



Theology as Science in Nineteenth-Century Germany: From F.C. Baur to Ernst Troeltsch

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CHAPTER

9 The Kingdom of God

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Abstract

This chapter seeks to show how the dogmatic content of Ritschl's system is closely bound up both with his historical and his philosophical ideas. To this end, the chapter is focused on Ritschl's central idea of the Kingdom of God. Its principal significance is first established on the basis of the whole range of Ritschl's writings. Its background is then established in what Ritschl calls 'biblical theology', a historical reconstruction of the New Testament setting of the Church, which Ritschl offers in the second volume (hitherto not translated into English) of his theological *opus magnum*, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*. A third part of the chapter goes on to examine in detail how Ritschl's leading ideas about the Kingdom of God shape one specific doctrine—his doctrine of God.

Keywords: [A. Ritschl](#), [Kingdom of God](#), [biblical theology](#), [ethics](#), [Jesus of Nazareth](#), [St Paul](#), [doctrine of God](#), [Thomas Aquinas](#), [M. Luther](#), [pantheism](#), [doctrine of reconciliation](#), [teleology](#)

Subject: [Christian Theology](#), [History of Western Philosophy](#), [Theology](#), [Philosophy of Religion](#)

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One unquestionable difference between Baur and Ritschl is their career path. While Baur began and ended his academic life as a historical theologian, Ritschl's development increasingly took him into the field of Dogmatic Theology. Baur himself notes this divergence, not without irony, in a letter of congratulation to his former student on the occasion of his promotion to an extraordinary professorship in 1853:

You have a beautiful field of occupation ahead of you, and while dogmatics is not the part of theology in which I would prefer to see you established, the participation in this task, which is particularly difficult at the present moment, must be of great interest to a younger theologian.¹

One cannot therefore do justice to Ritschl's thought without noting that, in many ways, the clarification of doctrinal questions is at its centre. A precise exposition of the doctrine of God, the work of Christ or the sacraments are at least as important to Ritschl as contemporary philosophical discussions about epistemology or value theory.²

At the same time, a full study of this dimension of Ritschl's work requires its own contextualizing. Ritschl's theology must be considered in its various relations with theologians of the Scholastic era, the Reformation, as well as Orthodoxy and Pietism—not to mention contemporary discussions in which he took part. While some of these questions have been addressed by recent scholarship,³ much more remains to be done.⁴

p. 212 Such a task the present work cannot accomplish; we must more narrowly circumscribe its aim. The extent of our interest in Ritschl's account of Christian doctrine is defined by the hypothesis that his concept of theology as science rests primarily on the integration of philosophical, historical, and theological work. If this assumption is valid, it *must* be possible to show that ↪ Ritschl's philosophical insights were developed for the purpose of facilitating an adequate theological interpretation of the Christian religion *and* an appropriate understanding of its historical foundations. At the same time, his historical studies, in particular his theory of Primitive Christianity, must likewise be shown to underwrite a particular theological interpretation of the Christian religion. His theological doctrines then, *ex hypothesi*, will illuminate the nature of Christianity in a way that makes Ritschl's philosophical and historical premisses plausible—premisses, we must remember, which do *not* presuppose a theology, but the religious and cultural reality of Christianity.

It would therefore be wrong to assume that Ritschl applied to theological questions a previously established, independent philosophy. Rather, the three dimensions of his academic work are irreducibly interrelated. Ritschl's conception of the Kingdom of God, which is as idiosyncratic as it is central to his theology, is an obvious test case for this assumption.⁵ Its analysis will demonstrate how closely Ritschl's theories in the philosophy of religion and in ethics are related to his more narrowly theological, dogmatic, and ethical choices. At the same time, his conception of the Kingdom of God is fundamental for Ritschl's understanding of biblical theology, that is of his exegetical reconstruction, on the basis of Scripture, of the historical revelation.

The argument will be developed in three steps. The first is an overview of the development of Ritschl's doctrine of the kingdom of God and its context within the history of ideas. Secondly, Ritschl's understanding of the Kingdom of God will be presented in the context of his own version of biblical theology. Finally, an account of Ritschl's doctrine of God will illustrate how his fundamental theoretical choices shaped his work on a specific topos of dogmatics.

Background and Development

p. 213 As far as we can see, Ritschl's specific interest in the doctrine of the Kingdom of God comes to the fore for the first time in his lectures on theological ethics in 1858.⁶ Otto Ritschl, whose biography usually evinces a keen sense of the gradual formation of his father's theology, surprisingly passes over this turning point, even though he clearly appreciates the significance of this ↪ lecture series in general.⁷ Nevertheless, even a superficial view reveals striking similarities between this first attempt to present the doctrine of the Kingdom of God as the 'principle of theology as such',⁸ both ethical and dogmatic, and his mature discussion of the same idea published nearly twenty years later in *Justification and Reconciliation* and in his *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion (Introduction to the Christian Religion)*.⁹

In his lecture notes, Ritschl proceeds from a summary of New Testament teaching (§21). He notes a tension: on the one hand, the Kingdom of God is described as a good 'produced only by God, to be imparted to humankind'. In other words, it is the work of God which human beings receive passively in faith. On the other hand, however, it is also said to be the 'object of moral striving'¹⁰ and thus dependent on human volition and activity. The New Testament solves this dilemma, according to Ritschl, by means of an 'external' connection of the two ideas. Jesus, he argues, initially inculcates the notion of an 'equivalent reward' corresponding to the ideal of moral striving: he promises 'a reward in heaven' to those who are persecuted on his behalf (Matthew 5: 12) or to those who love their enemies (Matthew 5: 46) while announcing negative compensation to hypocrites (Matthew 6: 1–2, 5, 16).¹¹ This logic of reciprocity, however, is ultimately transcended by the logic of grace, the

‘infinitely more valuable reward of the kingdom of God’.¹² In this way, it is divine activity that constitutes ‘the ground of the highest good’,¹³ and human action contributes to the coming of the Kingdom only insofar as it ‘is done for the sake of Christ, out of faith in Christ’.¹⁴ In this sense, Ritschl summarizes the position of the New Testament as follows:

Thus the Kingdom of God is the goal of [human] activity...only because membership in the Kingdom is already the condition for such activity. The Kingdom of God is not one-sidedly a divine or a human product, but a process that has been initiated by God through Christ and is to be realised by the believers in order to yield a product that is both divine and human.¹⁵

p. 214 In this dual sense, the Kingdom of God correlates with human activity in the spirit of justice: it is its ground, purpose, and means.¹⁶ Its function as *telos* corresponds to the divine end in itself, which is dogmatically expressed in the idea of the Son as the ‘necessary and eternal object of God’s love: ↳ ‘The kingdom of God is therefore the ethical exposition of divine love as an end in itself’.¹⁷

The New Testament position, then, balances the religious and ethical dimension of the Kingdom of God in such a way that human activity is demanded and appreciated but at the same time grounded in and transcended by God’s freely given love. Subsequently, however, this idea has not always been preserved in the Christian Church. Ritschl singles out specifically the identification of the Kingdom of God with a legal and ecclesial system, which he perceives in Roman Catholicism and traces back to Augustine’s *City of God*.¹⁸ To Ritschl, by contrast, ‘legal system and Kingdom of God form a mutually exclusive contradiction’.¹⁹

The Kingdom of God, based as it is on the principle of love, excludes the notion of entitlement that constitutes the basis of legality. Ritschl even concedes some justification to those who regard the Kingdom of God and property as incompatible; they seem, at first glance, ‘to prepare a special place for the Kingdom of God’.²⁰ This concession, however, is immediately revoked and bent into the assertion that precisely because the Kingdom of God transcends earthly justice, the legal system preserves a limited place for it. While, as Ritschl explains by analogy to the family,

among the children in the Kingdom of God property rights, compensation for insult, punishment for bodily harm and so forth should be suspended, the Kingdom of God presupposes the universal validity of the legal sphere as a means for even the highest moral task.²¹

p. 215 The Kingdom of God is thus not identical with any legally ordered community; with a swipe against Hegel and Rothe—though he omits their names—Ritschl dismisses the state as a possible contender for this role.²² Neither is it to be identified with any particular religious projects, as the Pietists suggest.²³ Rather, it emerges wherever the divine end-in-itself, love, determines the ends of human practice. This gradual evolution of the Kingdom, however, is met with permanent opposition and resistance, which Ritschl equates with the ‘power of sin’.²⁴ While teleologically, therefore, ‘the cosmos’ is destined to ‘be Christianized’, it is equally true that ‘the cosmos cannot accept Christ’.²⁵ ↳ Ritschl is aware how close his own position here is to that of the Pietists, whose eschatological orientation he nevertheless rejects:

the ecclesial mind will hope for a *historical* solution [to], confrontation [with], overcoming of, certain immoral tendencies.²⁶

By contrast, his appreciation of Calvin is evident; in the Lutheran tradition, only the Pietist Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) ‘made similar motifs...accessible’ by means of his chiliastic modification of orthodox eschatology.²⁷

It appears, then, that as early as 1858, Ritschl was already clear in his mind about the unique potential of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. While his notes are rudimentary, dense, and not always fully unequivocal, they

contain all the fundamentals of his later teaching. He dwells at length on the doctrine's biblical foundations,²⁸ emphasizes its systematic potential to integrate dogmatics and ethics, has a view for its teleological mediation of divine love and human striving, and notes its communal dimension as an antidote against religious individualism, the identification of Church and state or indeed sectarianism. None of this is as yet worked out within a recognizable theoretical framework, but in light of his later writing, the gaps can easily be filled thus providing an impressive glance at the state of his project fifteen years before the publication of his major works.²⁹

The notes give few indications of Ritschl's sources. At the end of a lengthy account of the historical background of his own teaching, Ritschl merely adds the names 'Leibnitz, Kant, Schleiermacher' without providing further details.³⁰ Notable, and especially regrettable, is the absence of any reference to Reformed theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603–69) who may well have been the only theologian prior to Ritschl who assigned to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God a similarly central position in his theology. Many years later, Ritschl devotes to Cocceius a full chapter of his *Geschichte des Pietismus (History of Pietism)*;³¹ this text is written with much sympathy, but Ritschl, there and elsewhere, refrains from any explicit comment on the relationship between their theologies.

p. 216 Whether, and if so, when and to what extent, Cocceius influenced Ritschl's understanding of the Kingdom of God must therefore remain an open question.³² There is, however, little reason to doubt his later statement that it was above all Schleiermacher whose lead he followed on this issue.³³ To Schleiermacher Ritschl owed the conceptual association of the doctrine of goods in ethics with the relation between individual and community and the theological doctrine of the Kingdom of God.³⁴ This is concisely summarized at the very beginning of the third, systematic volume of *Justification and Reconciliation*:

It remained for Schleiermacher first to employ the true conception of the teleological nature of the Kingdom of God to determine the idea of Christianity. This service ought not to be forgotten, even if he failed to grasp the discovery with a firm hand.³⁵

The same view is developed in much greater detail in the first, historical volume of the same work. There, Ritschl explains Schleiermacher's special position as the 'lawgiver' of recent theology by way of his introduction of 'a peculiar standard for the understanding of the Christian religion'.³⁶ Ritschl elaborates:

It will be expected that, as is usual, I should find this expressed in his idea of subjective religion....But what I am alluding to lies beyond the region of the *Glaubenslehre*. For Schleiermacher has established the much more general truth, that the religious moral life of the spirit cannot at all be conceived of outside of the fellowship that corresponds thereto, and that, in reciprocal action and reaction therewith, the individual attains his peculiar development.³⁷

p. 217 Ritschl's debt to Schleiermacher for his theory of the individual is a well-established fact, which he himself explicitly and repeatedly recognized.³⁸ In fact, he found this agreement so significant that he inserted, at the last minute, into his *Justification and Reconciliation* a reference to Wilhelm Dilthey's study of Schleiermacher's earliest works, which had been published only weeks earlier and broadly confirmed his own interpretation of Schleiermacher's thought.³⁹ In his understanding of historical 'individuals' as well as in his rejection of 'natural religion', Ritschl relied on ideas he had found in Schleiermacher, and it is important to see that at least for Ritschl, these points were directly related to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God and that, in his view, this relation was also found in Schleiermacher.

