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ALBRECHT RITSCHL AND HIS DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

I. RITSCHL THE RATIONALIST

The historical source from which the main streams of Perfectionist doctrine that have invaded modern Protestanism take their origin, is the teaching of John Wesley. But John Wesley did not first introduce Perfectionism into Protestantism, nor can all the Perfectionist tendencies which have shown themselves in Protestantism since his day be traced to him. Such tendencies appear constantly along the courses of two fundamental streams of thought. Wherever Mysticism intrudes, it carries a tendency to Perfectionism with it. On Mystical ground—as for example among the Quakers—a Perfectionism has been developed to which that taught by Wesley shows such similarity, even in details and modes of expression, that a mistaken attempt has been made to discover an immediate genetic connection between them. Wherever again men lapse into an essentially Pelagian mode of thinking concerning the endowments of human nature and the conditions of human action, a Perfectionism similar to that taught by Pelagius himself tends to repeat itself. That is to say, history verifies the correlation of Perfectionism and Libertarianism, and wherever Libertarianism rules the thoughts of men, Perfectionism persistently makes its appearance. It is to this stream of influence that Wesleyan Perfectionism owes its own origin. Its roots are set historically in the Semi-Pelagian Perfectionism of the Dutch Remonstrants, although its rise was not unaffected by influences of a very similar character and ultimate source which came to it through the channels of Anglo-Catholicism. Its particular differentiation is de-

termined by the supernaturalization which it shares with the whole body of modifications introduced by Wesley into his fundamental Arminianism, from which Wesleyanism, in distinction from the underlying Remonstrantism, has acquired its Evangelical character.

The Perfectionist teaching of Ritschl presents a highly individual example of a Pelagianizing Perfectionism quite independent of all either Mystical or Wesleyan influences. Mysticism, with all its works, Ritschl heartily hated; Wesleyanism he, with equal cordiality, despised. But he was a Libertarian of the Kantian variety; and, going here beyond Kant—who would allow the existence of a "radical evil" in men—he would not hear of any such thing as a native bias to sin. On the contrary, every man, according to him, comes into the world with a bias to good, and with the formation of his developed moral character in his own hands. No doubt he conceived that, in the circumstances in which man lives, the moral character which every man forms for himself is inevitably an evil one. Human society therefore, in point of fact, constitutes with Ritschl too, in its phenomenal existence, a "mass of corruption"; and reacts as such on each individual as he enters it, infecting him by a sort of "social inheritance" with its evil. No actual individual thus escapes a bias to evil. But this bias to evil, as it is the product of his own free activity, is capable of being counteracted by the same power which created it. All that is needed is the formation, under a sufficiently strong inducement, of a dominating motive in the opposite direction. Acting freely under such an inducement, the individual is capable at all times (except possibly when finally hardened) of reversing his activities, revolutionizing his character, and thus, in conjunction with others similarly moved (under the influence of whom, indeed, it is that he acts) building up, in opposition to the kingdom of sin, a Kingdom of God, in which he may be "perfect."

For "substance of doctrine," this is just the ordinary Libertarian Perfectionism. But Ritschl is nothing if not

original; and the peculiarities of his general system of teaching give to his Libertarian Perfectionism a specific form which presents many points of interest.

Already in his doctrine of the will Ritschl goes his own way. We have spoken of him as a Libertarian of the Kantian variety. But he does not follow Kant without dissidence. In his view of the mechanism of willing, he was as clear a determinist as Kant himself. He speaks without hesitation of "determinants" of the will and enumerates them not only as "purposes" and intentions" but also as "dispositions," and "impulses" which he does not scruple to call "coërcive," (*nötigend*).[1] His son and biographer does not hesitate to use the strongest language in describing the quality of his determinism, outlining it in such crisp sentences as these:[2] "In the particular act of the will there is always included a necessitation (*Nöthigung*) by the motive. In case of conflict the determination follows the stronger motive. So far, every action (*Handlung*) is necessary (*nothwendig*)." Despite this clear determinism, however, Ritschl, like Kant, asserts also that the will has power to determine itself, and actually does determine itself, not only apart from but in opposition to its "determinants." It is precisely in this power that, in his view, the distinction of the human spirit consists, by which it is separated from mere nature.[3] It is the primary element therefore in that *Selbstgefühl* of which he talks so much, and by which he means not abstract self-consciousness but concrete self-esteem—our sense of our value as a self. "In this self-consciousness, and the estimate we place on self in the exalted moments of our moral willing," he tells us,[4] "we experience the might of our self-determination to the good, regardless of every obstacle whether internal or external." When this almighty self-determination impinges on those coërcive de-

[1] *Justification and Reconciliation,* vol. III. E. T. pp. 251. 292. This work will be cited hereafter simply by pages.

[2] *Albrecht Ritschl's Leben.* I. p. 350.

[3] So he frequently says; e.g. p. 513.

[4] P. 283.

terminants, one would think something would be likely to happen.

Kant sought to escape the contradiction obvious here by removing this undetermined "freedom" into the "intelligible and non-empirical" region. Ritschl will have nothing to do with this evasion. He boldly declares "freedom" to be as much a matter of experience as the determination athwart of which it runs. "Freedom," he says,[5] "is not merely an idea, in accordance with which we pass judgment on our conduct, though this conduct be according to experience not free but necessitated in every act; but freedom is itself experience." Kant's doctrine, he affirms, is "theoretically unsatisfactory," because "it leaves unresolved the contradiction between the subjective claim to freedom, and the objective matter of fact of the causal nexus of action." Each action is no doubt motived, and is the necessary issue of its motive, and this naturally creates an impression that "freedom" is an illusion. "Yet in varying measures those actions are free, whose motive is a conception of a universal end, which calls a halt to the impulse which is active at the moment." It is in this formation of a universal end, acting thus as a controlling power over our impulses and inclinations, that Ritschl sees "freedom." Kant's doctrine now, he further affirms, "left no possibility open of action's directing itself according to the law produced by freedom," and thus was not only "theoretically unsatisfactory" but "practically useless." It proclaimed a universal empirical determinism. In opposition to this Ritschl asserts an experienced power of the will "to direct itself to the universal moral ultimate end."

It must be admitted that he merely asserts this power. How, under the determination of ingrained, if not innate, sinful dispositions it can possess it, is left in complete obscurity. It may be allowed that if the will, acting under the sway of sinful dispositions, is nevertheless capable of directing itself "at will," to "the all-embracing end of the King-

[5] P. 514.

dom of heaven," which includes in itself the motive of universal love, and develops out of itself the system of dispositions which involve the moral law—why, then, these dispositions thus formed might act as motives to action, just as the sinful dispositions already holding the field do, and in conflict with them might conceivably overcome them, or might blend with them, as exciting causes, of varying goodness or badness, of action. But how the sinful will can direct itself to its contrary as an end, despite the existing impulses to evil action "determining it at every step," and form these new dispositions which are to lay a restraining hand on those old dipositions, remains a mystery. It looks as if we were asked to believe that the will which is at every step determined by dispositions has in this instance first to create the dispositions by which it is determined, in opposition to the dispositions by which it is at every step determined. This appears to leave something to be desired as an explanation of how a possibility is "left open of action's guiding itself by the law produced by freedom." We do not wonder that Otto Pfleiderer speaks contemptuously of Ritschl's "abstract rationalistic notion of the moral will," and laughs at his representation of the human spirit "brooding as an abstract, natureless freedom over the chaos of the natural feelings and appetites,—with reference to which, to be sure, it remains incomprehensible how it manages to rule over and to order them."[6]

Though all explanation of the possibility of the exercise of such an "independent power" of the will fails, however, the assertion of its reality is persistent. It is to Ritschl the condition of responsibility and the essence of the dignity of spiritual existence. Arguing against the doctrine of "original sin,"[7] he declares that all ascription to ourselves of responsibility for evil,—whether with respect to acts or to habits, or to propensity—depends on our recognition in our several actions of the proof-mark of "the independence of

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[6] *Die Ritschl'sche Theologie,* 1891. pp. 68, 79.

[7] P. 337.

the will." This, now, he asserts, forbids looking on "the individual action as the dependent accident of a necessary power of inborn propensity." The scope of this is to assert that we cannot hold ourselves responsible for an inborn disposition which is evil, or for anything that issues from it. We are responsible only for acts of "independent" willing: not then for what we are but only for what we do; or for what we are only so far as it is the result of what we do. And by these acts of "independent willing" for which and for the results of which alone we are responsible, he means very expressly empirical acts of independent willing alone. Kant, he tells us, supposed man to be afflicted with "radical evil": if we make such an assumption, we cannot ascribe responsibility to ourselves for it "except on the presupposition that it is the result of the empirical determination of the will." "For," he adds, giving the reason, "it can be derived neither from the natural origin of every man, nor from a so called 'intelligible act of freedom' "—coupling thus Paul and Kant in a common condemnation. So far does Ritschl press this assertion of the "independence" of the will, that, applying it to God, he denies that God's will is the expression of His nature rather than, say, of His "free" purpose. To say that God wills the good because it is good—seeing that He is good in His own nature—is, he argues, to say that "God as will is subject to this righteousness as to a necessity of nature."[8] "The will," he affrms,[9] "to which its direction is given by the presupposed substantive righteousness, is not the self-determination which is becoming to God." We could scarcely have a stronger declaration that a will determined by dispositions is no will; that the only will worthy of the name determines itself. It would be unworthy of God to act otherwise than "freely" in this sense. We wonder what has become of Ritschl's psychological determinism.

We wonder also whence we are to obtain assurance of

[8] P. 248.
[9] P. 283.

the existence of this power of "free" willing. If not from consciousness, then surely from nowhere. But Ritschl discredits the witness of consciousness in the matter. He admits that, although the particular impulses operate coërcively (*nötigend*), that does not prevent this, their coërcive operation "assuming in the soul the form of conscious self-determination." He is forced therefore to allow that "conscious self-determination cannot alone be the exhaustive expression of freedom."[10] What is there to supplement it? Ritschl seems to suggest nothing but the assumed requirement of such "freedom" of action as he describes in order to ground responsibility, and the dignity which it confers on spirit as distinguished from "nature," the sphere of necessary causation. Whether on these grounds or others, however, he asserts its existence; and that with such vigor that, as we have seen, he pushes his psychological determinism in the mechanism of willing completely out of sight, and stands forth as fully fledged a Libertarian as Kant, or even as Pelagius himself.

We have already had occasion to note that Ritschl joins in a common condemnation Paul's doctrine of original sin and Kant's doctrine of radical evil. He will not have men come into the world with any entail of sin from any source. But he is not satisfied with Pelagius' idea of a will poised in indifference. "We cannot at all conceive," he says,[11] "of a will without definite direction to an end." As then he will not have men come into the world with a bias to evil, he is compelled to teach that they have a bias to good. This he does quite explicitly. All attempts to educate children, he says,"[12] "rest on the presupposition that there exists in them a general, yet still indefinite, inclination to good,"—although he adds that this inclination is without the guidance of comprehensive insight into the good and has not yet been tested in the particular relationships of life. "This," he says, making his meaning quite unmistakable, "is the reverse of the

[10] P. 292.
[11] P. 283.
[12] P. 337.

inclination of the will of the child to evil and of its necessitating power, which is maintained in the doctrine of original sin."

By this proclamation of the original goodness of children, Ritschl escapes, however, some only, not all, of his difficulties. Among his reasons for rejecting the doctrine of original sin is this one—that it assumes that there is a will previous to its individual acts.[13] Is not the same assumption involved in the doctrine of original goodness? If we are to escape this assumption it would seem that we must revert to Pelagius' absurdity of an abstract will with no determination at all; and how little can be made of that we have only to watch F. A. B. Nitzsch struggling with it to learn.[14] Then, there are the facts to be faced. Do infants, in point of fact, come into the world good? "Assuredly," remarks Pfleiderer,[15] "our experience with children," gives us no justification for such an affirmation: "unless we are very blind parents indeed, we discover in them, from their tenderest years onward, that self-will which is in very fact the root and kernel of all evil." This remark, which is part of a powerful defence of the reality of original sin in the narrow sense of a native impulse to evil, has made a little amusing history, which may not be without its instructive side. Henri Schoen[16] repeats it with an added French vivacity. Ritschl, says he, has replaced the profound truth "of the innate egoism of the infant with the natural tendency to the good." "Such a theory," he adds, "does great honor to the children which Ritschl has seen grow up around him; we need to confess that those we have known do not confirm it." Constantin Kügelgen[17] feels it necessary to go out of his way—for he himself agrees with the substance of it—to "brand Schoen's remark, which is more witty than scientific, that such a theory does great honor to

[13] Pfleiderer, *Development of Theology*, etc., 1890, p. 187.
[14] *Lehrbuch der evangelischen Dogmatik*, 1892; pp. 320, 325.
[15] *Die Ritschl'sche Theologie*, 1891. p. 66.
[16] *Les Origines Historiques de la Theologie de Ritschl*, 1893, p. 151.
[17] *Grundriss des Ritschlschen Dogmatik*, 1903. p. 34.

Ritschl's children, as of a tone not suitable to a learned investigation." That is as it may be; but we learn meanwhile, somewhat to our surprise, that nobody seems willing to take up with Ritschl's doctrine of the goodness of infancy. Pfleiderer, Nitzsch, Schoen, von Kügelgen, Wendland,[18] men of very varied theological attitudes, all with one voice repel it. We say we learn this with some surprise, for the goodness of childhood has not only long held the place of a fundamental dogma among the sentimentalists, but has invaded the formal teaching of more than one type of religious thought.[19]

The greatest difficulty with which Ritschl, with his doctrine of the native goodness of man, finds himself confronted arises from the fact of man's universal sinfulness. For Ritschl fully recognizes the universality of sin and is concerned only to assert that it is the product, in every several individual, of his own voluntary action. He is constrained to admit, of course,[20] that as sin enters his life thus only by his own volition, a sinless life-development is a possibility for everyone. But this possibility is actually realized, he asserts, by no one. This is certainly a most remarkable fact for Ritschl to be compelled to recognize. We should on his ground have *a priori* expected it to be realized by most. Pfleiderer indeed declares,[21] justly enough, that "Ritschl has not shown how selfish determination of the will at all can be explained, if there exists in the child by nature nothing but an indefinite impulse towards good." But Ritschl asserts, as we have seen, the possession by every spiritual being of a power of quite arbitrary willing, in the teeth of any actual inclination. And there is no

[18] J. Wendland, *Albrecht Ritschl und seine Schüler,* 1889, pp. 107-8.

[19] Cf. a somewhat instructive column in Hastings' *ERE,* X. 513b (H. G. Wood, article on "Puritanism"), and observe the violence with which R. H. Coats (*Types of English Piety,* 1912, p. 140) assaults Evangelicals for "scowling on blithe and happy children in their play", on the ground of an innocent observation of David Brainerd's which does not go beyond Pfleiderer's.

[20] P. 378.

[21] *Development,* etc., p. 167.

reason why he should not appeal to it here. Appeal to the possession of this power, however, while it may be thought to justify the assertion of the possibility, can scarcely be considered to justify the assertion of the inevitableness, of its exercise for sinning. It is not enough to account for all men without exception sinning to say that they are all able to sin. We need some account of their using their ability without exception in this particular direction. It is the duty of providing this account which is imposed on Ritschl by his teaching that all men come into the world with a bias to good and yet all men without exception sin.

The strength of Ritschl's assertion that the universality of sin is only an empirical fact, does not vacate, and is not treated by him as vacating, this duty. If he declares that "it is only by summarizing all experiences that we attain the conviction of the universal sway of sin,"[22] he yet represents this universal sway of sin as something which could have been forecast not only as "possible," but even as "probable,"[23] and indeed as "apparently inevitable,"[24] "under the given conditions of the human will." These are most astonishing representations, and seem to throw into grave doubt the primary declaration that every man comes into the world not only without impulse to evil, but with an impulse to good. The justification which is offered for them turns on further representations with regard, on the one hand, to the condition of man when he enters the world, and, on the other, to the conditions into which he enters in the world. To put it broadly, man enters the world pre-ëminently a willing being, and, though inclined to good, too immature to be able to guide his willing wisely. And the world which he enters meets him in his immaturity with manifold temptations. The consequence is that he sins. He sins of course voluntarily: sin finds a necessitating (*nötigend*) ground neither in the divine world-order, nor in man's endowment of freedom. But, so far as we can see,

[22] P. 378; *Unterricht*, § 28.
[23] *Unterricht*, § 28.
[24] P. 380.

says Ritschl, he sins inevitably; certainly sin extends over the whole human race alike as a mode of action and a habitual propensity.[25]

The particular form which Ritschl gives this general doctrine calls for some remark. In the *Instruction in the Christian Religion,*[26] he explains that the factors which bring the universality of sin about, are "the fact that the impulse (*Trieb*) to the unrestrained (*schrankenlos*) use of freedom, with which every man comes into the world, meets with the manifold enticements to selfishness which arise out of the sins of society." Thus it comes about, says Ritschl, that some degree of selfishness takes form in every one "even before the clearness of common self-consciousness is awakened in him." It has very naturally been pointed out[27] that the condition in which man is here represented as coming into the world is scarcely consistent with that which Ritschl ascribes to him when he represents him as endowed with an impulse (*Trieb*) to good. An impulse (*Trieb*) to good and an impulse (*Trieb*) to the unrestricted (*schrankenlos*) use of freedom are not only not the same thing; they are not even capable of conciliation. He whose action is ruled by an impulse to an unlimited use of freedom is so little the same as he whose action is ruled by an impulse to the good, that he must rather be pronounced to be without moral character altogether. Clearly, when so described, man is conceived as coming into the world merely a willing machine; will has absorbed all other faculties. And it throws a lurid light on Ritschl's real conception of the will,

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[25] P. 383. This teaching is fundamentally indistinguishable from that of the old Rationalism (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* II, p. 339, par. 3) and continually finds new representatives, as e.g., Miss E. M. Caillard, *Progressive Revelation,* p. 77, who thinks the Fall accounted for by the fact that the self-conscious will was "newly-born and feeble," while the "animal appetites and impulses were stronger in proportion, and the will succumbed before them, becoming their slave, instead of their master."

[26] § 28; E. T. in *The Theology of Albert Ritschl* by Albert Temple Swing, 1901, p. 204.

[27] Nitzsch, as cited, p. 320; Wendland, as cited, p. 107.

when we observe him, despite his expressed doctrine of psychological determinism, representing every man as beginning life as mere will, operating in a boundless manner. It sounds very well, no doubt, to hear of that high power of the spirit by which in moments of moral exaltation it can set itself to a good end, and by the sheer force of its moral energy break through the trammels of impulses and habits of evil and do the right. It has a different sound when we hear that this boasted spiritual endowment is merely our natural mode of action, without moral quality; and that all ethical development consists in curbing and shackling it in its vagrant activities. Certainly if this be the condition in which man comes into the world, he is in no sense the architect of his own fortunes. He is the helpless creature of his environment, which constitutes the mould into which, will he, nill he, he runs.

This is, in point of fact, what Ritschl's teaching comes to. According to him the universality of sin is due to the reaction of the uninformed will to the temptations of social life. In the intercourse of life man, under the temptations acting on his immaturity, becomes sinful before he knows any better. It is the temptations of human society which play here the determining rôle, and Ritschl does not scruple to say that in the environment into which man is thrust he cannot avoid sinning. Sin is "inevitable," he says, though he does not affirm this dogmatically: sin, says he,[28] is "an apparently inevitable product of the human will, under the given conditions of its development." A. E. Garvie[29] seizes upon the "apparently" here with a view to breaking the force of the statement. Wrongly: it is inserted, no doubt, in order to soften the admission, but it softens it only to the ear. Dealing with the matter of original sin from the purely empirical standpoint, Ritschl declares that we observe sin to be in point of fact universal, and that this its universality,

[28] P. 380: ein scheinbar unvermeidliches Erzeugniss des menschliches Willens unter den gegebenen Bedingungen seiner Entwickelung.

[29] *The Ritschlian Theology*, 1899, p. 300; contrast James Orr, *Ritschlianism*, 1903, p. 99, note 2.

so far as he can tell, is inevitable. Its inevitableness, he further affirms, is due to the conditions under which the human will develops. These conditions, he sums up in the comprehensive term "the kingdom of sin," which is his name for human society as organized in its sinful development. This kingdom of sin, he says, extends over the whole human race and binds all men together in the incalculable interplay of sinful action.[30] The conception is with him an important one, and he develops it with great fulness, and paints in very black colors the baleful influences derived from one another and from the mass, which interact on the individuals, in this evil organism. It is nevertheless just human society under the dominion of sin that he means. Into this evil social environment every man is thrust at birth, and by it he is, in his immaturity, moulded to its own nature. No wonder he becomes at once, with his impulse to unlimited use of his freedom, sinful. It is just a matter of "social inheritance," which Ritschl substitutes for the idea of natural inheritance. In the old antithesis of nature and nurture, he takes the alternative of nurture; in the old antithesis of heredity and environment, he takes the alternative of environment. His formula for universal sin is just universal freedom plus universal temptation, with the decisive emphasis on the temptation. So decisive indeed is the emphasis on the temptation that the suggestion is even let fall that no resistance is made to it at all. Every man, we are told, is at birth "put into connection with evil, against which his natural will does not contend at all."

One of the reasons why we recoil from this explanation of human sinfulness is that it suffers from the ugly logical disease called by the appropriately ugly name of hysteron-proteron. This malignant "kingdom of sin," whence came it? It is itself the creation of human sin. How can it, then, be the creator of human sin? Unless men had sinned before there was any kingdom of sin to infect them with its cor-

[30] P. 383.

ruption, there never would have been any kingdom of sin. The kingdom of sin is simply the *congregatio peccatorum,* and sinners must exist before they can congregate. They bring sin into the congregation, not take it out of it. And that means in the end that the cause of sin must be found in something in the sinner rather than in something in his environment. We shall have to urge, then, still, that the formula of universal freedom plus universal temptation is not adequate to account for universal sin. Freedom plus temptation may be a good average receipt for sinning: that it may be made infallible, something more is needed. That all men are able to sin offers no sufficient account of the use of this ability by them all without exception, under the solicitation of temptation, for sinning. The invariabilty of the result demands somethng else than ability to sin in them to account for it. Ritschl of course could not fail to recognize so obvious a demand. He meets it by teaching that men come into the world not merely endowed with a freedom of which they have the impulse to make an unlimited use, but terribly handicapped by ignorance of the good—that good to which they have a natural inclination and to which they no doubt would therefore turn if they only knew it. "Ignorance," writes Ritschl,[32] "as experience with children teaches us, is a very important factor in the origination and development of sin. Children, when they enter into the common spirit and life, are not equipped with a knowledge of the good, or of the moral law whether as a whole or in its details. . . . Rather must they learn the value of the good only in particulars and in the special relations in which they live, since they are quite incapable of comprehending the universal good. But most precisely in the case of children, the will enters into activity with the clear expectation of an unlimited effectiveness on surrounding objects and relations. In these circumstances, ignorance is the essential condition of the conflict of the will with the order of society as the

[31] *Unterricht,* § 27, p. 203.
[32] P. 377.

rule of the good; it is also the condition of the will's setting itself in revolt against this order." . . . We perceive that from Ritschl's standpoint it is ignorance which is the true *fomes peccati.* Men do not become sinners fundamentally because they are free, though they are incredibly free; nor because they are tempted, though they are overwhelmingly tempted; but because they are ignorant.

