

Reconsidering Friedrich Schleiermacher's Doctrine of God:  
Kataphasis, Apophasis, and Feminism

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## Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Part I .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter One: Schleiermacher as Reformed and Reforming Theologian.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>I. Currents of Criticism in Anglophone Scholarship.....</b>	<b>19</b>
A. Spinozism [ <i>All-Einheitler</i> ] and Idealism [ <i>Ichheitler</i> ].....	20
B. Psychological Subjectivism and Experiential Expressivism .....	29
C. Sexism .....	35
<b>II. Schleiermacher as Reformed and Reforming Theologian.....</b>	<b>42</b>
A. The Audiences of the <i>Glaubenslehre</i> .....	44
B. Theological Content: Theocentrism and Christomorphism .....	52
1. Theocentrism.....	52
a. Orientation of the Human Subject to God.....	52
b. Piety in Relation to God.....	56
2. Christomorphism.....	62
C. Reformed and Reforming: <i>ecclesia semper reformanda est</i> .....	67
<b>III. How to Read Schleiermacher's <i>Glaubenslehre</i>.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Kataphatic Elements of Schleiermacher's Doctrine of God:</b>	
<b>Christomorphic Theocentrism as "Essential Trinitarianism" .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>I. Trinity as the <i>Glaubenslehre</i>'s Keystone [<i>Schlußstein</i>].....</b>	<b>79</b>
A. Placement .....	79
B. Reformed Motivation .....	84
C. Specific Concerns.....	86
1. God in se .....	86
2. Conceptual Difficulties .....	95
a. Polytheism Not Guarded Against in the New Testament.....	95
b. Equality Between the Persons, and Between the Essence and the Persons .....	98
c. Relation of Unity or Trinity and Causality.....	104
D. Placement Re-visited.....	105
<b>II: The Singular God .....</b>	<b>110</b>
A. Original Causal Activity: One Divine Decree.....	113
B. Love: Union with Neighbor.....	115
C. Wisdom: Realization of Love.....	118
<b>III. Triune Temporal Fulfillment of the Divine Decree .....</b>	<b>125</b>
A. Jesus Christ.....	126
B. The Holy Spirit .....	133
C. Divine Holiness and Justice.....	139
1. Divine Holiness: Legislation.....	147
2. Divine Justice: Corporate Punishment of Sin .....	154



<b>Chapter Three: Apophatic Elements of Schleiermacher's Doctrine of God .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>I. Tension between Part One and Part Two .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>II. The <i>Via Causalitatis</i>: Apophasis Attends Kataphasis .....</b>	<b>170</b>
A. The Task of Theology .....	170
B. Theological Method .....	178
<b>III. The Otherness of God: Apophasis Anticipates Kataphasis .....</b>	<b>182</b>
A. Eternity .....	182
B. Omnipresence .....	190
C. Omnipotence .....	193
D. Omniscience .....	198
E. Non-Personal .....	201
 <b>Part II .....</b>	 <b>208</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Human Personhood and Non-Anthropocentric, Non- Anthropomorphic Personhood .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>I. Schleiermacher and Human Personhood .....</b>	<b>213</b>
A. Personal Analogies in Schleiermacher's Doctrine of God .....	214
1. Das Ich and Divine Eternity .....	215
2. The Artist and Divine Activity .....	216
3. The Human Knower and Divine Foreknowledge .....	217
4. Human Discernment and Divine Spirit .....	218
B. Re-describing Human Personhood in Light of Christ .....	221
1. Causal Activity Grounded in Eros and a Receptive Disposition .....	225
2. Materiality .....	230
3. Differentiated Relationality .....	237
4. Discerning Attention and Circumscribed Ineffability .....	247
<b>II. Relatively Non-anthropocentric and Non-anthropomorphic Personhood .....</b>	<b>255</b>
1. The Spectrum of Personhood .....	256
a. Schleiermacher's High Christology .....	256
b. Personhood in Degrees .....	264
2. Personhood as a Phase-Sortal .....	269
<b>III. Ineffability, Critical Realism, and Scripture .....</b>	<b>271</b>
 <b>Chapter Five: Divine Personhood and the Advancement of a Feminist Doctrine of God .....</b>	 <b>276</b>
<b>I. Feminist Theologies and Apophasis .....</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>II. Schleiermacher as Kataphatic Theologian .....</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>III. Correcting Schleiermacher: Divine Personhood .....</b>	<b>297</b>
A. Causal Activity Grounded in the Divine Good-Pleasure .....	301
B. Absolute Spirit's Relation to Created Materiality .....	303
C. Economically Triune Relationality .....	306
D. Divine Decree and Ineffability .....	308
<b>IV. Feminist Theologies and Divine Personhood .....</b>	<b>313</b>
 <b>Conclusion .....</b>	 <b>324</b>
<b>I. Schleiermacher and Feminism .....</b>	<b>326</b>
A. Absolute Dependence .....	326
B. Non-competitive Relations .....	327

