common Spirit; the unconscious; the creative; freedom in the sense of unimpelled volitional acts; and chance.<sup>1</sup> A short explanation will be necessary in order to make clear what Troeltsch means by these sub-categories.

The first of these interpretative sub-categories, originality and irreproducibility in the sense of something which happens once, and once-for-all, applies to those individual peculiarities of nations or cultural groups, or to the impress of outstanding personalities such as the genius, upon the individual totality, which cannot be explained by any survey of the environmental, historical or psychological factors in the case; but which must be taken as a given element in the historical investigation, even though no rational ground for its presence can be

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<sup>1</sup>These categories are enumerated and discussed by Troeltsch in Der Historismus, pp. 32-61.

brought forward. Examples of this originality and irreproducibility would be the peculiar religious genius of the Hebrew people, or the impact of some great personality such as Buddha or the other founders of the great religions.<sup>1</sup>

The representative is the means of selecting from the complex trends in the historical object those which particularly embody, typify and symbolise the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations of the countless individuals who comprise the historical entity at some particular time. The Reformation would be an example of such a movement; for it is significant not merely as an expression of the insight of its leaders, but as an outburst of the feelings and ideals of multitudes of ordinary people which found a voice in Luther and the other Reformers.<sup>2</sup>

The category or concept of the essential, as its name implies, relates to the effort to select the vital and important trends inherent in the historical unit. Such a work as Harnack's Wesen des Christentums is an attempt to apply this concept to the history of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Closely related to the category of the essential is that of unity or oneness of value or meaning. This concept refers to the apprehension of the common aim or value which holds the aggregate together, and makes it a unity. This common aim or end may be either conscious or unconscious on the part of the group. If the group is unconscious of this cohesive aim or end, it may require an act of historical intuition on the part of the investigator ~~which is needed~~ to discover it; for though the unify-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

ing factor is sometimes very obscure, it is sure to be present. Even a robber band, Troeltsch says, may be a Sinneinheit in this sense.<sup>1</sup>

The next sub-category, the Common Spirit, explains itself through its name; but it differs from the Sinneinheit in that it refers to the psychological forces, the reactions of the various individuals in the group upon one another so that they can unite for action and cooperate in spite of their individuality and separateness from each other. Why they should unite in this manner in spite of the clashes of interest as individuals or classes which exist among them is an antinomy which history cannot explain, but must accept as a fact with which to reckon in formulating its philosophy. In short, this is the concept which defines the relation of the component entities to the whole, and of the whole to the individuals comprising it.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of the unconscious serves to illuminate further that of the common spirit. Some of the drives which hold the individuals in cohesion so that they form a united group are instinctive, unreflective and too much a product of tradition and background to be present in the conscious mind. These factors, unconscious as they are, nevertheless contribute to the common spirit. This historical category of the unconscious must not be confused with the "unconscious" of which the psychologists talk. The unconscious in the sense Troeltsch uses it here applies to the group rather than the individual, and belongs to the historic object itself, not to the realm of psychology.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, pp. 42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 44 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

Certain trends and movements in the life of the individual totality fall into the sub-category of the creative. By this Troeltsch understands the impact of certain unusual individuals upon the group, which has the effect of changing or redirecting the channels of the life of the entire social entity. The influence of some of the great personalities of history like Caesar or Napoleon would be classified by this concept; but it is to be distinguished from the category of irreproducibility by the fact that it is a recurrent phenomenon rather than one which happens once-for-all. This element accounts partially for new currents in the life of the group. It is one of those incalculable features of the historic object, which set the latter apart from <sup>the rigid operation of</sup> the law of cause and effect which prevails in the natural world.<sup>1</sup>

A sub-category of the creative is freedom, that is, conscious acts of volition, (Freiheit im Willkürsinne). This means the voluntary modification of the life of the historical entity by the conscious erection of aims or goals for the group, either by the creative individuals or the group as a whole. This is another of the incalculable elements of the historic object.<sup>2</sup> Two examples seem to illuminate Troeltsch's conception of this category: Alexander the Great, with his desire to blend the cultures of the East and the West through his conquests, is an illustration of an individual who changed the life of his historic group through his achievement of a conscious aim for the group-life. The Russian five-year plan is a clear instance of a group as a whole setting up a definite goal for its life through its own will.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

To the list of the sub-categories for the interpretation of the individual totality in the historic sense must be added that of chance as a profound modifier of the life of the historical entities. Natural catastrophes such as floods, fires and earthquakes would come under this classification, which is really quite self-explanatory. This concludes the list of the sub-categories for the interpretation of the historical entity.

The second of the chief categories for the interpretation of the historical object is that of development. This is not to be confused with evolution upon the one hand, nor with progress in the sense of something which takes place automatically on the other. It refers to the changes which take place within the object through its own inherent drives or aims. These changes may be regressive as well as progressive. Sometimes the aim of the historic aggregate is hard to recognise, but what this category really denotes is the so-called "historical ideas" such as the Renaissance, capitalism, or Christianity, which change their object through their own intrinsic drives or aims quite apart from factors of chance, conscious will or other modifying forces, such as those covered by the sub-categories. This category is one of the most interesting, historically speaking, of them all.<sup>1</sup>

By means of the categories, the logic of history then turns to the interpretation of the material of its object, and out of the process of their application to it, formulates a philosophy of history. The mere erection of the system of categories is only one side of the process, which would be very formal indeed if the philosophy of history stoppe d

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, pp. 54-58.

there. The second aspect of the philosophy of history, which is the material side, comes with the application of the categories to the interpretation of the object with a view to ascertaining the ends towards which the historical entity is striving, and to comparing it with other historical aggregates. It is through this comparison of the aims and goals of the several historical complexes that the philosopher of history seeks to understand the meaning and aim of all human history. The process of comparison not only seeks for this universal meaning of human history; but it also serves to illuminate further the significance of the several aggregates, which cannot be fully understood by themselves, but only in their relation to the others with which they come into contact. It is through this contact with the others that the inherent aims of the separate entity reach full fruition, just as the individual man cannot attain his highest development by himself, but only through his social contacts. On the other hand, it would be an impossible task to unravel the meaning of history as a whole if the significance of each separate entity

could not be at least partially discovered through the examination of it taken by itself. Thus it is necessary for the historical observer to apprehend the values and ideals of his own group in order to begin to understand its connection with the whole of mankind, and it, in turn, throws light upon the meaning of the whole.<sup>1</sup> In the modern world, which is so closely interrelated, this proposition of Troeltsch's needs no proof; for we know only too well how closely the destiny of each historical unit is bound up with that of all the others.

To find out the meaning of all history through the study of the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 67-73.



historical aggregates by themselves and in their relation to each other is the purpose of the philosophy of history: but to Troeltsch this does not mean a vast rational construction of universal history with universal concepts and principles drawn from reason alone, like the Hegelian philosophy of history. The construction takes place chiefly with reference to the observer's own group, -- that is the Western-European, in Troeltsch's own case.<sup>1</sup> The construction also takes place from the standpoint of the present; but it includes the past which has created the present, and looks towards the future, which should be consciously shaped and directed along the lines of the values and ideals that appear to be most vital and significant in the present. The function of the historical philosopher is a practical and vital one, in that his determination of these values in the present life of the group is made with the object of shaping the future so that it will approximate the inherent ideals of the entity more fully. He shows the way to the creation of a new cultural synthesis. He aids in this formation of a new cultural synthesis in two ways: by discovering the ideal towards which the group itself is tending so far as that is already partially realised in the present aggregate; and by comparing this ideal trend with that of other historical entities, with the consequent clarification of the place of the group in the relation to the whole.

This construction, with a view to a new cultural synthesis, involves a thorough self-criticism of the philosopher's own group. It

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Troeltsch's discussion of the European group in the second section of Der Historismus as the object of such an investigation. It is a matter of great regret that Troeltsch did not live to write the volume in which he meant to construct the normative essence of the modern European cultural group.

is a measuring of the actual attainments of the group upon its own inherent ideal, as the latter has come down from the past, and appears in the present in order that the group may consciously move towards the more perfect achievement of that ideal. Just here the philosophy of history merges into ethics, the realm of the "ought" (Sollen). We now come to the concept of the norms; for these directive trends about which the new cultural synthesis should be built, have the authoritative character of standards according to which the life of the group must be guided if it is to move in the direction of the ideal.<sup>1</sup> Through this transition from that which is to that which ought to be, in the apprehension of the norms inherent in the historical object, the philosophy of history enters the realm of metaphysics, for the norms are nothing less than indications of or trends towards absolute values, which have their Ground in God.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of the norms deserves careful consideration. First of all, these norms have their temporal, historical basis in the object itself. Although they are embodied in the object, they do not receive their sanctions from their present sociological or psychological conditions with which they are mingled, nor from any laws of science of one kind or another. Indeed, it must be remembered that one of the main contrasts between the historical object, and the object of the natural sciences, the physical universe, is that the historical object can only be interpreted to a very limited degree through the working of the law of cause and effect. In history there is freedom for the human will to act, and room for the new, the original and the creative to appear. The his-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 79-83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

torical and ethical life of mankind, though at points subject to the sphere of nature and natural law, does have a margin of independence. It is in this margin of independence that the norms arise.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the norms do arise out of a particular historical aggregate causes them to have an individual significance or value; yet this value transcends its concrete form in the object, for it is a part of an absolute value which is intuitively perceived to be present even in that concrete and partial expression. This fact does not necessarily put the norms into the category of universal values, but merely postulates that in them there is a potentiality or a direction towards values wider than present and finite significance.<sup>2</sup> This potentiality is one aspect of the authoritative character of the norms. It should be observed, however, that this universal or absolute potentiality which the norm bears is not rooted in any abstract universal, rational concepts, as in Hegel's philosophy of history, nor yet in a rational and formally grounded ethic, which receives its content through the scientific grounding of the values, like the norms in Rickert's system, which Troeltsch criticises severely.<sup>3</sup> Through his emphasis on the historical entity from which the norms emerge, Troeltsch saves his theory from the abstract and rational character of Hegel's construction, which takes place on a purely dialectic basis, and also from the formal character of Rickert's, which loses touch with the concrete object in its effort to conform to the necessities prescribed by grounding an ethic on science.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Moderne Geschichtsphilosophie," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 704 ff.

Although Troeltsch's norms cannot be considered as timeless, universally valid and absolute, they are nevertheless a priori, objective, and authoritative for their particular situation. A priori in the sense in which Troeltsch uses it here seems to mean, "spontaneously generated by the object." His thought on the question of a prioris varied considerably at different periods of his life, but the final sense in which he uses the term here is not the Kantian meaning of a form in the subject, like the a prioris of time and space in the Kritik der reinen<sup>n</sup> Vernunft. Troeltsch himself in his earlier conception of the religious a priori certainly considered it such a form, but here he clearly means a self-authenticating, spontaneously generating quality in the object. The norms are then objective, a priori, so that the investigator by an act of will recognises them, and finds in them the keys to the essential meaning of the historical object out of which they arise. In this final stage of Troeltsch's thought on the subject of/a prioris, <sup>the</sup> the term is then one of content rather than form, and objective rather than subjective.<sup>1</sup> He himself says that it more nearly resembles Kant's a priori of practical reason, an intuition which becomes a practical necessity only through an act of the will which recognises it as such.<sup>2</sup> Here a priori is to be defined as self-authenticating and autonomous.

The self-authenticating manner in which the norms arise from the object itself is the assurance of their objectivity. They illuminate and clarify even the conflicting tendencies of and antinomies in the object. It is to them that the investigator abandons himself. Of course,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 166, 179-180.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

he may apprehend them wrongly, but there is little danger of this if he really lets them guide him. Instead of bringing with him to the investigation some ready-made criterion of his own into which he wishes to fit the object. If the investigator is competently trained, he can recognise the norms without difficulty, and thus indicate the future cultural synthesis which the historical aggregate should take.<sup>1</sup>

Though the norms are a priori and objective, this does not carry with it the assumption that they must therefore be timeless, eternal, and universally valid. It must be kept in mind that they arise out of a particular situation, and at a particular time, -- a fact that originates in the individual and developing character of the historical object. They may be timeless if they prove valid for more than their own situation, as for example, the teachings of Jesus are timeless. To say that the norms are eternal would be possible only for a Divine Intelligence which contained all time in itself. The norms start as particulars illuminating their own situation, and are not, like the canons of logic, necessarily applicable everywhere and at any time.<sup>2</sup>

The question of those norms which apply only to their own situation, and those which have wider applicability so that they approach universality and absoluteness, leads us to the distinction which Troeltsch makes between primary and secondary norms, (Normen des ersten und des zweiten Grades). The differentiation of these two sorts takes place in the comparison of the investigator's own historical aggregate with other historical entities. Let us suppose that the historian has investigated his

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 169, 181.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 162, 183.

own group, and has ascertained the norms for the present time. He has discovered in these norms the direction which his group should take to achieve a cultural synthesis which will best realise its inherent potentialities. Now he compares it with some other aggregate. He does this by trying to understand the life of that strange group as if it were his own, until he intuitively apprehends its norms. The latter he then contrasts with those of his own historic unit. He applies to both groups the standards that arise from each. He may find that some of the norms are the same for the two groups, that others are valid only for their own, and that out of the comparison new norms are evolved that embody a more universal value than the special norms originally contained in either of the historic groups. The primary norms would be those which hold only for their own group; the secondary ones would be those applicable for both groups. This latter class can be regarded as carriers of something which approaches a universal value, though it would be necessary to carry out the comparison for all of human history before their universal, absolute character could be entirely demonstrated.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that some of the norms do not partake of this wider applicability does not invalidate their authority for their own group; for they may well express some peculiar trend which is very valuable, but has not yet appeared anywhere else. Perhaps an illustration may serve to show what Troeltsch means here more clearly than a discussion could do. If some historical observer had been making an analysis of Egypt at the time of Ikhnaton, the monotheism of the religious movement he initiated would certainly have been a peculiarity of his own historical entity at that par-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 169-172.

ticular time, which had nowhere else appeared. That value was not carried forward into the next epoch, but just for that one brief time, a religious universal was incarnated in the Egypt of that moment. This is the one trend of all others in that day which should have been perpetuated. Now the purpose of the historical analysis as Troeltsch formulated it would be to grasp and pass on into the historical heritage of the group this peculiar kind of trend which may be a universal, and the source of infinite richness not only to the group concerned but to all humanity.

In practice it is very difficult for the single historical observer to do more than to see the norms for his own group. The other historical entities are too different from his own, and too few of the norms are common to the others. Also the task is so vast that one individual could scarcely compass it, or carry through the comparison for even one other group, to say nothing of all humanity. The most that the single investigator can hope to do is to apprehend the norms for his own group, and to understand its orientation in the vast panorama of its interaction with the other entities.<sup>1</sup>

Once more an illustration may show how this process should work. Suppose some American philosopher of history wished to make an analysis of the American nation at the present time. By using the logic of history upon his object, he would ascertain the norms around which the future cultural synthesis of America should be shaped. He would then wish to go further with his analysis. He might compare America with the European cultural groups, whose historical background is similar enough to the American so that many of the norms would be applicable to both groups,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 188, 189.

though some might prove peculiar to America. If he decided to go on to examine a totally different group, for instance Japan, most of the norms for the American group would be useless. He would not be enough in sympathy with Japanese culture to understand Japan and evolve norms which would represent the essence of present-day Japan. (Only a Japanese could do that). Yet from his knowledge of the norms for his own group, the American could tell enough of the direction of America's ideal development to see her destiny not only in reference to the similar group of European nations, but also in relation to Japan, -- even though that might be only a clash between the two conflicting sets of values inherent in the life of those two nations respectively.

The norms, indicating as they do the strongly individual character of their several objects, promise no easy synthesis of all the groups on the basis of some grand, abstract concept of the universal goal of humanity; but only on the ground of a synthesis that takes account of the unique character of each separate entity.<sup>1</sup> It is really largely an act of faith to believe that such a combination is possible at all. Troeltsch does not tell us in Der Historismus how it is possible for the groups to cooperate or fuse with one another in this larger synthesis, but fortunately we have in Lecture II of the book published posthumously under the English title of Christian Thought, (published in German under the more appropriate title Der Historismus und seine Überwindung) some light on how this may take place.

The norms partake of the general nature of ethical values in so far as they themselves are bearers of value, or trends towards an ideal.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, p. 199.



Now the ethical personality, according to Troeltsch is built up by two means; first by the categorical imperative which in the form of conscience, causes the individual to feel a duty to consider not only himself, but also his fellows. This categorical imperative which compels the individual to fulfil his obligations is never realised in himself alone, but only as these duties confront him in the concrete form of social situations which make demands upon him, and call upon him to adjust, subordinate, and even sacrifice his own individual interest in the interest of his fellows. This response to duty benefits the individual; for only through it does he become a free, creative and moral personality by the attainment of the virtues of justice, goodness, kindness, love, and all the rest.<sup>1</sup> It has also the larger effect of creating a unified and co-operative group out of separate personalities, who are able to work together for common ends, even to the extent of sacrificing their own interest when the highest good of the whole demands it. The individual accepts this sacrifice voluntarily because in response to the demand made by the concrete occasion, he realises the categorical imperative, and gives up his smaller interest to the greater. Now according to Troeltsch, the ego of the corporate group is bound by the same categorical imperative in relation to other groups. It, like the individual, must learn to respond to the categorical imperative in its dealings with other groups, even where cultural, or economic purposes conflict. It is only thus that anything like a cultural synthesis, or a working unity of the separate historical aggregates can be reached. In other words, the virtues, the goods of ethics, apply to groups as to individuals; they are the ultimates

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, pp. 49-55.

by which even cultural conflicts are to be resolved.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, a matter of faith to believe that such a synthesis of all the groups is possible, but Troeltsch believes that we must learn to recognise the presence of these ultimate values in the concrete forms in which they present themselves in the channel of history, and guide / <sup>the latter</sup> according to them.

The foregoing discussion leads directly into the subject of how the norms relate to ethical values. In reference to ~~their~~ own object, the norms have the quality of a standard of value from two points of view; first, as a measure of the present and the past by the ideal which the group has inherent in its heritage; and secondly, as indications of the direction which the future must take if it is to find a larger and fuller expression of this inherent ideal.<sup>2</sup> Thus in the emergence of the norms, the philosophy of history passes over into the field of axiology. The question then arises, how these norms whose genesis is admittedly of such an individualistic character that they not only vary with the object, but also with the time at which the investigation is made, can really be universals, and approximations towards absolute values. This transition is possible only because the historical aggregates themselves partake of a two-fold nature. On the one hand, they are historical, that is to say, transient and relative forms, but on the other hand, they are incarnations of values and ideals which are absolute and universal, just as the saint of the Christian Church, though a mortal, is an incarnation of the virtues / <sup>which comprise</sup> the Christian ideal. Naturally the historic entity

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, pp. 61 ff., 84-99.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, p. 200.

cannot be an exhaustive and complete presentation of the ideal, any more than a particular saint is an incarnation of the whole of the Christian ideal. It is merely an approximation of, and a striving towards the fullness of the ideal of which something has been captured in the one case as in the other. Ethical values are never found in pure and isolated form, but always in some concrete expression. The entities of history are particularly important to axiology for just this reason, -- that they present such varied and new combinations of the ideal and the actual, and have so much to teach about the formation of new systems of value.<sup>1</sup>

In the historical entity, then, the factual and the ideal, the relative and the absolute come together. Now the norms are really the values, the absolute elements which emerge from their concrete embodiment. As values, they have wider or potentially wider significance than just for the particular aggregate from which they are derived. The historical aggregates may be compared to tiny monads, which partake of and reflect the nature, though partially, of the greater absolute behind them, or, as Troeltsch puts it, quoting a sentence from Kierkegaard, "The historical is really the union of the metaphysical and the chance elements."<sup>2</sup> The norms represent the absolute elements. They may be applicable at the moment only to their own situation, for their object may be representing some value not being embodied by any of the other aggregates; but it may also be identical with the values incarnated by one or more of the other groups. When the norms for two or more groups coincide, they form a bond of sympathy between the latter and in the recognition

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

of their authoritative character, the way is provided for understanding between even the most divergent cultural groups.<sup>1</sup>

With the absolute element predicated by the valuational character of the norms, Troeltsch realises that he has stepped over into the realm of metaphysics; and he does so purposely, for it is his conviction that the philosophy of history must ever lead there. History cannot be understood by itself, and in itself, but only as it goes back to the super-historical realm behind and beyond, yet in it. The absolute values in the norms are to him nothing less than the meeting of history, the finite sphere of the human spirit, with the Ground of all values, God, the Infinite Spirit.<sup>2</sup> This is a religious intuition, that cannot be demonstrated by science or logic, but Troeltsch believed that it was the only basis upon which to understand history fully, and that the analysis of the historical object inevitably led to this position. The ultimate authority of the norms is thus grounded in their metaphysical character, in God, Who is behind all history. The norms that carry the highest values, those which point most directly to their divine origin, and goal, the religious goods, would thus be those around which he would propose to create a new cultural synthesis. It is through these norms, the carriers of absolute value in and through their temporary embodiments that he would seek the way out of the seeming relativism of history. This is the overcoming of the relativism of history through the deeper understanding of history, of which he speaks at the end of Der Historismus.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, pp. 199, 200-220.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 184, 214-216.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 772.

The foregoing pages have been occupied with an attempt to describe Troeltsch's ~~determination~~ of the norms in the field of history, and with his general method and construction of the philosophy of history. Before passing on to the discussion of the relation of the historical norms to the more distinctly theological ones, it is well to pause to try to estimate the colossal method that he outlines for us in Der Historismus. One must deeply regret that Troeltsch did not live to write the second volume in which he intended to use the method in indicating the lines along which the new cultural synthesis which he would suggest for present-day Europe would be shaped. He realised himself, however, that it would be an almost superhuman task for one individual to attempt the proposal of such a synthesis, and that the best results in the application of his method would come from the work of many hands.<sup>1</sup> Since we have only the method, we shall have only that by which to judge, and must form our estimate of it practically with reference to its significance in the religious field. It would be quite beyond the capacity or the province of the present writer to pass upon the technical historical questions involved.

Certainly Troeltsch's conception of the philosophy of history is magnificent and imposing. When so competent an expert in historical matters as von Harnack called Troeltsch the greatest philosopher of history since Hegel, one cannot but feel that such praise would not have been bestowed, had it not been earned.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even a layman in the field of history must be struck not only by the vast sweep of a mind that would undertake such a task, but also with the fact that Troeltsch's

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus, p. 771.

<sup>2</sup>A von Harnack, "Rede am Sarge Ernst Troeltschs," reprinted in Die christliche Welt, 22 Feb. 1923.

approach seems far sounder than the a priori and highly abstract rational one of Hegel. Behind Troeltsch's work lay the logic of history that Dilthey, Rickert, and Windelband had created. Certainly there is at least a beginning that strikes one as scientific. Starting with the investigator's own historical group as the object of his research is an improvement over the wholesale generalisations from the entire sweep of history in which so many would-be philosophers of history indulge. The separate historical entity is so small that it can be studied thoroughly enough to yield its own values to the discerning eye.

The real question in Troeltsch's own particular philosophy of history would be most likely to come in his extension of his philosophy of history into the realm of metaphysics, where he parts company from Rickert.<sup>1</sup> Benedetto Croce, in his book, Theory and History of Historiography (English translation by Douglas Ainslie, 1920), criticises the philosophy of history of Rickert himself for its flight into the realm of values and metaphysics, which he views as a withdrawal from the realities of history into the sphere of myth and imagination. Croce believes that there can be no such thing as a philosophy of history, except in the sense that all history is philosophy, and all philosophy is history. His opinion, therefore, is that there is no real connection between history and values, and that it is never the function of the historian to pronounce judgments of an ethical character.<sup>2</sup> Certainly if he criticises Rickert on this point, Troeltsch would come under even more severe condemnation.

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<sup>1</sup>Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, 3rd and 4th edition, 1921, pp. 410-411.

<sup>2</sup>Benedetto Croce, The Theory and History of Historiography, pp. 72-83.

Nevertheless, the criticism of Benedetto Croce is by no means decisive against the possibility of philosophy of history, or the derivation of ethical norms by that means. After all, the religious man sees more in the world about him than the unreligious one. His faith is a means of knowledge which reveals much that lies hidden from other men. In the sphere of history this is as true as anywhere else. It was not a mere attachment to his own theories which led Troeltsch to feel that history never could be fully understood out of the facts alone, but only through the great, overarching realm of the superhistorical, the metaphysical, that lies above it, yet through it. This position is a religious insight; natural to a religious man, and a source of real knowledge; for God, the religious Object, as Troeltsch repeatedly points out, can be known only through religion. It is this difference in the personality of the investigator that accounts for the differences in the results that the various observers in that field present. One cannot expect a positivist like Croce nor an unreligious investigator like Oswald Spengler to see all that Troeltsch sees. They simply cannot do so; for they are blind to the Greater Reality behind the facts they so carefully investigate and interpret.

Another attack upon Troeltsch's approach to the philosophy of history comes from quite a different quarter. Friedrich Gogarten, a theologian of the Barthian group, in his book, Ich glaube an den dreieinigen Gott, attacks Troeltsch from the religious point of view. Gogarten believes that theology can have nothing to do with the whole idea of philosophy of history. Particularly the metaphysical realm of the absolute values and the eternal truths is abhorrent to Gogarten from two points of view: first it is, according to him, a presumption on the part of man, who

is a creature, and a part of history, to set himself up to penetrate into the realm of these eternal realities, and an unwarranted and proud self-assertion of the human reason to think that it can go beyond the bounds of history which its Creator has set for it,<sup>1</sup> to discover the goals of history. Secondly, we cannot understand the reality of history by appealing to the superhistorical, or the metaphysical; for instead of getting at the reality of history in this way, we merely sweep aside the problem.<sup>2</sup> Gogarten will have none of Troeltsch's categories for the interpretation of history, which he thinks we cannot and must not seek to understand, or to interpret as a part of God's plan. All such attempts are improper and unbecoming to us as creatures.<sup>3</sup> We cannot and dare not set ourselves up to select what is history, as Troeltsch does, even for the purpose of making a cultural synthesis. Such attempts are not only futile, but wrong from a religious point of view, because they exceed the limits which God has set to our knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of any philosophy of history Gogarten presents us with a kind of religious formula by which we can deal with as much of history as concerns us. The essence of history to him is what he calls the me-you, (Ich-du), relationship. It is not understanding the you, but recognising him as a creature of God, like ourselves, and therefore with a claim upon us. The only history that counts in this me-you relationship is not that which has to be established by investigation, but

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<sup>1</sup>Gogarten, Ich glaube an den dreieinigen Gott, pp. 51, 67, 74.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 72, 62.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-67.



that which is a living, self-evidencing event in the present where the the Divine you you/presents his claim upon the me, and calls me to decision. The only parts of the past which present this claim upon the me are the history of the Hebrews, who were witnesses of the promise to salvation made to them by God, their Creator, and Jesus Christ, Who is and speaks the Word which calls us to salvation. If we respond to the claims of the you presented to us <sup>in</sup>/this way, we are understanding all of history that is necessary for us in our concrete situation. We can know this history without trying to understand or interpret history. If we try to understand it, we are merely pushing it aside by our self-assertion and the pride of our reason, which makes us believe that we can understand and investigate history out of some laws of the mind, or metaphysical absolutes which really do nothing but deafen us to the claim of the you.<sup>1</sup>

The point of Gogarten's criticism is plainly the religious question of whether Troeltsch in his philosophy of history steps beyond his proper place as a creature, and wishes to penetrate into the secrets of his Creator, thereby showing himself lacking in proper humility. One must appreciate Gogarten's keen feeling of the humble position of man as a creature, before God, his Creator, which plainly motivates the whole of his criticism. Yet, however valuable the counter-proposal that Gogarten offers us may be as an individual religious attitude, it hardly touches the real problems with which Troeltsch deals, and even as a religious attitude, it is an over-emphasis upon the transcendence of God, to the entire exclusion of His immanence. It is well to have our at-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-73.

tention called to the humility befitting us as creatures in the presence of our Maker, but must we therefore conceive this relationship in terms singularly reminiscent of the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11?

A second limitation in Gogarten's criticism of Troeltsch's whole approach would seem to lie in the meager content of the redeemed life, which Gogarten's standpoint implies. If the redeemed are indeed "fellow-heirs with Christ," does that not mean that God in His goodness, admits them to fellowship with Himself, and gives them the right to try to see His Will and His purposes in history as well as their own lives? If this be true, certainly there can be no irreverence in trying to "think God's thoughts after Him" and to discern in the events of history the workings of His Will. The prophets themselves would stand condemned at Gogarten's bar if this were so. Today we stand in a time of decision. If religious philosophers of history do not show us the way to a cultural synthesis that is religious in character, then some one else will point the way to one that ignores religion, as the Russian experiment shows, If we were to listen to Gogarten, we should simply be abandoning the task of the creation of a new cultural synthesis to the irreligious.

The real weakness in Troeltsch's method is not that he would make the attempt to find the norms for the new cultural synthesis at all; but that in his construction of the method, the norms are not entirely guarded from the dangers of subjectivism. Troeltsch himself is conscious of this difficulty at times,<sup>1</sup> and tries to safeguard himself against it by laying stress upon the self-evidencing character of the norms, and the fact that competent investigators can check upon one another.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, p. 108.

He also lays emphasis upon the necessary qualifications of the investigator, who must not only be a competent scientist in the field, but also be free from prejudice and quite objective in abandoning himself to the evidence in the matter. Furthermore he must be a man of fine ethical perception. The task of discerning the norms for the new cultural synthesis is not one that every one and anyone is competent to undertake. It must always remain the occupation of a few great thinkers.<sup>1</sup>

There are other times when Troeltsch seems to think that the subjective element is a real virtue of the method. He feels that the process through which the investigator discerns the norms, and aligns himself with the truth that they indicate, is a real act of religious faith and moral decision.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Heinrich Benckert, in a recent article in the Zeitschrift für theologie und Kirche, entitled Der Begriff der Entscheidung bei Ernst Troeltsch,<sup>3</sup> calls attention to the way in which this idea of personal decision runs through all of Troeltsch's thought, both in theology and in philosophy of history. Troeltsch seemed to feel that it was a very vital point, <sup>at</sup> /which his theoretical work touched the practical currents of life. This element of decision may well be important for the investigator's own personal attitude towards his work; but as a part of the method, it is a weakness and a contradiction. If the norms are really self-evident, it seems hard to see why they should have to be the center of such a momentous decision. One does not need to decide about the self-evident. On the other hand, if they do require such

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Historismus und seine Probleme, pp. 173, 181, 117, 82.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>3</sup>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Heft 6, 1931.

decision by the investigator, it looks as though they were not self-evidencing and objective at all, but merely subjective, dependent upon the investigator's point of view. However, it is never possible to escape subjectivity entirely; and at least Troeltsch reduces the subjectivity of the method as much as he can.

One cannot tell whether the method really will furnish norms until someone tries to outline such a cultural synthesis. Since Troeltsch himself did not live to do it, we can only hope others as competent and as reverent will take the task in hand; for a new cultural synthesis would not only be a benefit to western civilisation; but would be a great contribution towards the ideal of the Kingdom of God. However, for an important sociological and religious experiment such as the practical carrying out of Troeltsch's proposal would be, it would be necessary to have stronger guarantees against the danger of subjectivity in ascertaining the norms than Troeltsch offers us in his method.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATION OF HISTORICAL NORMS TO THEOLOGICAL NORMS

The theme of the preceding chapter was the determination of the norms of philosophy of history from the individual historical aggregates, which, though relative by their very nature as historical forms, nevertheless embody values of an absolute, or potentially absolute character. The norms which the philosophy of history discovers, as we have seen, partake of the nature of ethical values, and indicate the significant trends in the life of the present, around which the future should be shaped in order to secure a better and fuller incarnation of the ideal already inherent in the past and present of the group's life. We now come to the relationship of these ethical, historical norms to those which are distinctly theological or religious in character.

Two questions are involved in the understanding of this relationship between the two kinds of norms. The norms of history are ethical; but since religious values and ethical values are by no means always identical, we shall first have to answer the larger question of the relation of ethics to religion, as Troeltsch viewed it. This answer will reveal clearly where the two groups of norms are identical, and where they diverge from each other. The second question relates to the discovery of the particular sources of the theological norms. Troeltsch believed that history is the sphere in which God's revelation of Himself to men chiefly takes place; but not all of history is to be regarded as revelation. Therefore, in discerning the theological norms which are so closely connected with revelation, we shall have to ascertain where in the vast sweep of history, Troeltsch would look to find this Divine revelation.

Before turning to the second question, as to where revelation may be sought in history, it will be necessary to clear the ground by discussing the prior question of the relation of religion and ethics to each other. It was on this latter point that some of Troeltsch's best thinking was done; for it was a problem which engaged his attention even as a very young man.<sup>1</sup> It is one of the main themes of the Soziallehren and is also the subject of a number of his shorter essays, such as Grundprobleme der Ethik, the famous answer he wrote to Wilhelm Herrmann's Ethik in 1902; Atheistische Ethik, and Glaube und Ethos der hebraischen Propheten. (The first two of these shorter essays are included in Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, the third in Bd. IV).<sup>2</sup> Even Der Historismus contains frequent references to the question.<sup>3</sup>

Troeltsch never made the mistake of identifying religion and morality absolutely with each other, or of supposing that the main function of religion was to provide a supernatural sanction for ethics. His position always was that religion was a separate and independent interest of life, arising out of a purely religious longing in the human soul for redemption and fellowship with God, and capable of being satisfied in no other way but through God. Historically religion originates quite independently of ethics, and far from merely serving the purpose of putting a supernatural sanction upon whatever customs or social values may be viewed by society as moral, the higher religions create an ethic of their

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1895-96.

<sup>2</sup>One wonders why when Troeltsch's thought on the question of religion and ethics is such a valuable part of his contribution, so little has been written upon it. Of the recent literature upon Troeltsch, only Karl Fellner's Das Überweltliche Gut, deals with the subject directly.