The truth, admittedly, is that the latter, in his academy lectures *On the Highest Good*, had only touched on the religious dimension of the doctrine of goods with a fairly vague reference:

The activity of reason only becomes its own full revelation when through it the spirit manifests its supernatural home by means of which it contains the eternal and simple Being itself, in a mysterious

way.⁴⁰

Schleiermacher then defines the highest good: it is the one, ultimate *telos* of all four types of human moral activity but depending on the type to which it corresponds, which can be individual or universal, actively shaping (organizing), or interpretative (symbolizing), its appearance varies:

They are all one, and no one is without the other, but depending on whether we take one standpoint or another the highest good appears now as the Golden Age of unadulterated and all-sufficient communication of individual life, now as eternal peace of well-distributed governance of peoples across the earth, or as the completeness and immutability of knowledge in the community of languages, and as the Kingdom of Heavens in the community of religious faith. Each of those will in its particularity include the others and symbolize the whole.⁴¹

The 'Kingdom of Heavens', then, is here only one of four realizations of the highest good. It is specifically the goal of religious life, which, in Schleiermacher's ethical scheme, is a form of moral activity that is both individual and symbolizing. As all moral activity it transforms nature into spirit, but does so in a way that is irreducibly personal even while it aims at universal intelligibility and communication. As such it is distinct to scientific knowledge which aims at universal truth. Like the latter, on the other hand, it is symbolizing activity as it aims at making nature intelligible to humankind. In spite of his use of the biblical term Kingdom of Heavens, then, Schleiermacher's conception of the highest good is primarily inscribed into a complex theory of human activity and can be fully appreciated only within this context.⁴²

p. 218 A more superficial reader, however, may well identify in Schleiermacher's ethical reference to the Kingdom of Heavens, which in his academy lectures is made in passing, a more immediately theological motive. Ritschl certainly was one who did this. He quotes Schleiermacher's statement concerning the 'supernatural home' of the spirit and expounds it as follows:

The activity of reason only becomes its own full revelation when through it the spirit manifests its supernatural home; that is, when morality takes a religious direction and is founded upon religion, that is, in the Christian stage of development, in the conception of the Kingdom of God.⁴³

In Ritschl's reading, then, Schleiermacher affirms the need for a religious foundation of morality and refers specifically to the biblical category of the Kingdom of God. As we have seen, this interpretation is at least a considerable simplification of Schleiermacher's philosophical argument, but it confirms Ritschl's own conviction 'of the necessity of the communal character of any religion' and he commends Schleiermacher's academy lectures specifically because they offer 'proof' for this assumption.⁴⁴

How the Kingdom of Heavens in Schleiermacher's ethics is related to the Kingdom of God in *The Christian Faith* is a difficult question.⁴⁵ Ritschl, at any rate, takes their identity for granted and moves directly from his discussion of Schleiermacher's lectures *On the Highest Good* to his formula of the essence of Christianity in the *Glaubenslehre*. Its characterization of Christianity as the 'monotheistic phase of faith within the teleological (ethical) line of piety',⁴⁶ as Ritschl respectfully remarks,

does justice to the peculiar value and the inner excellence of Christianity above the two other monotheistic religions.⁴⁷

Ritschl's respect for Schleiermacher's approach, then, must not be underestimated. He fully endorses the latter's specification of Christianity as an ethical or teleological religion as it correctly distinguishes the Christian faith from the other monotheistic religions and in this sense adequately determines its place in the history of religions.

This language of appreciation, however, soon gives way to a much more critical tone. In fact, it turns out that Ritschl commended Schleiermacher's appraisal of the Kingdom of God in his formula for the essence of Christianity only in order to criticize all the more sharply its further theological development.

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For if the Divine final end is embodied in the Kingdom of God, it is to be expected that the redemption which has come through Jesus should also be related, as a means, to this final end. But as this relation is not expressed, the result is that Schleiermacher construes the whole Christian consciousness of God by reference now to redemption through Jesus, now to the idea of the Kingdom of God, without coming to any decision regarding the mutual relations of this final end and the function of the Mediator. The natural consequence of this want of lucidity is that no topic receives less justice in the general argument of his *Glaubenslehre* than what he admits to be the teleological character of Christianity.⁴⁸

Critical readers have protested that Ritschl misunderstands Schleiermacher's intention. His son-in-law and noted New Testament scholar Johannes Weiss observed that Schleiermacher's use of the term 'teleological' is idiosyncratic as is evident from his own addition of 'ethical' in the same sentence. By pretending that Schleiermacher believed Christianity was teleological in the usual sense of the word, Ritschl grossly misrepresented the viewpoint of *The Christian Faith*.⁴⁹ Be this however as it may, Ritschl's criticism at least indicates his own programme of theology, which is in line with his philosophical orientation. The central place of the biblical category of the Kingdom of God and its teleological character justify and indeed demand a complete reworking of Christian dogmatics in accordance with its principles. For this programme Ritschl coined the metaphor of an ellipsis with two focal points, salvation through Christ *and* communion in God's kingdom.⁵⁰ By contrast, Schleiermacher is the typical representative of Protestant theology,⁵¹ which in both its Lutheran and Calvinist variants has emphasized the salvation at the expense of ethics and morality.⁵²

This elision of the ethical dimension of Christianity has, in Ritschl's view, made it difficult for Protestant theology to offer an adequate response to the Catholic doctrine of the Church as the Kingdom of God. The latter, Ritschl concedes, 'in its own way' does justice to the central significance of that doctrine⁵³—though he leaves no doubt that it is also a serious distortion of evangelical truth. Nevertheless, it was the error of the Reformers that they

did not purify the idea of the moral Kingdom of God or Christ from sacerdotal corruptions, but embodied it in a conception which is not practical but merely dogmatical.⁵⁴

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Ritschl does not deny that it is possible to find a practical understanding of religion in the Reformers, particularly Luther—indeed, he finds the heart of Luther's theological contribution in this very insight.⁵⁵ This vision of religion as practice is not, however, related to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and this failure to integrate the new understanding of faith into this conceptual framework has, according to Ritschl, facilitated the complete neglect of the ethical aspect of Christianity in Melancthon and subsequent Lutheran Orthodoxy.

Against this fateful tradition of Protestant theology, Ritschl seeks to recover the task of theology by building on the programmatic hints he found in Schleiermacher who wrote that

that figure of a Kingdom of God, which is so important and indeed all-inclusive for Christianity, is simply the general expression of the fact that in Christianity all pain and all joy are religious only insofar as they are related to activity in the Kingdom of God.⁵⁶

These words furnish the motto for much of Ritschl's theology, but his specific development of this idea is determined by his understanding of ethics and teleology. In other words, the teleological character of the Kingdom of God implies its association with the principles of spirit and volition and must, for this very reason, be understood strictly *historically*.

This specific form of Ritschl's concept of the Kingdom of God motivates, as well as explains, his further claim that theology can only be practised from the standpoint of the Christian community. It is of cardinal importance to see that this imperative is entirely bound up with the specific philosophical and theological premisses underlying Ritschl's theory of the Kingdom as strictly historical. In a key passage, he writes:

Authentic and complete knowledge of Jesus' religious significance—his significance, that is, as a founder of religion—depends, then, on one's reckoning oneself part of the community which he founded, and this precisely in so far as it believes itself to have received the forgiveness of sins as his peculiar gift. This religious faith does not take an unhistorical view of Jesus, and it is quite possible to reach an historical estimate of him without first divesting oneself of this faith.⁵⁷

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Careful attention to Ritschl's words here reveals echoes of his earlier dispute with Zeller: the 'Tübingen', neo-rationalist understanding of 'presuppositionless' historiography is far from being the only legitimate one. In fact, it is not without presuppositions at all but rather ignorant of them; and theologically—perhaps not even only theologically—they are deeply problematic insofar as ↪ they betray a naturalist view of history that is at the very least incommensurable with the cultural level of Christianity.

Thus Ritschl in 1861. The same context is also present in *Justification and Reconciliation*, written almost fifteen years later. Immediately after the passage just cited, Ritschl polemically refers to the 'name of a historical "absence of presuppositions"'; his concurrent remark that 'the subversion of Jesus' religious importance has been undertaken under the guise of writing his life' is a clear reference to David Strauss.⁵⁸ This scholarly genre, according to Ritschl, is already implicitly critical of Christianity, for it

implies the surrender of the conviction that Jesus, as the Founder of the perfect moral and spiritual religion, belongs to a higher order than all other men.⁵⁹

He therefore dismisses the apologetic potential of a *Life of Jesus* and instead reiterates his earlier demand for a theology 'from the faith of the Christian community'.⁶⁰ Once again, his criticism is *not* directed against the use in theology of philosophical or historical methods as such—otherwise, Ritschl would hardly appeal to 'the general history of religion' for his definition of the Christian religion.⁶¹ Rather, as Ritschl carefully puts it,

we can discover the full compass of his *historical* actuality solely from the faith of the Christian community. Not even his purpose to found the community can be quite understood *historically* save by one who, as a member of it, subordinates himself to his person.⁶²

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Nothing may be more telling here than Ritschl's repeated use of the term 'historical'; overall, it occurs four times in the space of fewer than twenty lines. This terminological preference in the present place is unlikely to be coincidental, but indicates the interdependence of Ritschl's demand for a theology 'from within the Christian community' and his specific non-naturalist understanding of history. For Ritschl, only inclusion in the Christian community and participation in Christian practice facilitates an adequate understanding of history in this sense. From his exchange with Zeller it would further appear that Ritschl explicitly and emphatically does *not* limit this claim to the particular field of historical theology.⁶³ This postulate of a form of historical awareness that is reached only within Christianity, for Ritschl is justified insofar as the absoluteness of Christianity can objectively and universally be ↪ ascertained, a view he upheld until the end of the 1870s and which thus underlies all his major works published by that time.

The Kingdom of God, then, demands the participation of the theologian because it cannot otherwise be known and recognized. This is because it is eminently historical, which in turn is an aspect of its *practical* character. Both are intimately related; the concept of religion as practice for Ritschl implies its strictly historical, teleological, and generally spiritual (*geistig*) character. It is therefore not surprising that Ritschl can move directly from his demand for a theology 'from the faith of the Christian community', through which alone the

'historical reality' of Jesus can be expressed, to the postulate of its necessarily practical character. For the latter, he appeals to the Pietist Philipp Jakob Spener, whom in his ethics lectures he had credited with the first ethical concept of the Kingdom of God in Lutheranism. Spener has shown theology

the way to such a conception of the Christian view of the world and of life as can hope for success only when it is attempted from the standpoint of the community of believers.⁶⁴

The reason behind this principle, Ritschl continues, is expressed in Spener's 'ethical proof for the truth of the Christian religion', according to which 'whoever willeth to do the will of God will know the truth of Christ's doctrine'. This insight, however, entails 'an complete revision of the matter of theology': Ritschl's own ambition is nothing less.⁶⁵

Spener's 'ethical proof', as Ritschl understands it, asserts that, while the truth of Christianity can only be attained through participation in its practice, those who participate in it will necessarily recognize its absolute value. The proof is therefore 'objective' and yet inseparable from the theologian's participation in the community of the Kingdom. Once again the close connection between Ritschl's affirmation of a theology 'from the standpoint of the community of believers'⁶⁶ and his philosophical principles is evident. After all, the impossibility of an adequate theological understanding without personal participation ensues from the 'practical' and at the same time historical and communal character of spiritual religion.

