

IV
“MISERABLE-SINNER CHRISTIANITY” IN THE HANDS OF THE
RATIONALISTS

ARTICLE II
FROM CLEMEN TO PFLEIDERER¹

TWELVE YEARS intervened between Wernle’s assault on “miserable-sinner Christianity” and his retractation, and it is necessary to give some account of the course of the debate through these years. We have already intimated that one of the effects of the publication of Wernle’s book was to uncover a tendency and to create a party. A tendency was uncovered among adherents of the history-of-religion school to represent Paul as claiming for himself or asserting of all Christians either express sinlessness or something very like it, and this tendency rapidly hardened into a party-contention. Men like E. Grafe, H. J. Holtzmann, Paul Schmiedel, E. Teichmann, A. Jülicher, in reviewing Wernle’s book, were quick to express complete or partial agreement with its general position.² Carl Clemen was perhaps the first, however, to associate himself with it in an independent discussion.

Before the end of the year Clemen had published the Biblical part of his “Christian Doctrine of Sin”—the only part ever published—and he naturally included in it a section on “the dissemination of sin.”³ It had been the Biblical doctrine from the prophets down, he says, that sin is universal among men. But the possibility of overcoming it was always recognized for the future, and indeed was assumed for the past by the Priest Code and the Chronicler, and asserted for the present by Paul⁴—and he might have added also by the other writers of the New Testament since he interprets most of the post-Pauline writers in this sense (Eph. 1:4; 4:24; 5:1; 1 Pet. 1:15; Jas. 1:4; 1 John 3:6, 9).⁵ Paul, he asserts,⁶ not only sets himself up as a model and boasts of his work, but “expressly ascribes perfection to himself”—for which assertion Clemen has, however, no better proof than is afforded by the merely general, and perfectly natural, assertions of 1 Thess. 2:10; 1 Cor. 4:3 f. 2

¹ From *The Princeton Theological Review*, xviii. 1920, pp. 399–459; cf. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Perfectionism, Part One*, vol. 7, 177–236.

² H. J. Holtzmann, in the “Theologischer Jahresbericht,” xvii. 1898, p. 170 and xviii. 1899, p. 187, gives references to the several reviews mentioned.

³ “Die christliche Lehre von der Sünde: I. Die biblische Lehre,” 1897, pp. 100–122.

⁴ P. 122.

⁵ Pp. 119 ff.

⁶ P. 110.

Cor. 6:3 f. Paul, moreover, “nowhere speaks of sins committed by him after his conversion, and nowhere refers to them the sufferings which he so often recalls, as he must have done on his ... presuppositions, had he been conscious of any guilt whatever.”⁷ Apparent confessions of imperfections are only apparent—1 Cor. 15:9; 2 Cor. 5:2 ff.; Rom. 8:22 f. Gal. 2:20.

As for Rom. 7—of course the presents are presents; we must not make the Apostle a comedian dramatizing a distant past: but it was written in a bad hour, when the Apostle was in a gloomy mood—and therefore when he came to write the eighth chapter afterwards, he wrote in on the margin, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” words which have crept since into the text. “Looked at as a whole,” therefore, Rom. 7 means—what the moderns make it mean; and “in any case it has nothing to say against the freedom of Paul as a Christian in general from any consciousness of sin.”⁸ As to Phil. 3:12 ff. it is not to be denied that the efforts to empty it of its confession of imperfection have been imperfectly successful, but “neither is it to be forgotten that we have to do here precisely with the last of Paul’s letters to congregations, and that we find in it elsewhere also a different estimate of the Christian life from Paul’s earlier one; from it therefore we can draw no conclusions for the earlier period.”⁹ This comment seems to convey an admission that Paul does not always teach his own sinlessness or that of his converts. In his later epistles, at any rate, he has lost the assurance which is attributed to him on the basis of his earlier ones.¹⁰

With reference to his converts, it is argued that in presenting himself—and indeed Christ—as their model, Paul recognizes their ability to become like him—and Christ. There are passages, also, it is asserted, in which it is “expressly declared that the Christian no longer sins.”¹¹ Here the stress is laid on 1 Cor. 6:11, Rom. 5:6, 8, and especially of course, on Rom. 6:1 ff.; but also on Gal. 3:27; 5:24, and finally Col. 2:11. “In any case,” the conclusion runs,¹² “the transformation which has taken place in Christians through baptism is designated here again by so strong an expression, that it appears impossible to reduce it to a reversal merely of the relative strength of good and evil, to a removal of sin from the center to the periphery, to a certain inner separation from sin—as Lütgert¹³ has again of late sought to do.” “I admit,” Clemen adds, “that this explanation”—that is, Lütgert’s—“is valid in the case of some passages ...; in the most of them, however, Paul speaks so clearly of the overcoming of sin through conversion, that all limitation appears to be excluded.” Of course he should have added, “except the limitation of time”—but it is characteristic of this whole school of writers simply to assume that what is done in the matter of cleansing of Christians is done without any expenditure of time whatever, all at once, completely.

Clemen, then, does not press Paul’s doctrine of the sinlessness of Christians quite to such extremities as Wernle, and he draws back altogether when it comes to Wernle’s

⁷ P. 111.

⁸ P. 112.

⁹ P. 113.

¹⁰ P. 119.

¹¹ P. 114.

¹² Pp. 116–117.

¹³ The reference is to Lütgert, “Sündlosigkeit und Vollkommenheit,” 1897, pp. 38 ff.

estimate of the Apostle himself. So far from an “abstract idealist,” “doctrinaire fanatic,” who flagrantly contradicts in his teaching both the facts and himself, Paul was, says Clemen, a “sober realist,” who kept his eye and hand precisely on the facts.¹⁴ There is one thing, however, he says, which Wernle has missed in estimating Paul’s dealing with sin in the churches: when Paul charges his converts with sinning, it was only certain special sins which he ascribes to them, and otherwise he praises them (1 Thess. 4:9 f.; 1 Cor. 11:2, 17). There is no explanation of this, says Clemen,¹⁵ except that they had really conquered sin in general, but had not yet learned to look upon certain particular vices as sins. And here he draws an arrow from Scholz’s quiver. Scholz very strikingly pictures the difficulties which the newly converted heathen must have had in comprehending the Christian standard of morality. “When we wonder at the open transgressions of the ten commandments of which we hear so often in the Pauline epistles,” he says, “it should not be forgotten how new and unaccustomed many of the ethical requirements were for Christians of heathen origin; how many hindrances to the purer moral understanding must have arisen out of the instincts of the past. A just critic should allow that from such a start a good advance could be recognized in spite of all wavering, falling, holding back. This is precisely what Paul did.” Certainly nothing truer could be said. But to say this, as Clemen does through Scholz’s lips, is certainly not to say that Paul looked upon his converts as having already attained the goal. And Clemen himself has to admit¹⁶ that in his later epistles at least Paul—perhaps disheartened by the delay of the Parousia—thought of his converts as only beginners. Their new moral life was not yet manifest, but still “hidden” with Christ in God (Col. 2:3); the good work was only begun in them (Phil. 1:6); Paul himself was only beginning to know the power—it was a moral power—of Christ’s resurrection (Phil. 3:10). The goal of blamelessness still stood before them.

What Clemen teaches here, he repeats in the main in his “Paul, His Life and Works,”¹⁷ though not without modifications, the most notable of which is the apparent abandonment of the distinction between Paul’s earlier and later teaching. Justification, he teaches here, has reference, it is true, only to *past* sins, but does not on that account fail of some effect upon the future. Sins committed after we believe, we must ourselves bear the punishment of: therefore believers are sick and die—sometimes suddenly and untimely. But since they are justified, they need not commit these sins; justification brings with it the *possibility* of sanctification. Now, being justified, we can satisfy the claims of God on us, however high they may be. “We can walk in a new, holy life, because we know that our old man is crucified, therefore has paid its penalty; we can fulfill the law, after sin has been judged in the flesh.”¹⁸ The consciousness of this was very strong in Paul and he expected it to be present in others in the measure in which “he saw in the Christian in principle the new man, who actually did not sin any more at all.”¹⁹ “There was a time when we were weak and sinful, but now we are washed and sanctified, or figuratively expressed, are unleavened, so that there is no longer anything condemnable in us.” This is

¹⁴ P. 117.

¹⁵ P. 118.

¹⁶ P. 119.

¹⁷ “Paulus, sein Leben und Wirken,” ii. 1904, pp. 98 ff.

¹⁸ P. 100.

¹⁹ P. 101.

the reason why Paul could speak of the forgiveness of sins as something past; believers have no present sins to be forgiven. Christ's intercession, however, no doubt remains, and will according to Paul's expectation be operative at the last judgment.

There is another side of the matter, however, which must not be overlooked. Although we have become new creatures in Christ, yet this life is still hidden in God. Paul considered himself not yet perfect, and did not need to be taught by experience that others were even less so. We cannot even pray as we ought and need the grace of God always. If in spite of this Paul still looked upon himself and others as without sin, the explanation is doubtless to be found in part in this—"that he did not consider every departure from the highest ideal as sin."²⁰ It is found further in his expectation of an early end for all things. But what chiefly comes into consideration is that "Paul and the others had with their conversion really broken with sin, so that they feel now bound to the service of righteousness rather than of sin." If they were overtaken by a fault there was the hope that they would be recovered from it, and therefore could still stand unblamable at the Parousia and receive God's praise.

All this is once more said over again with the added clearness suitable to its more popular destination, in Clemen's little handbook which he calls "The Development of the Christian Religion within the New Testament," published in 1908.²¹ Here too he begins by pointing out that, according to Paul, "the death of Christ blots out only our *former* sins (Rom. 3:25) ... and the judgment at the end of the day proceeds on the ground of *works*." No doubt even then grace will rule, but consider 2 Cor. 5:10. When Paul says in Rom. 8:3 that God has judged sin in the flesh *in order that* the righteousness demanded by the law may be fulfilled in us, that proves that reconciliation so little supplants sanctification that it for the first time renders it *possible*. What is meant in Rom. 6:7 is primarily that each one's own death has an expiatory value; as it is spoken, however, of us who have not died, it means that we are absolved from sin by the death of Jesus, and that carries with it the further idea that we are no longer to serve sin—provided that we carry with us the mediating thought, that we are brought by the forgiveness of sins into a condition in which we need not serve sin. "So long as we still had to bear our guilt, we had always to say in our battle against sin that it was of no avail how much we attained, since the old guilt always remained; now that it is done away, however, now that we have been assured of the grace and love of God, we can for the first time take up the battle against sin, and actually begin a new life."²²

It is important to pause here to note that the only effect of forgiveness looking to sanctification which Clemen here supposes Paul to intimate, is our enheartening for the conflict with sin. There is nothing intimated as to any interior effect of the death of Christ in the way of purifying our hearts. We are to sanctify ourselves under the inspiration of our liberation from guilt. The importance of making this clear arises from its connection with what immediately succeeds. For Clemen proceeds at once thus: "Yes, Paul assumes of his congregations that this has already happened with them, that they *have* died to sin

²⁰ P. 102. He supports himself in this on Gottschick, Jacoby and Titius, as cited elsewhere, and repels Max Meyer's criticism.

²¹ "Die Entwicklung der christlichen Religion innerhalb des Neuen Testaments," 1908, pp. 88 ff.

²² P. 89.

(verse 2). Christ died for us, he says (Rom. 5:6), when we *were* still weak or sinners—now therefore we are no longer that: ye *were* slaves of sin, now however ye have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching which ye received (6:17); ye have washed and sanctified yourselves (1 Cor. 7:11) or, figuratively expressed, ye are unleavened (5:7). And now we understand why Paul, as already said, always relates reconciliation to the past sins, and speaks of forgiveness as something past (Col. 3:13); the Christian ought actually not to sin any more at all.” In this connection the deliverance from sin spoken of in this passage as already received by Christians can scarcely refer to anything more than deliverance from the guilt of sin. Their deliverance from sinning remains their own affair, wrought by their own efforts as a matter of duty under the inspiration of their forgiveness.

The sinlessness of Christians as such has become then only their duty to be sinless. And yet, just after thus explaining that all of a Christian’s freedom from sin is the result of a battle against it, in obedience to the exhortations of the gospel, Clemen proceeds, just as if it was otherwise, to ask: But did not Paul have to fight against sin? Is not 1 Cor. 9:27 there? And Rom. 7? Or if Rom. 7 was written in a gloomy hour, is not Phil. 3:12 there? And is not Paul always exhorting his readers to lay aside their sin? One thing is notable, he says: Paul has nowhere brought the death of Jesus into connection with their later sins, although he does speak once (Rom. 8:34) of Jesus appearing before God for us. Which merely reminds us again that a Christian, having once been relieved of the burden of his guilt, is then left to take care of his own subsequent sins for himself. Then Clemen closes the discussion by telling us that we must observe three things,²³ if we would understand Paul’s position. The first of them is that “conversion was at that time actually the beginning of a new life; he who attached himself to the Christian community had actually (at least in principle) broken with his past.” The second of them is that under the influence of his vivid expectation of the rapidly approaching end, “Paul could think that the change which had taken place in these newly converted men would protect them altogether from new sins.” And the third of them, which he says is the main one, is that Paul was filled with “youthful faith in the divine power of the gospel, and knew nothing of the senile conception of Christianity as ‘comforted sorrow for sin’ (*getrösteten Sündenelends*).” He hoped that his congregations would stand unblamable at the coming of Christ. That is to say, Paul in his youthful fervor of faith was optimistic.

