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DID RITSCHL'S CRITICS READ RITSCHL ?

(concluded)

by CLARK M. WILLIAMSON

IN the introductory part of this paper Professor Williamson considered twentieth-century criticisms of Ritschl by Barth and H. R. Niebuhr, and then presented what he called "a bold generalization of the Kantian mode of thought" in an endeavour to show some of the notions in Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason" in terms of which Ritschl delineated the Christian faith. Now he goes on to show how "this very delineation itself required a modification of this set of notions".

RITSCHL'S primary concern is with the Christian faith as revealed in Jesus Christ and as treasured by the Church:

Since the Christian religion arises from a particular revelation and is in a particular community of believers and worshippers of God, thus its peculiar concept of God must always be comprehended in union with the recognition of the bearer of this revelation and with the value judgment of the Christian community, in order that the entire content of Christianity be rightly understood. A presentation of doctrine which sets one or the other of these terms aside will prove to be defective.⁴⁰

From this we learn, to repeat, that the Christian faith has its origin in a special revelation, that it exists in a special community, and that its concept of God is properly and peculiarly its own.⁴¹

Although the content of the Christian faith is generically and specifically its own, and can be understood only from within or with a right appreciation of the Christian community, Ritschl is also intensely concerned that this faith be understood in a manner which will be both relevant to the human condition and intelligible to the community of Christians. It must be relevant to the conditions of existence as lived under the auspices of the Newtonian era and it must shed theological light upon the condition of redemption as experienced by the Christian community (Hefner's constructive point of departure). Part of what this means is that the Kingdom of God must be a Kingdom which offers an alternative to the natural and sinful dispensation under the oppressive conditions of which man lives:

⁴⁰ Albrecht Ritschl, *Unterricht in aer christlichen Religion* (Bonn: Marcus, 1895), p. 1. Hereafter referred to as the *Unterricht*.

⁴¹ Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (New York: Scribner's 1900), pp. 10-11. Hereafter cited as J. R.

At the same time the Kingdom of God is the highest good for those who are united in it, in so far as it presents the solution of the question asked or indicated in all religions, how man, who recognizes himself as part of the world and at the same time as having the tendency towards a spiritual personality, can assert the claim grounded on this to lordship over the world against the limitation by means of it.⁴²

Let us look a bit more closely at these two concerns of Ritschl—the Christian faith and its relevance to man's situation as he recognizes himself both as "Teil der Welt" and as "geistige Persönlichkeit."

Partly in interpretation of these two quotations and partly as reaction against Barth's claim that Ritschl's theology expressed the Enlightenment ideal of the life lived according to reason, but did so under the terms of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation,⁴³ with the implication that at this point the cultural deals of the Enlightenment assumed dominance over the Christian faith in Ritschl's doctrine. I should like to set forth a counter claim. This counter claim, based for the moment only on these two passages from the *Unterricht*, is that Ritschl's concern was not to subordinate Christianity to culture but, on the contrary, to develop new methodological principles for theology which would free (*liberare*) Christian thought from the cultural and philosophical trappings which it had acquired in a former age in order that it could be rendered relevant and re-established in its uniqueness for *this* age, for the age of man living under the aegis of the Kantian experiment. This I take to be part of the genius of liberal theology at its best.

Further, Ritschl's insistence that if one is to understand the content of the Christian faith properly he must recognize the specific bearer of Christian revelation as such and must also have the right appreciation of the Christian community indicates that Ritschl would like to have his *own* theological system interpreted as the intellectual setting forth of the experience of the Christian life. That is, Ritschl would hold that all Christian theology, including his own, can only be understood by one who has also, in faith, apprehended the Christian reality of God's justifying grace and forgiveness made possible through Jesus Christ. If one takes seriously these statements of Ritschl, it would seem necessary to infer that his total theological undertaking, whatever its shortcomings, is conditioned by the fact that he speaks from the self-

⁴² Ritschl, *Unterricht*, pp. 6-7.

⁴³ Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought*, p. 393.

conscious standpoint of the Christian faith and that he interprets the problems which he sets out to meet, such as that of spirit *versus* nature, from the standpoint of one whose own life is made meaningful by his self-awareness of his own response to God's salvation.