These insights tie in well with the results of our earlier analysis of Ritschl's concept of theology as science.⁶⁷ Ritschl, we found there, understands religion as generic yet hierarchical; its kinds and stages culminate in one religion, Christianity, that is particular but represents the whole nonetheless. This character of Christianity as the one religion that is also the whole allows, indeed demands, an explication from within that is a theology which at the same time, however, is also science of religion. We have here reached the same result starting from Ritschl's commitment to a theology conducted from within the Christian community. Its plausibility again rests on the ethical, historical, and communal character of Christianity. As it cannot be portrayed as such without personal religious involvement, the use of traditional doctrinal concepts, such as sin and salvation, in its explication is inevitable and justified but does not preclude an articulation of the same phenomena in the philosophical terminology of nature and spirit.

Ritschl can therefore describe the anthropological conflict underlying all religion in terms of sin and salvation as much as in the language of his nature-spirit dualism. The latter is employed in his own formula for the essence of Christianity:

Christianity, then, 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, which 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.⁶⁸

In accordance with the 'elliptical' character of Christianity, the role of Jesus in Christianity must be twofold: he is, in equal measure, both saviour *and* founder of the Kingdom of God.⁶⁹ In both functions he reorients human beings within the dualism of nature and spirit: as *saved*, they unconditionally owe to Jesus their new 'freedom of the children of God': that is, freedom from subjection to the determinism of the natural order. This freedom consists, on the one hand, in the person's 'beatitude', their reconstitution as a citizen of the intelligible realm or as an end-in-itself. On the other hand, it expresses itself in 'conduct from the motive of love', which Ritschl understands as a determination of the will in which self-interest and care for the other coincide:

Love continually strives to develop and to appropriate the individual self-end of the other personality, regarding this as a task necessary to the very nature of its own personal end, its own conscious

individuality.⁷⁰

p. 224 As such, it not only excludes any form of egoism, but also transcends the limits of natural and legal bonds.⁷¹ The ideal of this will to love is God, who in fact is identical with and defined by this loving will (1 John 4: 16). Since this will is directed at the communion of human beings in the Kingdom of God, a Christian doctrine of God is intimately connected with the Christian doctrine of salvation as well as the recognition of the person and activity of Jesus, the founder of the Kingdom.

Ritschl's emphasis on the believers' *passive* reception of their salvation from Christ must not obscure, however, his commitment to their *active* participation in the development of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, insofar as salvation is the transformation of the human will, it must engage the Christian in a process that is at least partly *dependent* on an adequate exercise of the believer's volition. This is what Ritschl means by calling Christianity the 'completely spiritual and ethical religion'—its character as religion and its character as morality are not really two different things, but two sides of the same coin. Christian beatitude, the liberation from the bonds of natural determinism, and Christian participation in the 'moral organization of mankind' are, strictly speaking, two ways of expressing the same reality. As a transformation of the will, salvation is manifested in and through the appropriate moral practice, while participation in the kingdom of God, which consists in 'conduct from the motive of love', presupposes a quasi-supernatural transformation of the will:

Freedom in God, the freedom of the children of God, is the private end of each individual Christian, as the Kingdom of God is the final end of all. And this double character of the Christian life—perfectly religious and perfectly ethical—continues, because its realisation in the life of the individual advances through the perpetual interaction of the two elements.⁷²

As Ritschl explained in his ethics lectures of 1858, the special potential of the idea of the Kingdom of God lies in its conceptual ability to encompass the religious as well as the ethical side of Christianity. It is therefore at once a divine and a human product and its application avoids a reduction of religion to either outward morality or interior piety.

The Kingdom of God in Biblical Theology

p. 225 From Ritschl's first known treatment of the Kingdom of God, its claim to represent the core of biblical teaching has been central to his interest in this doctrine. His project of a 'biblical theology', which occupied him since the 1840s,⁷³ is eventually and fully developed on this basis in *Justification and Reconciliation*. For Ritschl's theological system this element, which fills the entire second volume of the great work, is indispensable.⁷⁴ Its importance has often been overlooked in the reception and interpretation of his theology; the ensuing asymmetric perception has had a particularly devastating effect within English-speaking theology as the second volume has been omitted from the translation of Ritschl's main work. In spite of a number of valuable studies, therefore, the biblical focus of Ritschl's theology has largely remained unknown to English readers.⁷⁵

Before examining some details of Ritschl's argument, it is necessary to clarify more broadly the purpose of biblical theology within Ritschl's overall thought. To begin with, it must be noted that Ritschl's commitment to biblical theology neither implies an uncritical or literal affirmation of biblical statements nor the identification of biblical theology with systematic theology overall. Rather, it rests on his assumption of the lasting normativity of the founding epoch of Christianity, the Apostolic Age. For Ritschl, this premiss represents a general rule which he is ready to apply equally to the history of Islam or Buddhism:

It must therefore...be recognized as a law that those religions that aim at universality contain their proper nature, clearly and completely, in the activity of their founders.⁷⁶

This founding epoch of Christianity encompasses Jesus' activity as well as 'the first generation of his church, since without this particular success the intention of the founder could not be recognized as effective'.⁷⁷ The central theological relevance of the New Testament is predicated upon its 'documentation of this effective revelation'.⁷⁸

It is, then, its character as *historical source* that accords the New Testament canon its significance.⁷⁹ Given, on the other hand, Ritschl's insistence on the historicity of religion, it is at once apparent that his emphasis on the specific significance of the Bible for systematic theology is not at all in tension with his other intellectual commitments. Religions are primarily historical phenomena and must be understood as such. Christianity is similar to other world religions insofar as it has a historical beginning and a founder, and is therefore an instance of Ritschl's general rule, that in such cases their nature can be fully learned from its first origin.

p. 226 Furthermore, we must note that 'biblical theology' for Ritschl is emphatically not the attempt to determine the theology of the Bible, whatever the latter may be. Rather, it is theological interpretation of the *religion* of Primitive Christianity that can be reconstructed from the New Testament. Ritschl unambiguously denounces the

creeping error that more or less identifies the teaching of Christ and the apostles, which one seeks to reconstruct purely historically, with theological doctrine.⁸⁰

Rather, the proclamation of Jesus and in principle also the epistles are 'religious discourses' and are only normative if interpreted as such.⁸¹ Ritschl explicitly rejects the alternative:

If, however, one undertakes to reproduce the Christology of the apostles on the assumption that they have become what we are, theologians; if, consequently, one expects their speeches to progress, like dogmatics, from the pre-existent to the post-existent [sc. Christ], one violates those texts and ruins biblical theology.⁸²

In proposing a biblical theology then, of whose experimental character he is perfectly aware,⁸³ Ritschl seeks to emphasize the historical character of Christianity against those among his contemporaries, such as Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann and Richard Adelbert Lipsius, who saw inner experience as central to the Christian faith and thus, in Ritschl's view, reduced it, willy-nilly, to a psychological phenomenon.⁸⁴ This historical character, he argues, is ideally captured in the age of its foundation for which the New Testament provides the source material. The historical reconstruction of Christianity's original, ideal content on the basis of its biblical attestation, then, is the task of Ritschl's biblical theology, which makes it a prolegomena to systematic theology.

p. 227 Central to Ritschl's biblical theology and foundational for much of his argument is Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God. This practice places him, Ritschl says, in the tradition of the prophets;⁸⁵ in fact, the covenant tradition in Ancient Israel is the primary context in which the words of Jesus must be interpreted. The fulfilment this tradition *expected* has now, he proclaims, *arrived* (Mark 1: 15). Closely associated with this expectation, however, is the 'exhortation to a change of heart'.⁸⁶ Insofar as Jesus perceived an immediate connection between his message and his own activity, he was concerned, as Ritschl writes:

to educate, by means of regular influence, a certain group of people for the Kingdom of God, which is considered the highest good only insofar as this includes the highest task for its members.⁸⁷

This 'highest task', for Ritschl, is the radical call to repentance contained in Jesus' message. More indicative of the specific profile of his interpretation may be his understanding of the choice of the twelve disciples. According to Ritschl, only Mark preserves its full sense by naming as its purpose not only their commission but also their communion with Jesus (Mark 3: 14). This shows, on the one hand, the unity of proclamation and

practice in the person of Jesus, which unsurprisingly corresponds to Ritschl's own concept of religion as practice. The proclamation of the Kingdom of God by the founder of the Christian religion *must*, therefore, go hand in hand with the founding of such a Kingdom. On the other hand, the narrative evinces the communal character of Christianity. From Ritschl's Protestant perspective, the significance of the apostles does not consist in their elevated position as teachers or bishops; they are the first Christian community, in which the original impulse of Jesus' activity was most purely preserved.⁸⁸

Jesus knows that he himself, as the Messiah, exercises the dominion of God through his proper activity, but its realisation in a kingdom for him depends on obedient subjects; therefore he founds a community.⁸⁹

In this sense Ritschl also understands Jesus' exhortation of his disciples to seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6: 33): this indicates the change of heart and mind, the renewal of the will out of the spirit of love, as Ritschl puts it,⁹⁰ without which human beings cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

This exhortative, ethical element in Jesus' proclamation is underlined in those gospel sayings that describe participation in the Kingdom of God in term of an equivalent reward (Matthew 20: 1–6; 24: 45–51 etc.⁹¹). However, Ritschl suggests that these sayings must be read in conjunction with those passages that relate the moral and religious achievement to the believer's attitude to Jesus and promise a reward for works done 'for the sake of' the saviour (Mark 10: 28–31; Matthew 10: 37–9; 5: 10–11). This logic, he argues, already transcends the equivalence between human achievement and divine reward. The person of Christ, after all, reveals God's grace, which thus comes into view ('shines through'⁹²) as the real foundation of the divine kingdom. This is further underlined by Jesus' regular emphasis on the disproportionate character of the reward (Mark 10: 29–30). Ritschl concludes:

The participation in the Kingdom of God as the highest good is not, therefore, conceived as the direct product of an independently accomplished work; for the fullness of the divine gift exceeds the measure of the presupposed human achievement.⁹³

It is, rather, the fundamental significance of the forgiveness of sins that here comes to the fore. Jesus himself practises it as part of his Messianic role as judge, defined in the prophetic tradition. The forgiveness of sins is therefore part of his sorting of humanity, which 'in some awakens faith in him, and in others meets persistent disbelief (John 3: 17–18; 5: 22–24, 26–27, 30; 12: 47)'.⁹⁴ In this sense, Jesus' forgiveness of sins is merely another expression of the call to join his community, to which a response must be given:

If Jesus saves those who are lost by calling them into his community, over which he exercises the dominion of God, then those are saved by him who, on the basis of the gift of the highest good, let themselves be determined to obedience against the demands of the community of Jesus. While, then, the salvation through Jesus becomes operational in the impulse to a change of mind, the metaphors of being 'dispersed' and 'lost' indicate sinfulness.⁹⁵

Forgiveness of sins, then, like the Kingdom of God, becomes a reality for those who accept it on the authority of Jesus. The separation between those who are saved and those who are condemned correlates with the human response to Christ's call to repentance, which is the transformation of the will in the spirit of love; at the same time, this transformation is also origin and cause of the fellowship in the Kingdom of God.

This is Ritschl's reconstruction of the nucleus of Christianity with its complete coincidence of proclamation and practice. Thus Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God corresponds to his foundation of the Church, while, on the side of the disciples, their acceptance of the forgiveness of sins correlates with their readiness to live a new life in the divine kingdom. It is then, however, also the case that 'within the community of those who confess Christ the Kingdom of God comes about', in other words, that it is not something finished or complete

p. 229 but 'awaits its fulfilment...in the future'.⁹⁶ The Kingdom of God is thus both religious *and* ethical; it is divine gift *and* the product ↵ of human effort; it is fully present in the proclamation of Jesus and yet grows and develops over the centuries.

