

CHAPTER VIII

THE RITSCHLIAN REVISION

THE deep impression made by the Ritschlian theology may be explained by the fact that it sought to satisfy two characteristic demands of the modern Christian mind. It endeavoured to do justice to the doctrines which have been realised to be the source of the power of historical Christianity; and it endeavoured to give peace to the modern intellectual conscience by abandoning critical and doctrinal positions which had come to seem untenable. There may also be force in the contention of Frank that it was congenial to an age which has a diminished sense, if not of the power, at least of the heinousness and the guilt of sin.¹ On the other hand, it cannot be said that it has owed its influence to the novelty of its doctrinal constructions. The originality consists mainly in the fact that Ritschl consistently operated with his own method, and that it yielded a synthesis of truths, of heresies, and also of confessions of ignorance, that had not previously been brought together in the same combination and proportion.

Ritschl counts it a merit of Schleiermacher that he propounded a definition of Christianity—derived from the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, and confirmed by comparative theology, which should govern the treatment of particular doctrines of the Christian

¹ *Geschichte der neueren Theologie insbesondere der systematischen*, 1894, ch. v.

system.¹ His main criticism of Schleiermacher's definition is that, while perceiving that the central blessings of Christianity are redemption through Christ and the Kingdom of God, he lost sight in the course of his work of the importance of the latter conception, and in particular that he failed to set redemption in its due place as the means by which God realises His grand end of the Kingdom. He also pointed out, and with justice, that it is not a peculiar feature of Christianity which is affirmed in describing it as a redemptive religion—that this note is shared with it by the prophetic religion of the Old Testament, and that the specific difference of Christianity rather lies in its thoroughgoing spiritual conception of the content and method of redemption, and also in the realisation of the destination of the blessings to the whole human race. The definition in which Ritschl gives effect to his amendments runs as follows:—
'Christianity is the monotheistic, completely spiritual and ethical religion, which, based on the life of its author as Redeemer and as Founder of the Kingdom of God, consists in the freedom of the children of God, involves the impulse to conduct from the motive of love, aims at the moral organisation of mankind, and grounds blessedness on the relation of sonship to God, as well as on the Kingdom of God.'²

In point of form this definition leaves something to be desired. It has the merit of emphasising the practical bent of religion, and after prefacing weighty notes of Christianity it gives due prominence to a statement of its blessings and of the basis on which they rest. But the statement is ill arranged, redundant and defective. The list of the fundamental

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, iii. E. Tr., p. 8 ff. ² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

characteristics should include the note of universality, which it shares with Buddhism and Mohammedanism. The gift of eternal life may be implied in 'blessedness,' but its explicit affirmation in the form of immortality is required in view of its intrinsic importance, and also in view of the marked tendency of philosophical theology to treat personal immortality as matter of indifference. It may also be thought that the evangelical note expressed in the doctrine of Justification by Faith enters no less vitally into the Christian religion than the ethical doctrine that Christian conduct is rooted in love.¹

In general it may be said that the Ritschlian definition gives provisional support to our estimate that its promise of blessings is ampler than the divine provision on which reliance is placed for making the blessings effective. It reproduces Schleiermacher's observation that the mediatorship of Christ is vital to the Christian religion, but it proceeds to fasten attention on the predicate of 'founder of the Kingdom of God,' which paves the way for a weakened doctrine of the person and work of Christ. It may also be suggested that the definition of a religion which is confessedly the crowning and final revelation of God should convey something more of the great disclosure that has been made concerning the nature of the divine being than is set forth in the observation that it is a monotheistic religion. The most valuable feature of the definition is that it concentrates attention on the fact that the Christian religion is the vehicle for the conveyance to mankind, in dependence upon God as revealed in Christ, of large comprehensive and unique blessings, and that these make not only for an

¹ The definition of Professor Adams Brown is of the Ritschlian type, but does not show much improvement in arrangement and definiteness.—*The Essence of Christianity*, 1902.