These two motifs, then, guide this understanding of Ritschl, and the implicit insistence will be made throughout this paper, that, as the title of his *magnum opus* indicates, Ritschl's theological work is dominated by the conviction at which he has arrived existentially as a self-conscious Christian that the notions of justification and reconciliation form the centre of the Christian faith and the self-consciousness of the Christian community and at the same time constitute its relevance to the human condition.

Prior to the conditions of Christian existence under which man lives as "redeemed," it is clear that Ritschl understands man as existing under the burden of two distinct and oppressive forces. Ritschl's critics tend not to give adequate weight to his understanding of either of these two forces. In relation to each of these forces redemption stands as a liberating influence, *i.e.*, in Jesus Christ men are freed from an unrelieved consciousness of guilt and from the oppressiveness of a mechanical and capricious nature. "Spiritual redemption" is redemption "to that freedom from guilt and over the world which is to be won through the realised Fatherhood of God".⁴⁴

Formally, this definition of redemption which Ritschl gives is consistent with his definition of religion as a circle defined by three points: God, man, and the world.⁴⁵ Existentially, this definition of redemption, together with the description of the three foci of religion, points out for us the dual loci of those religious predicaments from which man must be saved. The first problem is with man's relation to the world; the second with his relation to himself. It will be seen, however, that both involve his relation to God. Ritschl understands each problem to be of such dimension that man cannot solve it by himself but stands in need of redemption by a Power greater than himself.

Ritschl approves of the notions of guilt which are held by the Lutheran theologians Hollatz, Buddeus, and Fresenius. Their conceptions, he says, amount to saying that

punishment of sin, in so far as it is conceived as a permanent consequence of sin, and is not annulled by redemption, expresses

⁴⁴ Ritschl, *J.R.*, p. 13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27, p. 29.

the *separation of sinners from God*, the suspension of man's fellowship with Him.⁴⁶

Consequently, Ritschl defines the forgiveness of sins, which he claims to be synonymous with justification,⁴⁷ as "that operation of God which restores sinners, separated as such from Him, to the presence of God and their proper fellowship with Him."⁴⁸ Significantly, the only "condition" which Ritschl finds necessary to this aspect of redemption is a self-awareness of one's own guilt.⁴⁹ An interesting matter of note is that Ritschl sees the consciousness of guilt itself as the initial manifestation of the tendency of the individual to reconciliation.⁵⁰ If I am correct, this places the origin, at least, of the process of redemption within the province of man's intellect rather than within the sphere of God's action. Consciousness of guilt, as one's awareness of his own responsibility for his sin, is tantamount to an awareness of the need for redemption. And although Ritschl would not place the ability to accomplish redemption within the range of man's powers, it seems that Barth would take exception to this aspect of Ritschl's thought.

Thus redemption is conceived as the liberation of man from the oppressive burden of his own guilt. Also, it is an operation of God upon man rather than an operation of man upon himself. Since *Schuldgefühl* constitutes a "removal from the person whom we know ourselves to have offended,"⁵¹ it signifies an alienation or disruption of relations between man and God which can only be overcome by God. It is so overcome in redemption; redemption here takes the form of forgiveness of sins and functions to remove the separation which, "in consequence of sin, has entered in between man and God."⁵²

At precisely this point, however, Ritschl strikes a note which penetrates at depth into the human situation as it was understood by means of the Kantian terminology. This note deserves to be mentioned here because it is generally overlooked by his critics and because it gives us an understanding as to why Ritschl held that guilt was something which man could not overcome by himself.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42 (italics are Ritschl's).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Guilt, in the moral sense, expresses the disturbance of the proper reciprocal relation between the moral law and freedom, which follows from the law-transgressing abuse of freedom, and as such is marked by the accompanying pain of the feeling of guilt. Guilt is thus that permanent contradiction between the objective and the subjective factor of the moral will which is produced by the abuse of freedom in the non-fulfilment of the law, and the unworthiness of which is expressed for the moral subject in his consciousness of guilt.⁵³

Hence guilt is a situation of split, of contradiction, within man himself, *i.e.*, within his will, the faculty of man to which Ritschl often seems to give the pre-eminent place. Also, it is a "permanent" contradiction. This means, I take it, just what it says. That is, guilt is not a series of bad deeds done by man which are unrelated to each other and only externally related to the human will. Ritschl has good anthropological grounds for describing the forgiveness of sins as a religious conception, *i.e.*, a conception having to do with God's operations on men.⁵⁴

Hence, guilt, as one aspect of the human predicament, constitutes both a separation of man from God and a contradiction within man *qua* spiritual being. Release from this oppressive awareness of unrelieved guilt, therefore, must derive from God rather than from man. Let us now look at the other aspect of the human predicament to which Ritschl conceives the Christian faith to be relevant.