The conceptual relation between Ritschl's understanding of salvation in his biblical theology and his philosophical dualism of nature and spirit is most distinctly seen in his interpretation of Jesus' death. This death, for him, is necessary as the ultimate proof of the redeemer's unique dignity and personal significance. His willing acceptance of his execution fully and irrefutably confirms 'that he resisted the temptations arising from the collision of the drive for self-preservation and the duties of his vocation'.⁹⁷ Only his perseverance in this extreme situation, in other words, could prove beyond a doubt that Jesus as a human person perfectly exemplified the absolute superiority of the spiritual principle to the natural. In this sense, Ritschl interprets Jesus' identification of his death as a ransom for many (Mark 10: 45).⁹⁸ Through wide-ranging exegetical comparisons, he tries to make a plausible case for a reading of λύτρον as 'means of protection', so that Jesus interprets his death as

a gift of specific value for God, which therefore is a means of protection against the death of all others.⁹⁹

This does not, of course, mean that the Christian community is exempt from natural death. Rather, Ritschl is concerned with the 'futility' of death. Just as Jesus himself 'even in his death did not become futile, but rather realized his purpose and finished his work',¹⁰⁰ those who believe in him 'are saved from the prevailing divine curse of the irrevocable annihilation of life'; in other words, 'they achieve a different evaluation of death than was possible under the dispensation of the Old Testament, and no longer fear death'.¹⁰¹

This gift of salvation given by God through Christ, and expressed in a transformation of the will, is summarized in the concept of righteousness. Here in particular, Ritschl detects a merger of religious and moral perspectives in the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God:

Jesus postulates righteousness as the task of the community of his disciples (Matthew 6: 33; 5: 20). Its solution is identical with the realisation of the dominion of God in this community. It is human activity inspired by the love to God and to the neighbour, which agrees with the leading will of God.¹⁰²

p. 230 Ritschl's ethical interpretation of the biblical concept of righteousness, it will be noted, contrasts rather starkly with the predominant Lutheran tradition. There is no indication, however, that Ritschl is overly concerned about this disagreement. Right from the outset of his discussion, he roundly dismisses the ↵ exegetical basis of the traditional view as a mere 'fantasy of the old theological school', educed from 'certain confessions of the Apostle Paul', that

the rule of Old Testament law has always caused either pharisaic selfrighteousness or despair about one's own salvation.¹⁰³

In reality, the Old Testament concept of righteousness is not coincidentally used in parallel to 'uprightness of heart' (*yishrei lev*); it denotes a certain disposition of the faithful which Ritschl regards as far from irrelevant:

The kernel of righteousness is formed precisely by the steady confidence in the merciful, righteous, faithful God, kept up in spite of all obstruction. In this confidence is given certainty of his help against the resistance of the ungodly and his guidance on the paths corresponding to God's salvific purpose.¹⁰⁴

Ritschl's primary concern, once again, is the balance between the biblical idea of salvation and its ethical teaching. To this end, he has to disown the alleged exegetical foundation of the fateful Protestant tradition of emphasizing salvation at the expense of reconciliation and of religion at the expense of morality.

It is worth recalling at this point that for Ritschl, an adequate understanding of the Old Testament is key to the proclamation of Jesus and the true nature of Christianity. As our analysis of his *Entstehung der altkirchlichen Kirche* has shown, he regarded the loss of this horizon in the post-apostolic generation as the cardinal reason for the problematic transformation of Christianity at that time.¹⁰⁵ In the second volume of *Justification and Reconciliation*, he writes accordingly:

The knowledge the apostles and authors of the New Testament possessed of the content, the destiny, and the divine foundation of Christianity, as much as Christ's own set of ideas, are due to an authentic understanding of the religion of the Old Testament..., which is lacking in contemporary Judaism, whether pharisaic, sadducaic or essenic.¹⁰⁶

Without a solid understanding of the Hebrew Bible, then, Christianity cannot properly be grasped. At the same time, however, Ritschl maintains that precisely this presence of Old Testament ideas in the New Testament makes the latter uniquely relevant for the biblical theology of Christianity. Ritschl asserts that a 'theology, which must understand the Christian religion from its original sources, is referred only to the texts of the New Testament'.¹⁰⁷ In other words, while Old Testament ideas are hermeneutically indispensable for the study of Christianity, the historian is justified in considering solely the origins of Primitive Christianity for his study of its essential nature.

p. 231 Ritschl then is clearly not following the tradition of Reformed covenant theologies, but at the same time, his unequivocal, 'anti-Marcionite' affirmation of the inadmissibility of the Old Testament for an understanding of Christianity strikes a rare chord in nineteenth-century German theology. Clearly, Ritschl's community-oriented, 'ethical' interpretation of Christianity must have made this option attractive for him. Note, for example, how he draws on the Old Testament idea of righteousness in his rejection of the purely interior view of righteousness that has often been justified with reference to Paul and Luther.

Ritschl, characteristically, takes his starting point from the synoptic Jesus who, he argues, continued and completed ideas previously developed by Old Testament prophets and in the Psalms

by emphasising the command to love God and the neighbour as the leading and most comprehensive principles of activity.¹⁰⁸

In his polemic against the Pharisees, he privileges the radical transformation of the will over the correct and detailed observance of ritual ceremonies.¹⁰⁹

For Jesus, then, righteousness is 'the task of those who share the fellowship of the Christian community', and the same understanding also dominates the New Testament in general.¹¹⁰ This has immediate relevance for the Kingdom of God, as Ritschl summarizes in the following passage which, by his standards, is almost lyrical in character:

Righteousness is the communal activity of those who belong to the Kingdom of God; it is the obedience that tests the efficacy of God's dominion exercised by Christ. Obedience against God's will for the benefit of the community is a plant that grows by the power of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which is its seed. Its fruit is the moral order, the general as well as the particular one, the peace to which those contribute who act righteously. Their contribution, which varies in its size and consequently benefits more or fewer people, either continues the regular existence of the moral community or forcefully reinvigorates it.¹¹¹

To reconcile this position with Paul's teaching, Ritschl concedes, is more difficult as in certain parts of his epistles,¹¹² his concept of righteousness is developed from a sharp antithesis between law and gospel.¹¹³ Ritschl, who is not coy to call this Paul's 'individual'¹¹⁴ position, explains it with his specific biography, his

p. 232 background in the Pharisaic tradition and, later on, his conflicts ↳ in Galatia and elsewhere. Paul's understanding of law and righteousness, Ritschl claims, rests on an implicit acceptance of the Pharisaic interpretation of the Mosaic law:

Paul accepts the *pharisaic combination* of the legal observance of cultic practices and the task of righteousness as *the view inherent in the law itself*.¹¹⁵

Just as before his conversion he had shared the (erroneous) view that the law constitutes a legal relation between God and the human being based on a correlation between achievement and reward,¹¹⁶ he retains this idea after his conversion, ignoring

the entire fullness of the faith of the Old Testament developed in the Psalms; ignoring in particular their relation to the law in which the righteous recognize God's assistance and accept it with gratitude.¹¹⁷

But while as a Pharisee, he believed at least sometimes, and in principle, that he had fulfilled the law in this sense (cf. Phil. 3: 6), his conversion led him to regard this possibility as a dangerous delusion.¹¹⁸

This idiosyncratic perspective was inevitably exacerbated when Paul was confronted with opponents in Galatia and Jerusalem who shared this very (mis)interpretation of the law. Just like the Pharisees, they understood the law as a legal relation between God and man, whose human part consisted *primarily* in the observance of cultic practices. The 'religious error of Phariseism' was therefore, as Ritschl puts it, 'legalized in the Christian community';¹¹⁹ the most problematic aspect of this Jewish school was at the cusp of becoming accepted in Christianity as well. Paul's protest against such a development was fully justified, and in agreement with Jesus' own views. However, in this dispute Paul implicitly granted the correctness of his opponents' interpretation of the Mosaic law. This was a fateful step, which Ritschl can only explain as a consequence of Paul's personal development: it confirms that Paul's conversion 'is the key to his overall intellectual formation'.¹²⁰

p. 233 All this does not, of course, mean that Paul can or should be discounted in a theological reconstruction of the biblical idea of righteousness and the Kingdom of God. We must recall at this point that, according to Ritschl, biblical theology interprets the 'religious discourses' of biblical authors not a magisterium whose teaching is eternally normative for the church as a whole. This methodological premiss allows Ritschl to contain the problem Paul's letters pose to his own theory. Paul's words only become difficult under the misguided assumption that there is something like 'Paul's theological system'.¹²¹ ↳ While his early Phariseism may have influenced his theoretical articulation of the Christian faith, it only marginally affected his practical religiosity.¹²² At the latter level, Ritschl maintains, Paul's understanding of justification agreed precisely with the meaning Jesus had assigned to the forgiveness of sins, and in fact complements it by his sacrificial interpretation of the death of Jesus.¹²³

Paul understands justification by faith as the basic relation established between the sinners within the Christian community and God. This community has been founded in this very relation according to God's mercy and righteousness, by means of the obedience of Christ perfected in his sacrificial death; it is maintained in it by the power of his life restored from death.¹²⁴

Pauline justification thus corresponds with the religious side of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God: it is the grace of God that through Jesus Christ and independent of human activity first enables human beings to enter into the Christian community. Internally, this gift bestows a calmness of mind which Paul calls 'peace with God' (cf. Rom. 5: 1), as well as trust in the steadiness of divine care and providence;

...the absence of fear of death; an independence of mood and judgment in relation to the value different people and changing circumstances in the world seem to represent; the reversal of judgment

about those evils that follow from the community's situation in the world; and the transformation of the natural perception of all evils by virtue of that judgment.¹²⁵

Ritschl explicitly disagrees with those, notably the Reformers, who found that this awareness of God's freely given grace in Paul corresponds to a sense of the complete inadequacy of one's own achievement.¹²⁶ Paul, just like Jesus himself, understands participation in the Christian community as a call to perfection; and this call can and should be answered! Ritschl here lays the exegetical foundation for the ideas he elsewhere develops under the title *On Christian Perfection*.¹²⁷ For Paul, according to Ritschl, it is the case

that an awareness of personal, moral perfection, in particular of perfect faithfulness to one's vocation may well coincide with the acceptance of justification by faith. Such an awareness does not have to be clouded by a reprimand of one's conscience, but must not either violate the principle that one should boast in the Lord. It is, finally, accompanied by the certainty of a special divine reward equivalent to the success God has awarded to the efforts undertaken in his service.¹²⁸

p. 234 Ultimately, however, it is not Paul but John who in the New Testament offers the most perfect expression of the moral aspect of the Kingdom of God. While his initial formula that God is light and that in him, there is no darkness (John 1: 5–7) in Ritschl's judgment is 'rather abstract',¹²⁹ he goes on immediately to relate this light to love—showing both that God must be understood as love (cf. 1 John 4: 8) and that the love of Christians for each other expresses and reflects the divine love shown to them.¹³⁰ 'If God, then, has shown his love for us to this extent, we are obliged to love each other'.¹³¹ Like the other New Testament authors, John *distinguishes* between the religious and the moral dimensions of Christianity and regards the latter as a result of the former. However, he goes beyond the other authors in his willingness to recognize an impact of the moral on the religious dimension as well.¹³² The reason is, according to Ritschl, that John, by contrast to the more 'optimistic' Paul,¹³³ already perceives the danger that lies in the mutual isolation of the ethical and the religious and realizes that this may not only lead to the weakening of moral effort, but that the latter will ultimately also affect religious faith as such.