individual, but also for a racial salvation. 'Christianity,' he says, 'is not like a circle described from a centre, but an ellipse which is determined by two foci.'¹ The reference is to the blessings of redemption and the Kingdom of God. In these two he has usefully comprehended the gifts which have come to the world from God through Jesus Christ. The main question that arises at this stage is whether redemption is to be conceived as the means towards the end of the realisation of the Kingdom of God.² This may mean that redemption is merely a means to the end of the coming of a Kingdom of love upon earth; but this would conflict with one of the deepest and best assured of religious convictions—viz. that there is a religious relationship, a possessing and being possessed by God, which is a sovereign good of the finite spirit, and which does not require to offer a vindication of itself by pointing to its utility for an ulterior purpose. It may, however, only mean that the religious relationship, when real, issues in labour within and for that Kingdom which embraces all righteousness and holiness and loving service. But in this form the doctrine of the teleological bearing of redemption is no recent discovery. It has been the doctrine of innumerable plain sermons from the apostolic age downward, that, having tasted of the Grace of God, it behoves men to bring forth the fruits of the sanctified and dedicated life. Its realisation by the Church has led to the cultivation on the basis of Dogmatics of a discipline of Christian Ethics. If Ritschl, in his indictment of all earlier theology,³ means that it had no vision of a

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, iii. E. Tr., p. 11.

² 'The reconciliation of sinners by God is conceivable as the means used for the establishment of the Kingdom of God by God's love.'
—*Ibid.*, p. 326.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Kingdom of God to be realised through grace and obedience in the midst of the life of the world, it is strange that, beyond paying a slight compliment to Zwingli, he should have overlooked this aspect of the spirit and tradition of Calvinistic theology. The old Lutheranism may have been infected by a one-sided spirituality and a timid individualism; but the churches which learned from Calvin, including the Scottish Church, had a firm grasp of the truth that Christ is not merely the Redeemer of guilty men, but that He also came to enable families and schools, cities and nations, to subject every department of their activity to the laws of God, and even to annex them as spheres of the Kingdom of God.

I

In his conception and exposition of the Christian blessings Ritschl advances upon the position of Schleiermacher by a fuller response to the demands of the religious instinct for a great and comprehensive salvation. This he does mainly by magnifying the service which the Christian religion renders to the race in the foundation of the Kingdom of God, in part also by claiming more religious substance and value for the religious boon of Justification.

1. The Kingdom of God is regarded as the crowning and, in a manner, the all-inclusive blessing of the Christian religion. 'The conception of God,' he says, 'which is given in the revelation received through Christ is that of a loving will which assures to believers spiritual dominion over the world and perfect moral fellowship in the Kingdom of God as the *summum bonum*.'¹ The Kingdom is the chief good for mankind,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

and the chief good for the individual may be defined as membership in the Kingdom. 'Christianity attaches blessedness for man to participation in the Kingdom of God and lordship over the world.'¹ Its nature is indicated generally in the clauses of the above-quoted definition, which point to the realisation of the final end of Christianity in the moral organisation of mankind, and in conduct which has its impulse from the motive of love.

What then is this *summum bonum* of Christianity—the Kingdom of God? A kingdom may stand for one or more or all of these things—the rule which is exercised by a sovereign, the territory over which he holds sway, the people whom he governs, the privileges enjoyed by his subjects, the activities which are carried on in the various departments of the life of the realm. As employed by Ritschl, the name frequently refers to the society or fellowship of persons embraced in the Kingdom. Thus it is said that the Christian idea of the Kingdom of God 'denotes the association of mankind—an association both extensively and intensively the most comprehensive possible, through the reciprocal moral action of its members.'² In other passages the emphasis is shifted to the privileges which are enjoyed, and the obligations which are imposed, in the life of the subjects of the Kingdom. These aspects are recognised in the distinction which is drawn between the Kingdom of God as a gift from God and as a task imposed by God. The Kingdom is said to be a religious conception—in that it represents a gift of God or 'an operation of God directed towards man'; and it is also said to be an ethical conception, inasmuch as it