C. Eco-Feminism and Feminist Economies .....	329
<b>II. Continuing Questions.....</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>III. Schleiermacher Scholarship.....</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Primary Sources .....</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Secondary Sources.....</b>	<b>337</b>

### **Abstract**

In this dissertation, I analyze, critique, and correct Schleiermacher's doctrine of God as presented in the *Glaubenslehre*. Reading the work backwards, I highlight the important and lasting contributions Schleiermacher has made to Christian theology, even as I critique his ultimately non-personal understanding of God. I argue that were his doctrine of God bolstered by an additional kataphatic notion, namely, a non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of God as personal, his theology could better contribute to feminist theological projects.

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## Introduction

Friedrich Schleiermacher is best known in theological circles for his first popular work, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* or the *Reden*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, compared to the sea of literature that attends to that piece, there is a relative paucity of scholarly engagement with the doctrinal content of his mature text, *The Christian Faith* (1830/1) or the *Glaubenslehre*.<sup>2</sup> Anglophone literature is only speckled with book-length essays, written in a predominantly theological register, on his doctrine of God. The present work contributes to remedying that situation. Moreover, Schleiermacher's work has been received through what I will argue are a number of inappropriate interpretive lenses. As a new vanguard of Schleiermacher scholars arises in the present decade, this dissertation contributes to the establishment of a more adequate interpretation. Not only does my work fill a gap within Schleiermacher scholarship and contribute to the growing interest in interpreting him within the Reformed tradition, it is also significant for contemporary theologians who—apart from a particular interest in Schleiermacher—are keen to

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, Ed. Richard Crouter (New York: Cambridge, 1996). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, eds, H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: T&T Clark, 1999). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube (1830/31)* (New York: de Gruyter, 1999). A note about the term "*Glaubenslehre*," which I use throughout this dissertation to refer to *The Christian Faith*: Gerrish explains, "It is the German equivalent of *doctrina fidei*, an expression that goes all the way back to the Latin fathers. Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) seems to have been the first to use *Glaubenslehre* in the title of a book on Protestant theology (*Evangelische Glaubenslehre*, 1688), but *Dogmatik* was the preferred term throughout the eighteenth century. Schleiermacher never abandoned the dominant term, but he did like to speak of his own great systematic work as his *Glaubenslehre*, notably in the open letters to his friend Friedrich Lücke. Further, he tells us in the introduction to *The Christian Faith* (second edition) that the title, in which he avoided the name *Dogmatik*, contains elements for a definition of the subject. A handwritten note explains that *Glaubenslehre* means a description or presentation of faith" (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 242.

investigate theological epistemology, method, and the doctrine of God during and after the modern period. Schleiermacher exemplifies the tensions between apophasis (negative claims about God) and kataphasis (affirmative claims) that Christian theologians have been wrestling with for centuries, and does so under the exacerbating conditions of modernity. As such, he is an important and insightful interlocutor for contemporary theologians.

Rejecting the hermeneutic tradition that reads the *Glaubenslehre* in terms of a generic form of human religiosity, I read the work backwards, beginning with Schleiermacher's discussion of the Trinity, moving through his account of the divine love and wisdom, further on to the holiness and justice of God, and finally to eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. This method has the benefit of challenging a number of critiques of Schleiermacher's work, including the claim that it is a specimen of "experiential expressivism."<sup>3</sup> More positively, it is also a partial enactment of what Schleiermacher himself wondered about in his *Letters to Dr. Lücke*, where he said that he may have done better to reverse the order of his dogmatics.<sup>4</sup> The interpretation and

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<sup>3</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lücke*, trans. James Duke, Francis Fiorenza (Atlanta: Scholars, 1981), 55-6. On the suggestion of Terrence N. Tice, Abraham Varghese Kunnuthara has also attempted to read the *Glaubenslehre* backwards in an effort to enact Schleiermacher's suggestion (I became aware of his work only after the completion of my dissertation). His work contrasts with mine, however, insofar as centers on Christology, rather than a sustained engagement with the Trinity. It is, on his own admission, "only a work of moderate proportion," and he hopes "others will come along soon and so further comprehensive, thoroughgoing work along the same lines as those emphasized here" (Abraham Varghese Kunnuthara, *Schleiermacher on Christian Consciousness of God's Work in History* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series) [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008], 159). My dissertation, though also circumscribed in scope, is more expansive than Kunnuthara's book. His work also diverges from my treatment inasmuch as it is comparative, highlighting similarities between Schleiermacher's thought and Eastern figures' work, especially Pandipedi Chenchiah (1886-1959). In addition, Kunnuthara does not attempt to constructively appropriate Schleiermacher's work for feminist aims.

analysis that results from this method highlights the Reformed and reforming character of Schleiermacher's mature thought, with a clearly theocentric and Christomorphic emphasis. More specifically, I bring to the fore the tension between Schleiermacher's apophatic and kataphatic claims. I argue that such tension, if handled and explicated carefully, can be turned into a helpful dialectic that includes the use of a kataphatic correction to Schleiermacher's doctrine of God.