Otto Ritschl repels the representation that all sin is to Ritschl mere ignorance.[33] Ritschl teaches, only, he says, that God regards pardonable sin as ignorance.[34] Whether there actually exists any such thing as unpardonable sin, however, Ritschl leaves an open question: he can conceive of, but will not affirm, its existence. It is not becoming in us to suppose of any of our fellow men that they have passed in their sin beyond the possibility of salvation. Some may have done so, but "whether there are such, and who they are, lies equally outside of our practical judgment and our theoretical knowledge."[35] We must therefore act on the supposition that all actual sin is in the judgment of God just ignorance.[36] Sin thus not only has its origin in ignorance, but always retains its quality as ignorance,[37] until—if it ever does so—having become invincible ignorance, it becomes also unpardonable. But though Ritschl seems thus to minimize the ethical evil of sin and the idea of its guilt evaporates in his hands, he yet deals seriously with its moral effects. He paints the moral condition of the kingdom of sin,—sin in the mass, as it manifests itself in humanity at large—in sufficiently black colors. With respect to the in-

[33] *Leben.* II. pp. 199-200: die Sünde sei überhaupt nur Unwissenheit.

[34] Dass lediglich Gott die vergebbare Sünde als Unwissenheit beurheilt.

[35] P. 383.

[36] Pp. 379 ff.

[37] Pfleiderer, *Die Ritschl'sche Theologie,* 1891, p. 68, very properly says: "It is noteworthy that Ritschl in his theory of sin, places himself wholly on the ground of the Greek intellectualism which is elsewhere so sharply condemned by him. It was Socrates, of course, who identified the evil with ignorance and therefore logically represented virtue as teachable." We shall see that to Ritschl, too, as sin is ignorance, so knowledge is the only remedy for sin.

dividual, the sinful act by no means ends with itself;[38] it reacts on the will which produces it and creates a sinful propensity.[39] Thus the man who came into the world with a bias to good, acquires by his sinning a bias to evil. Ritschl explains[40] that, although sin is "no original law of the human will," it yet—"fixing itself as the resultant of particular cravings and inclinations,—becomes in the individual man the principle of the will's regulation." He therefore proceeds to speak of sin as "a personal bias (*Hang*) in the life of every individual," and is only concerned to assert that it originates as such not from our generation from a sinning ancestor, but, "so far as our observation reaches," —a rather unexpected reassertion of his empirical standpoint here—"in sinful desire and action, which, as such, finds its sufficient ground in the self-determination of the individual will."

There is such a thing then as a "law of sin" in the will, a law of sin which is nothing less than "an ungodly and selfish propensity"; and this propensity has taken possession of the "whole human race."[41] It is the result of "the necessary (*nothwendig*) reaction of every act of the will on the bent (*Richtung*) of the faculty of volition (*Willenskraft*)"; our actions being evil we could not fail through our "unrestrained repetition of selfish decisions of will" to produce "an ungodly and selfish bias." This bias may not be so strong as that which is postulated in the doctrine of "original sin"; but it is equally real, and by means of

[38] We are using here the language of Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, 1897, p. 145. When Orr says; "Sin in his view not only originates in will but consists only in acts of will," he must be interpreted in consistency with what is said in the text, and "acts of will" must include "intentions, habitual inclinations and dispositions" (*Unterricht*, § 27).

[39] This is in accordance with Ritschl's general doctrine of the will—e.g., pp. 336-337: "The will, in the individual actions which are traced back to it as their ground, does not have phenomena which can exist or not exist without change in its nature; but through these actions, according to their tendency, the will acquires its kind and develops itself to a good or to a bad character."

[40] Pp. 348-349.

[41] P. 383.

his doctrine of the kingdom of sin, with its involved interaction of sinners, consciously and unconsciously, upon one another, Ritschl labors to show that it is very strong indeed, and may conceivably become, in extreme instances, so strong that all power to the contrary is lost and man becomes in consequence incapable of salvation, since salvation in his view is the effect of free action.[42] Whether such men actually exist, as we have already noted, Ritschl declines to decide; but by declining to decide the question of fact he allows that in theory they may very well exist. And this carries with it the recognition of the possibility of sin, acting as a bias, becoming so strong as to exclude all power to the contrary. It is not altogether easy to comprehend how Ritschl, with his descriptions of the depth of the evil which pervades the kingdom of sin, preserves any individual from the full strength of this bias to evil. It must be that after all, he thinks of sin lightly.

The same ground which we have just run over on the basis of the discussion in *Justification and Reconciliation* is traversed by Ritschl again in the *Instruction in the Christian Religion*[43] and naturally to the same effect. "Sins," we are told here, are fundamentally "evil volitions"; but it is added, "also the corresponding intentions, habitual inclinations and dispositions." None of these come into the world with us; they are all self-formed. We come into the world sinless and pick up sin in the process of living. It is a social fact; and from all that appears we would not become sinners, if we could be born and reared in a sinless society. That, however, is the case with none of us. Even he who is "born of Christian parents into the community of Christ" is "at the same time put into connection with evil, against which his natural will as such does not contend." This is a statement which sets us furiously to thinking. We wish to know why we do not contend against the evil of the world—if we are born with a bias to good. And we wish very much to know

[42] Pp. 379-383.
[43] § 27 ff.

why, if it is our environment which moulds us, the good environment in the "community of Christ" does not protect us from the bad environment of the kingdom of sin—especially if our native impulse is to good. Ritschl, however, closes his eyes to these things, and tells us flatly that "in every one some degree of self-seeking takes form, even before the clearness of common self-consciousness is awakened in him." Thus all men, without exception, become sinners, and this means not only that they share in sinful practices, but that they are infected with a sinful bias, which conditions their whole activity. "Even the single sinful act does not by any means come to an end with the act, but continues to work as a disordering or perversion of moral freedom."[44] And no one has committed only a single sinful act; and to the multitude of his acts is added the baleful power of the community's sin. For "united sin, the opposite to the Kingdom of God, rests upon all as a power, which at least limits the freedom of the individual to good." From our own sinning, reinforced by the influence of the sinful community, there thus arises a condition of will which suggests the description of an inability to good. Ritschl himself phrases it thus: "This limitation of the freedom of the individual by his own sin and by connection with the common condition of the world is, taken strictly, a lack of freedom to good."[45] He will not allow, however, that this "lack of freedom to good" amounts to "the absolute inability to good which the Reformers" taught: though he is able to speak of sin "dominating" the individual. A. E. Garvie is therefore so far wrong when he writes[46] that Ritschl, by his denial of original sin, "does not minimize the extent of the potence of sin, but seeks to explain it by an acquired tendency instead of an inherited bias." It may seem to us that his limitation of the "potence" of sin is illogical; it does so seem to us; but he does so far limit it as to refuse to admit that it ever

[44] § 31.
[45] § 30.
[46] As cited, p. 306.

in fact (he allows it in theory) wholly destroys the power to will the good.

Certainly it very greatly behooved Ritschl, at the cost of whatever inconsequence, to preserve to sinful men as large an ability to good as possible. For, in his rigorous anti-supernaturalism, he has nothing to appeal to for their salvation from sin except their own wills. In the Augustinian system—which gave law to the Reformation—the depths of sin are matched by the heights of grace: by the recreation of the Holy Spirit men dead in sin are raised into newness of life. Johannes Wendland strangely fancies that he is urging a valid criticism against the Reformation doctrine of sin when he asks:[47] "Is the moral freedom of man really completely lost?" and answers: "Then there would be no possibility of deliverance; for there would be then nothing for deliverance to take hold of." The Reformation doctrine not only entails but strenuously asserts that there is nothing in sinful man on which deliverance can "take hold," and that he is therefore incapable of deliverance save by the recreation of his dead soul by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit. But Ritschl knows no soul to be recreated; and knows no Holy Spirit to recreate it; and in his anti-mystical zeal knows no immediate Divine action of any kind on the human will. What the human will itself in its own unaided powers cannot do for its own recovery from sin, cannot in his view be done at all.

It is Ritschl's teaching that the soul subsists only in its functions. "We know nothing," he says,[48] "of an in-itself of the soul"; and he explains his meaning by the addition of the words—"of a life of the spirit enclosed in itself, over or behind the functions in which it is active, living and present to itself as a particular entity (*Werthgrosse*)." This is not a mere *obiter dictum* but a deliberately announced doctrine, valued precisely because it excludes all talk of

[47] *Albrecht Ritschl und seine Schüler*, 1891, p. 104.

[48] P. 21: von einen Ansich der Seele. D. W. Simon (in his E. T. of Stählin's *Kant, Lotze and Ritschl*, p. 168 note) proposes to render the awkward term *Ansichsein* by the equally awkward equivalent, "inseity."

"mysticism" in the relations of God to man. Pfleiderer[49] charitably supposes that "when he blew this trumpet blast against all 'mysticism,'" Ritschl could scarcely have realized the radical character of the pronouncement he was making; and then draws out its consequences. It makes the unity of the soul an illusion, dissolved into the multiplicity of its functions. And it renders the hope of immortality a delusion. How can there be talk of the immortality of the soul on the basis of a doctrine which allows for the existence of no soul? What is there to hold these functions together when the body decays?[50] Garvie brings together what is the gist of these criticisms, in one comprehensive sentence. Ritschl says he,[51] in his denial of the metaphysical existence of the soul and his restriction of personal life to the spiritual activities, "implicitly contradicts the unity and identity of the 'self,' the possibility of character, the certainty of immortality." In Ritschl's teaching, says Garvie again:[52] sweeping a circle with a wider radius, "God is, so to speak, lost in His Kingdom, Christ in His vocation, the soul in its activities."

How Ritschl applies this doctrine of the non-substantiality of the soul, may be observed as well as elsewhere, in a very characteristic passage in which his immediate object is to defend his doctrine of the "Godhead" of Christ from the reproach that it ascribes divinity only to His will and not to His nature.[53] Ritschl replies that there is no such distinction: the will is the nature. When we speak of a person's character, we mean nothing except the state of his will. A good character is a particular state of the will—this state of the will, to wit, the bending of the will to a

[49] *Die Ritschl'sche Theologie,* p. 105.

[50] We are always directed to Fr. Traub, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche,* 1894, p. 101 for a reply to Pfleiderer's strictures here. But Traub does not meet Pfleiderer's criticisms; he only asserts the right of Ritschl to his views.

[51] Op cit. contents of Chap. V. sect. III cited by Orr, *Ritschlianism,* p. 84.

[52] Op. cit. p. 62.

[53] Pp. 466 f.

good and unselfish end with sufficient decision to restrain and govern the natural impulses, which work, presumably, for immoral or at least unmoral ends. When the will forms and pursues a good and unselfish end so as to subordinate and subject the natural impulses to it—then the person is of good character. Whence, now, the will obtains the ability thus to subordinate and subject the natural impulses to itself, or rather to a good and unselfish end formed by itself, we are not told. That there are such impulses requiring thus to be reduced to subjection is itself a notable fact. Ritschl speaks of them as "the predispositions (*Anlagen*) of the soul." He tells us that they "correspond in some way to our bodily equipment"; and further that they are "given to us"; and still further that they are "designated as our nature (*Naturell*)." But now, he somewhat strangely adds that it is the allotted task of the created spirit to transform these "predispositions of the soul" into its "obedient instruments." We speak of this statement as strange, for surely the whole drift of these remarks suggests that we are here contemplating "the created spirit" as such, that is, as it comes into existence, and not only after it has formed for itself a character, and that an evil character. And as it comes into existence, it is in Ritschl's teaching good, and inclines to good,—to become evil only by the action of this very will which we are here told has as its task to obtain the mastery over these dispositions in order that thus a good character may be framed. Let that, however, pass. What Ritschl is teaching here primarily is that our character at any given moment is just the state of our will in that particular stage of the prosecution of this task. In proportion as we have the mastery over our predispositions and are governing them in the interests of a good end—we are good. Who or what, however, is this "we"—"the created spirit"—who thus dominates over the predispositions of the soul? Do not these "predispositions (*Anlagen*) of the soul" really constitute all the "we" that exists? Must we not have another "we", with another equipment of dispositions, be-

fore we can form a purpose antagonistic to it and dominate it in its interests? We are lost in wonder as to what it is that forms this purpose and dominates the predispositions which are "given" to us, and which are properly called our "nature." So little can Ritschl get along without a soul that he cannot conduct his discussion a single step without presupposing it.

It will have been already observed that it is not the soul of man alone which is dissolved in the acid of Ritschl's non-substantial metaphysics.[54] The being of God is dissolved in it also. As a matter of course Ritschl knows nothing of a Trinity in the Godhead. And where there is no Trinity, there can be no preëxistent Divine Christ, and no personal Holy Spirit. A. E. Garvie, who always gives Ritschl the benefit of a benevolent interpretation, whenever a benevolent interpretation can by any means be made possible, is compelled to allow that with Ritschl "the doctrine of the Trinity does not find any recognition whatever."[55] And Gustav Ecke, whose attitude toward Ritschl is as benevolent as Garvie's, is equally compelled to aver that we find as little recognition in him of a personal Holy Spirit. "According to Ritschl," he expounds,[56] "by the Holy Spirit there cannot at all be understood a kind of 'irresistible natural force' which traverses the regular course of knowledge and the normal exercise of the will. . . . When Paul makes use of the conception, he designates by it the knowledge of God as Father common to Christian believers and the knowledge

[54] For an admirable summary statement of the matter see Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, pp. 61-65.

[55] Page 343. The defence which von Kügelgen (p. 137) offers for Ritschl is only an admission—the "Trinity" means the successive manifestations of Love in several modes of operation: "With reference to the 'denial of the dogma of the Trinity' (so Haack) this reproach is invalidated, since the Holy Trinity, of course not simultaneously, but certainly successively, comes to manifestation in the self-revelation of God as will of love through the man Jesus, and in divine self-communication as power of God through the Holy Spirit,—wherefore naturally the immanent side of the Trinity gives way to the economical side on the ground of religious value-judgment."

[56] *Die theologische Schule Albrecht Ritschl*, 1897, p. 293.

of His Son as our Lord; and further the power of right conduct and self-sanctification or the formation of moral character. If the whole ethical praxis is thus deduced from the Holy Spirit, what this means is that the knowledge of God as our Father motives the disposition out of which righteousness and sanctification are produced."[57] The particular passage of Ritschl's[58] which Ecke makes use of here is a fair representative of his customary mode of speech on the subject. He is never weary of asserting that the Holy Spirit is no "stuff" and is not to be conceived in its action after the analogy of a "natural force," producing effects by its own power. And he as repeatedly explains that it is, in its real nature, just the "knowledge" which is common to the Christian community, and under the influence of which as a motive, the individual Christian sanctifies *himself*—as is particularly clearly declared in the passage expounded by Ecke. In it we are told that what Paul calls the Holy Spirit is the "power, common to Christians, of righteous conduct and of self-sanctification or moral character-formation, which finds its motive in that complete knowledge of God."[59]

In another typical passage[60] it is emphatically denied not only that the Holy Spirit is to be conceived as a "stuff"—which is Ritschl's way of saying a substantial entity—but equally that He is to be thought of as the "Divine means" (*göttliche Mittel*) of the regeneration of the individual. The state of regeneration or the new life may be placed in close relation to the Holy Spirit, says he; but that "is not to be understood in the sense that each individual is changed

[57] C. von Kügelgen, as cited, p. 114 ff. seeks to defend Ritschl against the charge—as made by Grau—that he reduces the Holy Spirit "to a function of knowledge." He is effectively answered by Leonhard Stählin in the *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift* for 1898 (IX. p. 505). "In spite of all his employment of the terminology which belongs to the church doctrine of the Trinity," says Stählin, "Ritschl remains a Unitarian."

[58] P. 533 f.

[59] P. 533 f.

[60] P. 605f.

by the specific power of God after the fashion of a natural force, but he is set in motion towards patience and humility as well as to moral activity in the service of the Kingdom of God by the trust in God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which is common to all Christians." Here it is explicitly denied that it is the Holy Spirit which works that change by which we become Christians and our own trust in God is invoked in His stead. As to the Holy Spirit itself, what is meant by it is "in reference to God himself," just "the knowledge which God has of Himself"; and with reference to the Christian community the common "knowledge of God and His counsel towards men in the world," which is the possession of the Christian community, and which, so far as it is true knowledge, of course "corresponds with God's knowledge of Himself." This last fact, namely, that the knowledge which the Christian community has of God corresponds with the knowledge that God has of Himself is the justification of the common name given to the two knowledges—the "Holy Spirit."[61] The Holy Spirit in the meantime is defined baldly as just a "knowledge": a knowledge *of God,* no doubt, but just a *knowledge* of God. This knowledge may exist in God as subject; or in the Christian community as subject. The individual member of the community, so far as he shares in this knowledge, is affected by it in his feelings and in his acts: it becomes to him a source in him of specific emotions and activities. This is what is meant by "having the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is just the spirit of the community conceived as an influence, swaying the individual; that and nothing more.[62]

[61] Cf. the statement on pp. 471-2. "The Spirit of God is the knowledge which God has of Himself, as of His self-end. The Holy Spirit denotes in the New Testament the Spirit of God so far as He is the ground of the knowledge of God and of the specific religious-moral life in the community."

[62] Near the close of this passage in the earlier editions (Ed. 1, pp. 535f; ed. 2, p. 562) there were some words which have dropped out in the re-writing of the passage for the third edition, of such clearness that they naturally were much quoted by earlier writers (e.g. Hermann Weiss, *Theolog. Stud, und Kritiken* 1881, p. 412; Fr. Luther, *Die*

Commenting on the passage which has just been engaging our attention,[63] Garvie[64] seizes hold of this sentence: "As the power of the exhaustive knowledge of God common to Christian believers, the Holy Spirit is, however, at the same time the motive of the life of all Christians, which as such is necessarily directed to the common end of the Kingdom of God." On the ground of this sentence he represents Ritschl as teaching that "the Spirit is in the Christian community, not only as *knowledge*, but also as the *motive* of action"; and that he explains to mean that the *will* as well as the *mind* of God is in the community." This is quite unjustified. What Ritschl says is that "the Holy Spirit" is the motive of the life of Christians "as the power of the common exhaustive knowledge of God belonging to the believers in Christ." There is no such thing as a "Holy Spirit" conceived as will, according to Ritschl: in his view the "Holy Spirit" is only a knowledge. And it is, in any case "knowledge" alone which can act as a "motive"; that is a thing will cannot do. Ritschl makes his meaning particularly clear in the summary paragraph in which he brings the discussion in this place, to a close. Nothing objective, he says,[65] can be taught about justification and regeneration except this—"that it" (these two things are so one with Ritschl that he uses a singular pronoun and verb) "takes place within the community of believers in accordance with the propagation of the Gospel and the specific onworking of the personal peculiarity of Christ in the community." These are its productive causes—the proclamation of the

Theologie Ritschls, 1887, p. 27). It runs in Ed. 2 as follows: "The Holy Spirit designates, metaphysically speaking, a *Formbestimmung,* like justification, reconciliation and childship to God." Weiss comments: "The Holy Spirit is therefore in no way anything real or substantial, but is simply the specific form of the Christian consciousness, so far as this cherishes precisely as consciousness the specific thought of God as Father, bringing it into practice, as guiding thought, over against the conceptions and moods which as guiding thoughts arise out of the world,—as dominating motive over against the natural instincts."

[63] P. 605.

[64] P. 539.

[65] P. 607.

Gospel and especially the impression made by the unique personality of Christ. How these causes work the result Ritschl now proceeds to tell us: it takes place, he says "seeing that there is awakened in the individual faith in Christ, as trust in God the Father of all, and a sense of union rooted in the Holy Spirit,—by which the entire world-view and self-judgment in the continuance of the sense of guilt for sin are dominated." That is to say the proclamation of the gospel and the impression made on men by the personality of Christ bring about their justification and regeneration, briefly, by awakening faith in them.[66]

Of course this is not to eliminate all "mystery" from the process: it is only to eliminate all that is supernatural. The words in which Ritschl says this have, it is true, been now and then gravely misunderstood,—as, for example, by Garvie.[67] "How this state is brought about," Ritschl remarks, "eludes all observation, like the development of the individual spiritual life in general." He does not mean by this to suggest that there is, or may be, something more at work here than is merely human—something more than knowledge acting as motive. He means only that the manner of working by which this knowledge produces faith,

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[66] Cf. *Unterricht*, § 5, note 3 (E. T. p. 174):—"The parables (Mark iv) which set forth the mysteries of the Kingdom in figures of the grain, etc., always signify by 'fruit' a human product, springing out of an individual activity, called forth by the divine 'seed,' i.e. by the impulse of the divine word of revelation." The sole divine element is "the word of revelation." In *Just. and Rec.* III, p. 175 Ritschl seeks to defend his doctrine of justification from the charge of Pelagianism; but his only weapon is a not altogether unjustified *tu quoque*. What interests us here is that here again he repudiates the conception of an action on the human spirit by the Holy Ghost as the account of the rise of faith in the soul. There is no such thing as a "soul" in the sense of a kind of *Natur*, that is, except as the activities of feeling, knowing, willing themselves; and grace does not act in this fashion, on a passive recipient. When it is said that the Holy Spirit acts upon us, what is meant, according to *Unterricht*, etc., § 55 (p. 226) is that "the impulse to right conduct," etc., "have their criterion in the knowledge of God as our Father which is given us in Christianity."

[67] Op. cit. pp. 339, 344. Also by Gustav Ecke, *Die Theologische Schule Albrecht Ritschls*, 1897, p. 63.

and faith justification and regeneration is, like all other operations of the human spirit, as he expressly says, something which withdraws itself from observation. Accordingly Otto Ritschl expounding his father's doctrine of the origin of faith, declares[68] that what he emphasizes is that all faith, whether the one becoming a Christian is aware of the connection or not, is called out by impulses which proceed from the Christian community as the vehicle of the Christian proclamation. "How these influences work," he continues, " 'eludes all observation precisely like the development of the individual spiritual life in general' "—quoting our present passage. Thus it appears that this famous sentence does not, in the view of Ritschl's son, any more than in its own apparent bearing, refer obscurely to the possibility of some direct action of the Holy Spirit taking place in the origin of faith; but only to the operation of influences coming out of the community as "bearer of the word." It is this that seems to Ritschl mysterious.

It ought perhaps to be added that although Garvie argues here that Ritschl means to posit an operation of God as will on the soul in regeneration, he nevertheless proceeds at once[69] to rebuke him precisely because he does not do this, but seeks all the causes of the transformation wrought in what we call regeneration in the subject of it. Garvie himself does not believe that, "in the spiritual sphere," causes produce their effects unmodified by the intrusion of free will; a mode of statement which can mean only that he supposes that God the Holy Spirit, operating as will, produces the effects He aims at, in the spiritual sphere, only by the permission of the will on which He operates. "There is a new factor," he says, "personal freedom, which either coöperates with, or opposes itself to, the operative cause, and thus decisively modifies the effect"—a remarkable assertion when we reflect that the "other factor" under consideration is Almighty God, and note that what is asserted is that the

[68] *Leben*, II, p. 227.
[69] P. 340.

human will not only modifies but "decisively modifies" the effect which Almighty God attempts to produce. Nevertheless Garvie against Ritschl's account of the matter argues that "we are not giving a complete account of even spiritual facts, if, because of the importance of this new factor, we recognize only the effects and refuse to inquire into the causes." "Yet this," he says, "is Ritschl's method." Surely this is to acknowledge that in his account of "regeneration" Ritschl indicates no "transcendent" cause of the effects observed; and that, in the circumstances, means that he explains the effects wholly within the sphere of human action. The phrase is now let fall[70] that in his further remarks Ritschl has no intention of "abandoning this method of exclusive attention to the human activity in the spiritual life"; and the companion phrases occur,[71] that Ritschl "appears, at least, to deny the indwelling and inworking of the Spirit," and "in his language at least, fails to recognize the presence and power of God's Spirit in the individual Christian experience." Surely this is to say that so far as Ritschl has expressed himself he allows for no divine factor in the Christian life. We have nothing to go on, after all, except what he tells us. And surely, he must be presumed to mean what he says.