The other side of the human condition is stated by Ritschl in connection with his "general conception of religion," which he says is to be used "regulatively," rather than constitutively in the interpretation of Christianity.⁵⁵ Ritschl holds that

In every religion what is sought, with the help of the superhuman spiritual power revered by man, is a 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. For in the former role he is a part of nature, dependent upon her, subject to and confined by other things; but as spirit he is moved by the impulse to maintain his independence against them. In this juncture, religion springs up as faith in superhuman spiritual powers, by whose help the power which man possesses of himself is in some way supplemented, and elevated into a unity of its own kind which is a match for the pressure of the natural world.⁵⁶

Here Ritschl holds that religion results as and only as man recognizes his inadequacy as a spiritual personality to cope with a

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

contradiction within himself, that contradiction being between the natural and spiritual aspects of his own self. Apparently, only as man recognizes his own inadequacy to deal with this contradiction can he seek that relationship to a more-than-human spiritual Power who will overcome the contradiction which man finds within himself. Hence, the human predicament points to man's frustration at seeing himself, on the one hand, as a trifling fragment of the world, a hopelessly determined part of the temporal-spatial chain in the causality of nature, and, on the other hand, as spirit, as person, as *imago Dei*.

By way of commenting upon the depth or supposed lack of depth in Ritschl's handling of the human predicament, I should like to remark that so recent a writer as Albert Camus, early in his career, has conceived the human predicament in much the same terms that Ritschl uses in the passage quoted above. The problem of man, for Camus, is that man lives under the conditions of a universe which is unresponsive to man's basic spiritual yearnings, in which man is limited by death—the universe's final answer to him—and in which there is no room for hope. Man, for Camus as for Ritschl, is "a trifling fragment of the world."

The Absurd is born of this confrontation between the human demand and the unreasonable silence of the world. It is this which must not be forgotten. It is to this which we must cling, because all of the consequences for a life may emerge from it. The irrational, the human nostalgia, and the Absurd which is born in their *tête-à-tête*, these are the three characteristics of the drama which necessarily must be concluded with all the logic of which an existence is capable.⁵⁷

Ritschl, operating with the mechanistic and capricious view of a nature which proceeded according to the law of efficient causality, certainly felt deep anguish when he contemplated man's situation as "a trifling fragment" of this process.

The difference, however, between Ritschl and Camus is that Ritschl has a concept of grace. Whereas, for Camus, the only alternative to resignation (expressed either as hope or as suicide) is a neo-Stoic resolve, personified by Sisyphus, to "refuse" the world, Ritschl contends that existence is not ultimately absurd because man is not finally unrelated to another spiritual (*geistig*) personality. Rather, it is God's freely given, providential offer of fellowship with Himself that frees man, also, from this aspect of the human predicament in which he finds himself. As Ritschl puts it in his *Christian Perfection*, the doctrine (and for Ritschl, consistently with his epistemology, doctrines are descriptive of

⁵⁷ Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p. 45.

experienced realities) of God's providential care for and spiritual communion with man that is revealed in Jesus Christ

brings the answer to the question which has been put in all previous religions; it lifts from the heart the weight which is felt in all religions, solves the contradiction in which man by nature finds himself; namely, that he is but a little fragment of the world, and yet is also as a spirit an image of God . . .⁵⁸

Although Ritschl speaks of man's desiring to be independent of nature, a sympathetic reading clearly indicates that this is not an independence which will satisfy man's egocentricity, i.e., which will put his ego at the centre of himself and his world. Rather, independence *from* nature or freedom *from* nature is freedom *to* devote oneself to another system on which one is dependent. In order to counterbalance the debilitating influences of nature man must give himself up "to entire dependence on God, take refuge therein . . ."⁵⁹ And we can so give ourselves to God because God has already given himself to us in Jesus Christ:

. . . the revelation impresses us with the certainty that our weakness does not make us too contemptible, our dependence on the world, which we feel when we sin, does not make us too despicable, to trust God as our Father, to come near to him, to lean on him, humbly, and so experience that to those who love God all things work together for good.⁶⁰

Hence, freedom from the world's oppressive weight is manifest in man's ability to exercise the religious virtues of humility towards God and patience under suffering towards the world.⁶¹

These two aspects of the human predicament, however, are seen by Ritschl as being fundamentally related to each other. That is, the oppressiveness resulting from one's considering himself only as a little part of the world is related, as result to cause, to man's state of sin in which he mistrusts and is even opposed to God. It is as if the man who, by virtue of sin, condemns himself to separation from God and to a moral contradiction within his own will condemns himself also to inclusion within a purely natural and exclusion from a gracious order of existence. Or, the man who, because of his indifference to the personal order of existence offered him by God, removes himself from God at the same time condemns himself to be "a trifling fragment of nature." In his claim that the revealed grace of God can heal both of the

⁵⁸ Albrecht Ritschl, *Christian Perfection*, trans. E. Craigmile, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, XXXV (January, 1878), pp. 665 ff. Hereafter referred to as *Christian Perfection*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 676.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 677.

contradictions in which man finds himself it becomes clear that Ritschl understands them as related. For instance, Ritschl holds that the believer is aware of his justification by virtue of the content of his religious freedom over the world. This content is (1) trust in God's providence, (2) the invocation of God in prayer, and (3) patience under those sufferings which God ordains.⁶² These activities compose the *ratio cognoscendi* of the pardoning grace of God; they make us aware of God's activity which is the *ratio essendi* that calls forth man's response. These activities on the part of man are called forth by the same act of pardon which enables man, at the same time, "to lay aside the mistrust of God which goes along with the unrelieved sense of guilt."⁶³ Hence this dual religious deliverance of man by God from the confining limits of his natural and sinful state does not constitute the end or goal of man's existence (that *bonum* which is the object of his strivings) but rather constitutes the necessary religious condition which makes this striving after wholeness (*Vollkommenheit*) possible.

Ritschl has deviated considerably from Kant in his understanding of the relations pertaining between man and God. This difference constitutes one modification which Ritschl's explication of the Christian faith imposes upon Kant's anthropocentricity. Briefly this difference is as follows.

Kant conceived man as having within himself the necessary ability to realize the *bonum supremum*; that is, man had all the powers necessary to bring his will into perfect accord with the moral law and thus gain for himself virtue. The *bonum consummatum*, however, while only possible in terms of the conditions laid down by the *bonum supremum*, was nonetheless considered by Kant to be beyond man's control for the simple reason that man had not the means to bring nature into harmony with morality. This *bonum consummatum* is defined generally by Kant as happiness, the state of a moral being for whom the events of his existence do not contradict his own morality.⁶⁴ But because man is not the author of his own existence he cannot guarantee the kind of harmony between nature and morality that is necessary to the realization of this *bonum consummatum*. Thus Kant finds the need for postulating a God Who, as both intelligence and perfect moral will, is author both of nature and of duty and who can therefore guarantee their ultimate harmony, thus making possible to man the consummation of his life-goal.

⁶² Ritschl, *J.R.*, p. 177.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 221.

Ritschl differs from Kant, therefore, at several points: (1) for Ritschl God's redeeming and saving activity is the condition for man's moral activity itself, *i.e.*, God, in liberating man from the oppressiveness of unrelieved guilt and from the weight of a capricious nature enables man to commit himself to a *bonum* to which otherwise he could not devote himself at all. Thus Ritschl has what a contemporary realist would have to call a more penetrating insight into the human condition than did Kant whose assumption was that man, acting out of his own resources, could be perfectly virtuous and needed God only to guarantee the consummate happiness of which man had already proved himself deserving. Also, (2) the human response correlative to God's act of grace, for Ritschl, is characterized by patience, humility, prayer, and radical trust. Hence, God, in Ritschl's system, has much less the appearance of serving man's egocentricity than He does in Kant's where He is the guarantor of a happiness of which man, on his own terms, knows himself to be worthy.