It seems apparent that in the ten years of his development covered by these three books, the doctrine of the sinless Christian lost its point in Clemen’s thinking. He has abated nothing, however, of his hatred of “miserable-sinner Christianity.” “The senile conception of Christianity, as ‘comforted sorrow for sin,’” is a tolerably biting characterization to make of the type of Christianity which presumably he identified with the doctrine of the Reformers. The excuse may justly be offered, no doubt, that if he does identify a Christianity which could be so described with the doctrine of the Reformers he has fallen into a mistake very prevalent in the circles in which he moved. And it is to be remembered in his favor that the intemperance of his language is apparently the result of a zeal which reflects a robust sense of the duty of moral effort. If “miserable-sinner Christianity” represents a tendency to acquiesce in sin and to substitute constantly repeated forgiveness of sins passively accepted as inevitable, for a manly battle against all sin and a steady advance upward toward conquest—why, then, it fairly deserves

²³ P. 91.

Clemen's characterization. Clemen has, however, tripped here over that facile "either—or" which catches the feet of so many of his fellows. We do not have to choose between the alternatives of a Christianity of mere ethical effort and a Christianity of passive submission to unopposed sinning. There is something much better than either, between.

The defence of the Reformers against Wernle's strictures was undertaken by a fellow Ritschlian, Johannes Gottschick, in an effective article printed in one of the later numbers of the *Journal for Theology and Church* for 1897.²⁴ The thesis of the article is that the difference, amounting to contrariety, which Wernle has attempted to establish between the Reformers and Paul, in their attitudes to the Christian life, is purely imaginary; the Reformers must be recognized as the continuators of Paulinism. The main contention of Wernle, says Gottschick, is to the effect that "by maintaining the continuation of sinning in Christians, the Reformation has obliterated Paul's sharp separation between the state of sin and the state of grace, and—a thing of which Paul knew nothing—has led the Christian who has to judge himself to be a sinner to maintain his confidence in God by means of reflection on forgiveness in Christ; and thus justification becomes to it no longer a single but an ever-repeated act."²⁵ Behind this representation, however, lie two questions of fact with reference to Paul's teaching, simple enough to make it easy to obtain answers to them: (1) Does the sinner remain a sinner after justification? (2) Is the Christian's confidence in God based on his assurance of the forgiveness of his sins in Christ?

To the first of these questions Gottschick's answer is given in the following passage:²⁶ "The question is how far the change which is given for Paul with faith and the reception of the Spirit reaches. According to Wernle, it produces complete freedom from sin, and this is to the Apostle characteristic for the nature of the Christian; Paul, it is said, knows no process, no development of the Christian life, but assumes that the ideal, that which Christians ought to be, they already are, and that the Spirit and the Christian state are lost with every sin, even the lighter ones. The assertion that Paul takes the ideal for the real and knows no development of the Christian life is, however, the manifest reverse of the actual state of the case. In all his letters the advancement, the growth, the strengthening of the Christian life is an object of the Apostle's exhortation and prayers." Citing then 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:10; Phil. 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; 1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Cor. 10:10; Col. 1:10, 11; 1 Cor. 15:58, Gottschick adds: "These passages already show that for Paul the Christian life is more than the actualization or even merely authentication of a condition; it is advance and development in both the extensive and intensive reference." Wernle, then, he continues, "has not shown that the Christian is a *sinless* pneumatic. He admits himself that the Apostle, in his practice, expects the recurrence of sin in the Christian life; but he contends that in theory he ignores or even denies it. For this he appeals to 1 Cor. 3:4 and Gal. 6:1, passages which are to prove that to the Apostle the Christian loses the Spirit with every

²⁴ *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, vii. 1897, pp. 398–460, article on "Paulinismus und Reformation." Compare with it another article by Gottschick in the immediately preceding number of the same magazine (pp. 352–384) entitled "Propter Christum. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Versöhnungslehre Luthers."

²⁵ P. 403.

²⁶ Pp. 414 ff.

sin. But 1 Cor. 3:1–4 does not say that the Corinthians ... have *lost* what they *possessed* or have *ceased* to be what they *were*; but that they have *not yet* attained that stage in life in Christ, in which they should long have stood. Although according to 3:16 the Temple of the Spirit, they are nevertheless not yet ‘pneumatics.’ To say that Paul at 3:16 has already ‘forgotten’ what he said in 3:4 is nothing but a bad evasion. In Gal. 6:1, too, the pneumatics who are to restore those that stumble—who are regarded as Christian brothers, just as the dissembling Peter and Barnabas are in 2:13 ff.—can be only a particular class of Christians, and in that case were perhaps distinguished by charismata and on that account called to such service.... The Christian life *cannot* be any longer a life of bold service of sin, and *need not* be any longer a life of weak slavery to sin of a will wishing the good. The possibility of individual transgressions lies, nevertheless, according to Gal. 6:1, near to everyone. What has changed is the *habitus*, the total disposition (*Gesamtcharakter*).” “And now the denial of sin in the Christian life in Rom. 6:1 ff.! As if what is discussed there were whether in the course of the Christian life, which for Paul is self-evidently directed to a moral end, sin can *occur*—and not rather whether faith in grace and emancipation from the law are a *license* or even an *incitement* to perseverance in sin. And what Paul deduces here is not the impossibility of individual sins, but impulse and power for a life for God and righteousness in contrast with a former service of sin.” On Wernle’s representation that Paul’s passage from the indicative to the imperative in dealing with the relations of Christians to sin—leaping, without any mediation and without noticing it, from the ethics of miracle to the ethics of will—Gottschick remarks:²⁷ “What appears contradictory to Wernle, is, so far as I see, only that a break with sin in principle can coexist with the necessity of admonition to contend against it, and further, that a consciousness of a nature-like propulsion can coexist with that of a spontaneous effort to obligated ends.”

The question raised by Wernle, Why does not the Apostle, in dealing with the sin of Christians, comfort them with reminders of the forgiveness which lies for them in Christ as the Reformers do? would be most directly answered, no doubt, by challenging the fact which is assumed in it. It would be enough to point to a declaration like Rom. 8:1, which, especially in its context, before and after, cannot possibly be made to refer only to the past sins of Christians, and which very eminently is of the nature of a comforting declaration. Gottschick is not prepared, however, to make just this rejoinder.²⁸ He prefers

²⁷ P. 418.

²⁸ P. 420: “In one matter, to be sure, Wernle is right, although his theory of the sinlessness of the Christian is not discernible in Paul: Paul did not reflect on sin as a thing which adheres to the Christian life permanently and normally and destroys its joyousness, and therefore needs a neutralizer through a continuously renewed forgiveness. And neither did he, when sin encountered him in the community, point the sinners to the grace of God and comfort them with forgiveness. The difference between him and the Reformers appears particularly characteristically in Rom. 8:1. There is given to him—the connection compels this view—by the experience of emancipation from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of life in Christ, the consciousness of no longer being subject to any sort of ‘condemnation’—whereas the Reformers explain the passage in such a manner that this consciousness is rather to spring from God’s objective gracious judgment.” Gottschick is confusing here the *proof* of “no condemnation to those in Christ

therefore to urge an argument *e concessis*, to the effect—that the forgiving grace of God is certainly everywhere presupposed in Paul.²⁹ Unrepentant sinners are of course dealt with by efforts to awaken their obtuse consciences and to bring them to repentance. “Even the strictest Protestant would have ventured on no other course.” But, in any event, even according to Wernle himself, “faith, baptism, justification, in Paul’s sense, ground a religious relation to God with the reversion of salvation.” And if justification renders salvation certain, it is absurd to speak of it as absolution only from the sins that are past; it must exercise dominion over the whole life, and, if sins be committed in that life, absolve from them also. “The formula that the preaching of faith, that is, the doctrine of justification, has merely missionary significance, is conversion-theology, is therefore simply untrue, so far as it has the meaning that justification brings something only for entrance into the Christian state and the community, but not for the continuation of the Christian life in the community.”³⁰ Wernle has himself contradicted this representation when he points out that justification guarantees salvation at the judgment-day and assures the enjoyment of future benefits, that it transfers us into the state of the “righteous” and looks therefore not merely backward to the sins that are past but forward to the heritage of the just. And Paul contradicts it no less, in passages like Rom. 5:1–11, 8:31–39, in which he expounds the significance which being justified has for the believer, bringing to him triumphant confidence in God, which raises him above the trials and perils of life and assures him of salvation. According to this representation, the faith that justifies must of course remain as the motive-power of the whole life. “Faith, in Paul’s sense, which supports itself on the love of God in Christ and longs for and confidently awaits life in the Kingdom of holiness and love, includes inalienably the earnest direction of the will to the moral goal.”³¹ Justification, however, as Paul conceives it, does not act merely as a powerful incitement to right living; it is also necessarily a constant absolution for the sins of life. On Wernle’s own representation, which allows that the faith that justifies grounds in Paul’s view a religious relation with God which involves in it the reversion of salvation, it must have been included in Paul’s view that the relation with God was destroyed by every sin, great or small. “Were,³² however, that the case, all analogy suggests that simple amendment would not be thought enough, but special transactions would be required for atonement. It is only the moralism of the Enlightenment which has allayed the uneasy conscience with mere amendment. There is no trace of anything like this in Paul. Wernle himself, indeed, declares that ‘Paul never, it seems, raised the question how the Christian obtains forgiveness when he sins’ (p. 69). The presupposition for such an attitude can only be that he and his congregations did not feel such sins as abrogating childship to God. And that finds an excellent explanation precisely from the significance which justification (or its synonyms) has to him for the Christian life—that it does not mean only non-reckoning of past sins, but transference into the positive and perpetual condition of the children of God and heirs of His Kingdom, yes, into the

Jesus,” with its *ground*; or to speak broadly, assurance with salvation itself. He accordingly shows some hesitation in an attached note.

²⁹ Pp. 428 ff.

³⁰ P. 405.

³¹ Pp. 413 f.

³² P. 429.

already present enjoyment of its benefits. The objectivity of the electing and calling grace of God, in connection with the assurance of already enjoying a foretaste of a future benefit, accompanying to him the expression of the relatively great transformation, imparted such strength and confidence in God and hope in the coming salvation, that it did not waver because of individual defeats in the struggle. And the Apostle's own judgment was not different: he only over and over again inculcated the condition which must be fulfilled, if this hope was not to deceive and this security was to be no fleshly one,—aspiration after what is above, and—the special form which this condition took over against intruding sin,—sincere and earnest repentance. Paul then does not speak of forgiveness as a continuously repeated necessary factor of the Christian life only because justification includes it once for all.”

The direct contradiction in which Wernle places Paul and the Reformers in their judgments upon the Christian life—representing the one as looking upon Christians, as such, as sinless and the other as thinking of them, to put it at its height, as “all sin”—has no foundation in fact. The “optimism” ascribed to Paul by Wernle, Gottschick declares, transforms him into a “psychological monstrosity,” at once “the incomparable spiritual adviser and the doctrinaire incapable of learning from experience.”³³ His letters teach us that he saw things as they were and realized fully all the shortcomings of his Christians. Of course he estimated also at its true value the radical break with sin which they had made, the power they had acquired in their conversion to turn away from the old evil life and to fight their way toward the goal of Christian perfection. And this new life which had come to Christians was as little neglected by Luther as by Paul. Nothing would have shocked Luther more than any suggestion that Christians have obtained nothing by believing, except an ultimate salvation. Sinners they are, who sin daily and need daily forgiveness. But they are not as the sinners of the Gentiles; with them “sin is not as it was before, because its head has been bruised by remission of sin.”³⁴ “They are not made but in the making,”³⁵ but they are in the making; and that means that they are partly made. By both Paul and Luther Christians were well understood to be in the process of salvation; but this very fact that they were and were seen to be in the process of salvation opened the way to the possibility of a difference in emphasis. How shall the Christian, by nature a sinner, but now regenerated by the Spirit and justified by faith and becoming more and more conformed to the image of God's Son, be characterized? From the remaining sinfulness of his nature? Or from his new creation and his now waxing holiness? Insistence on his character as “miserable sinner,” may be exaggerated into denial or neglect of the transformation which has taken place in him. Insistence on his character as new creature may be exaggerated into assertion of a perfection already attained. It would not do Wernle serious injustice to say that in his view something like these opposite exaggerations was precisely what took place respectively in Paul and Luther. Gottschick denies that any such exaggeration took place in the case of either. But he is prepared to admit that a real difference exists between Paul and Luther, arising from their throwing their emphasis respectively in the direction of these two opposite exaggerations.³⁶ He is

³³ P. 426.

³⁴ “Opera” (Erlangen ed.), xix. 48 [47 f.], cited by Gottschick, p. 438.