This negative representation, however, instructive as it is in itself, yet falls unhappily short of the truth of the matter. Ritschl not only fails to mention a divine factor in regeneration; he definitely excludes it. R. A. Lipsius speaks not a bit too strongly, despite Ecke's protest,[72] when he declares[73] that "the whole course of the Christian life is explained" by Ritschl " 'psychologically,' that is, empirically, without the entrance of a supernatural factor." Fr. Luther expounds the matter more fully: "There is no question in the Ritschlian theology," says he,[74] "of a new creation

[70] P. 341.
[71] P. 349.
[72] As cited, p. 64.
[73] *Die Ritschl'sche Theologie,* p. 21.
[74] Fr. Luther, *Die Theologie Ritschls,* 1887, pp. 27-28.

through the Holy Spirit. The Ritschlian system has no place for a Triune personal God, and knows nothing of a salvation resting on the saving operation of this Triune God. Everything in it derives ultimately from human action. Everything is effectuated by a self-activity of a humanity associated in an ethical kingdom and abiding in the condition of nature.[75] Everything here is nature, nothing grace, everything man-work, or as the Scriptures call it, 'law-work,' nothing the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, really and creatively delivering us." There is nothing on which Ritschl more insists than on what he calls the freedom of faith, by which is meant what we might rather speak of as its absolute arbitrariness. "Faith begins," says he,[76] "in harmony with the law of freedom"—and therefore its coming, he at once adds, is incapable of being predicted or foreseen. It comes, in other words, so far independently of conditions that it cannot be inferred from them. "The change of heart which is to be brought about by God's love towards sinners," he says again,[77] "must be conceived under the form of the freedom of the will,"—and then he immediately adds that it cannot take place therefore "when sin, regarded as enmity against God, has reached that degree of self-determination at which the will has deliberately chosen evil as its end." That is to say, man is salvable only when he is in a position to save himself. So zealous is he for this absolutely arbitrary action of the will that he even tells us[78] "that there is in no case either a mechanical or a logical necessity laid upon individuals to join themselves in faith to the existing Christian community." The language is exaggerated for effect in both members of the sentence. In excluding what he calls a "mechanical neces-

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[75] Accordingly Fr. Luther remarks a little later, (p. 29): "It is the Kingdom of God which, by the ethical communion established in it, calls out the religious-moral renewal of the heart; this is not done by the Holy Spirit."

[76] P. 577.

[77] Pp. 383.

[78] P. 577.

sity" of believing, Ritschl means really to exclude the re-creative operation of the Spirit, of which he always speaks in this depreciatory language.[79] In excluding what he calls "a logical necessity," he may appear to be setting aside only such an inducement to believing as will leave open no rational way of escape from it; but he is actually shutting out all really determining inducements whatever. Hermann Weiss is therefore quite right when he says[80] that with Ritschl "faith is and remains so exclusively the act of the subject that the dependence of the Christian on God and Christ becomes a purely external one or an imaginary one."

We may indeed challenge the possibility—even on Ritschl's postulates—of such an arbitrary act of faith as, he asserts, takes place. For Ritschl himself, as we have seen, represents the will of sinful man as biased to evil; as so strongly biased to evil, in itself and in its conditioning in the kingdom of sin, as would lead us to suppose it incapable of the act of faith attributed to it. Ritschl himself describes the condition in which man finds himself as one of "unresolved guilt," "separation from God," "slavery to the world"—against which combination, he says,[81] we "cannot assert ourselves with our own abilities (*Mitteln*) since it is from it that we receive all the motives to our action and effort." This certainly appears to attribute to sinful man an inability to good. But we are bound to bear in mind that Ritschl constantly asserts that this inability is not absolute; and that it finally emerges that what is left to man by it is not broken fragments of ability to good but a power of willing which can be called nothing less than plenary. Freedom in this sense is the prerogative of a man as personal spirit.

Ritschl nevertheless recognizes the duty and undertakes

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[79] Cf. e.g p. 529: "A material, mechanical change of the sinner is altogether unthinkable," in which "the sinner is made righteous mechanically—that is, say, by the infusion of love," instancing the Roman Catholic doctrine.

[80] As cited, p. 391.

[81] P. 629.

the task of making it intelligible how sinful man performs the act which is attributed to him. Naturally a number of modes of expression are employed. What is said reduces ultimately, however, to an appeal to the impression made on him by the personality of Christ and the influence exerted upon him by the Christian community, "the kingdom of God"; and as the former operates only through the latter, in the last analysis his appeal is solely to the influences brought to bear on sinful man in the kingdom of God. Here too, then, as in the matter of the origin of sin in the individual Ritschl's recourse is to "social inheritance." As there man, coming into the world with a bias to good, becomes sinful through association with those who were sinners before him; so here men living in sin and with a bias to evil become righteous through the influence of those who were righteous before them. A difficulty no doubt faces us arising from this very parallel. We have seen that, according to Ritschl, every man comes into the world inclined to good, but, even though he may be born into the Christian community, this inclination to good is invariably and "apparently inevitably" overcome by the evil influences to which he is subjected in human companionship, that is to say, in the kingdom of sin. We can scarcely avoid inferring that the influences of evil in the kingdom of sin are stronger than those to good in the kingdom of God. And that renders it difficult to understand how men inclined to evil and long immersed in the kingdom of sin, affected deeply by its influences, and more or less hardened in sinning, can be supposed to be able to turn at once to good on entering the kingdom of God. The solution of the difficulty lies of course in the relative unimportance in Ritschl's scheme of thought of inducements in this or the other direction, as compared with the ineradicable power of the will to turn itself in any direction whatever. No doubt thus the whole machinery which Ritschl has created—of a kingdom of sin to account for the universal sin of man, of a kingdom of God to account for the recovery of sinful man—is made

nugatory. But the robustness of his Libertarianism is thrown up into a correspondingly high light. How entirely he depends on the will to work the change by which one becomes a Christian, is luridly exhibited by the temptation to which he yields to pronounce children, and the members of backward races, incapable of making it. Christianity is only for the well-developed. Children cannot attain to it: "faith in Christ can be expected only at a riper age."[82] And Christian missions to people in a low stage of culture are at least of doubtful utility. Such peoples can be expected to embrace Christianity only when they have become more capable of entering into its ends.[83] These suggestions fall in with the great part which immaturity plays in Ritschl's idea of the origin of sin; and they are strong attestations, as they are inevitable corollaries, of the decisive part played in his doctrine by his Libertarianism.

But although the significance of "the community" is thus depressed beneath that of "the will," in Ritschl's scheme, it is not given an intrinsically unimportant role. It is through it that the whole "inducement to action comes to the will. And therefore in this sense the character of the action taken can be attributed to it. Ritschl can even say[84] that the "new birth" or "new begetting by God," or "the admission into the relation of sonship to God," which "in its essence coincides with justification as well as with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit"—"all this is again the same with admission into the community." Thus he reduces the entire list of expressions apparently declaring a divine introduction of the sinner into the new life to mere figures of speech for the eminently human act of entrance into the Christian community; it is the influence of his new environment upon him which alone comes into consideration.[85] Where com-

[82] P. 599.

[83] Pp. 136 f.

[84] *Unterricht*, etc., § 47, note 1.

[85] Cf. H. Weiss, a cited, p. 399f. Weiss remarks (p. 400) on Ritschl's failure to make a clear distinction between objectively belonging to the community and subjectively believing. "We have to do here," he com-

prehensiveness of statement is sought, it is apt to take some such form as the following. We obtain "forgiveness or justification, reconciliation and adoption into Divine Sonship"—all of which are one—, we read,[86] "only as members of the religious community (*Gemeinde*) of Christ, as the result of the incalculable and mysterious interaction between our own freedom and the determining influences of the community (*Gemeinschaft*)—which (the community) however, is possible, in its nature, only through Christ's unique life-course in its well-known double aspect, and its continuous operation through all ages." Here all that enters into the Christian condition is represented as attained by us through our own wills acting under influences brought to bear on us through the Christian community. It is added no doubt that this community itself is a creation of Christ and the influences it exerts are transmitted from Him. But this does not introduce a new influence operative on the sinner,—the influence of Christ,—distinct from that of the community. In representing the community as the vehicle of the influence of Christ it interposes the community between Christ and the sinner, and reduces the influence of Christ from an immediate to a mediate one, from a possibly supernatural to a natural one. This is not an accidental, it is the calculated, result of Ritschl's theorizing. He has nothing more at heart than to remove man from all direct contact with God.

It is therefore with unjustified charity in the concessive portion of his statement, that Hermann Weiss says,[87] "It is true, Ritschl wishes to avoid making the awaking of faith depend only on instruction or tradition,—but really he is

ments (p. 403) "with an underestimate of sin, so far as it involves not merely a relation of guilt but a perversion of the will and real corruption of the whole personal life in man. Therefore it is scarcely a question of a decisive conversion, and faith is conceived in the end entirely as a moral act of man's own. The religious facts present in the community, through which the individual receives his call to the Kingdom of God, suffice to call it out."

[86] P. 577.

[87] As cited, p. 404, end. His vouchers are pp. 529, 567.

unable to find any other way." Precisely what Ritschl wishes to do is to separate man effectually from all direct relation to God, and in order to do this he subordinates his relation even to Christ to his relation to the community through which alone (never directly and immediately) does the individual have any relation to the revelation of God in Christ and His reconciling work. The result is naturally that throughout all Ritschl's discussions—which vainly represent themselves as seeking a way between the Scylla of Romish and the Charybdis of Rationalistic conceptions—there looms (as Weiss does not fail to point out)[88] a background of essentially deistic thinking and the actual life of the believer is left by God wholly to himself. This is but one aspect of Ritschl's extreme anti-mystical preconceptions, the effects of which are briefly outlined by Henri Schoen[89] in such statements as these: "Ritschl does not speak of a direct relation of the divine Spirit with the individual"; "The relation of man and God 'ought not to be regarded as immediate; that would be to declare them imaginary (*eingebildet*)' ";[89a] "Let it suffice us that God acts in the bosom of His Church by the *Gospel* and by the *remembrance* of Jesus."[90]

Jesus Christ does not live in His Church. It is only His Gospel—the memory of Him—which lives in it and works the conversion of men. Johannes Wendland complains that "Ritschl has never more exactly defined what the community can give the individual, viz, only historical information."[91] The complaint is not well-founded. Ritschl makes

[88] As cited, p. 390. Cf. Friedrich Nippold, *Die Theologische Einzelschule,* etc., 1898, p. 266, who says that Ritschl's passionate aversion to all mysticism "brought his idea of God into undeniable approximation to deism." This, he says, along with his Moralism, enters into his approximation to the older Rationalism.

[89] As cited, pp. 69-70. Schoen adds: "W. Herrmann only draws the logical conclusion from these affirmations when he says: 'The idea of a real relation (*Verkehr*) of the Christian with God is not Christian' (*Verkehr des Christen mit Gott,* 1886, p. 8)."

[89a] *Theologie und Metaphysik,* p. 50.

[90] P. 608.

[91] *Albrecht Ritschl und seine Schüler,* 1899, p. 79.

it superabundantly plain that it is only "knowledge" which works through the community on the individual, though he magnifies, no doubt, the effects of this "knowledge." This is the account to give of his reduction of the Holy Spirit just to "knowledge"; and he looks to this "knowledge" to carry the sinner safely out of his own sin into newness of life—to this "knowledge" as the only thing needed to direct the will in its "free" action to which it is at all times competent. It is curious and not a little instructive to observe how widely such a representation, fatally defective as it is, commends itself. Theodor Haering for example,[92] accounts it a special service done by Ritschl that he gives us an answer to "the question, in what way we may arrive at faith in Christ." Ritschl says,—through the impression made on us by Christ of being a Revelation of God; by which there is awakened in us at the same time faith in Him and in God. Orthodoxy, says Haering, is helpless here. "To point to the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit, however justifiable this may be, is in the general connection really an evasion of the question, not an answer." Thus he sets "the Word and Spirit," by the conjunction of which alone, "orthodoxy" teaches, is faith wrought, in antagonism to one another, as if Ritschl had the one and "orthodoxy" the other—a very significant revelation of his conception both of "orthodox" and of Ritschlian teaching.

Alfred E. Garvie's reasoning[93] moves on much the same lines as Haering's. Criticizing the critics of Ritschl's antagonism to all "mystical elements" in Christianity, he writes: "If there is an immediate communion with Christ, or a direct action of the Spirit, unconditioned by the historical revelation, why contend so earnestly for the defence of the New Testament, why preach the Gospel in all the world, why maintain the Church and its means of grace? If Christ needs no mediation, and the Spirit uses no agency, why all this effort and testimony? The truth is that Ritschl

[92] *The Christian Faith*, pp. 690 f.
[93] *The Ritschlian Theology*, 1899, p. 149.

and his school are contending for what is recognized practically in all the Christian Churches, the dependence of Christianity on the historical revelation of God in Christ, as recorded in the New Testament." No, that is but half the truth. The whole truth is that Ritschl in contending for "the dependence of Christianity on the historical revelation of God in Christ" is not neglecting merely, but denying, the dependence of vital Christianity on the immediate operations of the Spirit of God in the heart. The appreciation of "the permanent value and universal significance of the historical revelation" which Ritschl may show (so far as he shows it) must not be permitted to obscure his depreciation—his denial—of the indispensableness of the direct operations of the Spirit of God on the heart, without which even this historical revelation could have no saving effect. Garvie is pleased to play a little[94] with the expressions "direct," "immediate," as applied to the "action of the Spirit on the soul." They are not new expressions which James Orr invented: they are the vehicles through which Christians through all ages have given expression to their fundamental faith that (as a very early Christian put it) the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them because they are Spiritually judged. This fundamental Christian confession cannot be vacated by the remarkable suggestion that no part is left for the historical revelation to play, no place remains for the preaching of the Gospel, if there be allowed a direct action of the Spirit "unconditioned" by it. This turns things on their heads. What the New Testament teaches is rather that the saving effect of the historical revelation, of the Gospel, is conditioned by the direct action of the Spirit—a truth which, of course, Garvie has no intention of really denying.[95]

It is important that we should make clear to ourselves the completeness of Ritschl's anti-supernaturalism. It is

[94] As cited, pp. 143 f.

[95] As cited, pp. 149-150. Cf. Orr's effective rejoinder to Garvie, *Ritschlianism*, pp. 83, 84.

not uncommon to make an exception to its completeness in favor of what is called the revelation of God in Christ, to which the impulse to the Christian life is traced, and the asserted supernatural character of which may therefore be supposed to give a supernatural character to the whole process of salvation. According to Hermann Weiss, for example,[96] Ritschl's system is saved from falling into "a complete Pelagianism," and the Christian faith becoming in his hands simply "a no doubt respectable but entirely insufficient trust in God in the search after virtue and consciousness of freedom," only by this circumstance,—that he "would recognize a foundation for these dispositions exclusively in a peculiar possession of the Christian community, and would refer this community as Christ's establishment to God's positive revelation or arrangement." "Herein," says Weiss, lies the supernatural side of the system." In saying this, however, Weiss fully recognizes that the supernaturalism recognized is pushed back into the distant past, and, as God is not allowed to act directly on the individual, becomes somewhat illusive. P. Graue,[97] while occupying the same general standpoint with Weiss, is still less satisfied with the character of the supernaturalism which he recognizes in Ritschl and feels sure that it is logically insecure. Ritschl, says he, "has left standing the external revelation-fact which lies before us in the existence of Christ. That is the lure which he has thrown out to supernaturalism. From that on, the whole religious life runs on empirically-psychologically. That is his last century Rationalism. But the two do not get on together. This Rationalism swallows up that supernaturalism. How can an exception be made of Christ when in the religious life everything proceeds purely empirically? Already, now, He has for the Ritschlians (scientifically?) only the *value* of deity; already, now, it is at bottom nothing but the subjective conception of the love of God which Christ gives us; already, now, we can in this

[96] *Theolog. Studien und Kritiken,* 1881, pp. 414 f.
[97] *Jahrbücher für prot. Theologie,* XV. 1889, p. 338.

Christology, speak logically neither of a deity, nor of a divinity, but only—pardon the aesthetically obnoxious term —of a God-for-us-ity of Christ. What prevents our turning away from that too? Our seeing in Christ's God-the-Father only a subjective reflection of His own loving nature, of His own moral beauty? What prevents our remaining wholly on the earth and making Him to whom the Ritschlian school still ascribes the value of deity, put up with the value of a good moral character? Our rationalizing the Son of God into the son of man? The true logic of the Ritschlian notion of revelation is a *denial* of all revelation."[98]

What Graue presents here as the inevitable drift of Ritschl's teaching about Christ is really rather the gist of his teaching. Accordingly J. Wendland,[99] after surveying the grounds on which Ritschl bases his ascription of the predicate of deity to Christ, very properly declares that they do not in reality suggest that predicate. We may well understand, he says, that out of a feeling of piety for the past, unwillingness to break with the historical tradition and the custom of the church, Ritschl should wish to retain such a title for Christ. But we can scarcely justify him in doing so, when what he means by it is nothing more than pure god-imaging (*gottebenbildlich*) humanity. "Particularly unhappy," he continues, "is Ritschl's defence of himself against his opponents who charged him with making Christ in the end nothing but a mere man. Ritschl rejoined (p. 397), 'By mere man (if I should ever use the expression) I should mean a man as a natural being (*Naturgrösse*),

[98] Similarly Nippold, as cited, p.265, represents Ritschl as seeking to escape from Rationalism by rejecting all natural knowledge of God and representing the Christian community as the sole mediator of reconciliation. But, he adds, this is merely formal; in the matter of teaching "he comes near enough to the old Rationalism" to explain the polemical attitude to him of the orthodox and the only half-acceptance of the liberals. He talks of Christ no doubt as if he possessed in Him at least one supernatural datum; but from him onward all is explained on a naturalistic, empirical-psychological basis. "All dogmatic predications dissolve in a complex of subjective-psychological notions, value-judgments and acts of will."

[99] As cited, p. 114 f.

with the exclusion of all characteristics of spiritual and moral personality.' It follows from this that the deity of Christ is to be grounded in the characteristics of spiritual and moral personality. These, however, are not at all divine but human things." Whatever we may think of the applicability of Wendland's closing criticism, it is certainly true that Ritschl's defence of himself is in its entirety mere evasion and amounts in substance to a confession of judgment. "We, for our part," writes Leonhard Stählin justly,[100] are unable to discover anything in his Christology that raises it above the level of a simple Rationalism. And the appending of the title of deity to the picture of Christ which he has drawn, is a pagan procedure for which no justification is offered."

Those who insist that Ritschl teaches the proper deity of Christ[101] appear to forget that Ritschl himself declined to make any such affirmation. We do not know how "the person of Christ came into being," he says,[102] or became what it presents itself for our ethical and religious estimation"; that "is no subject of theological investigation"—it is a problem "which transcends every kind of investigation." Only, we must not combine Him with God His Father; that explains nothing scientifically.[103] Let us content ourselves with knowing that He is that being "whose whole vocational activity forms the material of the complete revelation

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[100] *Kant, Lotze and Ritschl,* p. 221, at the close of a couple of pages of telling criticism of Ritschl's meagre Christology. Similarly, J. Wendland, as cited, p. 116 points out that apart from his use of "the extravagant" expression "Godhead" of Christ and the peculiar ideal of piety which Ritschl has brought to expression in his Christology, his estimate of Jesus does not differ from that of the "Liberal Theology,"—as for example that of Pfleiderer.

[101] C. von Kügelgen, as cited, p. 64 ff. supplies a very favorable example. His contention is that with his ontology of spiritual being and his epistemological views, Ritschl could say only what he says. See also William Adams Brown, *The Essence of Christianity,* 1902, pp. 260-261. Ritschl here is in effect made a mystic.

[102] P. 451.

[103] Aber die Combination zwischen ihm und Gott seinem Vater ist eben keine Erklärung wissenschaftlicher Art.

of God present in Him, or in whom the word of God is a human person." That is to say, what Jesus Christ is, is just the man in whom this complete revelation of God is embodied. There is no question of a preëxistence of Christ here, as indeed there could not be with Ritschl's view, whether of God or of Christ. Ritschl, it is true, employs the term "eternal" with reference to Him, with great freedom.[104] He stands, we are told, in an eternal relation with God: He is the eternal object of the love of God; even the phrase, "the eternal Godhead of the Son" is not shunned. But the employment of these phrases is accompanied with explanations which rob them of what might have otherwise seemed their natural meaning. Only God, he tells us, "does not become, but eternally is what He is": only He is "of Himself." As for Christ—even theological tradition denies to Him self-existence and (in the predication of eternal generation to Him) ascribes Him to "the category of becoming in distinction from being." So far as this, says Ritschl, we may go with the traditional theology, when we speak of the deity of Christ. So far as this—that Christ is a dependent being who had His origin in time. But we can go with it no further. What Ritschl is doing is giving a new sense to the term "eternal deity," as ascribed to Christ; a new sense which would necessarily be misunderstood were it not clearly explained. It has meaning only, Ritschl says, with reference to God, not to us. "The eternal Godhead of the Son of God, in the transcription (*umschreibung*) of it which has been given, becomes completely intelligible only as object of the divine knowledge and will, that is for God Himself." What is meant is that "Christ exists for God eternally as the same that He is manifested to us in temporal limitation." That is to say, He has always, just as He existed on earth, been the object of the divine prevision and predestination. Naturally, only of the divine. Ritschl somewhat unnecessarily adds: "But only for God; for as preëxistent Christ is for us hidden." We, not being

[104] E.g. pp. 470, 471.

eternal like God, can know things only under the conditions of time and space. God knows from eternity all things in one all-embracing knowledge. The mode of this knowledge is inscrutable; its objects are in a true sense real—that is to say in the eternal, timeless knowledge of God. Christ, therefore, as existing from eternity in this knowledge, has had an eternal preëxistence, in the sense of which it is more customary to speak as a merely ideal preëxistence. Of course the same could equally well be said of everything else. For anything that exists has eternally preëxisted in the divine knowledge and will. At botton Ritschl is expounding in this passage not a doctrine of Christ's preëxistence but the doctrine of God's eternal foreknowledge and decree. This of course has not escaped notice. "Real premundane existence is thus ascribed," writes Leonhard Stählin,[105] "not to Christ, but merely to the divine will as directed to the establishment of the Kingdom of God through Christ. As thus defined, however, the divine will is the volition of something that has yet to exist, something therefore which does not yet exist." "Ritschl," writes Henri Schoen similarly,[106] "teaches the ideal preëxistence of Christ, and Christ is for him the historical person of Jesus. But as, at bottom, a historical person preëxists really or does not preëxist at all, as there is no middle term, Jesus does not preëxist at all. What preëxists is solely the divine intention, the mercy of God. Accordingly, when Ritschl speaks to us of an ideal preëxistence of Jesus, that is only a new expression for the omniscience of God."

It is something that Ritschl thus relates Christ directly to the divine activities of foreknowledge and foreordination. It does not appear that he relates Him with similar directness to any other divine activities. How He came into being, how He came to be what He was—the bearer of the complete revelation of God, the vehicle of the complete will of God, and therefore the founder of the kingdom of God

[105] As cited, p. 207.
[106] As cited, p. 84.

—Ritschl warns us it is useless, even noxious, to enquire.[107] "How it was possible for such a man to come into existence," Stählin expounds,[108] "is a question which Ritschl declines to answer. So far as one desires to be a Christian, one must recognize as a fact—a given fact, a *datum*—this relation of Christ to God, declared by Himself and proved even unto death, as also by His resurrection from the dead.[109] We must refrain entirely from attempts to get behind this *datum*—to explain how it came to pass in detail, how it acquired an empirical existence. Attempts of this kind are purposeless, because they are resultless; and being resultless it is injurious to make them."[110] That Ritschl was careful to leave such questions in what Orr calls "convenient vagueness"[111] is full of significance. The plain fact is that his theology had no means at its disposal for solving them.[112] With his exclusion of all direct commerce of God with the human spirit—all "mystical fantasies"—he has rendered all revelation in the proper sense of the word impossible, and with it all immediate divine guidance. On this ground Christ cannot be a God-taught man; He must be explained merely as a religious genius. C. von Kügelgen, it is true, declares[113] it is unjust to represent it as Ritschl's view, as Lemme does, "that in Christ too the idea of the moral world-view arose in the same way as in us all—as a consequence of a moral wish or of meditation." Did not Ritschl, he demands, represent Jesus as "actually experienc-

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[107] P. 451.