<sup>3</sup>The problem of the relation between the religious ethic and the secular is treated by Troeltsch in Politische Ethik und Christentum, 1901; but owing to the specialised nature of that discussion it has seemed wiser to base the above on the more general essays.

own whose goods are those which center around fellowship with God and doing His Will. It is only secondarily that religion puts a supernatural sanction upon group mores, and that only where these happen to fall together with its own ends.<sup>1</sup> It was an error for which Troeltsch never could forgive Kant that the latter never recognised religion's independence of morality.<sup>2</sup> This independence of religion was first set forth by Troeltsch in his article published under that title, (Die Selbständigkeit der Religion) in 1895-96, and as late as 1919, we find him writing that he still maintained it.<sup>3</sup>

Since Troeltsch consistently maintained the independence of religion even against ethics, we must now seek to define his position with reference to the particular subject of the relation of the historical norms, which are ethical, to the distinctly religious or theological norms. In the discussion of the derivation of the historical norms, we have found that the norms appear as the absolute values inherent in the historical object, which the philosopher of history recognises as such through an act of intuition. With the emergence of the values indicated by the norms, the investigator believes himself to be in the presence of absolute and ultimate values. Now these absolute and ultimate values have their Ground, Source and Goal in God, in Whose presence the investigator

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," Zeitschrift für Theologie and Kirche, 1895-6, Heft 5, pp. 392-8.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Das Historische in Kants Religionsphilosophie," in Kantstudien, Bd. IX, 1904, pp. 44-45, and Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, pp. 34-35, etc.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Zur Religionsphilosophie," (a review of Otto's Das Heilige), Kantstudien, 1919, Bd. XXIII, p. 66.

feels himself to stand, when he discerns them.<sup>1</sup> It is the idea of God behind these values which is the important element to Troeltsch. Yet the relation of God to the values which the norms bear needs further definition and clarification. This we do not find in Der Historismus, which is chiefly occupied with the more immediate questions of the method of philosophy of history. The essay, Grundprobleme der Ethik, furnished additional light on the question; for in it Troeltsch defines quite carefully the relation of religion and ethics to each other, with particular reference to the Christian ethic.

It will not be necessary for our present purpose to go into all the details of Troeltsch's critique of Herrmann's Ethik, which Troeltsch characterises as "Luther's ethics translated into the spirit of Kant,"<sup>2</sup> but merely to define Troeltsch's own position. Troeltsch defines ethics as the discipline (Lehre) dealing with the ultimate purposes and ends of human life.<sup>3</sup> As such it contains a number of implications which have to do with the philosophy of history, metaphysics, and religion. There is no way to establish normative values in ethics except through a belief in the dominance of the ideal over the real, -- a presupposition which cannot be established without entering into the problems of religion.

As in all his other studies, Troeltsch's view of ethics was greatly influenced by his historical interest. He agreed with Herrmann in accepting the Kantian view of ethics, but only so far as the subjective side is concerned. There are, according to him, certain goods of a purely

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<sup>1</sup>Der Historismus, pp. 183-184.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Grundprobleme der Ethik," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 603.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 552-553.



subjective or personal character which can be deduced on a basis of rational necessity from the nature of the categorical imperative itself. But there are other, objective values which arise empirically out of history, and whose necessary character must be deduced from their historical setting. History, however, confronts us with two classes of objective goods; those which relate only to the life of man in this finite world; and those of a more ultimate nature which relate not only to man's destiny in the present world, but also in the world to come. The latter sort constitute an ethic sub specie aeternitatis, and it is with this class that the Christian ethic -- and, indeed, any religious ethic -- is chiefly concerned. Thus there are really two sets of goods, those sub specie aeternitatis, and those sub specie temporis, which sometimes conflict with each other. This competition is particularly strong in the modern world, where the ends of the state, the economic order, the arts, and the sciences have largely emancipated themselves from the domination of the other-worldly ethic, and are claiming a validity in their own right.<sup>1</sup>

When this conflict between the two sets of values takes place, it is a problem to reconcile them with each other. Historically religion has taken three attitudes towards this issue, and each of these still has its modern champions. The first solution is for the religious ethic to stand aside in hostility to the cultural values, and to take a monastic attitude of withdrawal from them. This is the attitude which the ascetic wing of the Catholic church has often taken. The second possibility is the course which has usually been followed by Protestantism. This is to view the cultural goods as merely ends and interests which are permitted to

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Grundprobleme der Ethik, "Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 623.

the religious man so long as they do not directly and glaringly conflict with the exclusively religious ends. The third attitude is for the religious ethic to dominate these cultural values entirely, as the Catholic Church tried to do in the Middle Ages. Now none of these ways entirely solves the problem, according to Troeltsch. He saw that both kinds of ethics had real worth, for it must be remembered that as a religious man, he had deep appreciation of other-worldly aims, but as a child of the modern world, he realized that the cultural goods also were both a potential and actual source of the enrichment of life. Hence it seemed to him necessary to achieve a synthesis in which both these cultural goods and the strictly Christian goods could attain their highest expression. This could never happen, according to Troeltsch if one or the other set completely dominated the other; nor would the most fruitful synthesis be reached if religion ignored or showed itself completely hostile to the cultural goods. He criticises Herrmann for not adequately recognising the seriousness of the conflict between the two groups in the modern world, and for imagining that by equating the Kantian ethic with that of Jesus the matter would be settled.

The Christian ethic does not coincide with the Kantian except in the fact that both emphasise the necessity for free moral action which springs from pure and single motives.<sup>1</sup> There the identity ends. The Christian ethic has as its chief good the Kingdom of God, whose realisation is largely eschatological in the teaching of Jesus. The Kantian ethic resembles the Stoic more nearly than the Christian, and to insist on the equation of the two is to mistake quite completely the other-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Grundprobleme der Ethik," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 266-639.

worldly summum bonum of the Christian ethic. Now the Kantian system deals only with the subjective side of ethics, the question of motivation; but the Christian ethic, which centers in the Kingdom of God must be concerned with the objective goods, and it is here that the tension between it and the cultural goods, which arise independently of it, comes to be. Hence the question of subjective motivation does not get at the root of the conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The solution of this conflict, Troeltsch thinks, must come from the side of the Christian ethic, but it must be neither hostility to the temporal ends of culture, nor dominance of them, nor mere toleration of them when they do not conflict with its own. The Christian ethic is not a denial of the world, but its aims transcend the world. It can never reach a complete adjustment with the temporal ends, but must always be in some degree of tension with them. Ethics itself has two roots or poles, about one of which the temporal ends are focussed, and about the other, the eternal goals. The religious ethic must recognise the relative independence of the cultural aims, but must also realise that they are not ultimate, like its own purposes. The religious ethic, which is concerned with the ultimate ends, meaning, and destiny of human life, must seek to incorporate these cultural goods into itself by discerning the ultimate values into which they may lead, and by giving a goal and meaning of its own to them. It must also supplement them by satisfying with its own eternal values the needs that they leave unsatisfied.<sup>2</sup>

This adjustment of the two sets of ends will never be easy nor

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Grundprobleme der Ethik," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 669.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 660-663.

complete, but out of the very tension the greatest good of both will be achieved. To quote Troeltsch's own words:

"There must always be a mediation between the two poles, which can never be brought completely together. The true moral life oscillates between the one pole and the other..... The Christian ethic must allow ungrudgingly to science the necessary freedom and flexibility of science, even when that threatens the religious ethic itself, for otherwise science has no meaning, and cannot serve even the ends of religion. It must allow and tolerate the joy which art finds in sense, without which even sacred art is impossible; and must make the best of the fact that only unusual peaks of achievement beget art which has spiritual and religious significance, while the chief province of art will always be the glorification of sense. Here it (the religious ethic) will have to admire what it resists, and will be able to conquer the whole impulse only when its first élan is exhausted. Only by toleration and allowing these ends to exhaust themselves can it hope to win in this conflict. It is right here, that the ethical problems are most delicate, profound, and difficult."<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch's scheme of ethics is thus a scale of values ranging from the lower to the higher, with conflicts occurring between them, but with religion, whose primary concern is the highest and most ultimate of these values, struggling to relate them all to the ultimates, and<sup>to</sup> incorporate the most significant parts of them all into the eternal ends of its own scale. In brief, it is the function of religion in relation to ethics to sort out the ultimate and absolute values by revealing their relationship to the Divine Ground of all values, God. Only so far as the values of culture can be related to the working of the Divine Will and ends are they really coincident with religious values.<sup>2</sup> This statement leads us directly back to the relation of the historical norms to the theological ones. Only those historical norms that embody these absolute values and commands of ethics, those whose character is most ultimate, and those which are most nearly connected with the purposes and require-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Grundprobleme der Ethik," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 661-662 (Quotation somewhat abbreviated).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 671.

ments of God as He reveals Himself to man in history, are identical with the theological norms. Troeltsch himself does not state this so clearly and explicitly as one could wish, but it is plainly his intention. Indeed, it is one of the the defects of his statement of the theory of norms that he does not emphasise a gradation among them on some such basis as that just indicated.

Having defined the relation between ethics and religion as it bears upon the subject of the norms, we now come to the second question: where Troeltsch would look to find the revelation in history which the distinctly theological norms indicate. Part of the question has been answered already in the foregoing discussion. Wherever Troeltsch saw an ultimate value or meaning embodied in the life of any historical entity, he would find the Divine activity, the Divine Spirit revealing Himself and His Will to men. Now, of course, this presupposes one qualification for the investigator personally. The observer who wishes to find the norms in theology must not only have the general qualifications which belong to the philosopher of history, such as competence in the field and fine ethical perception, but he must also be a man of the finest religious caliber. No one can understand the nature of religion who is not religious himself.<sup>1</sup> That this is an indispensable qualification as Troeltsch states, needs no proof; for one needs only to turn to the numerous attempts of outsiders to write on religious subjects to appreciate that unless the investigator has some real understanding of the nature of religion from his own personal experience, he goes far astray in his conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Religionsphilosophie," in Die Philosophie im Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, edited by Wilhelm Windelband, p. 141.

The ethical values which the norms carry indicate the rational aspects of history from which the norms arise. There is, however, another group of historical phenomena in which the distinctly theological norms may be discerned. These are the contingent elements, which cannot be accounted for upon any rational basis, but whose presence is an undoubted fact in history in general, and in the history of religion particularly. Troeltsch's idea of contingency is stated in his article, "Contingency" in the Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. This essay is also printed in German in his Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II. The gist of this theory is that not all of the elements of history which bear on religion can be accounted for on a strictly rational basis. Some are quite beyond the grasp of reason, or the capacity of logic and science to explain. Many of the factual combinations of history fall into the class of these contingent elements. To it belong those aspects which are concerned with the original, the irreproducible, and the new in historical combinations. It also includes the facts which come into being through the action of freewill apart from natural law. This category of the contingent describes many of the non-rational aspects of history which are of vital importance to religion. These contingent elements are one of the factors which make history so complex, and so incapable of complete rationalisation. Both the rational and the contingent phases have their place in religion, and are of interest to it, but their relation to each other sometimes presents conflicts and antinomies which cannot be reconciled in any logical fashion.<sup>1</sup>

The religious significance of the principle of contingency is

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Bedeutung des Begriffes der Kontingenz," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 778.

that it is the category into which the manifold activity and freedom of the world in God fall; and includes the creative freedom of God Himself in working out His purposes in the world. It accounts for those aspects of history for which no reason can be given except that they are the Will of God. Now this concept is of high importance in the formation of the theological norms; for it is exactly in these inexplicable and super-rational elements that the manifestations of the Will of God, and His self-revealing activity in the world are to be sought. The normative aspects of the philosophy of history are sometimes to be found incarnated in single personalities. This is even more true of the theological norms, for the higher religions rest very largely upon the contributions of certain outstanding personalities, those of their founders and others who apprehend and embody in their lives the Divine revelation which they have apprehended with a clearness and fullness unknown to their fellows.

The Hebrew prophets are a case in point. No one can say why an Isaiah or a Jeremiah should have appeared just at the moment he did. Such personalities are contingent elements in religious history; but the normative significance of these personalities for religion is inestimable. The whole peculiar character of the Hebrew people is another of these irreproducible, contingent facts, with which the theological norms are particularly concerned. All that the investigator can do is to say that these contingent appearances have their ground in the Divine Will. In addition to single personalities which embody norms for religion, there are also some periods of history which are a source of norms for the other, less creative times - such religiously dynamic eras as the

rise of the primitive Church and the Reformation are examples. No one can give a complete psychological or historical reason for the religious fertility of these classic periods, but it is one of the contingent facts of religious history.

To the class of contingent elements in the religious history of mankind belong also the inner facts of religious experience, communion with God through prayer and the devotional life.<sup>1</sup> These facts of the devotional life are also some of those with which the norms are concerned, particularly in their living expression in the life of the modern Christian community, for through them revelation in its continuing work is to be discovered. This source is purely a concern of the theological investigator, for ordinarily it would lie quite outside the consideration of the philosopher of history.

In his discussion of the meaningful and value elements in the norms Troeltsch covers the rational sources for the theological norms; and in the stress he lays upon the contingent elements he provides for the suprarational aspects of the problem.<sup>2</sup> He is fully aware of the difficulty of combining the two into a unified whole, but the theory of norms is his attempt to do so. Certainly he tried to construct the theory in such a way that both the rational and the superrational elements should have their place. He has been criticised for being too rational. Paul Tillich complains that he always sought the Divine in the meaningful or rational elements to the exclusion of the contingent.<sup>3</sup> On the other

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 266-278.

<sup>2</sup>"Die Bedeutung des Begriffes der Kontingenz," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 778

<sup>3</sup>Paul Tillich, "Ernst Troeltsch, Versuch einer geistigen Würdigung," Kantstudien, Bd. XXIX, 1924, pp. 352-353.



hand Rickert complains of Troeltsch's lack of appreciation of the rational for its own sake,<sup>1</sup> and Emil Spiess, the Roman Catholic theologian, accuses him of having a religion of feeling, which with its emphasis on value, is scarcely distinguishable from the American religion of pragmatism.<sup>2</sup>

This difference of opinion about Troeltsch's position on the relation of the rational and super-rational elements indicates merely that he tried to cover both, and did not solve the difficulty of reconciling their differences. It seems to the present writer fair to say that on the whole Troeltsch inclined to the rational side in his younger days. The Hegelian trend in his philosophy is very marked in the twin essays, Die Selbständigkeit der Religion and Geschichte und Metaphysik, and the Kantian influence of the period from 1903 on to the virtual close of his theological activity in 1915. On the other hand, Der Historismus shows certain indications of inclining towards intuitionism. Before giving any final judgment as to which of these elements formed the chief source of the norms, it will be necessary to see the working of his entire theory.

Before turning to the derivation of the theological norms, it will be necessary to define Troeltsch's conception of revelation, and its relation to the norms themselves. The peculiar function of the theological norms is to discern where revelation is to be found. Troeltsch defines revelation as the Divine self-disclosure to the human soul.<sup>3</sup> Although the material universe does and can reveal God, its sig-

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<sup>1</sup>Rickert, Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung, 1921 edition, pp. 410-411.

<sup>2</sup>Emil Spiess, Die Religionstheorie von Ernst Troeltsch, p. 571.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Offenbarung," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart 1910 Edition.

nificance as a vehicle of revelation is very minor compared to history, where it is chiefly to be found. Revelation is never found detached from some bearer, some personality or means by which the Divine reveals Himself to the human. Now the chief sources of the norms in theology, which have been discussed, are, of course, the places where the Divine revelation is to be apprehended. Revelation in Troeltsch's opinion, is not confined entirely to Christianity. We must grant that other religions, too, contain a real revelation of God, therefore we must also concede that their character is supernatural. Most of his life, however, Troeltsch believed that the Christian revelation is the crown and culmination of all revelation.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is the highest revelation of God in human history. Yet, granting as he does the reality of the revelation contained in the other higher religions of the world, he would not necessarily confine the quest for the religious norm to the history of Christianity and Judaism. When the Christian theologian has established the norms for his own religion, he would have also to go on to compare the norms with those of other religions, just as the investigator in the philosophy of history must compare the norms of his own aggregate with those of other groups before he can fully understand it. Thus the whole field of the history of religion must be considered before a full estimate of Christianity can be reached.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Offenbarung," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart 1910 edition.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DETERMINATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL NORMS

The discussion of the foregoing chapters indicated the method of the determination of norms in the philosophy of history, and showed the relation of the historical norms to the theological ones. The present chapter will endeavor to describe the determination of the theological norms, and their validation. The method of the determination of the theological norms would be the same for any of the great religions of the world; but since Troeltsch was a Christian theologian, who worked in the field of his own religion, it would appear to be the most logical scheme to treat first of the derivation of the norms within the sphere of Christianity, then of their application in the determination of the normative essence of that religion at the present time, and finally to carry them over into the wider sphere of the other great religions of the world in the question of the finality of Christianity. A further ground for this procedure is to be found in the fact that Christianity is the one of all the great religions of the world which has been the most deeply influenced by the scientific criticism of other aspects of the civilisation of which it is a part.

At the time when Troeltsch first began to develop his theories of the norms in Christianity, the idea of defining the essence of that religion has been made a popular theological objective by the publication of Adolf von Harnack's famous little book, Das Wesen des Christentums, (English translation entitled, "What is Christianity?"). The method which Harnack used in finding the essence of Christianity was the historical.

The main thesis of his book is that the essence of Christianity, that is to say the permanent and vital element which continues all through the variant historical forms which that religion has taken during its long history, is to be found solely in the message of Jesus. On the other hand, Alfred Loisy, the leading French Roman Catholic modernist of that time, in his book, L'Évangile et L'Église, maintained the counter-position that the original gospel of Jesus could not be regarded as the essence of Christianity. The gospel, according to Loisy, was from its very beginning a complex affair, whose varied character can be discerned only through the history of the Church. The essence of Christianity is consequently to be found in the totality of the living Church and its activities.

In the midst of this discussion of the essence of Christianity, Troeltsch was formulating his own historical method. His solution to the problem of the essence of Christianity led him to the formulation of the concept of norms in the field of theology. According to Troeltsch, both Loisy and von Harnack had over-simplified the problem of the essence of Christianity by supposing that any one element in such a complex historical phenomenon could be singled out as the essence of the whole. He wrote the essay, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" as a review of Harnack's book for Die christliche Welt in 1903, but like so many of Troeltsch's "book reviews," it was a point of departure for the formation of his own position.<sup>1</sup> In this article, he agrees with Harnack that the historical method is the correct one for the discovery of the es-

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<sup>1</sup>"Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" is now included in Volume II of Troeltsch's Gesammelte Schriften. Another essay in that volume, entitled, "Wesen der Religion und Religionswissenschaft," also treats the same problem.

sence of Christianity; but finds that von Harnack's conclusion that the essence was to be found in the preaching of Jesus alone is unsatisfactory because it ignores so much that is really valuable and enriching in the subsequent history of the Church. While granting Loisy's objection that Harnack's position was too simple, Troeltsch saw in Loisy's own answer, that the Church constitutes the essence of Christianity, nothing but a remnant of Roman Catholic dogmatism.<sup>1</sup>

Neither of these answers takes account of the difficulty of the problem, nor does justice to all the historical facts involved in the question. Christianity is really a succession of historical individualisations of the Christian ideal. It presents as particular and sometimes competing interpretations of its own ideal the preaching of Jesus, the message of Paul, the Primitive Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism Old and New, and the peculiar variation of them both represented in the mystical sects such as the Quakers.<sup>2</sup> No simple formula can be found to cover the essence of this succession of manifestations which comprise Christian history, unless it is to be an abstraction devoid of all meaning. Nor is it easy to point to some continuous element that runs through all these historical forms. It therefore becomes necessary to determine the essence of Christianity for each epoch by itself, in order that each separate form may be examined for its own inherent ideal.<sup>3</sup> All of these manifestations, even the preaching of Jesus, are conditioned by the historical factors of the contemporary

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Troeltsch's own divisions in Die Soziallehren.

<sup>3</sup>"Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 396.

situation of which they are a part. It is necessary to disentangle the ultimate elements of the inherent ideal of each epoch from the extraneous and transitory elements with which it is intermingled. Each separate form is a peculiar embodiment of the Christian ideal; and as such, contains its own norms. "Every epoch is immediate to God," as Troeltsch liked to put it, using a quotation from Ranke.

The essence of Christianity for any of its individual historic forms is nothing more or less than the determination of its norms for that period. Its characteristics therefore are those of the particular group of norms would be the same for any religion as for Christianity, though it is a peculiarity of that religion that it has shown such amazing capacity for assuming various historical manifestations without losing sight of its essential and inherent ideal. Troeltsch's own Soziallehren is an effort to determine the essence of Christianity for the various periods down to the eighteenth century, when the historical development of the Christian heritage was turned into very different channels by influences reacting with it from other currents of thought such as the natural sciences and the historical criticism begun in the period of the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> His Glaubenslehre is his determination of the essence for contemporary Protestantism, supplemented by special studies of various trends that caused the change, most of which are collected in the fourth volume of his Gesammelte Schriften.

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<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to note that Wilhelm Herrmann, whose approach to theology was very different from Troeltsch's own in ~~so~~ many respects, agrees with him that the Enlightenment did profoundly modify Christianity, even though he thinks Troeltsch somewhat overestimates its effect. Cf. Wilhelm Herrman, "Lage und Aufgabe der evangelischen Dogmatik," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1907, p. 6.

Like the general norms of the philosophy of history, the norms which constitute the essence of Christianity are intrinsic, inherent in their own object. According to Troeltsch, it is a mistake to take over some external canon such as miracle, or supernaturalism, and endeavor to judge the object by it.<sup>1</sup> Like the general historical object, each Christian complex must yield its own norms, although in the latter case, the task of the investigator is somewhat easier, because there is more historical continuity in the object. One of the main purposes of the determination of the norms for each period is to seek the continuing stream of revelation in its new form of embodiment in the present. A second is to apprehend new revelation which is being communicated to the present Christian community as it meets problems which may never have emerged before in all the history of the Church; for it must be constantly kept in mind that to Troeltsch, revelation was a dynamic force which is ever present in the Christian body throughout all its history.<sup>2</sup>

Now the peculiarly Christian norms have one characteristic which sets them apart from the norms of philosophy of history. They have a center of reference by which they are judged in order that it may be clearly seen whether they be true indicators of revelation. This is the classic period of Christianity, the New Testament, in which era the Christian ideal found its freshest and strongest incarnation.<sup>3</sup> Troeltsch does not stress the importance of the New Testament period for any dogmatic purpose of extracting from it some supernatural canon for the whole historical analysis, but simply because historically it is impossible to do otherwise

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?", Gesammelte Schriften.  
Bd. II, p. 433.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 432.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

than recognise the vigor of that creative era which was so close to Jesus Himself. On the other hand, it is not possible, historically speaking, to use this epoch as an absolute standard, for it itself is not a unity, and even in it, the Christian ideal meets us in various forms. Also in that period, many implications of the Christian ideal are recognisable only as buds whose full flowering comes with the lapse of time.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in that early period comes the very important historical transition from Jesus as a living personality to the Christ of faith.

Like the norms of philosophy of history, the theological norms measure the past and present of the individual form upon its inherent ideal; but the theological norms have a double reference, to the immediate past of the object, and to the classical New Testament era. They constitute an immanent critique of the past and present, by which the permanent and normative elements which are really in line with the Christian ideal may be differentiated from whatever accretions and incidental factors of the contemporary situation are mingled with the essence.<sup>2</sup> One purpose of determining the present-day essence of Christianity is to provide a convincing and authoritative statement of what Christianity really is and thus to provide an effective apologetic for the guidance of the Church in meeting the problems which arise within its own ranks, and to aid it in its proclamation of the gospel to the world.

The second purpose of the determination of the norms looks to the future, for just as the historical norms serve as the basis around

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?", Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 414.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 407, 432 ff.



which to build a future cultural synthesis which shall more fully express the ideal of the group, so the theological norms are directive trends by which the future of the Christian religion should be guided so that it may better incarnate the Christian ideal towards which it is striving. The very determination of the essence for the present is a creative act, for it is a means of shaping the essence for the future along the lines which the norms indicate. Troeltsch puts it thus, "The determination of the essence is the formation of the essence." ("Wesensbestimmung ist Wesensgestaltung")<sup>1</sup> The future is directed by this discernment of the vital elements of the historic stream of the Christian heritage combined with the best religious insight of the present. It is this creative religious direction of the future from the norms which is a movement in the direction of the ideal, the indications of that which ought to be in that which is (Seinsollendes im Sein).<sup>2</sup>

This ideal in whose direction the present moves is not a mere abstraction. It is the ideal implicit in the various forms which Christianity has taken in the past, not only of the particular form whose essence is being determined, but of all the historical essences as well, combined with the highest that the present is able to add to that heritage, and measured upon the New Testament period.<sup>3</sup> The present is a component of the vital trends of the past, and whatever new aspects of revelation the present apprehends or rediscovers. The determination of the essence is the effort to pass on the best to the future in the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?", Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 431.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 428.

hope that in it the whole of the Christian ideal will be incarnated with a fullness and beauty not achieved in either the past or the present. The apprehension of the norms is an act of creative intuition on the part of the investigator. / According to Troeltsch, the Reformers themselves had in mind such a combination of historical and living religious insight when they appealed to the Spirit speaking to their hearts from the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

As in the determination of the norms of the philosophy of history, it is clear that Troeltsch puts great stress on the important part which the personality of the investigator plays in the derivation of the theological norms. He admits frankly that a certain amount of subjectivism is a necessary accompaniment of the process; but denies that the subjectivism is complete or dangerous. It is not a matter of arbitrary and individual eccentricity. The investigator must be a man thoroughly trained in methods of historical research, and most important of all, he must have the finest and truest ethical and religious perception before he is competent to undertake such an important task.<sup>2</sup> The determination of the essence of Christianity is not an undertaking for every man; it, like the philosophy of history, is, and must always remain the work of a few outstanding experts. Granted a thoroughly qualified theologian, the objectivity of the norms will be insured by his complete willingness to abandon himself to the evidence of the object, and by the self-evidencing quality of the norms themselves. Also, as in the general historical analysis, the experts can check upon each other.

Whatever margin of subjectivity remains is an asset rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?", Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 431-432.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 408 -

a liability; for it is a personal appropriation of the historical revelation, and also of the present-day religious life of the Christian community of which the investigator is a part, and for whom he speaks.<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch is conscious that this does indeed put the weight of authority upon the investigator in this representative capacity; but urges that since external authorities have been shattered, we must learn to be our own authorities. Says Troeltsch, "We must learn to have authority within ourselves rather than outside us, to trust ourselves more to the creative power of religion, which gives a living answer to the questions of the present."<sup>2</sup> (Wir müssen lernen, die Autorität mehr in uns, als ausser uns zu haben, un mehr der schöpferischen und Gegenwartsfragen beantwortenden Kraft der Religion anzuvertrauen).

The validity of the norms rests upon their own objective, self-evidencing quality, and also upon the creative act of religious intuition of the investigator, upon his appropriation of the past and present witnessed by the Spirit, which is the living Revelation at work in the individual heart and in the fellowship of the Christian body. As a philosopher, Troeltsch was not content to allow the validity of the norms to rest upon this purely historical and religious basis. He sought to give the norms a more philosophic validation through his theory of the religious a priori. He does not state in the essay, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" that the norms receive their validity on philosophic grounds from the religious a priori, but he states it in numerous other connections, notably in the article, "Wesen der Religion und Religionswissenschaft," (Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 494, 495). It was really to insure

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?", Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 435.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 457.

a philosophic validity for the norms that he developed the theory of the religious a priori, a full account of which is given in two of his other essays, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, 1905, and Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori, 1909 (The latter essay is included in the second volume of his collected works). Following out the general lines for the a prioris of practical reason in ethics and aesthetics which Kant had laid down, Troeltsch postulates along with these two a third and special a priori for religion.

In order to understand the religious a priori by which he hoped to gain philosophic validity for his norms, it will be necessary to go somewhat extensively into Troeltsch's whole theory of religious knowledge. The reason he felt compelled to make this philosophic attempt to validate the norms was that he held that theology itself was no science, (Wissenschaft), in the strict sense of the word. It was merely the effort to interpret the knowledge supplied to the believer by religious faith in the light of the knowledge gained from secular branches of learning so far as they bear on religious matters.<sup>1</sup> Theology is therefore largely a confession of personal faith rather than a science. Now Troeltsch, who had a far more tender conscience than most theologians about drawing the line between scientific proof and faith, was not content with merely theological validity for his norms. He had to have philosophic<sup>support</sup>/as well. He therefore worked out the ingenious, though somewhat artificial, concept of the religious a priori.

Until 1904 we hear nothing of the religious a priori; but it must be recalled that it was about that time that Troeltsch embraced

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Dogmatik," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

the modified Kantianism of Rickert and Windelband. In the light of this conversion, he worked out a new system of religious epistemology, of which the religious a priori was an outstanding feature. Another contributing stimulus to the development of this religious epistemology was the psychological study of religion made by William James, which is embodied in his Varieties of Religious Experience. Troeltsch felt the need for some means of sorting out the normative content of the religious experience from the purely psychological data which William James, George Albert Coe and the other American psychologists were assembling. The religious a priori was to serve this purpose of differentiating the normative and valid content of religious experience from the purely factual and incidental psychological elements with which it was intermingled.<sup>1</sup>

The function of the psychology of religion is a purely descriptive one, according to Troeltsch. It cannot pass upon the truth and validity of the data it collects. That task must be left to religious epistemology, a branch of philosophy of religion.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, theology offers to philosophy of religion a body of normative truth from the theologian's own religion. Now against the general background of the data furnished by the history and psychology of religion, the normative claims to truth of one's own religion must also be tested.<sup>3</sup> How is the normative truth of religion ultimately to be decided? Having renounced the claim to a special kind of supernaturalism for Christianity, Troeltsch seeks to answer the question by the religious a priori.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Religionsphilosophie," in Die Philosophie im Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, Festschrift für Kuno Fischer, edited by Wilhelm Windelband.

His earliest description of the religious a priori is that it is a form in the mind of the religious subject. He does not mean this in a psychological sense, but in an epistemological one. The mere presence of this form in the epistemological subject is under no circumstances to be identified with the possession of religion; for this form must receive its content through the contact with the revelation and self-communication of the Divinity.<sup>1</sup> Psychologically, the apprehension of revelation is accompanied by emotional excitation varying from mild mystical states such as those of prayer and contemplation to its extremes, vision and ecst<sup>asy</sup>. The function of the religious a priori is to sort out of these psychological accompaniments the kernel of rational necessity, the valid and true element. This is nothing else but the human reason meeting the Divine Cosmic Reason. "It is the courageous venture of thinking, as Hegel says, to dare to trust one's self to the reason's own self-knowledge," Troeltsch says.<sup>2</sup> This self-recognition of the reason in the Divine reason behind the Cosmos takes place through the religious a priori, which is actualised through its contact with the religious object. The material which accompanies this action of the form in the subject is of two sorts: in the direct, personal religious experience of the subject, it is the function of the religious a priori to distinguish the immediacy of the Divine activity from the purely irrational, factual and empirical elements which accompany it, that is, to differentiate the universal, necessary and rational elements from the incidentals with which they are surrounded. Also, in the historical data of religion with which the investigator works, it is the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft,  
pp. 43-47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

religious a priori which distinguishes the rational and valid content of the religious experience from the historical, empirical and irrational phenomena in which that valid part is imbedded.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch does not mean to imply that the religious a priori functions like the Kantian a priori of pure reason, which would make valid religious knowledge the same as scientific knowledge. He conceived the religious a priori after the analogy of the Kantian ethical and aesthetic a prioris. Like them, it is not an affair of logic, but a means of distinguishing the rationally necessary and valid elements of the religious experience according to its own laws and its own nature.<sup>2</sup> According to Troeltsch, Kant really intended his a prioris of practical reason to function in this manner, but made the mistake of losing sight of the fact that as forms in the subject, they can function only through the psychological and historical content with concrete reality.<sup>3</sup> Like the a priori of pure reason, these other a prioris of practical reason have a logic of their own, which works on the psychological data, but this logic is by no means the same as epistemological logic. The synthetic function it exercises is not a scientific affair, but the product of a free and unified personality built upon the rational and necessary element discerned in the religious experience itself.<sup>4</sup> Since the religious a priori is not concerned with the logic of ordinary scientific knowledge, and its distinction of the rational and necessary elements in the religious experience is not a

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 758.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>"Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori," Gesammelte Schriften, p. 758.

strict connection of cause and effect, the distinction it draws between the rational, necessary, and valid elements, and the factual, incidental and irrational elements is a continual struggle to win by following its own laws the rational and valid from the irrational. This must be a deed and a decision of the free personality. Its results can only be approximate, never exact and precise.<sup>1</sup>

It is plain from the foregoing that one idea which dominated Troeltsch in his construction of the religious a priori is that it guarantees to religion an independent place among the constituents of reason. A second motive is to provide an epistemological function by which to distinguish the valid from the invalid, the true from the purely factual, and the rational from the irrational in the religious experience itself. He had a third interest also, which was first pointed out by Robert Jelke, who has done the most constructive work of any of the numerous investigators of the subject in revealing what Troeltsch's real intentions were. In his brochure, Das religiöse Apriori, (pp. 41, 42), Jelke shows that Troeltsch meant the concept to assure the metaphysical reality of the Religious Object. This view of Jelke's is undoubtedly correct; for it agrees well with Troeltsch's analysis of religious experience not only in the essays which deal with the religious a priori, but also with the subjective aspects of his analysis of religion as an experience belonging to a transcendent realm of ideas superior to sense knowledge in Die Selbständigkeit der Religion.<sup>2</sup> Although at the time of the writing of Die Selbständigkeit der Religion, Troeltsch sought to establish the reality of the religious Object along realistic lines, the religious a

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche. 1895-96, Heft 5, pp. 391, 392.



priori is plainly his attempt to do the same in so far as that is possible within the bounds of Kantian Idealism.

