Translation of Franz Overbeck, 
How Christian is Our Present-Day Theology? (Chapter One)\(^1\)

This translation is the first to be published in English of any significant portion of Franz Overbeck's famous text, Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie. In Chapter I of the work—translated here, together with the forward to the original edition—Overbeck deals with the question of the general relationship between theology and Christianity.

Foreword to the First Edition

What has persuaded me to draw together some reflections on contemporary theology in this tract is, firstly, the publication of Paul de Lagarde's essay On the Relationship of the German State to Theology, Church and Religion; with its attack on our theological faculties—an essay which one would hope is more widely known than the number of critical reviews it has received to date would suggest—and, secondly, the publication of Strauss's Confession.\(^3\) These very recent writings have prompted

\(^1\) This is a translation of Franz Overbeck, Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie (1903; first ed. 1873), reprinted by the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1974, pages IX-XI (Foreword to the First Edition) and 21-42 (Chapter 1). Literally, the title reads 'On the Christian Character of Our Present-Day Theology.' In the first edition Overbeck had added the subtitle 'A Polemical and Eirenical Tract,' a subtitle omitted from the second edition. A more recent critical edition, based on the first edition of 1873 (Franz Overbeck, Werke und Nachlaß, vol. 1: Writings up to 1873, in collaboration with Marianne Stafflacher-Schaub, ed. Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Nikolaus Peter, Stuttgart/Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1994, 155-318), has been of great assistance in the preparation of this translation. Footnotes preceded by one asterisk (*) are based, with some minor changes, on the above-mentioned Metzler critical edition (henceforth abbreviated as WN). Those preceded by two asterisks (**) or material in square brackets stem from the present translator. All other footnotes are in Overbeck's own text. In the footnotes, Overbeck's text will be referred to as Chr. I or Chr. II, or simply as Chr., if the difference of edition is irrelevant. Overbeck's general custom of putting proper names in italics (Tertullian, etc.) has not been followed in this translation. More significantly, some of his lengthy sentences and paragraphs have been broken up in an effort to make his thought clearer. For a brief introduction to Overbeck, see my article 'Franz Overbeck: An Introduction,' in ITQ, 65 (2000), 307-318, [M.11].

\(^2\) Göttingen, 1873. Since then frequently reprinted, the last time by the author in his Deutsche Schriften, final complete edition, 2nd reprint (Göttingen, 1891), 33ff.

\(^3\) "Dr. Strauss, Der alte und der neue Glaube. Ein Bekennniss (Leipzig, 1872) [ET: The Old Faith and the New, 1873]. Overbeck's own copy (A 404) contains in the end-paper the remark: 'Nietzsche got to know it from my copy when he was preparing [Strauss's] execution and he used it in carrying it out.' Nietzsche attacked Strauss in the first of his Untimely
me at this juncture to publish my own views on modern theology; the views themselves are of course much older. Yet notwithstanding the need — which I have in fact felt for a long time — to state my views on the current theological parties, it would not have been difficult for me to keep them to myself for even longer. I had all kinds of very different reasons for holding back; above all I was afraid of jeopardising the proper treatment of a subject I consider important, by dealing with it prematurely. And I would not have overcome these hesitations, despite the strength of the reasons urging me to state in a more general sense how I stood vis-à-vis theology, had I not been compelled to do so by my official position as a teacher of theology. However, given that I felt compelled to write this tract, I don’t think need make any further apology for either having written it or for the way in which I have written it. Honesty surely has to be the first commandment for the author if he expects people to take seriously his motives for writing. At the same time, of course, I thought that — particularly with the practical suggestions at the end of my tract — I might now also perhaps be able to help others, especially young theologians, who are struggling with difficulties to which no teacher of theology or Church authority at the present time may shut their eyes.