³⁵ xviii. 188, cited p. 440.

³⁶ Pp. 438, 448.

prepared to go indeed further than this, and to attribute to them a far-reaching difference in their definitions of sin. They both have the same state of things before their eyes, he says,³⁷ a will energetically directed to the good, which, however, is still only advancing to perfection, and still has to contend with the temptations and antagonisms of sin continuing to work in the periphery of the personal life, and thus is often betrayed into manifest transgressions. “But they pass very different judgments upon it.” “This is explained,” he now goes on to say, “by their applying a different standard of judgment. Paul characterized as sin in the complex of the Christian life only notorious lapses into sins of sensuality and selfishness; but on the other hand he did not so regard lagging in the attainment of extensive and intensive perfection, in trust in God, in love, in the sanctification of the whole life, which stood for him as the goal of his Christians, nor yet the struggle with the enticements and oppositions of the flesh which made themselves felt. Luther on the other hand, with inflexible sternness pled, in opposition to the scholastic theology, for the standpoint that every falling-short precisely of this Pauline ideal of perfection—to cover which he extended the Decalogue—is condemnable sin.... Precisely the fact that the Christian life is a striving towards a goal is to him a proof of the continuance of sinfulness in the regenerate.”

If this be true, then the Reformation has greatly refined and deepened the Pauline conception of sin. The purpose which Gottschick has in view in affirming its truth is to account for what he conceives (with Wernle) to be the greater preoccupation of the Reformation theology with sin. It has enlarged the conception of sin, he says, and, having enlarged the conception of sin, it has felt the condemnation of sin and the need of forgiveness, if not more strongly, yet more extensively than Paul. Here we have no doubt a difference with Paul, he intimates, but not a contradiction. This is the way he puts it:³⁸ “That Luther perpetually felt disquieted religiously by the continued conflict with the flesh and by the delay in attaining the ideal of perfection, or let us say of the Christian character, and had need of a counterpoise against this disquiet, is therefore the new thing, as compared with Paul, which remains. That, however, he found the counterpoise in justification for Christ’s sake, is not an extension of the meaning given to it by Paul, beyond the beginning of the Christian life to its whole course. In Paul, too, it extends over the whole course of the Christian life; objectively as the basis of the relation of childship to God or of the right to the inheritance of eternal life; and subjectively in the humility with which the moral deliverance leads back to God and in the confidence with which protection from all inimical powers, the fatherly guidance of God, and perfecting from God are expected. It is much rather a logical application (*folgerichtige Anwendung*) of the fundamental religious conception which Paul has formulated in his doctrine of justification, to the changed judgment (required by the changed circumstances) on the state of things, that is to say, on the Christian life, fundamentally renewed, it is true, but still striving and growing. It is not in this as if Luther in the forgiveness of the sins of the Christian thought of a continuously repeated forgiveness of individual sins; he was just as conscious as Paul of the unity and completeness of the state of grace, given objectively with justification, or the individual promise of grace, subjectively with faith. Forgiveness, or justification, and also the absolution given in the sacrament of penance, is not with him

³⁷ Pp. 438–440.

³⁸ Pp. 448 f.

a dispensation for a *quantum* of sins, but the reception of the *whole person* into the divine favor, the transference of it into the unitary and permanent state of grace. And it is the task of faith to raise itself, in the assurance of this, above the disquiet produced by the painful sense of continued sinfulness and by serious sins, recognized and repented of. It is on the one side included in this that it is not necessary, in the accompanying mood of humble trust in God's grace, to reflect scrupulously on daily sins; and on the other side it is not excluded that the application to particular cases of the justification which governs the whole life—since it is not a logical but an emotional one—will often enough be brought about as the restoration of a shaken or renewed consciousness of God's grace."

Among the writers on the ethics of the New Testament during this period, Hermann Jacoby³⁹ claims our attention at this point because of the completeness with which he associates himself with Gottschick, and that especially in the dubious views of Paul's conception of sin which we have just seen Gottschick enunciating. He was preceded by F. Mühlau,⁴⁰ whose revulsion from Wernle's whole representation was much stronger, and followed after a few years by A. Juncker,⁴¹ writing from a modern point of view but protesting against the representation of Paul which sets his "theory" and "practice" in contradictory antagonism, and (following A. Seeberg here) maintaining on somewhat doubtful grounds the use of the Lord's Prayer by Paul and his consequent regular praying for forgiveness of sins. Jacoby, without expressly intimating any exceptions, represents himself as coinciding in Gottschick's results, and having in view for himself only to "supplement" them.⁴² His presentation of their common views, however, is so clear and pointed that it will repay us to give them independent attention.

He begins his exposition of Paul's conception of the Christian's relation to sin with two affirmations.⁴³ The first of them is that "Paul characterizes the path of the Christian's life as a path of victory." "For a true Christian," he affirms, "there can be no such thing as a life in the service of sin; a dominion of sin, a 'reign,' 'rule' of it, is excluded (Rom. 6:12, 13)." In Paul's view it is the other side of the Christian's "double life" that is to be emphasized; the Christian belongs to what he is to become, not to what he is leaving behind him. This is Jacoby's protest against what he conceives to be the "miserable-sinner" conception of the Christian life. It is the seamy side of the Christian life which is the subject of his own second affirmation. There is such a thing as sinful concupiscence, and it has its allurements: and we are not without a painful sense that there is something in us in sympathy with it. But, and this is the second affirmation, Paul did not range this "under the category of sin," "no consciousness of guilt grew out of the conflict for him." "He did not regard even this condition, bound up with a victorious conflict, though it contradicts the moral ideal, as sin. Falling short of the moral ideal and sinning are by no means the same thing to him. The idea of sin has for him a narrower compass." This is Jacoby's act of adherence to Gottschick's representation as to Paul's undeveloped

³⁹ "Neutestamentliche Ethik," 1899, pp. 320 ff., 396 ff.

⁴⁰ "Zur Paulinischen Ethik," in the "Abhandlungen Alex. von Oettingen gewidmet," 1898, pp. 220–244.

⁴¹ "Die Ethik des Apostels Paulus," Erste Hälfte, 1904. Also "Das Gebet bei Paulus," 1905.

⁴² P. 325.

⁴³ P. 325.

conception of sin, and he proceeds at once to transcribe approvingly a page of Gottschick's discussion, and then to repeat and enforce its essential elements in his own language.

"No one," he says,⁴⁴ "has appreciated like Paul the conflict against the flesh in its entire greatness, in its complete difficulty. He sees the old man in his dreadful form, all the sinful lusts which move in him; he demands with uncompromising decision the putting off of this old man (Col. 3:5–9); but the experience of these allurements is not to him sin, but suffering, an almost unendurable suffering. Out of this feeling of suffering he exclaims, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death (Rom. 7:24). A cry of pain out of a past continuing into the present. For though he is removed from the service of sin under the dominion of the law, the condition of suffering, which is connected with the conflict against sin, abides with him. And how far Paul knows himself to be from the goal! He has not yet reached it, he has not yet attained perfection, but with straining strength he hastens toward it. He judges the life of salvation which has been built up in the community, as only a beginning (Phil. 1:6). And it is not without anxiety that Paul looks on the path of conflict, which he must still traverse—on the temptations that he must endure (Phil. 3:10–14). He has no doubt moreover that on this path 'transgressions' can occur. No Christian is certain that a temptation may not overcome him; that he may not permit himself to be betrayed by the flesh into a fault (Gal. 6:1). That declaration of the Apostle's is very important for the understanding of his view of the continuing of sin in Christians. Faults which may be thought of as sins of inadvertance can occur even in a normal Christian life, and in this sense Paul will have adopted the publican's prayer and the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. In this consciousness of the danger of temptation, of entanglement with lusts of the flesh, he requires from everyone who will partake of the Lord's Supper that he prove himself (1 Cor. 11:28, 31), and therefore assumes that a Christian will always find himself at his best. Paul was certainly not an enthusiast; the traits of an enthusiast are wrongly attributed to him by Wernle. But in spite of all that, it is true that Paul looked on the course of life of the Christian as a course of victory, sin as a slain foe, and the fundamental tone of his confession forms not the *Kyrie eleison* but *the Hallelujah*. Thus it ought to be in the case of every true Christian. But Paul also knows that reversions to the stage of the old man take place in the Christian life; not mere 'transgressions,' but 'sins' in the full sense of the word. To him, however, this is neither a necessary thing, nor a thing to be universally presupposed of Christians. It nevertheless does actually happen. In that case, however, the Christian state is imperiled, shaken, and must be reestablished in the same way in which it was first begun—in the way of 'repentance,' of the 'godly sorrow' which saves (2 Cor. 7:9–11)."

According to this representation the Christian is conceived rather as capable of sinning, liable to sin, than as actually a sinner by nature and through the manifestations of that nature also an inevitable sinner in fact. Original sin is reduced to an incitement of sin, a temptation to sinning which may be successfully resisted. Even sins of inadvertence, although liable to occur in all lives, apparently need not occur in any. Sins "in the full sense of the word," we gather, are rare in truly Christian circles; and when they occur are looked upon almost as having destroyed the Christian life itself. No Christian has as yet

⁴⁴ Pp. 326 f.

attained his goal: he is in the making and not made. But an impression is conveyed that the goal set before Christians is in the technical sense of the words very much a “counsel of perfection.” Certainly the ideal which Paul held before himself and his converts stretched far above anything he could, on Jacoby’s representation, call mere cessation of sinning; and he is almost given the appearance of busying himself not with delivering himself and them from sin but with elevating himself and them into something like supermen—into a region stretching beyond what can be easily spoken of as human. The element of truth in this representation should not blind us to the serious error of it. It is the result of minimizing the amount of sinfulness still clinging to and manifesting itself in the Christian life—original sin, actual sinning—until little room seems to be left for that continued ethical development on which nevertheless Jacoby vigorously insists.

Paul, says Jacoby,⁴⁵ when expounding Paul’s teaching on the developing life of the Christian, looks on the path over which the Christian advances from a two-fold point of view. “It is on the one hand to him the path of effort, of personal exertion, of his own achievement. The Apostle considers himself a combatant, who strains every nerve to win the imperishable crown, who practises self-denial to reach the goal (1 Cor. 9:24–27). He knows that he has not yet scaled the height of perfection (*Vollendung*), that he does not yet stand at the goal; but he expends his whole energy upon the effort to win it; dissatisfied (*nicht befriedigt*) with the moral stage to which he has attained, he aspires to a higher (Phil. 3:12–14). Thus the moral life appears to him a perpetual struggle, which reaches no end within the limits of earthly existence.” There was another point of view, however, from which he looked on it. “But he looks at the same moral life,” continues Jacoby, “as a development which takes place with inner necessity, like an organic process, which, once begun, if it is not arrested by some accident, reaches the ends by which it is determined by means of the action of the forces operative in it. The Christian who sows to the Spirit, that is, lets the Holy Spirit work on him, follows His incitement ... reaps of the Spirit eternal life (Gal. 6:8).” Because he places himself in the service of God, a moral quality “forms in him which fashions itself into ‘holiness,’ and has as its ultimate result eternal life, without this quality ceasing to be a gift of God’s grace; for it is the grace of God which introduces this ethical power, carries it on, and brings it to its conclusion (Rom. 6:22, 23).” The main point here is clearly and firmly stated: the Christian life is from the ethical point of view a process, advancing continually to the as yet unattained goal; and this process has a twofold aspect, according as it is viewed from the human side, as effort, or from the divine side, as re-creation; that is, according as we think of the exhortation “Work out your own salvation,” or of the encouragement “For it is God that worketh in you.”

Jacoby now proceeds⁴⁶ by adducing the great passages 2 Cor. 3:18, 4:16, and warning us at the same time that, in Paul’s view, “this constantly advancing procession of glory, which is grounded in childship to God, does not prevent Christians longing for a condition in which the full enjoyment of childship to God shall be possessed by them.” “At present,” he explains, “their childship to God is attested to them in the purely spiritual sphere, but their sensuous being is a mode of existence which in the burden of the afflictions which fall on them, in the temptations which are connected with it,

⁴⁵ Pp. 396 f.

⁴⁶ P. 397.

contradicts the mode of existence which, according to their spiritual nature, they possess as children of God. They therefore long after the redemption of the body, after the resolution of the disharmony between the spiritual and bodily phases of their life, after the harmony in which they shall experience the complete realization of childhood to God (Rom. 8:23, 30).” In comparison with this future condition, Paul, says Jacoby, speaks of our present blessedness as a “hidden” possession: we are pressing on towards things as yet unseen and only in the beyond shall we attain our end. “Thus the consciousness of Christians is filled with contrasting feelings and exertions. On the one side they are placed in the visible world in which they are to maintain themselves in faithfulness in their calling, in obedience to the ordinances approved by God, in sanctification of life—in a world, over against which they are nevertheless inwardly alien. On the other side they belong to a heavenly world, the powers of which are communicated only to believers, of which we can become aware, on which we lay hold, only by faith.” Only when Christ appears out of that “hiddenness” in which He now works, will the inner life of Christians find an outer manifestation corresponding to Him. “To this crisis of their condition they are ripening by inner development, by constant growth, which is conditioned by the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).”