In the essay, Wesen der Religion und Religionswissenschaft, he says that all an investigation of religious experience can hope to accomplish is to establish the religious judgments as necessary to reason, (page 494). He continues, "The theory of knowledge can reach nothing more than a demonstration of the validity and the interconnection of the contents of consciousness, and the subordination of all other elements to those which are thus recognised as valid; but it knows no existential proof as such. The only existential proof possible to it is the demonstration of a valid rational necessity, which is reached in all realms, scientific, historical, ethical, aesthetic, and religious, according to their various regulative principles; the demonstration of the validity of the religious idea in particular must not be confused with proofs for the validity of the knowledge of other single objects, since the latter rests only upon the demonstration of its causal connection with other objects. The religious Object is by no means one object side by side with others. The most important question is, therefore, that of the content and nature of the religious a priori. It lies in the absolute substantial relation (Substanzbeziehung) which is effected through the nature of reason, by means of which all reality, and particularly all values are brought into contact with an Absolute Substance in which they have their origin and norm. This, of course, postulates that the religious a priori must be referred to this connection with the other a prioris, from which alone is derived the inner unity and the firm basis in the common substance, the ground of all the separate a prioris." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, "Religion und Religionswissenschaft," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 494-495.

Now just how this unity of all the various a prioris comes about, Troeltsch has not defined clearly. He appears to believe that the religious ideas are more or less true according to the degree in which they harmonise or fail to harmonise with the other a prioris, of which the ethical is the most important. / In this provision he attempts to make room <sup>It is the task of a rightly oriented psychology to bring about the synthesis.</sup> for varying grades of truth in the different forms of religion, according to the degree in which they conform to this standard in their historical and psychological manifestations.<sup>1</sup> The intention of this unity of the a prioris is to give this rational necessity to all the contributing factors so that the whole will correspond with the Great Cosmic Reason that lies behind all reality, which according to his own statement in the quotation just given is the nearest epistemological approach to a demonstration of the existence of the Object from which these absolutes of reason originate.

He presupposes an idealistic metaphysic which is a combination of Kant's noumenal realities and Schleiermacher's cosmic Reason. This comes out quite definitely in his distinction between the intelligible and the empirical ego. This intelligible ego, he says, does not exist side by side with the empirical ego of sense experience and psychology, nor yet in it, but quite above and superior to it. Troeltsch believes that Kant did not draw this distinction between the intelligible and the empirical ego clearly enough; hence could give no clear means for providing for direct contact with the Divine in this realm of the transcendent ego, which is superior to time, space, and sense experience.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 495.

<sup>2</sup> Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, pp. 40-42.

The intelligible ego, which is above all these limitations of the psychological ego, is totally rational and able to distinguish by its own laws the rational element, that is, the Divine in the religious experience. Otherwise there would be no way of safeguarding the religious experience against the ordinary laws of cause and effect that condition the empirical ego. So far as one can understand Troeltsch, this intelligible ego is the seat of the religious a priori. Moreover, the meaning of Troeltsch's remark about the monadology behind this noumenal metaphysical construction of Kant's,<sup>1</sup> together with his reference to the identity of his own construction with Leibniz', (except for any preestablished harmony),<sup>2</sup> seems to be that this intelligible ego is akin to, or even a tiny fragment of the Cosmic Reason, which makes the reception of revelation possible. If this interpretation be correct, then it is a speculation about a divine spark in the human soul. This view seems to fit with Troeltsch's statement that everything is truly religious in so far as it is absolutely rational, and his idea that the Absolute of reason and God are identical.<sup>3</sup>

On the frail thread of the religious a priori, Troeltsch would then hang the weight of the validation of the normative and valid content of religion, and, in a measure, the reality of the Religious Object. The pros and cons of Troeltsch's theory of the religious a priori have been vigorously debated for more than a quarter of a century, since he first proposed the idea.<sup>4</sup> So much has been said and written on the sub-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 759.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 764.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>For a list of the literature on the subject of Troeltsch's a priori, see bibliography. The list is too long to give here.

ject that it is very difficult to say anything new that has not been stated in some form or other. Even the material of the controversy is too extensive to discuss in any detail; therefore we shall confine our discussion to those criticisms which seem to be particularly apropos in the whole literature. Our criticism will logically fall under two heads: first the value of Troeltsch's own concept of the religious a priori, and secondly the value of the whole idea of the religious a priori as a method of validation for religious experience.

So far as one reads the literature on the subject of Troeltsch's idea of the religious a priori, no one appears to have adopted the theory in just the form that he stated it, even those to whom the general idea of a religious a priori appeals.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly the reason for this is that his statement of his ideas on the question is very obscure; hence it is difficult to tell even after considerable study of the subject just what he means by the religious a priori. Jelke is the one of all those who have written on the subject who gives the clearest interpretation of Troeltsch's ideas; but one cannot but feel that Jelke understands Troeltsch's religious a priori better than Troeltsch himself. Even so competent a theologian as Ferdinand Kattenbusch confesses that he is not sure he understands Troeltsch's theory of the religious a priori.<sup>2</sup> One suspects also that Troeltsch's reluctance to discuss the religious a priori was due to a half-conscious feeling that his ideas on the subject were none too well defined. He wrote the essay, Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori, only because the trenchant criticisms of Paul Spiess, a student of Herrmann's, had forced

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<sup>1</sup>The most favorable of the critics of Troeltsch's construction of the religious a priori is G. Ritzert (Die Religionsphilosophie Ernst Troeltschs, pp. 58ff). Ritzert thinks Troeltsch stated the problem correctly and agrees with his transcendental psychology, but prefers Otto's more realistic metaphysical framework for the concept.

<sup>2</sup>Ferdinand Kattenbusch, Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher 1924, p. 80

him to it.<sup>1</sup>

A concept which is so obscure that even thoroughly competent theologians do not understand it, is certainly of little use, and can under no circumstances serve to perform the weighty function of validating and selecting the normative truth of religion, for which Troeltsch designed it. One may or may not agree with Rudolf Otto's conception of the religious a priori, but at least one can understand its workings. Otto has also done us the service of giving us the definite category of the holy through which his religious a priori functions.<sup>2</sup> Troeltsch does not give us any particular category through which his a priori works, though one must agree with Jelke against Süsskind that it is not a pure form without any content.<sup>3</sup> The content is plainly, as Jelke states the essence of religion, distinguishable in all its variant forms, which, of course, means its rational element, the Presence of the Absolute in the soul.<sup>4</sup>

It is just in this emphasis on the fact that the true essence of religion is to be found in its rational aspects that one difficulty with Troeltsch's construction of the religious a priori seems to lie. We must grant that he uses the term "rational" in a broader sense than logical or scientific knowledge, as he expressly states in answer to the objection raised by Paul Spiess that his theory would equate the truth of religion with scientific knowledge. He uses it in the sense of both theoretical

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Zur frage des religiösen Apriori," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 754.

<sup>2</sup>Otto, Das Heilige, 11th edition, pp. 143-144.

<sup>3</sup>R. Jelke, Das Religiöse Apriori, pp. 29-31. S. Süsskind, "Zur Theologie Troeltsch," Theologische Rundschau, 1914, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>Troeltsch, "Wesen der Religion und Religionswissenschaft," Gesammelte Schriften, p. 494.

and atheoretical validity.<sup>1</sup> The implication of Troeltsch's whole construction is certainly that valid religion is a highly rational affair, for he goes on to say in this context, "When I term it, (the religious a priori), rational in all cases, this word 'rational' has its fine shades of meaning: it indicates the character of the ordering, evaluation and reduction of all concrete reality, which comes from universal validity; it can thus be very different in science, ethics, religion and art."<sup>2</sup>

At times Troeltsch did emphasise the importance of the contingent elements in religion, as we have seen in his essay on the subject of contingency, but one cannot but conclude that he really ignores them to a very large extent in the whole working of the theory of the religious a priori, and that by and large, we are to find the valid and normative elements in the harmonious, ordered and rational aspects of the religious experience. Now, undoubtedly these rational concepts are present in, and vital to religious experience, but it is open to grave question whether they are the profoundest and richest aspects of religion. Certainly Otto is right in stressing the mysterious side of religion which is not irrational, but superrational. To relate the rational and superrational sides of religion to each other is a very difficult problem. Troeltsch, in his review of Otto's Das Heilige, finds that Otto fails to solve the question of their relation to each other,<sup>3</sup> but Troeltsch himself does no better. The difference is that Otto lays more stress on the superrational aspects,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Zur Frage des Religiösen Apriori," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 762, 763.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 762.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Zur Religionsphilosophie," (Aus Anlass des Buches von Rudolf Otto), Kantstudien, 1919, p. 73.

while Troeltsch prefers the rational sides. Neither one relates the two to each other satisfactorily. Perhaps that cannot be done. The effort to relate these two sides of religion reminds one of trying to combine a Greek temple and a Gothic cathedral. Both the temple and the cathedral are expressions of religion. The Greek temple embodies its rational sides, but the Gothic cathedral is a profounder expression of religion, because it has caught the religious aspirations which transcend reason. Yet these two forms of religious architecture cannot be synthesised. So also with Otto and Troeltsch in their effort to combine the rational and superrational aspects of religion. Neither one succeeds, because they are both trying to combine the Greek temple and the Gothic cathedral. If we must choose, however, it would seem that Otto's religious instinct is sounder in inclining more to the superrational elements in his system.

A further problem in Troeltsch's construction of the religious a priori lies in his effort to adhere closely to the Kantian metaphysic. Several critics have pointed out the weakness that comes through this combination. The Roman Catholics, Baron von Hügel and Emil Spiess both find fault with Troeltsch's allegiance to Kantian idealism.<sup>1</sup> Spiess' criticism, to be sure, is entirely motivated by his strong adherence to Rome, for all through his book, (which, aside from this Catholic prejudice contains many very valuable and illuminating comments on Troeltsch and his position), he gives one the impression that if Troeltsch had only turned to St. Thomas Aquinas, all his philosophical problems would have been

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich von Hügel, Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion, First Series, 1921, p. 189. Emil Spiess, Die Religionstheorie von Ernst Troeltsch, p. 571.

solved. Baron von Hügel's criticism is more impartial. He does not propose a naive return to the pre-Kantian realism, but suggests that critical realism would be the remedy. Even some Protestant critics feel that Troeltsch's choice of Kantian idealism for the basis of his religious epistemology was not a happy one. Jelke thinks that Troeltsch really broke with Kant in the direction of realism in his effort to find a firm and sure ground for the reality of God.<sup>1</sup> Professor Baillie, in his book, The Interpretation of Religion, also expresses the opinion that Troeltsch's construction goes so far beyond the bounds of Kant's that it really requires a different metaphysical structure, on several grounds.<sup>2</sup> The first is Troeltsch's assertion of the independence of religion from ethics in the postulation of a special religious a priori. The second is Troeltsch's insistence that the a priori of practical reason, like that of theoretical reason, must receive its content from experience. The third point is Troeltsch's opinion that the categories Kant laid down are not a closed list, but must be supplemented by the growing body of experience and scientific knowledge. Although Professor Baillie agrees with Troeltsch against Kant on the two latter points, he feels that the first is such a decisive break with Kant that Troeltsch needed some other metaphysical structure to carry out his religious epistemology consistently.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Professor D. C. MacIntosh, in an article entitled "Troeltsch's Theory of Religious Knowledge," (American Journal

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<sup>1</sup>Jelke, Das religiöse Apriori, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>John M. Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion, pp. 236-242,

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 243.



of Theology, 1919, pp. 285 ff.), thinks that Troeltsch limits the usefulness of his whole religious epistemology by adhering to the Kantian notion of a priori at all.

Since our chief interest is the question of the norms in theology and their validation, our criticism of Troeltsch's metaphysical structure must be from that standpoint. Kantian Idealism presents the theologian with only two alternatives. Either one can go the way of the Ritschlians, and, ruling out all metaphysics from theology, make an exclusive supernaturalism in the sphere of practical reason the basis of the truth of religion, as we find it exemplified par excellence in the theology of Wilhelm Herrmann. (As Professor Baillie observes, the Ritschlians are better Kantians than Troeltsch.)<sup>1</sup> The only other possibility is to follow out the line of Schleiermacher and risk the dangers of extreme subjectivism and even pantheism which that trend incurs. After all, it was really Kant who drove Schleiermacher into the arms of Spinoza.<sup>2</sup>

Now Troeltsch rightly saw that theology does not do well to exclude metaphysic. Harnack to the contrary notwithstanding, it seems very doubtful whether the Christian Church would have won such a decisive victory over its rivals in the ancient world if it had not made the strong alliance it did with Greek philosophy. In this modern world, theology still needs philosophy. As Troeltsch remarked about the Ritschlians, if theology refuses all external support, it is like the Sybil who had a dozen books of wisdom, but burned six of them because she felt that they were so wonderful that it was enough to have the remaining six.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Baillie, The Interpretation of Religion, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, in the final section of his essay, "Empirismus und Platonismus in der Religionsphilosophie", Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 384, concedes the point just mentioned.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, Heft 5, p. 436.

Troeltsch, being unwilling to use supernaturalism as a proof of the truth of religion, and being also a bitter foe of pantheism, would have strengthened his position greatly, had he been willing to break with Kantian Idealism altogether. As it is, he departs from Kantianism just enough to miss the benefits that it can bring, but does not go far enough in the direction of realism to free himself from its subjectivism. In spite of the strong Hegelian cast of his early metaphysic before he turned to Kantianism proper in 1903, one feels that he would have been able to work out a more convincing religious epistemology if he had kept on along the lines he lays down in Die Selbständigkeit der Religion, which shows a decided trend towards realism.<sup>1</sup> If one wishes to lay aside supernaturalism as the ultimate basis of religious truth, one can never find the way out of the subjectivism of Idealism to any means of establishing the religious realities outside the subject. One suspects that if Troeltsch had been born in a different country, he would have found the courage to break with Kant, but in Germany, where the Kantian influence is so strong, even philosophic consistency could not induce him to be independent of the greatest of all German philosophers.

The criticism of Troeltsch's philosophic structure and its Kantian basis raises the question of the value of any form of the religious a priori as a validation of religious knowledge. Undoubtedly the most convincing interpretation of that concept is Otto's; but there are all shades of opinion as to its nature between the intuitional explanation which he gives to it, and the rational construction of Troeltsch.

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<sup>1</sup>Emil Spiess also finds Troeltsch's earliest metaphysic more promising, but again, one suspects a Catholic predilection. My own view agrees but for reasons of philosophic consistency rather than following Spiess. Cf. Spiess, Die Religionstheorie von Ernst Troeltsch, p. 579.

Dr. Gerhard Heinzelmann in an article called "Zum Stand der Frage nach dem religiösen Apriori," in Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 1931, Heft 5-6, gives a survey of the chief theories about it, and Rudolf Köhler, in a pamphlet entitled Der Begriff a priori in der modernen Religionsphilosophie, also collects several interpretations<sup>of</sup> it. Its advocates number in their ranks besides Otto and Troeltsch, Georg Simmel, Erich Schaeder, Jelke, Reinhold Seeberg, Kalweit, and Anders Nyrgen. Everyone of these construes the religious a priori in some different fashion, ranging from a kind of inborn faculty which makes religious experience possible to a category for the reception and clarification of religious experience. With some as in Otto's theory, it is a psychological faculty, with others it is an epistemological affair more or less after the pattern of Troeltsch's, but never exactly like it.<sup>1</sup> When a term is used to mean six or seven different things to as many different people, it becomes meaningless. All of these speculative theories, however, either wish to find in the religious a priori some resemblance of the human spirit to the Divine which makes religion possible from the subjective side, or some formula for saying that religious truth is self-evidencing. Troeltsch, who always inclined to cosmic designs, seems to have wanted to do both these things at once.

Heinzelmann himself doubts whether the expression, religious a priori, is a useful one, and whether there really is such a thing as a religious a priori at all,<sup>2</sup> as does also<sup>the philosopher of religion,</sup> Heinrich Scholz. Neither

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<sup>1</sup>Heinzelmann, "Zum Stand der Frage nach dem religiösen Apriori," Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 1931, Heft 5-6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 335-338.

<sup>3</sup>H. Scholz, Religionsphilosophie, Berlin 1922, pp. 242-246.

could deny that religious knowledge is self-evidencing; but both find that it is something entirely received through revelation, not anything made possible by any inborn faculty <sup>either</sup> of ~~whatever~~ <sup>an</sup> psychological or epistemological description. The present writer shares their position.

Troeltsch himself does not really gain anything by his elaborate construction of the religious a priori. His simple theological validation through the testimonium Spiritus Sancti is a way of saying self-authenticating. That is all that one can say of the new norms that spring from new or supposedly new revelation which the theologians, or the modern church apprehends. For the others, which are a part of the Christian heritage there is the check with other periods and particularly the classic age of the New Testament. Of the new norms, ~~theologically~~, one can only say that they are revelation intuitively perceived, and that the investigator is morally convinced by his own religious experience of their validity.

There has been much controversy in modern times about the wisdom and the possibility of bringing philosophy and theology together. Troeltsch was right in maintaining that they cannot be entirely independent and mutually exclusive. However, there are one or two canons about combining them which Troeltsch disregarded in his validation of the norms through the religious a priori. One such rule in making theological and philosophical combinations is that in the translation of a theological concept into the realm of philosophy it shall not be made to mean something entirely different. Now as a theologian, Troeltsch says that the norms are recognised as such by a creative act of religious intuition and personal decision on the part of the investigator. As a philosopher of religion, he presents us with this complicated and rational

concept of the religious a priori. The two do not mean the same thing at all.

If as a philosopher, Troeltsch had to have a religious a priori, he should have defined it not as a form in the epistemological subject, but as a self-evidencing quality in the object, as he does later on in his work on the historical norms in Der Historismus.<sup>1</sup> Then the two things would have meant the same thing in both realms. This construction of the a priori would also have provided a place for the contingent elements which are not capable of complete rationalisation, which Troeltsch's "Kantian" religious a priori would seem to reject, if it is really a "means of separating the rational from the irrational," as he tells us.

Professor D. C. MacIntosh in his article, Troeltsch's Theory of Religious Knowledge, suggests a way of handling the religious a priori which would have preserved a number of the interests that Troeltsch really had at heart in his theory. This analysis deals with the matter from the standpoint of the religious subject. (The reference of the question to the religious Object has just been indicated above). He would base the construction upon critical intuitionism, making the a priori a relative rather than an absolute affair. The religious a priori would then be the accretion of the work of the religious Object upon the religious subject.<sup>2</sup> However, one cannot but wonder whether the term a priori is a good one for a process so plainly a posteriori. Regardless of the terminology, it is clear that this formulation of Prof. Macintosh's is a far more accurate description of the method by which the normative in religion is discerned on the basis of Troeltsch's

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<sup>1</sup>The bridge between the two interpretations of the religious a priori is found in Empirismus und Platonismus in der Religionsphilosophie, where we find Troeltsch receding from Kantian rationalism, and moving in the direction of a Bergsonian intuitionism.

<sup>2</sup>American Journal of Theology, 1919, p. 289.

theory than his own account of it. It fits more completely with the "decision" of the investigator. If the investigator must decide about the norms, there is no reason to suppose that the subject discerns them a priori. The faculty through which they are discerned is clearly built up through contact with the religious Object, as Mac<sup>i</sup>ntosh suggests.

Troeltsch in his statement of the qualifications of the religious investigator is careful to say that he must be a man of profound religious insight. Now if Troeltsch really means that the religious a priori is a form in the subject, the religious component of the reason, why should it require profound religious insight to discern the norms? Should he not be able to perceive them almost automatically? The very suggestion of this need for religious insight seems to imply that the capacity for making these religious judgments is the kind of accretion from contact with the Religious Object which Professor Mac<sup>i</sup>ntosh suggests.

Troeltsch makes clear that religious insight differs in various individuals. He states that the determination of the normative essence of Christianity will always remain the work of a few unusual persons. He concedes that investigators may even misapprehend revelation. If Troeltsch's formulation be consistently carried out, it is somewhat difficult to see why these misapprehensions should occur. If the a priori is really the reason apprehending itself, why is the possibility of error so large? The description Mac<sup>i</sup>ntosh gives of the origin of the capacity for religious judgments accounts much more satisfactorily both for misapprehension of revelation, and for differences in individual capacity to apprehend it.

All in all, the religious a priori as Troeltsch develops it is

the weakest part of his whole theological and philosophic structure. Fortunately the theory of norms does not stand or fall with the religious a priori. The norms that are already a part of the historical heritage reveal their absolute character by their superiority to time and change, and endure through the variant forms of historic expression in which they have been embodied. The new norms stand on the same basis as scientific hypotheses. Their verification as bona fide absolutes can come only through the lapse of time, or through demonstration that they are unmistakably in line with the historic continuum of revelation, or their correspondence with the spirit and intention of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch himself suggests a similar idea of the a priori in validating new forms in Über Masstäbe zur Beurteilung historischer Dinge, 1916, p. 138 except that he will hear nothing of analogy to scientific hypotheses.

## CHAPTER VI

### TROELTSCH'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE NORMATIVE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Having surveyed in the previous chapter the method of the derivation and validation of the theological norms which constitute the essence of Christianity for any given period, we now come to Troeltsch's own determination of that essence for its modern, Protestant form. This entails, as one would expect from his view of the nature of the essence, a discussion of his whole theological system. This chapter will deal with the main outlines of his doctrinal structure, - those elements which he considers normative for the modern Protestant Church, with the exception of his Christology, which has such profound normative significance that it seems best to treat it in a chapter by itself.

Troeltsch tells us in the little autobiographical sketch entitled Meine Bücher,<sup>1</sup> in the beginning of Volume IV of his collected works, that he could never make up his mind to write a Dogmatik,<sup>2</sup> but that his positive theological convictions were embodied in the various articles on doctrinal subjects that he wrote for the encyclopaedia, Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by Schiele, (1910 edition). Fortunately we do have a connected statement of his theology in the Glaubenslehre which was posthumously published in 1925, from notes taken from his lectures on the subject delivered at Heidelberg during the academic year 1911-1912. Although the Glaubenslehre was compiled in this manner,

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<sup>1</sup>This sketch was first published in Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen, Bd. II, Leipzig, 1923.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. IV, p. 13.



it is an accurate presentation of his theological system; for it gives the same impression of his thought as his other writings on theological subjects in the Gesammelte Schriften, and especially in the above mentioned articles in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. These articles include: Eschatologie, Dogmatik, Erlösung, Glaube, (dogmatisch), Glaube und Geschichte, Gesetz, Gnade, Prinzip, (Religiose), Offenbarung, Theodizee, and some minor ones ( Eschatology, Dogmatics, Redemption, Faith, (doctrinal), Faith and History, Law, Grace, Principle, (religious), Revelation, Theodicy).

We have spoken in the previous chapter of Troeltsch's view of the nature of theology. He did not regard it as a strict science, <sup>(Wissenschaft)</sup> but rather as the knowledge given by religious faith criticised and systematised in the light of the best knowledge furnished by the sciences so far as the latter relates to religious questions. Since this combination is largely a personal matter, he considered theology a confession of personal faith, whose function was to provide a normative statement of the present-day essence of Christianity for the guidance of the Christian community.<sup>1</sup> Although theology cannot escape the subjective element entirely, it has two guarantees of objectivity: the historical elements by which the individual theologian can check his own norms, and the fact that the normative positions he defines represent the religious consciousness of the present Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch's statements about the nature of theology are not entirely consistent. In his article on Dogmatik, he declares that it is too subjective to be really normative, that it is rather for the admonition, (Beratung) of the Christian community; but in several other places, for example, in "Was heisst 'Wesen des Christentums'?" (Gesammelte Schriften, II, 425-432, and in "Religionsphilosophie," in the Festschrift für Kuno Fischer, p. 127, he speaks of theology as normative for the Christian community. On the whole, it seems clear that ~~at least~~ in his earlier years, he certainly regarded it as normative for the Christian community at least.

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Troeltsch's theology, like all his scholarly work, is thoroughly dominated by the historical viewpoint as opposed to the older dogmatic standpoint. His system centers about two foci, the historical elements in the Christian doctrinal heritage, and the religious consciousness of the present-day Christian community. This accords with his concept of revelation as a living reality in the modern church as well as in history.<sup>2</sup> In making this division of his subject, he consciously follows Schleiermacher, by whom he was deeply influenced. So far as the present Christian consciousness is concerned, Troeltsch improves upon the method of Schleiermacher; for his greater awareness of the importance of history saves him from the extreme subjectivity which vitiates Schleiermacher's system at so many points. Troeltsch states that his reason for analysing the Christian consciousness in his theology is that one must begin with the revelation of God as the Christian community apprehends it, since it is impossible to analyse God, the Object of faith.<sup>3</sup> Also in the consciousness of the modern Christian community, historical trends of the Christian heritage are focussed and appropriated into a living synthesis with the present apprehension of revelation. Troeltsch's whole emphasis in this approach is upon the present as a creation of the past, which, by enriching the historical heritage, builds a future that shall be a better and fuller attainment of the ideal which they seek to incarnate and perpetuate.

Troeltsch defines Christianity as follows: "The Christian faith

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Dogmatik," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition, section 3.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

is the belief in the second birth and exaltation through the knowledge of God in Christ of man, the creature, who has been estranged from God in the world; but who, through this redemption is united in fellowship with God and with the redeemed community in the Kingdom of God." (Der christlich-religiöse Glaube ist der Glaube an die Wieder-und Höhergeburt der in der Welt gottentfremden Kreatur durch die Erkenntnis Gottes in Christo und damit ihre Vereisigung mit Gott und unter sich zum Gottesreich.)<sup>1</sup>

This definition states what Troeltsch considers to be the inherent ideal of Christianity, the Prinzip, as he calls it.<sup>2</sup> This Prinzip is the abstract formulation of the motivating force in Christianity which all the individualisations are striving to incarnate. It is the principle of continuity which underlies all the variegated historical forms. Each age strives to embody the Prinzip in whatever symbolism is at its command, and through whatever forms of thought are most understandable to itself. The Prinzip represents the common element of all the essences of Christianity of the various ages and forms of its entire history. The formulation of this inherent ideal is an act of historical and religious intuition as a result of the study of the totality of the manifestations which comprise the material of the history of Christianity.

The divisions of systematic theology follow logically from the formulation of the Christian principle. These are the historical doctrines and present-day religious and metaphysical beliefs. The historical doctrines or norms, deal with the Old Testament, Jesus, the develop-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Dogmatik der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 512.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Troeltsch's article, "Prinzip, (religiöses)," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910.

ment subsequent to His advent in the New Testament, and the growing doctrinal heritage of the Christian Church. The present day norms have to do with the appropriation of redemption through Jesus and the Christian community's apprehension of revelation in the present time. This appropriation centers about four leading ideas: God, man, the world, and the relation of all three to each other in redemption and fellowship in the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> Around these foci, Troeltsch constructs the normative essence of modern Protestant Christianity.

The historical aspects of the Christian heritage have vital and important significance in determining the norms which constitute the present day essence of Christianity, because, containing as they do the original revelation of Jesus, and its classic appropriation in the New Testament era, and the subsequent development of the Church through out the ages, they are the forces which have moulded the present and made it what it is to a very large extent. The first of the historical factors which shaped the present is the Old Testament period, which Troeltsch considers, -- as indeed he does all the historical elements -- from the point of view of its significance for the present.

The Old Testament development is important not only because it prepared the way for Jesus, but because it in itself contains certain very fundamental truths concerning the nature of God and His Will for man, which were revealed to the prophets and the other great religious souls in the course of Hebrew history. These truths are still vital and living for the modern Church, as they have been through Christian history. They are still normative elements in the Christian heritage. Jesus built

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 73.

upon the religion of the Old Testament. When He came, He did not have to begin by proclaiming monotheism as a basic fact about the nature of God. Due to the work of the Hebrew prophets, the acceptance of the oneness of God was axiomatic in the Jewish heritage when Jesus came. Not only had the unity of God been revealed through the Prophets, but they had also interpreted His Will in ethical terms. A third contribution of the history of Israel to the Christian heritage is the great succession of religious personalities, the prophets, the psalmists, and others, who, as bearers of revelation and forerunners of Jesus, have always occupied a position of normative significance in Christianity, and still continue to do so. Of course, not all of the history of the Hebrews can be regarded as normative, for some of the work of the prophets was lost or hindered from full development by the legalism and narrow nationalism with which later Judaism became entangled. The three contributions, monotheism, the interpretation of the Will of God in ethical terms, and the great succession of religious personalities, who were the vehicles of revelation, and forerunners of Jesus, still hold normative significance for modern, as for historic Christianity. Without these historical forerunners of Jesus, it would be impossible to understand Him.<sup>1</sup>

The second historical norm is the personality of Jesus, the crown, culmination, and center of the entire Jewish-Christian revelation. The importance of Jesus for the Christian faith is such that it will be discussed in a separate chapter. Here it must suffice to say that the normative position of Jesus is not comparable even to that of the founders of other religions, for not only is He the originator of the Weltanschauung

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 97-100.

contained in the Christian revelation of God, but He is the center and the mediator of the redemption. The very essence of the modern Christian's appropriation of salvation is that it is power emanating from Jesus, which lifts him out of himself and up to God.<sup>1</sup> In spite of all historic difficulties, Troeltsch believes that we can recognise the main outlines of Jesus' life and teachings in the gospels so that faith can continue to find in Him the secure historic basis for salvation now, as in the past.

The third historical period which is important in determining the norms of present-day Christianity is the subsequent history of the Church. Jesus Himself cannot be fully understood historically except in the light of the development which preceded Him in the prophetic tradition, and also through the succession of Christian personalities whom He inspired, - a succession beginning with Paul, and extending down to our own time. These great figures of the Church have a normative significance for the Christian community. In fact, the whole of church history has a living interest for the present in so far as it is the continuation of revelation. The purely factual side of this development belongs to the province of Church History, but the religious evaluation of it is the task of systematic theology.<sup>2</sup>

Troeltsch's division of Christian history is famous. He gives his reasons for it in detail in his Soziallehren, (1912), but it also underlies his Glaubenslehre. The divisions are: the Christianity of the primitive Christian community; the Christianity of the Greek Catholic Church, which reflects the spirit of a moribund antiquity; the Christianity of the Roman Catholic Church which mirrors the mind of the Middle Ages; the Christianity

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Glaube und Geschichte," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, section. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 118-121.

of old Protestantism, which is a Janus, with one face looking back to the Middle Ages, the other ahead into the rising modern world; New Protestantism, the child of the modern world; and side by side with Old and New Protestantism, that peculiar offshoot of them both, the mystical sects.

Of this long and heterogeneous development, not all is of normative significance for the modern church. The normative is to be sought in the appearance of great religious personalities such as Paul, Augustine, and the Reformers, who are continuers and bearers of revelation. They, as interpreters of Jesus and living representatives of the continuing revelation in the Church, are the authoritative figures in the whole religious development of Christianity subsequent to Jesus. There are also certain creative religious epochs which exert a directive influence over the Christian body today. The Reformation is one such era, at least for Protestantism, which, of course, Troeltsch has particularly in mind in his determination of the essence of present-day Christianity. (There would be no object in determining the essence of modern Roman Catholic Christianity; for that is, or at least gives itself out to be, quite untouched by all the currents of modern thought which have so profoundly modified Protestantism.)<sup>1</sup>

The formula by which the Church has historically expressed its belief in continuing and living revelation in its own midst is the doctrine of the Trinity. The early Church found a symbol for this idea in the Messianic hope; but when this expectation of the speedy return of Christ was disappointed, it formulated the idea through the doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine combines the historical and religious elements in the theology

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Troeltsch's essay "Der Modernismus," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II for a discussion of the unalterable position of the Catholic church on modern problems.

of the Church. In its modern sense, the Trinity expresses the essential revelation of God to His historical revelation, incarnated in Christ and continuing through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch understands the Trinity as a purely economic expression. The separation of theology from the Neoplatonic cosmological speculation out of which the doctrine originally arose makes it unnecessary as an expression of the unity of substance among the three members of the Godhead. The significance of the doctrine as an expression for the combination of the religious and historical elements in Christianity remains unimpaired by the fall of the Neo-platonic philosophy which underlay the original formulation; and understood in this economic sense, it is permanently valuable to the modern Church.

The doctrine of the Trinity is, according to Troeltsch, the bridge between the historical and the present elements of Christianity. The first of these present-day elements is the doctrine of God. With it, Troeltsch comes to the second of the sources of the norms, the analysis of the religious consciousness of the present-day Christian community. Troeltsch approaches the discussion of the doctrine of God in a humble spirit. He follows the method of Schleiermacher in making the Christian community's apprehension of God the basis of his statement of the idea of God, because God is too great to be comprehended by the human mind, and our knowledge of Him is only the "small spark from His great light in our own souls." He admits the subjectivism inherent in such a process; but believes it is inevitable, since we have no other way of knowing Him immediately except through the experience of Him in our own hearts. The only guarantee that

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 122-126.



we have that our apprehension of God corresponds to the reality of His nature is the faith that He is revealing Himself to us.<sup>1</sup>

By its very nature, then, our conception of God must be drawn principally from our immediate experience of Him. Even the historic elements in the doctrine of His nature cannot substitute for this immediacy of the perception of His character. They can indeed guide and mould our present experience; but not replace it. Of course, our conception of God has been greatly influenced by the conception of Him handed down from the Prophets and Jesus, but our idea is a synthesis of the historical heritage involved in the doctrine, and our own immediate experience of Him in our lives. The chief present-day factors which contribute to the doctrine of God in the consciousness of the Christian community are the modern view of the world and the personal struggle to understand the meaning of life.<sup>2</sup> The essence of the whole Christian conception of God is that it is an ethical theism.

The outstanding characteristics of the Christian theism is that it conceives of God in the personal terms of Will and Essence, (Wesen). By essence Troeltsch means that God not only manifests Himself as a Will that executes its own purposes and ends in human history; but also that as Essence, He is the immanent, indwelling Spirit Who makes known in the hearts of men His holy purposes and His gracious offer of fellowship with Himself to do His Will. As Essence, He also creates in the souls of men the Knowledge of the good, which He wills, and the desire to follow the good. It is this combination of the belief in God as Will with the idea of Him as

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 131 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

Essence which distinguishes the Christian conception of the Will of God from the Mohammedan and Jewish ideas of it. In Mohammedanism, God is thought of in the terms of Will, but that Will is arbitrary; and in Judaism, the interpretation of God's Will as fellowship with Himself is confined to the Chosen People. This characteristic combination of God as Will and Essence also differentiates the Christian concept from that of polytheism, where the Will of God appears to the religious subject as parcelled out among the various forces of nature instead of absolute and unified. This is also a differentiation between Christianity and all forms of pantheism and monism, which submerge the life of the individual in the Divine All.<sup>1</sup> This separation of God and man which Christian theism preserves causes inner logical conflicts in the idea of God as Will; but it is necessary to the true essence of religion to preserve human freedom and individuality so that the submission to God may be a voluntary act, and also in order that the human personality, when it has been exalted into fellowship with God through this surrender, may be relatively a creative and free sharer in the purposes of the Divine.