The way in which I have distanced myself from the practical proposals of men who regard me as an academic colleague, and with whom I have, in some cases closer, in others more distant, personal relations, and whom I have to thank for being so well-disposed towards my own scholarly publications, only shows, I think, that in what I have written I have not been swayed by personal considerations.4 In writing this book, let me say further, it has not been in any sense my intention to turn my back on people with whom I have a genuine bond of common concerns. Indeed in everything I have said here my sincerest wish has been to help ensure that the unobtrusive role of critical thought in theology should not be endangered. Theology by its very nature makes this difficult enough as it is. However, it is my conviction that the role of critical thought in theology is at the moment under serious threat from certain tendencies within liberal theology, just at a time when the latter still has such enormous, unresolved questions to clarify across the whole spectrum of the history of Christianity. I hope, in any case, that the reader who is not entirely hostile to this tract will not quarrel with its right to be called, despite its occasionally strident tone, not only a polemical but also an etiretrical tract.1 I should, however, like to ask its opponents to remember above all that it is only concerned with the theoretical solution to the problem of the relationship between Christianity and the educated mind,2 and not with the thousands of practical compromises between them that we are faced with in daily life. Hence my judgements do not apply at all to lay people, but only to theologians, and chiefly to those theologians who stand at the lectern in universities, and write books. For I have no doubt that many wise pastors will judge our present-day theological disputes for what they are worth and not get involved in them, but attend rather to the practical demands of his profession. I should not, however, have presumed to deny to present-day theological parties the right to call their theology Christian, as I have done in what follows, were I to claim unreservedly the title ‘Christian’ for my own theology, and were I not convinced that there are more serious reasons than is generally recognised for all of us theologians to be tolerant towards each other.

Basel, 16 May 1873.

F. Overbeck.

II. My Short Tract of 1873

Chapter 1. Theology’s Fundamental Relationship to Christianity

Everywhere today the cry is heard loud and clear that not everything still called Christian really is so, and no one disputes the right at least to ask whether it is or not. Theology cannot just ignore this kind of question, no matter how uncomfortable it may find it. It certainly cannot regard the question as one it should not have to face, for theology does not live on an island cut off from the rest of the world. Indeed, if it is true that theologians are more directly called upon than anyone else to state clearly their position in regard to Christianity, it is also true that for no one else this

5. This had appeared on the title-page of the first edition [see above, note 1].
6. **‘Bildung’, a quintessentially German term, is not easily translatable. None of the usual translations (‘education’, ‘formation’, or ‘culture’) quite captures the full meaning.
7. **After this Foreword, Overbeck inserted a ‘Foreword to the Second Edition’, which is followed by the first of the three main sections into which the second edition is divided. This first main section of the second edition is entitled: ‘Introduction: How I came to write my short tract of 1873.’ In this Introduction, dated 1902, Overbeck outlines his earlier intellectual development up to the publication of Chr. in 1873. His reflections include an interpretation of his friendship with Friedrich Nietzsche. The other two main sections of the
question more pressing. Before attempting, however, to answer our question in relation to present-day theology, it will be helpful first to look back and ascertain whether theology has ever had a claim on the title 'Christian'.

An assertion often made nowadays is that Christianity has a 'bias towards rational thought'. In order to be able to judge this statement, let us first of all establish the sense in which the term 'Christianity' is here being used. In the form in which it has reached modern peoples, Christianity is by no means only a religion, it is also a culture. As Greco-Roman antiquity felt its end draw near, it became Christian and, on its deathbed, got the strength to make us its heirs. Hence modern peoples received from one and the same source both the Christian religion and the culture of antiquity. And they received them both as a single composite structure. From this perspective one can also say that it was through being emblazoned in Christianity that the culture of antiquity was preserved and handed down to us.