This essentially true account of Paul’s doctrine of the Christian life in the world presents the Christian life as in its very essence a preparation for the life to come, and as therefore in every respect now incomplete. Paul teaches not a this-world but a next-world Christianity. Everything is begun here; nothing completed. It is of the very essence of his teaching, therefore, that we are not here perfect, that, in our ethical development as well as in every other, we are only in the making. Additional point is given to this by the striking paragraph of Jacoby’s discussion in which he raises our eyes from the individual to the Christian community and from the Christian community to the world—which is, after all said, God’s world. The consummation of the ethical life, he tells us,⁴⁷ is not related by Paul to the individual Christian alone but to the whole Christian community. It too is in a process of God-wrought growth; it too is to be the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost. But the gaze of the Apostle is not directed to Christ’s community, he now adds, as to a holy island in an unbelieving world; but to the entirety of humanity, which is to be taken up into the Kingdom of Christ. Thus, at the end of the road, every enemy shall be seen to be conquered (1 Cor. 15:26, 28), and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:11).

Something like what Jacoby does for Paul is done for John by A. Titius from his more vigorously Ritschlian standpoint.⁴⁸ If, according to John, eternal life is already had here and now, it is nevertheless not here and now enjoyed in its completeness. Christianity is with John too a next-world religion: the Christian is in this life in the Way, not at the Goal (cf. the designation of Christianity as the Way in Acts 24:14; 19:9, 23). And the difference concerns every relation of life, not least the relation of Christians to sin. The world they live in is an evil world, and they are liable to temptation. “They are moreover in need of perennial (*dauernd*) cleansing (John 15:2; 1 John 3:3) and emancipation from the power of sin (John 8:32); they must ever confess that they have sinned (1 John 1:8–10) and are therefore condemned by their hearts (1 John 3:19, 20) and need forgiveness

⁴⁷ P. 398.

⁴⁸ “Die Neutestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit,” iii. 1900, pp. 17 ff.

(1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2).” Paul no doubt presupposes “the perpetual necessity of forgiveness of sin.” But John does more than that. He emphasizes it. “It is emphatically asserted that forgiveness of sins belongs to the permanent life-conditions of the community, because the notion that we do not have sin and therefore do not need forgiveness rests in self-deception and is excluded by God’s Word (1 John 1:8, 10; 2:1b, 12). With this it accords that the Risen One imparts to His own the right to dispose of the forgiveness of sins; this presupposes the state of forgiveness of sins as a personal possession of the community (John 20:23). But also the particular conditions, under which the individual appropriation of forgiveness of sins stands, are discussed ...”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, says Titius, with all this, there is a difference between John—and Paul too, who, had he dealt with these matters as fully as John does, could scarcely have treated them differently—and Luther. It is a difference only of degree, it is true—of the degree in which the consciousness of sin gives its character to the Christian consciousness; but there is none the less a difference. With John—“perpetual incompleteness and sin are undoubtedly recognized, but it does not make the consciousness of a relative Christian perfection impossible; this appears rather as normal. Thus at 1 John 2:1 the sin of the Christian is thought of as exceptional; and in 1 John 3:22, John 15:7, 8, 16, the joy of prayer is conditioned by the consciousness of fulfilling God’s commandment and of doing what is pleasing to Him.”⁵⁰ We do not see, however, how Luther can be interpreted as greatly differing from this: he too supposed the Christian to be a Christian—one who had broken with sin in principle, and though in perpetual need of forgiveness, yet also in the perpetual joy of salvation.

In dealing with the portions of the New Testament not connected by him with the names of Paul and John, Titius speaks of the emergence in them of a new problem—the problem of the relation of the justification or the forgiveness of sins obtained in baptism to the sins of Christians.⁵¹ Paul, says he, had scarcely related his doctrine of justification to the continuing sin of Christians. The Apocalypse, Acts, Pastoral Epistles—for he denies these to Paul—give no certain guidance. But, fortunately, there is the Epistle to the Hebrews. It speaks here plainly, and speaks strongly, “relating the forgiveness of sins obtained by Christ to the whole life of Christians.” “On the ground of the divine will, the sanctification of Christians follows from the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; they are and remain holy (perfect tense, 10:10). By a single act He has sanctified the people of God (13:12; 10:29; cf. 10:14), so that now all of them are holy (3:1; 6:10; 13:24). The application to individuals is accomplished by the sprinkling of their hearts with the blood of Christ, and the washing of their bodies with pure water, that is, in baptism (10:22). The fundamental ideas of the author place beyond doubt that he considered, not that the forgiveness at baptism required supplementing, but that the forgiveness then once for all given conveyed a permanent (compare the perfect, ‘having been sprinkled’) relation to God not capable of destruction by sin (within certain limits). This follows already from Christ’s offering taking the place of the entire Old Testament expiatory system. What distinguishes the New from the Old Covenant is that God will no longer remember sins and transgressions (13:12; 10:17). From that, Hebrews draws the conclusion that where such forgiveness is present, the sin-offering no longer is made

⁴⁹ P. 44.

⁵⁰ P. 45.

⁵¹ Vol. iv. pp. 180 f.

(10:18). Therefore the single sin-offering of Christ expresses God's permanent readiness to forgive, not a once for all forgiveness, but a permanent relation of forgiveness, arranged once for all in baptism ... "It is manifest," Titius concludes after presenting much further evidence,⁵² "that here for the first time, the fundamental Pauline idea of justification has received a form, in which it is capable of satisfying the changed need, the need of assurance of permanent forgiveness for sin." We gather that on this view the Reformation might derive its specific quality if not from Paul, yet at least from the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is when treating Paul's teaching, however, that Titius formally enters into the controversy as to the sins of Christians.⁵³ His mode of dealing with it has close affinities with that of Jacoby. He draws back a little, indeed, from Gottschick's and Jacoby's representation that Paul's idea of sinning was a somewhat narrow one. He is willing to allow, it is true, that Paul did not think of every failure of the Christian to correspond with the highest ideal, as sin. But he is quick to warn against attributing to the Apostle the low moral standard which does not look upon the inner contradiction of the flesh as sin, and to insist upon the comprehensive breadth of his recognition of the sinful. It cannot reasonably be denied, he says,⁵⁴ that Paul considered every movement of the sensuous desire which runs athwart the divine requirements—and the divine requirements coalesce with him with the "ideal"—to be sinful. The love of our neighbor is not a mere ideal of perfection with him, but a binding requirement of the law, breach of which falls under the curse. Every action which is not accompanied with the religious assurance that it is permissible, or rather is pleasing to God, is branded by him as sin—which certainly shows an exceptional delicacy of moral judgment. Add the sharp contrasts which he draws between Spirit and flesh, light and darkness, righteousness and sin; and observe that, according to him, it is not given to men to stand neutral between these forces, but each one must take one side or the other—surely that has not the appearance of looking only on the grosser failings and faults as sin. In a word, while we need not attribute to Paul "a scrupulous and nervous anxiety of sin-consciousness," we cannot deny to him a clear and accurate and comprehensive sense of sin, as sin. We are not to suppose that he thought highly of the moral life of Christians because he thought lightly of the evil of sin. That way of answering the question raised by Wernle of whether Paul considered Christians sinners is barred.

The question no doubt would already be answered if we could follow Mühlau in considering Rom. 7:14–25 a transcript of the Christian consciousness. Rejecting that interpretation of this passage does not leave us, however, in doubt as to Paul's attitude towards the Christian life. The Apostle does not look upon the salvation which has become the possession of Christians, although it is in its innermost nature really divine salvation, as, as yet the final salvation, but as incomplete, so that the position of Christians in the world is one not yet worthy of the children of God.⁵⁵ Sin and the Spirit can dwell together in the human soul—not the dominion of sin and the dominion of the Spirit, but sin and the Spirit. Neither in the seventh chapter of Romans nor anywhere else

⁵² P. 182.

⁵³ Vol. ii. pp. 76 ff.

⁵⁴ P. 81.

⁵⁵ P. 77.

does Paul know the notion that the dominion of the Spirit is empirically compatible with the dominion of sin; nowhere does he recognize the alternation of the victorious advance of the Spirit and a retrograde moral movement, as the permanent rule of the Christian life. “But it is not less wrong, it seems to me,” continues Titius,⁵⁶ “when the theory is ascribed to the Apostle—a thing which A. Ritschl did not do—that the Christian does not sin.” Von Soden, Mühlau, Gottschick have brought forward much material to the contrary, but something more may be said. In saying it there is to be emphasized first of all that “not only particular observations, but precisely the whole theory of the Apostle, prove that he considered the life of Christians as sinful.” That is already clear from the fact that the present state of Christians has as its characteristic the presence in them of the two opposing factors, the flesh and the Spirit. “It is, however, self-evident that the morality of conflict and strife is not the highest, but that the measure of effort required marks at the same time the measure of power which sin still possesses even in the believer. To attribute to the Apostle the notion that the Christian does not sin, means therefore, to attribute to him that he considers the inner opposition of the flesh as not sin, that is, that he operates with too low a moral standard. If, however, his norm of righteousness consists in perfect love of God and men, then every impulse repugnant to it, even though it be overcome, is sin (Rom. 7:7); there is, however, no lack in the Christian life also of such impulses proceeding from the flesh (Gal. 5:17; Col. 3:5); and there can be no lack of them because these lusts are the movements of our flesh (Eph. 2:3) inseparable from our mortal body (Rom. 6:12). If then the moral norm is not externalized after a fashion wholly incompatible with Rom. 7:7 and with the whole inner conception of the Apostle, the fundamental fact of the existence of ‘flesh’ and ‘Spirit’ in the Christian life already brings with it the sinfulness of the life.”⁵⁷ This is far from the only evidence of the fact which Titius produces, but it may serve as a sample of his reasoning. As to Paul himself, it is true that it is not easy to turn up passages in which he ascribes present sins to himself; and he speaks too of Christians, from the point of view of the Spirit which dwells in them, as sinning rather through inadvertence and through weakness than by determinate purpose. They are Christians; and sin is represented by him as an ever more and more disappearing element in the Christian life, and he presupposes a really progressive approach to the ideal of perfection (e.g. Phil. 3:12 ff.). But sin always forms a limitation to the complete blessedness of the Christian. “And it is only in the resurrection, as the context of Phil. 3:10–14 shows, that the goal of sinless perfection beckons.”⁵⁸

The discussion aroused by Wernle’s book was thus obviously moving, from the first, even within the limits of the Ritschlian school, towards the decisive refutation of his central contention—that, according to Paul, Christians do not sin—and the consequent isolation of it as the peculiar property of those extremists who had come now to be known as the history-of-religion school. The impression is even received that, had it not been for their feeling of loyalty to their master, “the regular Ritschlians,” if we may so speak of them, might have reached in the process of the discussion an unexceptionable understanding of Paul’s view of the Christian life, as the as yet uncompleted product of the combined operation of the forgiving and renewing grace of God; and along with that

⁵⁶ P. 80.

⁵⁷ Pp. 81 f.

⁵⁸ P. 84.

a recognition of the substantial faithfulness of the reproduction of Paul's view in the teaching of the Reformation. Their approximation to such an understanding is at times so close that their assertions of divergences from it strike the reader almost as mere eccentricities. But the main elements of what Ritschl had taught, they continue to repeat up to the end, in one form or another, although, to speak the whole truth, often with more or less complete evacuation of Ritschl's meaning, while yet always making a show of deference to his authority. We have reference here especially to the assertion that Paul does not relate justification to the sins of Christians, and indeed does not regard these sins as very serious, certainly not as serious enough to qualify their sense of their own ethical worth; and that on the other hand, the Reformers so focused attention on the perpetual sinning of Christians as to submerge all sense of or indeed effort after ethical growth in a constant search for forgiveness, so that the entirety of Christian experience was summed up for them in the sense of repeated forgiveness. The debate, of course, did not lie wholly in the hands of the Ritschlians, although they were perhaps the most active parties to it: and it must be confessed that too many of those who entered it with a view to defending the Reformation doctrine, taught, instead, a doctrine which seems to have become traditional in the Lutheran churches as the Reformation doctrine, but which, if conceived as such, would go far towards justifying the Ritschlian strictures upon the teaching of the Reformers.

An example is supplied even by the very carefully guarded discussion of Ernst Cremer.⁵⁹ It is Cremer's fundamental postulate that "forgiveness of sins" is "the whole of Christianity, full salvation."⁶⁰ And "because the forgiveness of sins is God's whole salvation, perfect salvation, the faith which apprehends it in Christ is perfection."⁶¹ "It becomes intelligible now why faith in Christ is perfection; it is because God's forgiveness of sins is God's whole salvation, in which God's saving will comes to its goal; believers are perfect because Christ's saving work is perfect."⁶² "By the designation of the believer as perfect, it is emphasized that we have in Christ in the forgiveness of sins all that we need from God."⁶³ The terms perfection, perfect, are, of course, used in these declarations in a non-moral sense. We read:⁶⁴ "The idea that under Christian perfection the final result of the so-called process of sanctification is to be understood has no point of attachment in the New Testament." Again: "The perfection of the Christian is nowhere represented as ... the goal that is to be attained by him"; "it is not a particular stage of the Christian life."