That we should conceive of God in the terms of Will is an inherent necessity of the personal interpretation of His character. The analogy to human personality which it involves does not apply to the lower aspects of personality as we know it, but to its very highest and best qualities, will, purpose, intelligence and all the finer ethical attributes. The Will of God as we apprehend it is inseparable from the idea of purpose, of teleology. The chief scene of the working of God's purposes is to be sought in history rather than in the physical universe,

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 139-142.

though that, too, is grounded in the Will of God. God is not to be identified with the world, whose Creator He is, but His Will is manifested in the world, and in history, through the realisation of His purposes. His Will is ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> not rational in the sense of being the ultimate ground of all things, the reasons for which we cannot discover.<sup>1</sup> The Will of God is a free, creative agent, which has brought into being all that exists. We cannot answer the question why anything should exist at all except by saying that it is the Will of God. "That is the Reason of all reasons, the law of all laws. Man's reason cannot answer the why or the wherefore of it."<sup>2</sup>

Since the Will of God is the Ground of all things, this proposition holds true for the individual unit as well as for the sum-total of things. For this reason, history, which abounds in the individual and irreproducible, is the chief scene of the activity of the free, creative Will of God. History is dynamic instead of static, hence it is the principal vehicle of the living, continuing revelation of God. This is not too narrow and anthropocentric a view of revelation; for besides the activity of God in history by which He makes Himself known to us, there may be other spiritual realms in which He is revealing Himself, but of which we know nothing. History is the vehicle of revelation which concerns us, for through it, we come to know God.

Though the Will of God is free, creative, and the ground of all things, Troeltsch does not interpret it as arbitrariness. It is saved from

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 148-151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

arbitrariness by its combination with the thought of God as Essence. Through this concept, God's purpose for man appears as the exaltation into fellowship with Himself. Not only does His purpose for men include His self-disclosure, but also the will to good, for the good and the Will of God are identical. The Will of God is the Moral law within the human heart. It is the immanence of God in the soul. All who surrender to this inner urge to good, which God Himself creates, enter fellowship with Him in His Kingdom. Jesus' ideal of the Kingdom of God means the complete sovereignty of God in men. On the one hand, that purpose is highly individual; for it is the relation of the individual soul to God the Father. On the other hand, it is a universal ideal in its command of love to one's fellowmen. This purpose of God, the realisation of His Kingdom, which is made known to us chiefly through Jesus' revelation, is an idea that is entirely unique to the Christian religion.<sup>1</sup>

This idea of the loving Will of God with its good purpose in the realisation of the Kingdom of God is the heart of the theistic conception.<sup>2</sup> It entirely transcends reason; for no one can give any rational explanation of why the Will of God should have set such an aim for itself; since it is subject to no law or compulsion. Theism can be understood only through the conception of the Will of God, as beyond all reason. Historically, this combined idea of God as Will and Essence has caused much logical conflict in the attempts of various theologians to give a consistent statement of the doctrine. Usually theologians have inclined to one side or the other, instead of stressing both aspects. Calvin emphasised the Will element to the exclusion of the Essence. Other interpreters have

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 153-155.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-162.

stressed the Essence without proper consideration of the Will. Neither one is complete without the other. God is Will, but He is not arbitrary. God as Essence is immanent in the hearts of men, and manifests Himself by His love to them; but He is not bound by any law, even that of love. In the combination of these two aspects of His nature lies the peculiar genius of Christian theism. The two ideas are united in the concept of freedom, or of the Spirit. The Spirit is the indwelling God in man, through Whom he is exalted into unity of will with God, and shares the Divine freedom through perfect obedience to, and accord with His Will.<sup>1</sup>

The subjective appropriation of this conception of God rests upon a personal decision. To some extent this decision is influenced by the possibility of combining this idea of God with the picture of the universe which philosophy and science furnish to the modern man. The objections to it from this source are four: First, some maintain that it is unworthy to conceive of God in this anthropomorphic form. Second, others assert that this theistic interpretation leaves us with a permanent philosophic dualism. Third, some others are of the opinion that the idea of plurality of ends contains in it the impossibility of any teleological view of the world. Fourth, still others assert that the idea of God in connection with freedom turns out to be an assumption that can neither be rationally established nor deduced.

To the first of these objections Troeltsch grants that the theistic conception necessarily entails a certain element of anthropomorphism; but that this is no real objection if the anthropomorphism be conceived on the analogy of the higher rather than the lower aspects of personality.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 162-165.

If we are unwilling to think of God in personal terms at all, the only other alternative is to conceive Him as an Eternal Absolute<sup>1</sup> without any attributes of any kind. The latter idea of Him would obliterate all distinctions between good and evil. Even though the theistic view involves logical conflicts and antinomies, we must prefer these to the attributeless Eternal Absolute, which has no predicates at all.<sup>2</sup>

The second objection is that of those who incline to the kind of unity which monism and pantheism afford. To this difficulty Troeltsch retorts that even monism and pantheism do not escape the dualism between good and evil. The evil must be explained as illusion, which necessitates some answer to the problem of how that illusion came into being. The nature of true religion demands the recognition of that dualism which in fact exists in the world. If this dualism is not admitted, there is no need for salvation of any kind, even the type that pantheism affords. The Christian salvation offers redemption from the lower to the higher by the unity of the will of the creature with the Will of God. Pantheism also recognises a certain dualism by its offer of salvation to the creature through the absorption of his individuality in the Pure Being of God. The pantheistic dualism is that between illusion and reality; in Christianity it is that between good and evil. Both presuppose an irrational element. The difference is that the pantheistic irrational is the dualism between illusion and Being; the Christian is the creative Will of God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch often did speak of the identity of the Absolute of philosophy with the Christian God; but it must be remembered that he consistently maintains that the Absolute in the sense he uses the term is the philosophic Absolute only in the sense of being the Ground and Originator of all the ideal values. He never uses Absolute in a monistic or mathematical sense of the attributeless All.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 165-169.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-172.

The third type of objection to the idea of God as Will and Essence is that it tends to make God finite; therefore cannot be carried out to a logical conclusion. The objection is twofold. One side of it concerns the implication that such a supposition makes God incomplete in His own Being without the fulfilment of His purposes, which is equivalent to denying His self-sufficiency and superiority to change. The other side of the difficulty is that the very assumption of God's purpose for man is an anthropocentric notion, because it makes man and his welfare the object of great solicitude on the part of God. To the first half of the difficulty, Troeltsch answers that all thought of the Being of God leads in some way to an idea of the necessary connection of His purposes with His Being, even the Spinozistic theory, in which the amor intellectualis becomes His purpose. The Christian idea makes redemption the purpose of God for man; and redemption is the heart of all religion. The reply to the second half of the difficulty is that just the fact that God has the purpose of redemption for man in view is not absolutely anthropocentric. There is no reason to suppose that redemption is the only purpose God has in the universe. Moreover, even the aim of man's redemption does not mean that God is concerned with his welfare and prosperity on a purely eudaimonistic plane. Redemption is entirely a religious matter, the exaltation of the creature above the realm of nature and sense into fellowship with his Creator.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth possible question about the theistic conception concerns the combination of the idea of the Will of God with freedom of the creature. This is a completely superrational postulate of theism; but it

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 176-180.

is very essential to the true character of religion. Since God Himself wills its existence, all creation exists through His Will. He wills to exalt men into fellowship with Himself so that they become partakers of His freedom. Religiously, this doctrine is expressed in regeneration of the creature, and second birth. Applied to the world at large, it allows for the appearance of new things through the continuous creative activity of God. This conception conflicts with the changelessness that is so dear to pantheism; and it also clashes with the effort of science to carry out the law of cause and effect rigidly throughout the universe.<sup>1</sup> The complete application of the law of cause and effect to all realms of life would postulate that science is in a position to explain the ultimates of the universe, which, as a matter of fact, it cannot do. It, like religion, must bow before the mystery of the creation and the ceaseless activity of God without being able to explain the one or the other. The appearance of new elements is irrational, but their existence can be denied only if one assumes that all change is illusion. In human life, each individual is irreproducible, and in religion, the converted man is a new creature. The idea of the creation as an unceasing process gives an account of the irrational in the universe, though it does not explain it.

The concept of God as Will and Essence does not exhaust the Christian doctrine of His Nature. God's Will and Essence are directed towards holiness, which leads to the next norm of present-day Christian theism. Like the doctrine of the Will of God, His Holiness is also a part of the heritage of Christian tradition which comes down to us from Jesus and the Prophets. The holiness of God occupies a central position in the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 181-182.



teaching of Jesus. Under it are subsumed such attributes of the Being of God as His perfection, His Being as the Ground of the moral law, and His character as the Author of the moral order of the world and of moral freedom. These aspects of His Holiness imply His complete opposition to all forms of sin and evil. In its eschatological form, God's irreconcilable hostility to evil is expressed in the doctrine of the Last Judgment;<sup>1</sup> for the essence of the Holy Will of God is that it demands holiness of man, and judges him according to the measure in which he meets this demand.<sup>2</sup>

The above-mentioned characteristics are the chief ones contained in the idea of the holiness of God. The present appropriation of these elements needs further elaboration, for according to Troeltsch, the modern world presents some peculiar and perplexing difficulties to the Christian belief in the Holiness of God. The Holiness of God, it must be emphasised, is the real heart of Jesus' own idea of God, -- not His love, as the current modern idea would lead us to believe. The very application of the word goodness or holiness to the Being of God offers some difficulty. We cannot transfer all ethical virtues wholesale to His Being; that would be senseless anthropomorphism in the case of virtues like bravery, which plainly belong only to men in their struggles. Even goodness, perfection, or harmony, when applied to God, can mean only the inner unity or consistency of His Being with itself, not the obedience to the moral law, which is the essence of the term in reference to men. When we say that God is good, we mean only that His Will is manifested in the moral law, not that He is bound by it. What the relation of God's goodness or holiness to His own

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 184.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. also the brief article "Gericht Gottes," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

Being is, we do not know, for it is beyond the reach of our comprehension.<sup>1</sup>

The use of such terms as goodness and holiness in Christian theism serves only to express our understanding of Him through the idea of Moral Will instead of through simplicity of substance.

God as Holy Will demands holiness of men. This is an entirely personal demand, for which each human being is responsible. The individual has the freedom to answer or to refuse to comply with God's demand for holiness. If he chooses to oppose the Will of God, he must bear the responsibility for his course. The Biblical formulation of this truth is the notion of rewards and punishments.

This formulation Troeltsch finds inadequate for the needs of the modern world; for it is too plainly in contradiction to the experience of life. Reward does not always follow good conduct, nor does punishment invariably overtake evil-doers. For the doctrine of rewards and punishment, Troeltsch would substitute the idea of a moral world order, for this is a concept not only more understandable in the modern world, but truer to the teachings of Jesus, in which the theme of rewards and punishments is not the heart of the question. Even the faith in a moral world order<sup>2</sup> raises difficulties for Christian faith. It raises the question of man's relation to the physical world, and the problem of happiness in relation to moral action. Even granting that the Christian holiness must express itself in obedience to the Will of God, and in love to God and man without reference to the good or ill consequences that follow from it, still the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 200-201.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch's complete moralisation of the Holiness of God, has been criticised by Wunsch, (Evangelische Wirtschaftsethik p. 172), who believes that Otto has given us the true interpretation of the term holy in his Das Heilige. However, it is really Troeltsch rather than Otto, who follows traditional Christian usage here. If Troeltsch moralises the term too completely, the question can also be raised whether Otto has not separated it/thoroughly from its moral connotation.  
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Christian ideal cannot be entirely indifferent to the physical world, which, if the words of Jesus, "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven," be taken literally, has also a place in the Divine economy. The Christian ideal of moral action cannot be entirely spiritual, because we are placed in a world that is a combination of the material and the spiritual. To say anything of the relation of the two to each other is something of an adventure of faith, but in the long run, and in the majority of cases, we have the right to believe, Troeltsch thinks, that goodness does result in happiness, though it is not always true in individual instances. Goodness does not save from disease, accidents, or natural catastrophes. The good cannot expect miraculous exemption from the working of natural law. This focus of the matter is largely modern, though Jesus Himself taught that being overtaken by accidents or calamities due to the operation of natural forces was not to be interpreted in the terms of requital for bad conduct. The important fact for us to recognise is that the Divine demand for holiness presents itself to us, and that it must be answered, regardless of whether happiness follows or not.<sup>1</sup> All that we can do is to cherish the faith that in the end, the good will triumph, and that an ultimate harmony between natural and spiritual good will be reached.

The problem of the relation of goodness to man's destiny in the world has implications that reach over into the next essential characteristic of the Christian idea of God, His love. God is loving, according to the Christian belief, yet His love has nothing to do with eudamonism, -- a marked contrast to the interpretation of the love of the gods in the

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 205-212 Cf. also his articles "Gesetz" and "Theodizee" in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 205-212 Cf. also his articles "Gesetz" and "Theodizee" in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

higher polytheistic religions. Also, Christianity alone of all the great religions of the world, reveals God as loving and gracious. This characteristic of the God of Christianity is so far beyond the grasp of science and philosophy that all the questions they raise concerning it relate only to the preconditions of such a belief, not to the certainty itself, which is purely religious in character. The love of God, according to Troeltsch, cannot be fully understood through analogies drawn from human love, - even from father or mother love, - which has to do with human senses and affections. The love of God is a unique form unknown in human relationships. It is the love of the Creator for His creatures. All figures drawn from human love are only figures when used of the love of God. The relation of love between God, the Creator, and men, His creatures, can be best understood in the terms of a unity of spirit and will between them, which expresses itself in devotion to certain objective values which are recognised as the Will of God.<sup>1</sup>

The problems which arise for Christians in connection with the belief in the love of God center around two facts of experience: first that it seldom happens that the goal of this relationship of love is fully reached by man, -- an observation that used to be formulated in the doctrine of predestination, -- and secondly, the practical difficulties which the facts of life present to the belief in a loving God in a world filled with suffering and brutality, the question of the so-called theodicy. These are both practical rather than theoretical problems.

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 212-215.

Although the central element in the doctrine of God is really His Holiness, it is in the light of the belief in His love that all the rest of His nature is to be interpreted. The very fact of creation is itself an expression of God's love. The demand for holiness that He makes upon men is an expression of His loving Will for them; for He desires fellowship with them; and also, He not only makes this demand of them, but through His forgiving love and grace, He creates in them the capacity for goodness.<sup>1</sup> His love for His creatures wins them back to Himself. If they will but surrender to Him in faith, He exalts them into fellowship with Himself, and condescends to allow them to share in His purposes.<sup>2</sup> The idea of the love of God is the key to the whole of Christian theism, through which all the rest of God's character is to be understood, and through which the ultimate meaning of creation is illuminated.

If the love of God is outgoing and gracious, as Christian theism asserts, the practical difficulty that this relationship of love to God seems so seldom to be realised among men must be met. Predestination is the older way of formulating this fact; but according to Troeltsch, that doctrine views the matter from the wrong side. The limitation of those who share in the fellowship is not on the part of God, Who wills to save only the elect and damns the rest of mankind. It is rather that this exaltation into fellowship with God through His grace and forgiving love is a free offer, which each man can either accept or reject. Even when this fact of freedom has been considered, there still remains the serious difficulty of the many individuals who suffer from limitations of a spiritual or mental character which leave them no capacity or ability to desire to

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 221, also the article, "Gnade," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

accept this offer of salvation. Primitive men, who are but little removed from the animal level, so far as we can see, are a case in point. There are also those who through mental or physical handicaps, disease, accident, or other misfortune, have had their higher capacities so impaired that it is impossible to conceive of their being able to attain to any higher spiritual level at all. These considerations cause us to wonder whether salvation is intended for all. This is the modern form in which the problem of predestination presents itself.<sup>1</sup> In the face of the facts, Troeltsch believes that we must still say with Calvin that God is not obliged to offer salvation to every creature. Hard as this saying may seem, it contains a genuinely religious note in its appreciation of the fact that men may not question the Will of God.

Troeltsch refuses to take any way out of the difficulty of predestination such as the belief in reincarnation, which he thinks is too highly speculative to treat seriously.<sup>2</sup> He does not follow those who would postpone the salvation of these retarded personalities to the next world. He maintains that if they are to develop in the next world, they must bring with them some capacity for that development which, so far as we can see, they do not in fact display. He is willing to rest the matter in the doctrine of predestination. The limitation of grace is only one according to capacity, not the arbitrary one the older form of the doctrine presupposed. The elect according to Troeltsch's idea, would be only from the group of those who have the capacity to accept or reject God's offer of fellowship with Himself. This is quite a different statement of the doc-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Prädestination," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 231. Evidently Troeltsch felt a certain sympathy with the idea of reincarnation, for in his article on Eschatology in Schiele's Encyclopaedia, he seems to play with the notion himself. Cf. Eschatologie, Section 4.

trine from that of the older, deterministic statements.<sup>1</sup>

The second problem, that of the theodicy, is, like predestination, a problem common to all ages. From the time of Job the contradiction between the idea of a loving God Who rules the world and the facts of experience have been felt by religious people; but the problem does have some distinctly modern emphases, due to our conceptions of the working of natural law. The traditional doctrine of the Church solved the problem through the idea of the fall of man as the root of all the misery and suffering incidental to the struggle for existence, and even explained the origin of disease and death by this means. Combined with Greek philosophy, the Church sometimes explained the whole problem on the basis of a dualism between spirit and matter. Neither of these solutions is possible in the modern world. Troeltsch's view is that even the best that one can say about the problem of suffering is merely a matter of individual opinion.

We are in a world that may be suited to some final, spiritual goal of mankind, but which certainly is indifferent even to the spiritual concerns of the individuals involved at many points. The universe is plainly an unfinished product, with the struggle incidental to such a condition displayed in its many conflicts and imperfections. On the one hand is the harsh world of nature, and on the other, the spiritual struggle of man; but we can only believe that the Divine purpose underlies both, and that the spiritual life is deepened through the conflict between the two forces. Furthermore, Troeltsch believes that God Himself suffers with His creatures in their efforts to realise His ends. His love is so great that its deepest meaning is known through His suffering with men in their suffering.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 228, 232 .



As a consequence of His love, God's creatures are important to Him as sharers in His purposes, and in their struggles He is concerned. This idea presents great theoretical difficulties; but it is an essential of theism, for without it, the existence of the creatures as separate individuals yet united to God through their oneness of purpose with Him would have no meaning.<sup>1</sup> The theoretical problems lie along the line of believing that God is in any way dependent upon His creatures for the realisation of His purposes, and of thinking of Him as growing with their growth. Practically, however, the idea of men as coworkers with God, is of enormous religious importance. This conclusion leads Troeltsch into the discussion of the relation of God to the world, and to men, the second of the great normative ideas of present-day Christianity.

Of course, it is impossible to consider the idea of God without reference to the world and to men, but the discussion of the subject has hitherto been focussed about the idea of God. In the consideration of man and the world, the view point shifts from the concept of God to the Christian idea of the world as it reflects God. The relation of the world to God falls into three divisions: creation; providence, or world-governance, as Troeltsch prefers to call it; and miracle. The Christian beliefs about the world are not to be confused with scientific hypotheses about its origin. Religious beliefs about the nature of the world must not conflict with the teachings of science; they must be broad enough so that they can be held to be true, whatever scientific hypothesis about the world and its origin has the fore at the time. A doctrinal construction which affords room for both is entirely possible, because the Christian view is not an explanation

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 235-239.

of the world, but a religious attitude towards it. Naturally, Troeltsch's position makes no effort to save the Biblical cosmology. He is content to leave the question of how the world came into being entirely in the hands of science.<sup>1</sup>

That the world is the creation of God has always been a prominent ideal in the teaching of the Prophets and Jesus. The doctrine of creation includes both the ideas of God's transcendence and His immanence. Logically it is difficult to combine these two elements; but the combination is one of those antinomies which reason cannot resolve, but which are vital to the religious life. In the prophetic conception, God is largely transcendent in His relation to the world which He has created, but in the teaching of Jesus, His immanence also comes to the fore. The world is not to be regarded as an ultimate in itself; but behind it does lie the mystery of the Divine, and it does reveal the character of God and His Will. God is not identical with the world, but He is active in it. The fact that the Christian conception of the relation of God to the world contains the antinomy of immanence and transcendence explains why at some periods the transcendence has been emphasised to the exclusion of the immanence and vice versa. At present the tendency is to stress the immanence, because of the vast size of the universe as astronomy reveals it, and because of the concept of the working of natural law throughout the whole of it.

The working of natural law throughout this vast universe, which science formulates in abstract terms, means in religious language the continued creative activity of God in the cosmos. In the midst of all this modern emphasis on the immanence of God, Troeltsch points to the necessity.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 240-241.

of keeping the transcendent aspect of the nature of God in sight; for though science leads us to think God as in the world, we must never make the mistake of identifying Him with the world. The world is but one expression of God and His creative activity.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of God as Creator of the universe accounts for its origin. The continued presence of God in His world, and His guidance of it, is expressed by the doctrine of providence, (Vorsehung) or world-governance, (Weltregierung), as Troeltsch prefers to term it. The latter conception, which is also a part of the theistic heritage of Christendom, refers to the belief in the ultimate triumph of God's good purposes, under which the religious teleology in reference to the world is comprehended. This thought is expressed in the Old Testament by the faith in the final triumph of Israel and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. In the New Testament it is the expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of God, at which time the redeemed individuals will share in the ultimate victory of the Will of God, and in His love. The ideal is not one of the material happiness or the well-being of men in the world, but of moral triumph. The latter view has been rendered all the more necessary by the modern conception of natural law, which makes it all but impossible to believe in arbitrary interventions on the part of God to change or guide individual destin<sup>i</sup>es. The world-governance of God can be thought of only in connection with the triumph of God's purposes as a whole, and the sharing of the redeemed individuals in that end.

Furthermore, like the doctrine of creation, the conception of providence is a purely religious one, not a scientific explanation of how

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 247-252.

er when this triumph of the Will of God will take place. Like creation, providence is a continuous activity of God, and is separated from creation only conceptually, not temporally. The time of the ultimate consummation<sup>1</sup> is not revealed to men. Applied to men, the meaning of this ultimate victory of the Will of God is redemption, although there are doubtless other spiritual ends included in God's plan in the universe, of which humanity has no knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The ultimate triumph of God's Will to redemption is to be understood as the profoundest meaning of His love. The doctrine of creation views the world as coming from God, that of providence sees it as directed towards Him, but both are really but different aspects of the same religious idea, the place of the world in God's love.

The doctrine of God's world-governance is the religious answer to the question, "Has the world any meaning?" The answer is one of faith: that the meaning of the world is to be found in fellowship with God. No support for such a belief can be drawn from science. It is outside the realm of science to deal with ultimate purposes and ends. We can only accept the answer of faith that somehow the world as a whole is directed towards the ends of God. This is the religious view of the world as a whole, under which the destinies of individuals fall only in so far as they concern the destiny to fellowship with God. For the rest, individual destinies are too intricately bound up with natural causes and the continuity of natural processes to ascribe them to God directly. We cannot know the why and the how of God's world-governance, nor see its connection with ends outside our own destiny of fellowship with God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 252-257.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 257-266 .

The third of the doctrines which concern God's relation to the world is His dealing with the individual soul, which Troeltsch treats under the heading of miracle. It includes prayer, individual experience of God, and the facts of personal religious experience. Later on, Troeltsch admitted that his use of the word miracle to cover this group of facts was quite unwarranted;<sup>1</sup> and even at this time, he says in his explanation of the term that the immediacy of God's working would be a better expression.<sup>2</sup> He does not mean miracle in the older sense of a supernatural intervention which sets aside the operation of natural law; he means a purely religious event that has nothing to do with natural law or its operation. It is the mystery of God's dealing with the individual human soul. The doctrine of providence describes His relation to the world as a whole, but this doctrine of "miracle" or immediacy relates to the individual soul, or the individual happening in the totality of His world-governance. It comprehends the factual, contingent side of the religious life, the immediate presence and working of God in the soul, for which no logical reason can be given, and the ordinary laws of cause and effect cannot account.

Troeltsch admits that miracles in the older sense of the word cannot be entirely denied even on scientific ground, but only rendered very improbable. Catholicism still revels in miracles; but from the very first, Protestantism admitted only those contained in the Bible. Now our growing knowledge of the physical universe has pushed this old-time view of miracle still farther into the background. Even the Biblical miracles have been subjected to such rigid historical criticism that much of their miraculous character has been questioned or swept away. Whether miracles in the older

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, pp. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 267.

sense happened or not is unimportant religiously. It is the miracles of personal communion with God that are vital to faith. The term immediacy which he takes over from Kutter expresses what Troeltsch means much better than the word miracle. (Troeltsch's retention of the word miracle at all in this connection is an attempt to pour new wine into old wineskins; a departure all the more surprising in the light of his usual frank and even daring brushing aside of all tradition which had lost meaning for him.)

The belief in the immediate contact of the individual soul with God presented no problem until the advent of modern science. However, even today, to see the activity of God in the totality of things and not in any of the individual events of units is to have a very one-sided Christian world-view. It is to overlook the facts of religious experience known at first hand by every religious man. These lie beyond the power of science to explain. They are not rational, but contingent elements of religious experience. The religious man cannot tell how God brings about that communion of the soul with Himself through which he becomes a new creature; but he knows it to be a fact of his own experience. Science is not concerned with immediate religious experience. It explains only those mediate elements which are capable of complete rationalisation. Within the framework of these rational elements which can be reduced to exact formulisation by science, and side by side with them are the immediate contingent facts of religious experience which do not conflict with science because they do not come within its ken. Religious experience, by which the individual soul meets God and is changed according to His Will, is a concrete, contingent fact for which no other explanation can be given except that it is the Will of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 270-278.

From the discussion of the world in its relation to God, Troeltsch proceeds to the subject of the Christian view of man. Man is a part of the world, which the Christian views as coming from God, and directed towards Him. The Christian doctrine of man is that he is God's creature, like the rest of the world, hence separate from God, yet destined to fellowship with Him. This religious anthropology, as Troeltsch calls these propositions about the nature, origin, and destiny of man, has nothing to do with such sciences as anthropology and psychology, for it deals with a group of religious attitudes about man and his relation to God which are quite outside the sphere of the sciences. This religious anthropology treats of the infinite worth of the human soul, its likeness to God, (Gottesebenbildlichkeit), sin, the barrier which stands in the way of man's fellowship with God, and the religious interpretation of human history.<sup>1</sup>

Although man is a part of nature like other creatures, he manifests certain differences from the physical world and from other creatures which give him a relative independence of nature, and entitle him to a degree to be called the lord of creation. Religion, which is a way of overcoming the world, heightens these differences, and increases man's spiritual freedom from nature. In considering man, religious anthropology therefore treats him as a religiously and ethically self-conscious being. It is this religious and ethical freedom and self-consciousness in the human personality to which Troeltsch refers when he speaks of the soul, in contradistinction to any psychological explanation of the higher self-consciousness, and to any materialistic theories of the soul such as spiritualists

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 279-281.

hold.<sup>1</sup> Man in his religious anthropology has also nothing but the ethical interpretations in common with the Biblical anthropology contained in the stories of the creation and fall of man, which he rejects on scientific grounds.

Regardless of how science may explain the physical origin of man, whether by special creation, or by the evolution of the higher from the lower orders of life, the religious view of the physical side of man's life is that it is the basis and the precondition of the higher intellectual and spiritual attainments of man, which God created to serve these higher ends. The origin of the higher life is not clear from the explanations of science. The teaching of the Church on the relation of the spiritual to the physical is a mixture of theories built upon the stories of the creation and the fall of man, Pauline ideas of the opposition between the flesh and the spirit, and Platonic speculations about the <sup>relation of the</sup>psyche, the nous and the pneuma to one another, -- all of which are equally meaningless in the modern world. The substitution of some more satisfactory theory of the interrelation of the two has not yet come about. Troeltsch thinks that no mere psycho-physical parallelism is sufficient to describe the relation between the higher and the lower sides of life. The higher development of the personality depends very much upon the lower; for mental and psychological abnormalities often have a purely physical origin. The important point for religion is, however, that granted that the physical preconditions are normal enough not to produce these mental disturbances, the human personality, in its struggle for character, does tend to free itself from the lower side of its nature.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 282-284.



The soul, this higher personality which tends to free itself from nature, Troeltsch names the intelligible ego. In the intelligible ~~ego~~<sup>ego</sup>, which is not inborn, but created by the ethical struggle, lies the capacity for sharing in the Divine life of fellowship with God. The satisfaction of this urge to be freed from the lower nature can be found only in religion. The incoming of the Divine grace bestows freedom, and through the willing surrender to the Will of God, transforms the man into a new creature. It is this higher personality, the intelligible ego, which is the scene of the operation of the Divine. It is the Divine activity which confers upon the soul its infinite worth.<sup>1</sup>

When the soul submits freely to God and lives in fellowship with Him, it develops towards that perfection of personality which is likeness to Him, (Gottesebenbildlichkeit). The original Church doctrine pictured this likeness to God as having existed in the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam. There is no historical evidence for believing that this state of perfection ever existed; but the ideal remains a vital part of the doctrine of man. In its Christian form, this ideal is the effort to attain a personality like that of Jesus.

The realisation of this ideal, which is possible only through fellowship with God, presupposes the capacity for infinite development of the human personality so that the process, though it begins in the earthly life, can be consummated only in the life hereafter, in full unity with God beyond all the bonds and limitations of human life. Between the beginning of the development in the surrender of the soul to God and its completion in full unity with Him after death, lies the ethical struggle

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 285-295.

towards holiness like unto that of God, and the fight against sin which is the barrier to that holiness.<sup>1</sup>

Sin as a theological concept is not only an ethical matter, but a religious one as well. Troeltsch follows the traditional division of the doctrine of sin, and discusses it as original and actual. Original sin in its modern interpretation, includes, according to his view, the weaknesses, limitations, frailties, resistances to the Divine Will, and barriers to fellowship with God which are inherent in human nature itself, and in man's position as a part of the world of nature. Although the traditional teaching about the origin of sin through the fall of man has dropped away, the doctrine of original sin itself remains to describe a group of facts with which we still must reckon. More serious from the religious standpoint, however, is the fact of actual sin, the conscious opposition on the part of the individual to the Will of God, and His call to goodness. Actual sin may take the passive form of ignoring God's grace and love, or the active form of denying, rejecting, and opposing His Will. This view of sin is peculiar to Christianity, and follows as a direct corollary from the Christian belief in a personal God and the freedom of man. Although the idea of sin is not pleasing to the modern world, we need to remind ourselves that the doctrine is a vital part of Christianity, without which our understanding of God is entirely incomplete and inadequate. The preaching of the Prophets was largely a call to repentance. The Psalmists write with passionate intensity of their individual consciousness of sin. Jesus regarded sin as opposition to the Kingdom of God, and allegiance to evil. It was this absolute and determined op-

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 295-300.

position to the good which Kant had in mind when he formulated his idea of radical evil, (das radikale Böse). Sin is a matter of the will, but its heinousness from a religious standpoint can be comprehended only in its contrast to the goodness and love of God. Sin therefore is any want of trust in God and the disposition to follow one's own selfish concerns regardless of the good and of the Divine call to self-surrender. The Biblical account ascribes the entrance of sin into the world to Adam's disobedience; but psychologically sin is a concomitant of freedom, and an incident of the ethical struggle.

As the self develops ethically, it is confronted with the choice of following the call of God and yielding to Him, or of pursuing the selfish concerns of the ego as a part of nature and the present world. The pursuit of the purely eudaimonistic interests of the natural man is opposition to God. This may not be conscious opposition; it may be merely inertia or indifference, or the choice of interests which are partially good, or the desire for self-expression. Following the line of the least resistance by yielding to the desires of the natural man belongs in the category of original sin, but it may lead to actual sin, the active and positive disobedience to the Divine Will. Sin in the psychological sense is common to all men, though in varying degrees, according to the extent to which they consciously resist the Will of God. Besides original and actual sin, Troeltsch distinguishes a third type, social sin. By social sin he means the sort whose consequences are inherited, and thus pass on into the life of the group, or the race,

Closely related to the idea of sin is that of guilt. Guilt is the consciousness of being estranged from God and the good through sin.

In this consciousness of guilt lies a latent desire for a better relationship to God, and for the power to do good. When God seeks man, he flees before Him because of this consciousness of guilt and sense of unworthiness. It is through the sense of guilt that the enormity of sin is comprehended by the soul, and the desire for repentance is born. Consciousness of guilt is a feeling peculiar to theistic religion; for it is the feeling of alienation from the personal seeking God. The consciousness of guilt, the painful sense of God's wrath against us as sinners, and despair over our estrangement from Him is, according to Troeltsch, the one real punishment for sin, though punishment in this sense must be carefully distinguished from the results and consequences of sin, which may harm others as well as ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian views the world on the one hand as the striving towards the realisation of its ideal of likeness to God, and on the other, as the opposition to this ideal in the presence of sin.. The scene of the struggle between the two is history. Even to interpret history in the terms of an ethical and spiritual struggle is an achievement of religious faith. Yet a philosophy of history of this kind is a very ancient part of the Jewish-Christian heritage. The Old Testament pictured the struggle of the two and the final triumph of the good in the ideal of the Messianic Kingdom. In the teaching of Jesus it is the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Catholic Church identified the triumph of the Will of God with the universal dominance of the Church. Protestantism, it is true, did not equate the Kingdom of God with the universal dominance of the Church, but it preserved the other symbolic ideas of the triumph of the good quite

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 300-317.

unchanged. Nowadays these symbols can be accepted only as mythical pictures in a philosophy of history which looks forward to the ultimate triumph of the Will of God.