My interpretive work dovetails with a constructive agenda, which is to show—indirectly in the first and directly in the second part of the dissertation—the benefits of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God for feminist theologies.<sup>5</sup> After developing a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric description of personhood, I argue that it would both be faithful to the heart of Schleiermacher's theology and useful for advancing feminist theological aims to affirm the divine quiddity (the what-ness of God) as personal. Though many feminists have shied away from this claim, using the *via negativa* (negative theology) to avoid idolatry and to heed Kant's prohibition against speculative metaphysics, I argue that affirming the personhood of God would systematically cohere with and fuel feminist anthropologies and ecclesiologies while circumscribing the scope of claims regarding divine ineffability. By making this argument, I put my finger on the pulse of one theme within current feminist theology, namely, the use of apophysis for achieving feminist theological and practical aims. In this way, the present work is a contribution to the conversations within Schleiermacher scholarship, feminist theology, and contemporary theology more generally.

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<sup>5</sup> In the conclusion, I address the ways that Schleiermacher's work is already conducive to feminist theologies.

In chapters one through three, I primarily make a series of interpretive arguments. Chapter one begins by recounting a number of influential interpretations and critiques of Schleiermacher's work. Diverging from these readings, I compare his text to John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and argue that it is usefully read as "Reformed and reforming."<sup>6</sup> Specifically, I show how Schleiermacher advances Calvin's anti-speculative tendencies with regard to the divine revelation and activity, deriving the divine attributes from God's redeeming activity received in Christian piety. I especially seek to challenge the interpretation that Schleiermacher is a psychological subjectivist or experiential expressivist, which began with Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, and continues through the work of George Lindbeck and those influenced by him.<sup>7</sup> Part of the way to challenge that interpretation is to reject the now standard tradition of interpreting the *Glaubenslehre* in the bright light of the *Reden*. By gauging Schleiermacher's reception in Anglophone scholarship, offering a Reformed context within which his work might be read, and denying the interpretive habit of primarily reading the *Glaubenslehre* through the *Reden*, I set the stage in the first chapter for a more detailed investigation of

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed., John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). I say "Reformed and reforming," instead of "Reformed and always reforming," as the classical phrase has it (*ecclesia semper reformanda est*) because although Schleiermacher's work should continue to be reformed (as I am doing in this dissertation), he himself is not always reforming it.

<sup>7</sup> The broad interpretive view of the history of modern theology made popular by Barth's followers is the following: "After the Reformers, Protestantism hardened into a scholasticism which proved quite unable to deal with the intellectual revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Protestant liberalism responded to this challenge but so capitulated to the spirit of the new age—its immanentism, optimism, and anthropocentrism—that there was nothing distinctive left for Christianity to defend. Neo-orthodoxy, happily, rejected this optimism and immanentism while reserving what was best in liberalism, its honesty and critical spirit. The neo-orthodox revolt was based on a rediscovery of the 'strange new world within the Bible,' the transcendence of God, the sinfulness of man, and the Reformation principle *sola fidei, sola gratia*" (Van A. Harvey, "A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher's Theological Method," *The Journal of Religion*, 42/3 (1962), 166-7). Harvey characterizes this interpretation of the history of modern theology as a myth.



Schleiermacher's doctrine of God in chapters two and three.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the constructive work of chapters four and five revisits and redresses some of the critiques raised in chapter one.

In chapter two, I turn to the charge that Schleiermacher relegates the Trinity to an appendix to his *Glaubenslehre*, which is used to sideline Schleiermacher from intra-Christian doctrinal dialogue.<sup>9</sup> As an extended response, I read his mature work by beginning from the end, with his remarks on the Trinity. Doing so brings to the foreground the kataphatic and distinctively Christian features of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God and allows me to develop the first chapter's emphasis on Schleiermacher's theocentrism and Christomorphism. In short, I argue that Schleiermacher's "essential Trinitarianism" focuses on the divine activity in the world, with special regard for the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the common Spirit of the Church.<sup>10</sup> As such, the Trinity is the essence of Schleiermacher's entire dogmatics. After considering his remarks on the Trinity, both with regard to its essential elements and its historical development, I will then consider divine causality, love, and wisdom. Moving further backwards, I will discuss the