If this be so, naturally the question becomes very pressing, In what relation does the moral life stand to this experience of forgiveness through faith? Cremer raises the question in the first instance in this form:⁶⁵ "If the Christian has his perfection in faith in

⁵⁹ "Über die Christliche Vollkommenheit," 1899. Compare also L. Clasen, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, x. 1900, pp. 439 ff., and Beyreis, *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, xii. 1901, pp. 507 ff., 621 ff.

⁶⁰ P. 40.

⁶¹ P. 21.

⁶² P. 21.

⁶³ P. 22.

⁶⁴ P. 37.

⁶⁵ P. 22.

Christ, and that, just because he has in Him forgiveness of sins—if forgiveness of sins is the whole of salvation—in what interest can then the moral requirement be made seriously effective?” In reply he tells us that “the moral relation cannot be so separated from the religious, from faith, that a faith would be conceivable which does not at the same time postulate and bring with it a moral relation”: “faith in Christ is not possible without our attitude to the world being decisively influenced.” It is absurd to talk of going to Christ for forgiveness of sin without a realization of the evil that sin is, and a renunciation of it. The one is involved in the other. That is all true enough, but it leaves us only greatly desiring to be free from sin, without telling how our deliverance from it may be accomplished. We are carried a step further, however, when we are told that⁶⁶ “the salvation present in Christ is of such a nature that it cannot be accepted in faith except with such a transformation.” But we will let Cremer himself expound why and how this is so: “Even the minimum of religious understanding is lacking when forgiveness of sins becomes suspected of being a dispensation from the moral requirement. It is a favorite notion—especially where moral perfection, or at least completeness, ‘sanctification,’ is demanded with emphasis—that on deliverance from the guilt of sin, deliverance from its power *follows* as a *second* divine gift and human task.... The power of sin cannot be more strongly experienced than when sin is experienced as guilt. Precisely in the sense of guilt does sin exercise its enslaving dominion, and when the sense of guilt is lacking sin is not felt as an enslaving power and therefore the power of sin is broken when guilt is removed. Forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit are therefore one divine act; God forgives sins when (*indem*) He gives the Spirit; the forgiveness of sins is in itself the establishment of communion with God; a forgiveness which was not the establishment of communion with God, gift of the Spirit, would be no forgiveness. Because, however, forgiveness is the gift of the Spirit, essentially the entirety of salvation is to be recognized in it. In one divine act the power of sin is, therefore, broken along with the removal of its guilt; in faith in the forgiveness of sins morality is inseparably bound to religion and morality proceeds inseparably out of religion. The establishment of the relation to God is the removal of the relation to sin; in the instant in which the man is bound to God, he is no longer bound to sin; the forgiveness of sins means that the one power replaces the other; if sin has power over men, so also has God, who takes man into fellowship with Himself; power which becomes active in the same instant in which man yields himself to Him. In turning to God, the relation to sin is immediately broken; compare the exposition of Paul in Rom. 6” ... and so forth.

The scope of this exposition is to the effect that forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit as a sanctifying power, are received by the same act of faith. And that is the burden of Cremer’s doctrine of the Christian life. “No doubt when faith is preached,” he says again,⁶⁷ “sanctification ... is preached; for faith which delivers from sin is extinguished if it does not avouch its possession.... The preaching of forgiveness and it alone is itself the preaching of sanctification.” All this is true, and is important, and as far as it goes is well put. What is lacking in it is any real explanation of how the moral life proceeds out of forgiveness, how justification necessarily carries with it sanctification.

⁶⁶ Pp. 22–23.

⁶⁷ P. 40.

We are told that the two go together and must go together: we are told that the same faith receives both: we are told that the new relation to God involved in faith brings renewal with it, with inevitable certainty. But we are not shown how the two are immediately connected inwardly. They find their union apparently in their common relation to faith, or in their common source in a reconciled God, but not at all in an immediate relation to each other. And therefore Cremer's insistence that the "forgiveness of sins" is "the whole of Christianity, full salvation" remains unjustified, and provokes contradiction, as, despite his asseverations of the inseparable connection—involvement, if you will—of moral renewal with it, leaving the ethical side of the Christian life inadequately recognized.

The tendency which seems to be guardedly suggested by Cremer comes to its full expression in an interesting article by Karl Schmidt published in the *New Church Journal* in 1905.⁶⁸ If we read him aright, sanctification with Schmidt consists really in a constantly repeated, or renewed justification; so that it might be said with the fullest meaning that in justification the entirety of sanctification is included. His apparent meaning is not merely that justifying faith brings sanctification also with it, which would be true; but that it brings complete sanctification—perfection—with it all at once. Thus every justified man is perfect; and, the extremes meeting, Schmidt and Wernle might seem to clasp hands. But Schmidt explains that he means this only "in principle"—a phrase very *caviare* to the whole Ritschlian circle. The justified man is sanctified only in beginnings, which will however certainly complete themselves in the end—provided of course that he stays justified. For he may sin; but if he sins that is because his faith has failed; and, faith failing, so does his justification. The only remedy in this condition is to refresh, renew, regain faith. Faith may, no doubt, fail not only measurably but entirely; and then we have fallen wholly out of grace. In every man without exception, however, it fails measurably over and over again. The life of the Christian is conceived thus as a continuous series of failures and renewals of faith—that is to say, of justification, and also of sanctification. This gives to it the aspect of alternations of complete sinfulness and complete sanctification; and in these alternations the Christian life is lived out. In this construction certainly the necessity of moral effort has dropped out of sight, and no place seems to be left for moral growth. Whatever morality the Christian has, comes to him without effort; and his life-history is marked, not by increasing firmness of moral purpose and strength of moral energy, to say nothing of compass of moral attainments, but only by the aimless and endless systole and diastole of his ethical vicissitudes.

If the discussions of Cremer and Schmidt take a somewhat wide range, and touch on the specific controversy about "miserable-sinner Christianity" only somewhat incidentally, the two dissertations of the Pomeranian pastor, Max Meyer, have no other reason for their existence than that controversy affords them, and make it their sole aim to test the exegetical basis and to review the conclusions of Wernle and his coadjutors. The first of these dissertations, which bears the title of "The Christian's Sin according to Paul's Letters to the Corinthians and Romans,"⁶⁹ confines itself strictly to the testimony of these Epistles to Paul's attitude to the sins of Christians in general. The special question of what rôle sin plays in the life of the Apostle himself is reserved for the second

⁶⁸ *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, xvi. 1905, pp. 719–771.

⁶⁹ "Die Sünde des Christen nach Pauli Briefen an die Korinther und Römer," 1902.

dissertation, which is entitled, “The Apostle Paul as Miserable Sinner.”⁷⁰ The two together thus cover the ground, and seek by an independent examination of the sources to reach a well-founded judgment on Paul’s attitude towards sin in the life of Christians. The three things in the Christian life, as reflected to us from the pages of the Epistles to the Corinthians and Romans, on which Meyer lays stress, are its principial break with sin, its continued involvement with sin, and its progressive conquest of sin. “The Christian life,” says he, therefore, is “at once both a being and a becoming, a possessing and an acquiring, an enjoying and a longing, a jubilation and a groaning.”⁷¹ The principial break with sin which has taken place is not undervalued. It is even said that “if sinning once belonged to the nature of man, it has become for the Christian henceforth unnatural.”⁷² But neither is it obscured that the break with sin is as yet only principial. “The new creature is nevertheless only one in principle, because one in the making.”⁷³ “The new life is an inner, a central life, that does not yet dominate in its birth the periphery of the old life.... The Christian life needs therefore development in the periphery and is accordingly thought of by Paul as a process of completing and unfolding.”⁷⁴ In expounding the sixth chapter of Romans, Meyer insists that it deals not with an instantaneous transaction merely but with a continuous activity. The question to which it is an answer is, Shall we continue in sin? The thing deprecated is that we may live in sin. The thing approved is that we should walk in newness of life. The passage of the discussion from the indicative to the imperative presents therefore no difficulty. “The new life is thus laid upon the baptized person as his continuous task.... And herein it is plainly declared that Paul looked upon the new life of the Christian as an uninterrupted process, proceeding on the ground of a single inner fact.”⁷⁵

The Christian life is therefore not merely a gift but also a task, not merely *Gabe*, but *Aufgabe*. “What has come into existence as a once for all determinate experience at the entrance into the Christian state, is to pervade the whole Christian life as a perpetual task.”⁷⁶ The whole Christian life: there is even a hint that the Parousia itself will not find the task completed. At least, when in commenting on 1 Cor. 1:8 Meyer declares, “That, then, the moral development of the Christian has its crown in sinlessness at the day of the Parousia, the Apostle has not taught,”⁷⁷ he does not make it clear that he has that passage only in mind. On the contrary, there is some appearance that he intends the declaration, though occasioned by the exposition of this particular passage, to have general validity. The remark is directed against Gottschick’s assertion⁷⁸ that the only difference between Paul and Luther in the matter of the Christian’s growth reduces to this: “that Paul hopes

⁷⁰ “Der Apostel Paulus als armer Sünder. Ein Beitrag zur paulinischen Hamartologie,” 1903.

⁷¹ “Die Sünde des Christen,” p. 77.

⁷² P. 78, appealing for support to Lütgert, “Sündlosigkeit und Vollkommenheit,” 1897, pp. 38 ff., and Beck, “Vorlesungen über christliche Ethik,” 1892, i. pp. 244–252.

⁷³ P. 76.

⁷⁴ P. 77.

⁷⁵ Pp. 64 f.

⁷⁶ P. 77.

⁷⁷ P. 47.

⁷⁸ *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, vii. 1897, p. 446.

for the presence of perfection at the judgment day, while Luther, who understands perfection in the absolute sense, holds it to be unattainable ...” There underlies this assertion Gottschick’s notion that Paul does not treat anything as sin among Christians except gross vices, while Luther has attained to a deeper and more refined sense of what is sinful. This notion is undoubtedly wrong. But Meyer is as certainly wrong when he seeks to remove the difference asserted to exist between Luther and Paul with reference to the state of Christians at the Parousia, by denying that Paul expected Christians to be perfect “in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Such an expectation, he says, “is already excluded by 1 Cor. 6, where Paul has recognized sin as an inevitable evil, under which the Christian community suffers.” The reference here appears to be wrong, but it is the general assertion founded on it which interests us. According to it, it is Paul’s doctrine that sin is an unfailing evil from which Christians suffer: it is a thing that stays by them always, from which they will never be free. If, when they stand before the Judge at the last day they are “unreprovable,” that is only, now Meyer continues, because they stand there in Christ Jesus and God is faithful and will fulfil the promise of their call. This remark is just, and it is no doubt a just exposition of 1 Cor. 1:8. But it does not follow that Paul does not teach that the conformation of Christians to their Lord, however slowly it may have proceeded, will be completed at the last day. This he teaches elsewhere with great clearness (e.g. 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23), and it is a part of his general system, the absence of which would throw it into confusion.⁷⁹

We have laid some stress on Meyer’s representation that in Paul’s teaching sin is “an inevitable evil” (*unausbleibliches Übel*) in the Christian life, because he also represents that, according to Paul, sinlessness is possible to Christians. Possible, not actual; but though not actual, yet possible. Before that great experience which we call conversion, a man is under the necessity of sinning: after it, “the Christian need sin no more.”⁸⁰ “The possibility of not permitting sin to occur, is, of course, present for the pneumatic.”⁸¹ Expounding Rom. 6:12, Meyer says: “The ‘obeying the lusts’ need no longer occur in the Christian life. The Apostle does not mean by this, however, ‘that the Christian leads a life no longer accessible to any sin’ (Holtzmann). The *non posse non peccare* has no doubt ceased for the Christian, but it has not therefore already come with him to the *non posse peccare*, but at most to the *posse non peccare*.”⁸² We would gladly lay hold of the qualification “at most” as exhibiting at least a certain hesitation in Meyer’s mind: but we fear he will not permit us to do so. He means to assert sinlessness to be possible to Christians, although illustrated by no single example. Or rather, as we shall soon find that we have to say, by only a single example. For Meyer finds a single example in Paul himself. Were it not for this one exception we should have to say that a possibility which is never actualized is no possibility—there must be something to render it impossible if in

⁷⁹ Cf. the good note by T. C. Edwards on 1 Cor. 1:8: “It by no means implies that a Christian can be, as Meyer says, morally defective at the day of judgment (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23). Rather it implies that the end of this aeon will be determined by moral reasons. The course of history is a moral development, and the cosmical development depends on that of the individual Christian.”

⁸⁰ P. 78.

⁸¹ P. 79.