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 284. 'The association of man for reciprocal and common action from the motive of love,' p. 290. 'A Kingdom in which all are knit together in union with every one who can show the marks of a neighbour,' p. 334.

is only through the discharge by men of the divinely imposed task—through the rendering of obedience on their part—that ‘God’s sovereignty possesses continuous existence.’ These two meanings, it is added, are interdependent.¹ This account of the Kingdom has the appearance of a description of the Christian Church, but the Kingdom is really conceived as a much wider and also as a much more elusive reality. To some extent Kingdom and Church merely represent two different aspects and endeavours of the same community. ‘Those who believe in Christ,’ it is said, ‘constitute a Church in so far as they express in prayer their faith in God the Father, or present themselves to God as men who through Christ are well-pleasing to Him. The same believers in Christ constitute the Kingdom of God in so far as, ignoring distinctions of sex, rank or nationality, they act reciprocally from love, and thus bring into existence that fellowship of moral disposition and moral blessings which extends through all possible gradations to the limits of the human race.’²

In other words, the Kingdom would appear to consist of that portion of the human race which has been raised to the Christian plane of character and service, while if we look away from persons to things, it consists of the privileges, the virtues, and the graces, and also the ethical obligations, of the Christian life. It is the sphere in which life has been thoroughly moralised—in which brotherly love has become the ruling principle

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30. So also, ‘The Kingdom of God is the highest good assured by God to the community through His revelation in Christ, but it is to be regarded as the highest good only in so far as it is at the same time recognised as the moral ideal for the realisation of which the members of the community bind themselves one to another by a definite rule of reciprocal action.’—*Unterricht in der Christlichen Religion*.

² *Justification and Reconciliation*, iii. E. Tr., p. 285.

of action, and manifests itself in unselfish service of man, in the forms of brotherly kindness, philanthropy, and above all of faithfulness and diligence in one's appointed calling. It is implied, however, in what was already said of the religious character of the idea of the Kingdom that it is not a mere synonym for a moralised society. It is also a sphere of religious privilege. The members are thoroughly religious in spirit as well as ethical in principle. They enjoy the fundamental religious boon of security and freedom over against the world as the result of their relation to God, who is the Master of the world. They enjoy the privilege of access to God, they lay hold of Him in faith, they approach Him in prayer. As united to God they gain the victory over the world—not indeed in the sense that they find its laws set aside by God because of their faith and prayers, but in the sense that all the changes, chances and calamities of time are powerless to harm them, and are transmuted into a discipline that works consistently for the good of the children of God. The forms in which this victory over the world comes to expression are a childlike trust in Providence, and a humility evidenced in childlike submission to the will of God amid the untoward and cruel happenings of life. Membership in the Kingdom also carries with it the privilege of entertaining the Christian hope of eternal life. Ritschl has been accused of cautiously limiting his outlook to the present life, and in his analysis of eternal life he undoubtedly furnishes some ground for the charge by refusing to discuss the content of eternal life in a future state, and confining himself to its manifestations in this life in the forms of joy, blessedness and the feeling of exaltation.¹ But

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

there can be no doubt whatever that his general view of the function of religion as calling upon God for the protection of our highest interests justifies faith in continued personal existence, and that he himself confidently drew this inference. 'Man apprehends himself,' he says, 'as a being who stands near to the supramundane God, and claims to live in spite of the experience of death. Christianity has only unfolded that view of the world in which this aspiration finds its confirmation, and the question about eternal life is answered.'¹

2. We have next to advert to two spiritual blessings which, while enjoyed by members of the Kingdom, may also be regarded as the presupposition of membership. These are reconciliation and justification which, though separable in thought, yet coincide in actual experience.² Reconciliation is a change of attitude on the part of the sinner toward God, and comes about when he takes up towards God an attitude of childlike trust and obedience. Justification is an act of God in which the sinner is accepted as righteous and his sins are forgiven. The force of the doctrine of forgiveness of sins is that they no longer act as a bar to communion with God, and to the enjoyment of the privileges of His Kingdom. 'Justification, or the forgiveness of sins, as the operation of God upon men which is fundamental in Christianity, is the acceptance of sinners into that fellowship with God in which their salvation is to be realised and carried out unto eternal life.'³ He agrees with Schleiermacher that a single divine act

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 610. 'Personal assurance of the indestructibility of spiritual existence always attaches itself to experiences of the religious-ethical character,' p. 669.