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<sup>8</sup> I am focusing on English-speaking reception of Schleiermacher in part because relating him to the Reformed tradition is rather unique to Anglophone scholarship. A pioneering work in this regard is: Brian Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). German scholarship on Schleiermacher's relation to Reformed theology is sparse. See Martin Ohst, *Schleiermacher und die Bekenntnisschriften: Eine Untersuchung zu seiner Reformations- und Protestantismusdeutung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> As the editors of Schleiermacher's *On the Doctrine of Election* note, "A frequent prejudice infecting facile assessments of the work of Schleiermacher is the assumption that his theology was so thoroughly invested in an uncritical employment of Enlightenment themes and philosophy as to have neither historical nor dogmatic utility for those wishing to engage the mainstream Christian tradition" (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the Doctrine of Election*, trans. Iain G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 1).

<sup>10</sup> This is a phrase used by Claude Welch. See Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 293-4.

actualization of the divine decree in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the divine holiness and justice. As this chapter details the kataphatic aspects of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, it anticipates chapter five, where I return to the argument that his work ought to be interpreted as primarily kataphatic.

In chapter three, I move further backwards to the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, which contains Schleiermacher's relatively apophatic theological claims. It includes his understanding of the theological task and method, followed by his understanding of divine eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and non-personhood. Here, too, my discussion aims at establishing the priority of the second, kataphatic part of the *Glaubenslehre* instead of the first, more apophatic part. I do so by attending to the purpose and method of theology as Schleiermacher conceives them. Within the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, apophasis is correlated with and anticipates kataphasis. That is, even when Schleiermacher details the apophatic aspects of his doctrine of God, his thought has a kataphatic edge inasmuch as the negations he discusses correspond to positive claims. Read backwards, each negative claim regarding the divine being and activity deepens and nuances Schleiermacher's positive theological claims.

Chapters four and five constitute the second, more constructive, part of the dissertation. I begin by arguing that Schleiermacher has exceeded the requirements of his regulated apophaticism by denying the personhood of God. This is due, in large part, to his anthropocentric understanding of personhood. As such, I will show that although Schleiermacher denies that God is personal, he retains at least four aspects of human persons in his description of God; namely, activity, intentionality, relationality, and

ineffability. Moreover, I will identify passages in the *Glaubenslehre* where Schleiermacher uses personal analogies for the divine being. These personal analogies and descriptors serve as *prima facie* warrant for developing a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of personhood, drawing on Schleiermacher's own work and recent feminist thought. My aim in developing a description of personhood is to lay the groundwork for a more circumspect but still intelligible and beneficial understanding of a personal God, based on God's self-revelation in the person of Christ.

In chapter five I will show that calling God "personal" would contribute to feminist aims in three ways: by curbing idolatry, halting the current turn toward radical apophysis that undermines feminists' positive claims, and facilitating the achievement of inclusive ecclesial communities. To illustrate the argument, I consider Wendy Farley's interpretation of Schleiermacher as presented in *Gathering Those Driven Away*, which shares some features with an experiential expressivist view of his work.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on previous chapters, I argue for understanding him instead as a kataphatic, distinctively Christian theologian. I will also address how describing God as personal achieves more coherence within a theological explication of doctrines that includes Trinity, Christology, and Ecclesiology. Finally, I will suggest that affirming divine personhood and adopting a primarily kataphatic approach allows for an affirmation of particularity and diversity within Christian communities, an affirmation that is subtly undercut by primarily apophatic theologies.

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<sup>11</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011).

I recognize that arguing for divine personhood in the precise way I do in the following pages may be a rather unpopular move. It may be too “conservative” for the more “liberal”-minded and too liberal for the conservative-minded, theologically speaking.<sup>12</sup> The former may prefer to speak of the divine as, for instance, the “ground of being,” one’s “ultimate concern,” or the “horizon of being,” in part because they are legitimately concerned to avoid anthropomorphism and the ways that “a personal God” has been used to oppress people.<sup>13</sup> As such, some liberal-minded readers may not find “the (Some)One who wisely loves,” for example, a satisfactory appellation.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the particular way I go about describing divine personhood may also be unpopular among conservatives, since I am using Schleiermacher’s work and feminist thought in order to construct a notion of personhood that is relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric.

