has begun with the nature and state of man, a second with the being and character of God, a third with the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and a fourth has followed the order of the Divine dispensations. Yet there need be no doubt that there is such an order, one in which every dogma is exactly where it ought to be. This order, it may also be safely affirmed, can only be one of advance from the simpler to the more complex. An order in which each dogma has before it only its natural antecedents, and after it only its natural consequents, must be one of con­tinuously increasing complexity. The spirit of order and of system cannot rest, however, in the series. It must classify as well as connect the doctrines. This also may be accomplished in various ways, and even when there is general agreement as to what are the natural groups, there may be considerable difference of opinion as to their delim­itation. But the most perfect distribution by classifica­tion, if unsupplemented, must be unsatisfactory. A still higher kind of unity has to be attained. It is that of the only unity which is truly organic. It is that of co-ordina­tion and correlation through a single central principle. An intellectual system, a system of science or doctrine, can only have this unity, and be in consequence a true system, when all its particular truths and various departments or divisions of truth are connected with one another and combined into a whole by reference to a common and central truth. The necessity of conforming to this condi­tion of systematizing has now begun to be felt among theologians, and hence in several modern systems of Christian dogmatics the doctrines are not merely distri­buted into groups, but an attempt is also made to find a centre for the whole system in a single pervasive idea. Such a centre Rothe, for example, finds in the religious consciousness, a consciousness of sin and of grace ; Kahnis in the doctrine of the Trinity; and Thomasius and H. B. Smith in Christ Himself, His person and work. So far as Christian theology is concerned, the last of these views is doubtless correct. Christian theology, like Christianity itself, must be Christocentric. All its doctrines either directly and immediately relate to Christ’s manifestation of God and redemption of man, or are the antecedents and consequents of those which do. To Christ the entire system owes its distinctive character. For general theo­logy, on the other hand, the central and vital idea can be no other than that of religion itself. It must obviously be one derived from the domain of the science itself, and indeed from the essential nature of the object of the science. As it would be an error to seek the principles of biology elsewhere than in “life,” or of psychology else­where than in “ mind,” so must it be to seek the principles of theology elsewhere than in “ religion.” Theology is the science of religion, and in the true idea of religion should be found the central and constitutive principle of the general system of theology. That it can be found therein will appear as we proceed.

Must the work of method in theology end, however, even with the formation of a system which answers to the requirements just indicated*?* Is there no still higher procedure or application of theological method legitimate ? This is to ask if there be any place for a speculative method in theology, aud if speculative theology rest on any solid basis.

The history of theology might, perhaps, suffice of itself to show, on the one hand, that speculation has a large and legitimate place in the sphere of theology, and, on the other hand, that its place is one the limits of which are difficult to fix or keep within. Christian theology was initiated by Gnostic speculation, grandly reasonable in aiming at the exhibition of Christianity as the absolute truth and absolute religion, but otherwise wildly extra­vagant. An Origen and an Augustine owed largely to speculativeness both their successes and their failures. The defects of scholasticism were due more to misdirection of the reflective understanding than of the speculative reason, and it was especially the speculative and the mystic divines of the Middle Age who opened up the way to modern thought and modern theology. Men like Nicholas of Cusa, Bruno. Telesio, and Campanella, looking from the heights of speculation, saw some aspects of religious truth which the Reformers, standing on lower if safer and less cloudy ground, overlooked. A Descartes and a Spinoza, into whatever errors they may have fallen, certainly did much, and in a directly speculative manner, to enlarge and advance the philosophy of religion. Kant supposed that, by his critical researches into the nature and limits of knowledge, he had made an end of speculative theology and done what would effectually deter reason from specu­lative adventures. It soon became apparent that his expectations had been doomed to disappointment, that in reality he had excited speculative reason to extraordinary activity and even audacity, and inaugurated an era of theology far more speculative than any which had preceded it. The great speculative movement in philosophy headed by Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Baader, Krause, and others passed on immediately into the sphere of theology, its leaders themselves proceeding to apply their principles and methods to the explanation of the doctrines and phases of religion. Theologians by profession soon followed in their footsteps. Daub and Marheinecke constructed systems of Protestant dogmatics by means of Hegel’s dialectic. Strauss, Baur, and their followers reached by the same method negative and antichristian results, bringing out the contradictions between the doctrines of the church and the speculative truths to which it was held that they should give place. Many theological systems of an almost exclusively speculative character have since appeared in Germany. Weisse’s *Philosophische Dogmatik* and Rothe’s *Theologische Ethik* are good typical instances. And, while not so predominant, the speculative use of reason is yet conspicuous in the treatises on Christian dogmatics of Dorner, Martensen, Schöberlein, Hofmann, Liebner, Biedermann, and others. In the department of philo­sophy of religion a speculative procedure is not less fre­quently followed, either as alone appropriate or as a necessary supplement to the genetic and historic method. Rosmini, Gioberti, and Mamiani inaugurated in Italy a speculative theology second only to that of Germany. Contemporary French theological literature can boast of at least one work displaying real speculative power,—the *Philosophie de la Liberté* of Μ. Secrétan. In America Hickok, Bushnell, and Mulford may be named as having shown confidence in the competency of speculative reason in the spiritual sphere. In Britain Principal Caird has argued in favour of a speculative procedure in theology with rare skill in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion.* On the whole, however, both in America and Britain, the speculative method has received little recogni­tion from theologians. But this, of course, may be held to be partly cause and partly effect of the want of life and originality, of thoroughness and truthfulness, of ordinary American and British systematic theology.

Is there, then, room and need in theology for the speculative method? The answer must depend on what is meant by speculative method. There are kinds of so- called speculation which are plainly illegitimate and in­applicable. Thus, some have represented speculative theo­logy as part of a philosophy of which the whole system is deduced in a purely and strictly logical manner from an *a priori* principle, idea, or datum. On this view the specu­lative thinker somehow apprehends an absolute first of