In general, then, Ritschl modified Kant in two fundamental directions: first, he has given a more profound reading of the human condition than Kant and a reading more in keeping with what we today generally consider to be a realistic Christian outlook upon life. For this reason Ritschl sees God's gracious relation to man as much more basic and pertinent to his condition and much less tangential, relating only to its consummation, than did Kant. For Ritschl God is not the guarantor of man's happiness; rather He is a gracious Father and a loving Saviour Who rescues man from his own internal contradictions. Secondly, Ritschl has hinged human fulfilment upon a theocentric rather than upon an anthropocentric orientation. That is, the source of meaning for Ritschl is not, as we earlier saw it was for Kant, the shaping and ordering activity of man's reason, but the activity of God in history. This last point has to do with that *bonum*, the Kingdom of God, in which Ritschl considers man's life to find its fruition and it is to this that we must now turn.

Ritschl assumes also with Kant that man strives after a *bonum* which is a unity, a goal which is satisfactory to man's essential nature because it is complete in itself. In our earlier reference to Kant we discussed this notion partly under the rubric of the synthetic relation of the morally (formally) determined will to its object (matter) and partly under the concept of a Kingdom, a society of rational beings acting harmoniously in terms of the moral law rather than with regard to their private concerns. This fundamental notion of the Kantian philosophy, as it is here given

shape in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, informs Ritschl's delineation of the Christian faith.

One term which Ritschl uses to express this *bonum* or *finis* at which human existence aims is the term "perfection," *Vollkommenheit*, which could perhaps be better translated as "completeness." This latter avoids the more moralistic overtones of "perfection," and also makes us aware of the more nearly existential meaning of the term. Ritschl is concerned only with perfection as it may be legitimately and usefully understood "in strict accordance with Christian usage . . ." ⁶⁵ The conditions which he lays down for his conception of perfection are, besides this, that: (1) it must be "something which is compatible with the essential nature of man," ⁶⁶ which means that it must be a goal which is not foreign to man's actual or possible destiny. Man's life with all its limitations, with its unfinished character, with its goals and motivations must find a realized order or unity which is peculiarly its own. It must achieve not merely a whole, but a whole of its own, a whole generically suited to itself.

Certainly, in any case, it must be something which is compatible with the essential nature of man; that is to say, it must be compatible with a nature which is created, limited, continually developing or growing, which is never done working, which never comes to be equal with God. But it must be something which can be compared with that perfection in God which is manifested in goodness towards the just and the unjust. Perfection such as our Lord Jesus, the apostles Paul and James prescribe and declare to be possible means that a Christian—each Christian—can be or become a complete thing, after his peculiar kind, in the sphere of religious faith and moral action. ⁶⁷

Hence this ordered system must not be merely appropriate to man's essential humanity but (2) it must be at the same time a system through which man can express himself in the uniqueness of which he is self-aware.

This system, however, is a practical-moral and religious system rather than a natural system. And in this we see what Ritschl means by the phrase "compatible with the essential nature of man." It is not that, as part of nature, man is not part of a whole. He is: but the whole of which he is part thwarts his development and grants to him a wholeness which is inadequate to his humanity in those peculiar and most important spiritual and personal respects where in it differs from nature.

⁶⁵ Ritschl, *Christian Perfection*, p. 665.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

And this Kingdom of God in which man finds his completeness is something to which man must commit himself. As a moral and religious system it is in accord with man's true nature because in it man's essential freedom and self-determination is not abrogated. Whereas as a part of the world man feels himself bearing the weight of subjugation, as a member of the Kingdom of God man is "elevated above the world."⁶⁸ It is important to note also that this highest good which can be appropriately realized by human nature takes the form of the Kingdom of God and represents not a good upon which man *qua* man has decided for himself, but a good "which God destines for us as our supramundane goal."⁶⁹

Seen in this light, Ritschl's use of such phrases as the one quoted above ("above the world") is unfortunate for they seem to distort his basic meaning. He is contending that man's unique humanity is or can be brought to its full realization and fruition only in a practical-moral order which has God's liberation of man from nature and guilt as its necessary condition and base and the transcending of natural, i.e., egoistic motivations as its aim. Egoism, Ritschl claims, is best served under these natural conditions where one is free to pursue mundane ends. But under the conditions of the Kingdom these must be replaced by faith in and service to, not man himself, but God his Father.⁷⁰