⁸² P. 65.

such a multitude of instances it is never actualized. In the presence of this one exception we can only say that the possibility must be a very slight one which in so many instances has been actualized only once. Meyer's zeal in the matter is an ethical one, and is grounded in his doctrine of the will and its function in the Christian life. What has happened to the Christian at conversion is, in his view, that his will has been freed from bondage to sin, and his destiny placed in his own hands. He may sin, if he chooses; and he need not sin unless he chooses. He may sin fatally if he chooses; or he may refrain from all sinning whatever if he chooses. He stands before the two ways and can walk as he will. If he has the *posse non peccare*, he has equally the *posse peccare*—the *non posse peccare* and the *non posse non peccare* would be equally derogatory to his manhood; for has not the Spirit made him *free*? Accordingly we are told that “it is not unthinkable for Paul that even the Christians should live after the flesh,”⁸³ and that “the eventual turning of the Christian *in malam partem* is not at all excluded.”⁸⁴ Of course it is not unthinkable either that the Christian should live after the Spirit; that is his quality. And of course he may conceivably live wholly after the Spirit. But here we are called up again, for in the very act of drawing the parallel out in detail Meyer interposes:⁸⁵ “Therefore this conflict cannot possibly find its conclusion within the sphere of this life. And the Apostle has not taught that Christians stand at the end of their Christian development sinless. ‘Grace’ remains for them always the last word. The sinlessness of the Christian lies therefore on the other side of the earthly existence.” And yet Paul was sinless! The one thing, meanwhile, of which Meyer is most sure, is that what the Spirit does is just to make us formally free; and that He is therefore not to be thought of as an “overmastering power” which acts like a “natural force of a higher order,” so that “life in the Spirit is to proceed infallibly with the necessity of nature.” The language here is, of course, exaggerated. It is chosen with a view to repelling the representations of Karl and Wernle. But, the exaggeration having been eliminated, there is an element of Paul's teaching of the first importance, recognized at this point by Karl and Wernle, which Meyer has not allowed for.

When Meyer comes to deal formally with the question, why Paul had nothing explicit to say to the Corinthians of the forgiveness of their sins, committed since conversion, he is more successful on the destructive than on the constructive side. He has no difficulty in showing that there is no exegetical ground for the assertion that Paul connects the forgiveness of sins so closely with baptism as to treat the merits of Christ as available only for pre-baptismal sins.⁸⁶ And he has as little difficulty in showing that the attempts to interpret Paul as reckoning as sins only the gross vices into which he could count on his Christians not falling, do not bear the test of either the exegesis of Paul's words or of the recorded facts. He is quite within the warrant of his evidence when he declares that, so far from not requiring his Christians to realize his high ideal in their lives, Paul strenuously demanded its realization by them as their obligatory task, and reckoned it sin in them when their life in the smallest respect failed to correspond with it.⁸⁷ When it

⁸³ P. 70.

⁸⁴ P. 71.

⁸⁵ P. 80.

⁸⁶ P. 33.

⁸⁷ P. 35.

comes, however, to adducing definite texts in which the forgiveness of the current sins of Christians is declared, Meyer does not appear to have made his selection with particular success. He is led therefore to suggest that Paul made only a sparing use of express references to the consolation of forgiveness, no doubt for a pedagogic reason—these raw young Christians were less in need of consolation for sins grieved over than of correction for sins indulged in. In the end he falls back, very wisely, on the general consideration that “the forgiveness of sins,” that is to say that forgiveness of sins which is justification, “has with Paul the value of a permanent possession,” so that the question, which it is asserted Paul never raised, how the Christian when he sins receives forgiveness, obtains this as its proper answer: In the same way that he received forgiveness on becoming a Christian.⁸⁸ He has no difficulty, of course, in showing,⁸⁹ that justification in the Epistle to the Romans is treated as introducing once for all into grace, and, as H. Cremer puts it, looks both forward and backward in the great context of salvation, binding together past, present, and future into one. “God’s justifying judgment” (explains Cremer more fully),⁹⁰ “is a continuous, permanent one ... to which, therefore, even the pardoned sinner can only daily appeal afresh, for daily new and yet abiding forgiveness of his sin and guilt.” It admits of no doubt that, according to Paul, justification is salvation and therefore dominates with the effects of salvation all the subsequent life of the Christian. And now, having reached this point, Meyer turns the argument around⁹¹ and urges that this alone proves that Paul looked upon Christians as still sinning. For why should he lay such weight on the continuous importance for the Christian life of precisely justification, unless there were continuous sinning for which this justification is needed?

This argument from justification to the universal sinfulness of Christians admits of greater elaboration than is given it in this place, and receives it in the second of Meyer’s dissertations. The very essence of this doctrine is that men have no righteousness of their own, but only that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God on faith (Phil. 3:9). That this means not only that our sole dependence is on the righteousness of God received when we believed, but also that we continue through life so far in the same condition as when we believed, that we never have any righteousness of our own on which we can depend, is clear from the eschatological reference in Phil. 3:9–11. It was not once only that Paul and his Christians had “no confidence in the flesh”; they never had or could have confidence in the flesh, and least of all when it was a matter of entering into participation of Christ’s resurrection. It has its significance that precisely in this passage Paul proceeds to declare himself not a consummator but only a viator. He has not attained, but is pressing on. The life that is lived here below is lived not by sight but by faith. Accordingly he characterizes it in Gal. 2:20 as a life in the flesh, lived in faith, faith in his Redeemer. The question, no doubt, arises whether the phrase “in the flesh” in this passage implies sin. H. A. W. Meyer says it does not: “The context does not convey any reference to the ethical character of the ‘flesh’ (as *sedes peccati*).” Max

⁸⁸ P. 37.

⁸⁹ Pp. 54 f.

⁹⁰ “Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre,” 1899, p. 366.

⁹¹ P. 56.

Meyer says it does; and on the whole we think him right.⁹² “Already,” he writes,⁹³ “that ‘flesh’ and ‘Spirit’ are associated” in the passage “as two inimical powers, which stand in diametrical contradiction with each other ... proves that the Apostle did not consider himself sinless.... The ‘flesh’ with him too is still *sedes et fomes peccati*, and is active in the ‘lusts’ ... And that Paul has even here thought of the sin inhering in his ‘flesh’ in which he knows himself involved, in spite of his most intimate *unio mystica* with Christ, we learn from this—that he, so long as he lives ‘in the flesh,’ knows himself permanently united by faith to Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. It is Jesus’ love for sinners on which he stays himself in his life of faith.... According to this passage Paul not only felt the need of comfort and new forgiveness but actually always afresh appropriated in faith the forgiveness of sins in Christ.” Meyer, then, adduces Col. 1:14, Eph. 1:7, “we *have* forgiveness of sins,” and calling attention to the present tense, declares that these passages show that Paul knew, for his own person also, “a *remissio quotidiana*.” G. Hollmann⁹⁴ simply scouts this use of these passages, and certainly it does bear some appearance of overstraining them. But at least the passages show that the forgiveness of sins was a blessing enjoyed, alike by Paul and his Christians, as a continuous possession, and that this forgiveness must be taken sufficiently inclusively to embrace all the sins that existed for him and them. If we cannot quite say that the passages prove that they were continuously sinning, we must at least say that they do prove that the grace of forgiveness was looked upon by them as the fundamental blessing on which they rested their whole lives long.

Meyer himself, it is to be observed, does not look upon these passages as proving that Paul and his Christians thought of themselves as continually sinning. They prove only, in his view, that Paul and his Christians thought of themselves as continually sinful. He argues strongly, as we have seen, that all others than Paul were continually sinning. But he singles Paul out as the one man who has ever lived who has realized the possibility that belongs to all Christians, of not actually sinning—a judgment which seems rather ungenerous to John and Peter and James and the rest. Paul, says he,⁹⁵ “is the greatest, next to Him who can be compared to none other.” “He not only preached to his Christians, but he lived out before them, how far the Christian can advance in the battle for sanctification.” If this is to be taken as meaning what it says, Paul is presented to us as illustrating the utmost moral possibility of humanity; we may just as well look upon his person as read his precepts, if we wish to learn the full duty of the Christian in the sanctification of his life. He is more completely our example than Christ Himself, because Christ went beyond—Paul only to the extreme limits of—our possibilities. There are attainments in Christ’s life in which we cannot follow Him; there are no attainments possible to us whose model we do not find in Paul. It is needless to say that Paul does not present himself to us as such a universal example, when he calls on his readers to be imitators of him as he was of Christ Jesus; and it is equally needless to say that he is not brought before us in his epistles as such a universal example. Such overstraining of

⁹² See also Mühlau, as cited, p. 231. On the other hand Windisch, as cited, p. 156, holds with H. A. W. Meyer.

⁹³ “Der Apostel Paulus als armer Sünder,” 1903, pp. 31 f.

⁹⁴ *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, xxix. 1904, col. 203.

⁹⁵ “Der Apostel Paulus als armer Sünder,” p. 58.

Paul's language is not necessary that we may do justice to his greatness, or to the really divine element in his life and in his work. Meyer is quite right when he insists on the unity of his consciousness and refuses to separate Paul the man from Paul the apostle,⁹⁶ and to pass differing moral judgments on the two. Paul was as a man what he was as apostle: the apostleship was the sphere in which this man functioned. And after all said, Paul's apostleship was not self-sought, and was not prosecuted in his own strength. He was called by God to it, and sustained by God in it, in a definitely supernatural manner. It is not surprising that he was conscious of having done the work of the apostleship faithfully. He praises his work as well done; the praise he gives it is of course less praise of himself than of the God who strengthened him: but even so, his self-praise does not involve a claim of personal perfection even in his work. In 1 Cor. 15:9 he puts himself in point of fitness for his office below all the other apostles—though he was under no illusions as to the shortcomings of some of them; and if he asserts that he has labored more abundantly than all, he ascribes that to the pure grace of God. In Eph. 3:8 he describes himself as less than the least of all the saints, without any obvious reference to his pre-Christian life—and he knew the saints. When he calls himself in 1 Tim. 1:15 (if the adduction be allowed) the chief of sinners, it is not so certain that the reference is solely to his pre-Christian sins. It is not a boastful sense of his own strength, but a humble dependence on God's grace, which after all forms the basis of Paul's self-consciousness, and, as Meyer very properly remarks,⁹⁷ "if it is the triumph of the divine power in him which rules the Apostle's whole self-consciousness, then, his boasting, in which his self-consciousness finds its strongest expression, becomes intelligible; and the appearance of Paul's making himself guilty of the sin of proud exaltation, vanishes."

Meyer is no more insistent that Paul was free from actual sinning—that is his concession to his opponents in the "miserable-sinner" controversy—than he is that he remained always sinful in his "flesh," which is his concession to Paul's own teaching. He argues elaborately⁹⁸ that although Paul always felt the impulse to sin and longed to be free from it, yet he never fell into sins of act. He bore therefore in the battle with sin the physiognomy of conquerer, and step by step drove it ever from the field. But Meyer is very strenuous in asserting the unbroken presence in Paul of this sinful "flesh." As he puts his conclusion formally:⁹⁹ "So far as the material at our disposal tells us, it must pass as an axiom that Paul in his Christian life knew sin very well, but had no acquaintance with sin in our ordinary sense. We can speak then, with reference to Paul, only of a *peccatum habituale*, not here ever of a *peccatum actuale*. Apart from the ... possibilities of sins of inadvertence, weakness and ignorance, it was 'concupiscence' which with Paul was the constitutive characteristic of what was especially signified to him by 'sin.' On its account the Apostle has to prosecute with reference to himself continually, that 'discerning' of 1 Cor. 11:31, 'cleansing' of 2 Cor. 7:1. This 'concupiscence' was the constant occasion why Paul 'over and over again cried out with yearning for his deliverance from his sinful flesh.'" A position like this is scarcely more intelligible in itself than it is defensible from the records. So sharp a separation as is made between the

⁹⁶ P. 41.

⁹⁷ P. 20.

⁹⁸ Pp. 43, 44.

⁹⁹ P. 51.

underlying sinful nature and the body of sinful acts seems untenable. There is no sinful nature which is not active; and the activities within and the activities without are scarcely capable of such sharp division. So certainly as the *operari* follows the *esse*, so certain is it that as long as the *peccatum habituale* exists the *peccatum actuale* occurs. So far from saying that the *peccatum habituale* may lie in the background and show itself in no act, we must rather say that as long as it lies in the background it must of necessity show itself in every act. Its existence in Paul makes him in the fullest sense of the word a “miserable sinner,” incapable of not sinning, because incapable of being in his acts anything but himself. Of course, if all that is meant is that Paul did not commit murder or adultery, did not steal and rob, then that is true. But we should not forget the probing touch of the Sermon on the Mount, which is Paul’s touch too, as Meyer fully understands—witness his decisive repulsion of the attempts of Gottschick and Jacoby to attribute to Paul a coarser standard. And Meyer should not forget either, by the way, that according to him, Paul prayed, “Forgive us our trespasses.” And it might even be worth while to remember the sharp saying of Samuel Rutherford about “the world’s negative holiness—no adulterer, no murderer, no thief, no cozener”—which, he says, “maketh men believe they are already glorified saints.” It is not necessary to do those things in order to be a “miserable sinner”; nor does the absence of such things from the life constitute us sinless.