² 'Though reconciliation is properly conceived as justification made operative so that they may not be identified in thought, it is difficult to separate them in time.'

³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

underlies the experience of regeneration, but insists that the aspect which it wears of a declaratory judgment upon the sinner belongs as truly to the realm of reality as the new life which is brought into existence by the creative exercise of divine power. He thus adheres in principle to the interpretation of justification as a forensic act, in so far as a paternal judgment can be described in the language of the court of law. He also strongly affirms that the judgment is synthetic—that is, it adds a predicate not previously found in the sinner, and accepts him for something other than he actually is.¹ He thus reaffirms the fundamental position of the evangelical version of Christianity that the divine judgment of justification is not based on the worthiness of the sinner, but is an act of magnanimity to which faith is related as the mere condition of its being appropriated and made effective in the experiences and activities of a new life.

Ritschl follows Schleiermacher in conceiving of the divine purpose in redemption as relating primarily to an economy and to an aggregate of redeemed persons, and as bearing upon individuals only in so far as they come within the range of the system, and claim its benefit.² This idea is expressed in the form that the object of Justification is the Christian society, and that it is passed on to the individual as the result of his taking place in the Christian fellowship and sharing in its life.³ The interest of this proposition lies in the fact that it may be a disguised statement, either of the Arminian doctrine that the elective decree of God is

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³ Justification or reconciliation is related in the first instance to the whole of the religious community founded by Christ, and to individuals only as they attach themselves by faith in the Gospel thereto.—*Ibid.*, p. 130.

conditional, or of the Catholic tenet that there is no salvation outside of the visible Church. Undoubtedly the tenet expresses Ritschl's antipathy to absolute predestination, and it also has the practical effect of magnifying the function of the Church as a storehouse or medium of the means of grace. But in refusing to conceive the individual as the immediate object of justification, Ritschl was really misled by undue deference to Schleiermacher, to whom it was dictated by his philosophical idea of God, and the latter thinker did not sufficiently reconsider it in the light of his own more Christian conception of God.

3. It does not fall within our purpose to discuss the many controversial points which are raised in the above scheme of thought. Our present interest centres in the general question as to whether the Ritschlian theology conceives the Christian blessings on such a scale, and esteems them of such a quality, that the Christian religion retains the character of a great salvation, and promises benefits adequate to the spiritual needs and capacities of man. To this question the answer must be in the affirmative. It may be objected with force that Ritschl did less than justice to the mystical side of religion, and that he failed to realise that a good which is good in itself, and not merely useful as a means to an end, is enjoyed by the soul which enters into union with the God of justification and reconciliation. But if Christianity accomplishes all that he affirms—blessing the individual with access to God in the forgiveness of sins, a Christlike spirit of filial trust and obedience, the subjection of the whole life to the law of love, the title to hold the Christian hope, while it also establishes and fosters in the world a Kingdom of God which is a preserving salt to society, the life of its higher life, and the nursery of those of its great men whose great-

ness is rooted in goodness, the suggestion is inadmissible that Ritschl has very seriously abridged or mutilated the blessings which are promised in the Christian Gospel.