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<sup>12</sup> I use the terms loosely, as they may not be as useful as we might be led to believe. To see what I mean, consider Gary Dorrien’s definition of Liberal Theology. Dorrien understands Liberal Christian Theology primarily as a mediating movement that has four defining characteristics. First, Liberal Christianity has its roots in turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Protestant thought. Second, it is reformist, in that it attempts to reconcile Christianity with “the verdicts of modern intellectual inquiry.” Third, it is committed to the authority of reason and experience. And finally, Liberal Theologians conceive of Christianity primarily as a way of life. (Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], xxiii.) The limitations of this definition become clear when we see that both Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin would arguably fit the bill as Liberal theologians on Dorrien’s definition, save that they lived before the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As such, an easy demarcation of Liberals from non-Liberals on the basis of themes or theological convictions may not be possible. At bottom, it seems to me the term “Liberal” may simply gesture toward a certain theological mood of intellectual curiosity, a belief in the provisionality of theological statements, and openness to ideas that seem to have been generated outside the obviously Christian community, all within a post-Kantian context.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973), 163-289. For instance, as I will show in chapter five, for Wendy Farley, “The idea of God as a person, a being, with omnipotent powers is essential to the logic of domination by which some are saved and others damned, some orthodox and others heretics, and by which women and sexual minorities, the afflicted and the rebellious, remain perennial outsiders” (Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011], 66.)

<sup>14</sup> This name could be used as a distillation of Schleiermacher’s focus on divine causality, love, and wisdom, coupled with my correction of his doctrine to affirm divine personhood.

What I am trying to achieve is a middle way that might, to some extent, allow conservative- and liberal-leaning readers alike to speak the same language regarding the doctrine of God. This ecumenical task is important when the line between conservative and liberal cuts across denominations, threatening not only the unity of the Christian Church as a whole but also Christians' ability to speak intelligibly to one another within the same Christian tradition.<sup>15</sup> R. Marie Griffith recognizes the need for shared understanding between conservatives and liberals, specifically among women. Further, she acknowledges class-based interests at work in the insularity between the two groups. She writes that a liberal kind of "general hostility toward religious and cultural 'backwardness' is fueled by interests that are profoundly class-based."<sup>16</sup> She continues,

The continuing efforts—made, I am convinced, in good faith—by feminists to transcend class insularity and appeal more broadly to women in diverse social locations cannot succeed without reexamination of this deeper intolerance to religion and the limits imposed by faith on believers.<sup>17</sup>

While Griffith's project in *God's Daughters* is an ethnographic depiction of evangelical women and mine is an explicitly and directly theological enterprise, the same conviction undergirds both: there is a need for "liberal" feminists to pay attention to concepts dearly held by conservatives, and—I would add—to present their Christian theologies and theological epistemologies in a way that attempts to transcend insulating class-based theological differences. Of course, the suggestion that divine personhood be embraced will not entirely bridge the gap between conservative and liberal. I do, however, hope that

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<sup>15</sup> Arguably, the liberal—conservative divide is more significant, in terms of Christian unity, than denominational divides. For that reason, I'm using "ecumenical" here in a somewhat unusual fashion.

<sup>16</sup> G. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 205.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

it might contribute to the effort to recognize the strength of at least one theological conviction that is highly regarded in conservative circles (i.e., the personhood of God) and may—with feminist and Schleiermacherian-inflected corrections—contribute to the advancement of feminist theology and practice. A final motivation for writing this dissertation, then, in addition to its importance for Schleiermacher scholarship, feminist theology, and contemporary theology more generally, is its contribution toward liberal-conservative ecumenicalism.

### Abbreviations

*CF*: Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. Edited by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart. New York: T&T Clark, 1999.

*OG*: Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On the Glaubenslehre*. Translated by James Duke and Francis Fiorenza. Atlanta: Scholars, 1981.

*BO*: Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*. Translated by William Farrer. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1850.

*DE*: Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On the Doctrine of Election, with Special Reference to the Aphorisms of Dr. Bretschneider*. Translated by Iain G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012.

*ICR*: Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.

## **Part I**

### **Chapter One: Schleiermacher as Reformed and Reforming Theologian**

Schleiermacher's readers, from his own time through the present day, have read his work with their fault-finding faculties in full swing. In Anglophone scholarship, he has been charged with Spinozism, Idealism, psychological subjectivism or "experiential expressivism," and sexism.<sup>1</sup> Although some of these charges have merit, they are constantly overstated. Further, the practice of reading Schleiermacher with an eagerness for criticism has consistently blinded readers to the parts of his work that are worth studying, wrestling with, and constructively appropriating. Indeed, looking forward to my substantive chapters, I will argue that those parts are neither few nor far between. Especially with regard to his doctrine of God, Schleiermacher's work is worth reading with an attitude of respectful openness.