For us as modern Christians there are many questions as to the legitimacy of this philosophy of history. Historical science does not touch the inner struggle of the spirit against the flesh in its investigations. Even the history of religions concerns itself only with the outer fringes of these more intimate struggles of the soul; and leaves us to guess at the inner recesses of the life of the spirit. History as a science knows neither beginning nor end, and even the presence of progress in history is hard to demonstrate. The belief in the triumph of the good, the spiritual forces, against the bad and the material is purely a matter of faith. The belief in progress itself is but a disguised religious faith. An instance of this semi-religious belief in progress is afforded by those Christian socialists who believe that the Kingdom of God will be realised on earth through a combination of the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood and the increased application of scientific improvements in technique to our way of living. Although there is some historical justification for the belief in progress towards the Kingdom of God, Troeltsch is of the opinion that the final consummation of the triumph of the Will of God is an eschatological event, reserved for the life after death. The Kingdom of God will probably never be realised completely on earth, for mortal life is and will always be nothing but a continuous struggle. When one set of difficulties is overcome, a new set takes their place. There is also the probability that our world will end sometime, or that climatic conditions will alter in such a manner

as to make the continuance of human life impossible. Furthermore, the earthly triumph of the Kingdom of God would, according to Troeltsch, be contingent upon the triumph of the European-American civilisation, with which Christianity is inextricably bound up, and we cannot know whether Western civilisation is destined to continue. Most important of all, the religious ideal itself demands a goal beyond the bounds of earthly life, where the triumph of the good would be synonymous with the complete union of the souls with God, an end attainable only in the life hereafter.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth essential or normative trend in the determination of the essence of present-day Protestant Christianity is the doctrine of redemption, which brings together the doctrines of God, man and the world in their religious relation to each other. The final section of the Glaubenslehre treats this subject, and in more compact form, the same ideas are expressed in the articles on the grace of God and on redemption in the first edition of Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. The latter part of this section in the Glaubenslehre is fragmentary, so that in the main, we shall follow the account of the ideas in the above-mentioned articles from Troeltsch's own hand, with supplementary reference to the Glaubenslehre where that seems desirable.

No doctrine of the Christian Church has been more variously interpreted at different periods than that of redemption; yet it is a continuous and vital element through its whole history. Its central idea of God as forgiving Grace is, as Troeltsch rightly says, the highest and tenderest revelation known to the human race.<sup>2</sup> Redemption in some form is found in

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 317-325, Cf. also article on "Eschatology" in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Gnade Gottes," section 2, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

all the higher religions except Mohammedanism and legalistic Judaism, but it is the peculiar genius of Christian theism that it formulates the idea in personal terms corresponding to its conception of God as loving and forgiving Grace. The difference of the Christian doctrine of redemption from that of all the other higher religions is not only in the more personal formulation of the idea, but also in the profundity and power of its conception. Historically, redemption has been variously interpreted. In the teaching of the Old Testament Prophets, it was the restoration of Israel and the Messianic Kingdom. According to Jesus, it is complete surrender to God, and membership in the Kingdom of Heaven. Both temporal and eschatological elements appear in Jesus' conception, with the predominance of the one or the other depending upon what interpretation is given to the moot question of Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness. Paul's idea of redemption centers in the death of Christ, but the culmination of the process is eschatological. The Catholic Church refers it to the death of Christ, the merit of which is in the custody of the Church, and is mediated to the individual through the sacraments. Protestantism refused to recognise the Church as the ark of salvation; and referred redemption solely to the death of Christ. In the period of the Enlightenment, the whole idea of redemption was uncongenial to the rationalistic trend of the age. The life of Christ was emphasised as an example and pattern of goodness for our instruction; but his death was not felt to be significant. Schleiermacher restored the idea of redemption to its rightful place in Christian thinking by making the assurance of forgiveness as it is revealed to us through the impression of the figure of Christ central in his doctrinal system.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Erlösung," sections 1, 2, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

The idea of redemption needs rethinking before it can be understood by the modern world, according to Troeltsch. The death of Christ, he thinks, cannot be regarded as a vicarious sacrifice; for such an idea does violence to modern ethical thinking; it is untenable in the light of the historical understanding of Jesus; and finally it ascribes a legalistic character to God, Who is pictured as demanding this satisfaction. To retain such a theory of the death of Christ is to attribute to God a character which is not only highly anthropomorphic, but also quite incompatible with His revelation of Himself as forgiving Grace and Love. Even Schleiermacher's formulation of the doctrine is not adequate for the modern church, thinks Troeltsch.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch's own idea of redemption is focussed about the experience from the side of man, the subject, and from God, the Object. From the standpoint of man, redemption means the perfection or the sanctification of his personality through the freedom and increased moral power which results from his submission to the Will of God, and acceptance of the Divine forgiveness and grace. He is then exalted into fellowship with God, and through this fellowship of love, he is able to conquer the lower desires for self-assertion and material well-being. From the standpoint of God, Who takes the initiative in redemption through the offer of His grace, redemption means the return of His creative Will to itself, enriched by the redeemed Will of the souls who have submitted to Him. Redemption is the natural corollary to the idea of God's loving and creative Will to holiness.

God is the real Redeemer, according to Troeltsch's theory; for

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 329.



it is His Grace which takes the initiative and assures the soul of forgiveness through the revelation of His own character as Redeeming Love. The most important vehicle of God's revelation of His character as a gracious and forgiving God, is Jesus. The revelation of God through Jesus begets faith in the heart of man. Faith gives knowledge of what are the true values of life, and through the power of God's love, it gives the strength and the will to live for these higher ends. The content of redemption is as follows: It is redemption from the suffering incidental to life, and release from the sense of guilt through the assurance of Divine forgiveness. Of course, the believer is not released from the suffering incidental to life, but he is given a new attitude of triumph over it which enables him to accept it as necessary to the unfinished nature of the world in which he lives, and to accept it patiently and without rebellion as a means of purification and discipline to the soul in its effort to free itself from the bonds of the lower self. The final release from this kind of suffering is to be found only in the world to come. Redemption also means release from the oppression of guilt through the assurance of God's forgiveness of his sins. Through the assurance of God's forgiveness and His offer of fellowship with Himself, the soul is filled with joy so that all things are made new, and from this increased power to live for the higher ends of God results. The present redemption is a series of inner transformations towards God, the world, and one's fellowmen. The final redemption comes after death.<sup>1</sup>

The final redemption, which takes place beyond the grave, is the complete overcoming of all barriers and obstructions which prevent the union of the soul with God. Troeltsch believes that after death the soul

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Erlösung," sections 5, 6, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

undergoes a period of development or purification until the union of its will with that of God is complete, when it loses its individuality and is merged into His Being.<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch admits himself that this idea of the fusion of the soul with God is a pantheistic strain in his theology. He combats pantheism at every other point in his doctrinal system, but succumbs to it here in this eschatological form.<sup>2</sup>

The discussion of the place of Jesus in Troeltsch's outline of the doctrine of redemption will be reserved for the next chapter, which is to be entirely devoted to Troeltsch's Christology.

The last constituent of Troeltsch's determination of the normative essence of Christianity is the Christian doctrine of the Kingdom of God. The section which deals with this subject in the Glaubenslehre is unfortunately very fragmentary. The Kingdom of God is the correlate of redemption; for when the individual is assured of forgiveness and admitted to fellowship with God, he becomes a sharer in the Divine purposes, and a coworker towards their realisation. He unites with other redeemed individuals for the same end. In this fellowship, the bond of unity is the common recognition of the authority and greatness of God. The purpose of the fellowship is worship of God, and the strengthening of their own faith through that means. The urge towards religious fellowship has always been prominent in Christianity. It is the root of the Church, but the Church should be distinguished from the Kingdom of God, since the latter is a fellowship confined to the redeemed.

The necessity for providing for the increase of the fellowship,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Eschatologie" in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 362-363.

the desire for stated services of worship, and the attempt to propagate the gospel in the world led to the foundation of the church as an institution for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. The real founder of the church as an institution is Paul, though the circle of the religious fellowship goes back to Jesus. Jesus was content to work through the synagogue; hence it was only when Paul wrenched Christianity loose from Judaism that the church as such began under the latter's direction. Even in his day, when the churches were separate organisations, the sacraments had begun to be observed, and the teaching and missionary work of spreading the Gospel was well under way so that the later church had only to build on the foundation that the greatest of the Apostles laid. The Catholic Church developed its elaborate organisation with the priesthood and its emphasis on the supernatural character of the sacraments.

The Reformation changed the theory of the function of the Church very materially. It severed the connection of salvation with the priesthood and greatly simplified the sacraments; but left to the church its essential character as a fellowship for the propagation of the gospel through the preaching of the word, and the celebration of the sacraments as means of grace. Even through the existence of many particular churches, Protestantism has never lost the ideal of the church as a religious fellowship. In modern times the ideal of the Kingdom of God has come to replace that of the church as a divine institution. The churches regard themselves as the means for the spread of that ideal, and around it they focus all their educational and missionary activity, as well as their preaching and worship.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 365-373.

Around the central historical elements in the Christian heritage, the development in the Old Testament, Jesus, and the history of the Church, and around the present experience of the Christian fellowship centering in the doctrines of God, man, the world, and redemption, Troeltsch constructs the normative essence of present-day Protestant Christianity. The main effort of his construction is to grapple with the problems which confront the Christian faith from the fields of science and history. Our chief concern is with the historical emphasis, not only because Troeltsch himself believed it to be the more important, but because around it the problem of the norms is chiefly centered. So far as his outline of the Christian faith in relation to scientific questions is concerned, he achieved his aim of constructing his system along such broad lines that there would be no conflict between the religious attitudes that the Christian gospel includes, and the results of science. The scientific Weltanschauung has changed greatly since 1911 when Troeltsch wrote the lectures that make up his Glaubenslehre, but very little of what he says in relation to scientific questions would have to be altered by theologians of the present. He rightly emphasised the fact that science and religion belong to different realms, and by laying stress on the essentially religious character of the affirmations which Christianity makes about God, man, and the world, he avoided the mistakes of those theologians who mix science and religion together in their systems.

The essential problem with which Troeltsch wrestles in his determination of the essence of Christianity is the one which dominated all his work, the problem of the relation between the merely historical and the normative. The treatment of the historical elements and the question raised

for Christian faith by historical criticism are honestly and fairly met in Troeltsch's system. Also the questions that confront the modern mind in the effort to build for itself a Christian Weltanschauung are to be given a thoughtful and thoroughly Christian answer. The criticisms which have been made of Troeltsch's dogmatic construction in his life-time centered largely about three points: his neglect of supernaturalism,<sup>1</sup> his Christology, and his doctrine of redemption. The last two points will be discussed in the next chapter, and the question of supernaturalism will be taken up in more detail in the chapter on the finality of Christianity to which it really belongs. Here it must suffice to say that Troeltsch does not deny supernaturalism either to Christianity or the other higher religions of the world. What he refused to do, was to lay the whole weight of Christianity's claim to absolute validity and truth upon its claim to exclusive supernaturalism, (cf. article "Offenbarung" in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, section 3). The present writer finds herself unable to agree with those, who like Theodor Kaftan,

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<sup>1</sup>The criticisms of the approach of Troeltsch and the theological approach used by him and other members of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule which are of most importance are those of Traub, Häring, J. Kaftan, T. Kaftan, Metzger, Hunziger, Ihmels, and Prof. H. R. Mackintosh. For a list of these, see bibliography. Very few recent criticisms of Troeltsch's theology have appeared, partly due to the fact that the Glaubenslehre appeared posthumously and partly to the preoccupation of present theologians with Barthianism. Karl Barth in his Dogmatik, (p. 115), comments that Troeltsch's Glaubenslehre is sehr wissenschaftlich- aber nicht sachlich; and certainly from Barth's point of view Troeltsch's theology would be lacking in content. However, Troeltsch would no doubt have been unable to distinguish Barth's Dogmatik from an Erbauungsschrift. The two start from such different presuppositions about the nature of theology that Barth's criticism does not touch the real nature of the task as Troeltsch saw it. Another criticism of Troeltsch's Glaubenslehre is that of Friedrich Wieneke, who says in his monograph, Die Entwicklung des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs bei Ernst Troeltsch, (p. 50), that nothing in the system could lay claim to the universal validity, (Allgemeingültigkeit). This seems to me a very sweeping and hasty generalisation, which applies only to a few doctrines such as the idea of immortality and the Christology.

appear to think that Troeltsch loses all hope of gaining normative elements for his dogmatic construction by an a priori exclusion of the supernatural character of revelation.<sup>1</sup> But apart from this, can we say that his construction of the essence of Christianity is really normative?

Troeltsch's theological method is in the main that of Schleiermacher, for he takes as his point of departure the analysis of the present-day Christian consciousness. Troeltsch, however, avoids some of Schleiermacher's mistakes. His system is less subjective, for Troeltsch had two advantages over Schleiermacher that helped to counteract the latter's extreme subjectivism. First of all, the increase in the knowledge of both the method and the results of historical criticism developed in the century that intervenes between the lives of the two men gave Troeltsch far greater understanding of the nature of the historical questions involved than Schleiermacher could have had in his day. Then, too, Troeltsch's own devotion to history gave him a far keener feeling for the need for objectivity in religion than Schleiermacher as a child of the Romantic Movement could be expected to have. Schleiermacher's low estimate of the Old Testament is notorious;<sup>2</sup> but Troeltsch lays particular stress upon the normative importance of the Prophets, the Psalmists, and the other great figures who prepared the way for Jesus, and still exert a marked influence over the modern church. Also, except in his doctrine of immortality, there is no tendency towards pantheism in Troeltsch such as marred Schleiermacher's earlier system. Troeltsch is a thorough-going theist, who, although he maintains the immanence of God, is equally decided about the transcendent aspects of His nature.

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<sup>1</sup>T. Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, 1912.

<sup>2</sup>Schleiermacher, Der christliche Glaube, Zweiter Teil, paragraph 132.

Of course, Troeltsch does not escape subjectivism completely in his system; but he does not claim to do so. He says in his article on Dogmatik that theology is not a strict science, that it partakes of the nature of a personal confession, but that it is saved from complete subjectivity by its check with the historical elements of revelation and its capacity as representative of the feelings and consciousness of the Christian community.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore in the measure within which it does these two things that we must decide whether Troeltsch has really given us a normative statement of Christianity or not.

Theodor Kaftan denies that Troeltsch's teaching is sufficiently in line with that of the Apostles and the New Testament to give him the right to call himself a Christian theologian.<sup>2</sup> Kaftan justifies this statement by pointing out that Troeltsch's method is really that of philosophy of religion instead of theology, for in his construction, the accent falls on the scientific procedure instead of the positive and absolute revelation with which he is dealing. There are some individual points in which Kaftan's criticism is quite justified, but one can hardly say that it is true of the system as a whole. Troeltsch's system does not differ on the whole from that of most liberal theologians, except that it emphasises the historical element more. However, the construction does contain some wholly original and individual aberrations which have no claim to erection to a normative position either on the basis of being in line with the historic Christianity, or of being representative of the consciousness of the modern church.

The most conspicuous example is the doctrine of immortality, which has been the subject of criticism by T. Kaftan,<sup>3</sup> Professor Mackintosh,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article "Dogmatik", section 4, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.

<sup>2</sup>T. Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>H. R. Mackintosh, Immortality and the Future, p. 235.

and even R. S. Sleight,<sup>1</sup> whose book, The Sufficiency of Christianity is in the main very favorable to Troeltsch. The Christian Church has always believed in the survival of the soul after death. Certainly no orthodox Christian tradition, or general present-day Christian opinion in support of Troeltsch's view could be produced. As Professor Mackintosh correctly says, it is a Neoplatonic and Oriental speculation.<sup>2</sup> This concession of Troeltsch's to the pantheism, which he so vigorously combats in every other place, is very hard to understand from the point of view of philosophic consistency. If we are to strenuously eschew all that savours of pantheism in this world, as Troeltsch would persuade us, why postpone it to the next world, where after a period of probation the soul finally becomes merged in the being of God after all? There is no reason for Troeltsch's idea, so far as making concessions to science goes. Science has not yet contributed anything decisive one way or the other on the possibility of the survival of the human personality after death. Troeltsch's philosophic picture of human souls as entities separate from God seems to be a kind of Leibnizian monadology. From that point of departure, it would surely be more consistent philosophically to maintain the individuality of the monads throughout eternity, as well as here and now.

Unlike some of Troeltsch's errors, this one seems not to have been one of the head, but of the heart. What really underlies this curious notion is a sincere, though misguided religious feeling. Troeltsch believed that after the souls have remained as separate individualities in the presence of God until they come into complete unity with His Will, their

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<sup>1</sup>R. S. Sleight, Op. Cit., p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Mackintosh, Immortality and the Future, p. 235.



love for Him would be so great that it would burst even the barriers of their individualities, and merge their being completely with His.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch's doctrine of God is very rich, and quite in line with Christian tradition without doing violence to modern feeling at any point. Only one minor point, which he does not especially emphasise, might be open to question. He seems to believe that God is a growing Being, Who develops with His own purposes. In that suggestion, one sees the fine Italian hand of William James and the finite God of pragmatism. However, Troeltsch does not lay particular weight on that matter, and of course, some of the mystics have verged upon the idea that they are necessary to God, and that they increase His greatness as they carry out His purposes. Troeltsch himself points this out, quoting Angelus Silesius' saying, "Ohne mich bist du nichts."<sup>2</sup> We cannot say that this idea is simply an individual aberration. All that we can maintain is that it is scarcely in line with the most orthodox tradition of the Church, and that it is somewhat of a question whether this extreme mystical strain in the Church doctrine has a right to apposition as normative.

Troeltsch's interpretation of the Trinity is not the conventional one; but it is one that does preserve a real interest in the Christian heritage, the continuing revelation of God in Jesus as the Word, and in the work of the Spirit in the church, so that Even though the substantial speculation that underlay the original formulation of the doctrine is not retained in Troeltsch's statement, his idea has the possibility of

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Eschatologie," section 4, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 238.

usefulness in modern Christian thinking.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch's combination of God as Will and Essence is a very thoughtful and valuable solution to the problem of immanence and transcendence in the Christian concept of God. He himself points to the logical conflicts that these two elements cause, but he has given us a helpful contribution towards our theological thinking on this point.

Only one or two points in connection with the other doctrines call for comment. Kaftan finds that Troeltsch has an inadequate understanding of the doctrine of original sin, which he thinks does not do justice to the moral aspects of the question.<sup>2</sup> The present writer is unable to agree with this criticism. On the contrary, it seems that Troeltsch has given us a statement of original sin which preserves the underlying truth of that historic doctrine, without its mythological appendages. It is hard to see how unless we go back to accepting the Genesis account of the Fall of Man, we can state the doctrine of original sin otherwise than as Troeltsch does. The moral aspects of the problem of sin receive sufficient consideration under his treatment of actual sin, where they would seem rightly to belong.

Troeltsch's restatement of predestination is also one eminently worthy of the consideration of modern Christians. It does justice to the

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<sup>1</sup>Even Barth bestows a grudging commendation on the important position which Troeltsch gives to the Trinity. Cf. Barth's Dogmatik, p. 129. On the other hand Wieneke finds that Troeltsch has only two persons in his Godhead, since according to this critic, he makes no adequate distinction between Christ and the Spirit. It would seem that Wieneke has not rightly understood Troeltsch, for he makes quite plain that he interprets the Spirit as the continuing Word of revelation in the hearts of the Christian community as individuals and as a group. Cf. Wieneke, Die Entwicklung des philosophischen Gottesbegriff bei Ernst Troeltsch, pp. 48-49.

<sup>2</sup>T. Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, p. 63.

fact which underlay the older doctrine, that "many are called, but few are chosen", yet it avoids the arbitrary limitation of the elect on the part of God which marred the older doctrine.

Troeltsch's idea that the personalities who preceded Jesus, the Prophets, the Psalmists and the other great religious leaders of Israel, and the succession of the great leaders in the Church who were inspired by Jesus should have normative significance for Modern Christianity is a very interesting suggestion towards the solution of the problem of authority. He merely throws it out as a suggestion, however, without developing it through a careful analysis of wherein the normative significance of these personalities lies. He mentions Paul, Augustine, Luther, Schleiermacher, and other great figures down to our own time as among those entitled to a normative position in the Church as bearers of revelation; but before the Church could admit these leaders to normative significance, it would be necessary to analyse each one of them very carefully in order to define just how far each of them is an incarnation of the Christian ideal. It would be necessary to distinguish the permanent Christian contributions of each of them from the purely human frailties and the incidental contemporary ideas with which their normative importance is intermingled. This task would be very difficult, and would have to be the work of experts on the period to which each of these persons belonged before the Church would be justified in admitting them to normative importance.

The fact that this task would be difficult does not mean that it could not be accomplished. Troeltsch's own Soziallehren attempted an analysis of this kind focussed about the social aspects of the Church's teaching. True, Troeltsch's own presentation of the various leaders, particularly Luther, caused much controversy. Various criticisms have been made of

Troeltsch's idea of Luther, notable among them those of Kaftan, Holl and even the Frenchman, Emil Vermeil.<sup>1</sup> This fact illustrates the difficulties inherent in the process, and the subjectivism to which it is apt to fall a prey. Particularly in the case of Luther, who was such an inconsistent and many-sided personality anyhow, the task of getting a normative interpretation which should serve the church would be almost impossible; for in Luther one can find almost anything. However, in spite of the difficulties involved, the suggestion is a fruitful one. The work of many experts over a long period would doubtless be needed before a normative presentation of the various personalities could be obtained; but it is not impossible. Every now and then someone produces a book on some personality that is a classic. Sabatier's St. Francis of Assisi is an illustration. If each of the great personalities were carefully studied, some such classic presentation of their normative significance eventually could be made. If we are not to place the whole weight of authority upon Jesus, this kind of analysis would be the alternative. Perhaps Troeltsch's own work on Calvin is the nearest approximation to such a classic or normative presentation of any personality which he made.

Except for the doctrine of immortality which Troeltsch advocates, there is little in his system of theology so far as the construction given in the present chapter is concerned which is not entitled to be called a normative statement of Christian doctrine. Most of the doctrines outlined here are sufficiently in line either with the historical teaching of the Church, or the present thought of the Christian body to be taken as norma-

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<sup>1</sup>Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, pp. 46ff., Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, Bd. I, and Emil Vermeil, La Pensée Religieuse de Ernst Troeltsch, Section II.

tive. Troeltsch's doctrinal structure, does, however, have two very serious drawbacks. His doctrine of redemption does not give sufficient prominence to the redemptive work of Jesus, and his Christology is quite out of line with the historic tradition of the Christian Church. These two criticisms will be developed in detail in the next chapter, where the whole subject of his Christology is to be discussed.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NORMATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS

The preceding chapter outlined Troeltsch's construction of the normative essence of Christianity. The sources of the norms are two: the historical elements which have come down from the past, and at present mould the life of the Christian community; and the religious consciousness of the Christian body today. Of the historical figures who have created the Christian heritage, it goes without saying that Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity, the chief revelation of the character of God, and the Mediator of the redemption it promises, is by far the most important. In Troeltsch's system, Jesus is the supreme norm for the essence of Christianity in all ages, and in all its forms. The Prophets and other bearers of revelation in the Old Testament are chiefly significant as the forerunners who prepare the way for Jesus, in Whom their work culminates. The personalities of the Christian Church are of normative importance in so far as they are incarnations of the spirit and message of Jesus. Although Troeltsch, in contradistinction to the Ritschlians, was unwilling to see in Jesus the sole norm for Christianity, he does make him the supreme norm. It will be the purpose of the present chapter to discuss the normative position of Jesus, as Troeltsch conceives it. This will necessitate a survey of Troeltsch's whole thought on the subject of Christology.

Troeltsch wrote comparatively little on the subject of Christology. The only important single source of his idea of the place of Christ is the little lecture, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben, 1911. There are some references to the subject in essays like "Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums" in Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, and a section in the Glaubenslehre, which is largely a repetition of Die Bedeutung der

Geschichtlichkeit Jesu. The Soziallehren contains a sketch of the message of Jesus, in the chapter called "Das Evangelium," and a few passages in Die Absolutheit des Christentums also deal with Jesus' person and teachings.

Troeltsch deals with Jesus chiefly as an historical figure. He does not exclude soteriology from his Christology, but it is certainly not the most prominent feature of his thought of Jesus. Troeltsch is very decided about the historicity of Jesus. He is convinced that in spite of all the differences of the New Testament critics among themselves in regard to the details of Jesus' life and teachings, we can recognise the main events of His life, and the essentials of His teaching from the gospel records. He considers it a "critical monstrosity" to raise the question of whether Jesus ever lived, and regards it as a great exaggeration of the historic difficulties in the case to imagine that we cannot recognise the main outlines of Jesus' life and teachings.<sup>1</sup> To doubt the historical existence of Jesus would mean to commit the historical tour de force of doubting the unassailable authenticity of the Pauline letters, as well as sweeping aside the corroborating evidence of all the rest of the New Testament records.<sup>2</sup>

It is the work of historians and Biblical critics to establish the facts of Jesus' life; but the theologian must interpret these in the light of their significance for faith. "Faith can interpret facts, but it cannot establish them," declares Troeltsch repeatedly.<sup>3</sup> It is true that we are dependent on the narratives of the Christian community itself for

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben, pp. 2-4. The same idea is carried out in Troeltsch's criticism of Arthur Drews' attempt to deny the historic existence of Jesus. Cf. "Aus der religiösen Bewegung der Gegenwart," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 38 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 108, 109.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben, p. 33.

the life of Jesus and the beginnings of the Church, and that it is only later on as Christianity began to spread over the Roman empire that we have extra-Christian accounts of it of a fragmentary character. We have the letters of Paul, the authenticity of which no one can doubt. The Synoptic accounts were compiled from verbal traditions, but although we cannot be certain of the details, we can be sure that in the main the reports given of Jesus' sayings and doings are accurate. Also the book of Acts is a reliable document. For these reasons, Troeltsch is convinced that we are in a position to know the main facts of Jesus' life and the general outlines of His teaching.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that we can discern the main events of Jesus' earthly life does not solve all problems for faith. There are some very important questions relating to Jesus' own belief about the nature of his Messianic mission, which we cannot disentangle from the opinions of the early community, and of the gospel writers themselves. Also we are confronted even in the letters of Paul with the important transition from the historic Jesus of the Synoptics to the preexistent Christ of the Pauline Churches. This change, according to Troeltsch, is to be accounted for as a natural development in the thought of the Christian community, just as the Buddhistic community soon exalted its head to a position of divinity. Troeltsch thinks that in the case of the early church it is altogether unnecessary to resort to some explanation of a mystery cult, to whose hero Paul attached the name of Jesus, and whose rites he transferred to the Christian Church. In the first place, we do not know of any cult that would fit the facts in the case as the Pauline epistles give them to us; and secondly, the worship of the Christian community retained too much of the distinctive character

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 109-110.



of Jewish monotheism to make such an assumption of the adoption of a pagan cult at all probable.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of all the miraculous and legendary elements with which the fancy of the early Church invested the figure of its Master, we can clearly recognise beneath and through these the unique and incomparably fascinating personality of Jesus himself. The imagination of the Church could never have invented the figure of its Lord. We do not need to know all the details of how the early Christians transferred the Jesus, whom many of them had known in a peculiar fellowship of love on earth, to the position of Divine and Exalted Christ, but we can know that this process took place because of the great fellowship of love that they had enjoyed with him, and the extraordinary working of his personality upon them which assured them that he was alive even after his crucifixion, and that he was the promised Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

It is not necessary for the understanding of Jesus as Troeltsch conceives him to enter into an extended discussion of Christ's teaching. Troeltsch was not primarily a New Testament critic. Suffice it to say that he considered that the absolute element in Jesus' thought centered about the idea of the Kingdom of God, the complete rule of God, which begins on earth, but is to be ultimately realised only as an eschatological ideal.<sup>3</sup> In the emphasis which Jesus placed on the worth of the individual soul lay the key to the idea of a universal community of love, and also to a highly personal and individualistic relation between the soul and God. The idea of the Kingdom of God led to an ethic rooted in the self-consecration of

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 110-111.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-113.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, p. 100.

the individuals concerned to the preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God which would bring with it the end of the world and the judgment. Its dominant motive is found in the doing of the Will of God in purity and singleness of heart, and in the entire surrender of the whole personality to the Will of God. The summum bonum of this ethic and its reward are both found in fellowship with God and membership in His Kingdom. Jesus used the elements of the teachings of the Old Testament which he found ready to his hand, so far as they suited his own ideal and purpose; but the main and essential root of his teaching was his own unique and profound fellowship with God.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch, who views Jesus chiefly from the historic viewpoint, did not hold any doctrine of the Incarnation. He conceives of Jesus' unique relationship to God in terms of unity of will, rather than of essence.<sup>2</sup> He interprets the work of Christ under the three traditional offices of Prophet, Priest and King, of which the kingly function is the most important.<sup>3</sup> He does not understand any of these three titles in a sense which would include any implication of cosmic significance, lordship over nature, or any other similar metaphysical interpretation such as these titles implied in the older theologies.

Christ's redemptive work is covered by his offices as Prophet and High Priest. The kingly office refers to his relation to the Christian community as its head. As Prophet, Christ reveals the character of God as we cannot find it revealed anywhere else in history. It is Christ who gives

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen, pp. 34-38.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

us certainty of the gracious and forgiving character of God, and leads us to surrender to the initiative of the Divine Grace through which we are redeemed.<sup>1</sup> As High Priest, Jesus is the Mediator of redemption. According to Troeltsch, the real Redeemer is God, Who deals directly with the individual soul, forgiving its sins, and assuring it of pardon and fellowship with Himself through its surrender to His Divine Grace; but Jesus is the instrument and mediator of this redemption because He is the greatest single source of our knowledge of the character of God, which begets in us the confidence to believe that God is gracious and ready to forgive our sins. It is the humbling and exalting effect of the personality of Jesus which causes us to recognise God in Him.<sup>2</sup> Thus the redemption which Jesus mediates is a present experience; for it may come to us not only through the historical figure of Jesus in the gospels, which is conditioned by the thoughts and feelings of His time; but also through His **Spirit**, freed from history, and continuing his work of revelation in the Church.<sup>3</sup>

Troeltsch does not ascribe any unique redemptive significance to the death of Christ. He thinks the whole idea of the importance of the crucifixion needs reinterpretation in the light of the historical understanding of Jesus. Every age, he says, has interpreted the death of Christ in the way most congenial to its own thinking; hence we also have a right to interpret it in terms that are meaningful to us. The redemption which Jesus mediates comes to us chiefly from the effect of His life; it is really nothing more than the transfer of the power of His life to ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 114-115.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Erlösung," Sections 7, 8, in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 Edition.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 347.

Redemption is not something which was effected once for all for mankind in Christ's death; it is a process which God brings about anew for each soul through the mediation of Jesus. To interpret the death of Christ in any propitiatory sense which changes God's mood towards the sinner from one of wrath to one of grace is to predicate to Him a character incompatible with His Grace and Love, which Christ Himself reveals.

Although it is impossible, according to Troeltsch, to interpret the death of Christ as a vicarious atonement for sin, His death still has a religious meaning beyond that of any ordinary martyr. It is significant as the epitome of the enduring conflict between the Christian ideal and that of the world; it brings out in high relief the ever-present disposition of men to oppose, resist and harm the Divine in human life. The crucifixion also demonstrates that sacrifice is the culmination of the Christian revelation of the character of God; and sets a permanent example to the Christian community of vicarious and sacrificial suffering. In short, the secret of the abiding significance of the death of Christ is to be seen in its supreme revelation of the character of God, rather than in its being a single act which brings salvation once for all to man.<sup>1</sup>

Since Troeltsch evaluates Jesus and His influence so completely from the standpoint of the historical facts of His life, and since he does not view Christ's death as the chief means of redemption, he is unwilling to ascribe any cosmic significance to Christ's redemptive work. He considers the latter view historically unjustified. He is also unwilling to use such titles of Jesus as the Second Adam, or the Absolute Man, or to see in His coming the center of human history. In such titles Troeltsch finds

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 349-350.

nothing but survivals from the older theology which an impartial view of history does not support. Even Abelard in the Middle Ages taught that the significance of Jesus was to be found in the transformation of soul rather than in any cosmic effects of His mission.<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch points to the long aeons that elapsed before history really began, the vast sweep of history itself with the far-flung lines of the Oriental civilisations quite untouched by the influence of Jesus, which influence has been so largely bound up with our own cultural group. In the face of these facts of history, it is hard to view the coming of Jesus as the center of the history of the world. It seems to Troeltsch a sheer piece of European egotism to assert that the center of our religious life is also the center of humanity. It is indeed, he thinks, a highly anthropocentric notion that was born in a day when only a small section of the globe was known, and when it was the general belief that a few thousand years covered the whole scope of history. Now in view of the vast extent of history and the enormous size of the universe, we can hardly imagine that the redemption of humanity on our obscure little planet is an event of cosmic significance.<sup>2</sup>

For Troeltsch the real center of the work of Jesus is to be found in the third of the traditional offices, that of King. Christ as King is the caput mysticum of the Church, the corpus mysticum. It is around the Person of Christ that the Christian community rallies, and in Him it finds the

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 848-849. Lucius Hopkins Miller, who gives an otherwise accurate account of Troeltsch's theology in his article in The Harvard Theological Review, 1913, quotes Troeltsch as using these titles of the Second Adam, the Absolute Man, and the center of history in reference to Jesus. This usage Troeltsch expressly refused to admit, both here, in the Glaubenslehre, (p. 117) and in Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, (pp. 15, 16). Cf. Miller's article, pp. 445-446.