II

Our religious interest accordingly shifts to the second capital question—viz. whether he operates with a saving machinery which is sufficient to redeem these rich promises, and to translate them into fact in the experience of individuals and of the race. His starting-point is that redemption is of Christ. The blessings comprehended in redemption and the Kingdom of God are the fruits of the work of Christ. Like Schleiermacher, he finds it of the very genius of Christianity that Christ occupies a central and permanent position as the mediator of benefits of the Christian salvation. For this there is a twofold reason—that He was the bearer of the perfect and final revelation of God, and especially that to Him the Christian community is indebted both for its origin, and for its continued vitality, purity and strength. ‘The community which is called on to form itself by union into the Kingdom of God, and whose activity consists in carrying out this assigned task, depends entirely for its origin on the fact that the Son of God is its Lord to whom it renders obedience. The community as the object to which God’s love extends cannot even be conceived apart from the presupposition that it is governed continually by its founder as its Lord, and that its members go through the experience of being transformed into that peculiar character of which their Lord is the original, and which through Him is communicated to them.’¹

¹ *Justification and Reconciliation*, iii. E. Tr., p. 281.

The conception is substantially Schleiermacher's doctrine of Christ as the second Adam—the chief difference being that Schleiermacher regarded Christ as archetypal mainly in respect that He exemplified and transmitted the spirit of constant filial piety, while Ritschl lays more stress upon His manifestation of filial obedience and love to man. This may be more simply expressed by saying that salvation or membership in the Kingdom consists in possessing a Christlike piety and goodness—that there are men, women, and children in the world who are Christlike in different degrees, and that in the last resort they owe their Christlikeness to Christ.

1. What next, we have to ask, did Christ do to found, and what does He do to sustain, this community? The answer to the first question is that He lived His life in perfect trust and obedience, and that He exhibited the same qualities when fidelity to His vocation required Him to endure suffering and death. On Ritschl's view the death of Christ could have no significance as a propitiation for sin—whereby it was made possible for God to receive sinners to mercy, for the only difficulty to be reckoned with was on the side of man with His sense of guilt and His distrust or fear of God. The value of the death of Christ for us lay in the fact that it is a power which continues to awaken the steadfast faith in God's love, the spirit of obedience unto death, and the sense of victory over the world, which are among the chiefest privileges or responsibilities of the members of the Kingdom. The nomenclature of priesthood and sacrifice are retained, but substantially the meaning is that He was the Saviour because of the spirit of sacrifice which informed His life, and which came to its clearest and most

compendious expression in the world-subduing faith, and in the perfect obedience, of His passion. On the other hand Ritschl holds that the work of Christ is in an objective way the ground of forgiveness and acceptance. In a real sense God pardons for Christ's sake, since Christ lived and died to found the Kingdom, and God forgives in the interests of the Kingdom. How then does Christ reproduce men after His likeness so that they become citizens of the Kingdom? Ritschl does not make use, as Schleiermacher does, of the idea of a mystic relationship of Christ in which an evangelical piety may recognise a passable description of the experience of quickening power and comfort which is enjoyed in the friendship of Christ. To Ritschl this conception was more than uncongenial: 'sentimental intercourse with the risen Christ' was esteemed a pathological aspect of Pietism, which was improperly commended as normal, and which was responsible for much of the prejudice felt against Christianity by the more virile types of modern Christian character. Has Ritschl then no dynamic available save the commonplace explanation of the older rationalism that Jesus was the perfect exemplar of piety and virtue, and that He moulds us in piety and virtue, according to our degrees, by the influence emanating from His teaching, and above all by the constraining force of His example? This seems to be all that is recognised in such a passage as the following:—'What in the historically complete figure of Christ we recognise to be the real worth of His existence, gains for ourselves the worth of an abiding rule; since we at the same time discover that only *through the impulse and direction* we receive from Him is it possible for us to enter into His relation to

God and to the world.'¹ It was, however, clearly seen by Ritschl that a large mass of the Christian character, inspiration and endeavour which makes up the Kingdom of God is not directly traceable to the teaching and example of Christ. It has been transmitted through the life, institutions and activities of the Christian society. The creative and sustaining work of Christ is largely accomplished through the collective spirit and life which passed from Him into the society which He founded. In this collective life and spirit we are in touch with the grace and power of the glorified Lord, or with the operations of the Holy Spirit. They are the realities which appear in these religious phenomena.

