

P.O. Box 215  
Rollinsville, CO 80474-0215  
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Professor Gordon E. Michalson, Jr.  
Division of Humanities  
New College  
University of South Florida  
5700 N. Tamiami Trail  
Sarasota, FL 34243-2197

Dear Mike:

I regret that I've been delayed as long as I have in redeeming my promise to write you further about your *Kant and the Problem of God*. But as it turned out, making good on my commitment became a bigger project than I anticipated, since it proved to require my re-reading—yet again!—Kant's *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*. Having now finally been able to do this, and having also re-read much of your book (especially Chs. 1, 5, and 6) in the light of it, I'm able, at last, to give you my reactions.

I could wish, as I imagine you may, that they were more positive than they are. For although there are things in both the form and the contents of your book that I appreciate and even admire as much as other things you've written, I'm also put off by much of it, especially its thesis and the way you go about trying to establish it. In fact, unlike anything else of yours that I recall reading, it has made me wonder at points whether it isn't less an exercise in critical reflection, and thus in building a reasoned case for positions that are worth taking, interpretatively and critico-constructively, than it is an example of rationalization, in the sense of giving reasons for positions already taken independently of the critical interpretation and validation required to support them. In any case, I have not found that the interpretations either of Kant or of my own work that underlie your expressed or implied criticisms of them are sufficiently supported by relevant evidence and argument to make me take your points as well-founded.

I realize, naturally, that I may have failed to understand or fully appreciate a reasoned case that you actually make for your positions. After all, my preunderstanding of Kant has all along been rather different from yours—as you yourself observe in the Preface (p. x)—and, being, in my own revisionary way, what you call a "liberal mediating theologian," I definitely have my own very different views on the underlying systematic and philosophical theological issues and the relevant possibilities for constructively dealing with them in our situation today. But, then, if you think that I have missed or not sufficiently felt the weight of your argument, I can only ask that you let me know by providing a bill of particulars as to

where and why I've misunderstood you or underestimated the strength of your case, so that I can reconsider it and, where necessary, learn from my mistakes.

I should also say that it is not my intention here to do anything like full justice either to your book or to my reactions to it in the more particular comments that follow. To do anything like that would require indefinitely more time and energy than I am able to give to it, even if, as I strongly suspect, nothing other than an extended face-to-face conversation would be likely to serve the purpose, anyhow. In any case, I must be content to say enough simply to detail and support the more general assessment implied by what I've already said.

I want to make two main comments. The first is on your interpretation of my work as it emerges most directly in Ch. 6.

You'll agree, I think, that it is my work, more than any other, except, possibly, David Tracy's, that you portray in your book as a contemporary representation of "the mediating tradition." But, then, you'll presumably also agree that you give your readers every reason to assume that my work is a typical instance of the ideal type you construct and label "liberal mediating theology." The difficulty, as I must view it, however, is that the understanding and practice of theology actually documented by my writings simply do not conform to your ideal type, but, on the contrary, require constructing a significantly different typology of types of Christian theology. Therefore, so far as I am concerned, the interpretation of my theology that you entitle your readers to assume in appropriating your expressed or implied criticisms of it is a function of your typology, not of a careful analysis and interpretation of what I myself have, in fact, said and meant.

The significant difference, as I see it, between your presupposed (or implied) typology and mine is that the two poles that generate each of them are indicated, in your case, by such terms as "Christian faith" or "religious conviction," on the one side, and "the surrounding culture" or "the intellectual standards of the day," on the other (pp. 1, 134), whereas, in my case, the corresponding indicative terms are most commonly "appropriateness" and "credibility," understood as referring, in the first instance, to the two claims involved in the claim of Christian witness itself to be adequate to its content, and then, secondly and derivatively, to the two criteria of adequacy proper to systematic theology's critical validation of these claims. Thus, in your terms, a "liberal mediating theology" is characterized as concerned, above all, with establishing continuity between Christian faith and the prevailing culture and its standards, whereas my theology, as I've consistently characterized it in my terms, is most concerned with critically reflecting on both of the claims expressed or implied in bearing Christian witness itself—viz., the claim to be appropriate to Jesus Christ as attested by

the apostolic witness of scripture and tradition; and the claim to be credible to human existence as disclosed by common experience and reason.

In my view, the failures of much so-called liberal theology, past and present, are due to confusing these two very different ways of understanding and practicing Christian systematic theology. Chief among these failures, most certainly, is uncritically accepting the surrounding culture or the current intellectual standards as valid both in interpreting the meaning of Christian witness and in validating its claims to validity. But what I learned, above all, from Rudolf Bultmann is to avoid this confusion by, among other things, clearly and consistently recognizing that, as much as the surrounding culture and its standards must indeed be reckoned with in defining the *problem* of Christian theology, they can never be rightly looked to to provide the warrants for its *solution*, which can be found, in the nature of the case, not in any culture and its standards, but only in the Christian witness, on the one hand, and in human existence, on the other—and that simply because of the claims made or implied by Christian witness itself.

Unless I am mistaken, you, for your part, still have to take account of all the indications in my writings, expressed and implied, of this very different understanding and practice of theology. But this is not the place to inventory these indications, much less to address the underlying systematic and philosophical theological issues—not only between the two of us, but also between me and the likes of the "postliberal" theologians whom you also discuss in your conclusion and whose criticisms of my work, like yours, have usually displayed not a little "inaccurate firing."