Symbol of all its ideals and aspirations. In Him it has a firm historic basis for its faith in God as loving and forgiving Grace. He is the Mediator of the redemption that it seeks.. This idea of Christ as the center and Symbol of the Christian community is very important to Troeltsch. Over and over again he speaks of the need of all religion for vitalisation through religious fellowship and worship.<sup>1</sup>

Now a Symbol that is to be the rallying point of the community must have historical reality behind it in order to inspire the lives of Christians as Jesus has done all through the centuries, and still does today. No myth, however beautiful, can have the inspiring and vitalising power of a reality. Nor can an ideal divorced from a personality have the power to produce a succession of historical personalities like those of the leaders of the Christian Church. This reality upon which the faith of the centuries has fed is the historic Jesus. Without the firm basis in reality that the figure of Jesus affords, Christian faith would cease to be a living force in the lives of all earnest souls who love the truth, and become merely the property of idle aesthetes and dilettantes, who lack moral earnestness. For these reasons Troeltsch has no patience with those who push aside the historical questions that surround the facts of Jesus' life, and see in Jesus only a mythical symbol of the hopes and aspirations of countless Christians through the ages. Also, on similar grounds, he is unable to join those of the Hegelian group who separate the Christian ideal or Prinzip from the person of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

As Troeltsch puts it, "Just as for him, (the Christian), God is

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, pp. 31-32, 10.

not just an idea or a probability, but a holy reality, so also he wants to rest his faith in this Symbol upon the sure basis of a real life. It is a matter of vital importance to him that (Jesus), a real man thus lived, struggled, believed, and triumphed; and that a flood of power and certainty still flows from that real life to him. The Symbol is a real symbol to the Christian only because behind it there stands the great figure of a supreme prophet of religion, - a figure in whom he not only beholds God, but to whom he can turn for strength when he needs the security of a personal religious authority which he experiences immediately in his own life. That is the justification for Herrmann's talk about the 'fact of Christ.' Only it is not a question of the individual's assurance of salvation being gained first of all through his certainty of Jesus, but of the fact that there can be no supporting and strengthening vital continuity for the Spirit of Christ without Jesus as a rallying point, -- and this common bond of loyalty to Jesus must go back to a real life if it is to have inner power and sincerity."<sup>1</sup>

Such are the main outlines of Troeltsch's Christology. We now come to the answering of the question in what senses Jesus is to be regarded as normative for the faith of the Christian community. First of all, it must be said that Troeltsch, in contradistinction to the Ritschlians is unwilling to make Jesus the sole norm in Christianity. His first reason for this is a purely historic one. Although we can recognise the main facts of Jesus' life, and the outline of His teaching, we do not and cannot know all the details. If He is to be the sole norm and authority in our religion, we should have to know all these details. We can never draw the line with

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, pp. 32-33.

certainty between the beliefs of the Christian community and Jesus' own thoughts and feelings as they appear in the gospels, -- particularly on such vital points as the subject of Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness, and the involved problem of eschatology.<sup>1</sup> Our knowledge of Him is sufficient to find in Him the Symbol for our faith and aspirations, but not to make Him the exclusive authority.

The second reason why Troeltsch is unwilling to make Jesus the sole norm for Christian faith is that Jesus, as a real historic figure, is partially conditioned by the thoughts and feelings of His own time, and therefore cannot be regarded as absolute upon all subjects. This contention of Troeltsch's is one which must undoubtedly be admitted if we accept the gospel records at their face value. Otherwise we must assume that all the reports that indicate that Jesus accepted the popular demonology of His time are mere projections of the gospel writers' own beliefs upon Him. Moreover, there is a wide difference of opinion among good and sincere Christians as to how far we can accept Jesus' attitude towards divorce as normative for us today. Also, if He expected the Kingdom to come very soon after His death, as the gospels give us some reason to believe, (unless one discards such a saying as that in Mark 9:1, "Behold, there are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power"), then Jesus, too, shared in the hope of speedy return that was not to be fulfilled. This question is a much debated one, of course, but it would seem to involve discarding entirely too many passages in the gospels if we take the view that the early Christian community projected their own expectations on Jesus.<sup>2</sup> All these considera-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>A moderate, yet representative view on the question of Jesus' own expectations regarding the coming of the Kingdom of God is that of E. F. Scott, The Kingdom of God in the New Testament.



tions make it necessary to accept Troeltsch's view that we cannot regard all of Jesus' views as normative for us. He did share some of the intellectual limitations of His time.

For Jesus, according to Troeltsch, the real absolute was to be found in the Kingdom of God, not in His own Person. The transfer of the absolute to Christ's Person is the work of the Christian community.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch believes that we can expect the absolute only in the eschatological sense of the full realisation of the Will of God, as Jesus did. The real Absolute therefore lies only in God. Sleigh represents Troeltsch's attitude very accurately when he says,

"This Absolute, which Jesus placed in the Kingdom of God, was soon transferred to his person. Such a transference was natural, and indeed inevitable, on the part of the primitive Church, because then all were in a 'naive atmosphere.' . . . We cannot, however, continue to pretend that the transference was essential, nor can it be justified by saying that the fact of Jesus implicitly involved such a reference to his person. It is actually, on the contrary, but one more illustration of the mythic and syncretistic attempts of all religions to fortify their naive Absolutes, when they have been shattered by coming into contact with other attitudes to, and interests of life, and to harden them into dogmas in order to preserve them from evaporation. The more unreservedly this is recognised, the more effectively we shall get back to the reality of Christ and his message, and be able to yield ourselves to his naive greatness, spiritual power, insight, and freedom, as in fact the highest and greatest spiritual realities known to, and admitted by us."<sup>2</sup>

The final reason which Troeltsch brings forward for his unwillingness to put the sole weight of authority on Jesus is the fact that He can be rightly understood only in the light of the prophetic development which preceded Him, and of the great succession of personalities whom he inspired, -- through Paul, Augustine, Luther, and all the other great saints of the Church down to our own time.<sup>3</sup> He is the crown and culmination

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 100-102.

<sup>2</sup>R. S. Sleigh, The Sufficiency of Christianity, pp. 118-119.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben, pp. 38-40.

of all the development of the Old Testament which preceded Him, and in Him is latent all that the succeeding centuries of Christians have discovered. Each generation of His followers has interpreted Him somewhat differently; but all have found in Him the satisfaction for their needs. It requires the interpretation of them all to see Him in His fulness. The great saints of the Church illuminate and heighten the qualities they find in Jesus through their reproductions of what they have caught of His Spirit. It would seem that in Troeltsch's thought, Jesus might be compared to a beam of light, which, taken by itself, appears white, but when seen through the spectro-scope of these other personalities, shows the colors which comprise the ray in their single beauty and glory.

Having dwelt upon the negative side by giving Troeltsch's reasons for not wishing to see in Jesus the sole norm for Christianity, we now come to the positive side, and are ready to define in just what senses Troeltsch does believe that Jesus is normative for the Christian Church. Although Christ is not the sole norm in Troeltsch's system, He is the supreme and the final norm. The other personalities, the Prophets and the saints, derive their normative significance from Jesus; for they are authoritative in so far as they are forerunners of Jesus, or reproducers of His Spirit. The test of whether they are bearers of revelation or not is really whether they are in line with Jesus, -- even granting that their revelation is new in the face of the problems of their own day. The normative position of Jesus is permanent and ultimate, though not exclusive. Troeltsch, in one of the finest passages from a religious viewpoint in all his writings, speaks thus of the permanent significance of Jesus:

"Any sincere religious life that transcends the bounds of a primitive form of worship needs some kind of symbol, incarnation, personal embodiment of realisation. . . . <sup>of its ideal</sup> from communion with which religious power pours out to it. Fundamentally the same thing is true of the significance of Jesus for Christianity. He is the incarnation of religious power, illuminated ever anew by the centuries, whose heart-beat goes through the whole of Christendom, just as the vibration of a steamer's engine can be felt through every portion of the entire ship."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is of unique normative significance and must remain so for the Christian community. He it is Who guides us to God, and reveals the character of the Father as we find it nowhere else in history. It is He Who gives us certainty of God's forgiving Grace and Love, and bestows upon us the faith and confidence to surrender to the Father's offer of pardon and fellowship with Himself. In this sense, Jesus is the true norm for the Christian's experience of God, and of redemption. Even if our redemption comes about mediately through the preaching of the Word in the Church, we still have to go back to Jesus for the assurance that God is as the Church proclaims Him to be; for only in Him do we find the perfect revelation of the Father that assures us.<sup>2</sup>

Not only is Jesus the norm for the faith of the Church in redemption and in the knowledge of the character of God, but He is also the norm by which the Christian must measure his own religious experiences and his personal apprehension of the Divine revelation. If left to its own devices without any external standard by which to measure its own validity, individual religious experience may easily run riot into all kinds of extravagances of a mystical sort which even border on the pathological. In Jesus the Christian body has a criterion by which to judge whether what it supposes to be revelations really are of God or figments of its own imagination. The historic personality of Jesus must also serve as basis

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums," Gesammelte Schriften. Bd. II, p. 847.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, pp. 114-116.

and norm for all of the Christian's experiences of the Christ of faith. The Spirit is constantly at work in the Church, revealing to it the mind of Christ, and leading it into all truth; but the Church can be assured of the genuineness of these revelations only as they accord with the spirit of the historic Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, Jesus is the center and the norm for the aspirations, ideals and activities of the Christian community. Around His Person, they unite in fellowship; and in worship they strive to appropriate to themselves the certainty of God and the inspiration for life that they find in Him. He is the pattern and the inspiration of all their efforts to reproduce His Spirit in their lives, and to spread the ideal of the Kingdom of God in the world through preaching, education, and missionary activity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, pp. 44-45. Troeltsch did not believe that direct communion with the Exalted Christ was possible or desirable. (Op. Cit., p. 30) Jesus was a historic person to him, to be known only historically, and through the Spirit, Who continues His revealing work. This point in Troeltsch's Christology has been criticised by Prof. H. R. Mackintosh, (The Person of Christ, pp. 364-368). Two enthusiastic disciples of Troeltsch, George Edgar Wolfe, ("Troeltsch's Conception of the Significance of Jesus," American Journal of Theology, 1916, pp. 179-204) and Sleigh, (The Sufficiency of Christianity, pp. 126-127), have taken up the cudgels on Troeltsch's behalf, and seem to feel that they have settled the point at issue between the two theologians by pointing out that for Prof. Mackintosh also Christ mysticism must be grounded on the firm basis of the historic Jesus, (Mackintosh, Op. Cit., pp. 306 ff.) The difference between Troeltsch and Prof. Mackintosh does not seem to me so easily resolved. If I understand the latter's position in contradistinction to Troeltsch's, each starts from a different understanding of the figure of the historic Jesus, and from this difference as to the facts in the gospel records themselves, each logically takes the position that he does in regard to the Exalted Christ. The real root of their differences seems to me to lie in the very different interpretation that each gives to Jesus' own self-consciousness as the records present it. Troeltsch believes that Jesus put the absolute in the ideal of the Kingdom, while Prof. Mackintosh stresses Jesus' consciousness of His Messianic mission and Sonship to God.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben, p. 47; Cf. also the section on the Church in the Glaubenslehre.

No one can doubt that Troeltsch's Christology, like all of his theological thinking, is a sincere attempt to preserve the religious richness of the Christian heritage, and at the same time to face honestly and fairly all the difficulties and problems raised for faith by historical criticism. Also one must keep in mind in making any estimate of Troeltsch's Christology that it is a protest against the isolation of Jesus from all the rest of the religious development of mankind which seemed to him a decided limitation of the Ritschlian position. With these two points in mind, we shall try to make some estimate first of the merits, then of the limitations of Troeltsch's Christology. The first of its virtues is that Troeltsch emphasises vigorously the absolute necessity of making the facts in the life of the historic Jesus the basis for the whole. No Christology can have any reality which does not do that. Any Christology which ignores or minimises the importance of the historic figure of Jesus becomes either Docetic, or leaves behind all reality in mere sentimentalism.

Troeltsch's Christology has also the merit of defining very clearly a number of the senses in which Jesus is and must remain normative for the faith of the Christian community. No one can gainsay that Jesus is normative for all our knowledge of the character of God, and that through Him alone we have certainty of the gracious and loving Nature of the Father Who is willing to forgive our sins, and to exalt us into fellowship with Himself. That He is the center and symbol of all the hopes, aspirations and ideals of the Christian community has been proved by the experience of the Church throughout the ages. Although Troeltsch's statement of the unique normative significance of Jesus does not go so far as one could desire, he does thoroughly recognise that the normative place of Jesus in Christianity is supreme, permanent and unique.

Quite rightly, Troeltsch points out that while Jesus is the supreme and final norm, He is not the sole norm for Christianity. We must admit, if we are honest, the justice of Troeltsch's contention that we cannot view the personality of Jesus as absolute in the sense of free from all of the contemporary intellectual limitations of His day and generation. Any one who accepts the results of Biblical criticism at all would have to agree with Troeltsch there, for this is surely no original idea of his. Furthermore, we must grant also that we cannot make Jesus the authority to Whom we can turn for ready-made solutions to all our problems, and in Whom we can find a pat answer to any and every question that arises. The vain efforts of the Christian socialists to attach their programs to Jesus adequately bear out the objection of Troeltsch on this point.

A more positive aspect of Troeltsch's refusal to see in Jesus the sole norm for Christianity is his contribution in calling attention to the fact that we cannot understand Jesus taken by Himself, but only through the interpretation of Him which the succession of Christian personalities whom He inspired can furnish us. The Church has always recognised, at least in the orthodox line, the indispensability of the Old Testament development for the understanding of Jesus. The very fact that the early Church took over in toto the Old Testament canon demonstrates its position in this matter. However, at least in Protestantism, the significance of the Christian leaders for the understanding of their Lord has not been officially, (even though practically), recognised. In a very objectionable way the Catholic Church has recognised the importance of these master Christians through its sanction of the worship of the saints. Troeltsch's emphasis upon the importance of the leaders of the Church for the adequate understanding of their Master called attention to the place of the succession of great figures of Christian history

without any of the superstition and undue homage that attaches to the veneration of the saints in Catholicism. Not only does the recognition which Troeltsch accords to the leaders of the Church imply a more positive evaluation of Church history than the estimate of a man like von Harnack, who sees in most of it only a falling away from Jesus, and a corruption of the purity of His method; but it is a real contribution to our appreciation of Jesus. Just as the whole of a masterpiece like the Sistine Madonna is often appreciated best when reproduced in sectional detail, so Jesus is best seen in His full glory through those who incarnate certain qualities of His Spirit in their lives. We understand the love of Jesus more fully when we see it embodied in the life of St. Francis of Assisi.

Nevertheless, when all of the virtues of Troeltsch's Christology have been admitted, we have to concede that it has some very serious limitations, -- in fact more than any other part of his doctrinal construction. It is impossible to read Troeltsch's writing without appreciating the warmth and sincerity of his personal devotion to Jesus;<sup>1</sup> but his scientific Christology is a very timid and inadequate statement of the faith of his own heart. Nowhere else do we see that singular dualism between Troeltsch the philosopher and Troeltsch the Christian more clearly than here. As Mezger, one of Troeltsch's critics, puts it, "Der christliche Theologe Troeltsch lässt sich allzusehr imponieren von dem Religionsphilosoph Troeltsch."<sup>2</sup> Even

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch admits frankly that practically the depth and power of Herrmann's Christology attracted him, though he was unable to share the latter's theological statement of it. ("Zur Frage des religiösen Apriori," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 768). He states his devotion to Jesus in warm terms in various places, for example, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 103 ff. The passage quoted above from Die Zukunftsmöglichkeit des Christentums is another instance.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Mezger, Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte, p. 34.

so friendly and appreciative an admirer of Troeltsch as Baron von Hügel finds himself "warmed by the religious Troeltsch but chilled by the philosophic Troeltsch" with his cold and abstract terms, myth, hero and symbol.<sup>1</sup> Certainly in his efforts to face the critical and historical difficulties in his Christology, Troeltsch goes too far in the direction of Historismus, (the historical temper).<sup>2</sup>

The objection that Troeltsch's position makes faith too dependent upon history was raised during his life, principally by Herrmann.<sup>3</sup> In extreme form, this protest meets us in Gogarten's criticism, which will have none of Troeltsch's or Harnack's or any other historically interested theologian's attempts to "understand" or "interpret" Jesus, or to discern what His religion was in order that He may be an ideal for the faith of the Christian community. Such an attempt is, according to Gogarten, not a real relationship to Jesus, for allegiance to His religion would be to a timeless, superhistorical truth which appears in history only once in Jesus Himself. That procedure is just "an aesthetic timeless revivification of the picture of Jesus, not a historical meeting with Him in time."<sup>4</sup> At the bar of Gogarten's criticism many of the foremost theologians and many very earnest Christians of the past and present, (Herrmann as well as Troeltsch)

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich von Hügel, Essays and Addresses, First Series, pp. 187-188.

<sup>2</sup>This is the one important point that Traub in his Glaube und Geschichte, pp. 11 ff. makes against Troeltsch. Otherwise this critique is quite unfair. It characterises as inconsistent and unnecessary on their own theories the successful defense of the historicity of Jesus made by Troeltsch and the religio-historical theologians against the attack of Drews. The real weaknesses of Troeltsch's Christology are not brought out; and the implication is that Troeltsch would have been more consistent if he had had no Christology at all.

<sup>3</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup>Friedrich Gogarten, Ich glaube an den dreieinigen Gott, p. 133.



would be found weighed in the balance of the Dialectic theology and found wanting. Surely if we are to follow Gogarten and evolve a Christology which does not start with the historical figure of Jesus as well as we can "understand and interpret" it from the gospels, we should have a thoroughly Docetic Christology, as in fact Gogarten himself plainly does.

Troeltsch replied rather ably to the objection of Herrmann and those like him who complained that his position made faith dependent on the research of scholars and experts. To this Troeltsch retorts that indeed to some degree the faith of the Church is dependent on the work of scholars and experts; but that this is no new state of affairs. In educated circles in the Church, this has always been so. For centuries the church depended upon classical philosophy and science for support for much of its world view and for many of its doctrines.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Troeltsch contends that that faith is not dependent upon the fine points of detailed and pedantic investigation of highly technical and unimportant points; but only upon the results of historical investigation with regard to the main outline of Jesus' life and teachings. The questions which historical criticism have raised are very real difficulties, but the Church must fight them through, otherwise the sure historical basis for its faith in the person of Jesus would be imperilled. Finally, Troeltsch was rightly confident that the worst that criticism could do could not touch anything but the details of Jesus' life and teaching.<sup>2</sup>

There are far graver objections to be made to Troeltsch's Christology. The point is not so much whether we can allow faith to be de-

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch shows in his first book, Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Gerhard und Melanchthon that early Protestantism as well as Catholicism took over much of the philosophy of the ancient world in support of its doctrines.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben, pp. 37-38.

pendent upon the results of experts, (which we cannot avoid doing to some degree if we have a true Christian appreciation of the value of truth), but whether, Troeltsch in his anxiety to be fair to all these historical doubts and questions has not gone too far and reduced Jesus to a lower position than history in fact compels us to assign to Him. Sleight puts the case too favorably to Troeltsch when he says that Troeltsch's Christology does not sacrifice anything essential to His power for us as a revelation of God.<sup>1</sup>

Troeltsch, it will be recalled, treats the work of Christ under the three traditional offices, Prophet, Priest, and King, of which the kingly office is the most important as he sees it. Little if any fault could be found with Troeltsch's treatment of the work of Christ as Prophet. He states very well Christ's normative significance for the Christian body as the greatest Revealer of God, by Whom they must measure their own revelations, and judge their religious experience. On the other hand it appears to the present writer that Troeltsch gives but little content to the priestly function of Christ, because of the small part that he assigns to Him in redemption; and that although he lays great weight on the kingly office, his treatment of it centers too much on the Christian community, and too little on the Person of Christ in its kingly supremacy.

The weakness of Troeltsch's interpretation of the priestly office of Jesus lies in the fact that he can see no special redemptive significance in the death of Jesus. He does see in that event more than a mere martyr's death; but he has nothing but scorn for the idea that the death of Christ brought redemption once for all to the human race.<sup>2</sup> All

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<sup>1</sup>R. S. Sleight, The Sufficiency of Christianity. p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 350, also Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, pp. 17-18.

that Troeltsch says of the crucifixion as a revelation of the character of God is true; but there is much more to be said for the concentration of redemptive power in the cross than he seems to grasp. Here we see the rational strain in Troeltsch's temperament coming to the fore. His attitude towards the crucifixion is one of his failings as a theologian which justify T. Kaftan's remark that he was a disciple of the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> The significance of the cross is usually lost upon those of a rationalistic turn of mind; probably because it is one of the hardest of all Christian doctrines to formulate in rational terms. It is not accidental that there have been so many different and conflicting interpretations of the death of Christ in the history of Christian thought. They all testify to the fact that the cross is a great mystery of our religion which no intellectual or doctrinal formula has wholly succeeded in expressing. Perhaps we shall never get a doctrine of the crucifixion which fully and exhaustively states its meaning; yet it is a fact attested by the centuries that in the sight of the cross Christians have experienced redemption in unique and heightened form as nowhere else even in the life of Christ. Troeltsch does say that the death of Christ is a unique expression of the sacrificial and redemptive character of God; but only when this redemption is personally appropriated in the sight of the cross can the depth of its meaning be fully appreciated. The cross is an experience rather than a doctrine; but without that experience one's understanding of Jesus as High Priest remains defective, as Troeltsch's does.<sup>2</sup>

Troeltsch's Christology centers in the kingly office of Christ;

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<sup>1</sup>T. Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, p. 60. Kaftan also calls attention to Troeltsch's lack of understanding of redemption as a process centering in the death of Christ. (Op. cit., pp. 63 ff).

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 353.

but his statement of it is focussed too sharply around the Christian community so that it does not put sufficient emphasis on Christ's lordship over the Church.<sup>1</sup> Professor E. W. Lyman, of Union Theological Seminary, in a recent article entitled, "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," in the Journal of Religion (April 1929), points out two of the most serious limitations of Troeltsch's Christology. The first is the ambiguity of the latter's use of the term, Symbol, and the second is the entire relativity of Troeltsch's view of Christ. Dr. Lyman raises the question whether Troeltsch means by Symbol that Jesus is the incarnation of the truth and the new way of life that we and all men need, or whether He is simply the repository of all the varying aims and ideals of the centuries.<sup>2</sup> In fairness to Troeltsch we must admit that he does mean that Jesus is a real historic figure Who does embody this revelation of God and is Himself the pattern and example in which the Christian community can find its ideal and rest its faith.<sup>3</sup> However, Dr. Lyman is entirely right in pointing out that the use of the term symbol in Troeltsch's system is unfortunate.

When Troeltsch speaks of the Christian community and its need of a Symbol, he almost gives the impression that it is the real function of Jesus to supply this need for a Symbol, and that one of the chief sources of His importance is the fact that He is this Symbol, which unites the Christianity community. Now no one would deny that Jesus is a Symbol or better

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<sup>1</sup> It is just in this connection that we must acknowledge the service of the Barthian Christology that it emphasises the truth which has too often been lost from sight in recent Christological thinking that Jesus does confront us as Lord and make demands of us. (Cf. Brunner, Die Absolutheit Jesu, p. 141).

<sup>2</sup> Lyman, Op. Cit., p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Troeltsch, Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu, pp. 33-34.

an example and pattern to the Christian community from which it derives its ideals and aspiration, and by which it measures its achievements; but He is also the Lord of the Christian community, for Whose sake it exists, and without Whom it would be nothing. In other words, the Christian community derives its importance from Jesus, not Jesus from the Christian community. Troeltsch does not sufficiently stress his Lordship in his talk about Jesus as a Symbol for the Christian community.

The second criticism which Dr. Lyman makes of Troeltsch is an even more fundamental one. Jesus is a thoroughly relative figure in Troeltsch's system. There is some justice in Troeltsch's contention that we cannot regard Jesus as absolute in the sense of unlimited and unconditioned by His time; but when that fact has been conceded, we must go on to the consciousness of the fact that there are a number of absolutes in Jesus also. Dr. Lyman lists some of the absolute values to be found in Jesus' life and teaching, which are valid for us and for all time. These are: His conception of man's sonship to God; the supremacy of love; the power of faith; the intrinsic worth of the human soul; the conquest of evil by self-giving, suffering love; the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth; and His conception of a God Whose nature is the embodiment and expression of these ideals and with Whom we stand in living relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Even calling attention to these individual religious and ethical absolutes in the Person and teaching of Jesus does not exhaust His absolute-ness. There is still the utter uniqueness of His own relation to the Father which is not wholly covered by them.<sup>2</sup> Surely that is the greatest absolute in history. Troeltsch explains Jesus' relationship to God as a unity of will;

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<sup>1</sup> Lyman, Article, "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," Journal of Religion, April, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. H. R. Mackintosh in his Originality of the Christian Message calls attention to the historical uniqueness of Jesus' self-consciousness. The question of Jesus' self-consciousness is one of the most difficult in gospel criticism; but at least the uniqueness of His relationship to God is clear, however He may have conceived His mission.

but the logic of his insistence that the idea of the historical manifestation of God as Will must always be combined with that of Essence should not be followed everywhere else and excluded from Jesus alone. It is just in the Person of Jesus that we see in its supreme form this very combination of God as Will and Essence. Troeltsch is unwilling to follow the logic of his own system here because that would involve a doctrine of the Incarnation, which he is unwilling to admit because of his prejudice against anything that savours of the exclusive supernaturalism of the Ritschlians. Troeltsch confesses that he is an adherent of the Johannine Christology,<sup>1</sup> and his doctrine of the Trinity substantiates this assertion; but it is hard to see how one can really hold a Johannine Christology without admitting the Incarnation of the Logos, the Eternal Word of God.

From another point of view it is unnecessary on the purely historical merits of the case to make such a low estimate of the Person of Jesus and its absolute qualities. Although sometimes he talks of the unbroken causal chain of historical connections which renders it impossible to set Jesus apart from the rest of history, there are other parts of his theory of norms that would allow for the unique position of Jesus. These are the contingent elements of which Troeltsch sometimes made much. Now Jesus is surely the most contingent personality in history, the least explicable through ordinary laws of cause and effect. He is the greatest Einmaligkeit, whose uniqueness cannot be explained on any ordinary basis. That is why the Church from the beginning held the doctrine of the Incarnation; because it could find nothing in ordinary life which did explain Jesus. Even with all our theories of historical connection, development, and the rest, we are still

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Glaubenslehre, p. 349.

unable to explain Jesus' uniqueness on a purely historical basis. That is why it is historically inadequate to fit Jesus Who is so distinctly a historical Einmaligkeit into any laws of cause and effect. His fellowship with God is quite in a class by itself, it is Sonship, to which even the Founders of other religions do not lay claim.<sup>1</sup> Buddha, as everyone knows, was skeptical about the existence of God, and Mohammed claimed nothing more than that he was the Prophet of God, But in Jesus there was such a close relationship with God that we cannot explain it in terms of unity of Will alone, we must explain it in the combination of unity of Will and Essence which the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation formulated. In its cruder form, the Incarnation was stated by the Church in the virgin birth; but in the more refined Logos idea of the Fourth Gospel we have the uniqueness of Jesus explained just through the fact that in Him the Word becomes flesh.

The question of the absoluteness of Jesus in its relation to the finality of Christianity belongs to another chapter. Here it will be sufficient to confine ourselves to the purely Christian aspects of the absolute position of Jesus. The very fact that Jesus could inspire that great succession of personalities in the Church is itself a unique fact in history. Troeltsch himself tacitly admits the unparalleled greatness of Jesus and His uniqueness when he calls attention to the great historic development, of which Jesus is the culmination and the epitome. On the grounds of his own historical theories, Troeltsch ought more adequately to have recognised the uniqueness, and in this sense the absoluteness of Jesus as an Einmaligkeit.

When one considers these historical facts that attest the uniqueness of Jesus, and His absoluteness in the sense of irreproducibility, titles such as the second Adam, the Absolute Man, and the center of history are justifiable. Had Troeltsch not been so utterly preoccupied with the limitations

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, Originality of the Christian Message, pp. 79ff.

of Jesus, and the ways in which He was conditioned by history, he would have realised more thoroughly that Jesus is a superhistorical figure as well as a historical one. If Jesus is not the center of history, we have no alternative left but to believe that history has no center. The reason that we date all our chronology before and after Christ is our recognition that His advent is the most transforming event in history. Moreover, the normative character of Jesus is such that we are right in calling Him the Second Adam, and the Absolute Man, because He is the ideal and pattern of what man should be. Surely the facts themselves compel us to ascribe to Jesus at least planetary significance. To go on to find cosmic significance in His advent is a step of faith. If the redemptive work of Jesus is a fulfilling of one of God's purposes, as we believe, then it must be of cosmic significance, not because it concerns man, but because all God's purposes have cosmic significance.

Had Troeltsch only followed the logic of his own theories to their end in the recognition of the absolute, as well as the relative element in Jesus, he would have solved his life-problem; the quest of the absolute in history, as Erich Przywara remarks. Certainly it is not only a Catholic but a Protestant, indeed a universal Christian judgment that Przywara expresses in this connection when he says that in Jesus we have just that union of the absolute and the relative, the meeting in one Person of the Divine Absolute elements and the relative human ones.<sup>1</sup> It is really in his wholly relative Christology that the tragic failure of Troeltsch's own life roots; but this failure was a personal one, not one of his method. Troeltsch

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Przywara, "Ernst Troeltsch," Stimmen der Zeit, Heft 105, 1923, p. 79. Brunner, who is surely a Protestant, in his Absolutheit Jesu, p. 17, sees in Jesus that same meeting of the absolute and the relative of which Przywara speaks.



was temperamentally incapable of recognising absolutes even when they were plainly before him. As Emil Spiess puts it, "to him every truth wore an individual face."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. Spiess, Die Religionstheorie von Ernst Troeltsch, p. 31.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE APPLICATION OF THE NORMS IN THE GENERAL FIELD OF THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD -- THE QUESTION OF THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

Up to this time we have been occupied with the examination of the theory of norms in its application to the sphere of Christianity alone. It will be the task of the present chapter to go on to see how the norms work in the larger realm of the higher religions of the world, which will involve a discussion of the question of the finality of Christianity. The historical method in itself cannot give any proof that Christianity is the final religion, according to Troeltsch, for that is a question which only the future can decide. However, there are certain evidences from the field of history, surveyed through the method of the norms which tend to show a presumption towards finality in favor of some one or the other of the world religions.

Troeltsch's thinking on the question of the finality of Christianity divides itself into three stages, as Erich Leidreiter, a recent writer on the subject, points out.<sup>1</sup> The first stage is represented by early writings, chiefly Die Selbständigkeit der Religion, and Geschichte und Metaphysik, in which under the influence of the Hegelian dialectic of history, he quite confidently asserts the finality of Christianity even while protesting against the narrow and exclusive supernaturalism which he sees in Ritschlian Christianity. The bridge to the second stage, as Leidreiter rightly observes, is the little essay, "Christentum und Religionsgeschichte, "1897, now included in Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II. The second stage in his ideas on the subject is that of his Absolutheit des Christentums, first published in

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<sup>1</sup>Leidreiter, Troeltsch und die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 1-22,

1901, (second edition, which is used for the present chapter, 1912). The transition to his final view of the subject is shown in "Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums" (1910), in which he takes a somewhat more radical standpoint <sup>than</sup> ~~from~~ the one expressed in Die Absolutheit. His final conclusions on the question are to be found in the first and most pretentious of the lectures written for delivery in England just before his death in 1923. The lectures were never delivered, for Troeltsch died just a few weeks before the proposed visit was to take place; but the lectures were translated under the auspices of Baron von Hügel and other interested English scholars, and published under the title, Christian Thought, 1923. The Place of Christianity among the Religions of the World, as this lecture is called, takes a more radical stand in regard to the question of the finality of Christianity than Troeltsch had previously represented at any time; but we must believe that it is the final conclusion to which his historical studies had led him. The practical implications of the question are treated in one of his essays from the middle period of his thought on the finality of Christianity, "Die Mission in der modernen Welt", which originally appeared as an article on the implications of the finality of Christianity as they present themselves from the standpoint of Christian missions, in Die Christliche Welt, 1906.

Although there is an extensive literature in German on the subject of Troeltsch's ideas of the question of the finality of Christianity as Die Absolutheit represents them, there is very little on the subject in English. Aside from a few scattered references, there is only the single book of R. S. Sleigh, The Sufficiency of Christianity, published in 1923. This phase of Troeltsch's thought is excellently presented by Sleigh with an understanding and sympathetic critique; but his book appeared before

it was possible to utilise the material on Troeltsch's final views on the question as they appear in Christian Thought.

One common presupposition runs through all the cycles of Troeltsch's ideas on the question of the finality of Christianity. That is his assumption that one must assume that all the higher religions of the world are supernatural in so far as they contain revealed truth; therefore we must not begin our investigations of other religions with the a priori idea that Christianity stands apart from all the other religious development of mankind. He is also convinced, except in his final stage, that historical analysis of the world religions will give us an understanding of the direction in which all the religions are tending, and that out of the process of this analysis, we shall discover inherent norms in the various forms, which give the key to the understanding of each of the several forms, and finally will enable us to discern the general ideal or norm of all religion. These methodical presuppositions hold true even for his final radical stand that the various religions could not be held to be tending in the same direction.

Troeltsch believes, it must be recalled, that the historical norms, like the theological or religious norms, are not necessarily universally valid, timeless and unchangeable standards by which all the religions at all times can be measured. As in the various periods and individualisations which Christianity has taken, the norms must be discovered for the separate times and forms, so also in the general field of the religions of the world, the norms arise from objects that are continually changing and developing. Moreover, they arise from an object which presents that same combination of the relative and the absolute, the temporal and the metaphysical that is found in all historical products. Historical combinations are all relative and passing embodiments of the ideal, even in the

sphere of religion; but that does not alter the fact that they embody values that point in the direction of an ideal aim. Christianity, according to Troeltsch, is one of these great historic individualisations, like all the higher religions of the world; and any attempts to demonstrate that it is the absolute religion cannot apply any other method, be that the rational one of Hegel, or the dogmatic one of the Ritschlians, than would be used in the treatment of the other religions of the world. The only fair basis is to take them and analyse them all on the historical method.<sup>1</sup>

We shall now proceed to the examination of Troeltsch's position on the finality of Christianity at the period represented by the Absolutheit, followed by some criticism of the same; and then consider his final views on the subject. The earliest position, represented in Die Selbständigkeit der Religion is not characteristic enough of his own thinking to call for extensive discussion. It is simply a modified Hegelianism in which the Idea of religion, redemption, is discovered to be most thoroughly realised in Christianity, hence we accept it as the final religion,<sup>2</sup> after the careful historical comparison of the various religions.

In Die Absolutheit, Troeltsch's argument proceeds on a less distinctively Hegelian basis, laying greater emphasis on the historical side, though there are still traces of Hegel's influence, such as the stress that he puts on the necessity of true religion's break with nature. His argument proceeds along genuine religio-historical lines in this essay.