But although this order to which man is called to commit himself is appropriate to man *qua* man, this does not open Ritschl to the charge of anthropocentricity. Two further points must be made here to clarify what Ritschl is about. First, God's causal workings upon man, unlike those of nature, are such that not only does God leave man's freedom intact — rather, God's influences actually enhance man's freedom. Hence God's action on behalf of man strengthens rather than weakens that essential spiritual characteristic about himself of which man is aware and which is seriously threatened by the natural order of things. Secondly, man's own freedom is not available to man until God has acted graciously upon man and man has responded in trust to this working of God. Hence, whatever dominion is to be man's comes as the divinely given resolution of his religious problem and not as the egoistically clutched-at object of human desire.

It is because of the above consideration, then, that Ritschl can conceive of the Christian community as called into existence by

⁶⁸ Ritschl, *J. R.*, p. 206

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

the love of God extended to man through Christ.⁷¹ The *bonum* for which man strives, then, is the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which is the correlative of God's loving action and which, because it is brought into being by God's love has as its end the end of man *qua* man, because "love aims at the promotion of the other's personal end."⁷²

Here again, then, we see how Ritschl effectively counters the Kantian emphasis with a Christian emphasis: whereas Kant posits man's essential freedom as the basis of his morality and the condition of his living in a Kingdom of ends, Ritschl maintains that man's freedom and man's desire to live the completely moral life is available to him only in the Kingdom which is given by the will and love of God. Hence, while it may be that the *form* of the complete life, i.e., the ideal, is the same in Ritschl as in Kant, and here Barth would be correct in his criticism, it is nonetheless true that the source of this life is God's will for man. Here, then, Ritschl modifies again the Kantian anthropocentric emphasis. With this discussion of Ritschl incompletely presented but yet, perhaps, sufficient for the purpose of this paper, let us now turn to the problem of Ritschl criticism.

CONCLUSION

Taking Ritschl in context, we note two things. First, that he provided a genuinely theocentric counter to the anthropocentric understanding of man's realization in his life-goal that was given by Kant. He tried to show that man's fulfilment came as he responded to and accepted God's offer of His goal for man, and that this understanding of God both as source and direction of man's true realization places a strong modification upon Kant. He tried, also, to point out that man's "lordship" over the world was a lordship exercised in the terms of the Kingdom, i.e., in terms of service both toward men and God.⁷³ Secondly, a point which must be made with regard to Ritschl's vigorous assertion of the superiority in worth of spirit as over against nature, is that Ritschl was fighting a battle which very much needed to be fought. He was fighting for the life of the spirit (and of Christianity) in a time when scientism was actively reducing spiritual phenomena to explanation in terms of such things as the "modes of production" (Marx), the "law of the three stages" (Comte), and man's self-alienation (Feuerbach), to mention but a few. Hence, although

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

Ritschl may have asserted too strongly the worth of spirit, man's "lordship" over nature, it is by no means clear that this assertion was not the one to make in this situation nor is it clear that the assertion is dragged in from extra-Christian sources, as H. R. Niebuhr claims.⁷⁴ Genesis accords to man some quality of *Herrschaft über die Welt*, a dominion emphasized lately by Bonhoeffer and Cox. Although Ritschl would agree with Niebuhr that God is the chief object of value for the Christian, which is precisely what Ritschl wants to affirm when he says that Christ "has the worth of God for us," it cannot legitimately be contended for Ritschl that God's value for man is made a means for or subjugated to man's own value of himself.

Rather, we can make three basic points about Ritschl: (1) that man's value is realized for man as satisfying his essential humanity only by virtue of God's loving will, which grants to man the Kingdom in which man finds his spiritual freedom and worth and of God's power which delivers man from the predicament which prevents his realizing his own self-end; (2) that God's action must always be relevant to man's need; and (3) that man's own activity in fulfilling the vocation to which he is awakened by God is informed by the revelation granted in Jesus Christ's life-work. And although Ritschl, for all this, was both more liberal and more optimistic than even the Liberals of today can be, his value for the future of theology is not the purely negative one of a theologian who adopted a wrong alternative and explored it to its conclusion.

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⁷⁴ Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, p. 29.