If this is what one means by Christianity, then the statement that it has a 'bias towards rational thought' makes sense, for Christianity, so understood, already incorporates rational thought. However, if one takes Christianity to be something according to its origins - it is, and what in the first instance it exclusively was, namely a religion, then nothing could be further from the truth, than the above statement. For, if Christianity is considered as a religion, then it is rather the case that Christianity, like every religion, has the most unambiguous antipathy towards rational knowledge. I say: 'like every religion', because the antagonism between faith and knowledge is permanent and absolutely irreconcilable. And so when in an otherwise instructive lecture that seeks to determine the boundaries between faith and knowledge - and does so with more seriousness and success than one normally expects from this kind of theological enterprise - it is nevertheless thought possible to point us to the religion,

8. "The German term is Wissenschaft, often translated 'science', 'Science', however, in English tends to be associated almost exclusively with the natural sciences, whereas in German Wissenschaft can refer to a sustained search for knowledge in any area, provided that what is being sought is what is usually called nowadays 'rational knowledge', i.e. critically controlled knowledge, or knowledge acquired by application of the scientific method (as reflected, famously, in the title of Descartes's best-known work: 'Discours de la méthode' ['my unadorned']). As J. W. Mostmeister and D. G. Overbeck have noted in their helpful preface to the revised translation of Hana-Gerhard Gaden, Truth and Method (New York, 1998), xviii: 'The German Wissenschaft suggests thorough, comprehensive, and systematic knowledge of something on a self-consciously rational basis.' (This preface also contains brief and pertinent comments on other difficult German terms that occur in the text here translated, such as Bikkung and aufbeuten.) In this translation, 'scholarship' has also been frequently used to translate Wissenschaft and related terms. Finally, on the question of Wissenschaft, some remarks by Eric Hobbs have been enlightening, and reveal, incidentally, how the use of the German term is now felt to be appropriate even in English. Speaking of one of the meanings of the term 'Europe' to emerge in the modern world, i.e. from roughly the seventeenth century onwards, he writes: 'Europe' consisted of a now possible community of scholars or intellectuals engaged, across geographical borders, languages, state boundaries, affiliations or personal faiths in the construction of a collective edifice, namely whose truth is not open to attack from knowledge', as the 'eternal' religion, 'which has nothing to fear from knowledge';) even this is still to claim too much. It is like claiming to have found the philosophers' stone. But if the religion in question has not in fact taken its adherents beyond the boundaries of this world, then it is an idle claim.

So long as this does not happen, then the sphere of religion - whatever its origins may be - is the world. From the material of the world, religion creates its own forms, and can exist only in these forms, but for that very reason religion cannot avoid being explained away by scholarship. As for a religion which could in no detectable way be perceived in the lives of its adherents in this world, such a religion could only be judged not really to exist. And in that case it would only have no more fear of scholarship, because it was no longer alive. In truth, however, religions cannot avoid leaving themselves open to rational attacks, and hence it is only whenever they were strong enough to keep the latter at bay that they had no fear of rational thought.

And so in the case just mentioned there is really no point in characterising - as our lecture does with particular reference to the Christian religion - the religio-ethical life, 'which has been revealed as a reconciling and redemptive form of life in human history through Jesus, and has found expression in those touched by his personality'. As something about which scholarship can never raise any doubts, since it 'in fact exists for all to see'. For as far as scholarship is concerned, what is at stake here, is not necessarily that the existence of a certain number of facts, summarised under the name 'Christianity', might be put in doubt. Not at all. Rather what is at stake, is how these facts are to be explained. And if it is conceded that scholarship has the ability even to call into question 'whether the expression of this new redemptive life originated historically in the way hitherto assumed', then it has been granted all it needs to annihilate Christianity as a religion over and over again. If what up to now has been taken as the accepted description of the Christian religious life is surrendered to the scrutiny of scholarship, then assuming that some kind of comprehensible

9. Herm. Schultz, 'Zur kirchlichen Fragen der Gegenwart' [On contemporary questions in the Church] (Frankfurt a. M., 1869), 9. The author gives a reply to the above observations in the Jahrbiicher für deutsche Theologie, 1874 (1874), i. 86; and Overbeck, cf. E. Vetscher, Reden und Verhandlungen der protestantische Theologie und Kirche', 17, 299-304. According to Schultz, 'the religious-ethical life, which has been revealed in the human race through Jesus as a reconciling and redemptive life and come to expression in those touched by his personality,' is 'something about which scholarship can never raise any doubts' (p. 9).