The method by which Troeltsch examines the various religions of

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 45-59.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1895-96, pp. 203, ff.

of the world is, of course, the historical. He tries to put aside all a priori canons which would make the conclusion a foregone one from the beginning, whether these be the rational ones of Hegel or the dogmatic ones of orthodox theology like miracle and supernaturalism. According to Troeltsch, the term, Absolutheit, which comes from the modern evolutionist apologetic, means in its application to Christianity, that in that religion we have the only complete and normative truth about God, man, and the world, although the other religions of the world do contain certain relative and incomplete truth about them. In his mind the absoluteness of Christianity in this rational sense is the exact equivalent of the attempt to demonstrate the complete and peculiar truth of Christianity which the ordinary orthodox theology proves by the canons of supernaturalism and miracle.<sup>1</sup> The intent of the two methods is exactly the same, and their method differs only in that the approach of the first is more rational and philosophic, the second more exclusively dogmatic. Neither the one nor the other does adequate justice to the historical facts in the field of comparative religion.

Troeltsch thinks that both of these types of apologetic approach the question quite wrongly. Instead of trying to establish what is normative and valid in the Christian or any other religion, they start out to show that Christianity is the exclusive supernatural revelation, or that it is the absolute fulfilment of the idea (Begriff) of religion. Thus his aim differs from the start from the two schools of apology; for the historical method of approach excludes such presuppositions and cannot provide the means for a proof of the finality of Christianity in either of those two senses. History is concerned with individual and irreproducible forms, which

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 9-13.

arise out of the mobile and incalculable vitality of life itself.<sup>1</sup> What norms it can yield do not go back to some omnipresent absolute, but arise out of these various forms themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Not only is Troeltsch's aim different, but there are further differences as to the approach of the investigator himself. He does not put aside his religion, and approach the question in an entirely objective spirit; Troeltsch was too true to his own thesis that no one who was not religious himself could understand religion. Rather the investigator uses his own faith to give him the means of understanding sympathetically the religious urges and motives inherent in other religious individualisations besides his own.<sup>3</sup> Those critics of Troeltsch's ideas, who, like Hunziger,<sup>n</sup> recognised his entire religious sincerity, maintained that in bringing his faith with him to his task, Troeltsch was no different from other theologians in his attempt to decide among the competing claims to truth of the religions of the world; for even with Troeltsch the decision among various norms is a matter of personal faith.<sup>4</sup> The difference is a real one, however, for an attitude of sympathy and understanding in investigation of the claims of the other religions to truth is quite other than an investigation whose only motive is to prove the rightness of its own standpoint from the very start.

In religion we are in the curious position of being unable to understand any religious phenomenon unless we are religious ourselves; but there is a real difference between that attitude and dogmatically insisting

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>August Wilhelm Hunziger, Probleme der systematischen Theologie, pp. 99 ff.

from the outset that our religion is the only true and valid revelation of the Divine.

From the beginning, Troeltsch believes, we must admit if we are to be fair, that Christianity is, and has been conditioned by historical conditions just as thoroughly as the other religions. We cannot point to any period in its history when it was absolute in the sense of historically unconditioned, even in the time of the primitive church. History knows no such thing as an absolute religion, or a universal concept of religion; and it is not possible on a historical basis to make such a construction of Christianity as to show that it ever fulfils this absolute ideal or concept.<sup>1</sup> Instead the attempt of the historical analysis is to discover the norms that are inherent in all the religions.

Mankind has had fewer ideas than one might expect, and thus we never need fear that too many norms will arise for the religions of the world. In fact not all of the religious development of mankind even enters into the comparison. The primitive religions, however interesting or instructive they may be from a purely psychological point of view, do not embody any of the great and significant trends and values in religion, which are to be found only in the higher, more developed types represented by Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Zoroastrianism. These alone enter the comparison, in which each of the higher religions should be examined for its regulative principle, or Prinzip; and out of the comparison of the regulative principles, the goal, norm or ideal of them all may be discovered.<sup>2</sup> This goal or norm by which the validity of the various regulative principles is to be judged is no a priori concept of religion,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 25-35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 60-61.



nor is it an abstract universal idea drawn from the common characteristics which all the types exhibit. It is a standard which evolves out of the process of the comparison itself, and issues from the very conflict of the trends that the regulative principles exhibit. The decision as to this norm, is, of course, a personal religious one on the part of the investigator; but once more Troeltsch emphasises that it is no arbitrary decision for the standard of one group, even the investigator's own. It is the dominating ideal or norm which emerges with inescapable force out of the comparison itself, in which the secondary and non-essential elements fall into the background, and the truly valid and important ones force themselves upon the consciousness of the observer.<sup>1</sup> At this time Troeltsch had not yet discovered the remarkable advantages of the religious a priori as a validator of the norms; so that here he is content to let their validity rest with the personal decision of the investigator.

The norm which results from the historical comparison of the various regulative principles of the religions affords a means of judging the various individualisations of religion, and although the competing claims to finality among them cannot be decided absolutely by it, at least the presumption as to the finality of the various competitors may be discerned. The norm is really a common ideal or goal, towards which all the forms are striving. This goal or ideal is embodied to a greater or less degree in all the individualisations. The one which embodies it most fully would therefore be the one in whose favor there would be the greatest presumption as to finality. The ideal is also the index of the truth and the validity of the revelation that each embodies, whether that be partial or full.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 65-67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.

This goal, ideal or norm, which emerges from the historical comparison, Troeltsch finds in redemption, - the break with the lower world of nature, and the direction towards the higher world of absolute values, towards fellowship with God.<sup>1</sup> Now this goal of redemption is, according to him, embodied in its highest and fullest form in Christianity. In that religion alone the break between the lower and the higher worlds is completely consummated. Judaism and Islam feel the necessity for severing the two spheres; but because of their legalism, they do not really separate the higher from the lower, they place them side by side, and leave it to the religious subject to work out his own salvation as best he may by consummating the break between the two for himself. They do not supply him with the power which redeems him from without, but leave him to climb to the higher life by his own strength, or works. The Indian redemptive religions, in which group Troeltsch would also classify such mystical religions as Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, do consummate the break between the higher and the lower worlds, but in a manner that is really a regression to the nature religions and polytheism. The soul is indeed united with God in the redemption that this group assures, but the individual is merged in the being of God, and his identity is lost. This type of redemption is regressive because it loses the gains that have been made in the struggle up from polytheism. In the one as in the other the ideas of personality and the ethical characteristics of the Divinity count for nothing. The individual loses his individuality in this variety of redemption, and the world process loses all distinctions between good and evil, and becomes mere illusion.

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, p. 83.

In Buddhism particularly, redemption is consummated by the negation of all desire in the oblivion of Nirvana. Its redemption is just a breaking of the individual's will instead of strengthening it through a positive ethical struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity, on the other hand, fulfils the ideal of redemption the most completely of all the world's living religions. It completes the break between the world of nature and the world of the spirit by building a scale of higher values above and in opposition to the lower ones of the world of nature. It denies the values of the lower sphere of nature, and at the same time is free from asceticism because of the positive estimate it puts upon life and the world-process, which according to the world view, come from God, and lead back to Him. The individual personality is not lost, rather it is preserved and purified by exaltation into fellowship with God through its self-surrender to His grace. Through the consequent union of will with the Divine, the human personality becomes a sharer in the Divine ends, and a partaker in the realisation of those higher values whose Source and Ground is God.<sup>2</sup>

The ideal of redemption, which is realised in some degree in Christianity is therefore seen to be more fully and more desirably realised than in any of the other forms of religion. Consequently, since the ideal of religion and the goal of all religions are most fully embodied in Christianity, its revelation must be considered the highest and truest of all the revelations of the religions of the world. It is the ideal towards which all the other religions are groping. Yet when all this has been admitted, we have not yet proved

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 84-86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

that Christianity is the absolute religion. It is a historical phenomenon, like the others; and although it is the highest revelation that we have so far, that fact does not show conclusively that it is the crown and culmination of religion for all time. All we can say is that among all the living religions, it has the highest probability of finality in its favour. To go beyond this probability to the belief that it is the final religion is a step of faith; but we can have nothing but faith to assure us that our religion is finality. We cannot give a theoretical proof that it is final. Christianity should really be regarded as the normative rather than the absolute religion; it will not be possible to assert that any religion is final until the end of history.<sup>1</sup>

This assurance that Christianity is the highest revelation so far as we now see, and that it is moving in the direction of an even greater realisation of the ideal of all religion is all the certainty that the individual Christian needs. According to Troeltsch, the absolute realisation of religion is to be found only beyond the realm of all history.<sup>2</sup> Jesus Himself is the authority for this belief. The Kingdom of God, complete realisation of which is an eschatological consummation, is the absolute religion for Jesus. This Absolute, which for Him centered in the Kingdom of God and its eschatological completion, was naive and spontaneous, born from the certainty of His great religious experience of fellowship with God. The Christian community later transferred the absolute to His Person, in an effort to fortify its naive absolute, which could not retain its original spontaneity when it came into contact with other,

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

competing absolutes.<sup>1</sup>

Every religion begins with this naive sense of the absoluteness of its own revelation, born out of the reality of its original experience. Now in the original Christianity of Jesus, this claim was the most naive and powerful. The absoluteness of this early Christian claim is truly universal. It makes no attempts at proof or apologetic because it is confident of its own depth and validity. What apologetic is added to it later is the work of the Christian community. Now in the very naivete of this early Christian claim to absoluteness and universality Troeltsch sees a proof of its own validity. In the other religions, the absoluteness is of a more restricted character. In primitive religions, it reaches only over the clan or the territory which the local god controls. He is absolute in his own province, but there are other gods in the neighboring tribes who are just as absolute in their own land. Only in the higher forms of religions do we find any effort to extend this absoluteness over a larger area.<sup>2</sup>

Even among the higher religions Christianity is the only one that erects a thoroughly naive and absolute claim to universalism. That is true even of the monotheistic ones. Brahmanism is the wisdom of the priestly ~~clans~~<sup>castes</sup>; Buddhism promises full redemption only to the monastic circle who are willing to devote themselves entirely to the pursuit of the path of enlightenment as the Buddha marked it out. Zoroastrianism retains other gods in the shape of the demons who constantly thwart and oppose the will of the good God, Ahura-Mazda, whose only helpers in his unceasing struggle against the demons are the members of the Persian nation.

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<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 100-102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 120-121.

Thus its absolute is restricted by the demonic forces on one hand, and by the bounds of Persian nationalism on the other. Judaism had the purest claim to universalism for its absolute in the ethical monotheism of the prophets; but later this claim was restricted and hindered by its degeneration into narrow legalism and Jewish nationalism. Mohammedanism, which also inherited some claim to absolutism from Judaism, lost the sense of the fullness of this absolute through its fatalistic and arbitrary conception of the Will of God, Who is too capricious a being to be entirely at one with His own ethical commands. Also it reflects too much of the character of Arabian tribal law and custom to hope to establish any full claim to universalism.<sup>1</sup>

The message of Jesus contains the purest and most thorough-going claim to absolutism. This roots in the inwardness and depth of its own revelation, from which it spontaneously overflows. The Holy Will of God makes demands upon all men. The Kingdom of God is the all-inclusive absolute, which appeals directly to the human soul. Its claim runs through all the individualisations which Christianity has assumed in the course of its long history. Even the scientific analysis of the present has done nothing more than to reveal this very absolutism as an inner necessity of that great religion itself, based upon the reality and depth of the revelation it contains.

The practical aspects of the finality of Christianity are treated by Troeltsch in his essay on missions in the modern world, (Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, pp. 779-104). According to the view he expresses there, any vital and powerful experience of revelation such as Christianity contains, must necessarily overflow into missionary activity. Moreover

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Die Absolutheit des Christentums, pp. 124-126.

quite apart from this natural expression of the greatness of its own revelation, missions have a significance for Christianity because they are a means of creating a spiritual fellowship among the nations of the earth, which will hasten and aid in focussing the future development of all the religions towards the common goal to which they are tending. Missionary activity need not be carried on in any patronising and narrow-minded sense, for in the process of the creation of this fellowship, Christianity as well as the other faiths will be enriched through the self-purification which the more complete discernment of the common goal, and the interchange of ideas with the other religions will bring about.

Thus, according to Troeltsch in this middle stage of his thought on the question of the finality of Christianity, we cannot prove on historical or rational grounds that Christianity is the final religion; but faith has nothing to fear from historical analysis and comparison with the other religions of the world. Such comparison reveals that all religions are tending towards the common goal of redemption, and that this goal, is most fully and completely realised in Christianity itself. The essay, Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums, written in 1910, and delivered as a lecture before the fifth International Congress for a Free Christianity in Berlin, in the main presents the same view, though there are some indications that Troeltsch was moving towards a more radical position on the matter. He still maintains that Christianity is the highest and best of the world religions, and sees no indication of any higher religion appearing on the horizon. He does, however, seem to take more seriously than previously the idea of a syncretism of the religions of the world, in which the revelation of Christianity would be indeed incorporated. He even speculates about the possible appearance of some new revelation which

may transcend or super<sup>s</sup>cede the Christian revelation.<sup>1</sup>

A far more radical view is set forth by Troeltsch in his last book, Christian Thought. In the lecture, "The Place of Christianity among the World Religions," therein contained, he retracts the view he set forth in Die Absolutheit des Christentums. Like his earlier positions, this final one also rests upon historical analysis; but he tells us in this lecture that his historical researches had led him to the conclusion that his earlier positions were untenable. It was chiefly his growing feeling for the historical category of individualisation which caused him to change his mind so completely, and convinced him that arguments he had used in his early work could not be substantiated by historical investigation.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible, according to his final view, to prove from history that there is a higher revelation in Christianity than in the other religions by pointing to an inner, spiritual depth in the redemption it assures; and secondly, he now sees no historical reason for regarding Christianity as the ideal religion, whose goal is the aim towards which all the other religions are tending. A clear and objective view of the question reveals that the other religions of the world are moving in quite divergent directions from Christianity, each one towards its own inherent ideal. Their goals are consequently not the same as that of Christianity, -- in fact some of them are the very opposite of the Christian goal. The various religions represent such irreconcilable trends that there is no reason to believe in their ultimate fusion with Christianity, or that their ideals would find their highest fulfilment in the Christian ideal

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, "Die Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums," Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. II, p. 850.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, pp. 10-12.



of redemption.

Christianity, like all the other religions, must be examined in the light of the category of historical individualisation. This analysis reveals that the very term Christianity is nothing more than a theoretical abstraction. The vast complex that goes under that name presents no historical uniformity whatever; it not only differs in every age, but is split up into a number of denominations which do not represent any historical continuity or unity derived from the past. Christianity is, to use Troeltsch's own words, "a particular, independent, historical principle, containing, similarly to other principles, very diverse possibilities and tendencies."<sup>1</sup> Since these forms which Christianity has assumed in the past, and still continues to do in the present, are so multifarious, it is difficult to reconcile any of them with the idea of finality.

A further ground for Troeltsch's change of mind is that it is his conviction that Christianity is inextricably bound up with western civilisation. Through their historical connections, the two have become so completely fused that all our thoughts and feelings here in the West are permeated with Christian ideals and motives, even when we are quite unconscious of that fact. Christianity, too, has been so profoundly modified by its contact with the West that it has long since lost whatever oriental character it may have had originally. "Christianity stands or falls with European civilisation," is the extreme statement which Troeltsch actually makes.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the primary claim to validity of which Christianity can boast is only that it has made us what we are, -- our social order, our art and science, our conceptions of freedom, and of personality, our

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, p. 13 .

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 24 .

progress towards the Kingdom of God. Only through Christianity can we preserve the religious dynamic that we need. Some religion we must have, and the only one which we can endure is Christianity, which has made us, and which we have made.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Troeltsch affirms, the fact that Christianity has been the religion of such a vigorous race as our own, attests its truth and the vitality of its spiritual power. It is, to quote his own phrase, "God's countenance as revealed to us."<sup>2</sup> The validity which Christianity has is only validity for us. Other races living under other conditions also possess religions which are an inseparable part of their civilisation, for which they can make a similar claim to validity. They can no more sever themselves from these religions than we can cut ourselves off from Christianity. Their religions are quite as valid for them as Christianity is for us.<sup>3</sup>

Since all the religions of the world are so closely intertwined with the civilisations of which they are a part, the only way to compare the validity of the various religions is to compare the civilisations of which they are a part. If such a comparison were carried through, only God, Who has ordained these differences, could pronounce judgment upon their respective truth and validity. Each religious group, accordingly, must follow the normative ideal inherent in itself, and seek to purify and enrich its own experience so far as that is possible according to its intrinsic standards.

The theoretical position which has just been outlined is the one which Troeltsch finally reached. Even in this final period, we

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-26.

still hear the religious Troeltsch speaking in spite of the philosophical Troeltsch. After giving us his theoretical view, he goes on to tell us that practically his own attitude towards, and faith in Christianity is but little affected by this startling change of mind about the question of finality, except on the matter of foreign missions. He believes that missionary activity should be confined to primitive tribes, whose culture has already been shattered by its contact with European civilisation. To peoples of this type we owe it as a duty to give them a new religious basis upon which to build a civilisation of their own; but along with our attempts to pass Christianity on to them, we must constantly bear in mind that what we give them will take new individualisations of its own, in conformity with the conditions of their life. So far as the higher religions of the world are concerned, the contact with Christianity may prove helpful to them in their efforts to purify themselves from within, as well as being profitable for us; but there should be no attempt to proselytise among the adherents of these higher faiths.<sup>1</sup>

The second practical consequence of Troeltsch's change in theoretical position in regard to Christianity concerns the future of that religion alone. Christianity is at present faced with a new and very difficult situation. It needs to readjust to the changed social and economic conditions within its own territory. Historically it has always shown amazing capacity for self-purification and self-criticism. It has also enormous power to assume new individualisations so that there is no doubt that it will be able to meet the new demands that the changing conditions of European civilisation are putting upon it. However, its present form will doubtless be greatly modified by this new situation. Just how

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, pp. 28 ff.

this change will come about, we cannot prophesy with any certainty; but Troeltsch has faith to believe that Christianity will prove itself equal to its task.<sup>1</sup>

As for the question of the ultimate relation of Christianity to the other great religions of the world, Troeltsch confesses that he finds it hard to give up the idea of some common goal towards which all the religions of the world are tending -- especially since he believes firmly that they all emanate from the same Divine Source. At present, however, none of the living religions seems very near that final Divine Goal, which may even lie in the world beyond. It may be that the future will bring forth new individualisations in which the religions will be able to make some nearer approach of understanding towards each other than at present seems probable. However, as far as we can now discern the future possibilities, it seems likely that the revelations contained in the several religions will remain separate, each in its own civilisation. In the meantime, the truth for us is no less the truth, -- namely that Christianity is God's revelation to us. Just as we have learned to love our fellow-men as being of worth in themselves, though independent of us, so we must learn to love and respect the various civilisations of mankind with all their differences from us, religious and other. We must seek constantly through contact with them to purify our own motives and standards so that we may ever better incarnate the truth for us which is contained in Christianity. Finally we must adjust ourselves to the idea that God's truth is not One but Many.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

The position which Troeltsch set forth in Die Absolutheit was the subject of a shower of criticism. The critiques of it are so many that one despairs of adding anything new to what has already been said in so many ways, from every conceivable standpoint. Outside of his colleagues in the religionsgeschichtliche Schule, Troeltsch's standpoint met with little favor anywhere, except among a few isolated individuals especially in the Anglo-American world.<sup>1</sup> However, he achieved the triumph of gaining the approval and warm commendation of the distinguished philosopher, Rudolf Eucken.<sup>2</sup> Even before the appearance of the Absolutheit, Troeltsch's general approach to the question in Die Selbständigkeit der Religion had been sharply criticised by the Ritschlians, Julius Kaftan, Niebergall, Traub and Reischl.<sup>e</sup> Later on when the Absolutheit was published, Hunzler, Beth, and Mezger, and the representatives of the "Positive Theology," Ihmels and T. Kaftan, and numerous others followed suit. It is impossible to go over these voluminous criticisms point by point. They divide themselves into two types. T. Kaftan represents the "positive" direction most

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<sup>1</sup>To be mentioned here are George Galloway, whose book, Faith and Reason, shows Troeltsch's influence, Sleight who in the main agrees with Troeltsch, and Prof. W. Adams Brown, in his Essence of Christianity, who while not entirely agreeing with Troeltsch's conclusions, recognises the contributions of his viewpoint. (Cf. Op. Cit., pp. 273-275). Wendland, who would probably be classed as religio-historical theologian, commends the great honesty of Troeltsch's position on the question of the finality, and defends him against his Ritschlian critics. (Cf. Wendland, "Philosophie und Christentum bei Ernst Troeltsch", Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1914, pp. 152 ff.)

<sup>2</sup>Eucken, Hauptprobleme der Religionsphilosophie der Gegenwart, p. 76, "Thus we hail with particular joy the fact that Ernst Troeltsch, that leading spirit of the younger generation of German theologians, has brought this question (of the finality of Christianity) into the lime-light, with the profundity and vigor that are characteristic of him in his book, Die Absolutheit des Christentums."

effectively. Although in his Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, he does bring out a number of the weaknesses in Troeltsch's structure, here as at various other points, he does not recognise the latter's positive contributions with any fairness. One has the impression that the real standard by which he measures Troeltsch is really Lutheran orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> of supernaturalism as the element "which pronounces judgment upon him."

More important are the criticisms of the Ritschlians. They also find fault with Troeltsch's refusal to admit exclusive supernaturalism in the Christian revelation; and accuse him of inconsistency in giving out that he is following the religionsgeschichtliche Methode, in the analysis of the other religions, and then all of a sudden turning around and declaring that the final validation of the norms evolved through the analysis is an act of faith.<sup>2</sup> These are the themes which Julius Kaftan set in his replies to Troeltsch's articles, "Die Selbständigkeit der Religion," and "Geschichte und Metaphysik," in the controversy carried on between them in the Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche,<sup>3</sup> 1895-1897. Some condemnation, though surprisingly little, is poured out upon Troeltsch's Christology, -- a fact to be accounted for on the grounds that at that time Troeltsch had written nothing exclusively or mainly devoted to Christology, and also that he had acknowledged his personal devotion and consecration to Jesus in warm terms in a number of passages.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kaftan, Ernst Troeltsch, eine kritische Zeitstudie, p. 71, etc.

<sup>2</sup>For the literature, see bibliography.

<sup>3</sup>J. Kaftan, "Die Selbständigkeit des Christentums," and "Erwiderung: die Methode; der Supranaturalismus."

<sup>4</sup>Neth reviewed Troeltsch's Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu in the Theologische Rundschau, 1912, (Article entitled "Die Bindung des Glaubens an die Person Jesu," pp. 16-21). In this he criticises Troeltsch for not stressing individual belief in Jesus more, but does not in my opinion point out the most vulnerable and serious defects in Troeltsch's Christology.

The fairest estimate of Troeltsch's work on the question of the finality of Christianity from the Ritschlian standpoint is Mezger's little brochure on the subject, published in 1914, under the same title as Troeltsch's own book, Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte. The gist of Mezger's argument is that Troeltsch's work on the question of the finality of Christianity up to that time has rendered two important services; it has shown the impossibility of the general Hegelian type of proof for the absoluteness of Christianity; and it has demonstrated conclusively that we cannot cling to a type of apologetic which wishes to isolate Christianity from the conclusions of the study of comparative religion.<sup>1</sup> He rightly recognises that Troeltsch does not deny supernaturalism in general; but agrees with the Ritschlians that Troeltsch goes over from science to faith when he makes the norms which emerge in his historical analysis rest upon personal faith. Finally, he concludes that Troeltsch does not give adequate recognition to the uniqueness of Jesus, when he concedes that Christianity might be superseded by some higher revelation.<sup>2</sup> Mezger, however, is content to rest his belief in the uniqueness and finality of the revelation of Jesus on the facts of personal Christian experience.

In the main the present writer is in agreement with Mezger's criticism of this phase of Troeltsch's thinking on the finality of Christianity. The controversy between Troeltsch and his opponents on the matter of supernaturalism does not seem to the present writer the real heart of the question. After reading the literature on the point, one has the impression that more heat than light was generated in the polemic on both sides. A num-

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<sup>1</sup>Mezger, Op. Cit., pp. 12-19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 48 ff.

ber of the opponents, as Mezger indicates, misunderstood Troeltsch's position on the question entirely, and supposed that he advocated an immanent evolutionism.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Ferdinand Kattenbusch is quite right when he says that the kind of supernaturalism that Troeltsch fights is an antiquated variety that grew up as a spatial affair under the old Ptolemaic-Biblical cosmology, and that this type of apologetic has long since ceased to be seriously advocated in all liberal theological circles.<sup>2</sup>

The really important issue is the uniqueness of Jesus, whatever explanation, supernatural or otherwise, one may choose to bring forward to explain that quality. It has been indicated in the previous chapter that Troeltsch's Christology does not do adequate justice to the unparalleled and irreproducible personality of our Lord. What critique there is to make of Troeltsch's solution of the problem of the finality of Christianity seems to lie in the same direction. It is from the standpoint of his own theories and method by which he is to be judged on this point. What he says about the historical conditioning of Christianity at all points in its development is quite true. It is indeed no different from other religions in this respect. Yet on historical grounds we are compelled to assign a greater uniqueness to the Person of Jesus than Troeltsch in fact does. He sets the problem wrongly in imagining that just the history of Christianity in contrast to the other religions can decide the presumption in favor of Christianity's claim to finality. Christianity's greatest claim to finality lies in the unique figure of its Lord. The Ritschlians had sounder theological instincts than Troeltsch upon this point, -- though he was right

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<sup>1</sup>Mezger, Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ferdinand Kattenbusch, "Die Lage der systematischen Theologie," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, pp. 131-132.



in his contention that they did not follow out the historical implications of the matter far enough, and set Jesus too much apart from all the rest of the religious development of mankind.

On purely historic grounds, we can reach a higher estimate of Jesus and through Him of Christianity's claim to finality than Troeltsch did. Not only as the Christ of faith is Jesus a suprahistorical figure, but as the Jesus of history, as Troeltsch should have seen from the inner logic of his own historical and normative method. No figure has so thoroughly stood the test of historical criticism as that of Jesus. Troeltsch, in the midst of a period when historical criticism was doing its worst, put the judgment of history upon Jesus in too low terms. Now that we are somewhat removed from the thick of the smoke of criticism which surrounded the figure of Jesus at that time, we can see a little more clearly that historical analysis itself substantiates the entire uniqueness of Jesus.

If we compare Jesus with the founders of other religions, the only one of them who can seriously be compared with Jesus at all is Buddha. One needs only to read the Koran to see how inferior Mohammed is to Jesus. The militarism and fatalism which found their way into the gospel of the prophet of Islam from his personal allegiance to these ideas do not stand comparison with the lofty religious ideals that Jesus' spiritual conception for the Kingdom of God represents. Mohammed is plainly only a glorified Arab sheikh, not worthy to be seriously mentioned along with Jesus.

We know too little of Moses and his work to be sure just how much of Judaism is his creation, but even ascribing to him the most that the Old Testament records justify us in doing, we must still accept the judgment of the Epistle of Hebrews that Moses was but the servant in the house,

in comparison with Jesus, Who is the Son over His own house, (Hebrews 3:5,6). Confucius is a sage rather than the founder of a religion, and Lao-tze a one-sided mystic, Buddha is indeed a truly inspiring religious figure, but his inspiring quality is marred by his negative attitude towards life, which is a direct consequence of his atheism.<sup>1</sup> Jesus consecrates life; but Buddha retreats from it. As Professor Mackintosh puts it, it was really somewhat inconsistent of Buddha to teach men his Way when the logic of his own theories would have been to go apart from all men.<sup>2</sup> Noble as Buddha's personality was, he did not reveal, nor claim to reveal the Face of the Divine behind all life; but only the way of escape from life into Nirvana, non-being. Even when it is granted that at individual points, the ethic of Jesus and the ethic of Buddha fall together, and that Buddha lived out his own ethic, her personality is still marred by the pessimism of his outlook and the entire agnosticism towards the existence of any higher power.

When we look across the field of history for uplifters of humanity to compare with Jesus, the field is very limited. Perhaps the only other figure is Socrates. He is a martyr and an uplifter of humanity; but there is nothing in the impression we get from his figure that deserves to be designated as redemptive in its quality. Although he had his Plato and the rest of that group of disciples, his influence does not extend beyond the very small group of the philosophically-minded. Socrates never inspired a great succession of personalities from all walks of life like the leaders of the Christian Church to whom Troeltsch calls our attention

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<sup>1</sup>The view of the figure of Buddha here presented is based mainly upon the little book on Buddhism by T. W. Rhys Davids, and the translations of the Buddhist sources of the life of Buddha by the same author.

<sup>2</sup>H. R. Mackintosh, The Originality of the Christian Message, p. 168.

as the historical effect of the influence of Jesus. Even the Old Testament Prophets are but forerunners of Jesus, and the saints derive their significance from the fact that they are reproducers of His spirit. From whatever standpoint the comparison may be made, Jesus stands out unique in all humanity. Beside Him all others are but as candles compared with the sun. There are very good historic as well as theological grounds for accepting the uniqueness of Jesus. One may call this supernatural on grounds of faith; but even on historical grounds, we must admit that Jesus is outstanding and quite unparalleled in the sphere of history.

Had Troeltsch recognised the historical grounds for estimating Jesus more highly than he does, his contribution to the question of the finality of Christianity as he formulates the problem in Die Absolutheit would have been far greater. However, whatever doubts Troeltsch's earlier position may raise on the question of the finality of Christianity, his final one is so extreme that it is a challenge which we cannot ignore. He reached both views on the basis of the historical method, he tells us, but must he believe that this radical opinion is an inherent necessity of his theories?

The one advance that his thinking in the final period represents in his clear realisation at that time that the religions of the world are not all tending in the same direction. The norm that he set up as the inherent ideal of all religions, redemption, in his earlier work, is quite true to the genius of all religion; but when the validity of this general ideal is admitted, it must be recognised that the religions of the world seek to realise the goal of redemption by very divergent paths. The most cogent bit of his earlier argument is the fact that in Christianity the

ideal of redemption is the richest and most meaningful found in any religion. Is there any reason to suppose that his thinking on this subject was clearer in his later years? Quite the contrary seems to be the case. In those last days, he became obsessed with the idea of historical individualism, as Baron von Hügel rightly points out.<sup>1</sup>

Some very grave questions must be raised about the historical necessity of a number of the opinions that Troeltsch expresses in Christian Thought. One cannot help feeling very doubtful about the statement that Christianity stands or falls with western civilisation.<sup>2</sup> If that statement were to be accepted as true, it would mean that the two were practically identical. No one would deny that the destinies of the two have lain together for a considerable period of time, and that each has necessarily modified the other. But they are by no means identical. Historically, Christianity has shown a considerable degree of independence of western civilisation. The church has often been the critic of the civilisation of which it is one constituent factor in the past, and continues in this role at the present time. Troeltsch himself, in his essay Grundprobleme der Ethik, points out very convincingly a number of points of conflict between the Christian ethic and the cultural ends of other aspects of our modern western world. As long as these conflicts exist, we cannot suppose that Christianity has lost its independence of western civilisation.

Nor is it a foregone conclusion necessitated by historical evidence that the end of Christianity would come with the fall of western civilisation. Christianity arose in the ancient civilisation of the Graeco-Roman world; but far from dying with that civilisation, it conquered the bar-

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<sup>1</sup>F. von Hügel, Introduction to Troeltsch's Christian Thought, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, p. 24.

barians who had conquered the old empire; and rose from the ashes of the ruins of the old civilisation to occupy undisputed place as the religion of western Europe. A religion that has been able to survive the fall of one civilisation may well survive the fall of another. If our present civilisation should end, Christianity, the most vigorous and vital element it contains, might well find root in some other civilisation, either in whatever supersedes the old one, or in some other part of the world.

This point brings us once again to the limitations of Troeltsch's view of Jesus. Certainly the way in which the present bearers of the Christian heritage present it to the modern world has some influence upon Christianity's hope of becoming the universal world religion. The present presentation of Christianity is, however, only one aspect of the problem of its finality and not the most important one. Troeltsch ignores Christianity's great claim to finality, the Person of its Founder. Just now there is considerable practical evidence coming in from the mission fields to lead us to suppose that whatever limitations our presentation of Christianity to the world may have acquired from its connection with our western background, the personality of Jesus does not share these. His is a figure which appeals not only to the western mind; but to the eastern as well. To be sure, the Orient has not gone over en masse to Christianity; but there are certain representative men who have accepted Jesus, -- men like Kagawa in Japan, T. Z. Koo in China, and Sadhu Sundar Singh in India. If Troeltsch's own category of the representative means anything, it is by leaders who typify the characteristics and aspirations of their own groups that we must judge the direction in which the temperament of the group has the capacity to move. These men have responded to the universal appeal of Jesus; hence

it seems probable that Jesus can attract the peoples from which they come. Kagawa seems to feel that the East will come to Christ to save itself. In the eminently Christian letter he wrote to the Chinese Christians at the time of the Japanese occupation of Tsinan in January, 1932, he writes, "I tell you that unless Christ is glorified in the Orient, the future of our continent will be very dismal. Unless we believe in Christ, and deepen our spiritual life with Christian idealism, peace will never come."<sup>1</sup>

In Jesus lies Christianity's best hope of universalism. Missionary activity has been going on on a large scale only a little over a hundred years, -- a very short period for such an immense task. Europe itself did not become Christian in a year or even a hundred years; and we cannot expect modern missions to complete their task of spreading Christianity over a much vaster territory in one century. The fruits of missions are already sufficiently impressive to make it very doubtful whether the fusion between Christianity and our civilisation is nearly so complete as Troeltsch supposed. It is, moreover, not equivalent <sup>is</sup> ~~of~~ saying that the triumph of Christianity over the East would mean the dominance of Western civilisation. They may take Jesus without taking western Christianity at all. Ghandi is certainly no friend of western civilisation; but he has repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Jesus.

