

ity, and to consider this alone. Thus we have to do, not with the conceptions of Christ—who was the Founder of the community, but not of it—but with the representations of the consciousness of the community corresponding to and aroused by his sayings. The Revelation made in the historical person of Christ is the sole source in Theology, but “as regards the apprehension of revelation, this must be from the standpoint of the community, not from that of the Revealer himself. Christ, as Founder of the Kingdom of God, stands over against the community, and theology must reflect the contents of Revelation as it appears from their standpoint, not from his.” One of the initial statements of Ritschl’s third or systematic volume, is this: “The faith of the community that it stands to God in a relation essentially conditioned by forgiveness of sins is the immediate object of theological knowledge.” Theology, that is, has to do, not with God, but only with the effects of the divine working within us, or, more exactly, with the divine working as set forth by its effects. “Outside of the self-activity in which we appropriate the workings of God,” he declares, “we have no understanding of religious truths.”

But the theologian is to seek to understand not the Christian community as it is, but as it ought to be. “Theology is not the picturing of a factual condition of piety in the existing Church, but the unfolding of the norm of all piety in the Christian community. What, then, is this ideal apprehension of the workings of God in the believer? It is found in the original consciousness of the Christian community. There is a wide difference between the conception of Christ’s revelation to-day—the result of centuries of abnormal growth—and the conception of it in the Apostolic consciousness. We must get back to the historic Christ.

Here Ritschl employs his own historical canon that a society may be best understood by its original documents. This is the initial point of his second volume, the Biblical substructure of his theory of “Justification and Reconciliation.” He therefore makes the New Testament the source of infor-