10. 'On the significance of forms' for Overbeck's thought, see especially M. Tetz, 'Zur Formgeschichte der Kirchengeschichte', Theologische Zeitschrift, 17 (1861), 413-431 (esp. 419-423, on Chr), and also, 'Altheistische Literaturgeschichte - Patrologie'.
the number of its adherents. But whenever rational thinking enters the fray, miracles will cause just as great a decrease in the number of that religion's adherents. The belief, for instance, that the skies would fall and the earth return to chaos as soon as anyone laid a hand on the image of Serapis in Alexandria reinforced the latter's religious standing for as long as this belief could be maintained. But when an ordinary Christian soldier, under Theodosius I, took his axe and smashed the image, with impunity, belief in the image's religious status was destroyed, and suddenly what until then had been shielded by an unquestioning and untestable faith and considered as miraculous, became something that could be fully explained and understood. Among Christians themselves, Jesus' miracles may well have served as proof in his favour; but against unbelievers he had to be defended for working miracles. For to unbelievers, miracles made Jesus seem like a magician ('goet'). To take another example: the miracle of transubstantiation, a foundation stone of faith that the Catholic Church hit upon in the Middle Ages, was at the same time a particularly fertile source of doubts against it. Indeed a religion's miracles harm it even in the eyes of another religion, as the example of the Christian Apologists shows; for the latter criticised the miracles of pagan mythology, remarking that such miracles could find credence only in the first and still utterly ignorant ages of mankind. This is, by the way, also an instructive example of just how thoroughly religions can lose the sense of what they have in common, when they begin to attack each other.

Christianity's fortunes and experiences are the very last thing, however, that could lead us to think of the relationship between faith and knowledge as being less hostile than we have been saying. To begin with, original Christianity no more expected to have a theology than it expected to have any other kind of history on this earth. Indeed, Christianity entered this world announcing its imminent end. Now, although Christianity did in fact produce a theology more quickly than any other religion, it would be futile to try to explain this by arguing from any of Christianity's own fundamental tenets to a special elective affinity between Christianity and rational thought. Rather, if we look at the question from a completely different angle, we can find without too much difficulty a fully satisfactory explanation of what occurred.

Christianity was a new religion which found itself from the outset in a world that had attained a level of culture so high that it could rightly be asked whether humanity today has again reached it. Even Tertullian, who was particularly loath to look at Christianity from this kind of perspec-

17. **Literally: something that had entered into the sphere of knowledge**.
18. E.g., by Origen, Contra Celsum, II, 49, 32.
19. Cf. H. Reuter, Geschichte der religiösen Auflösung im Mittelalter, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1875, 1877), I, 16f. (The material in square brackets in the text above was added by Overbeck.
ive, once stressed that what distinguished Christianity from the religious
cults of earlier times, was that it was a religion for civilised people. In
such a world, no matter how strong Christianity’s basic religious impulses
may have been, they still had the most powerful obstacles to contend
with. It was, then, only very natural that at a relatively early stage
Christianity should seek an accommodation with a world that was unable
to destroy, and look for support in quarters where previously it had seen only
danger and hostility. The struggle between faith and knowledge was
fought out then almost in the very cradle of Christianity. With astonish-
ing thoroughness, Gnosticism destroyed all the early Christian faith’s his-
torical presuppositions, turning it into a metaphysical system. But in so
doing, it stripped Christianity of its popular character and abolished it as
a religion. Notwithstanding this sobering experience, however, the early
Church — in the East, at any rate — was unable, even in the very short
term, to resist the desire for an accommodation with secular scholarship,
which at that time was completely dominated by the Alexandrians.
Instead of asserting all the more vigorously the complete autonomy of
the simple faith in redemption through Christ, the Church set up Christian
theology as the true Gnosis, alongside the Gnosis which had been sup-
pressed and was now declared to be false. In this ‘genuine Gnosis’, it is
ture, at least a certain amount of Christian tradition was placed under
the protection of faith and thus shielded from intellectual attacks. This was
achieved above all by means of the establishment of the Christian canon.
But at the same time, it should be noted, it was regarded as completely
appropriate to move beyond the standpoint of faith to that of knowledge.