By comparing his work to John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* this chapter seeks to encourage precisely this attitude of respectful openness.<sup>2</sup> I will argue that in contrast to the distinct, sometimes conflicting, currents of critique in Schleiermacher's reception, his work is usefully read as "Reformed and reforming." As I am joining the ranks of scholars who have already claimed that Schleiermacher is working within the Reformed tradition—scholars like B.A. Gerrish, Matthias Gockel, Dawn DeVries, Bruce McCormack, and Kevin Hector—the distinctiveness of my own interpretation comes to

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, even within his own day, Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* was criticized from right and left such that when he read his own work, "this person and that person float before one's mind, first at one passage and then at another" (*On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lücke*, Trans. James Duke, Francis Fiorenza (Atlanta: Scholars, 1981), 33). Hereafter, cited as *OG*.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). Hereafter, *ICR*.

the fore with regard to the precise ways in which I see Schleiermacher not only as Reformed but in some ways intensifying Calvin's convictions by taking them to their logical conclusions in ways Calvin himself could not.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, Schleiermacher takes Calvin's anti-speculative convictions to their conclusion in his treatment of divine revelation and activity, more faithfully deriving the divine attributes from lived Christian piety, which is anchored in God's redeeming activity. While I treat Schleiermacher's Reformed and reforming character as a theologian, I will take aim especially to undermine the subjectivist interpretive tradition that was advanced by Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, made its way into English reception through H.R. Mackintosh, and came to rest in George Lindbeck and those who read Schleiermacher through him.

Moreover, I will argue that contemporary Schleiermacher scholars would do well to reject the much-used but often unexamined hermeneutical tradition of interpreting the *Glaubenslehre* in the bright light of the *Reden*. Because doing so has carried the day in Schleiermacher's reception, however, in order to take stock of these criticisms, I will treat his work as though it were all of one piece in the first section of this chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Some key texts include: B.A. Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993). *Tradition and Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978); "Schleiermacher and the Reformation: A Question of Doctrinal Development," *Church History* 49/2 (Jun., 1980): 147-159; *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (New York: Oxford, 2006). Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996). Bruce McCormack, "Revelation and History in Transfoundationalist Perspective: Karl Barth's Theological Epistemology in Conversation with a Schleiermacherian Tradition," in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); "Review of Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher*," *Theology Today* 55/3 (1998): 482-485. Kevin Hector, "Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 (July 2006): 307-322.



By surveying Schleiermacher's reception in Anglophone scholarship, providing a Reformed lens through which to read his work, and questioning the hermeneutic tradition that reads the *Glaubenslehre* primarily through the *Reden*, this first chapter sets the stage for a more detailed analysis of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God in chapters two and three. In addition, the constructive work I carry out in chapters four and five will include reiteration and redress of some strands of the currents of criticism I raise here.

### **I. Currents of Criticism in Anglophone Scholarship**

Until recently, Schleiermacher's readers typically have been introduced to his work as a requisite stop in a journey through theological history primarily because he serves as a foil for greater thinkers and movements. To one degree or another, this approach treats Schleiermacher as a whipping boy for much that has gone wrong in modern, "liberal" theology. He is, as the litany goes, an atheist, pantheist, Idealist, nationalist, subjectivist or experiential expressivist, and sexist. In this section, I endeavor to untangle the "amazing cacophony of voices" that interpret and critique Schleiermacher's work in these ways.<sup>4</sup> I will focus on the way these charges relate to the work of this dissertation, giving special attention to the charge of subjectivism or experiential expressivism. By beginning with the litany of charges made against Schleiermacher's work, I aim to show why he has been a rather unpopular figure in the history of Christian theology, before suggesting that his *Glaubenslehre* be read anew.

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<sup>4</sup> *OG*, 34.

### A. Spinozism [*All-Einheitler*] and Idealism [*Ichheitler*]

One of the earliest critiques of Schleiermacher's work, which began with his contemporaries and has persisted in his English-language reception, is the charge that it is Spinozistic or pantheistic.<sup>5</sup> A second is that it is Idealistic. These twin, conflicting charges have a long and philosophically intricate history that could be the subject of at least two dissertations, in and of themselves. Indeed, in part as a response to the charge that Schleiermacher is Spinozistic, Julia Lamm offers a careful and sophisticated interpretation of the relation between Schleiermacher's thought and that of Spinoza in *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza*.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, much ink has been spilled on Schleiermacher's association with Idealism.<sup>7</sup> As Matthias Gockel explains, "Most interpreters in the wake of the so-called Schleiermacher Renaissance since the 1960s regard him primarily as a philosophical theologian for whom German Idealism was the main conversation partner."<sup>8</sup> Thus, given the long history of

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<sup>5</sup> Johann Friedrich Ferdinand Delbrück was a prominent critic in this regard. See Johann Friedrich Ferdinand Delbrück, *Erörterungen einiger Hauptstücke in Dr. Friedrich Schleiermachers christliche Glaubenslehre* (Bonn: Adolf Marcus, 1827). Wilhelm Dilthey claims that the Earl of Shaftesbury, who paved the way for the acceptance of Spinoza, had a significant impact on Schleiermacher's thought. See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Leben Schleiermachers* (ed. Hermann Mulert; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1922), 1:174). For a contemporary exploration of this claim, see Ernest Boyer, Jr., "Schleiermacher, Shaftesbury, and the German Enlightenment," *The Harvard Theological Review* 96/2 (2003), 181-204.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996). See also Andrew Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (New York: Oxford, 2010). Dole highlights one way that the charge of Spinozism might be accurate, arguing that Schleiermacher is attempting to demonstrate "a simultaneous commitment to both of two positions commonly thought to be incompatible. One of these was a commitment to the Christian faith sufficiently robust to cohere with the duties of a preacher or an academic theologian; the other, a willingness to side with Enlightenment philosophers such as Spinoza, for whom the natural order, including the 'human order,' constituted a single, organized totality of causes and effects the details of which might be known by means of natural philosophy" (Ibid., 5).