2. Like Schleiermacher, Ritschl starts with the work of Christ as Redeemer, and in the light of His benefactions he construes the dignity of His person. In view of the service He renders, the benefits He bestows, and the saving work which He accomplishes, we rightly attribute to Him the predicate of Godhead. He who does the work of God in founding the Kingdom of God, in giving knowledge of and access to God, and in building up souls in the likeness of God, holds relations to us which can only be properly described in terms of God. The affirmation of the divinity of Christ has the character of a judgment of value, but this has the significance that it is affirmed on the ground of the experienced power of Christ. It does not mean that it is merely a useful symbol, and one which is not seriously meant to cover reality. The divinity of Christ means that in Christ God came and comes into living contact with mankind, so that in dealing with Him we have to do with God. For Schleiermacher the divinity

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

of Christ practically meant that Jesus Christ was the perfect exemplar of piety, who was called divine because of His close and constant sense of fellowship and harmony with God. For Ritschl the essential meaning of the divinity of Christ is that He was a man in whom God was revealed, in the fullest measure that was possible in a human being subject to the forms of human experience. In Christ, in brief, God was so manifested that God is understood, not only from His words, but in His person. What, now, are the divine qualities which shine forth in Jesus Christ? He revealed God in His grace and truth, or more summarily in His love, so that we can trust God for such a love as was seen in Christ—far-reaching, holy, sympathetic, beneficent, self-sacrificing. He also revealed the power of God. Under this head we are not reminded of the acts of divine power which are ascribed to Christ in the Gospel record: the theme is worked out in more circuitous fashion by showing that Christ possessed mastery over the world in the sense that it was powerless to destroy or even to injure Him, and that He emerged from the worst trials which it could bring, and from the fiercest assaults which it could deliver, as Lord and Saviour. Lastly, the godlikeness of Christ which is His divinity was seen in the fact that the purpose of His life was identical with the purpose pursued by God towards the human race. The goal of human history, as decreed by God, is the realisation of His Kingdom on earth; and the founding of this Kingdom Jesus accepted as His vocation, to this vocation His whole work was subordinated, and in fidelity to it He endured the death of the Cross.

The theological method of Ritschl debars him from including in the dogmatic system articles which have

no point of contact in the believing experience of the members of the Christian society. On this account he can find no place for the Catholic doctrines of the mode of Christ's incarnation and His pre-existence. The Virgin-birth is ignored as necessarily wanting in experimental corroboration as well as in adequate historical proof; and it is also pronounced superfluous in view of other and more conclusive evidence that grace and truth were in Jesus Christ. For the same reason he refrains from the affirmation of the pre-existence of Christ, which evidently cannot claim the same support of immediate personal experience to which appeal is made when testimony is borne to the grace and power of the glorified Christ. The pre-existence of Christ he only affirms in the sense that He was eternally known and embraced in the divine purpose; and that, from the divine point of view, in which there is no separation between decree and act, this involves that for God Christ is the eternal Son.¹ In the same sense and terms it is clearly possible to affirm pre-existence of ourselves.

3. The Ritschlian conception of God, as compared with that of Schleiermacher, marks an unmistakable return to the standpoint of Christian Theism. There are, indeed, traces of Schleiermacher's thinking in detached positions, but the whole theological thinking is governed—so far as the epistemological theory does not interfere—by loyalty to the idea of God which underlies the Christian system. The article of the personality of God is vigorously defended, with some debt to Lotze,

¹ 'If we discount, in the case of God, the interval between purpose and accomplishment, then we get the formula that Christ exists for God eternally as that which He appears to us under the limitations of time. But only for us since for us, as pre-existent, Christ is hidden.'—*Ibid.*, p. 471.

against the Pantheistic school,¹ and with equal emphasis he affirms the transcendence of God. God's distinction from and elevation above the world are maintained as a vital interest of religion.