[108] As cited, p. 214.

[109] On what Ritschl understood by the Resurrection of Christ see the careful statements of Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, pp. 92, 202 f., and *Ritschlianism*, pp. 96 ff.

[110] *Theologie und Metaphysik*, p. 29.

[111] *Ritschlianism*, p. 46. "How Christ should arrive at this knowledge of God," remarks Orr, "should possess these extraordinary endowments, should stand in this unique relation to God and to his purposes —in short, should be the Person that He is, and should stand in the relation to God and man that He does—is a mystery into which we are not permitted to pry."

[112] Cf. Stählin, as cited, p. 314.

[113] As cited, p. 65.

ing a religious relation to God, theretofore non-existent, and undertaking to introduce his disciples into the same world-view and world-estimate?" The premise and conclusion here certainly do not hang together. That Ritschl represents Christ as the discoverer of a new relation to God and as able to transmit it to a following, says nothing as to his view of how Jesus acquired this new conception of the relation of man to God. And the passage in Ritschl to which von Kügelgen appeals[114] also says nothing of it.

This passage says, to be sure, more to the honor of Christ than von Kügelgen extracts from it. It says that Christ is something more to the community which He established than its founder and lawgiver—than "the transitory occasion of His disciples' religion and the legislator for their conduct, who would be a matter of indifference to them, as soon as His law had been learned." Ritschl magnifies the abiding influence of Jesus' person on His followers, the example which it is to them, the inspiration which it brings them. "The task," he says, "of the real development of the spiritual personality, cannot be conceived rightly or fully apart from the contemplation of the prototype of this human destiny. What therefore we recognize in the historically unique portraiture (*Lebenschild*) of Christ as the particular value of his existence (*Daseins*), gains through the peculiarity of this phenomenon, and through its norm-giving bearing on our religious and ethical destiny, the value of a permanent rule, since we at the same time establish that it is only through the arousing and directing power of this person that we are in a position to enter into His relation to God and to the world." These remarks very greatly exalt Christ—in His functions. In this exaltation of His functions, He is separated from other men: He is the originator, they at best the imitators; He is the producer, they at best the reproducers—who apart from His inspiration can do nothing. This is not a small difference, though it be but a difference of degree: a difference of but

[114] P. 386.

degree all the more that it is hinted that in reproducing what He has produced we may reproduce it fully. This exaltation of Christ in his functions is even carried so far that it is connected with the predicate of Godhead—though unfortunately these high functions on which this Godhead is based are treated rather as forming its content than supplying its evidence. Nowhere do we get beyond their limit, and therefore nowhere do we get beyond a great man—say the supremely great man, who has found God and found him completely, and by the power of His unique spiritual energy stamps His own religious image on the hearts of men.

It is necessary to revert for a moment to the hint in Ritschl's discussion to which we have just called attention in passing, that Christ's followers may become altogether like him. Is Christianity adequately described, we may ask, as "the religion of Jesus," or is its essence to be sought rather in "faith in Christ"? Is Jesus merely our Example, or is He also our Savior? These two antitheses are not quite identical, and we may be advanced in our understanding of Ritschl's teaching by discriminating between them. Ritschl does not wish to teach that Jesus is only our Example. He vigorously assaults the "advocates of the religion of Jesus," who seek to "exhaust the significance of Jesus in the scheme of individual imitation." They overlook, he declares, the fact that Jesus withdraws Himself from imitation "by setting Himself over against His disciples as the author of forgiveness of sins."[116] Ritschl is seeking, formally at least, to preserve to Jesus some shreds of His function as Savior. We use this depreciatory language because it appears that he ascribes saving functions to Jesus only so far as there proceeds from His person an influence which incites His followers to action and gives direction to their action.[117] After all, therefore, he con-

[115] P. 387.
[116] Pp. 2, 561 ff.
[117] P. 387.

ceives of Jesus only as our Example, except so far as he throws the emphasis on His example, less as pattern than as inspiration. Jesus affects us, according to him, only through the impression which the contemplation of Him makes on us—the influence which he exerts upon us; and our Christianity consists in the end, therefore, only in our repeating in our own persons what is found first in Him—unless we prefer to split hairs with Theodor Haering[118] and carefully explain that it is not a question of our individual imitation of Jesus but only of experiencing in ourselves after the fashion of a copy (*nachbildlich*) the childship to God which Jesus promises after the fashion of an original (*urbildlich*). It remains true that the Christianity of the Christian consists, according to Ritschl, in his presenting in his own life-experience the "piety" which Jesus lived out in His own person. Beyond doubt, he explains, Jesus experienced and testified to His disciples a religious relation to God which had had no exemplification before Him, and made it His task to lead His disciples into this same conception of the world and judgment of self. "This religious determination of the members of Christ's community is prefigured in the person of the Founder and is grounded on it as the abiding power to all imitation of Him."[119] In point of fact Ritschl therefore brings us back, for the essence of Christianity, to the repetition in His followers of just those simple elements of piety which are given originally in Jesus. His Christianity is just "the religion of Jesus." And the whole purpose of his main treatise would not be misleadingly described as an attempt to show that those conceptions pronounced by Lagarde[120] "apostolical, not evangelical" are really "evangelical" as well as "apostolical," because "rightly understood" they mean nothing more than following Jesus in thinking of God as mere love, who has no intention of punishing sin, and therefore living no longer in distrust of Him, but in

[118] *Ueber das Bleibende im Glauben an Christus*, p. 14.
[119] P. 387.
[120] *Mittheilungen*, 4. p. 107.

trusting acceptance of His end as our end. Like Jesus, and under the impulse received from Him (through the community), we are to live in faith, humility, patience, thankfulness, and the practice of love in the kingdom of God. Doing so, we shall be divine as He, doing so, was divine. This is to Ritschl the entirety of Christianity: and this is at bottom just a doctrine of "imitation" of the religion of Jesus."

It is mere paradox to speak of Ritschl as teaching a supernatural Christianity. "Although he lays little stress on specific miracles," writes William Adams Brown,[121] "Christianity is to Ritschl in a true sense a supernatural religion, for which no adequate preparation or explanation can be found in pre-Christian history." The qualification "in a true sense" really tells the story; its function in the sentence is to guard against its being understood to say that Ritschl's Christianity is a supernatural one in the ordinary sense of that term. The reason assigned for the supernaturalness of Ritschl's Christianity is moreover, ineffective. Ritschl, to be sure, teaches that Christianity came into the world as something new; and we may for our own part believe that, properly considered, that involves its supernaturalness. But there is no reason to suppose that was Ritschl's opinion: on the contrary, he takes great pains to prevent its attribution to him—and he gives us a Christianity which, despite its sudden advent into the world, is through and through, in its substance, modes of working and accessories alike, purely natural. It certainly is a meiosis to say that he "lays little stress on specific miracles." He does not allow the occurrence of any such thing as a "miracle." "Miracle," with him, as Orr justly tells us,[121a] "is the religious name for an event which awakens in us a

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[121] *The Essence of Christianity,* 1902, p. 227.

[121a] *The Christian View of God and the World* 1893, p. 31; see also *The Ritschlian Theology,* p. 93. Cf. Wendland, as cited, p. 61, who gives as the passages from which Ritschl's doctrine may be drawn: *Justification and Reconciliation,* III. E.T. 618-19; *Instruction,* etc., §17, E.T., 188-9; *J. d. Th.* 1861, pp. 429; *Hist. Zeitsch.* VIII, 1862, pp. 97 ff.

powerful impression of the help of God, but is not to be held as interfering with the scientific doctrine of the unbroken connection of nature."

Even more paradoxical than Brown's is Gustav Ecke's representation.[122] According to him Ritschl not only has no intention of excluding the supernatural factor from the course of the development of the Christian life, but actually so suggests it as to compel us to perceive in it his genuine point of view. It is allowed that he is not altogether consistent in the matter. He only sometimes speaks as if he recognized a direct supernatural activity underlying the Christian life, providing indeed its producing cause; recognized it but declined to assert it or to expound it, because, above all else that he recognized about it, is this—that, though it is to be acknowledged, it is a hidden mystery of which nothing whatever can be said, a kind of *Ding an sich* behind the phenomena of the spiritual life. At other times, it is admitted, he speaks as if there is nothing of the sort to be recognized and the Christian life is to be explained solely out of the natural powers of man's own spirit. Ecke now declares that, led by considerations of a general character, he is of the opinion that Ritschl is himself only when he speaks in the former fashion. He apparently forgets that even to speak in this former fashion is already to withdraw oneself wholly from the supernaturalism of the Christian life. It is already to treat this supernaturalism, which is only conventionally allowed, as negligible; to take up an agnostic attitude over against it, which, like all agnostic attitudes, is only an indirect way of denying it. It already betrays a rationalistic conception of the processes of the Christian life as ruling the mind, and thus points to the rationalistic mode of treatment which lies by its side as representing the fundamental point of view of the author.

It is true that, after expressing, at least, a complete "agnosticism" with reference to the working of the Holy Spirit on the human spirit, and asserting the consequent necessity of

[122] As cited, pp. 63 ff.

confining ourselves in expounding them to a mere description of the phenomena themselves, Ritschl is able to write such a sentence as this: "In these statements the Holy Spirit is not denied, but recognized and understood."[123] And it is true that after reasserting this "agnostic" attitude in its extremest form, going so far as to declare that "nothing further can be objectively taught" about the justification and regeneration of the individual than that they follow on his acceptance of the gospel as presented to him in the Christian community, he feels justified in striking back waspishly at his critics in the assertion that he too recognizes that there are "mysteries" in the Christian life but that it is his habit when he comes across a mystery to be silent about precisely it.[124] Such declarations, however, do not point, as Ecke appears to suppose, to a fundamental supernaturalism of conception on Ritschl's part, which represents the real Ritschl; but have precisely the contrary meaning. Ritschl is able to neglect whatever supernatural elements in the Christian life he may be thought here and there to suggest that he dimly perceives, and to develop the whole story of its rise and progress without their aid. And even when his language, taken literally, may seem most clearly to carry a supernaturalistic meaning, we cannot fail to know that it is not intended to convey it. This is true for example of the instances which have just been adduced. It is certain that when Ritschl speaks of "mysteries in the religious life" he is thinking of nothing supernatural, but only of the wonders of the natural operations of the human spirit. And it is certain that when he speaks of "recognizing and understanding" the Holy Spirit, he is not thinking of any supernatural Being—a Divine Person who acts as a Power on the persons of believers—but only of the "common spirit" of the Christian community, which in the form of a common knowledge affects the activities of the individual. Facts like these throw a lurid light on the survival in Ritschl's ex-

[123] P. 23.
[124] P. 607.

positions of expressions which might otherwise be thought capable of bearing a supernaturalistic interpretation.

What these expressions indicate is not that Ritschl was of a divided mind, and spoke now in a naturalistic, now in a supernaturalistic, sense without ever being able to find a point of equilibrium. Still less do they mean that, though working out his system on naturalistic postulates, he remained at bottom a supernaturalist, and his fundamental supernaturalism occasionally forces itself to the surface. What they mean is simply that Ritschl, though working out a purely naturalistic system, worked it out in the face of, and with a view to commending it to, a supernaturalistically minded community. He therefore clothes his naturalistic system with the terms of supernaturalism, or, to be more precise, of conservative evangelicalism. He himself thought of this procedure as a reminting of the old coin; it is not strange that the evangelical public itself looked upon it as rather counterfeiting it. In point of fact he everywhere employs the old nomeclature of a supernaturalistic theology in order to express—with whatever twisting and straining—his new naturalistic conceptions. The method cannot be said to be a happy one. Henri Schoen, who deals with it gently, points out that Ritschl borrowed, or may have borrowed, it from Hofmann, who, he thinks, in other matters also exerted a certain influence on Ritschl's development. Hofmann, says he,[125] not only compelled the Bible to teach his theology, "but inaugurated a procedure which became that of the Göttingen theologian. Persuaded that his contemporaries would accept his theory more easily if it was clothed in an orthodox form, he preserved the traditional terms, redemption, expiation, satisfaction, only giving them a new sense. He did not wish, at any price, to cast off 'the uniform of his army,' that is to say, that of the orthodox party. His object, as he liked to repeat, was 'to teach old truths in a new form.' It is possible, with equal right, to reverse the formula, and say that he taught new truths,

[125] As cited, p. 133.

while employing old expressions. Ritschl expressed indignation at this procedure;[126] he imitated it more than once." He found, in effect,[127] "in the writings of Hofmann a valuable lesson in prudence; he could learn from them that, in order to get a truth accepted he must avoid shocking the religious feeling of his contemporaries, and that it is often useful to present new ideas under an old form, that is to say, by preserving the expressions to which pious men are accustomed. The method is dangerous; beyond question, very dangerous: we do not hesitate to repel it when the sense of truth is in danger of being blunted by it. . . ."

It cannot be denied that Ritschl deliberately adopted this method of commending his naturalistic theology to a suspicious public; or that he pressed his employment of it to an incredible extreme. It would no doubt be a mistake, however, to attribute to him a calculated intention to deceive. He obviously took pleasure in his employment of the consecrated forms of speech and no doubt persuaded himself with more or less success that he had a right to them. We have to reckon here with the peculiarities of his personality, with the special type of his piety, with the sources of his theological system.

Johannes Wendland, in an illuminating page or two, makes us aware[128] of the close connection of Ritschl's theological attitude and development with his strong and proud, angular, and self-assertive character. Hating above all things what he regarded as sentimentality and pious "gush," seeing religion rather in "doing" than in "feeling," and priding himself on his "practical" Christianity, he conceived it to be his mission to bring this type of Christianity to its rights as over against the tendency to emotionalism which he marked with disgust in the professionally religious. With this natural temperament, his mind turned with predilection to that ethicizing form of Christian teaching

[126] *Justification and Reconciliation,* I. 645, 546.

[127] Schoen, as cited, p. 140.

[128] As cited, pp. 7 ff. Much of the contents of these closing paragraphs is drawn from this discussion.

which for more than a century had been regnant in a large section of German thought, and which we know by the general name of Rationalism.[129] "In point of fact," says Leonhard Stählin justly,[130] "his system of theology is an attempt to revive in new form the antiquated principles of Rationalism and to establish them on a new basis by means of a theory of cognition suggested by Kant and Lotze, and with the help of elements drawn from Schleiermacher. . . . It is simply a reconstructed theology of the so-called faith of reason or rational faith (*Vernunftsglaube*) and differs from other attempts of the same kind, not so much in substance as in form and method. . . . Matters are not altered by simply laying stress on the historical revelation through Christ as long as Christ has no other significance than that of having first realized that which forms the content of natural religion." It is not, however, in this philosophic-theological inheritance that his theology found its starting point, although he ostentatiously presents his epistemology as its determining factor. Neither does it take its starting-point from his historical or exegetical investigations, although he ostentatiously lays extended historical and exegetical investigations at its base. His philosophical, historical and exegetical results are all already dominated by his point of view, which has its roots in his religious peculiarity and the ideal of piety which he cherished and sought to illustrate in his person.

This type of piety he endeavored to impress on the church as the substance of what it is to be a Christian. It was in its interest that he worked out his theology, and it was in its interests that he turned and twisted the teaching of the Scriptures and of the great Reformers alike, in the determination to wrest from their unwilling lips support for it. Nothing could exceed the eclecticism of his procedure, except it be its violence. He takes from Scripture and Reformers alike what suits his purpose, without the least re-

[129] Cf. the good remarks of Julius Leopold Schultze in the *Neue kirchl. Zeitschrift*, 1898, IX, p. 214.

[130] As cited, p. 277.

gard to its logical connection, and then fits it without mercy into his scheme. He himself näively betrays how he deals with the Reformers, for example, when he drops the remark:[131] "The reformatory ideas are more concealed than revealed in the theological books of Luther and Melancthon themselves." Neglecting their real teachings he gathered out from their writings such chance remarks as could be made to fit in with his own view of things, and built up from them a new Reformation doctrine which he presented as the only true one. Thus he gave the world a new Naturalism, decked out in phrases borrowed from the Scriptures and Reformers, but as like their system of thought as black is to white, and called it the true doctrine of the Bible and Reformers. This strange procedure has, under his influence, been systematized and men now tell us gravely that the essence of any movement consists of that in it which we can look upon as lasting truth—which, being interpreted, means that in it which we find conformable to our own predilections.[132] In Ritschl's own hands it was rather the result of his overbearing temper, which imposed itself upon the materials of his thought and bent them to his service. So far as this, or something like this, is the true account of the matter, it is not necessary to attribute to him any direct purpose to deceive. The result was the same.

Benjamin B. Warfield.

Princeton.

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[131] *Drei akademische Reden,* p. 18 (as cited by Wendland).

[132] This is the procedure of W. Herrmann and A. Harnack when dealing with the doctrines of the Reformation. For the general notion see the *Harvard Theological Review,* October 1918, pp. 538 ff.

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ESCHATOLOGY OF THE PSALTER

There are certain editions of the New Testament which by way of appendix contain the Psalter, an arrangement obviously intended to serve the convenience of devotion. It has, however, the curious result of bringing the Apocalypse and the Psalms into immediate proximity. On first thought it might seem that scarcely two more diverse things could be put together. The storm-ridden landscape of the Apocalypse has little enough in common with the green pastures and still waters of which the Psalmist sings. For us the Psalter largely ministers to the needs of the devotional life withdrawn into its privacy with God. Such a life is not usually promotive of the tone and temper characteristic of the eschatological reaction. This will explain why the ear of both reader and interpreter has so often remained closed to strains of a quite different nature in this favorite book.

It requires something more strenuous than the even tenor of our devotional life to shake us out of this habit and force us to take a look at the Psalter's second face. It has happened more than once in the history of the Church, that some great conflict has carried the use of the Psalms out from the prayer-closet into the open places of a tumultuous world. The period of the Reformation affords a striking example of this. We ourselves, who are just emerging from a time of great world-upheaval, have perhaps discovered, that the Psalter adapted itself to still other situations than we were accustomed to imagine. To be sure, these last tremendous years have not detracted in the least from its familiar usefulness as an instrument of devotion. But we have also found that voices from the Psalter accompanied us, when forced into the open to face the world-

ALBRECHT RITSCHL AND HIS DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

II. RITSCHL THE PERFECTIONIST

It lies in the very nature of a naturalistic system that it should lay all its stress on the activities of the Christian life. There is nothing else on which it could lay its stress. What man himself does, the influences by which he is brought to do it, and the issue of his activities—this is the circle of topics in which what, by a strange transmutation of meaning, is still called Theology, moves. Ritschl continues to employ the terms reconciliation, justification, forgiveness, adoption, regeneration, sanctification; but they one and all denote in his hands human, not divine, acts; and his whole discussion is devoted to the elaboration of the influences under which man is brought to the performance of them, their nature, and their effects.

According to Ritschl all the influences under which man is brought to the performance of these acts are gathered up, as in their focus, in the person of Jesus Christ; or rather in the great discovery which Christ made of the real relation in which man stands to God, the effective transmission of which to His followers constituted the one object of His life.[1] This great discovery is comprehended in the one declaration that God is love and nothing but love, and therefore man has nothing to fear from Him. We do not rest under the Divine condemnation; the Divine wrath does not hang over us; God intends us nothing but good; God will do us nothing but good. This is what Jesus would have us understand and act upon; and this it is by which, if we understand and act upon it, we become Christians with all that that involves. Of course what we are assured of here is

[1] P. 386: "Beyond doubt Jesus experienced and declared to his disciples a religious relation to God not before known, and purposed to bring His disciples into the same religious world-view and self-estimate, and under this condition into the universal task of the Kingdom of God which He knew to be set for His disciples as for Himself."

that sin has no significance in the sight of God; and what we are exhorted is to treat it as without significance. Bringing us to this attitude to sin and God is the reconciling work of Jesus; our assumption of this attitude is our justification. For when we assume this attitude our distrust of God, the product of our feeling of guilt, passes away; we take our place happily by God's side; and, assured that He means us only good, we make His end our end and work with Him for its attainment.

We are obviously entangled here in a perfect network of illusions.

There is no such thing as sin. What we call sin is merely ignorance. Our feeling of guilt is therefore an illusion.[2] It is really not a sense of ill-desert for sins committed so much as a mere anticipation of the displeasure of God. We are not oppressed by the consciousness that we have done wrong; we are depressed by anxiety lest we shall receive harm. It is less regret than fear which gives it its form. This fear, however, is wholly misplaced. God feels no displeasure towards us and has no intention whatever of punishing our sin. He never has had. He experiences no movement of indignation against us; His whole emotional reaction towards us is love. Our sense of forgiveness is therefore also an illusion. There is nothing to forgive; and God has never been ill-disposed toward us. "If there is no truth in the consciousness of sin, as guilt causing alienation from God," writes Pfleiderer in an illuminating page,[3] "neither can there be any truth in the consciousness of the annulment of guilt and alienation from God. A guilt which does not exist except in man's illusory notion cannot be forgiven; a relation which has never really been interrupted cannot be restored, cannot be reconciled. The

[2] To be perfectly accurate we should note here that Ritschl is willing to allow that sin may become witting—in the case of the finally reprobate. As Pfleiderer (as cited, p. 69) puts it: "All sin, with the exception of the always only problematical definitive hardening, is in God's judgment only ignorance.'

[3] As cited, p. 61.

conclusion necessarily follows from the estimate of sin as an ignorance which is not deserving of wrath and does not interrupt our relation to God, that the consciousness of reconciliation or of a change from an interrupted to a peaceable relation is an illusion. There cannot occur here a change in the actual relation between man and God; the change lies only in man's conception of his relation to God so far as he is relieved from his former illusionary notion of this relation or is enlightened as to the absolute erroneousness of his sense of guilt and fear of the angry God."

In a word, Ritschl's whole doctrine of sin, guilt, forgiveness, reconciliation moves, not in the realm of realities, but in that of the subjective consciousness. Man feels himself under the Divine condemnation. He is wrong. All he needs is to be assured that he is wrong, and all is well. That is in effect Ritschl's doctrine of justification. Continuing his searching criticism Pfleiderer points out[4] that Ritschl can assign no ground for justification and that the reason is that nothing has really happened in justification. "There is no such essential difference for God between sinners and righteous that the one stands in an entirely different relation to Him from the other." "In point of fact," says he, "the key to Ritschl's doctrine of justification lies here: there is no need for a ground for the justification of the sinner simply because the sinner has never been the object of God's disfavor, but his sin has been esteemed by God only as the stage of his ignorance. Justification is therefore really nothing but the historical notification, brought about by Jesus, that God is only love and as such is not angry with sinners, and they may therefore lay aside their fear and distrust of Him. It is no doubt assumed along with this, that those who, as members of the communion of Christ, hear this proclamation and profit by it, will be led by it to adopt the end of God in His Kingdom. How, however, if this assumption be too optimistic? How if it should rather be found that the proclamation of the God whose

[4] As cited, p. 75.

forgiveness of sins is not accorded on distinct conditions, but whom rather sin does not in the least offend, is understood and utilized by the mass of the members of the community as meaning that they need not make too much of their sin and can exercise their freedom over the world in joyous mastery of the world and enjoyment of the world, undeterred by old-fashioned scruples of conscience? Of course the Ritschlian theologians have no such meaning and purpose. But the danger of a practical consequence of this sort lies so uncommonly close in this theology that it certainly needs to be earnestly considered."