While a full exegetical evaluation of Ritschl's various theories is beyond the scope of this study, their present survey should have made evident that this 'biblical theology' cannot be reduced to an invocation of New Testament proof texts in support of a specific theological position. Rather, Ritschl implements his programme of reconstructing Christianity on the basis of the religious reality of its founding epoch with much historical, philological, and theological ingenuity. While his approach is strictly historical, he seeks to prove on that basis that Christianity is the perfectly spiritual and teleological religion. Ritschl himself had laid the major historical foundations for this interpretation in his earlier study of *The Formation of the Early Catholic Church*. And while, from today's perspective, the limitations of his overall picture are as obvious as they were in the case of Baur's account, many details of his frequently surprising and occasionally counter-intuitive theories evince not only solid exegetical work but may well contribute lasting insights.¹³⁴

p. 235 In view of this evident commitment to historical scholarship, the systematic coherence of Ritschl's biblical theology is all the more remarkable. In accordance with his philosophical commitment to a history of collective individuals, whose principle is most clearly discernible in their beginning, he reconstructs the essential nature of Christianity in the proclamation of Jesus and his communal practice. This unity of preaching and life, he argues, forms the seminal origin that determines the subsequent history of the Church (or, in any case, should have determined it). While the idea of a historical essence of Christianity is not peculiar to Ritschl, his emphasis on the 'religion' of Jesus as comprising proclamation and practice in equal measure is largely original with him. Included in this concept of religion, however, as we have seen again and again, is its communal character. The 'religion of Jesus', then, is neither a theological system nor the expression of a merely or primarily interior, psychological reality, but is practice, a particular way of life which, of course, necessarily includes inner experience. It is for this reason that Jesus' actions are as significant as his 'self-consciousness'; it is for the same reason that Ritschl emphasizes specifically Jesus' calling of the disciples into community with

him and that, within this communal structure, the impact of Jesus' practice on his disciples is of immediately theological relevance. After all, it is this impact that finds its literary reflection in the New Testament canon, which in turn justified the whole project Ritschl has been undertaking.

This unity of proclamation and life, of theory and practice in the person of Jesus, finds its strongest expression in the Kingdom of God. It thus becomes clear at this point just how central this concept must be for the entirety of Ritschl's theology. It is this idea, and only it, that moves his postulate of the mutual interdependence of preaching and action in Jesus' life beyond a mere hypothesis: The Kingdom of God as the centre of Jesus' proclamation expresses as an idea the unity of religion and morality, of faith and life, of subjective and objective religion as well as the interaction of receptive and active elements in the Christian's faith experience. The Kingdom of God taken as the historical reality Jesus initiated, on the other hand, embodies all these ideas in their practical realization. For Ritschl, both belong together, and one cannot be appreciated without the other. Accordingly, the Kingdom must be understood both as divine gift—the expression of the unchanging divine will to love—and as the call to the Church to participate in a social and historical reality determined by this will to love; it has been fully constituted by its founder at the beginning of Christian history, but is also forever growing, changing, and developing. In a word: the concept of the Kingdom of God integrates within itself the productive tension Ritschl perceives at the centre of Christianity.

Nonetheless, Ritschl's biblical theology, the reconstruction of the religion of Primitive Christianity, is not yet systematic theology; it only provides the normative groundwork for the latter. On this foundation, Ritschl thinks, the theologian must accomplish his own work, namely that of a systematic doctrinal development appropriate to the intellectual, cultural, and historical situation Christianity has brought forth. This task, Ritschl avers, has only been accomplished imperfectly so far; a 'complete revision of the matter of theology' is required.¹³⁵

p. 236 This revision must do justice to the various postulates contained in, and emerging from, the concept of the Kingdom of God at every point of the theological system, both in methodology and in dogmatic substance. It is not enough for the theologian, therefore, merely to adapt individual doctrines to insights about the nature of Christianity obtained in biblical theology and philosophical reflection; rather, the ethical, teleological, and historical nature of Christianity must find its expression in the organization of dogmatic topoi and their integration into a systematic whole. Ritschl rigorously submits to this task, and presents its results in the third volume of *Justification and Reconciliation* as well as, in condensed form, in his *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*.

A Teleological Doctrine of God

Ritschl's 'complete revision of the matter of theology' cannot be presented here in its entirety. Instead, we shall attempt to capture its spirit by focusing on one important element within his system, his teleological reformulation of the doctrine of God. If our hypothesis is correct that Ritschl's concept of theology as science implies that the historical, philosophical, and theological interpretations of Christianity are inseparably connected, this triad must also come into view in his exposition of individual doctrines within his systematic theology even though, inevitably, more specifically doctrinal problems will predominate.

Ritschl develops his doctrine of God by way of extensive historical discussions involving the major medieval, Reformation, and modern theologians; it is in response to, and engagement with, these individuals and their positions that his own approach to the problem is shaped, justified, and defended.¹³⁶ Equally formative have been his critical and often polemical debates with theological contemporaries. While the present study does not allow for a full exploration of all these relationships, no plausible reconstruction of Ritschl's own theology is possible without an appreciation of their significance for his thought.

Characteristically, Ritschl's work on the doctrine of God begins in earnest with historical scholarship. In 1865 and 1868 he published three major journal articles in the *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* (*Yearbooks for German Theology*).¹³⁷ They contain detailed analyses of the teachings of theologians from Thomas Aquinas to Martin Luther to Fausto Sozzini. It is this research, ↪ which then forms the backbone of his most comprehensive treatment of this doctrine in volume three of *Justification and Reconciliation*.¹³⁸ This preoccupation with historical theology, however, must not be mistaken for theological historicism which would be contrary to Ritschl's theological and philosophical principles. He cannot expect earlier generations of theologians to offer safe guidance towards the most appropriate understanding of God; rather, its correct conceptualization derives from a firm grasp of Christianity's essence, which has been revealed historically in its earliest phase and finds its authoritative reflection in the canon of the New Testament.

In practice, this means that the test for any doctrine of God must be its ability to underwrite what Ritschl calls the Christian worldview. Christianity promises human beings salvation in the sense of a triumph of their spiritual being over impervious nature. Christ is believed to be saviour and founder of the Kingdom that unites a moral community in activity towards a common goal. The Christian concept of God must operate within this framework; specifically, it must have the capacity to underwrite this particular understanding of salvation. Existing theological formulations of this doctrine will, consequently, be measured by their conformity with this ideal. Given that few theologians prior to Ritschl defined their own work in these terms, it is hardly surprising that Ritschl's evaluation of the theological tradition on the basis of his own principles is overall extremely critical. It would be wrong to call it dismissive; Ritschl is an excellent and in many ways gracious reader of theological texts, perfectly able to recognize and acknowledge theological insights even in authors whose general outlook he sharply rejects. He is furthermore aware that his forerunners sought to base their understanding of God on their Christian faith, drew on the Bible, and participated in the practice of Christianity; one must therefore, by Ritschl's own definition, expect to discover nuggets of theological truth in their writings.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the tone of his treatment of other theologians usually betrays his impatience with their insufficiencies, and even Martin Luther, whom he credits with the one insight most crucial for his own theology, is by no means wholly exempt from stinging criticism.¹⁴⁰

For Ritschl, then, the criterion by which any doctrine of God must be judged is to what extent it permits, or obstructs, a Christian understanding of salvation as justification and reconciliation. For this reason, he presents his fullest account of the doctrine of God as part of his treatment of the latter two doctrines. Once again, his most obvious precursor for this decision is Baur, ↪ whom he also follows in inscribing this theological discussion into the duality of nature and spirit.¹⁴¹ As elsewhere in his work, however, Ritschl's principal indebtedness to Baur coincides with equally radical disagreement and a complete reformulation of the latter's results. For Baur, reconciliation meant overcoming the duality of nature and spirit in an ontological mediation; in this sense, the idea of the Incarnation aimed at a third in which both principles were preserved and thus 'reconciled'. Baur's history of the doctrine of reconciliation, consequently, displays the possible variations of such mediation and finds its putative climax in a theory that perfectly unites both principles while keeping each of them fully intact. By contrast, reconciliation for Ritschl means overcoming the conflict between human and divine will. This understanding, it will be noted, is precisely in line with his voluntarist reconstruction of the ethical, teleological, and historical character of Christianity. Accordingly, Ritschl writes in the introduction to the first volume of *Justification and Reconciliation*:

The idea of reconciliation with God is possible only where there is contradiction of will between the two sides, or of one side against the other, which is to be overcome.¹⁴²

Thus, the question of God, for Ritschl, is from the beginning a question about God's will or, more specifically, about God as will.¹⁴³ This will only becomes the object of study for Christian theology, however, on account of its problematic relationship with human volition; the history of the Christian doctrines of justification and reconciliation is the history of attempts to conceptualize this conflict and its solution as envisioned in the

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teaching and the practice of Christianity. Failure to perceive this task and to adapt every single theological topos to its requirements is, Ritschl alleges, the cause of much error and confusion in the history of theology. The latter failure was compounded by the absence of a scientific ethos in theology and the consequent lack of any attempt to systematically connect the individual loci and to ↪ refer every single one of them to the central doctrine of salvation and reconciliation:

We are able to know and understand God, sin, conversion, eternal life, in the Christian sense, only so far as we consciously and intentionally reckon ourselves members of the community which Christ has founded. Theology is bound to take up this point of view, and only so is there any hope of constructing a theological system which deserves the name.¹⁴⁴

Traditional dogmatics failed to take this insight seriously and this led to predictable consequences:

The traditional doctrine of man's original state, consequently, implies that theology takes up its standpoint within either a natural or a universally rational knowledge of God which has nothing to do with the Christian knowledge of him, and is consequently indifferent to the question whether the expositor who expounds the doctrine belongs to the Christian community or not.¹⁴⁵

We do not have to elucidate again the specific meaning Ritschl attaches to the need for the theologian to be involved in the Church.¹⁴⁶ Crucially, the present passage highlights the root of his criticism of nearly the entire theological tradition: its neglect to develop *all* dogmatic topoi in a specifically Christian way. They all must be shown to depend on salvation by Christ and the Kingdom of God proclaimed and founded by Jesus. Failure to do so creates a systematic 'gap' that is filled more or less randomly. For the mainstream of medieval and post-Reformation theology, this meant the adoption of 'natural' or metaphysical insights with supposedly generally validity, which in reality however had their origin in a pre-Christian, pagan worldview and therefore objectively corrupted Christian teaching.