(a) The fundamental attribute is conceived as love, with which omnipotence is associated as the condition of His loving will being able to accomplish its purpose to give man the victory over the world. The divine attribute of justice, in Ritschl's view, has been misconceived in the theological tradition: it has no interest in punishing sin out of regard for the rights of God or the demands of violated law, and it is properly interpreted as merely a steadfast purpose of God to establish His Kingdom of righteousness and love. Though stated in his own peculiar way the idea seems to be a reproduction of the view of Origen, that the divine justice is divine love in the custody, and under the administration, of divine wisdom.

(b) Combining the idea of God with the foregoing doctrine of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, Ritschl is able to propound a Trinitarian doctrine of the Dynamistic type. His theory of knowing, and also the supposed duty of theology to keep strictly to what is experimentally verifiable, preclude the attempt to penetrate to distinctions and relations in the inner life of the God-head, and to exhibit the knowledge thus gained in the Catholic dogma of an ontological Trinity. The law that a thing is given in its appearances holds of God as well as of finite beings. But in justice to Ritschl it has to be added that for him phenomenon belongs to the world of reality, that in the appearance the thing actually appears; and that therefore it was very God who was manifested in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 226 ff.

who is with us still as the Holy Spirit which is the spring of the spiritual and moral life of the Kingdom of God.

III

The scheme thus outlined of the means of salvation, as distinguished from the content of salvation, must be held to be inadequate in the light of our previous discussions. For it is not easy to name any specifically Ritschlian doctrine of capital importance which has not in some former situation sought to establish itself in theology in a slightly different form, and which did not evoke misgiving or solemn protest as impairing the efficacy or diminishing the security of the Christian salvation. The Ritschlian doctrine of the Atonement, indeed, is no mere reproduction of the theory of moral influence, since it responds to the religious need of perceiving an objective ground of reconciliation, by the illuminating idea that God forgives sinners for the sake of the Kingdom. But much weight must be given to the fact that this seems an inadequate ground of acceptance to those who have undergone the experience of repentance in its classic form, realised the unspeakable heinousness of sin, and known the wrath of God to be one of the most assured of facts of the spiritual world. The doctrine of the person of Christ, and of the Trinity, has its ancient counterpart in the construction of Paul of Samosata; and there were weighty religious reasons, as we have seen, which led the ancient Church to hold it vital to affirm the personal pre-existence of Christ, and to believe that the threefold manifestation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit requires to be supported by the doctrine of an essential Trinity. In particular the divinity of Christ, on Ritschl's view,

does not seem to mean more than that He revealed God by being a godlike man; and a godlike man is considerably lower in the scale of being than the Arian Son who, though conceived to be the godlike instrument of creation and providence, was yet not great enough to satisfy the demands of Christian faith. Further, the Ritschlian scheme is weakened by the rationalistic tendency to substitute for the divine energies embraced in the traditional scheme the power of ideas and of social influences. The strength of the Catholic position lies in the fact that it gives access by faith to a living person who is very God, and from whom proceeds the Holy Spirit, also a living person, the Lord and Giver of life. And what Ritschl substitutes for this, according to the best judgment of the present writer, is a Christ who enables us to form a just idea of God, and who has founded a world-wide and enduring Christian society, the influences of which go to mould and to energise Christian character. While he does justice to the deepest conviction of the Church in emphasising the mediatorship of Christ, it may fairly be affirmed that he has deprived Him of the special qualities—viz. an essential Godhead and a vitalising power, which made His mediatorship to be valued by the Christian society as the indispensable means of realising what was greatest in the great salvation.