There can be no sort of question that Ritschl makes the sense which the sinner has of resting under the displeasure of God, the sense which the believer has of having been forgiven by God, illusions. "All reflections about God's wrath and pity, His long-suffering and patience, His severity and mercy," he says,[5] "are based on the religious adjustment of our individual situation with God in the form of time." A. E. Garvie[6] rightly expounds this to mean, that "subjective changes in our own spiritual state, which is conditioned on the lapse of time, are experienced by us as due to objective changes in God's relation to us, although God is not Himself subject to the condition of time." But this is not all that it means. Ritschl is really employing the idea of the eternity of God to ground the denial of the presence in Him of any such emotion as wrath or any such quality as vindicatory justice, it being a maxim with him that wrath and love cannot co-exist in the same mind. However indispensable the judgments which he enumerates "may be in the context of our religious experiences," therefore, he immediately adds, "they are out of all relation to the theological determination of the whole under the viewpoint of eternity. Under the theological point of view, therefore, the wrath of God and His curse on sinners yet to be reconciled, finds no validity." God's actual attitude to us is,

[5] P. 322.
[6] P. 307.

and therefore His eternal attitude has always been, just that of pure love. He feels no anger towards us, and has never felt any, and it is absurd therefore to speak of reconciling Him to us, and even more absurd to speak of reconciling His love and anger in Himself. It is true that under His own sense of guilt a sinner may imagine that God is angry with him, and, under this obsession, may even look upon the evils which befall him in the course of his life, as so many punitive inflictions. But all this is illusion. "Here," says Garvie rightly,[7] "we are concerned with a subjective representation, not an objective reality." There being no such thing as "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against every doer of iniquity," it is our sense of guilt only, not the fact of the case, which leads us to interpret the evils of life as punitive. Paul is wrong when he connects death, for example with sin.[8] The only evil which is a real consequence of sin, is that estrangement from God which results from our sense of guilt. This experience of estrangement from God—the result of our sense of guilt—is therefore in a true sense the only "punishment" of sin.[9] "The unremoved sense of guilt is not a penal state along with others, but this is the thing itself to which all external penal evils are related only as accompanying circumstances."[10] Thus the whole of the evil of sin is swallowed up into the sense of guilt, which itself is—not the subjective reflection of an objective separation from God wrought by sin itself—but a subjective illusion as to the attitude of God

[7] As cited, p. 310.

[8] P. 358 f.

[9] Cf. Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, p. 147: "It is this experience of separation from God which, on Ritschl's showing, is the real core or essence of the punishment of sin, so far as, *ex concessis*, the punitive idea (which rests on the rejected theory of 'rights') is to be admitted to Christianity at all." In Ritschl's system there is no place for real punishment of sin. "If there is no wrath of God against sin," expounds Garvie (as cited, p. 310). "there can be no punishment by God of sin. This conclusion Ritschl expressly draws."

[10] P. 365.

towards sin, creating the feeling of a separation from God which has no existence except in our own imagination.

This being true, reconciliation naturally is to Ritschl, as Friedrich Nippold phrases it,[11] "at bottom, nothing but a change of mind, though no doubt, this change of mind is made possible only by the knowledge and appreciation of the divine will of love declared by Christ." And all that happens in justification—which is only a synonym of reconciliation—is, as Garvie points out,[12] "the restoration of the sinner to communion with God," or, otherwise expressed, "the removal of the sinner's separation from God," though to be perfectly accurate we must take the nouns "restoration," "removal," not actively, but passively. The separation here spoken of is expressed, or we would better say, consists, in a "sense of guilt"; it is therefore, this "sense of guilt" which is removed. "This, however," remarks Garvie now, "would be no benefit but an injury, unless with the sense of guilt there is also taken away the guilt, which is a real contradiction by man of God, and of his own moral destiny. As this contradiction is real, else man's sense of guilt were an illusion, so the removal is real, else man's feeling of forgiveness were a deception." This reasoning is formally sound; but as the results it ostensibly reaches are the precise contradictions of Ritschl's actual teachings, it serves only to show how completely the conceptions of sin and its removal drop out of Ritschl's teaching. Man's sense of guilt does appear in Ritschl's system as an illusion and his feeling of forgiveness does appear in it as deceptive. The guilt and forgiveness which these illusory feelings fallaciously presuppose share, of course, in their illusoriness. Ritschl knows nothing of either guilt or its removal, in the proper sense of the word guilt, in which it includes along with subjective ill-desert, also obnoxiousness to punishment.[13] The "sense of guilt" is represented by Ritschl as real-

[11] As cited, p. 265.

[12] As cited, p. 325 f.

[13] Orr has made the matter perfectly plain, *The Christian View of*

ly just distrust of God, and there is no ground for distrusting God. God does not really forgive our sins; He merely takes no account of them—His whole reaction towards us being love. He loves us continuously, with a love unconditioned by the intrusion of wrath. He experiences no change of attitude towards us, or of action toward us. We simply come to know that this is His attitude towards us; and our distrust of Him, the product of our unjustified sense of guilt, passes away. It passes away precisely because it has no ground in reality. We feel forgiven but we are not forgiven; we have merely learned that God is not "separated" from us—we have only been "separated" from Him.

What we receive through Christ according to Ritschl would be somewhat more accurately expressed therefore if we spoke of it as not forgiveness but the assurance of forgiveness.[14] Our sins are already forgiven, that is to say, overlooked: what we obtain through Christ is only knowledge of this fact.[14a] We remain guilty of these sins, of

God, etc. p. 179, *The Ritschlian Theology*, pp. 146 ff, 269 f, and especially *Ritschlianism*, pp. 99 ff. The strictures on Orr's representations made by A. T. Swing, *The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl*, 1901, pp. 125ff, Orr has himself dealt with adequately. Those by J. T. Mozley, *Ritschlianism*, 1909, pp. 218 ff are no more successful.

[14] On the technical subject of "assurance" Ritschl speaks at large p. 652. He who manifests the characteristic features of the believer—faith in God's providence, humility, patience, prayer, "combined as they are in normal fashion with the disposition to obey the moral law and with good action in one's calling"—has sufficient evidence that he is in a state of salvation. This admits of no other meaning than that our assurance of reconciliation is an inference from the observed fruits of reconciliation—Including our moral state. Accordingly Ritschl tells us in the summary statement (p. 670) that "the believer expresses his personal assurance of reconciliation" in the exercise of the Christian virtues. This is a position, however, which he does not seem always to preserve.

[14a] There is a certain analogy between Ritschl's representation that men are not under the wrath of God, but need only to lay aside their distrust of God and realize that they have nothing to fear from Him to be "saved," and a wide-spread type of preaching which declares all men by nature "sons of God," and "salvation" to consist in coming to understand and live according to this high character. "It is the true philosophy of history," says Phillips Brooks, "that man is the child

course, in the sense in which Ritschl speaks of "moral guiltiness"—that is to say, we remain subjectively ill-deserving, —and we do not lose consciousness of this guilt. It would be contrary to God's truth to pronounce us no longer guilty, and our own conscience witnesses to us that we are guilty.[15] Our sense of guilt may even be intensified.[16] Only we are made to feel that all this makes no difference in God's treatment of us, and so we are encouraged no longer to hold aloof from God in distrust of His purpose towards us. What "forgiveness removes is not the sense of guilt for past sins, but only its effect in separating from God, or the distrust of God which attaches to it."[17] It "merely makes inoperative that effect of guilt and the consciousness of guilt, which would appear in the abolition of the moral communion between God and man, in their separation or mutual alienation."[18] "When God forgives or pardons sins," Ritschl now immediately continues, "He brings His will into operation in the direction of not permitting the contradiction—expressed in guilt—in which sinners stand to Him, to hinder that fellowship of men with Him which He intends on higher ground." Forgiveness of sins thus means for Ritschl that, on God's part, God having ends of His own to serve, will not permit man's sin to stand in the way of fellowship with

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of God, forever drawn to his Father, beaten back by base waves of passion, sure to come to Him in the end." The analogy is not completely destroyed when a universal redemption is thought of as the ground of man's favorable condition as already forgiven and requiring only subjectively to realize this forgiveness,—which constitutes his salvaation. It is unnecessary to point out how wide-spread this notion is: it is intrinsic in all doctrines of a "universal atonement" where the atoning fact is found in the work of Christ and not in an act of man's. A curious example of it is mentioned by L. Ihmels, *Die tägliche Vergebung der Sünden,* 1901, pp. 39 f in "the Bornholm movement," for which see also Herzog-Hauck *sub nom.*

[15] P. 60. "The removal of guilt and the consciousness of guilt would be in contradiction to the validity of the law of truth for God, as also for the conscience of the sinner."

[16] P. 544.

[17] P. 545.

[18] P. 64.

Him; and on man's part, man, being assured of this, lays aside his distrust of God, the natural result of his sense of guilt ("that mistrust which as an affection of the consciousness of guilt naturally separates the offender from the offended one"), and commits himself in full trust to God's providential care. To put the matter bluntly, God proposes on His part to take man just as He finds him; and man agrees on his part, that being done, no longer to distrust and hold aloof from God, but to trust himself to His keeping. Having no longer to look for evil from God, according to his desert, he will accept the good, which, despite his unworthiness of it, God (for ends of His own) is willing to give him. This is really Ritschl's doctrine of justification; and obviously, it is a profoundly immoral doctrine. It amounts at bottom simply to an understanding between man and God that by-gones shall be by-gones, and no questions will be asked.

Even C. von Kügelgen[19] allows that Ritschl deals too lightly with the forgiveness of sins. "That, not indeed the idea of sin, but the idea of the forgiveness of sin, is (of course unintentionally) attenuated by Ritschl on theological grounds, seem to us easily shown. Frank says[20] accordingly

[19] As cited, p. 44.

[20] The reference is to Fr. H. R. Frank, *Ueber die kirchliche Bedeutung der Theologie A. Ritschls*², 1888, p. 14: "It corresponds with Ritschl's conception of sin, that in order to the reconciliation of man with God there is no need of an atonement by propitiation. 'When God forgives or pardons sin, He exerts His will in the direction that the contradiction, expressed in guilt, in which sinners stand to Him, shall not prevent that communion of man with Him which He purposes on higher grounds' (p. 64). 'On higher grounds'—because the establishment of the Kingdom of God is His self-end and forgiveness of sins is needed for it." Pursuing his theme Frank points out that in Ritschl's conception of God, no less than of sin, nothing else than this could be expected of him. "Now then," asks Frank a few pages later (p. 18), "how are we to comfort a soul that has fallen into sin and is burdened in his conscience in the presence of God? We must say to him: Dear friend, you have a wrong idea of God. God has no need of punishment and atonement. On higher grounds, namely, that He may realize the purpose of the world, which is at the same time His own purpose, He pardons sin. Be at peace, dear soul, and do not disturb yourself with such mediaeval (cf. Ritschl, *Drei akad. Reden*, p. 28) notions."

with justice that according to Ritschl God forgives sin 'on higher grounds,' because the establishment of the Kingdom of God is His self-end, and forgiveness of sins is needed for that. Thus forgiveness of sins becomes for Ritschl at bottom a means to an end . . . " These remarks do not, however, go to the root of the matter. What is difficult to credit is not that God has a high end in view in forgiving sins and that it is this high end which determines His action —any doctrine of forgiveness must come in the end to that; but that this forgiveness is grounded solely in this high end. Not only is God's ultimate motive in forgiving sin made to be His desire to establish a Kingdom of God; but His sole proximate justification in forgiving sins is supplied by this one motive. His forgiveness of sins is made thus a purely arbitrary act, performed for no other reason and with no other justification, than that He needs forgiven sinners for ends of His own. This, we say, is a profoundly immoral doctrine; it represents God as treating sin as no sin, which is as much as to say, failing to react to moral evil, perceived as such, as every moral being, by virtue of his very nature as a moral being, must react to it—with abhorrence and indignation. Nevertheless as we have already seen, this representation falls in with Ritschl's actual teaching with respect to God, to whom he denies any other attribute than love and from whom he withholds specifically the attribute of vindicatory justice. It is also alone consonant with his teaching with regard to the work of Christ, to which he will not permit to be ascribed any expiatory or sin-bearing character. If he was to teach any forgiveness of sins at all, Ritschl was shut up to representing it as done by God in that purely arbitrary way in which alone, he tells us, it would be becoming for God's will to act.

An attempt is made to mitigate the immorality of the transaction, as it concerns man, by representing it as the reception by man of "eternal life" or "blessedness," and the source of great encouragement to him to undertake good works. Assured of acceptance with God, despite his sins,

he, in trust in God's providence, rises, as a spiritual being, above the world, makes God's self-end his end, and, as a fellow-worker with God, labors for the building up of the Kingdom of God in the world. Having been given a new chance, he takes it. We have already seen Pfleiderer, with justified cynicism, questioning whether the proclamation of totally ungrounded forgiveness, open unconditionally to all, would naturally have this happy effect. With a similar implication Frank reminds us in this connection of Claus Harms' comment that in the sixteenth century the forgiveness of sins cost at least money; now, it seems, we are to have it for nothing at all—we are just to take it for ourselves.[21] Certainly to represent forgiveness of sins as costing absolutely nothing—either to God or to us—will scarcely gird our loins to avoid at all costs such negligible foibles. In any event, however, we are given here but a poor substitute for the Holy Spirit, making His people holy by His creative action on and in them. Yet this is what Ritschl offers us instead of that. Readers of Ritschl are struck by nothing more strongly than by his embarrassment in dealing with the topic of sanctification. With his passionate repulsion of all "mysticism,"—that is, of all immediate working of God upon man—he has no instrument of sanctification but the human will, acting "freely" under the inducement of motives.[22] Man must sanctify himself. With his equally determined representation of justification as purely a change of relation—it would be better said, of attitude—to God, he repels all implication of sanctification in justification, however that implication may be conceived. Sanctification is an independent work of man, taking place in a different sphere of operation. The most that he can allow when swayed by this point of view, is that it is so far

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[21] Fr. H. R. Frank, *Ueber die kirchliche Bedeutung der Theologie A. Ritschls*, Ed. 2, 1888, p. 31.

[22] Hence Fr. Luther (*Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1891, p. 479) very properly says that "according to Ritschl it is nature and not grace which is the source of the moral activities of life."

furthered by justification that the new attitude to God assumed in justification predisposes men to make God's self-end his own end, and enheartens him in its prosecution. Justification may be thus, he says, the fundamental condition of the Christian life,[23] apart from which the new life would not be undertaken or vigorously prosecuted.[24] But it is not the direct means of sanctification nor is sanctification its direct end. Such a representation would be to institute a "wholly apocryphal" connection between the two.[25]

The dualism between the religious and the ethical aspects of the Christian life thus brought to expression, runs through the whole of Ritschl's exposition of the Christian life and is never quite resolved. It is embodied in the famous comparison in which he pictures Christianity "not as a circle described from a single center, but an ellipse which is determined by two *foci*";[26] and it determines the form of his definition of Christianity, which is modified from Schleiermacher's precisely in its interests. "Christianity," says he,[27] "is the monotheistic, completely spiritual *and* ethical religion which, on the ground of the redeeming *and* Kingdom-founding life of its Originator, consists in the freedom of childship to God, includes in itself the motive to conduct out of love, aims at the moral organization of humanity, and grounds blessedness in childship to God *as well as* in the Kingdom of God." He is thinking here obviously in terms of religion and ethics set in a parallel relation to one another, with no vivid sense, at least, of their integration into a single notion. He is determined that Christianity shall not be to him "either merely a doctrine of redemption, or merely a system of morality." He insists that it is both;

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[23] P. 535, paragraph 2.

[24] P. 546. When von Kügelgen, as cited, p. 94, declares that the reproach that with Ritschl "justification has no telic relation (*Abzweckung*) to the production of morally good conduct or of works"—as Lipsius represents—is unjust, he can be justified only so far as this.

[25] P. 495 ff.

[26] P. 11.

[27] P. 13.

and in order that it may be both he continually emphasizes the two as two. He says,[28] it is true, that "dogmatics must be worked out, not purely from the idea of redemption; nor ethics purely from the idea of the Kingdom of God; each must be kept under the constitutive influence of both ideas." "Effectuation by God" supplies the form of the one; "personal self-activity" of the other. Neither can do without the other; they interact on one another. But their unity continually escapes his grasp. In the end, no doubt, the two are integrated under the scheme of means and end. Redemption is in order to the Kingdom of God; the ethical activities of the Kingdom of God manifest childship to God. But this mode of representation is reached with difficulty and is not consistently maintained.

Means are of course always subordinate to their end. As redemption through Jesus has the Kingdom of God for its end, that means accordingly that religion is in order to morality, or, to use a parallel mode of expression, employed by Ritschl, "religious dependence" is in order to "moral freedom." And that means in turn that Ritschl's system (conceiving of religion and ethics as it actually does) is at bottom less a system of theology than a system of ethics; and it is the idea of "moral freedom," which gives its form to ethics, that dominates his thought. He does indeed remind us[29] that Christianity is in the first instance a religion, and only in its specific character among religions, the ethical religion by way of eminence. Therefore, he argues, "the religious functions—trust in God, humility, patience, thanksgiving and prayer to God—in which according to Luther's teaching, the believer takes his position against the world—have precedence of the series of moral functions in which we devote ourselves directly to man." But this avails nothing; for in Ritschl's view, these "religious" functions are at most only a parallel product of man's free action, in the religious sphere, to his independent mo-

[28] P. 14.
[29] P. 527.

rality; and in reality only a means to his moral activity, supplying the "mood" in which alone it can be, or can be successfully, prosecuted. It is his naturalism which is determining his conceptions here. He is not talking of what God works in man in and through justification; but of how the new attitude which man assumes in what he calls justification affects him in his relations God-ward and man-ward. What he presents as the religious results arising out of justification are therefore merely the motives to moral action which spring from his change of attitude. The vacillation, in which Ritschl now presents the religious aspects of the Christian life as merely the means to the moral, and now keeps the two apart as independent parallel phenomena of it,[30] may possibly be, Henri Schoen suspects,[31] if not exactly due to, yet facilitated by, a double inheritance. There is Schleiermacher, after whom it was difficult to present a purely ethical theory of redemption. But there is also Kant. And if, in spite of Schleiermacher, the ethical element dominates in Ritschl's doctrine, "that is because, consciously or unconsciously, he remains more under the influence of Kant than of Schleiermacher. It is because he feared above everything to see the mystical element predominate over the will to do good, which appeared to him to be the essential factor of all religion."

We perceive that Ritschl's conception of the Christian life amounts briefly to just this: free ethical life inspired by a sense of well-pleasingness to God. Justification is viewed as the assumption of a new attitude of trust towards God and entrance, in this trust, into participation in God's aim to found an ethical Kingdom; and this Kingdom of God is viewed as the society of those animated by this motive and sharing in this endeavor. Justification thus prepares for the ethical effort; the Kingdom of God is its sphere. This free ethical life under this inspiration constitutes now Christian

[30] P. 521. "What we gain is not a simple subsumption of the ethical under the religious aspect of Christianity."

[31] As cited, p. 138; cf. p. 136.

perfection, in Ritschl's nomenclature; that is to say, it is all that it is necessary to have in order to be a Christian—it makes us perfectly Christian though it may not make us perfect Christians.[32] Ritschl, however, is not content to leave his conception of the essence of Christianity, or Christian perfection, in this simple brevity of statement. He analyzes it, and he elaborates it. He divides, first of all between those elements of it which are, in his view, the direct and immediate effects of justification, and those elements of it which proceed from justification only indirectly and mediately, namely, through the mediation of the former. The former are, as we have seen, the religious, the latter the ethical elements; and we note here again that the Christian life is conceived as essentially conduct to which its religious aspect serves as means. The religious elements—Ritschl calls them religious functions—are enumerated as we have seen, as faith in the divine providence, humility, patience, prayer. They form, in their necessary unity,[33] the temper of mind or mood of the Christian, the temper of mind or

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[32] William Adams Brown is quite right therefore when he tells us (*Christian Theology in Outline,* p. 413) that "perfection" "as understood by Ritschl is a name which describes the qualities which enter into the Christian ideal, however incomplete may be their quantitative realization." "Thus," Brown illustrates, "a man whose life is characterized by the qualities of faith, humility, patience and fidelity to his calling is perfect in Ritschl's sense of the term; since he is living in the right relation to God, however conscious he may be of occasional lapses from his own standard." And then he adds: "So defined, Christian perfection is only a name for that assurance which should characterize all true Christian living, and which is possible in any walk of life. It is the rejection of the Catholic doctrine of a double standard by which the possibility of perfection is confined to men who give themselves to the monastic life." We shall see subsequently that there is more to be said: Ritschl was not satisfied with a perfection of relation or a *perfectio partium.*

[33] The religious elements of Christian perfection all go together and *cannot* exist except in their combination. Ritschl says (*Die christl. Vollkommenheit,* Rae's translation p. 148) that "they are so constituted that none of them can come up without the other; they are the various reflections shed by the religious certainty of reconciliation with God, through Christ."

mood by virtue of which he is a Christian, and because of which he becomes a worker along with God in the moralization of the world, through love.

There is nothing arbitrary in this construction. It is merely the expression in terms of the Christian life of the fundamental contents of Ritschl's doctrine of justification. He identifies justification with the forgiveness of sins, which is, positively expressed, entrance into fellowship with God. This entrance into fellowship with God involves, however, deliverance from the sense of guilt so far as the sense of guilt produces mistrust of God and separation from Him. It is necessarily accompanied therefore with peace of heart and joy. Ritschl calls this experience indifferently "blessedness" and "eternal life." And this naturally carries with it on the positive side a trust in God, which takes the place of the mistrust from which deliverance has been had. In this trust we not only accept God's providence as well for us and for the world, but are impelled to adopt God's end as our end, and to work along with Him to its accomplishment. This is all of the very essence of the experience of justification as a fact. And it is not a very complicated conception, but on the contrary, at once very simple and quite unitary. It would not be doing serious injustice to it if we said brusquely that it is comprehended in the idea of putting ourselves by the side of God and accepting His end as our end. We put ourselves by the side of God when we not only acquiesce in the course of things which He has in His providence established for His world, but recognize it as the best course of things and best for us. This carries with it what Ritschl calls "dominion over the world," that is superiority to its changes and chances and the subordination of it to our spiritual life. It carries with it also humility and patience and thanksgiving to God: these are the tones of mind which acquiescence in, acceptance of, and rejoicing in God's providence bring with them. Putting ourselves by the side of God in this attitude of mind, we

naturally make His end our own and live for the purposes for which He has created and is now governing the world. This double attitude of believers, religious and ethical, constitutes their specific quality as believers: this is what Christianity is. In other words, this double attitude constitutes the perfection of Christians, which accordingly Ritschl defines in one of his briefer statements as consisting in "humility, faith in, and submission to God's providence, invocation and thanksgiving to God in prayer, and fidelity in the moral vocation which is useful to the community."[34] Or again:[35] "Faith in the Fatherly providence of God, which maintains a right feeling with God through humility, and with the world through patience, and which expresses and confirms itself through prayer,"—to which is to be added, on the ethical side, the faithful pursuit of our vocation.

Bearing such a relation to his doctrine of justification, Ritschl's doctrine of Christian perfection obviously embodies the essence of his religious teaching, in which his whole system culminates and into which it flows out as its issue. He himself so regarded it. Hs speaks of it[36] as "the practically religious proceeds (*Ertrag*) of the doctrine of reconciliation." In it is depicted what in his view Christianity actually is, the tangible, palpable, concrete Christianity of reality. Whatever else may be theory, this is the fact, the whole fact, of Christianity. He did not easily win to its full apprehension. We are given to understand that it was only at the end of his long toil in the composition of his chief treatise, that he reached perfect clearness in his understanding and statement of at least the details. In January 1874, while the great book was in process of going through the press, he was called upon to deliver a lecture for the benefit of the Göttingen Woman's Club.[37] He chose the

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[34] Cited by Garvie, as cited, p. 356.

[35] P. 652.

[36] Letter to Marcus, January 16, 1874, *Leben*, II, p. 156.