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In his own work, Ritschl consciously and deliberately seeks to undo this damage and establish a theological alternative to it. He distinguishes two main forms in which the doctrine of reconciliation has historically been developed. They correspond to conceptualizations of the relation between divine and human will that are different though they also share similar features. The first tradition, Ritschl argues, ultimately originated with Thomas Aquinas,¹⁴⁷ ↪ assumed its classical form in nominalism and from there partially influenced Luther, Calvin, and Calvinism,¹⁴⁸ before finally becoming dominant in Arminianism and Socinianism.¹⁴⁹ Its fundamental principle, which underlies the various variations encountered in all these authors, is the absolute freedom of the divine will; this 'formal freedom' of the divine will, however, correlates to what Ritschl calls the relativity of its objects.¹⁵⁰ In this theory what specifically God wills is completely detached from any concept we may have of him; knowledge of God is thus logically severed from the awareness that the object of his will, according to Christian revelation, is human salvation. Instead, he is recognized first and foremost as creator—a perception the proofs of God's existence appropriated from ancient philosophy made additionally plausible.¹⁵¹ In this relation he is the absolute Lord over all creatures, including human beings who, consequently, 'as contrasted with him are as destitute of rights as slaves'.¹⁵² While in real history God has undertaken to change this situation by instituting a valid moral order of the world, this outcome is ultimately subjected to the principle of God's arbitrary volition. In this theory, Ritschl argues, there is no original relationship between God and humanity. Rather, they are treated as individual legal entities, whose relationship, consequently, is conceptualized by analogy to private law.¹⁵³ Their mutual obligations are thus understood as resting on a contract to which God commits 'out of equity' (*aequitas*, *Billigkeit*) while man is subjected to it *volens nolens*. This idea facilitates the further assumption of an equivalence between human fulfilment of this contract and divine recompense,¹⁵⁴ while God is under no obligation 'to punish human transgressions of his law',¹⁵⁵ but possesses complete freedom 'to forgive them as injuries or as infractions of his private rights'.¹⁵⁶

p. 241 Ritschl is prepared to admit that the biblical idea of complete human dependence on God might be construed as giving rise to such a theory,¹⁵⁷ but apart from this concession he regards it as sheer nonsense. It imagines, he writes, a world in which human beings are expected, on the one hand, to understand that they have no rights vis-à-vis God. In principle, God could dispose of them as he pleases; yet on the other hand they are expected to see in him their partner in a legal relationship that presupposes equality of moral personhood between both partners.¹⁵⁸ This seems like a slaveholder, who

out of equity treats the men who are his chattels as persons capable of rights, who in this confidence imposes on them a law of reciprocal behaviour, but indulgently tolerates infractions of it except when they are characterized by obstinacy, and rewards the well-meant fulfilment of his law, however imperfect it be...¹⁵⁹

The other main type in which the doctrine of reconciliation has been cast, Ritschl recognizes in the prevalent teaching of the Reformers¹⁶⁰ as well as in Lutheran and Reformed Orthodoxy. Here, the relation between divine and human will is interpreted by analogy to public law.¹⁶¹ The difference, according to Ritschl, lies not so much in the fact that in this form of the theory human beings have been furnished with rights at their creation, but rather in the view

that the law, the fulfilment of which is required, is not one of arbitrary content, but the expression of the Divine will such, indeed, as is essential to God himself, must of necessity be ascribed to him, and is ordained to be in all its concreteness the indispensable and universal rule of the moral order.¹⁶²

This construction results in a completely different understanding of salvation history. For on this analogy, it is necessary to punish human transgression of divine law 'like treason'¹⁶³ with the highest form of punishment available, and this penalty remains in effect throughout subsequent generations and can only be lifted by Christ's specific work of reconciliation.

p. 242 What about the idea of God underlying this theory? To Ritschl, it is as problematic as the earlier one.¹⁶⁴ In this model, he argues, God's justice appears as natural necessity, to which the divine will is subordinate.¹⁶⁵ Where this problem is recognized, the response has often been a two-tiered concept of God, in which his justice, as latent quality (*ruhende Eigenschaft*) underlies the individual effects of his will thus all but abrogating the central Christian tenet of God's personality.¹⁶⁶ Thus, public law is ultimately as unsuitable as an analogy for the relationship between divine and human will as private law. This, finally, leads Ritschl to his decisive question: can this relationship at all be explained in legal terms and categories?

At this point at the latest, it should be clear that Ritschl's rather idiosyncratic distinction of private and public law theories of divine-human reconciliation has by no means digressed from his concern for the Kingdom of God as central theological category. It is, of course, this very notion that is now introduced to offer a better and, in fact, the only adequate frame for the interpretation of the relationship between God, humanity, and the world as a whole. We have earlier seen Ritschl protest strongly against its juridical or political interpretation¹⁶⁷ and should not be surprised that this same failure is at work in the two prevalent types of doctrine analysed here. An argument Ritschl ascribes to 'the older school' (that is, seventeenth-century orthodoxy) held that the double command to love was at the same time the substance of the universal moral law.¹⁶⁸ Ritschl strongly disagrees and instead reiterates the purely ethical character of the Kingdom of God:

Moral fellowship as such neutralizes national distinctions, for it springs from the subjective motive of love, which differs from that natural hereditary friendliness of fellow-countrymen to one another which is, as a rule, an accompaniment of civil society. Moral fellowship, viewed in these two characteristics of possessing the widest possible extension and being animated by the most comprehensive motive, can only be conceived as the *Kingdom of God*. This idea Christ expresses in

such a way that he transcends the view of the national state, and takes up an attitude essentially opposed to it.¹⁶⁹

Ultimately, therefore, the idea of the Kingdom of God, and nothing more, constitutes the criterion for a doctrine of God corresponding to Ritschl's theological requirements. By its standard, the theories of Lutheran and Reformed Orthodoxy are as deficient as their Socinian rivals:

Both are out of harmony with Christianity exactly in so far as they are not guided by the Kingdom of God as a positive end which, as common both to God and man, follows from the conception of divine love.¹⁷⁰

p. 243 As this idea cannot be separated historically from the 'founding epoch' of Christianity, the doctrine of God that is implicit in it becomes the mark of emphatically *Christian* theology, a system of thought inseparable from the message proclaimed by Jesus and the practice inaugurated by him.¹⁷¹ By contrast, both traditions considered in Ritschl's analysis suffer from the error of natural theology. Both ultimately hark back to supposedly rational assumptions for which 'points of support for both were found in the New Testament'.¹⁷² But this neutrality is, in Ritschl's view, illusory merely obscuring the worrying and lasting influence pre-Christian views have had over Christian theology especially in the form of metaphysical arguments for the existence of God and in the tradition of apophatic theology: neither one nor the other is ultimately compatible with the 'Christian world view'. Both occlude the decisive 'question, what end God has, or can have, in common with the human race'.¹⁷³

The God who is conceived only as not being the world, must always be negatively related to everything that is real.¹⁷⁴

Even after the Reformation had effected a correction of the world-denying ethical viewpoint to which this concept of God corresponded, theologians failed to draw the appropriate and consistent conclusions for the doctrine of God:

If the proper destiny of the human race includes spiritual and blessed fellowship with God, this end cannot be unrelated to God's personal end. Between the creation of man for this end and the creative will of God it is impossible to think the relation as accidental; it must be necessary.¹⁷⁵

The key to the solution of this problem, according to Ritschl, lies in John's statement that God is love (1 John 4: 8).¹⁷⁶ Love, here, is to be understood as a will constantly striving

to develop and to appropriate the individual self-end of the other personality, regarding this as a task necessary to the very nature of its own personal end, its own conscious individuality.¹⁷⁷

p. 244 Understanding God in this way requires that the aim of his will—and this is the salvation of humankind in his own kingdom—determines our understanding of his being. We cannot know God without thinking of him as salvific love; and we know nothing of God that is unrelated to this specification. In the devotional language of the gospels, this idea is expressed through use of the word 'Father',¹⁷⁸ which implies, as a corollary, trust that 'all things work together for good for those who love God' (Romans 8: 28).¹⁷⁹ Thus did Luther define the significance of Christian faith in God in his *Large Catechism*,¹⁸⁰ and this is what Ritschl regards as the Reformer's great, albeit largely unrecognized, insight.¹⁸¹

By contrast, any attempt to articulate the Christian concept of God on the basis of a 'disinterested' knowledge existing apart from, and independent of, the reality of salvation in Christ, inevitably fails. The idea of God as love cannot, Ritschl insists, be reached by narrowing down such an earlier, more 'universal' concept:

For the goodness and power of God, on which faith casts itself, is in Luther's view revealed in the work of Christ alone. Apart from Christ, apart from the reflection of God in Him, Luther finds the idea of God to be accompanied by terrors and annihilating effects.¹⁸²

Ritschl agrees without reservations. The Christian theologian for him confronts a straightforward alternative: either to think God in and through the teleological concept of love as salvific will whose goal is the establishment of his own Kingdom in partnership with humanity, or not think him at all. To opt for the former, however, the theologian must also accept as the horizon of his or her reflection the historical reality of the religion that Jesus founded and thus place himself or herself within the ever-developing Kingdom of God.¹⁸³

* * *

p. 245 Of great significance for Ritschl's theology is the assumption that every concept of God is relational. There is no doctrine of God that is not, explicitly or ↳ implicitly, concerned with human salvation; if theologians pretend otherwise, this usually hints at a dimension of their thought they are unwilling to admit. This relationality, however, is not solely a mutual affair between God and the human being, but triangular. Ultimately, every idea about God implies corresponding notions of humanity as well as the world as a whole, and the theologian must not ignore either of them.¹⁸⁴ Ritschl derives this tenet from his commitment to a concept of religion as practice inscribed into his dualism of nature and spirit: human beings turn to religion because they are caught in a tension between their determination by natural laws and their claim to the freedom of the intelligible realm. Their expectation, therefore, can only be met if religion offers a plausible redefinition of their relationship with the natural world. 'The idea of God', he therefore formulates, 'is the ideal bond between a definite view of the world and the idea of man as constituted for the attainment of goods or the highest good.'¹⁸⁵ Whether it can provide this 'ideal bond' between human beings and their world must then be the touchstone for any doctrine of God.

What idea of world corresponds to the Christian understanding of God as love? Ritschl argues that

neither the indeterminate notion of a cosmos, nor the notion of the natural world, can be conceived as the correlate of this particular aspect of the Divine will; for in them there is nothing akin to God..We can find an object which corresponds to His nature as love only in one or many personal beings.¹⁸⁶

The Christian concept of God as such, then, entails the purpose of creating persons, though Ritschl concedes that we cannot know a priori whether one or many of them. But in the world we know this question has been decided! For this world, Ritschl deduces two consequences from his doctrine of God: first, it must consist of a 'multiplicity of spirits' destined to join into a fellowship—this, of course, is once again Ritschl's Kingdom of God whose specifically Leibnizian background is perhaps nowhere else as tangible as here.¹⁸⁷ Only this idea, he writes, permits 'to conceive the human race as a unity in spite of its *natural* multiplicity';¹⁸⁸ this association of human beings in the spirit of love Ritschl can therefore, and in this qualified sense, call their 'supernatural' unity:

p. 246 The multitude of spirits who, for all their natural and generic affinity, may yet, in the practical expression they give to their will, be utterly at variance, attain a ↳ supernatural unity through mutual and social action prompted by love, action which is no longer limited by considerations of family, class, or nationality and this without abrogating the multiplicity given in experience. It is an essential characteristic of the Kingdom of God that, as the final end which is being realised in the world and as the supreme good of created spirits, it transcends the world, just as God Himself is supernatural.¹⁸⁹

This 'supernatural' Kingdom of God, however, becomes reality in history and *only* through the community that has been founded by Jesus and remains continually dependent on him.¹⁹⁰ The history of the Christian

community and the history of the world, then, are intimately related; Christianity has a unique role to play in world history. While Ritschl derives this idea from his properly theological insights, its articulation throws into sharp relief a fundamental tension within his approach. Until now, his entire reasoning has tended to emphasize the contingent character of the Christian history. The theologian must accept ‘revelation’ and participate in the communal practice of Christianity because theological insights can only be had on this basis; while they are universally applicable and in that sense scientific, they cannot be deduced from more general historical or philosophical principles. How plausible are all these demands, however, if Christianity ties in so nicely with the principles of idealist philosophies of history?¹⁹¹ If the destiny of the Christian religion is to unite humanity in the Kingdom of God, and thus to lead the world to the goal to which it has been called since creation—*must* not such ideas lead Ritschl back to precisely the same kind of philosophy of history and ‘natural theology’ which he rejected with so much emphasis in his dispute with Zeller? A major faultline is indeed beginning to emerge in Ritschl’s thought here, and we shall have to come back to this problem.