The sure proof, however, of the opposition between rational knowledge
and the purely religious interests of faith is that scholarship, even in this
attenuated form, was only able to establish itself in the Church with a
kind of violence. And once established there, it only succeeded in holding
its own by enduring the most jealous supervision and constantly running
the risk of being accused of heresy whenever it attempted to operate
in any way freely. And in fact it did turn out to be the breeding-ground of
endless conflicts with the community’s faith. Even the beginning of
this process, as represented around the turn of the second and third centuries
by Clement of Alexandria and after him, by Origen, is entirely typical of
the whole development. That is to say, at this early stage things are cer-
tainly not as one would have expected them to be, if there really were an
intrinsic relationship between Christianity and rational thought (a view
we contest). For, with these earliest founders of Christian theology, it is
not as if rational thought made its first, modest appearance in the
Church, received a friendly welcome from faith, the older son of the
family, and then continued to grow alongside faith, going from strength to
strength. Rather, rational thought enjoyed in this period the highest level
of power it ever attained over faith in the entire history of the early


Church, and in the following generations always kept being pushed
further and further back, in fact, from the position it had initially
captured.

This just goes to show — and to show very clearly — that rational the-
ology was only forced on the Church by the earliest Alexandrians through
an act of violence. Clement justified his establishment of a science of
Christianity by appealing to the Greek philosophers, whose teachings he
deemed to be more or less on a par with the religious teachings of the Old
Testament. From the standpoint of early Christianity this was the most
daring innovation, which as such was endorsed by no one at that time,
with the exception of Gnostic teachers. And of course to the ecclesias-
tical epigones of the earliest Alexandrians, it could only appear as the worst
possible kind of heresy. And yet it was this evaluation of Greek philosop-
hy that Clement defended, even with scorn and derision, against the
simple Christian faithful, who were reluctant to have anything at all to
do with the traditions of Greek rationalism.

Origen, however, even in his own lifetime, came under strong attack
for his teachings, which profoundly shook traditional Christian beliefs. It
is true that his standing was fairly undisputed for most of the fourth
century, a period when the Church began consolidating its position within
the world of the Roman Empire, where it had just won acceptance, and
in so doing could not yet very well ignore Origen’s contribution to its the-
teological system, since he had created it. Yet not long afterwards, Origen
was counted among the worst heretics and anathematised over and over
again, even though his work was to mark indubitably the generally accepted
theology of the Church. So the early Church did indeed accept the fruits
of the intellectual boldness of its first theologians, but did not allow any-
thing remotely like as much, let alone more, leeway to any of their suc-
cessors, and had no qualms even about consigning the memory of its
earliest theologians to oblivion.

This is even true in Clement’s case, in the sense that information about
him more or less disappears in the Church after the time of Eusebius. In
fact, whether or not to permit a scholarly treatment of the articles of faith
was to remain for the Church a permanently unsettled question. Origen
himself, even though he in fact asserted fairly regularly and always very
emphatically his rights, as a man of learning, against simple believers
(οπλαστήρες simplices), nevertheless envied those very believers. For he concludes
the foreword to his polemic against Celsus the pagan with the remark that it
is of course best not to need any kind of refutation of Celsus at all; rather, it
is best to be an ordinary Christian believer who by the power of the spirit
within him can simply disregard Celsus’ objections to Christianity.