[37] This lecture was of course, *Die christliche Vollkommenheit: ein Vortrag*, 1874.

subject of Christian Perfection and, drawing out of the fulness of his thought what was the result of long years of labor, "he found that certain ideas which form the web of the great book, became to him for the first time, completely clear."[38] He at once set himself to adjusting the text of his book to his new lucidity of insight, so that in it as well as in the lecture of 1874 we have his complete thought on the subject. Ritschl does not mean, of course, to say that the general conception which only thus late reached its final form was new to him. He tells us on the contrary that its fundamental elements had been for years in his mind.[39] For long, however, he had employed them only in his Theological Ethics and it was apparently not until 1873 that he discovered that they had as important a place in Dogmatics as in Ethics.[40] Perhaps it may be not without its significance that the special element of his doctrine which he himself looked upon as embodying its real significance was thus carried over from his ethical to his dogmatic system. Once carried over into the dogmatic system, it was made the most of. It is not merely the issue of the system; it pervades it. We do not have to wait to see it expounded, in its substance at least, until we read the end of the dogmatic volume, where the Christian life comes up for formal treatment. Its fundamental elements are already—as is natural since they are merely the effects of justification—presented in the discussion of the subjective side of justification.[41] They are even more fully presented—as again is natural—as the opposite over against which the conception of sin is adjusted.[42] They are suggested again—as again is natural, since He is the pattern of His people—when the character of Christ comes up for discussion.[43] Ritschl did not

[38] *Leben*, II, p. 156.
[39] *Leben*, II, p. 125.
[40] *Leben*, II, p. 148.
[41] Pp. 168 ff (177).
[42] P. 335.
[43] Pp. 389, 463, 551, 574; and see especially the letter to Diestel of May 24, 1873, printed in the *Leben*.

make little of his doctrine of Christian perfection, or thrust it into a corner.

Ritschl is very eager, as elsewhere, so especially here, to attach to himself the teaching of the Reformers. Nowhere else does he do so with less right. He adduces especially a passage from the Augsburg Confession, which, he intimates, can with a little interchange of what he represents as equivalent statements, be made to teach about Christian perfection precisely what he teaches.[44] The Confession is very much concerned to repel the elevation of the monastic life in contrast with that of ordinary citizens into a "state of perfection." No, it says, "the good and perfect kind of life is the kind of life which has the mandate of God," not that which has been invented by man without any commandment from God. The perfection which the Gospel teaches does not consist in a pretence of poverty and humility and celibacy, but in the fear of God and faith. It is—and this is the passage adduced by Ritschl,[45] "to fear God sincerely and again to conceive great faith, and to be assured for Christ's sake that we have a placated God; to ask from God, and confidently to expect, help in all our undertakings, according to our calling; meanwhile diligently to do good works outwardly and to attend to our calling." "In these things," it is added with emphasis, "there is true perfection and the true worship of God; it is not in celibacy, or mendicancy, or dirty clothing." Here, says Ritschl.[46] there is as-

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[44] We have only, he says, (*Lecture on Christian Perfection*, E. T. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October 1878, p. 665) to "group the thoughts a little more systematically, and to combine 'reverence for God' and 'trust in Him' into the one idea of 'humility'"; to "substitute 'faith in God and submission to His providence' for 'the expectation of God's help and the contempt of God and the world'"; and "add to these supplications and thanks to God in prayer; and lastly faithfulness to the public demands of morality." That is to say, we have only to rewrite the statement from a fundamentally different point of view and to make it witness to a completely different conception.

[45] *Confessio Augustana* XXVIII, 49 (Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, III, p. 57).

[46] P. 647.

serted just what he teaches,—"not merely that faith in God's fatherly providence and prayer are the expression of our consciousness of reconciliation, but also that these functions, together with humility and the moral activity proper to one's vocation are the expressions of Christian perfection." It may repay us to observe just how far this amazing assertion is justified, and precisely where the two statements part company.

This at least the Confessional statement obviously has in common with Ritschl's—it is speaking, as he ostensibly is, merely of the *perfectio partium;* of what is necessary to be a true Christian; of what enters into the idea of Christianity as essential constituent elements; of *Christianismus totus* as it itself expresses it: not of the perfect embodiment of this perfect and entire Christianity in the individual. It is in these things alone, it says, that the perfection of Christianity is to be found; we are not to seek it elsewhere. But it is not said that these things are embodied in any given life in their perfect manifestation (the *perfectio graduum*). On the contrary the Reformers very explicitly assert that they are not.[47] Another thing in which the Confessional statement resembles Ritschl's is that in enumerating the characteristics of true Christianity it includes both religious and ethical elements and places them merely side by side. Christianity embraces, it says, both a religious attitude and ethical activities—and it adds nothing as to the relation of the two to one another. For all that is said here, that relation might be one of mere adjacency. This, Ritschl would have us believe, is the characteristic attitude of the Re-

[47] It is a characteristic phrase of Luther's (Erlangen Ed, of *Works,* XI. 185): *Christianus non est in facto sed in fieri.* Similarly Calvin (on Eph. 1.16, 1548), "The knowledge of the faithful is never so clear that their eyes are without blearing and free from all obscurity." Our warfare, says Calvin (*Inst.* I. XIV. 13) "is terminated only by death"; then only (§18) is our victory perfected, "our flesh having been put off, according to which we are yet subject to infirmity." So Luther (*Lectures on Romans* of 1515) declares of the truly righteous that "they sigh, until they are completely cured of concupiscence, a release which takes place at death."

formers.[48] In this, however, he is wrong and he has himself incidentally adduced some of the evidence that he is wrong.[49] The whole nature of the relation of religion to morality in the Christian system—or to speak more narrowly of the relation of justification to sanctification—may have required some time to be brought out into clear light, and may even yet in wide circles be imperfectly apprehended. But the necessary connection of the two has never been doubted in evangelical circles, and Ritschl's tendency to conceive of them in separation is only one of the results of his lapse from the evangelical position. The simple collocation of the two in the passage adduced from the Augsburg Confession means nothing more than that Melanchthon at the moment was not concerned with a closer definition of their relation. In a third matter the similarity of the passage adduced from the Augsburg Confession and Ritschl's doctrine of Christian perfection is more striking and more significant. This lies in the prominence given in the definition of Christianity on the ethical side to the great Protestant conception of vocation.[50] It is the most satisfying and the most fruitful element in Ritschl's treatment of the Christian life that he organizes its ethical side around the idea of vocation, although, of course, the conception itself cannot, in the presence of his antisupernaturalistic point of view, come

[48] Cf. the discussion, pp. 487 ff. He discusses Luther's and Melanchthon's views in vol. I, pp. 167 ff, and Calvin's, pp. 189 ff. They all, he says, were clear that both justification and sanctification follow on saving faith, but not clear as to the exact relation in which they stand to one another.

[49] Cf. p. 147 where he recognizes that both Melanchthon and Calvin teach that the believer "sees in his ability to perform good works an evidence of God's special pardon"—which certainly connects sanctification with justification.

[50] This is the way Doumergue speaks of it (*La Réformation et la Révolution*, 1919, p. 35): "Then Luther, and with more logic still, Calvin, proclaimed the great idea of 'vocation'—an idea and a word which are found in all the languages of the Protestant peoples, and which are lacking in the languages of the peoples of antiquity and in the culture of the middle ages."

fully to its rights.[51] It is a matter of course that the idea appears even in the brief allusion to the moral life of Christians in the Confession. It was a living influence in all the thought of the Reformers regarding conduct.

So soon however as we rise from the ethical to the religious aspect of the Christian life all similarity of the description of it given in the Augsburg Confession to Ritschl's conception of it completely vanishes. According to the Confession the Christian life receives its form from three fundamental reactions. These are sincere fear of God, assurance of His reconciliation through Christ, and confidence that He will answer the prayers of his people. Ritschl allows no place in the Christian life for any one of three, and thus set himself in diametrical opposition to the Confession's conception of the substance of Christianity. As in his system God is love and nothing but love, there is no propriety in speaking in it of a "fear," of a "serious fear," of God; phraseology which conveys, no doubt, particularly the ideas of awe, reverence, veneration, but from which the sentiment of dread—we still speak of God as a "Dread Being"—cannot be eliminated.[52] It is precisely every idea which can be expressed by "dread" that Ritschl discards from his conception of God. Consequently in adjusting the Confessional statement to his own view, Ritschl passes lightly

[51] For example, the immediately divine appointment of each man's calling; cf. Doumergue as cited: "Vocation is the call of God addressed to each man, whoever he may be, to charge him with a special work, no matter what. And the calls, and consequently those called, are equal among themselves. The burgomaster is God's burgomaster, the physician God's physician, the merchant God's merchant, the laborer God's laborer. Every vocation, liberal as we say, or manual, the most humble, the most lowly, or the most noble, the most glorious, according to appearances, is of divine right." Among all the wise things which Ritschl says about our vocation (cf. pp. 444, 666), he cannot quite rise to this wisest of all.

[52] Young, *Centaur*[1] (*Works*, 1757, IV. 108): "That dread Being we dare oppose." Cf. O. W. Holmes, *Army Hymn*: "God of all nations! Sovereign Lord! In Thy dread name we draw the sword."

over the phrase "serious fear of God," rendering it—not of course in essence wrongly—"reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) for God," and combining it—quite unwarrantably—with part of the next clause—"trust in God"—"into," he says,[53] "humility." A "placated God" (*Deus placatus*) is of course equally abhorrent to him as a "dread God," and for the same reason. A God who is all love needs no placating: He has no wrath toward sinners; and the whole of "salvation" consists in the discovery of this fact by the sinner. Christ has not appeased God, and the essence of his work consists, indeed, in persuading men that God needs no appeasing. Ritschl therefore simply sums up the entire declaration, the key declaration in the Confession, in the idea of "trust," and considers it, in combination with the "fear of God," as we have already noted, to be absorbed in the one notion of "humility." As little as a "placated God" does Ritschl believe in a prayer-answering God. In his watchful zeal against all "mysticism," he will not permit God to act directly on the human heart, and his conception of God's relation to the universe is rather deistic than theistic. There is no way then for God to answer prayer, and prayer is reduced accordingly to the forms of adoration and especially thanksgiving—although, it seems, that Ritschl, quite inconsistently, does not venture to reject petition altogether.[54] Accordingly he again divides the Con-

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[53] *Die christliche Vollkommenheit*, 1889, p. 8 (E. T. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct. 1878, p. 665).

[54] Pp. 647 ff; *Instruction*: §§ 54, 55, 78 ff. Orr (*The Ritschlian Theology*, p. 177) says: "Petitionary prayer is generally excluded and we are taught to regard prayer as chiefly thanksgiving." That expresses the fact. Ecke (as cited, p. 303) Haug, Lamm, omit the qualifications. Von Kügelgen (as cited, p. 127) comes to Ritschl's defense but without effect. From all that appears, the answer to our petitions is "limited by the reservation that the petition must accord with God's providence over us" (*Instruction*, § 55); which appears to mean that we receive nothing we ask for which we would not have received had we not asked. Even Garvie (as cited, p. 354) allows this. He condemns Ritschl's "limitation of prayer to thanksgiving" or the "practical exclusion of petition from it," and adds that in these circumstances that "faith in God's providence of which Ritschl makes to much" means

fessional statement and gravely bids us "to substitute for 'the expectation of God's help and contempt of death and the world' "—the latter phrase being derived from a passage of Luther's which he couples with the Confession—"faith in and resignation to God's providence"; to which he adds as a new item "invocation of and thanks to God in prayer." "Faith in and resignation to God's providence" are, however, not in the least the same thing as "petitioning from God and certainly expecting aid." The personal relation is gone altogether, and with it the postulation of personal action *ad rem.*[55]

The difference between the Confessional and Ritschl's conception of the Christian life, thus, is polar. In the one we have a life instinct with the sense of God in His majesty, passed in His presence as the ever present and active ruler of the universe, who is nevertheless accessible to us in our weakness, to whom therefore as to a personal supporter and helper we can go in every time of need, with full expectation of aid, because, though we are sinners, He has been reconciled to us in the blood of Jesus Christ; a life

"little more than acceptance of whatever God may choose to send us, without any expectation whatever that our desires will in any way be taken into account." Garvie is writing from a standpoint which would subject God to man; but he recognizes here that Ritschl's doctrine of prayer renders specfic answers to petitions impossible.

[55] George Macdonald, who is not often right, is right when he says (*Robert Falconer,* p. 193): "She had taught him to look up—that there was a God. He would put it to the test. Not that he doubted it yet; he only doubted whether there was a hearing God. But was not that worse? It was, I think. For it is of far more consequence what kind of a God, then whether a God or not." Of course Ritschl does not represent his far-off, silent God as a direct object of human affection. What believers love is their fellow-believers, and it is only in them that they love God, or, we may add, the exalted Christ. "For," says Otto Ritschl, describing his father's ethical teaching (*Leben,* II. p. 354), "in the Johannean declarations it is the suppressed mediating thought that God as the unseen cannot be the immediate object of human action. Accordingly neither can Christ, as the Lord who has become unseen, be the direct object of love-expression." So in the *Instruction,* § 6, Ritschl says: "Love to God has no sphere of activity outside of love to one's brother."

therefore suffused with the hope, the confidence, the joy which comes from the consciousness of pardoned sin. In the other we have a life of submission—no doubt humble, patient, even grateful, or even joyful submission—to the course of things, in the belief that it is a good God that has ordained this course of things and that it must therefore be working for good. The former conception is the Christian conception. The latter—must we not call it merely pagan?

It is desirable to go somewhat more into the details of Ritschl's doctrine. Ritschl represents the sole direct effect, as it is the single proper end, of justification to be what he calls "eternal life,"[56] a conception which he empties of both its eschatological[57] and its ethical content, and thinks of in terms of pure "blessedness." Its quality is given to this blessedness by the experience of what Ritschl calls "dominion" (*Herrschaft*) over the world, or, in other words, the sense of superiority to the changes and chances of the world which is proper to a spiritual being—or just "freedom." "The positive aim of forgiveness or justification, or reconciliation," says Ritschl,[58] is "that freedom of believers in communion with God which consists in dominion over the world, and is to be regarded as eternal life." And von Kügelgen expounds the meaning of his master thus:[59] "Eternal life, in the sense of Christianity, is the Christian independence . . . which in harmony with God's providence subjects all things to itself, so that they become the means to blessedness, even though, from the external point of view, they run athwart it." This "lordship over

[56] Pp. 495 ff. Maerker subjects Ritschl's doctrine of "eternal life" to a careful examination in an article in the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* for 1898 (14 pp. 116-138) entitled "Lehrt Albrecht Ritschl ein ewiges Leben?"

[57] Von Kügelgen (as cited, p. 94) points out that Ritschl identified "eternal life" not with an extramundane consummation (*Vollendung*) but with intrammundane Christian perfection (*Vollkommenheit*).

[58] P. 556. Cf. the phrases on p. 518: "reconciliation with God, or liberation from the world, or eternal life." These phrases are synonymous.

[59] As cited, p. 131.

the world," which is identical with "eternal life," and "blessedness," we see, is identical also with what Ritschl calls "faith in God's providence." We are told accordingly [60] that "the aim of reconciliation with God in the Christian sense" is "lordship over the world," and then again[61] that "in general the form in which religious lordship over the world is exercised, is faith in God's providence." The aim of reconciliation "which does not differ in substance from justification or regeneration" is then, in this intensely this-world religion, "faith in God's providence." Thus, "faith in God's providence" becomes the substance of the Christian life, the thing that makes it a really Christian life. The other elements entering into Ritschl's conception of the Christian life which are subsequently mentioned—humility, patience, thankfulness—are merely qualifications of mode, not additional constituents, of the Christian life, as thus defined. Now, we are told[62] that this "faith in divine providence" is "normally a tone of feeling." That is to say reconciliation, justification, regeneration, have as their aim, and issue into, a purely subjective change, that and that only. We need not, because of them, find ourselves in any objectively different situation from that occupied before; we in point of fact, do not. There has come about a change only in our "tone of feeling."

Let us endeavor to make clear to ourselves precisely what this means. When it is said that Ritschl uses the phrase "eternal life" not in an eschatological sense, but of a "tone of feeling" acquired in this life, it is of course not meant merely that he teaches that the Christian does not wait until death to receive the blessings obtained through Christ, but enters into them at once on believing. What is meant is that Ritschl conceives "eternal life" after a fashion which adjusts it entirely to this life; it is in its essence in his view an attitude towards the actual course of this world. If

[60] P. 609.
[61] P. 617.
[62] P. 622.

there is anything beyond, it does not appear. "Salvation," with him, if we can speak of "salvation" with reference to his theories, is an entirely "this-world salvation." "Saving faith" is a phrase as little consonant with Ritschl's system as "salvation," and the relation of faith to justification gives him a great deal of trouble. He wishes to speak in the terms of Reformation doctrine, but he does not find it easy to determine whether faith should be represented as antecedent to justification—its condition, he would say—or as consequent on it; the best he can do is to call it its "concomitant." In point of fact, faith in his system is the substance of justification. All that justification is, is the passage from distrust to trust: this is not the way justification is obtained—this is itself justification. Justification thus is identified with faith; and the faith with which it is identified is not faith in Christ our Redeemer, nor even faith in a redeeming God, but just faith in the divine providence. The sinner having been persuaded that he can safely draw near to God despite his guilt, lays aside his distrust and draws near to God in trust. He is sure now that God, admitting him despite his guilt into fellowship with Him, will deal well with him. That is to say, he commits himself to God as Father and trusts to His fatherly love that all things will work for good to him. This is nothing more than faith in God's providence. And this faith in God's providence is declared to be itself justification, reconciliation, adoption, eternal life, all of which are synonyms.

This being so, it is astonishing to learn, as we quickly learn, that by the providence of God Ritschl has not at all in mind what that phrase would naturally suggest to the average Christian, the ever present watchful care of God; but just the established course of things, conceived of as the general ordinance of God. The world is governed by law; and God is not to be expected to interfere in any way with the working of that law, which He himself has made

the governing power of the world. To trust in the providence of God, as Leonhard Stählin points out,[63] does not mean then confidence that God will "really intervene in the course of nature, at individual junctures, for the benefit of believers," but confidence that the actually existent order of things is not accidental, but has been ordained by God, who is our Father; and acquiescence in it as such. The established course of events is not modified by special divine action to adjust it to our needs, but we adjust ourselves to it, because, knowing it to be ordained of God, we know its ordering is for the best. "It is our duty to see in the existing order of things the result and sway of divine providence," and to accept it in humble and patient thankfulness. There is no providence which "extends one whit farther than the order of things as it actually exists." "Faith in the fatherly providence of God," therefore "resolves itself, in this view of the matter, into the assured confidence that reason is immanent in the actually existent order of things, and that accordingly nature is a means subordinate to spirit." No change takes place in the course of events in our behalf; the only change that takes place takes place in us. When we lay aside our distrust of God and trust in His providence, we merely assume a different attitude towards the course of events. The same things happen to us which would have happened had we not made this change of attitude towards God. But what we looked upon as against us, we now look upon as for us: what we looked upon at best as but the grinding out of blind law, at worst as the caprice of a malevolent deity, we now look upon as the expression of the will of a Father. After all is said, however, what is meant when Ritschl speaks of trusting in divine providence is nothing more than that it is the mark of the Christian that he trusts in law: he acquires a new attitude toward the actual course of things and humbly, patiently and thankfully accepts his lot in life.

Garvie, it is true, registers a somewhat sharp dissent.

[63] As cited, pp. 228 ff; cf. Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, p. 177 f.

"When Ritschl speaks of God's Providence," he declares,[64] "he means what he says. He does not believe in an inevitable course of nature, independent of a Personal Will, which does not do its worst with us, because we make the best we can of it. He does not give a stern fact, submission to fate, a sweet name, faith in God's Providence, by a 'poetic license,' "—and so on. This passionate language, however, is quite futile, and only betrays the confusion in its author's mind. Of course Ritschl is not supposed to be teaching a doctrine of "fate." He looks upon the course of things as having been determined by a Personal Will, and represents therefore this course of things as expressing a personal choice, the choice of a person whom he declares to be love and nothing but love. But he does not allow that this course of things is ever modified (no matter when the modification has been determined upon) for the individual's benefit, according to his emerging needs. It has been once for all established for the benefit of the Kingdom of God and we, for our part, are to look on it as our Father's will and understand that it is working as a whole for our good. Our trust in divine providence does not mean with Ritschl then, that we are sure that God adjusts the course of events to meet our varying individual needs. But it does mean the assurance that our loving Father has ordered the established course of things for the best, and it does mean that we, now become one with Him, have learned that that is true, and therefore accept every event as it befalls us as from His hands. This amounts to saying, when taken at its height, that we see the hand of God in all that comes to pass, the hand of our Father in everything that befalls us—whether in itself good or grievous: that in a word we look through nature in all its happenings to nature's God, even though we may see Him only far off. When taken thus at its height, faith in divine providence is no small religious achievement. It is the fundamental religious attitude towards the world: and it must enter into every worthy conception of the

[64] As cited, p. 350 f. Cf. the words cited in note 54.

Christian life. It is nevertheless, as here expressed, being deistic in its tendency, a fatally inadequate conception of the nature of divine providence, and it certainly, however taken, can never be accepted as Ritschl represents it as a complete account of the essence of Christianity. "Faith in the fatherly providence of God," says Ritschl,[65] "which maintains a right feeling with God through humility, and with the world through patience, and which expresses and confirms itself through prayer, is, in general, the content of the religious life which grows out of reconciliation with God, through Christ." That is to reduce Christianity to a merely natural religion.

From the point of view here brought to expression, Ritschl is obviously right in speaking of Christianity as consisting in a "tone of feeling." And it is natural that we should wish to ascertain somewhat closely the particular feeling which it is. We think first of all of the feeling of submission, and there does not lack phraseology in Ritschl's discussions which justifies this. But it quickly becomes evident that he does not think of the Christian's attitude towards the course of things, conceived of as the providential appointment of God, as one of bare, negative submission. It is an attitude of positive acquiescence, acceptance, adoption: the Christian makes God's appointment his own. No doubt his attitude toward the course of events conceived as God's appointment is characterized by humility with reference to God and patience with reference to the course of events itself, but it is characterized also by thankfulness. And Ritschl pours into the notion not only satisfaction, but joy. The tone of feeling which he makes Christianity consist in, is distinctly an optimistic one. In the discussion which he devotes to this matter,[66] indeed, he goes far toward making it

[65] P. 652. On January 1, 1874, Diestel, endeavoring to make a forecast from as yet incomplete materials of what would be the upshot of Ritschl's great work, suggests that it will be that the essence of Christianity consists in faith in God's providence. Ritschl agrees. See *Leben*, II. p. 154.

[66] Pp. 618 ff.

indistinguishable from the instinctive optimism of exuberant vitality, the care-free temper of the man of action prosecuting his work in the world. We are told, for example, that we have this faith in divine providence not on empirical grounds—observation does not produce it and would not confirm it,[67]—but as a conviction drawn by each man from the complex of his own experiences. And yet not as a reasoned conclusion based on an analysis of our experiences; but as an instinctive conviction. It has no necessary conceptional content; it is normally a "tone of feeling" which is the expression of our "spiritual energy."[68] It may, no doubt, develop into clear ideas and judgments; but only if the conflicts so far inhibit action as to compel mental analysis of our struggling spiritual energy. It is, normally, just our feeling of well-being and of courage in the face of our circumstances. It may easily, therefore, be confused with the mere natural courage of man in facing the evils of life.[69] It is specifically different from this, however, because it is not merely courage in facing the evils of life but acceptance or rather adoption of the whole course of things, including the evils, into our own scheme of life, because it is God's will. That is to say, it is not merely self-assertion, but confidence in providence. And that is an attitude, says Ritschl, which is peculiarly Christian. It is an attitude not to be found in any who have not derived it from Christ. It was

[67] P. 618: "For observation of the fortunes of others would afford just as much, or even more, ground for shaking as for supporting our own conviction."