There is a second consequence Ritschl deduces from his understanding of God as love for the constitution of the world: nature is related to spirit as a means to an end:

If it be an essential part of God’s personal end that he should create a multitude of spirits, formed after their own kind, and that he should bring them to perfection in order to manifest himself to them as love, then the world of nature, viewed in its separate formation as distinct from the world of men, cannot be viewed as a mere arbitrary appendix, but must rather be regarded as a means to the divine end.¹⁹²

p. 247 In this idea, according to Ritschl, lies the ultimate fulfilment of the task of all religion, the ‘solution of the contradiction in which man finds himself, as both a part of the world of nature and a spiritual personality claiming to dominate ↪ nature’.¹⁹³ The superiority of spirit over nature is therefore contained in the Christian concept of God in such a way that human self-assertion is already inscribed in the purpose of creation:

God’s will, permanent and certain of itself, directed towards the realisation of the Kingdom of God as the ethical and supramundane unity of a multitude of souls, forms, for the sake of this end, the ground of everything, whether multiplex or individual, which serves as a means to its accomplishment. We must *therefore* conclude that God creates in time the multiplicity of things, which, as superior or inferior to each other, become causes and effects.¹⁹⁴

This result, it may be objected, was in fact predetermined from the moment Ritschl set out to develop his systematic theology. He had, after all, in his biblical theology established the same insight as underlying the worldview of Primitive Christianity and, on this basis, identified it as the ‘nature of Christianity’ at the beginning of the third volume of *Justification and Reconciliation*.¹⁹⁵ The doctrine of God merely recapitulates this insight and develops its theoretical consequences without generating radically new information. Such a criticism, however, would ignore that, according to Ritschl, this precisely is the task of systematic theology. It does not constitute the truths of Christianity but learns, reflects, and interprets them on the basis of their prior evidence in religious life. This does not mean that theology cannot criticize religious practice, but the critical potential it has derives exclusively from its awareness of the principles inherent in the ‘founding epoch’ and their systematic application to later periods. Ritschl’s doctrine of God, whatever else may be said against it, is a precise application of this prescription.

On this basis, Ritschl develops a strictly soteriological doctrine of God. God is of interest to the Christian theologian only insofar as he is a ‘God for us’, a God who is known, through the revelation of Christ, as a gracious and loving God. For Ritschl, theological interest in God apart from this revelation is misguided; he rejects such attempts sharply and often polemically. The passionate language he adopts in this context, however, cannot distract from the fact that his approach leaves unanswered the crucial question of what can be said about God’s nature apart from his revelation as the God of love. Ritschl’s extensive discussion of Luther’s

On the Bondage of the Will shows that he was conscious of this problem. He sarcastically notes the tension in the Reformer's position: on the one hand, Luther declares that we should simply ignore that which lies beyond our salvific concern (*quae supra nos nihil ad nos*¹⁹⁶); we must listen to God's word and not speculate about his 'inscrutable will'.¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, however, his diatribe against Erasmus would suggest 'that Luther knows quite a lot in this area after all'.¹⁹⁸ Ritschl himself does not intend to follow him in this respect:

We shall honour the inaccessibility of this area for human understanding in this way that we only permit our premonition briefly to traverse beyond the limit of God's revealed salvific will into the background of his universal efficacy. Subsequently we bend it back underneath the certainty of God's mercy in Christ thus *suppressing* further questions.¹⁹⁹

This statement of intent evidently raises the question of how easily such suppression is achieved. In the present passage, Ritschl seems at least to permit the interpretation that—just as Luther apparently intimated it—the soteriological God of the Christian revelation is not the *whole* God. Unlike Luther, however, Ritschl insists that the limit drawn by revelation is to be strictly observed.

However, there are indications that this was not after all Ritschl's main and conclusive view. After all, as a thinker schooled at some point of his life in Hegelian philosophy, he knew that such an intellectual ban could not be upheld and would, in the end, only lead to a migration of the God question from theology into a different academic discipline. Indeed, Ritschl's willingness to identify the essence of God with his love must indicate that Luther's *deus absconditus* for him is a non-god, an idol. This interpretation is confirmed by Ritschl's polemical controversy with his colleague at Erlangen, Franz Hermann Reinhold von Frank. Against Frank's insistence on the concept of God's 'absoluteness', Ritschl argued that this was a survival of pre-Christian religion made obsolete by the more comprehensive proof of the absoluteness of Christianity.²⁰⁰ For if it is true that God is an object of 'religious knowledge', and if it is further true that the history of religion finds its consummation in Christianity, then the knowledge of God suggested at this stage of religious development marks a universal, 'indispensable truth, in order that we may find both the ground and the law of the real world in that creative will which includes, as the final end of the world, the destination of mankind for the Kingdom of God'.²⁰¹

With this last twist, however, Ritschl's doctrine of God reveals itself as closely aligned to some of his most central concerns. In particular, it is the exact theological correlate to his fundamental philosophical tenet, the voluntaristic dualism of nature and spirit. God is the will whose goal is the Kingdom of God, the world as a unity of intelligible, 'spiritual' beings. Insofar as this spirituality is tied to communal religious and moral practice, participation in such activity is the exclusive as well as sufficient means through which the reality and the presence of God is disclosed. In other words, only those who join the Christian community experience God as the indispensable precondition of this form of life. This precondition is primarily historical in nature, pointing believers back to the foundation of their community through 'revelation' in Christ. Because of this origin, Christians today receive the Kingdom of God as divine gift. At the same time, however, as the Kingdom is also in the process of becoming, they are called to participate in its future consummation. For Ritschl therefore 'the instances of human action from love which are comprehended under the Kingdom of God constitute, as the correlate of God's personal end and as his specific operations, the perfect revelation of the truth that God is love'.²⁰² The Kingdom of God thus extends from the past into the future, and while the perspective shifts from the latter to the former, the role of its human members changes from passive recipients to active collaborators in God's project. In both perspectives, however, the Kingdom is strictly historical, tied to the specific, irreducible history of Christianity and therefore plausible only to those who participate in this communal practice.

Ritschl calls his theology 'positive' because it 'starts from the Christian idea of God'.²⁰³ But it should by now be clear that for him this commitment does not compromise its scientific character. He supports this assumption through his own elaboration of a number of constitutive principles that underlie his systematic theology as much as his thought as a whole: the dualism of nature and spirit; the voluntaristic interpretation of the latter as

practical, historical, and communal; and the identification of Christianity as religion of the spirit in precisely this sense. On this basis, Ritschl's intellectual system operates, as we have seen, as a triad of historical, philosophical, and theological perspectives which, in their unity, ground his claim to present Christian theology as the science of religion.

Notes

- 1 Letter dated 21 August 1853. Quoted from: O. Ritschl (1892: vol. 1, 248). Ritschl's appointment had already happened in late 1852.
- 2 For a full exposition of Ritschl's theology cf. Schäfer (1968).
- 3 Hofmann (1998); Slenczka (1998); Lotz (1974).
- 4 Chalamet (2008: 623–8).
- 5 No comprehensive account exists but cf. Weiss (1901); Walther (1961: 137–55); Schäfer (1964); Kuhlmann (1992: 110–39).
- 6 The lecture series was given for the first time in the winter semester of 1858/9 under the title 'moral theology' (*theologische Moral*); from the subsequent winter semester onwards, Ritschl delivered them regularly as 'theological ethics' (*theologische Ethik*): O. Ritschl (1892: vol. 1, 449–50). Ritschl's lecture notes from 1859/60 have now been edited for the first time by R. Schäfer: Ritschl (2007).
- 7 O. Ritschl (1892: vol. 1, 345–64).
- 8 Ritschl (2007: 74). Cf. the chapter heading: 'The Kingdom of God as the ethical principle of Christianity' (73).
- 9 Ritschl's reference to the 'pietist' use of the concept of the Kingdom is echoed almost literally in (1888: vol. 3, 12).
- 10 Ritschl (2007: 74).
- 11 Ritschl (2007: 74).
- 12 Ritschl (2007: 75).
- 13 Ritschl (2007: 75).
- 14 Ritschl (2007: 75).
- 15 Ritschl (2007: 75–6).
- 16 Ritschl (2007: 76).
- 17 Ritschl (2007: 76). To gauge the development of Ritschl's thought it is interesting to compare here his dogmatics lectures from 1853 which contain the identical theological concept (humanity as contained in the divine as self-end) but as yet without reference to the Kingdom of God: O. Ritschl (1892: vol. 1, 234).
- 18 Ritschl (2007: 77); cf. (1871: 156–8).
- 19 Ritschl (2007: 77). In Ritschl's later writing, this principle underwrites his extensive criticism of medieval, Reformation, and post-Reformation theologies.
- 20 Ritschl (2007: 78).
- 21 Ritschl (2007: 79).
- 22 Ritschl (2007: 81).
- 23 Ritschl (2007: 81).
- 24 Ritschl (2007: 82).
- 25 Ritschl (2007: 82).
- 26 Ritschl (2007: 82). Italics mine.
- 27 Ritschl (2007: 83). On Spener cf. Wallmann (1986: 324ff.).
- 28 Ritschl's argument in these lectures is limited to the doctrine's New Testament background, but his principal insights into the unity of the Bible were already in evidence in his *Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*: see Chapter 7, text at n. 127. Further on his elaborate biblical theology in *Justification and Reconciliation* cf. 'The Kingdom of God in Biblical Theology' in this chapter.
- 29 Some of these connotations hint at areas in Ritschl's activity which, while crucial for him, are largely ignored in the present study. He was an active part of the life of the Church during a momentous and tumultuous period in its existence. Questions about the role of religion in modern society, about early forms of ecumenism (the Prussian Union) and the lasting relevance of confessional Churches, about individual piety and the revivalist movement, and not least the relationship between Church and state, occupied Ritschl throughout his life. These concerns are inextricably intertwined with his more abstract theological ideas.
- 30 Ritschl (2007: 84).
- 31 Ritschl (1880: vol. 1, 130–52).

- 32 Cf. however the testimony of W. R. Smith, who studied under Ritschl in 1869 and wrote from Göttingen to his father, 'He [sc. Ritschl] always recommends the old Dogmatik and last week lent me a book of Cocceius whom he admires greatly' (letter dated 7 July 1869): Booth and Hess, (<http://www.gkbenterprises.org.uk/letters/1869-07-07.html>).
- 33 To see Leibniz and Kant behind Schleiermacher, as Ritschl's lecture notes suggest, makes sense historically. Cf. Dilthey (1970: 342–4) for Leibniz's influence on Schleiermacher's concept of individuality: 'He [sc. Schleiermacher] formed his idea of the individual on the basis of that concept [sc. Leibniz's monad]' (342).
- 34 Schleiermacher's two academy lectures *Über das höchste Gut*, fundamental for Ritschl's later reconstruction of Schleiermacher's doctrine of goods, were known to Ritschl at least since 1860 from an article by Palmer: Palmer (1860: 437–40); Ritschl (2007: 80).
- 35 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 12), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 11.
- 36 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 487), ET: Black, 443.
- 37 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 487–8), ET: Black, 443–4.
- 38 See Chapter 7, text at n. 94.
- 39 Cf. Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 477) and Dilthey (1970: 326–44).
- 40 Schleiermacher (1827: 552).
- 41 Schleiermacher (1827: 552).
- 42 Cf. Birkner (1964: 38–41); Moxter (1992).
- 43 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 492), ET: Black 448 (with changes).
- 44 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 492), ET: Black 448.
- 45 Cf. Miller (1970: 82–6).
- 46 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 492), ET: Black, 448. Cf. Schleiermacher (1830b: vol. 1, 15–17) (§ 11), and (74–80) (§ 9) for the distinction between the 'teleological' and 'aesthetic' types of piety.
- 47 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 494), ET: Black, 450.
- 48 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 9), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 9.
- 49 Weiss (1901: 99–100).
- 50 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 11), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 11.
- 51 Calvin and the Reformed tradition are no longer exempt from this charge as they were in Ritschl's earlier ethics lectures. Cf. Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 11) and (2007: 83).
- 52 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 11), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 11.
- 53 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 11), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 11.
- 54 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 11), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 11.
- 55 Cf. Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 6–7), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 6–7.
- 56 Schleiermacher (1830b: vol. 1, 78–9) (§ 9.2), ET: Mackintosh/Stewart, 43.
- 57 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 2), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 2.
- 58 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 2–3), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 2–3.
- 59 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 3), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 3.
- 60 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 3), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 3.
- 61 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 9), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 8.
- 62 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 3), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 3.
- 63 Cf. Ritschl (1861: 459) with the concluding appeal against the 'drifting apart of academic disciplines'.
- 64 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 8), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 8.
- 65 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 8), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 8. (cf. John 7: 17). Interestingly, Ritschl quotes this biblical verse again in his discussion of Kant's moral argument for the Christian idea of God (215).
- 66 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 8), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 8.
- 67 See Chapter 7, 'The Reformulation of the Idealist Programme'.
- 68 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 13–14), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 13–14.
- 69 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 3), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 3.
- 70 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 264), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 278.
- 71 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 267), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 280–1.
- 72 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 13), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 13.
- 73 *An Essay on Biblical Theology* is one of Ritschl's first extensive academic works while still a student. The lengthy account in O. Ritschl (1892: vol. 1, 100–2) shows some interesting similarities with his later thought.
- 74 Cf. Schäfer (1968: 44–67).
- 75 Cf. however Marsh (1992) for a treatment of some of the relevant issues.
- 76 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 13). In the first edition, Ritschl went further and postulated a 'law' supposedly valid 'for all ideas that shape history', according to which 'the content of the principle that founds a community shows itself in its full peculiarity