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Hans-Joachim Birkner, *Theologie und Philosophie: Eine Einführung in Probleme der Schleiermacher-Interpretation* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 11.

Schleiermacher's reception with regard to the charges of Spinozism and Idealism, I will not attempt to offer a full treatment of it within the space of a portion of this chapter. I will instead focus on these critiques as a portal to the question of the relation of God and the world, which will be important for interpreting Schleiermacher's doctrine of God.

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's interpretation of Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) is most important for my purposes because his was the interpretation with which Schleiermacher primarily interacted and formed his own views of Spinoza. On his reckoning, Spinoza posited the relation between God and world as one of unity. God is not a being or an existence, but being or existence itself. That is, God is not opposed to nature, but its synonym. In his famous phrase, *deus sive natura*. In addition, for Spinoza, one's relation to God is primarily understood and enacted through the modes of philosophy and science.<sup>9</sup> Taken together, these aspects of his philosophy led Jacobi to charge Spinoza with atheism and pantheism.<sup>10</sup> The accusation of Spinozism, in its Jacobian form, is problematic for readers, of course, who are keen to clearly distinguish the Creator from creation and who see religious piety, as opposed to philosophical reflection, as the appropriate response to God's being and activity. As Andrew Dole explains, "Accusations of pantheism and atheism were serious matters for an aspiring Prussian intellectual in the context of the early nineteenth-century 'crisis of theism,'" which erupted in the midst of newly influential philosophical critiques of theism, the rise of historical criticism, and modern scientific inquiry.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the German pantheism controversy, see Brian Gerrish, "The Secret Religion of Germany: Christian Piety and the Pantheism Controversy," in *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 109-126.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinozas* (Breslau: G. Löwe, 1789).

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 4.

It was in this context that Schleiermacher stood accused. For example, his ecclesiastical superior, S.G. Sack (1738-1817) wrote, “I can acknowledge the book [i.e., the *Reden*], now that I have read it through with deliberation, as nothing more than a spirited apology for pantheism, a rhetorical presentation of the Spinozistic system.”<sup>12</sup> Likewise, D.F. Strauss (1808-74) reiterated Sack’s view, denouncing Schleiermacher as a “clever Spinozist” who “had pulverized Christianity and Spinozism so fine, for mixing, that it would take a sharp eye to distinguish the two.”<sup>13</sup> The charge that Schleiermacher, in both his early and late work, was an *All-Einheitler* or a pantheist has persisted into twentieth-century Anglophone scholarship. For instance, John Cobb claims, “Schleiermacher requires little more than that the universe as a whole be understood as living and infinite unity on which each of its parts must be seen as absolutely dependent. Specifically, Schleiermacher finds fully acceptable the philosophy of Spinoza.”<sup>14</sup> A Spinozistic reading of Schleiermacher’s work is, then, an early and enduring critique.

Lamm deftly and convincingly argues that Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God, “while indeed influenced by his appropriation of Spinoza and neo-Spinozism, is developed in the *Glaubenslehre* in such a way that it is free from the charges of pantheism commonly made against it.”<sup>15</sup> Schleiermacher takes the Spinozistic formula

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<sup>12</sup> Albert L. Blackwell, “The Antagonistic Correspondence of 1801 between Chaplain Sack and His Protégé Schleiermacher,” *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 1 (1981): 113.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1937), 79. Cf. David Friedrich Strauss, *Dogmatik*, vol. 2 (Tübingen, 1841).

<sup>14</sup> John Cobb, *Living Options in Protestant Theology: A Survey of Methods* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 131.

<sup>15</sup> Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 6.

“One and All” as closely related to his own doctrine of God.<sup>16</sup> Even so, his use of the feeling of absolute dependence (*das schlechthinnige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*), for which he is so well known, is developed out of his attempt to “free himself from charges of pantheism.”<sup>17</sup> I will argue throughout this work that in the *Glaubenslehre* (1830/31), Schleiermacher consistently upholds the distinction between Creator and creature.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, the asymmetrical relation of dependence that holds for God and creatures fixes a clear distinction between them.