[68] Pp. 622, 623.

[69] It is rather a pungent question which J. L. Schultze raises (*Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1898, p. 238) when he asks: Do all Christians actually show the characteristics here depicted? How many possess the energy of will here made characteristic of all? Paul himself seemed able to live on such a plane only through Divine help. "If, however, this direct converse with God is replaced, as with Ritschl, by a mere conviction mediated by the Christian community—if thus then the possibility of continual renewal from the source is cut off—why then, this feeling of perfection becomes nothing but an artificial fiction. Energetic characters may persuade themselves that they possess it"—but the generality?—

precisely this, in fact—identical as it is with the assertion that God is love—in which Christ's discovery consisted.[70] Thus Ritschl, having abased Christianity to a merely natural religion, by reducing it in its essence to "trust in the divine providence," seeks to restore it again to its uniqueness as the only "revealed" religion by declaring "trust in the divine providence" to be solely the product of the "revelation" in Christ. This does not in any way affect the poverty of his conception of Christianity. It merely recalls us sharply to the realization of the extreme destitution of the religions men have made for themselves.[71]

It is, now, this general point of view or "tone of feeling" (*Gesinnung*) which constitutes, on the religious side, what Ritschl calls Christian Perfection. He who is of this way of thinking and feeling is a Christian, and is all that he need be, from the religious point of view, in order to be all that a Christian is. But in accordance with Ritschl's dualistic conception of Christianity, there is an ethical side to Christianity also. And the ethical is so related to the religious element in Christianity that the ethical task cannot be undertaken or accomplished save under the impulse derived from the religious attitude. It constitutes, nevertheless, as the end to which the religious attitude is the means, the real substance of the Christian life, which is as much as to say the precise thing in which Christian perfection consists. How the two elements are related in the whole made up of their union, is made quite clear in an excellent summary statement of Johannes Wendland's, in the opening page of his description of Ritschl's type of piety. "With him," says he, [72] "all religion originates in man's estimate of himself as something more than a fragment of dead nature. Christianity is to him the perfected religion because man is qualified by it to become a spiritual personality, a whole in his kind. It delivers man from violent oscillations of mood between

[70] Pp. 181, 625.

[71] Von Kügelgen, as cited, pp. 121 ff, defends Ritschl's attitude.

[72] As cited, p. 8.

pleasure and displeasure. In the certainty that all things work for good to those who take them from the hand of God, the Christian knows how to prevail over even the evils of life in trust in God, humility and patience. Conscientious work in his calling, whether it be a spiritual one, or one of manual labor, of low esteem among men, is for man at once the best remedy against distress, and also the way to secure that perfection which is obtainable for the Christian. Thus the personal life of the individual takes its place in the general life-purpose of the whole, which consists in erecting the Kingdom of God in the world. Man coöperates in building up God's kingdom in every true vocational work in his appointed place. For the Kingdom of God is advanced not only by domestic and foreign missions, but marriage, family, civil society, national state are fellowships in which it is to be realized. It is through righteous conduct and neighborly love that the Kingdom of God is established." Let us see now, in more detail, how Ritschl presents Christianity on its ethical side and how he relates the idea of Christian perfection to it.

The ethical task of the Christian, he teaches, is determined fundamentally by his adoption of God's self-end as his own. God's self-end is the Kingdom of God.[73] This conception is not to be confounded with that of the Church. The Church is the people of God organized for the particular purpose of worship.[74] The Kingdom of God is the people of God conceived in the totality of their ethical activities, under the impulse of love.[75] The breadth of the conception

[73] See especially on Ritschl's conception of the Kingdom of God the very clear and satisfactory summary statement of Orr, *The Ritschlian Theology*, pp. 119 ff.

[74] P. 284: "In order to preserve the true articulation of the Christian view of the world, it is necessary clearly to distinguish between viewing the followers of Christ, first under the conception of the Kingdom of God, and secondly under the conception of the *worshipping community*, or the Church. This distinction depends on the difference which exists between moral and devotional action."

[75] Pp. 610 ff. Cf. p. 285: "The same believers in Christ constitute the Kingdom of God, in so far as, forgetting distinctions of sex, rank, or

enables Ritschl to subsume under it every activity of man viewed in its ethical aspect. He utilizes here, as has already been intimated, however, the Reformation conception of vocation, and thus is able to present the primary ethical task of the Christian under the rubric of faithfulness in his vocation.[76] He that is faithful in his vocation has performed his whole ethical duty in the Kingdom of God, and, being thus a whole in himself, is perfect. No doubt we may think of many other moral acts which, in the abstract, we might lay upon him as duties. But, lying outside the circle of duties belonging to him in the faithful discharge of his vocation, they do not enter into the whole which it behooves him to be in his own kind; and his failure to perform them therefore cannot be imputed to him as fault. No man can be more than one kind of a man; or if by reason of strength he may embrace in his task more than one vocation, or if, as needs must be, a penumbra of secondary duties may gather around the governing vocation which is his special task, nevertheless the center about which the whole circle of his duties revolves remains his vocation, and it is faithfulness to this vocation and to whatever is inseparably connected with it that determines his ethical character.

We perceive that the chief concern which Ritschl shows in developing his doctrine of vocation is to utilize it so to limit the range of duty as to make it possible for the Christian man to be ethically as well as religiously perfect. The motive on which he acts here is derived from the consideration which he advances with confidence to the effect that hope of attainment supplies the only adequate spur to endeavor. "If in any activity," says he,[77] "we know ourselves beforehand unconditionally condemned to imperfection, then

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nationality, they act reciprocally from love, and thus call into existence that fellowship of moral disposition and moral blessings which extends through all possible gradations, to the limits of the human race."

[76] Cf. p. 163: "The Reformation principle that justification becomes matter of experience through the discharge of moral tasks, while these are to be discharged in the labors of one's vocation. . . . "

[77] P. 662.

impulse to it is paralysed. The possibility of perfection must be held in prospect if we are to use diligence in any department of activity." On this ground, sufficiently dubious in itself—though not on this ground alone—he repels the Evangelical doctrine that even in the state of grace we must always be mindful of the imperfection of our moral conduct, so that we may never be tempted to depend for our salvation on our own works, which never meet the demands of the law, but only on Christ received by faith alone. It is a contradiction, he says,[78] in any case, to tell us in one breath that we are to look away from our works to Christ because they are too imperfect to put any dependence on, and in the next that despite this their imperfection we are to depend on them as proof that we are under the action of grace. The ultimate conclusion to which he would drive us is that the Christian man's works are not subject to the judgment of the law. Before following him to this conclusion, however, we wish to point out briefly the fallacy of the reasoning from which it is drawn and the consequences of the rejection which it involves of the evangelical doctrine of the Christian's unbroken sense of imperfection. The justification of this digression lies in the importance of the matter for the understanding of Ritschl's point of view. There is involved in it in one way or another, indeed, a very large part of his system; and, we may add, also the fundamental error of every form of perfectionism.

Robert Mackintosh[79] observes that one of the leading motives of Ritschl in his dogmatic volume is his "desire to find a remedy for the Protestant perplexity regarding the assurance of salvation." And then he posits the dilemma which we have just cited from Ritschl, in somewhat different words. "Is it logical," he asks, "to bid us discover defects in all our works in order that we may rest upon God's grace, and yet to insist that we must have good works to submit lest we be moral impostors?" Why "perplexity" should be

[78] P. 661.

[79] *The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl,* 1915 p. 132.

caused by such a question is inexplicable. The answer is simple. Certainly it is logical—provided salvation be a process. To find salvation in progress is as sound evidence of salvation as to find it completed—provided salvation be a supernatural work. The writers of the New Testament and the Reformers and their evangelical successors, agree in these two things—that salvation is a process and that it is a divine work. They recommend us therefore to recognize it as always here incomplete; to discover imperfection in all our works. And they recommend us equally to perceive in its discovery in us, in any stage of incompleteness whatever, the incontrovertible evidence that we are in God's hands. There can be no assurance derived from any other source than evidence that we are in God's hands; and that assurance is as firm and as vivid when the evidence is derived from the discovery that God is working, as it could be were it derived from the discovery that He had already worked, our salvation.

We are not dealing here, however, with merely an *apex logicus*. We are dealing with the very essence of Protestantism. The progressive character of salvation lies at the very heart of Protestantism's heart, because (among other things) the Protestant doctrine of justification and its effects takes to a considerable extent its form from it. A large part of the religious value of the Protestant doctrine of justification, in its distinction from sanctification, is lost, if sanctification be not a process, the completion of which occupies the whole of life; if, that is, the injunction, "Work out your own salvation" does not apply to the whole of the Christian's walk on earth, but ought to be addressed to men only at some particular stage of their Christian experience—say, only at its beginning. For a large part of the religious value of this distinction turns on this—that the Christian's hope of salvation (his assurance) does not depend on the stage of sanctification to which he has already attained. Sanctification being a process, and a process which reaches its completion only when this life is over, the discovery of

sin remaining in him at any point of his earthly life is no proof that the Christian may not nevertheless be in Christ. In proportion as it is made the Christian's duty not so much to work out his salvation continuously but to enjoy it at once in its completeness, the believer, conscious of sin, loses his confidence that he is a believer at all. If this attainment of complete salvation is made coincident with justification, all sense of continued sinfulness is a clear disproof of present salvation. The matter is only mitigated, not changed, by separating the attainment of complete sanctification in time from justification. Salvation involving taking this second step, the continued sense of sinfulness becomes evidence of failure of such portentiousness as to shatter our peace and assurance. If it belongs to the Christian to be without sin, and to be without sense of sin,—in this sense of the statement—then the fact of experience that we are not without sin and not without the sense of sin is pretty clear proof that we are not Christians. It is not a matter of little importance, then, that we should settle it with ourselves whether the characteristic of the Christian walk in the world is constant advance towards sinlessness, or complete present enjoyment of sinlessness. If the latter, then, gloss it as we will, no one is entitled to think of himself as a Christian, no one is justified in regarding himself as saved, unless he is in the possession of complete sinlessness. In that case the whole religious gain of the Reformation doctrine of justification in distinction from sanctification is lost, and we are thrown back again into the despairing task of determining our religious state and our future hope on the ground of our own merits.

It is no accident, therefore, that the Reformers presented the Christian life as a life of continuous dissatisfaction wth self and of continuous looking afresh to Christ as the ground of all our hope. The effort of Ritschl to present the Christian life rather as a life of complete satisfaction with self tends not only altogether to undermine the entire evangelical system, but to strike a direct blow at that peace and

joy of the Christian which it is his professed object to secure. For the Christian's peace and joy are not and cannot be grounded in himself, but in Christ alone. He rejoices in the sufficiency of Christ's saving work for him; his exultation is in a salvation made his despite his unworthiness of it. This joy obtains its peculiarity precisely from the coëxistence of dissatisfaction with self and satisfaction with Christ. The dissatisfaction with self does not mar it; it enhances it rather—because the more dissatisfaction we feel with ourselves the more the greatness of Christ's salvation is manifest to us, and the more our delight in it waxes. Transfer the ground of our satisfaction from Christ to ourselves, and all satisfaction becomes at once impossible—except for the shallow souls who can find satisfaction in their own hearts and in the works which proceed from them. We have returned to medieval work-salvation: the very essence of Luther's revolt turned on his inability to find satisfaction in self. We are not preaching, and Luther did not preach, a lugubrious Christianity, which is always and only preoccupied with shortcomings and failures. Of course the Christian delights in his salvation. Of course he has no impulse to depreciate what he has already received. Of course his joy is unbounded, and his peace supreme. But this only because—and only on the condition that he understands that—he has not yet "attained"; that what he has received is but the earnest of what is to come; that what he has already done or is now doing is not the ground, and what he already is is not the extent, of his hope. It belongs to the very essence of Christianity that we have not "attained"; and that is the same as saying that sanctification is in progress and there is more to come. The Christian who has stopped growing is dead; or to put it better, the Christian does not stop growing because he is not dead Luther rightly says the Christian is not made but is in the making.

Precisely what Ritschl emphasizes, nevertheless, is that the satisfaction of the Christian has its ground in himself.[80]

[80] Cf. p. 651: "The destination of men for perfection in Christianity

We gather, however, that it does not take much to satisfy a Christian: a very imperfect perfection is perfection enough to make him perfect. We have observed how Ritschl sets his main contention in direct contradiction to the Evangelical doctrine of the continuous dissatisfaction of the Christian with his attainments during this life. He does not admit, however, that he is also in conflict with Scripture. In this matter at least, he contends, the Reformers were at odds with the Scriptures. The exegetical justification of this contention he seeks to supply in a passage in the closing pages of the second volume of his main work which has become famous and which has exerted a greater influence than any other portion of his discussion of the perfection of the Christian.[81] In this passage Ritschl declares that the relation in which the Reformers place the believer's supposed consciousness of continued imperfection to justification was wholly unknown to Paul. Paul, of course, knew that Christians sinned; his epistles are full of the proofs of it. But he did not at all bring these sins into relation with justification. Moreover he had a very healthful sense of his own faithfulness in his vocational activity, and asserts it against all gainsayers. Nor was his self satisfaction official alone. We cannot do otherwise than infer, Ritschl sums up,[82] that "alongside of the conviction of justification through faith, a consciousness of personal moral perfection, especially of perfect faithfulness in our vocation, is possible, which is disturbed by no twinges of conscience . . . " Paul accordingly arrogates to himself in this matter nothing which he does not accord to others. He distinctly presupposes that Christians as such possess not indeed a multiplicity of good works but a connected life-work which may properly be called good. Only John[83] among the New Testa-

may be seen in the exhortation to rejoice amid all the changes of life which, in the New Testament, accompanies instruction in the Christian faith (Vol. II, pp. 344-350). For joy is the sense of perfection."

[81] *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung.*[3] II, 1899, § 39, pp. 365 ff.

[82] P. 370.

[83] This, of course, can be said even by Ritschl only after he has

ment writers strikes a different note; and the note he strikes is not fundamentally different. He teaches, it is true, that believers continue to sin and need to have continued recourse to the Forgiver of sins (I John 1 : 8, 9.) But it does not follow that even in his teaching the self-consciousness of the Christian is to receive from this its dominant tone. Rather in this teaching also this is determined by the possibilty of moral perfection. "From the pessimism with which Luther emphasized the constant imperfection and worthlessness of the moral activity of Christians, John is far removed. The sinful was to him still always only the exception in the Christian life, not the rule and an inevitable destiny."[84] As a conspectus of New Testament teaching, this representation is, of course, absurd. Nevertheless, Paul Wernle (after certain forerunners) took it up and elaborated it in his maiden book,[85] thereby opening a controversy which threshed out such questions as whether we may speak of "Paul the 'miserable sinner,'" and whether Paul knew anything of "the daily forgiveness of sins." That, however, is another story.

We may suppose that Ritschl could not have been led to such a representation of New Testament teaching save as a result of his low view of sin as in essence just ignorance. This made it possible for him to imagine that Paul, for example, never reflected on the relation of the abounding sin which he saw in the Christian communities to the justification of these sinners, and cherished in himself a consciousness of moral perfection in conjunction with the very poignant sense of personal unworthiness to which he gives expression. Some such representation was, however, forced on him by the most fundamental elements of his

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explained away such passages as Rom. vii. 14-25, Gal. v. 17, not to speak of multitudes of others which he does not notice.

[84] P. 378.

[85] *Der Christ und die Sünde bei Paulus*, 1897.

[86] Wernle growing older and somewhat wiser found it necessary to correct the extremities of his teaching: see the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1909, 20, coll. 586 ff.

system of thought, if he was to preserve for his teaching any semblance of connection with the New Testament. There is his contention, for instance, that it is impossible for God "to love" and "to hate" the same person at the same time, which lies at the very root of his whole system. He had made use of it in framing and developing his remarkable doctrine of the "wrath of God." Because God loves sinners and out of that love has chosen sinners to become sharers in His Kingdom and objects of His "redemption," it is impossible, he says,[87] to speak of the "wrath" of God with reference to sinners as such. God's wrath is turned against those sinners alone who show themselves irreconcilably enemies of His Kingdom and despisers of His love, that is to say, the finally impenitent,—if there be any finally impenitent. It does not burn against sinners as such, since all are sinners, and in that case none could be the objects of His "redemptive" love; it is a purely eschatological notion. Holding firmly to this irreducible either-or—that there can be no love of God present where His wrath is in any measure active, and no wrath of God where His love is in any measure active—Ritschl could not allow that the reconciled sinner could justly suffer under a continuous sense of guilt. No clouds could be admitted to obscure the Father's countenance. The reconciled believer must not only bask in an unbroken but in an unsullied sense of the divine love. The Reformation doctrine that the Christian life is a continuous repentance, that the believer is conscious of continual shortcomings which, he knows, deserve the wrath of God, and is continually receiving unmerited forgiveness, was not merely repugnant, but impossible to him. He was compelled to develop a conception of the Christian life which inferred perfection. There could be no room in it, we do not say merely for distrust, fear, despondency, but for contrition, repentance, self-abasement. The very essence of the Christtian life is for him necessarily freedom from these things. Precisely what "reconciliation" is to him is the discovery

[87] P. 323.

that God takes no account of sin in us. Not that we are freed from sin. But that it makes no difference whether we sin or not: God closes His eyes to our sin. This is of course an antinomian attitude. All perfectionist doctrines run into antinomianism. It is intrinsic in Ritschl's low view of sin. What is at the moment important for us to note is that it enables us to understand that Ritschl is not willing to have the perfection which he proclaims for Christians measured by the standard of the moral law. Whatever the Christian may actually do, he is no "sinner," and his conscience must not accuse him.

In order to sustain himself in this lamentable position Ritschl develops an unhappy argument designed to show that the moral law is in any event incapable of fulfilment. Not incapable of fulfilment by sinners only, but intrinsically and of its very nature incapable of fulfilment.[88] This because it is in effect infinite in its demands: it claims the will simultaneously for illimitable requirements spread out through space and the series of claims made by each of these requirements extends illimitably through time. The finite being is capable, however, of only one act at a time. And since it is impossible for him to do at once everything that falls under the category of the good, he is under no obligation to do it. What he is required to do, in point of fact, is not to fulfil the moral law in its abstract completeness, but to make of his life a moral whole, rounding it out in dutiful conduct in accordance with its intrinsic requirements as such a whole. It is the conception of vocation to which Ritschl appeals here to supply the limitation of duty by which it may be rendered capable of performance. "Ev-

[88] P. 662: "Now the notion of good works, which find their standard in the statutory law, is the expression of a task which not only is impracticable on the presupposition of the continuance of sinfulness, but in and for itself cannot be thought in connection with the characteristic of perfection." "Therefore it is not merely sin, as evil will or as indifference, which thwarts the quantitatively perfect fulfilment of the moral law, but this is in itself impossible in comparison with the statutory form of the law."

eryone," says he,[89] "is moral in his behavior when he fulfils the universal law in his special vocation or in that combination of vocations which he is able to unite in his conduct of life." Thus, we are told, "there is excluded every moral necessity to good actions on ends which do not fit in with the individual's vocation," and the "apparent obligation is invalidated that we have to act morally at every moment of time in all possible directions."[90] The situation, however, he perceives not to be relieved in this manner. The spacial infinity is cleared away, indeed, but the temporal remains. We are moving now in one, narrow path, but there is no end to it. "Even when the fulfilment of the moral law is confined to one's own calling and what is analogous thereto, the series of good actions which are incumbent is still illimitable in time."[91] Relief can be found only in discarding all responsibility whatever to "statutory law," that is to externally imposed law. We "find the proximate norm which specifies for every one the morally necessary conduct in our moral vocation" itself, and thus vindicate the "autonomy of moral conduct."[92] We are under no law but such as is evolved out of our moral disposition in the course of our activities themselves: and we evolve this law, of course, only as it is needed and fulfill it as it is made. Thus, executing the particular judgments of duty as we form them, we preserve steadily, it seems, our perfection. "Under these circumstances," says Ritschl,[93] "and in this form the individual produces the moral law out of his freedom, or"—that is, in other words—"lives in the law of freedom." We are therefore under no other law but "the law of freedom" and "the universal statutory law" has no authority over us. Emancipated from all externally imposed law, we are a law to ourselves, and we recognize no other law as having dominion over us.

[89] P. 666.
[90] P. 666.
[91] P. 666.
[92] P. 666.
[93] P. 667.

It can occasion no surprise, of course, that Ritschl, with his Kantian inheritance, should proclaim this doctrine of "autonomous morality." Our interest is only in the particular form he gives it, and the use to which he puts it in expounding his views of Christian perfection. The assertion of the doctrine itself pervades the discussions of the dogmatic volume of his chief work.[94] We turn for example to its very closing sentences;[95] there all its chief elements are given crisp expression, precisely as we have drawn them out above from an earlier page. Christian perfection, he says, consists (together with the "religious functions") just in "freedom of action." In this freedom of action, the Christian, seeking the final end of the Kingdom of God, imposes on himself,—"gives himself,"—a "law." He gives himself this law "by the production (*Erzeugung*) of principles and judgments of duty." Thus the law which he follows, and by following which he manifests himself as what he ought to be, is his own product, developed, as means to its accomplishment, out of the aim (*Endzweck*) which he is pursuing. Not only is no "statutory law" (*statutorisches Gesetz*) imposed on him from without, but no immanent law is written on his heart by the finger of God.[96] He evolves his own rules

[94] See especially the discussion on p. 526 where we are told that "the moral law is complete only in the reticulation of those judgments of duty which determine the necessary form of good action in each particular case," and further that "the principle of autonomy not only holds good within the circle of general moral law as such, but we act autonomously in each particular province of life." Cf. p. 650: "The saints who strive to act in the fear of God and to follow God's ways, come to know the duties incumbent on them through their disposition and not through a statutory law." We must not be misled by the superficial resemblance of language like this to the Christian doctrines of the leading of the Spirit and the writing by Him of the law of God on the heart. Ritschl knows no Holy Spirit, no immediate work of God on the heart, and indeed, no heart for God to work on. What Ritschl is doing is only adapting to his own purposes Kant's doctrine of autonomous morality, which was Kant's protest against the view of vulgar Rationalism that sin arises only from the deliberate transgression of known external law.

[95] P. 670.

[96] Ritschl strangely thinks these two things inconsistent, and blames

of life—his governing principles and his determinations of duty—out of himself, solely under the guidance of the end he is seeking. In the absolute freedom of his will he chooses his own end; and that end determines his rules of living for him. These are the elements of Ritschl's ethics. God is concerned in them only so far as that He provides, through the "revelation" made by Christ, the end to which, freely adopted by them, the efforts of Christian men are freely directed,—His own self-end, the "Kingdom of God." The "moral law"—we are availing ourselves here of Fr. Luther's exposition[97]—"is deduced by the men who appropriate this end out of themselves; it is a subjective product of the human moral will. It is the law which man in moral freedom gives himself so soon as he has established the advancement of the 'Kingdom of God' for himself as the self-end of his life-practice. He takes this advancement of the Kingdom of God as self-end to himself, however, so far as he has become conscious that thus his personal self-end—which he has already set before himself—is furthered. This self-end is the attainment of that moral, spiritual freedom which maintains itself triumphantly over against all hindrances from the world of nature. In 'carrying through,' this his self-end over against the world consists 'the blessedness of the person.' The Christian is therefore with reference to the establishment of the moral law de-

the Second Helvetic Confession for bringing them together (p. 523). At bottom Ritschl confuses knowledge and power. He speaks as if action cannot be voluntary if directed by law—which would be as much as to say that voluntary action is necessarily lawless. That no doubt, is much his notion of "freedom." The writing of the law on the heart does not abolish the law which is thus written on the heart. No doubt the writing of the law on the heart may be construed to mean the implantation of an independent instinct for what is contained in the law. Something like that is, apart from its "mysticism," what Ritschl supposes, not indeed to have been done to Christians, but fairly to represent what the native powers of Christians, as moral men are capable of. The Christian will, says he (p. 526), "is guided by a free knowledge of the moral law, through which it perpetually produces that law."