at the beginning of the development' but becomes 'more shallow or transformed' as its impact 'branches out' (1870: vol. 2, 13). From the second edition, this principle is explicitly renounced.

77 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 13).

78 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 13).

79 Schäfer's use of the term 'biblicism' for Ritschl's viewpoint is therefore misleading (1968: 60).

80 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 22).

81 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 22).

82 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 23).

83 Cf. Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 21): 'The individual conditions of this procedure cannot be demonstrated in advance, but can only be established from the product, i.e. biblical theology. For this discipline in its historical sense is Scripture interpreted through itself; or this at least is its aim. Of course, one cannot become convinced of [the merits] of this claim if one refuses from the outset to accept the task. While the latter has been formulated for one hundred years, it is still discredited insofar as the ruling exegesis follows, in important points, dogmatic ideas which reveal an illegitimate influence of ecclesial traditions over the biblical theology.'

84 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 7–9). Cf. Hofmann (1852: vol. 1, 9–10); Lipsius (1871: 56). Further on Hofmann's argument: Slenczka (1998: 20–6).

85 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 23).

86 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 28).

87 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 31).

88 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 21–2).

89 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 31).

90 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 32).

91 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 32). Ritschl made the same point already in the earlier ethics lectures. See Chapter 9, text at n. 11.

92 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 33).

93 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 34).

94 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 36).

95 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 38).

96 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 41).

97 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 42).

98 Cf. the extensive discussion in Schäfer (1968: 54–9).

99 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 85).

100 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 87).

101 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 87).

102 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 265).

103 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 268–7).

104 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 269).

105 See Chapter 7, text at n. 127.

106 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 16).

107 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 16).

108 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 275).

109 This is how Ritschl understands Jesus' charge of 'hypocrisy' against the Pharisees in verses like Matt. 23: 23; Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 276–7).

110 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 279).

111 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 293–4).

112 The hortatory sections, Ritschl insists, always presuppose the 'normal' view: Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 309).

113 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 321).

114 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 304).

115 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 308). Italics in the original.

116 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 311–12).

117 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 311).

118 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 314–15).

119 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 307).

120 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 321).

121 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 320).

122 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 320).

123 A full interpretation of the biblical concept of sacrifice follows in the third chapter: Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 157–264).

- 124 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 339).
- 125 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 355).
- 126 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 365).
- 127 Ritschl (1889: 4–5).
- 128 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 370).
- 129 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 373).
- 130 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 376).
- 131 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 374).
- 132 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 377).
- 133 Ritschl (1888: vol. 2, 378).
- 134 Cf. Schäfer (1964: 80–5) for a thoughtful defence of Ritschl’s theory against the standard charge that it was entirely discredited by Weiss’s discovery of the apocalyptic background of Jesus’ preaching.
- 135 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 8), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 8.
- 136 Recent scholarly work on these issues has not been extensive. Cf. on Ritschl and Luther: Lotz (1974); Hofmann (1998); on his discussion with F. H. R. von Frank: Slenczka (1998).
- 137 Ritschl (1868).
- 138 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 184–309).
- 139 An illuminating example is Ritschl’s essay on Bernard of Clairveaux (1873). The reader notes the author’s surprise to find in this medieval writer so many ‘evangelical’ insights.
- 140 Ritschl’s critique of Luther is most strongly articulated in (1865: 66–89) although he adds contextual observations mitigating his charges.
- 141 See Chapter 2, ‘The Two Programmes: Idealist and Neo-rationalist’. Notable is the permanent presence of Baur as a conversation partner throughout Ritschl’s historical studies. Ritschl’s engagement with Baur’s writings is always critical but betrays solid familiarity and scholarly appreciation of his teacher’s work. Cf. (1868: 59–61) for a detailed discussion of Baur’s interpretation of Scotus’ theology and its changes between the *Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit* (1841) and the posthumous *Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* (1861). In his account, Ritschl takes cognizance of several smaller publications that lie between the two major ones.
- 142 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 14). For this reason, Ritschl dismisses what Baur had called the ‘mystical’ doctrine of reconciliation in the Church Fathers as irrelevant and begins his own historical reconstruction directly with the conflict of Anselm and Abelard. From the second edition onwards, he integrates a brief account of Patristic ideas culled mainly from Wilhelm Herrmann’s doctoral dissertation on Gregory of Nyssa: (1888: vol. 1, 12–14). Cf. (1888: vol. 3, 75–7).
- 143 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 262), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 276. Cf. Ritschl (1875: 21–2) (§ 11 with n. 2).
- 144 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 4), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 4.
- 145 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 4), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 4.
- 146 See Chapter 9, text at n. 57.
- 147 Ritschl is aware that the inclusion of Aquinas in this tradition, which is normally traced to Duns Scotus and his students, will be controversial. His own argument to sustain it is, arguably, far-fetched. Yet for Ritschl the decision is crucial as it reveals at the root of Western theology the deformation of the idea of God brought about by the adaptation of natural theology. The two ideas of God, obtained respectively through metaphysical argument and from revelation, cannot really be reconciled. Thomas solves this problem by merely accepting the contrast between the idea of God’s volition, which he finds in Christian revelation, and the ‘indifferent simplicity’ of the metaphysical concept of God, which ultimately forms the basis of his own system. In this way, Ritschl claims, his work already points to later nominalist ideas: (1865: 28–9).
- 148 Cf. Ritschl (1865: 66): ‘Within limits and with specific application, the nominalist concept of God has continued to affect the foundations of Reformation theology. This happened by means of the doctrine of double predestination, which was mediated through Luther’s writing *De servo arbitrio* and subsequently came to dominance in the Calvinist churches.’ In detailed analyses Ritschl covers Luther (66–82), Calvin (96–102), as well as Beza and a number of other Reformed theologians (102–11).
- 149 Cf. on Arminianism: Ritschl (1865: 124–7); on Socinianism: (1865: 128–44); (1888: vol. 3, 229–33), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 241–5.
- 150 Ritschl (1865: 25).
- 151 Ritschl (1865: 27–9); (1888: vol. 3, 203–8), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 214–19.
- 152 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 228), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 240.
- 153 Ritschl (1865: 43); Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 58–85); (1888: vol. 3, 228–33). In Aquinas, however, Ritschl recognizes elements of the public law model: (1865: 42).
- 154 It therefore corresponds to the medieval and Catholic ‘notion of human merit before God’: Ritschl (1865: 65).
- 155 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 229), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 241.

- 156 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 229), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 241.
- 157 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 232), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 244.
- 158 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 232), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 244.
- 159 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 233), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 245.
- 160 Ritschl (1888: vol. 1, 230–5).
- 161 Ritschl (1865: 88–9); Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 233–50), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 245–62.
- 162 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 234), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 246.
- 163 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 235), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 247.
- 164 Cf. in detail: Ritschl (1865: 161–75).
- 165 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 236), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 248.
- 166 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 237), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 248–9. On the problem of God's personality cf. Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 217–27), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 228–38.
- 167 See Chapter 9, text at n. 19.
- 168 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 238), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 250.
- 169 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 240), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 252.
- 170 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 279), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 294.
- 171 Cf. Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 267), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 281.
- 172 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 256), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 270.
- 173 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 257), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 271.
- 174 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 258), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 271.
- 175 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 258), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 272.
- 176 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 262), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 276.
- 177 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 264), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 278. Ritschl's concept of love is almost entirely abstracted from its affective component. This one-sidedness is quite typical of his more general, peculiar blindness to this dimension of religion and, probably, life. Probably related is his almost violent aversion against any form of 'pietism' which his own students already found almost incomprehensible. Cf. for a fascinating critique along those lines: Hefner (1966).
- 178 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 259–60), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 272–3.
- 179 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 288), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 304.
- 180 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 6), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 6. The reference is to Luther's explanation of the First Commandment in his *Catechismus Maior*, Prima Pars, and to *Augsburg Confession* XX 24: *Bekenntnisschriften* (1998: 560–7; 79), ET: Tappert, 365; 44.
- 181 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 201–2), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 211–12.
- 182 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 202), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 212.
- 183 This aspect of Ritschl's theology is lost where his concept of value judgements is deemed the primary key to his thought. In the decades after his death, this became the predominant interpretation (Stählin (1888)) and is still popular today (Slenczka (1997)). In this reading, Ritschl's theology is a forerunner of today's non-realism concerned almost exclusively with the believers' experience and their notional correlates. To his opponents, this made him nearly an atheist in theological guise (Leese 1912). Ritschl never intended this, but one may ask whether he did not dramatically underestimate the epistemological and ontological problems his approach created. His response to early critics in *Theologie und Metaphysik* certainly looks naïve and improvised, and his use of the concept of 'religious cognition' (e.g. 1888: vol. 3, 15–20) lacks adequate epistemological reflection.
- 184 With this idea Ritschl exerted considerable influence on nascent sociology of religion. While detailed research is still scarce, much suggests that, directly or indirectly, both Max Weber and Émile Durkheim drew on his work for this insight: e.g. Ward (1987: 203–10) for Weber; Jones (2002) for Durkheim.
- 185 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 192), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 201.
- 186 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 264), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 278.
- 187 Cf. Leibniz (2002b: 146) (§ 84–5); Walther (1991: 54–60).
- 188 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 266), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 280.
- 189 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 267), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 280–1 (with changes).
- 190 Ritschl (1875: 33) (§ 19).
- 191 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 268), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 282.
- 192 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 265), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 279.
- 193 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 189), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 199.
- 194 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 284), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 299. Italics mine. It is difficult not to think here of Barth's celebrated idea of the creation as the 'external basis of the covenant' in § 41.2 of *Church Dogmatics* III/1: Barth (1932: vol. 3/1, 103ff.), ET: Bromiley, 94ff.

- 195 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 13–14).
196 Ritschl (1865: 77).
197 Ritschl (1865: 77).
198 Ritschl (1865: 82).
199 Ritschl (1865: 83). *Italics mine*.
200 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 226), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 238.
201 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 213), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 224.
202 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 276), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 291.
203 Ritschl (1888: vol. 3, 217), ET: Mackintosh/Macaulay, 228.