On the other hand it is to be observed that the Ritschlian theology is a positive theology which sets forth a body of extremely important truths. It is right in what it affirms, and its affirmations are truths which are of the highest value for thought, for character and for life. To believe in a personal God whose essence is love, to think of the infinite and eternal God in terms of Jesus Christ, to be assured that He forgives the sins

of those who repent and believe, to accept as the end of history the establishment of the Kingdom of God, to hear His call to serve Him in His Kingdom by fidelity in one's calling, and by Christlike love of man, to trust the love of the Father amid all the ills and disappointments of life, and so to endure to the end—all this makes up an intellectual and religious equipment which is no mean provision for fighting the spiritual battles of the modern world. It may not sufficiently draw upon the supernatural sources of life and power for producing and sustaining the most saintly type of experience, but regarded even as a scheme of religious and ethical ideas it is fitted to do a great work in that process of leavening which is no unimportant part of the business of the Gospel.

As a fact it would seem that the Ritschlian theology is a selection and instalment of Christian truths which are fitted to render apologetic service of great value in relation to our particular age. For it is a curious circumstance that, while Ritschl insists that faith is needed to receive the truths of the Gospel, the doctrines which he puts forward are for the most part such as have little appearance of foolishness even to the half-spiritual man. The declared foe of Rationalism, Ritschl contrived to make the Christian doctrines seem eminently reasonable to all who make the great fundamental assumption that is involved in the Christian idea of God. From the theistic point of view, it is easy to believe that God is to be thought of in terms of the purest and noblest that has come within our ken—even Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ represented in His life the purpose of God, that He calls us to the Kingdom which stands for all forms of high and unselfish service of man, and that the inspiration of our piety and our

power for service come ultimately from Christ, and are mediated through the Church which He founded.

It would therefore appear to be properly matter of satisfaction to all who occupy the Christian standpoint that a synthesis of the truths of Christianity should have been forcibly preached to a generation which has been largely affected with the spirit of Agnosticism, and even with materialistic ideas. On the other hand it may be objected that this is a case in which the good is the enemy of the better, and even that a selection of Christian truths, if offered as a substitute for the whole truth, may prove to be positively injurious, and may act not as food but as poison. In regard to this point we have to make clear to our minds what is the precise bearing of truth and error which we are discussing. We may look at it from the point of view of the ancient Church and of the older Protestantism—with the presupposition that there is a minimum of orthodox belief which is necessary for the attainment of eternal salvation, and also a degree of heresy which entails the penalty of eternal punishment; and from this assumption it is natural and indeed inevitable to view an impoverished scheme of Christian doctrine with indignation and horror, and to oppose it with all the concentrated purpose and wrath of the ancient polemics. If we cease to argue the matter, as is now generally agreed, from an eschatological point of view, and confine ourselves to testing the value of a system for sustaining the Christian experience and the Christian hope, it is natural to take up a much more charitable attitude towards the more meagre types of Christian doctrine. It is, indeed, supremely intelligible that a reduced scheme of Christianity should be still earnestly opposed as offending against those who possess a stronger faith

and hold a fuller creed, and as threatening to deprive them of spiritual blessings which they possess, or to weaken their sense of security in regard to them. But it is possible to believe that there is a perfect form of Christian doctrine which is needed to enable the Christian religion to produce its full results, and at the same time to hold that other systems have a real, if a lower, degree of spiritual utility, and to suppose that it is better for a sect or school to receive some benefit from a defective version of Christianity than that they should ignore it and receive no Christian benefit whatever. The truth is that the Christian religion, like mother-earth, sustains great multitudes in very varying degrees of health, comfort and well-being; and we may be thankful in both cases that, even where privation and hardship prevail, there is at least a livelihood. There is a further parallel that as population tends to migrate from the poorer places to richer and more hospitable climes, so there is evidence of a spiritual tendency which leads human souls, if they have found a footing in the world of Christian faith at all, to press on from the colder and darker regions to the sphere of a fuller faith and a richer life. Of this there are illustrations in the later history of the Ritschlian School. It seems clear that the Ritschlian version of Christian doctrine is adequate to enable the Christian religion to do a considerable part of its work among men of a particular grade of culture and experience; and when the Christian religion gets to work its normal effect is that, not in grace only, but in knowledge, there is growth to more and more.