[97] *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift,* II, 1891, p. 485; cf. also his exposition in his book, *Die Theologie Ritschls,* 1887, pp. 40 f.

pendent on God only in the one respect that the end of the Kingdom of God, morally determining his life, is revealed to him by God through Christ. Otherwise he is morally 'autonomous.' "

With this doctrine of autonomous morality Ritschl certainly seems to have found a basis on which he can pronounce Christian men really perfect. If we create our own moral law and create it in accordance both with our special ends in our particular vocations, and with our particular situation at each moment,[98] there seems no reason why, measured by that standard, we should not be and remain "perfect." Ritschl felicitates himself especially that with this understanding of the matter, the moral life of the individual becomes "a whole." If duty is limited by the demands of our vocation (together with whatever else is associated with it), and determined by ourselves under our conceptions of those demands, no doubt a certain unity is acquired by our lives which gives them the aspect of "wholes in their kinds." It is not so easy to assure ourselves that the kinds of which they are wholes are good kinds. Ritschl apparently would say that this is secured by the fact that all the vocations pursued by Christian men are pursued in subordination to the one great end of the Kingdom of God, God's self-end communicated to us by Christ and made ours by the new attitude which we have taken to God in our justification. Meanwhile he exhibits a certain uneasiness here. The limitation of duty to the requirements of our vocations no doubt reduces the multiplicity of good works in which conduct manifests itself to an inwardly limited unity, that is, to a "whole." "But," he adds,[99] "the whole that is so conceived is not yet perceived to be a thing which is also externally limited," and here he reverts to a figure of speech before employed by him: "Even if the spacial unlimitedness of good works as measured by the universal statutory law be set aside, yet the temporal series of actions in our moral

[98] P. 526.
[99] P. 667.

vocation appears to be endless." Men's consciences, it seems, are not easy in the facile solution of the question of their moral obligation which Ritschl offers them: they are not so sure that they have no duties which do not lie in the direct line of the prosecution of their callings, and none in this line which they have not yet recognized.

There seems no particular reason why Ritschl should permit himself to be disturbed by such pricks of conscience. To conscience, which to him is only "something picked up in the course of living,"[100] surely no normative authority can be ascribed. He feels bound, however, to seek to quiet its qualms. He admits that his perfect men are disturbed by a sense of shortcoming and guilt. He suggests however that this may be only the result of an undesirable "self-torturing self-scrutiny," which threatens, he complains, "to throw back the discussion on the lines of the idea of good works from which we are trying to escape"—that is, the idea that we are really under moral obligation to do everything that is good. Conscience, the implication appears to be, ought to be kept under better control. And he has suggestions to offer in the way at least of soothing us under its assaults. We shall, no doubt, omit many actions even in the discharge of our calling which we might have performed, and we may impute their omission to ourselves as guilt and thus bring ourselves under an impression of perpetual imperfection. But consider! May we not find later that "the relaxation which we have allowed ourselves to take has served to increase our activity in our calling?" This seems to mean that we ought to have no scruples in omitting duties if it furthers us in our calling; a sentinel, for example, we suppose, is right to sleep on his post if it refreshes him for fighting on the morrow! Moreover—can we say that all omission of useful actions that are possible is wrong? Must we not confine the condemning judgment to

[100] *Etwas im Gemeinschaftsleben erwerbenes* (*Ueber das Gewissen*, 1876, p. 20). On Ritschl's doctrine of conscience see the illuminating comment of Pfleiderer, *Die Ritschl'sche Theologie*, 1891, pp. 77 ff.

the omission of actions which are morally necessary? Above all, Ritschl continues in an exposition which has fallen into the commendation of a purely negative morality—must we not remember that in order to be the "whole" which constitutes Christian perfection we need not be a very big "whole?" It is not necessary in order to be "perfect" that we shall be the biggest "whole" we can be. We may well content ourselves with being a moderate sized "whole." If we are a perfect little "whole" we need not bother over the fact that we might have been a bigger whole had we striven harder. The point is not the quantity but the quality. "True, a whole, too, must be a *quantum* . . . But a whole does not require as one of its conditions a quantitative extension *ad infinitum* . . . He who in the moral fulfilment of his vocation is more indefatigable than his neighbor merely makes the whole possibly greater; while he also possibly imperils its existence."[101] The moral seems to be that we perhaps would do well not to try to be too good; economy in goodness may be a good thing; we may overreach ourselves and by excess of goodness become bad.

We shall make no attempt to conceal our conviction that Ritschl's effort to show that we may be "perfect," by limiting ever more and more the sphere of our moral activities—though it has the element of truth in it that our moral duty is conditioned by our vocation—is not only ineffective but immoral. At the moment, we are more concerned to point out, however, that the attempt itself, and the manner in which it is worked out, combine to make it superabundantly plain that Ritschl's purpose is to represent a real moral perfection as attainable by Christians; or in other words that Ritschl teaches, in the proper sense of the words, a perfectionist doctrine. His method of showing that perfection is attainable is, to be sure, to show that we can be perfect without being all that term strictly connotes. This general method of vindicating the attainability of perfection, however, he shares with all perfectionist teaching. His special

[101] Pp. 667, 668.

mode of giving a color of perfection to manifest imperfection is all that is his own. He has the courage of his convictions here too, and separates himself from the modes adopted by others, with some decision. In particular he plumes himself greatly that he is not as other men are in the matter of the relaxation of the law—limiting ability by obligation and confining sin to deliberate transgression of known law. Of course the typical examples of the reprobated teaching are supplied by the relaxed and relaxing teaching of the Illumination, which, says Ritschl,[102] "trifled away the Christian problem of reconciliation by referring men's obligation toward God's law to the relative criterion of the internal and external situation." He adduces Töllner to whom nothing was sin but sins of "set purpose," and who taught at once that obedience to the strict law of righteousness is impossible and that in the administration of God, therefore, no absolute standard of moral perfection is applied but every man is judged according to his ability. But Ritschl does not confine his condemnation of such conceptions to them as found in the teachers of the Illumination. They are found in orthodox writers too, he says, and wherever found are offensive. They are found, too, he says,[103] in the Methodist doctrine of perfection, which also he represents as a mere evasion,—"casuistry" is his word—teaching as it does that "not every transgression of the law is sin," and that "it is possible not to sin even when we actually do wrong to others." We perceive that Ritschl holds strongly that every transgression of moral law is sin and that there can be no perfection where the whole moral law is not kept. His mode of escape is to deny the validity of all "statutory law." There is no such thing as a universal moral law imposing duty in all its items on all men alike. Each man secretes for himself his own moral law, and in order to be perfect must fulfill only it in all its requirements.

[102] Vol. I, E. T. p. 387.

[103] P. 664.

We must confess that we do not see that, on the basis of this general doctrine, Ritschl can escape sharing the reproach of his fellow perfectionists—that they relax the law of God and confine sin to transgression of known law. To explain that not the entire moral law in all its range—in space and in time, he would say—applies as prescription of duty to the individual, but only those moral obligations which arise into consciousness in the process of the faithful prosecution of his vocation, is rather expressly to place himself in the same category with them. For surely this is to make "the internal and external situation," of the individual the criterion of his duty, and to confine sin in him to the delibrate transgression of moral requirements clearly known to him. There is eliminated from his obligation the whole body of duties which the moral law, considered in its entirety, prescribes outside the special consciousness of duty developed by him in the faithful prosecution of his particular vocation. That this general moral law is a reality and constitutes the general standard of duty can hardly be denied even on the ground of a doctrine of autonomous morality. We surely are not expected to believe that each individual develops in the prosecution of his special calling not so much the section of the moral law applicable to him, but a so-called moral law, peculiarly his own, unrelated to, perhaps contradictory of, those evolved by others. These sections of the moral law, developed by individuals, must therefore in combination constitute a general moral law, the whole of which is authoritative, though it is known only in part to each individual. If this be not admitted, then there is no such thing as morality. What we call morality has become only what in each individual's case he has discovered by experience to be the most useful "trick of the trade" for him. Ritschl, then, has no advantage in the matter in question over his fellows, and his doctrine of perfection is perceived to be only another attempt to quiet the human conscience in its condemnation of the imperfections of our lives, by persuading it that its duty does not extend beyond our actual

performance; and to betray it into finding satisfaction in our imperfection as if it were, in our "internal and external situation," really perfection.

It does not appear that Ritschl's doctrine of Christian perfection has reproduced itself as a whole very extensively. Its influence can be traced, however, in many quarters. We have already called attention to the controversy aroused by Paul Wernle's book on *The Christian and Sin in Paul,* which took its start from Ritschl's exposition of Paul's doctrine of sin in Christians. In the wake of this controversy, it has become the fashion among a certain school of "liberal" writers to represent Paul as teaching a doctrine of perfection for Christians. David Somerville cannot be classed with these writers; but his description of Paul's relation to sin in his *St. Paul's Conception of Christ,*[104] has derived much from Ritschl's. In H. H. Wendt's *Die christliche Lehre von der menschlichen Vollkommenheit untersucht,* 1882, the whole circle of Ritschl's characteristic ideas reappears, transposed into a lower key. But not only is the entire thought and expression simplified, but the asperities and exaggerations of Ritschl's doctrines are eliminated. What is left is merely the reasonable assertion that man attains in Christianity and in Christianity alone his human perfection, a perfection manifested in its completeness in Christ Himself and in his followers principially and qualitatively here, but not hereafter quantitatively. Strangely enough Paul Lobstein takes from Ritschl's treatment of Christian perfection the mould into which he pours his exposition of Calvin's doctrine of "the goal of the new life," in the last chapter of his *Die Ethik Calvins,* 1877. Perhaps no more striking manifestation of a disciple's zeal could be afforded. "It is Ritschl's service," he says,[105] in explanation of his remarkable procedure, "to have investigated the idea of Christian perfection in a true Evangelical-reformed spirit, and introduced it into Christian ethics."

[104] Pp. 125 f.
[105] P. 131.

Ritschl's commentators naturally often express a favorable opinion of his doctrine of perfection either as a whole or more frequently in one or another of its elements. The element in it which seems most commonly to attract favorable notice is, as it is natural it should be, the emphasis given to the notion of vocation. Garvie says shortly:[106] "This conception of Ritschl's is a very valuable one, and deserves our grateful recognition." When he comes to reproduce, however, what Ritschl's doctrine of Christian perfection is, he rather overdoes an element in it, which is already in Ritschl quite sufficiently exaggerated. "It does not mean," says Garvie, "infallibility of judgment, sinlessness of life, moral completeness; but it does mean that in his relation to God man is conscious of his own worth as a child of God, of his own claims on the grace of God, of his own independence of nature and society." The note of "humility" which is at least formally present in Ritschl's exposition is not heard here. Mozley expresses himself with even more enthusiasm of admiration than Garvie. Ritschl's handling of the subject, he says,[107] "is strikingly illuminating and a real help to piety." He particularly commends the use which Ritschl makes of the idea of vocation. This doctrine, says he, "that a man should try to be faithful to his particular vocation and make his life a whole in its own order, and that therein lies Christian perfection, is exceedingly valuable, since it banishes the hopeless sense of imperfection, or inability even to approach the goal of effort, which must result if any one compares himself with the universal moral law and sees perfection in conformity therewith." The lesser task is no doubt the easier: but we should be sorry to suppose that that fact abolishes the greater.

An earlier English expositor[108]—we understand it to be Archibald Duff, Jr.—throws the emphasis of his agreement upon another point. What Ritschl seeks to describe, he says,

[106] As cited, p. 358.
[107] As cited, p. 232.
[108] *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct. 1878, pp. 656 ff.

using phraseology of his own, is "what the atonement effects, what are the results of it in men," or otherwise expressed, "what a man is who has been reconciled to God through Jesus." The answer given is that such a man is "perfect." "If," he now adds, "there be men on whom God now looks with full pleasure (for what else does 'reconciled' mean?), if there be men whom God regards as perfect, let us know what are the characteristics of such men." Evangelical Christians, however, are not accustomed to suppose, that the fact that God looks on "reconciled" men "with full pleasure" infers their perfection. They think of Christ, and suppose that the satisfaction of God is with Him as Redeemer, rather than with them, the redeemed. They would by no means agree, therefore, that the faith of the soul "that God and it are reconciled is faith that at that moment God is satisfied with its being what it is." They suppose on the contrary, that God is so little satisfied with what the soul is that He does not intend to leave it in that condition. God cannot be satisfied with any soul in which any depravity whatever remains, nor can that soul—on the hypothesis that it is a "reconciled" soul—be satisfied with itself. The truth is that this feeling of "satisfaction," the characteristic tone of mind which Ritschl demands for the believer, a demand which Duff is here echoing from him, is so far from being the mark of the Christian's life that it would be the signature of his death. Ritschl complains that unless the possibility of attaining perfeection be held before Christians all impulse to effort dies in them. He forgets that dissatisfaction with their present condition supplies a much more powerful spur to effort. No doubt the Christian must be animated by hope of improvement if he is to strive with energy to advance in his course. But why this hope should take the specific form of conviction that the supreme goal of this improvement is within his easy reach at any time, if only he will take it, it is difficult to see. And should he once reach out and take it—surely that motive to exertion would at once be lost. He would then be "satisfied" and would have no motive for

further effort. It is a much more powerful incitement to effort that he should know the evil of the case in which he is, the difficulty of the task which lies before him, the always increasing reward of the journey as it goes forward, and the supreme greatness of the final attainment.

We should not pass on without a further word or two suggested by the assumption which underlies Duff's remarks, that to be reconciled with God is to be perfect. There is a sense in which this is Ritschl's doctrine. But this is not the sense in which it is Duff's doctrine. And it is not the sense in which it is the doctrine of many of Ritschl's critics. We have had occasion to point out that in the interests of the "perfection" of his Christians Ritschl was ready to limit the law to which they are responsible, and in that regard cannot escape the charge of "relaxing the law." But his zeal nevertheless was precisely for morality—though a limited "autonomous morality"; and he never dreamed that morality could be had merely by believing, without being conquered, without effort. It is even true, as we have seen, and as Heinrich Münchmeyer, for example, is at pains clearly to point out,[109] that the Christianity of the Christian consists according to Ritschl precisely in his morality, and that whatever religion he is allowed to have is subsidiary and ancillary to his morality.

We find ourselves accordingly in substantial agreement with Münchmeyer when he writes thus:[110] "It is now clearer what the real state of the case is with Ritschl. Man is to supplement himself by God, with God's help to attain his destination by dominating as spirit the world and its influences upon him; and to labor as member of the human society at its God-appointed destiny. The first he attains through appropriation of reconciliation, the second through appropriation of the divine world-end which is directed to the Kingdom of God. It follows that for Ritschl commun-

[109] *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben*, 1887, VIII, pp. 95 ff.

[110] As cited, p. 109.

ion with God is only a means to an end, to the end that man shall attain his destiny, which, however, does not coincide with the Kingdom of God but is only purposed, that is to say, conditioned by it. I cannot comprehend why Ritschl does not, according to his presuppositions, set forth as the destination of man, to labor, in spiritual freedom from the world, on the moral organization of humanity in the Kingdom of God,—which destination he attains through the relation in which he places himself to God. In that case, the task of Christianity would of course be merely a moral one. But in any case it is not in Ritschl of a religious kind, but a rational and an ethical one, and the character of Christianity as religion is only so far preserved by him that humanity attains its rational and moral destination in dependence on God. This dependence on God would remain preserved, however, even had Ritschl more logically posited only the moral aim for Christianity. I say again, it is simply a self-deception when it is supposed that Ritschl teaches a religious and a moral destination of Christianity; in reality there is question with him only of a rational and moral destination, which however certainly cannot be set in parallelism. In reality there can be only a moral destination of Christianity according to Ritschl."

This criticism is just. Ritschl's system is a one-sided ethical system and in principle reduces Christianity to a morality. But that affords no reason why it should be met by an equally one-sided construction of Christianity as a purely religious system. This is however what is done by Münchmeyer in fellowship with many others, zealous for "faith" as constituting the whole substance of Christianity. Man's destination, he declares, is uniquely "communion with God," though he is forced to add that men have always felt that it was precisely sin which separated them from God, and have accordingly sought after atonement for sin. "When according to this," he asks,[111] "is man perfect?"

111 As cited, p. 110. Similarly E. Cremer, *Ueber die christliche Vollkommenheit*, 1899, p. 23: "Because the forgiveness of sins is God's

And he answers: "When he has found his God in faith, when in faith he knows Him as his Father and himself as His child. Then his heart has peace, he desires no more. That is what the Augsburg Confession means when it places Christian perfection in 'serious fear of God and again the conceiving of great faith and confidence for Christ's sake that we have a reconciled God.' For only by the way of repentance do we come to faith in the grace of God. He who has been brought to this faith—'I have a reconciled God,'—he is perfect. And the more he grows and waxes strong in this faith, the more joyful will his heart be. Joy, however, as Ritschl says, (and in this I agree with him) is the feeling of perfection. And thus it is fully explained why Paul and the Reformers and our theologians place reconciliation so completely in the center; for by it alone is the communion with God which constitutes our perfection, made possible." According to this representation perfection consists entirely in our religious relation; produced directly by reconciliation it is just the reconciled state; and it is realized subjectively in the soul-attitude we call faith. To be "in faith" (*im Glauben*) is to be *ipso facto* "perfect." Good works are only the natural activities of one in communion with God. They have no other significance. When we sin, that is a proof that our faith has failed; and that drives us back to faith. "So soon as the Christian has found in faith His God's heart again, he is perfect." The perfection of the Christian, in a word, consists solely in a relation.

In their conceptions of the nature of Christian perfection, considered in itself, Ritschl and his followers and those of his critics represented by Münchmeyer obviously are

whole salvation, perfect salvation—faith, which apprehends it in Christ, is perfection." "It is intelligible now why faith in Christ is perfection; it is because God's forgiveness of sins is God's whole salvation, in which God's saving work reaches its goal; believers are perfect because Christ's saving work is perfect." "By designating the believer as perfect, it is emphasized that in Christ we have in the forgiveness of sins all that we need from God."

looking, each at one side only of the same shield. Each holds, each denies, half the truth. What is lacking in Münchmeyer's construction is that he has in view only the guilt of sin. It is sin, says he, which separates us from God: when we are relieved from sin we are at one with God and rejoice in communion with Him. He is thinking only of the guilt of sin: what of its pollution? The Reformers did not make that mistake. They knew that the blessedness of the Christian consists not only in abiding in the presence of God but also in partaking of His holiness. They remembered that without holiness no one shall see the Lord. They did not oppose communion with God and holiness to one another: they understood that these are inseparable from one another. Ritschl is not wholly wrong in making morality the end of Christianity: John Wesley is undeniably right when he says that holiness is the substance of salvation. Ritschl was right when he emphasized the moral nature of Christianity as a religion, and saw it advancing to a Kingdom of Righteousness. He rightly wished to relate his so-called religious aspect of Christianity to his so-called ethical aspect; and he was not wholly wrong in looking at this relation under the rubric of means and end. He was wrong, of course, in exalting the moral aspect of Christianity into practically its totality; in reducing the religious aspect from the primary place it occupies in the New Testament to almost a mere name. In his hatred of supernaturalism, he gives us no God to flee to, and no God to visit us. His total discarding of what he calls "mysticism" is really the total discarding of vital religion. His whole labor impresses the reader as a sustained effort to work out a religious system without real religion; or, with respect to our present subject, to make out an issue of justification into sanctification without any real justification to issue into sanctification and without any real sanctification for justification to issue into. The peculiarities of Ritschl's dualistic conception of Christianity and his treatment of the matters which fall under the relations of justification and

sanctification arise from his determination to have only a self-moralization instead of a sanctification for believers. His antisupernaturalism rules everywhere and here, too, as in his system at large, we have only a camouflaged Rationalism. Nevertheless it is a good witness which he bears when he testifies that there is no perfection which is not ethical. And this is the witness of the Augsburg Confession also. For Münchmeyer quotes only a part of its declaration. He omits the concern shown in it for "all our undertakings according to our vocation." And he omits the inclusion in its definition of Christian perfection itself of these words: "meanwhile diligently doing good works and serving our vocation." It is "in these things" as well as in the others "that true perfection and the true worship of God consist." There is no perfection whether *partium* or *graduum* without them in their due relations: without them no man is a Christian and no man, of course, therefore, can without them be called "perfect."[112]

Princeton. BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

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[112] The sources for Ritschl's doctrine of perfection are especially his *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung,* Vol. II, ed. 3, 1887, §§ 39-40, pp. 365 ff; Vol. III, ed. 4, 1895, ch. IX., pp. 575 ff., and E. T. 1900, pp. 609 ff; his lecture *Die christliche Vollkommenheit,* ed. 2, 1889 and English translations in *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review,* 1875, pp. 137 ff. by John Rae, and in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1878, pp. 656 ff by E. Craigmile; and his pamphlet *Unterricht in der christliche Religion* 1875, ed. 3, 1886, and E. T. 1901 in *The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl* by Albert T. Swing, pp. 169 ff. See also the relevant passages in O. Ritschl, *Albrecht Ritschl's Leben* 1892, 1896; G. Mielke, *Das System Albrecht Ritschl's dargestellt, nicht kritisirt* 1894, *pp.* 50 ff; J. Thikötter, *Darstellung und Beurtheilung der Theologie Albrecht Ritschl's,* 1883, pp. 48 ff; C. von Kügelgen, *Grundriss der Ritschl'schen Dogmatik,* ed. 2, 1903, pp. 120 ff.

The following are some of the more notable discussions of Ritschl's doctrine of perfection:—John Rae, The Protestant Doctrine of Evangelical Perfection, in *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review,* 1876, pp. 88-107; R. Tifling, Ueber christliche Vollkommenheit nach Ritschl, in the *Mittheilungen und Nachrichten für die evangel. Kirche in Russland,* 1878, pp. 341-362; H. Münchmeyer, Darstellung and Beleuchtung der Lehre Ritschl's von der christlichen Vollkommenheit, in

the *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben* 1887, pp. 95 ff; Fr. Luther, *Die Theologie Ritschl's,* 1887, pp. 31 ff, and also Ueber christliche Sittlichkeit nach lutherisch-christliche Lehre und nach die Aufstellungen der neueren Schule, in the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift,* 1891, pp. 469 ff, 619 ff, 712 ff; Fr. H. R. Frank, *Ueber die kirchliche Bedeutung der Theologie A. Ritschl's,* Ed. 2, 1888, pp. 21 ff, and also *Geschichte und Kritik der neueren Theologie* (1894), Ed. 4, 1908, pp. 350 ff; H. Weiss, Ueber das Wesen des persönlische Christenstandes in the *Theologische Studien und Kritiken,* 1881, pp. 377 ff; J. Köstlin, Religion nach dem Neuen Testament, in the *Theologische Studien und Kritiken,* 1888, p. 7 ff.; P. Graue, Der Moralismus der Ritschlschen Theologie, in the *Jahrb. für prot. Theologie,* 1889, pp. 321 ff; M. Reischle, *Ein Wort zur Controverse über die Mystik in der Theologie,* 1886; E. Vischer, *Albrecht Ritschl's Anschauung von evangelischem Glauben und Leben,* 1900; R. Wegener, A. Ritschl's *Idee des Reiches Gottes im Licht der Geschichte kritisch untersucht,* 1897, along with J. Weiss, *Die Idee des Reiches Gottes in der Theologie,* 1901, ch. VI. pp. 110 ff, and J. H. Schultze, Die Ritschlsche Theologie eine Teleologie, in the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift,* 1898, pp. 211 ff; E. Cremer, *Ueber die christliche Vollkommenheit,* 1899, pp. 7 ff; Beyreis, Die Christliche Vollkommenheit, in the *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift,* 1901, pp. 526 ff; Karl Schmidt, *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift,* 1905, pp. 724 ff.