We have just seen Meyer attributing to Paul knowledge and use of the Lord’s Prayer, and we have seen formerly the same thing done by Juncker. It was inevitable that sooner or later some one would enter the controversy about the sins of Christians from this angle. This was at length done by G. Bindemann in a book entitled “The Prayer for Daily Forgiveness of Sins in Jesus’ Proclamation of Salvation and in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul,”¹⁰⁰ published in 1902. It cannot be said that this new mode of approach brought much gain for the particular debate in progress. It was already generally allowed that Jesus did not contemplate sinless followers, so that in the first part of his discussion Bindemann can give us only a systematic arrangement of generally accepted facts. In the second part, he manages to review all the main topics which the debate had thrown into prominence, but he does this outside of his specific subject. He is compelled to allow that there is the slenderest direct ground for attributing to Paul knowledge and use of the Lord’s Prayer, and indeed he bases his own conclusion that it was known to Paul ultimately on general considerations, rather than on specific references to it. He can even write:¹⁰¹ “No express references to the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer are found, and it may seem that the whole spirit of that prayer is alien to the Apostle: not petition, but thanksgiving becomes the Christian. It has even been possible to maintain that the Lord’s directions as to prayer as they are presented in the Lord’s Prayer are altogether unknown to the Apostle.”¹⁰² And in fact, for one to whom it is not from the outset on other grounds a historical impossibility that Paul should have had no knowledge of this important piece of tradition of Jesus, such knowledge is not to be indisputably proved from the epistles of Paul.”

¹⁰⁰ “Das Gebet um tägliche Vergebung der Sünden in der Heilsverkündigung Jesu und in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus,” 1902.

¹⁰¹ P. 10.

¹⁰² The reference is to Wernle, as cited, p. 53, to which is added Gunkel, “Wirkungen des Heiligen Geistes,”² 1899, p. 61.

Already from this passage we perceive that the question with reference to Paul's prayers takes a wider range than merely his knowledge and use of the Lord's Prayer. In his references to prayer, we are told in this same context, the prayer of petition in general falls notably into the background in comparison with the prayer of thanksgiving, and petitions for forgiveness remain unmentioned even when the prayer of petition is spoken of. "Here Paul nowhere mentions, no matter how much occasion there was for it, the prayer for forgiveness; he neither bears witness to it for himself, nor does he recommend it to others with unmistakable clearness. This could be expected; since he is writing to congregations in which open sins, serious faults, lay publicly in sight. Even his intercessions for his congregations, the contents of which he incidentally communicates, do not enable us to determine that he prays for the forgiveness of their guilt. He prays for the growth of faith, the increase of knowledge, that they may receive in greater fulness the gifts which they already have." At a later point in the discussion this same line of remark is resumed. We read:¹⁰³ "Petition also, then, does not fail in Paul's own prayer-life. But in all the intimations concerning the content of his prayers all reference to prayers for the forgiveness of sins is lacking. We might repeatedly expect an exhortation to the congregation not to forget the prayer for forgiveness; most naturally, say, at the end of Galatians or Corinthians; but precisely here there is lacking even that general requirement of prayer, such as is found in I Thessalonians, Romans, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians. Other passages seem to show directly that the daily prayer for forgiveness, such as is recommended in the Lord's Prayer, does not at least take a prominent place in the Apostle's circle of ideas. In Col. 3:13, cf. Eph. 4:32, the readers are required to forgive one another when they have suffered injury the one from the other. But as the motive for such a willingness to forgive, there is no indication that only under this condition will their prayer for forgiveness of their own sins be heard of God—though that would be sufficiently naturally suggested by Matt. 6:12, 14 f., Mark 11:25, 26, Luke 11:4. Only the fact in their own past is recalled, that their sins *have been* forgiven to his readers, the fact of washing away their sins which occurred in baptism."

Having thus sharpened the problem to the utmost Bindemann makes it his task to show in detail that despite the fact that mention of the prayer for forgiveness falls into the background in Paul's letters, Paul's whole system of teaching supposes and demands it. In that system the guilt of sin takes the most prominent place and on every page of his writings it is preëminently the guilt of sinning which is presupposed. He will not even permit it to be said that, justification being presupposed, it is, with reference to the Christian life, the power of sin which takes the place in the foreground. Having pointed out that, according to Paul, wherever the "flesh" is, there is sin, that therefore all Christians still sin, and, still sinning, are still in need of forgiveness, he continues:¹⁰⁴ "According to all this, it should be admitted that the prayer for the forgiveness of sins takes a place in the piety of Paul of similar importance to that which it takes in Jesus' proclamation of salvation."

Nevertheless (he proceeds to reason) precisely the significance which the contrast of "flesh" and "Spirit" with Christians possesses in the theology of Paul seems to many to lead to something different. There is an appearance as if, for the Apostle, in the estimate

¹⁰³ P. 62.

¹⁰⁴ P. 89.

of sin in the Christian life, the idea of its *power* may stand in the foreground, while the idea of the *guilt* produced by it in God's sight retires into the background. Attention has accordingly been called to the fact that Paul never speaks of the importance for Christians of the forgiveness of sins obtained by Christ. Justification, forgiveness of sins, appear rather, it is said, as a possession, which believers have from the beginning on. On the other hand, it is said, the demand that Christians shall withstand the power of sin in the power of the Spirit is constantly repeated. In the description of the Christian life, interest in emancipation from the power of sin predominates with the Apostle. Here, therefore, the Apostle's teaching concerning the Spirit, which contains the really new and fruitful ideas of the Apostle, obtains the upper hand, while the juridical circle of ideas, which embraces the doctrine of justification, of faith, and so forth, seems confined wholly to the fact, lying in the past, of entrance into the Christian life. The Epistle to the Romans is, it is said, the proof of this; whereas the first five chapters are wholly dominated by the doctrine of justification, in the succeeding three which describe the life of the Christian, it is only the walk in the Spirit that is discussed. Thus the recession of prayers for forgiveness is explained, so it is said, by the concentration of the Apostle's interest on emancipation from the power of sin, whereas emancipation from its guilt, by the fundamental forgiveness of sins, which occurs once for all, is guaranteed once for all.

To this plausible representation Bindemann replies that not only does it fail to apprehend the close relations in which Paul's doctrines of justification and of the gift of the Spirit stand to one another; but it attributes to the Apostle a separation between the power and the guilt of sin, which would have been impossible to him. It would have been impossible to the Apostle to think of the power of sin, without at the same time thinking of its guilt. "It was far too serious an estimation of sin, which came to the Apostle out of his faith in God's forgiveness of sin on the ground of Christ's death, for the consciousness of guilt not necessarily to awaken with new sharpness along with the thought of Christ's act, on the occurrence of every sin that was committed in the Christian life." "Therefore," Bindemann says in conclusion,¹⁰⁵ "it is for Paul, too, wholly self-evident, that the Christian, considering his sin, necessarily needs the forgiveness of its guilt, and the assurance that this new sin also is forgiven and his communion with God is no longer disturbed." By such lines of thought as this, Bindemann supposes that he has shown that the preaching of Paul contains all the presuppositions which require of Christians prayer for forgiveness and manifests the sameness of the faith of Paul with that of Jesus. On this ground he thinks he may assert that Paul knew the Lord's Prayer and used it in the same sense in which Jesus gave it. "It can no longer seem strange that Paul never elsewhere"—than in the one passage in which he supposes it referred to—"mentions it, and does not oftener require it. We may hold it to be accident, if the few occasional writings which have come down to us from Paul do not give us clearer information in the matter."¹⁰⁶

Ludwig Ihmels' excellent conference address on "The Daily Forgiveness of Sins"¹⁰⁷ occupies much the same standpoint with Bindemann's book. It itself sums up the result of

¹⁰⁵ P. 90.

¹⁰⁶ P. 105.

¹⁰⁷ "Die tägliche Vergebung der Sünden: Vortrag gehalten auf der X. Allgemeinen lutherischen Konferenz zu Lund," 1901.

its discussion in these words:¹⁰⁸ “We live by daily forgiveness and we praise God’s mercy that we may live by it.” But it adds at once: “To be sure, that we are sinners is no part of the gospel, and what we praise God’s mercy for is not that we never have as yet overcome sin.” That the address is preoccupied with this apologetical aspect of the question is due in part to the gibing tone of the assailants of the doctrine presented in it, and in part, no doubt, also to the circumstances that it was spoken to a company of pastors, and has as its object to advise them in their dealings with somewhat formal penitents. It is more concerned therefore to avoid appearing to give license to sinning among the indifferent, as something natural to the Christian life, which it would be useless to strive against, than it is to encourage the despairing with the assurance that their sins, though many, may and will be forgiven them.

The address opens by representing opponents as saying, “Must we sin, then, in order to be orthodox?”¹⁰⁹ Why preach the persistence of sinning among Christians and the permanent continuance of their imperfection? The answer is, in the first instance, says Ihmels, because it is true. It is also true, of course, that it is only half the truth, and the other half must be insisted on, too. And the other half is that “wherever personal Christianity exists there necessarily is also a radical break with sin.”¹¹⁰ The Christian is not to be expected simply to accept his lot and adjust himself to his continued sinning as to something that has to be endured.¹¹¹ And certainly he is not to be exhorted, as some sectaries exhort him, to look on all our sinning as in such a sense already forgiven as that we need have no concern about it. That is not the attitude of the New Testament writers to the sins of Christians. Nor is it the attitude of the Reformers. The Reformation doctrine of “miserable sinners” is a doctrine of penitent sinners. It has no application to the indifferent or the secure. It offers itself only to those who, broken-hearted in repentance, look to Jesus alone as their compassionate Savior, and it tells them that for them too Jesus alone is enough. It does not tell them that they are not sinners; that would not be true, and they know it is not true; no one knows himself a sinner like a penitent sinner. It tells them that they are saved sinners—and that is the most glorious thing it could tell them.

Advising his company of pastors directly as to how the public proclamation of the perpetual forgiveness of sins is to be made, Ihmels speaks as follows:¹¹² “This is the gospel—that God for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who gave Himself for our sins and rose again for our justification, will still have communion with sinners. As proclamation of the daily forgiveness of sins, this gospel takes the form that God will not be prevented from fostering this communion by the continuing imperfection of the Christian state. The gospel, now, belongs, however, only to the sincere. Hence it follows that consolatory preaching of the possibility and actuality of continuous forgiveness, must be accompanied—of course not in the pastoral care of the anxious, but in the general public preaching—with a plain warning against all consciously cherished sin. Consciously cherished sin makes communion with God objectively and subjectively

¹⁰⁸ P. 34.

¹⁰⁹ P. 8. Ihmels says he takes these words from the lips of one of the leaders of the Sanctification Movement, meaning R. Pearsall Smith (“Reden,” p. 99).

¹¹⁰ P. 9.

¹¹¹ P. 16.

¹¹² P. 29.

impossible—there can be no doubt of that. Then, however, the proclamation must carefully avoid all appearance of intending to treat the Christian’s continuing sin itself as a part of the gospel. It cannot, in other words, seek to quiet the Christian, lamenting over his sin, with the consolation that it cannot be otherwise, and also that it makes little difference.”

It will have already been observed that the specialty of Ihmels’ treatment of the general subject lies in the emphasis he throws on the duty of overcoming our sins. The forgiveness of our sins is in the interests of our overcoming them, not of our acquiescing in them. In this the whole essence of the gospel lies for him. “The whole Christian life,” he says,¹¹³ “in the sense of the Reformation is nothing but an unfolding of the communion with God and the blessedness grounded in forgiveness of sin. Therefore a forgiveness of sins, no matter how truly, as the warranty of communion with God, it may mean the whole salvation, would nevertheless be but a self-contradiction if it did not also deliver the Christian actually from sin.” And what is true of the great central act of forgiveness, is true for him also of all the repeated acts of our daily forgiveness. They are in order to our constant advance in overcoming our sins. We are still imperfect; but it is perfection to which we are destined and it is through God’s grace, manifested, among other things, in the forgiveness of the sins into which we fall on our way thither, that we are advanced toward it. This is the way Ihmels expresses himself on these matters:¹¹⁴ “It may be said that among all assertions which are made about sanctification, there is none which is more lacking in Scriptural basis than that view according to which the divine act of justification needs to be supplemented by a later divine act of sanctification. On the other hand the Holy Scriptures certainly know of a growth in faith, which means at the same time a growth in the whole Christian life, and they know also of such Christians as they call in a special sense perfect. But let the Biblical notion of perfection be defined as exactly as it may, there are at any rate three things about which there can be no doubt. First, nothing is meant by it beyond the homely Christian state itself, accessible to all: it is rather a matter simply of perfection in this state. Secondly, the application of this conception to the individual Christian is always intended only in a relative sense. Lastly, this judgment has, moreover, nothing to do with absolute sinlessness.”

Perhaps there underlies Ihmels’ treatment of the Christian’s advance in ethical attainment a somewhat inadequate conception of the mode of the supernatural re-creation of which it is the human manifestation. Like many of his fellows he is very much afraid of ascribing an operation to God analogous, as he would say, to the action of a natural force;¹¹⁵ and is jealous above all things for “purely voluntary” action on man’s part—as if the voluntariness of the human action was in any way curtailed by the underlying recreating or even “leading” action of God. When he comes to describe in detail, however, the process of the Christian’s advance, the words in which he does so are at least capable of a thoroughly unexceptionable meaning. The main points in his description are that the Christian’s life is a battle against remanent sin, but a battle fought under the initiation of God and with the promise of victory. “According to experience,” he adds,¹¹⁶ “this victory

¹¹³ Pp. 12, 13.