22. *Literally: ‘abandoning their persons’.
23. For a more differentiated view of Clement’s historical influence, cf. A. Méhat,
Theologische Realencyklopädie, 8, 101–113, esp. 110f.
If this was how the greatest scholar of the early Church spoke, then it cannot surprise us to see Athanasius, for example, beginning the instruction a friend requested on the Christian faith, with the remark that such instruction was superfluous, since the Christian religion bore witness to itself by living realities. And it was only to prevent Christianity from being despised and to prevent the faith of Christians from being exposed to pagan ridicule on the grounds that it lacked any rational foundation — in other words for a very worldly motive — that Athanasius finally agreed to comply with the request and to provide the desired instruction. And even if, bearing in mind his own attitude, it was only a cliché of course when Chrysostom, like so many others, once said that there is nothing worse than using human standards of thinking to measure things divine, nevertheless here too one feels that sense of unease about its theology which the early Church never lost.

There is no doubt that the sentence of condemnation that the early Church, with its ascetic ideals, passed on all worldly values, is also aimed at theology. This was particularly so in the East where the Church had allowed itself to become deeply involved with the culture of the pre-Christian world. As a result, the Church's ascetic ideals manifested themselves with particular intensity in the East. The West managed to put up a much longer and more stubborn resistance to the intrusion of all systematically scholarly theology, and finally accepted theology, especially in its Origenist form, only from the hands of a frivolous man of letters, Jerome, and even then still with great reluctance. Jerome did indeed become the founder of theological learning in the West, but, given his characteristic trait just mentioned, he was quite exceptionally well-suited to guarantee the superficiality or lack of seriousness of the learning he provided. And furthermore, the Christian community's passionate aversion to theology coincided with a time when the illusion that there could be a theology with a purely apologetical relationship to the Christian faith, was a possibility. Indeed it was probably only this illusion that could have enabled the Church to overcome its fear of theology. Both the existence of this illusion in the early Church and its real possibility at that time, are beyond doubt. For this illusion emerged at a period that witnessed the most rapid and indisputable decline of all branches of learning. And it became especially possible in the Middle Ages. This was the period when Christianity, combined with Greco-Roman learning, passed to the barbarian peoples whose migrations had brought them into contact with the Roman Empire, and when the Church had absolutely all branches of learning under her control. And yet even here the relationship between faith and knowledge that developed only remained peaceful so long as the power of the state, which was now subordinate to the Church, provided the means to ensure that it would.

If we confine ourselves now for the moment to the early Church and the Middle Ages, we can see it is obvious that in those periods rational thought, unlike Christian faith, was merely tolerated. Furthermore, Christianity's whole worldview intensifies in its case the general antipathy all religions feel towards rational knowledge. Hence, it is almost incomprehensible how anyone could ever have said that Christianity had a bias towards rational thought. The truth, of course, is that this way of talking is built-in to theology itself, and indeed owes its origin to theology's concern to delude itself about its own nature. For those who consider the question dispassionately, the facts of the matter are clear enough: Christianity only acquired a theology when it wanted to gain a foothold in a world it was supposed to have rejected. This thesis would still be correct, even if one were to see theology as deriving in the most unqualified way one could think of from Christianity's own religious concerns. Were one to say, for instance, that, in order to safeguard itself against corruption, Christianity had to develop a theology that, in looking back to its beginnings, would always keep the memory of its origins clear — even had this been the case, theology would still be seen as resulting from a weakness in Christianity which is inseparable from its existence in the world. But to imagine theology emerging in this way would be in any case quite false. For, right at the very beginning, i.e. in the earliest Christian theology of Alexandria, it is as clear as it can possibly be that theology was looking in a completely different direction, and that with its theology Christianity wanted to commend itself also to the wise of this world, and to win their approval. Regarded in this way, however,