One point which Troeltsch makes in his discussion of the question of the finality of Christianity in his last lectures is very significant in its relation to the universal appeal of Jesus. He says, there that it is a proof of the validity and depth of Christianity that it has become the

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<sup>1</sup>Toyohiko Kagawa, Letter to the Chinese Christians at Tsinan, written in January, 1932, printed for private circulation by the Society of Friends in Philadelphia.

religion of a race like our own.<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch is right; for if Christianity can subdue the spirit of a race whose native tendencies are in many respects so foreign to the teachings of Jesus as our own are, there is good reason to believe that He cannot fail to appeal to the peoples of the Orient. The Japanese are enough like ourselves to give us the right to suppose that if Jesus can conquer us, He is certain to attract them. There is much in His teaching which should appeal to the practical-minded Chinese. Of all the nations of the East, none seems to display such a different type of mentality from the western as India. Yet Stanley Jones, a missionary of long experience in that country, tells us that India does not want Christianity, but she does want Christ.<sup>2</sup>

That is the difference. We cannot expect to find our type of Christianity of universal appeal; but we can expect to find that our Master has the power to draw all men unto Him. It may be that these other nations will make new individualisations of Christianity in conformity to their own needs and temperaments that will be quite unlike our own form, as the missionaries tell us. In that case, their understanding of Jesus will but illuminate Him in new ways so that we shall see more of His fulness when the line of eastern Christian saints is added to succession He has inspired in the West.

Another statement in Troeltsch's later thought on the finality of Christianity causes us to wonder whether he was really following the logic of his own theories of norms. This concerns Christianity itself. Is Christianity really so lacking in historical continuity that the very expression itself is nothing more than a "theoretical abstraction"?

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Stanley Jones, The Christ of the Indian Road, p. 18.

Are there not certain normative trends that weld these diverse forms together? Troeltsch himself in his earlier work was among those who gave an affirmative answer to this question. At that time he pointed out the four great normative ideas of God, man, the world, and redemption, which, even though variously interpreted at different times in the history of the Church, are passed on from generation to generation as directive trends around which the religious experience of each generation focusses itself. There is also the fifth and greatest unifying factor, Jesus Himself, of whose continuous normative influence Troeltsch himself in his earlier years knew how to tell us in warm terms. These unifying, normative aspects did not disappear from Christianity between the time that Troeltsch did his early work, and this final phase of his thought. It was Troeltsch who changed, not the fact. The change in his thinking was due to his entire preoccupation with the category of historical individuality. He had lost the sight of the forest for the trees.

This intense concentration upon the individual and relative aspects of all historical forms accounts also to some extent for his theory of polymorphous truth. That conception appears for the first time in his system as far back as 1907, in the lecture entitled Die Trennung von Staat und Kirche, but the notion does not become prominent in his system until about 1918, when we find several references to it in his Kaisergeburtstagsrede, Über Maßstäbe zur Beurteilung historischer Dinge. From that time on, Troeltsch becomes a thorough-going relativist. The example of this position is his statement in Christian Thought that even science and logic seem to exhibit strong individual differences in their fundamental rudiments and an innermost nature under different skies, and upon different soils.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Christian Thought, p. 23.



Since even these supposedly fixed sciences vary so greatly, Troeltsch argues, that it should not surprise that truth in religion is many instead of one. Starting from Troeltsch's parallel of science and logic, one cannot but question whether he is stating a fact or merely giving voice to a subjective aberration from fact. First of all, it must be said that our western civilisation is the only one which has made any important contribution either in science or in logic. The Oriental countries have created speculative philosophies, but not logic, and what progress they have achieved along scientific lines has been almost wholly the effect of western influence. However, there is nothing specifically Oriental in the science they do have. The Indian physicist who was recently awarded the Nobel prize in physics did not approach his research with some peculiarly Indian method unlike that of western physicists. Nor was the procedure of the Japanese doctor Noguchi, in his scientific labours anything essentially Japanese, which differentiated it from the methods of all European and American doctors.

Even in religion, where the element of value judgment enters into the apprehension of truth to a greater degree than in science, we cannot rest content with a theory of polymorphous truth. Werturteile root in Seinsurteile. If God exists, as Christianity teaches, then the Buddhistic atheism must be wrong. Even in these days of relativism, the law of contradictions is not abrogated. Either God does exist, or He does not exist; and about existential facts there is no room for different opinions. If God is the loving Father that Jesus reveals, He is not the arbitrary and capricious Being Whom Mohammed reveals. We cannot be content to rest our belief in the ultimate validity of Christianity simply with the idea that it is valid for us. Our convictions in the matter might well be wrong;

for subjective feeling is not an ultimate test of validity. However, our faith in the finality of Christianity has a better ground, -- the unique historical personality of Jesus. His revelation certainly does not agree at essential points with that of the other religions, but His personality is the greatest attestation that we can desire to the superiority of His apprehension of God to that of the other founders of religion. This is not a proof, to be sure, but it is a high historic probability.

Troeltsch applied the historical category of individualisation and of irreproducibility very thoroughly at most points in his work, but in the very place where the greatest individuality and irreproducibility are to be discovered, has a curious blind spot, -- due no doubt to his effort to keep free of prejudging the case on a religious basis. Furthermore, in his consideration of Christianity in history in his own category of development, he should have found the counter-balance to his entire preoccupation with individuality. Development presupposes some continuity. It is not equivalent to transformation; but Troeltsch, in his final historical examination of Christianity, unconsciously applied to the history of Christianity some new category of transformation, which he does not mention in his list. If he had followed the inner logic of his own normative method in history, his judgment would have been very different from the one he gives us in that final book, Christian Thought. Once more it is Troeltsch himself who fails, not his method. The root of his failure lies in his low historical estimate of the place of the Person of Jesus as a decisive factor in the question of the finality of Christianity.

## CHAPTER IX

### (Conclusion)

#### THE VALUE OF TROELTSCH'S CONCEPT OF NORMS IN THEOLOGY

The preceding chapters have been concerned with the presentation of Troeltsch's theory of norms in theology, and its application in the fields of history in general, in Christianity in particular, and finally in the wider sphere of the great religions of the world. All the way through, the effort of the survey has been to see in the functioning of the theory at individual points both its excellencies and its shortcomings. Above all, however, the attempt has been to find the inner logic of the theory itself and to appraise it in the light of its own inherent necessities. The final critique, however, must be an evaluation of the system of the norms as a method of procedure in the solution of the problem of authority. Here, also, the emphasis of our estimate will center upon discovering how far Troeltsch carried out the method according to its own logic, rather than on measuring the construction by the standard of some external viewpoint, our own or any other.

No one can read Troeltsch's writings without marvelling at the vast scope of his learning, the enormous productive power of his mind, the comprehensiveness with which he grasped the conflicting trends of modern life, and the religious insight with which he pointed surely to the potentialities for good or for ill in them all, from a Christian standpoint. Troeltsch's work as a theologian, philosopher and historian covers so wide a field that at first sight it may seem to lack all unity. It does not have the unity of an ordered system, its unity is one of motive and dominating interest. It centers about the search for normative religious truth in all three fields, sometimes in one, sometimes in another, or in all three at once; but the quest is one wherever he pursues it.

His contribution to the solution of his problem is not one of content except at individual points; but his method is one which we cannot ignore. The problem with which he wrestled is our problem, and although we cannot find in him the ready-made results that more one-sided temperaments give us, we can find a method ready to our hand, which with careful and complete application, will help us to find the solutions and the conclusions that he did not reach himself. Both Troeltsch's successes and failures lay in the amazing vitality and complexity of his own personality. Ernst Troeltsch himself is a cross-section of life. Life is not capable of being fitted into any system; nor can Troeltsch be confined within the bounds of a system. He pointed out all sorts of problems, and gave off ideas about them as radium gives off emanations; but before he had worked the problems through to the end, he would change all his theories, and move on to something else. The only continuity in his work is therefore the growth of the method by which he sought to find the norms, and it is just there that his contribution lies. Through this complexity of his own temperament we must also account for the fact that his theories have a potentiality for far greater usefulness than they achieve in his own hands. Before he had reaped the fruits of any cycle of his theories, life and his own restless spirit had driven him on to seek other ways of discovering truth.

In the very presence of so many conflicting and divergent trends in his own person lies the secret of the inconsistencies and incompatibilities of his theories. He saw what was genuinely valuable in very diverse and conflicting interests and values and tried to conserve them all. Sometimes this was a liability, but more often it was the source of the vitality and fertility of his approach to his problems. No one can understand or rightly evaluate the theories that he created without understanding Ernst Troeltsch, the man. The actual results that he achieves are exactly in proportion to

what his own restless and many-sided personality allowed him to achieve.

In appraising the theory of the norms, we must judge the method, not by what Troeltsch himself made of it, but by its own inherent fruitfulness apart from his own application of it. Troeltsch himself ended his life work by succumbing to the very relativism and individualism that he had sought all his life to avoid, but this was not the necessary or logical outcome of his theory of norms in history and theology. It was the relativity and fluidity of the man himself. The theory has great potential value in the solution of the problem of authority, if certain gaps are filled in, and some slight aberrations and over-emphases due to Troeltsch's own temperament are corrected. After all, Troeltsch's is the most noteworthy attempt to wrestle with the problem of normative religious truth and its relation to history that we have seen since modern historical criticism arose.

The problem to which Troeltsch gave his life is our problem, too, and we cannot close our eyes to it unless we take refuge in some form of dogmatism, which solves the problem by ignoring it. One such easy solution is the road to Rome, either by the direct route of going over to the Roman Church or by the indirect way of the High Church movement. Neither of these ways faces the reality of the problem. Nor is the way of the Dialectic theology a real solution to the problem of faith and history. It is rather a subtle and clever evasion of reality in the question by setting up a dualism between revelation and everything else, be it history, criticism, science or culture. The only way out of the problem of faith and history is through it, as Troeltsch rightly saw. His method has the great merit of being a real attack on the problem.

"Faith cannot create facts; it can only interpret them."

History and Christianity are inextricably bound together by the fact that Jesus was an historical figure. The whole problem of faith and history centers in Jesus. He is and must remain the surest hold and anchor for faith in history, without which Christianity would perish. Any questions which can be raised in reference to the main events of Jesus' life, or the chief outlines of His teaching, must be faced honestly and fairly by the Church, if its Christology is not to be Docetic, sentimental, or mythical. Troeltsch set the problem of faith and history correctly there. He also saw clearly the further historical problem of the connection between Christianity and history through the development that comes about in the succeeding centuries.<sup>1</sup> That interconnection confronts us with the need for sorting out the valid and permanent elements in the extraneous additions to the Christian heritage from those which are mere accretions and out of line with its own genius. Troeltsch's normative method not only states this problem but gives us a means of attack upon it. That alone is a valuable contribution to the problem of authority, and a useful supplement to the work of a man like Harnack, who merely calls attention to, and condemns the presence of the factors in the historical heritage of Christianity which are not included in the original teachings of Jesus.

A further service of Troeltsch's theory as a contribution to

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<sup>1</sup>Against Troeltsch's contention that Christianity has developed historically, Karl Beth asserts that it has merely unfolded. (Beth, "Entfaltung und Entwicklung," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1910, pp. 406-417). Of course, Christianity has unfolded, but it has also developed historically. It is impossible to ascribe the fusion of Christian doctrine with the heritage of Greek philosophy to "unfolding," to cite only one example.

the problem of the authoritative versus the merely incidental and extraneous, is that it consistently recognises the independence of religion in general and Christianity in particular from other factors in the cultural aggregate of which it is a part. To be sure, in his book, Christian Thought, Troeltsch himself loses sight of this differentiation and identifies Christianity pretty thoroughly with western civilisation; but in all his earlier work, he showed very clearly, and conclusively that Christianity was not only modified by the culture with which its lot was cast, but was also a positive and independent force which changed, modified, and curbed the action of these other factors in conformity with its own genius. That is surely the thesis of the Soziallehren, and even in Der Historismus, the proposed cultural synthesis was to be built around the highest values embodied in the life of the group, which in Troeltsch's eyes were always the religious ones.

Troeltsch's theory of norms does us the service of providing a means of distinguishing the historical elements which are native to the genius of the Christian heritage from those which are foreign to its spirit. This is a contribution to the problem of authority which is still needed in the Christian world, -- perhaps more so than ever before, when numerous new problems confront Christianity in its contact with the unparalleled situation in which we now find ourselves. We have great need to select from these new currents those trends which can be fused with historic Christianity and those which we must discard as entithetical to its ideals. Just here, however, lies one of the difficulties of Troeltsch's statement of his method. He rests the validity of the normative elements thus to be distinguished upon the personal decision of the investigator, --

a suggestion which leaves the door wide open to subjectivism. There would always be the danger that any modern attempt to distinguish the norms which are to direct the future will be nothing but ideas prized by the moment, or reflections of some vagary of the investigator himself. Even the great are not free from prejudices or cherished theories, and it is hard for even a genius to escape conditioning by the spirit of his time. Of course, Troeltsch frankly admits that some subjectivism is inevitable in the process; but his statement is somewhat faulty in that it stresses so greatly the importance of this creative act of decision on the part of the investigator, -- an idea that seems to have been very precious to him personally. If he had laid greater emphasis on keeping in line with the great figures of the past, the Prophets, the saints, and above all, Jesus Himself, he would have insured greater objectivity to the operation of his theory. He does suggest this guarantee of objectivity occasionally, but does not carry it out consistently enough.<sup>1</sup>

Although it is a defect of Troeltsch's statement of the theory that he does not guard himself sufficiently against subjectivity, it is a merit of the theory as a contribution to the problem of authority that it provides a place for the possibility of new revelation. No authority that is static is adequate; for revelation, as Troeltsch finely perceived, is a living affair, grounded in the continuing activity of the living God in history. However, interestingly enough, although Troeltsch is so careful to provide for that possibility, there is practically nothing in his own construction of the normative essence of present-day Christianity to which one could definitely point as new revelation. This was not due to

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Article, "Dogmatik," Section 3 in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 1910 edition.



any lack of insight on Troeltsch's own part, but to the unreligious trend of that age. What changes have come about in theology recently are due to the impact of science for the most part, not to new revelations. We are not in an age when many new revelations are being vouchsafed to us; but there is always the possibility that in some era that is more sensitive to the Divine than ours, new revelation may arise. It is one claim to future usefulness for Troeltsch's plan that it provides for that contingency.

The crux of the question of the theory of norms as a contribution to the problem of authority is whether Troeltsch has really pointed the way to the discovery of absolutes, or whether he has just given a set of relative values which are ever-changing, temporary, and dependent upon the form in which they are embodied for their validity. It must be admitted that in Troeltsch's later work, the latter is the case; but once again, this is not the inherent fault of the method, nor the necessary outcome of its application. Historically we can know absolutes in only one way -- by their timeless character. To see an absolute in the present and recognise it as such is really only an act of intuition, and we cannot be sure that we have really apprehended an absolute until enough time has elapsed to show us that this new value is really superhistorical. However, as we look back over the past, we can detect the absolutes as such much more easily; though, as Sleigh puts it, even there they do not spring out at us full-grown, like Minerva from Jove's head.<sup>1</sup> The absolutes are always intermingled with relatives, therefore it takes insight to find them. Troeltsch, in his historical studies, became so absorbed in the relative dress of the absolutes that he missed their essential core. This is to be

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<sup>1</sup>Sleigh, The Sufficiency of Christianity, p. 201.

attributed to his great preoccupation with the idea of the individual, and his strong feeling for the uniqueness of every situation. He lost the sense of the superhistorical in the historical.

As far as his theological structure is concerned, Troeltsch weakened his theory of the norms by his inability to appreciate the absolute values and qualities embodied in Jesus, where these meet us in the clearest and purest form of any single point in all history. When Peter confessed at Caesarea-Philippi, "Thou art the Messiah," he, by the revelation of the Spirit had opened his eyes to the Divine Absolutes in the historical, human personality of Jesus of Nazareth. That all of Jesus' contemporaries did not recognise the Divine Absolutes in Him is understandable and forgivable; but that we should not recognise them after the lapse of twenty centuries has revealed their timeless, superhistorical character, is not so pardonable. It is surely the logical necessity of Troeltsch's theories to see the Divine in human life. That is really the presupposition upon which his whole construction is built; but in Jesus, where these Divine Absolutes confront us most unmistakably, Troeltsch remains concentrated on the relative and temporally conditioned aspects of His personality, and misses the very absolutes he is seeking everywhere else in history.

Had Troeltsch reached a sounder historical estimate of Jesus, he would have found in Him a surer canon for the measure of the absolutes in the rest of Christian history than the personal decision of the investigator. Having established them on the theological side, he could then have translated them into philosophic terms by the adoption of a realistic metaphysic, -- perhaps the modern phenomenology, which rightly stresses the abiding and compelling character of the values in themselves, and lays but little stress on the temporary and relative forms in which they are con-

tained. The construction of the norms as scales of values in Troeltsch's system accords well with this realistic metaphysic, but does not make a consistent whole in combination with the Kantian idealism which was the basis he used for most of his life. Even in his latter days, when he was moving in the direction of realism, he never wholly broke his allegiance to Kant. The fatal subjectivism of the idealistic metaphysic is partially responsible for Troeltsch's inability to construe his norms as absolute values, objectively real, and valid in themselves and independent of the historical accidents with which they are intermingled. A realistic construction of this type would have insured for his norms just the kind of objective validity which the theory demands.

Troeltsch's choice of Kant as a philosophic support is unfortunate from a second point of view. It reinforced all the rational trends in his own temperament, and prevented the contingent elements whose value Troeltsch really saw from receiving the recognition which his theory as a whole demands. Troeltsch's critics are about equally divided as to whether he was a rationalist or a mystic. There are those, who, like Wobbermin, picture him as a thorough-going rationalist.<sup>1</sup> Others, like Wendland, who appreciate the deeply religious bent of his nature, think of him as a mystic.<sup>2</sup> The truth is that both reason and religious intuition were very strong in Troeltsch, and produced a marked tension in his personality which reflects itself in his work. Sometimes one won; sometimes the other; but in the periods when Troeltsch is most Kantian, he is invariably most rationalistic. At these times he nearly loses sight of the contingent elements in his view of the historical reality from which his norms arise. That this was Kant's

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<sup>1</sup>Georg Wobbermin, Die religionspsychologische Methode in der Religionswissenschaft und Theologie, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup>J. Wendland, "Philosophie und Christentum bei Ernst Troeltsch," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 1914, p. 130.

influence rather than Troeltsch himself, is shown by the fact that even in his most rational essay, Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft, we find him declaring that the heart of all religion is the perception of the presence of God in the soul, -- a thoroughly mystical idea.<sup>1</sup> The mystic in Troeltsch also comes to the fore in the great admiration which he displays for the sects in his Soziallehren. The theory of the norms is an effort to conserve both the rational and the superrational aspects of religious reality. In the historical aggregate, both rational and contingent elements are present, and both can furnish normative values; but when Troeltsch actually comes to tell us where the norms are, he generally turns rationalist, and discovers them only in the rational aspects, particularly at the periods when he is most Kantian. Since the major portion of his theological contribution falls within the period from 1902 to 1914, we must attribute some of Troeltsch's neglect of the contingent elements to Kantianism. Even in this most Kantian phase of his thinking, however, there are instances, to the contrary, such as his discovery of the norms for religion in general in the idea of redemption, -- a purely contingent aspect of reality. Another instance of the emergence of the contingent is the importance he places upon the non-rational experience of the immediacy of God in the soul. However, the two outstanding failures of his construction of the normative essence of Christianity, his Christology and his incomplete doctrine of redemption are both the errors of a rationalist. Had he been truer to his theory of the importance of the contingent elements, his presentation of the normative essence of Christianity would have been more acceptable. As

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Op. Cit., pp. 35-36.

Professor Otto in his Das Heilige unforgettably reminds us, religion is only partially capable of rationalisation, and the rational elements are often not the deepest.

Whenever Troeltsch gets away from Kant, he makes fewer mistakes on the rational side, and had he found a system of metaphysic which allowed more play to the contingent, which his theory really recognises as vital, he would have been able to reap more of its benefits in his own application of his normative approach.

Aside from the philosophic structure on which the theory is built, there are certain omissions and gaps in Troeltsch's own statement of his method, which need to be filled in if the theory is to attain its full usefulness in the solution of the problem of authority. Without departing from the spirit of the theory, perhaps we may be allowed to supplement the theory at these points by what additions it seems logically to require. In the first place, Troeltsch nowhere distinguishes clearly between those norms whose permanent and valid character is assured, and those trends which are hypothetically, but not certainly, normative in character. There should be a gradation among the norms, especially those for the essence of Christianity. This gradation is implicit in the distinction which he makes between the historical norms, and those of present experience; but he does not make any statement about the gradation of the norms in his discussion of the method by which these are derived. It is the opinion of the present writer that four different grades of norms emerge from Troeltsch's analysis of Christianity.

Jesus Himself is the supreme norm for Christianity for all time. His normative position is assured by the uniqueness of His own personality, the authority of His Person and message as a revelation of God, and by the experience of the Church throughout the ages. His unparalleled

influence is attested by the succession of the saints whom He has inspired, as Troeltsch so well points out. The judgment of history is that His personality is superhistorical, timeless, and contains absolute qualities and values which are indispensable to Christians in all ages. By Him we measure our individual religious experience, and in Him we find the example and inspiration for all our attempts to find and do the Will of God in our individual lives and in society. He is therefore the central and permanent norm for the Christianity of all periods.

Perhaps it would seem from the foregoing that Troeltsch was in error to admit any other norms into Christianity besides Jesus, and that the Ritschlians were right in making Him the sole center of authority in the Church. Such is not the case, however, though Troeltsch has left a certain gap in his theory because he does not tell us more of the reasons why he admits other figures to a normative position. He does give us some considerations which make it impossible to see in Jesus the sole norm for his system; but he does not define carefully enough just how and for what the other personalities are normative. Without departing too much from the spirit of Troeltsch's work, it would seem that some of these reasons may be supplied as a supplement to the theory.

Troeltsch tells us that we do not know all the details of Jesus' life and teachings; therefore we cannot hope to make Him the sole authority. Furthermore, we can appreciate Him fully only as the great figures of the Church illuminate and throw into high relief the qualities which they catch from Him, and embody in their own lives. Both of these are cogent reasons which we can neither deny or ignore.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Die Bedeutung Jesu für den Glauben, and the Section on Christology in the Glaubenslehre.

There are several other ways in which the authority of these other figures can supplement the authority of Jesus. This brings us to the second grade of norms, those discernible in the great leaders of the Church who have undeniable authoritative significance, but whose authority is on a distinctly lower plane than that of Jesus.

We cannot make Jesus the norm for our experience of Him as Redeemer. He is the Revealer of God; we can discern that fact clearly whatever obscurities or critical difficulties may confront us in the gospel records. However, since His self-consciousness as Messiah is one of the most unclear of all the problems in the gospels, we cannot be sure in what senses He would wish us to regard Him as Redeemer, through Whose life and death we are able to receive and accept the grace of God. We do not know exactly what interpretation Jesus placed on these events Himself. Jesus is the object of our experience of redemption, not the subject of it. We alone are the subjects of an experience of redemption, which Jesus never had, so far as we know, for He did not need it. It is from the other personalities of the Church, Paul, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, Augustine, Luther, and the other heroes of the faith that we must seek the norms for our experience of redemption through Christ. Certainly any theory of authority that did not provide norms for the Christian experience of redemption would be very thin indeed.

We need the guidance of the classic expressions of the experience that great souls have had in Jesus to lead us to the fullness of a well-rounded appreciation of His greatness and His meaning for our lives. In all our Christological thinking, these other leaders must provide the normative formulations for us. There is some truth in

the observation that we cannot entirely share the religion of Jesus, but must content ourselves, at least until we are redeemed by Him, with the religion about Him. For these elements which are integral to Christian experience, we need the normative guidances of the master Christians in all ages. These considerations alone would make it impossible to see in Jesus the sole center of authority.

No one of the great figures of the Church is absolutely normative as an individual, but as a group their authority is indispensable. Some thoroughly devoted Christians prefer the Johannine Christology to the Pauline, others find greater richness in that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There are those who see a more congenial interpretation of the meaning of Christ in Calvin's teaching; others in Luther. Some find the charm of Jesus embodied more beautifully in St. Francis of Assisi than in St. Augustine. Christology is a growing affair. New saints may arise who will add to the fulness of our appreciation of Jesus by giving us new Christologies, or combining the old in new ways. The normative position of the interpreters of Jesus is permanent as a group, but there must be freedom to select from their contributions as individuals.

The third group of norms which should be distinguished are those whose authority depends not so much upon the universal and absolute values which they embody, as upon their applicability to similar situations, where the historical combination of factors is such that they are authoritative and useful in the solution of corresponding problems. This class of norms would include normative solutions of both a doctrinal and a practical character. It is impossible to find in Jesus an answer to all conceivable questions that may arise in the life of the Christian body. To



cite one example, Paul gives us more light on missionary methods and aims than Jesus does; for Paul had a broader experience in that field. The Church has had a long history, in which it has had to meet a great variety of situations and solve a great many problems. On the doctrinal side, the creeds are the attempt of the Church to reach a normative position. But not only is this a matter of doctrines. In practical questions, too, we need whatever normative solutions the experience of the Church in similar historical situations can give us, in so far as it is a true application of the Spirit of Jesus, and is capable of translation into terms that will be understandable and helpful to our own age. A practical illustration may serve to clarify this point. Our age is one in which it seems that civilisation itself is tottering. Perhaps there are Christian canons for it in the teaching of St. Augustine, who also lived in an age of decay. There are other epochs, like the age of the Reformation, to which Troeltsch so often pointed, which are so rich in religious creativity that they can furnish normative guidance to almost any succeeding generation. The values embodied in such an age, and those from any other period which are transferable to other situations constitute this third class of norms of occasional applicability.

The absolute character of these three classes of norms is historically assured. The fourth class is that of tentative or hypothetical norms. There are many problems which confront Christianity at the present time that are quite unparalleled in its history. Jesus did not tell us explicitly what to do about war, the economic order, internationalism, or any of the other burning social questions upon which the modern Church cannot turn its back. The history of the Church can give

us little that is normative towards the solution of these vital issues. Even in the realm of doctrine, we are confronted by the unprecedented heresy of having within the ranks of the church itself those who deny the existence of God. It is for an age like ours that this fourth class of norms must be discerned, -- those trends which so far as the best religious insight of our time can see lie in line with the Christian ideal of the past. We do not have history behind us to show just where these values are, or what they are; but we must try to apprehend these new norms along the lines that Troeltsch suggested. We must look for new revelation in the light of the old. We must seek the norms for a new synthesis of Christianity which shall embody its ideal and the Spirit of its Master better than in the past. That is the contribution of Troeltsch's theory of the new norms. For their validation we have nothing but the guidance of the Spirit. Yet if we believe in the Spirit that shall lead into all truth, we can believe that we shall discover His truth for us, and for the future which we are creating. In the words of the little poem that Troeltsch was very fond of quoting:

Er/  
"Was Gott sei wird in Ewigkeit  
"Kein Mensch ergründen.  
"Doch will, treuer sich jeder Zeit,  
"Mit uns verbünden."<sup>1</sup>

By way of summary, it may be in order to indicate once more what the norms in Troeltsch's system are, and where they are to be discovered. They are absolute values, or directive trends which point in the direction of an absolute value or ideal, -- for example, redemption is the norm for all religion. In the particular case of the history of

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<sup>1</sup>Poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, quoted by Troeltsch in Die wissenschaftliche Lage und ihre Anforderungen an die Theologie, p. 58.

Christianity, these norms are usually incarnated in great personalities, or in especially creative, classic eras of the history of the Church, like the Reformation. Any epoch contains norms which are authoritative for itself, and some of these may prove to be applicable to other periods. The norms may also be inherent in some particular individualisation of the Christian ideal, such as the type represented by the mystical sects, which Troeltsch admired greatly, or some peculiar variation of one form, like New Protestantism. These norms may prove applicable to other forms, and thus pass into the stream of the historical heritage, or they may be absolute and valid, even if they are not absorbed into the Christian heritage. In history the two most important sources of the theological norms, so far as the present writer understands the implication of Troeltsch's theory, are the great religious figures, and the classic epochs of church history. In addition, there are present-day norms discernible from the analysis of the religious consciousness of the Christian community. These ideal values of both sorts, the vehicles of revelation, constitute the seat of authority in religion for Troeltsch.

In conclusion a few words must be said of the desirability of Troeltsch's normative method as a solution to the problem of authority in Christianity. It is no infallible authority that he offers us; but we have come to a time when we must cease to look for infallible and inerrant authorities in the older sense. The Catholic Church still claims infallibility and inerrancy, but at the price of avoiding the issues instead of facing them, and for Protestants at least, its claims

received a blow in the time of the Reformation from which they never recovered. In like manner, we can no longer regard the Scriptures as an absolute authority in the older sense. The figure of Jesus, as Troeltsch quite adequately establishes, cannot be viewed as the authority for everything in Christianity, nor provide a stereotyped solution for every conceivable problem which can arise in the life of the Church. If individual religious experience is made the sole seat of authority, we fall a prey to the worst dangers of individualism and subjectivism in which every man becomes a law unto himself.

Troeltsch's method is a fortunate combination of the best in all the solutions which have heretofore been offered to the problem. It is in fact such a valuable proposal that one wonders why it has been generally ignored even by those who have written on his system. The only one of Troeltsch's critics who even mentions it is Barth,<sup>1</sup> who disagrees with it. The ultimate seat of authority in Troeltsch's solution is in revelation itself. An authority which is to achieve fullest usefulness must contain objective, fixed elements, but it must also be flexible enough to provide room for development and change. It must be both static and dynamic. Troeltsch's proposal provides for this combination. In the historic norms we have the sure and approved heritage of God's revelation to men in the past, through the Old Testament development, the culmination of that growth in the apprehension of God's nature and truth in Jesus Himself, and the continuing effect of His inspiration and the revealing

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<sup>1</sup>K. Barth, Dogmatik, p. 387.

work of the Spirit in the great succession of the saints down to our own time. Finally there is the provision for the apprehension of new revelation in our own day and generation, which the Christian theologian, by the witness of the Holy Spirit in his own heart, discerns, and gives to the Church for its present and future guidance.

Troeltsch has solved another problem which is a very difficult one in the present state of the question of authority. We can no longer naively suppose that revelation is before us in all parts of the Scripture, as our fathers did. Biblical criticism has destroyed that belief once for all. Nor can we imagine that any and every intuition which comes to our minds is a real revelation of God, as many of the mystics have done. Revelation, like the absolute values, does not meet us in pure and isolated form either in the Scriptures, or at the present time. It is intermingled with extraneous and foreign elements, that are as often as not quite opposed to the Spirit and nature of the Living God, Whom Jesus reveals. We must therefore select the true and valid content of revelation out of all this long development, and out of our present religious experience.

Troeltsch gives us guidance in making this selection. With a sure religious sense he points to the living bearers of revelation, who have seen the truth most fully, and whose vital message is normative for us today, as for all the periods of the history of the Church. By these great figures of the past we measure our own religious experience, and know whether it be of God, or the imagination of our own minds. For the new revelation in our time, we must trust to the consecrated work of modern leaders. The Church has usually been wise enough to

accept guidance from its greatest and best sons and daughters. God does not leave Himself without a witness in any generation, and in our own day, we can still trust to the religious insight of a Wilhelm Herrmann or a Studdert-Kennedy for normative Christian guidance on the new and peculiar problems that vex us. If this is dependence upon experts, at least they are trustworthy experts, who are closer to the Spirit of their Lord than the Church at large can hope to be.

Karl Barth criticises Troeltsch's proposed solution to the problem of authority as a return to the authority of the Church, -- a Catholic position disguised in the Protestant form of the philosophy of history.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this objection, Barth's own position is not nearly so far removed from that of Troeltsch as he supposes. He, too, puts the seat of authority in revelation, in the Word, witnessed by the Prophets and the Apostles;<sup>2</sup> though he is more careful than Troeltsch is to state that the latter are on a distinctly lower plane of authority. Barth, too, admits the figures of Calvin and the other Reformers to a position of authority, as "witnesses" as he expressly states.<sup>3</sup> Doubtless, his selection of authorities would differ from Troeltsch's, (for example by the omission of the detested Schleiermacher), but practically Barth acts upon Troeltsch's theory. Indeed, the Church as a whole has worked upon it, -- consciously in Catholicism, unconsciously in Protestantism, -- for most of its history. Why should we not admit the theory as our present solution to the problem of authority, and strengthen our position by availing ourselves of the

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Barth, Dogmatik, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Barth, Op. Cit., pp. 341 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

large modicum of authority that is still left us even when we do not possess a single authority that is infallible and inerrant taken by itself?

Science and religion differ from each other in many ways, both in method and in aim; but they do have one thing in common: the search for normative truth. In both fields, some normative truth is handed down from the past; but some must be sought and won in the present. History distinguishes the absolute and valid for us in the heritage which has come down to us; for the test of time reveals the gold from the dross in the combination of the absolutes and the relatives. Troeltsch's theory points the way to a high degree of certainty for us in our appropriation of the absolute and valid authority that the past can give us. For the present-day norms, we cannot expect absolute certainty, nor does Troeltsch promise it to us. His conception of present religious truth is that it is a growing body of approximations to reality, -- a conception of truth not unlike that of the scientists, and sponsored in the religious field by St. Paul, who said, "Not that I have already attained," (Phil. 3:12), and, "Now we see as in a mirror darkly," (I Cor. 13:12). For the present, we can have no certainty that we have rightly apprehended whatever new truth God is revealing to us except so far as it is in line with the revelation of the past, and the inner assurance of the witness of the Spirit that we have rightly discerned it.

We are in a time when we peculiarly need to seek guidance on our problems, and "purify ourselves for the task before us through a new vision of God," as Troeltsch in his Dante oration admonishes us.<sup>1</sup> We must seek the Absolutes in the relative in our own day, the Divine in the human. The method of Troeltsch can give us help in this search. In our quest of the Absolutes

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<sup>1</sup>Troeltsch, Der Berg der Läuterung, p. 17.

we must not, like Troeltsch himself, lose faith in our search, but must earnestly continue the struggle to see and to embody the Absolute ideal of Christianity more fully and perfectly in the new synthesis we are striving to make. Troeltsch failed to find the goal he sought, but often those who fail themselves point the way for others to succeed.



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