¹¹⁴ P. 20.

¹¹⁵ E.g. pp. 16, 36.

¹¹⁶ Pp. 22 f.

is not in this life a definitive one; the expectation of the complete overcoming of the flesh we connect with the complete deliverance from the obduracy of the world of sin and of death, and our immediate transference under the influence of God from face to face.”

Much the same note as is struck by Ihmels is struck by Johannes Haussleiter in another conference address—on “The Christian’s Consciousness of Sins”¹¹⁷—delivered in 1904. This address is indeed more intimate in tone than Ihmels’, because it deals not with pastoral duty but with personal religion. Having spoken of our vivid memory of past sins, Haussleiter asks whether the change that took place in us “when we believed” has broken off all relation to the “lusts of the flesh” which formerly brought us into sin. “Were that true,” he says, “the memory of the past would not be so living, so present—we might say so timeless—as it actually is. The Apostle Paul says, ‘the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit, however, lusts against the flesh’ (Gal. 5:17). The assertion applies to us, to Christians. We may be preserved now from many actual sins, if we let ourselves be led by the Spirit of God. But so long as we are involved in this body of death the old man does not cease to stir or to move. We have every reason to take heed to these movements and to combat them. When the Apostle gives the exhortation, ‘Walk in the Spirit,’ he does not add the conclusion, ‘And then you will have nothing more to do with the lusts of the flesh,’ but ‘And then you will not *fulfil* the lusts of the flesh.’ There is no longer need to fall into the gross works of the flesh and there should be no falling into them. But the impulse and the provocation to do so remain in our sinful nature, and therefore the necessity of conflict and of watchfulness abides. And therefore there abides the petition: ‘Forgive us our trespasses.’ ”

Having next deepened our sense of the sinfulness of our misdeeds by showing how they are all specifically sins against God, Haussleiter proceeds: “There stands a declaration in the First Epistle to Timothy which has seemed to many strange. Paul writes here (1 Tim. 1:15), that Christ has come into the world to save sinners, and adds: ‘Among whom I *am* a chief one.’ Has he not miswritten? Ought he not to have written, ‘Among whom I *was* a chief one?’ He is certainly already washed, sanctified, justified; he is a servant of Jesus Christ, and His ambassador to the Gentiles. He has labored more than the others. But that is not his merit, but the merit of grace. Through God’s grace he is what he is. But just because he lives continuously by grace, the knowledge of his sin is ever before him. They condition one another. Because Paul cannot live without the Savior of sinners, he reckons himself permanently among sinners, not among sinners who wish to remain sinners and are far from God, but among those who have experienced overpowering grace but who also know that they need grace daily. Paul knows himself and his Savior. The Holy Spirit has opened his eyes.” “The Christian knows,” we read again, “that he is burdened with much more guilt than he himself perceives—guilt of unrecognized results of earlier sins, still greater guilt of sins of omission in the region of charity. The Christian joins in the prayer of the Psalmist, ‘Who can mark how often he fails? Cleanse me from secret faults’ (Ps. 19:13). Should he be willing consciously to increase the burden of guilt lightly? The Christian stands in daily conflict with sins of temperament, with sins of weakness and sins of habit. The grace of God has enough here to bear, to cleanse, to wash away. It were a sacrilege to draw on it deliberately by

¹¹⁷ Published in the *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, xxxvii. 1904 (June 24), coll. 610 ff.

conscious transgression. God keep us, us Christians, from security! The consciousness of sin, in the earnest sense in which we have described it, is a means of protection.”

We have moved into a totally new atmosphere when we turn to Otto Pfleiderer. A lingering relic of the old Tübingen school, an eager forerunner of the new history-of-religion school, he had no more in common with the Ritschlians by whom and with whom the controversy had in the main been carried on, than with their “miserable-sinner” opponents. We shall have to go back to W. A. Karl at the very beginning of the controversy to find anything with which we can compare him, and it goes without saying that Pfleiderer owes nothing to Karl, and that the parallel between the two has its very narrow limits. He takes his start as is his wont from general ethnic conceptions and endeavors to interpret Paul from them, placing in this interest at the foundation of Paul’s thought the universal animism of heathen mythology. The book in which Pfleiderer’s views on the matter which concern us are given expression, is the second edition of his “Primitive Christianity, its Writings and Teachings.”¹¹⁸ The first edition of this work was published late in 1887. The second edition, “thoroughly revised and much enlarged,” appeared in 1902;¹¹⁹ and among the changes introduced into it were included the whole animistic background which Pfleiderer now wrote into Paul’s doctrine of the Spirit, and especially the completed elaboration of that mystical conception which he had always attributed to Paul’s notion of the relation of the Christian to Christ,¹²⁰ and on the basis of which he now represents Paul as inconsistent with his fundamental thought in recognizing sin as possible and actual in the Christian life.¹²¹

It will be observed that Pfleiderer is entirely willing to allow that Paul holds a supernaturalistic view of the Christian life. He assigns his supernaturalism, however, to an animistic inheritance. This animistic inheritance, nevertheless, has been modified by Paul in two directions. With him all the spirits had coalesced into one Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. And this Spirit operated in the Christian not occasionally only but continuously, and in particular became the productive cause of his whole ethical life. There is a recognition here of Paul’s doctrine of the “leading of the Spirit,” disparaged no doubt by its connection with animism, but nevertheless admitted in its fundamental elements. Now, Pfleiderer remarks that such a doctrine brings with it certain practical difficulties. “When the Christian life is referred back to a spiritual being of supernatural power, coming into man from without,” he argues,¹²² “the ethical self-determination of the human ego threatens to be suppressed, and the transformation seems to be effected in the inevitable

¹¹⁸ “Das Urchristenthum, seine Schriften und Lehren,” (1887) 1902.

¹¹⁹ An English translation was published in 1906, and the following references are to it.

¹²⁰ From the beginning of his occupation with the teaching of Paul (“Der Paulinismus,” 1873, E. T. 1877) Pfleiderer had attributed to him a mystical doctrine (which he calls a Mysticism of Faith), discovering the chief of its expressions in the “in Christ” which was afterwards to be exploited by A. Deissmann (see “Der Paulinismus,” pp. 197 ff.). On the early form of his doctrine of the Spirit the same reference will suffice, to which may nevertheless be added “The Influence of the Apostle Paul,” 1885, pp. 69 ff. In these early expositions of the “in Christ” and the “Spirit” is to be found the germ of all that Pfleiderer teaches in 1902.

¹²¹ Pp. 404 ff.

¹²² P. 390.

fashion of a process of nature, in which, along with human freedom, guilt and sin would be excluded.” That is to say, if we are in the hands of a supernatural power all our own activities must be supposed to be superseded and there must be attributed to the Spirit alone our entire, not merely re-creation, but life-manifestation.

Pfleiderer says that Paul, “in his ideal picture of the spiritual life under grace (Rom. 6 and 8),” does seem to make an approach to these “inferences.” “But,” he adds, Paul “is practical enough to recognize fully the continuance of sin even in Christians [and] ... attributes this to a principle of sin in the flesh which brings the ego into captivity. Over against the abstract ideal of the spiritual man who cannot sin, he sets directly the equally abstract caricature of the carnal man who can do nothing but sin (Rom. 7:14 ff.)” Here we have, he says, “two abstractions which are doubtless meant as the opposite sides of the same condition.” They are nevertheless, in Pfleiderer’s opinion¹²³ “in fact mutually exclusive, and ... in their opposition, split the unity of the personal life in a dualistic fashion.” He thinks the “difficulty is solved,” however, if, following “modern psychology,” we interpret Paul in terms of “psychic conditions, motives, directions of the will, which, as they are developed out of the unity of human nature, are always held together by the unity of the personal consciousness in such a way that they form its proper content, the manifold factors of its life-activity.”

As this is precisely what Paul means and says, without prejudice to his supernaturalism, we can but wonder why a self-contradiction should be thrust upon him only that it may be immediately resolved. The contradiction is resolved, however, in Pfleiderer’s view only for himself, not for Paul, and in his further exposition of Paul’s teaching as to the Christian life it is pressed to its extremity. “A lofty idealism,” we are told,¹²⁴ “appears in this description of the Christian life. The Christian is no longer in the flesh but in the Spirit; he has crucified the flesh with its lusts; the world is crucified to him and he to the world; he is risen with Christ, lives in the Spirit, possesses the Spirit of Christ. Christ himself lives in him instead of his former ego; he is a new creation; his life is hid with Christ in God; he has become a spiritual man; he is like Christ. That over such a being sin can no longer hold sway is self-evident; that is what makes it so difficult to grasp the fact that nevertheless in the actual Christian life sin is still present. The Christian, as Paul describes his character, ought properly no longer to be able to sin, since the divine Spirit is the ruling ego in him, and the sinful flesh is conquered, abolished. Yet Paul is far from drawing this obvious inference from his doctrine of the Spirit. On the contrary, all his epistles testify with what prudence and care he estimates the actual ethical condition of his churches, censures their weaknesses and sins, and exhorts them to lay aside all evil and contend unremittingly against sin. Spirit and flesh stand in constant strife with one another, and the victory of the Spirit does not come to pass by itself with the unflinching certainty of the laws of nature, but depends on whether the Christian endeavours to walk according to the standard set up by the Spirit, and mortify the deeds of the body, or allows sin again to have dominion over him.”

Pfleiderer supposes here that according to Paul the flesh may defeat the Spirit—that neither justification nor the spirit of sonship secure “unconditionally” the ultimate salvation of the Christian, but that he stands or falls at the last judgment according to his

¹²³ P. 391.

¹²⁴ Pp. 404 f.

works—which is certainly not Paul’s teaching. But he closes the paragraph with a direct declaration that Paul did not, in any case, ignore the sins of Christians, but deals with them at large and in detail. He then proceeds to declare that there is a contradiction, in Paul’s presentation of the Christian life, between his doctrine of it as Spirit-led and his doctrine of it as the scene of ethical effort. We are accustomed, he says, to correct or to soften this contradiction by calling in the notion of development, process, progressive advance. This is, however, declares Pfleiderer, inconsistent with the supernaturalism of the one aspect of it. “How,” he asks, “in relation to this overmastering divine being, is there room for the free self-determination of the human will?”¹²⁵ But the distinction which Pfleiderer draws here—between divine control and human function—is not Paul’s. Paul’s preoccupation is with “the flesh” and “the Spirit”—the old instinct to evil, and the new power (certainly divine) to good. What Pfleiderer is asking is, how the creature can resist the creator. His whole preoccupation is with freedom. “Is not the new man, on this assumption,” he asks, “at bottom a will-less slave of the holy spiritual being in his heart, as the old man was a slave of the demonic sinful being in his flesh (Rom. 6:16 f.)? Is he the active and responsible subject of sanctification, or is he only the passive object for the possession of which the two hostile powers, the holy spiritual, and the fleshy sinful, contend (Gal. 5:17)?” Why take either horn of this dilemma, with its exclusive either—or? Neither represents Paul, who instead of Pfleiderer’s, Either God or man, says with great clearness, Both (Phil. 2:12, 13).

It is not without its interest to observe Pfleiderer applying Rom. 7:14 ff. to the Christian as a description by Paul of one side of the Christian’s condition.¹²⁶ On an earlier page,¹²⁷ to which he here refers us, he declares of Rom. 7:25 that it is a “confession which is by no means to be referred to the past of the apostle before his conversion, but pictures a present and continuous condition.” He adds, however, “but, of course, only as regards the ‘natural man,’ which continues to exist even in Christians alongside of the supernatural ‘pneuma,’ and is here portrayed by Paul with the same one-sided abstraction with which he elsewhere portrays the new spiritual life of Christians.” “Only,” says he, “from a combination of the two one-sided pictures—the dark picture in chapter 7 and the bright picture in chapter 8—can we gather Paul’s complete view of the actual concrete Christian life (cf. Gal. 5:17).” With this background of the dualism of Paul’s representation behind him, Pfleiderer can now go on to declare that in Rom. 8. Paul represents believers as set free by the Spirit from all sin, meaning “not merely the removal of the guilt of sin, but also the overcoming of the power of sin.” Only—it all depends on our coöperation and after all it is only an abstract picture of one side of the matter, the other side of which we have already read in chapter 7.

This is not untying the knot; it is not even cutting it; it is leaving it as tightly tied as it was before. The debate could not end in such ambiguities. We find it accordingly returning at once, for better, for worse, to the round assertions of Wernle. Only so was there hope of rescuing these assertions from their impending disintegration. Whether this rescue could in any case be accomplished we may learn by observing Windisch’s valiant

¹²⁵ P. 407.

¹²⁶ P. 390.

¹²⁷ Pp. 234 f. This whole passage is in the second edition added bodily to the statement in the first edition (1887), which closes on a different note.

attempt to accomplish it.