25. *In Basel Overbeck began a translation of Athanasius' Oratio contra gentes (A 145), which broke off in chapter two.
26. Against the Pagans, ch. 1 ("Contra gentes, 1").
29. *On Overbeck's negative picture of Jerome, see his Ueber die Auffassung des Streits des Pandas mit Perin in Antiochen (Ged. 2, 11ff.) bei den Kirchenvateren (Basel, 1877), 42:70, esp. 49, and in more detail his "Aus dem Briefwechsel des Augustin mit Hieronymus", in Historische Zeitschrift, 42, Neue Folge 6, (1879), 222-259, passim, 233 and 253; both are reprinted in WN, vol. 2.

30. On the obstacles which rational thought finds blocking its path thus again in this period when it tries to get into the Church, Augustine's prologue to his *Treatise: On Christian learning ([Wissenschaft] is also very instructive for this translation of the Augustinian original *De doctrina christiana, see my Zur Geschichte des Kanons, Chemnitz — now Tübingen and Leipzig — 1880, 47). Augustine has to make apologies for attempting to give rational instruction about the interpretation of Scripture, and for not leaving the understanding of Scripture to God's inspiration of each individual.
32. *In the first edition this phrase reads: 'every religion's natural antipathy'.
33. *" Cf. Mt. 11:25.
theology was nothing other than an aspect of the secularisation of Christianity. It was a luxury Christianity indulged in, but as with every luxury, it has to be paid for.

If the confusions of the early and medieval Church do not enlighten us on just how expensive this particular luxury is, then our eyes should certainly be opened by the evidence of modern times which have seen the total collapse of all those illusions about rational thought, mentioned already, that in earlier times were still possible. Scholarship has now emancipated itself entirely from the Church. It develops its own methods of argumentation, applying them without any regard for aims that tie outside the sphere of scholarship. In practice, not a single one of its disciplines defers to the needs of Christianity. All are completely unconcerned about any possible conflicts with traditional Christian ideas, and least of all are they deterred by the actual accumulation of such conflicts. Now, since theology, in so far as it is a scholarly discipline, has no epistemological principles of its own, but can only get them from, if it is in no position to dictate them to, other disciplines, not even the delusion that theology is 'Christian scholarship' can be entertained any longer.

For, if it is now clear to everyone that there simply is no such thing as 'Christian scholarship', then it also follows that theology cannot continue to think of itself as 'Christian scholarship'. And in saying that, it is of no significance whatsoever that theology's aim is not purely scholarly. The fact that theology contains a scholarly element at all is what counts. For the nature of the scholarly element in theology is determined not by theology's own aim, but by what 'scholarship' means in the world at large. But now, if Christianity has basically always been an intellectual problem for theology, and never more so than today, then it is surely no longer possible to ignore that what this means is that theology makes Christianity as a religion problematic, i.e. it calls its very status as a religion into question. And this is in fact true of every kind of theology, whatever its results may be. For even apologetical theology, assuming its conclusions were honestly reached, would still be every bit as dangerous for Christianity as critical theology, since even apologetical theology, were it to prove that Christianity could be known to be true, would destroy it as a religion.

There is nothing of course that theology continues more stubbornly to deny than this fact, but it can only be doubted by those whose false theological idealism, which thinks that religion can be indifferent to its own characteristic forms and expressions, we have already rejected. Meanwhile, however, modern theology itself is utterly incapable of producing anything even remotely resembling a religion. Now a religion need not be particularly concerned about the myths it has created, so long as its myth-forming power remains a living force, i.e. so long as the miraculous forces that produced its basic myth continue to live on within it. It is no secret that in the Christian world these forces have long since been defunct. In fact they have been extinct for as long as there has been a Christian theology. And as the Christian myth had at an even earlier stage already been turned into a fixed, rigid tradition, we find the historical interpretation of that myth, especially of the canonical documents in which it was expressed, being practised quite early on in the Christian community.

But the superstition that a sacred document's religious authority could be preserved by historical interpretation alone had not yet occurred to the early Church, which had found in the allegorical interpretation of Scripture a kind of substitute for the myth that was itself no longer alive. Our present-day theology, on the other hand, not only has lost contact completely with every interpretation of Christian religious texts apart from the historical, but – and this is almost incomprehensible – it has actually deluded itself into thinking that it can establish the truth of Christianity again historically. And yet, were this project to succeed, it would at most produce a religion for scholars, that is to say, nothing that could seriously be likened to a real religion, something that would have about as much existential truth as the 'cerebral religion' which nowadays has a hold on many people's minds and – we are even told – is supposed to have 'outsourced the religion of faith', in the case 'of all who are really educated and discerning'.

Although theology believes it serves religion, in essence it is by nature alien to religion. Nothing in fact reveals this more clearly than the overestimation of historical study for theology's positive aims, which is currently so widespread. And similarly, nothing can show more clearly how, for theology, times have changed. Theology has lost its position of intellectual dominance and has become subordinate to scholarship. In fact theology is now of even less significance than a handmaid (ancilla), in the sense that it could possibly fulfil an ancillary role, but its services are just not required.

It is, of course, also what we have here referred to as the underestimation of the significance of religion's mythical forms, and overestimation of the significance of its historical foundations, that permits theology to interpret the relationship between faith and knowledge so superficially as to disguise its own relationship to religion, and to declare, for instance, rather too blithely, that no scientific discovery can in any way affect the Christian faith. Such an assertion is contradicted daily by the facts.

34. *Inverted commas added for clarity.
35. "In the margin of his own copy of Chr"… Overbeck wrote with reference to 'modern theology': 'That's what it later called itself at the actual height of its self-importance' (quoted in the Antiquarische Bibliothek Basel, 6 June 1966, 29).

HOW CHRISTIAN IS OUR PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION?

In the case of Christian, there is a clear and consistent thought process that leads to the conclusion that Christian education is the only way to achieve a true education. This conclusion is based on the belief that education should be centered on the development of character and moral principles, which are essential components of a Christian education.

The importance of Christian education is evident in the way it is taught. The curriculum is designed to instill a strong moral foundation in students, and this is achieved through a combination of teaching, discussion, and personal example. The goal is to help students develop a strong sense of right and wrong, and to equip them with the tools they need to make good decisions in life.

Christian education is also characterized by a strong emphasis on community. Students are encouraged to work together, to support one another, and to help those in need. This sense of community is an integral part of the Christian education experience, and it helps to create a strong sense of belonging and purpose.

In conclusion, Christian education is a powerful tool for shaping the minds and lives of young people. It provides a clear and consistent framework for teaching, and it is designed to help students develop the skills and values they need to succeed in life. It is an essential part of any education system, and it is a testament to the importance of character and moral principles in shaping the future of our society.
this thesis, while in the modern period it proves it, though not so much by the devastation science has caused in the area of Christian faith, as by the sterility of theology's own attempt, undertaken in response, to reconstruct the Christian religion by means of pure scholarship. One should bear in mind, therefore, that the expression 'Christian theology' refers only to the practical scholarly discipline that deals with the task of all theology, which is to draw lines of demarcation between secular culture and religion, and, with particular reference to Christianity, to place each in relation to the other. However, the actual scholarly character of Christian theology can have no direct claim on the title 'Christian'. The more the vindication of Christianity as a religion is considered to be a matter of general human concern, the more it will involve all branches of learning, as was the case in days gone by, or none at all, as is the case at the present time, when even for theology the pretence of doing so can no longer be sustained.

But if we have established in general terms that theology \textit{per se} contains an irreligious element, and hence also that Christian theology contains an unchristian element, then we are ideally placed to grasp what we now want to observe in today's main theological parties: namely, that - of all people - it is theologians who can turn Christianity into something which - whatever else it may be - is no longer Christianity.