It may come as a surprise, then, that in chapters four and five I will offer a critique of Schleiermacher’s work that may sound reminiscent of at least one line of thought posited by his early critics, which they connected with his alleged Spinozism: “Schleiermacher’s doctrine rejects the traditional Christian theistic belief in a transcendent, personal God.”<sup>19</sup> My critique of Schleiermacher’s rejection of the personal quiddity (i.e., what-ness) of God is not, however, a mere repetition of an early misunderstanding (i.e., that he is a pantheist). Rather, in light of Lamm’s work, I seek to show that although Schleiermacher explicitly rejects attributing personhood to God, key strands of his doctrine of God are in keeping with that attribution. Ascribing personhood to God is, I will argue, faithful to his theology considered as a whole. My suggestion will render visible a constructive response to early critiques of this kind.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. I will offer an argument in support of this claim below.

<sup>18</sup> Schleiermacher says that he admitted the possibility of pantheistic piety “because of what I had said about Spinoza in my *Speeches*, although I myself had noted that it is irrelevant since no form of religion is pantheistic” (*OG*, 49).

<sup>19</sup> Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 2.

A second early and enduring charge against Schleiermacher's work is that it is Idealistic. On this interpretation, Schleiermacher is associated with the various approaches taken by his colleagues at the University of Berlin, including Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) in their radicalization of Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) Transcendental Idealism.<sup>20</sup> Generally speaking, if pantheists have been interpreted as relating God and the world as a unity (with an emphasis on the empirical world), idealists have been taken to relate them by positing the pure ego or absolute human spirit as the ground of the world. Fichte has been interpreted as taking the *absolute* subject as synonymous with the deity. Yet because

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<sup>20</sup> Almost from the beginning, Schleiermacher and Hegel were not on good terms. As such, most have argued that Hegel did not influence Schleiermacher. Yet it may be a bit more complicated than that. As Richard Crouter argues, "In one sense I think it is clear that they did not influence each other. Neither thinker depended in a substantial way on the thought of the other in coming to his own position; in both instances they were fully formed and committed to their views prior to the call of Hegel to Berlin in 1818. Yet in another sense I believe there may well be a significant influence between them. ... in the decade of the 1820s each figure served tacitly as the intellectual foil for the work of the other and that, at the height of their careers, it was virtually impossible for either figure to express his views on religion or philosophy without implicitly confronting the thought of the other figure" (Richard Crouter, "Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48/1, 21-22). Crouter argues that Hegel and Schleiermacher were contending for the same space and were involved in something of a sibling rivalry: "Their commonly held beliefs include: first, that the university is not only a significant place of learning but also a major force in shaping and not just in reacting to currents of modern culture; second, that there could and must be a new accommodation between traditional religious and Christian teaching and modern thought, including humanistic as well as natural scientific inquiry; third, that the work of Immanuel Kant, which sought to reconcile man to the world by defining the limits of pure reason, was incomplete and must be supplanted by new efforts at synthesis and system-building. By disavowing knowledge of things-in-themselves, one denied to mankind a full comprehension of the world and of one's relationship to the world, not to mention a [full] knowledge of God" (Ibid., 22). Brian Gerrish explains, however, that although Schleiermacher may have had contextual and methodological similarities with Hegel, the latter insofar as "Schleiermacher's procedure of moving from figurative to scientifically exact language resembled the Hegelian program of transposing representations into concepts," there was a "significant difference of principle. For the Hegelians there was always the temptation to presume that philosophical reflection superseded religion by grasping its conceptual core, whereas for Schleiermacher the core of religion was not conceptual, and reflection could never be more to him than interpretation of what is original in the figurative form (Gl., §17.2)" (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 170).

absolute Spirit is conceived as the “immanent noumenon” rather than as a purely transcendent Ego standing apart from the world, he was also accused of atheism.

Here, too, Jacobi is an important interlocutor for he was one of the first to accuse Schleiermacher of having similarities with Fichte.<sup>21</sup> According to Jacobi, Fichte presents an “inverted Spinozism,” which is a “representation of a materialism without matter, or of a *mathesis pura*, in which pure and empty consciousness imagines mathematical space.”<sup>22</sup> For Jacobi, both Fichte and Schleiermacher present an immanent noumenon, which amounts to a type of Idealism.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, throughout the chapters that follow, I will argue that Schleiermacher holds a form of critical realism, rather than Spinozism or its inversion. As Lamm explains, Schleiermacher’s view “is not a naïve realism that presupposes the world *is* just as we experience it to be.”<sup>24</sup> That is to say, his view is critical of the relation between world and spirit. It does not consist in an unsophisticated form of correspondence. At the same time, it is a form of realism: “impressions are received from the outside; we are so constituted as to appropriate them. The finite world exists really before we conceive it.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, “Open Letter to Fichte,” *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. and trans. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>23</sup> Schleiermacher “stressed the points of divergence; nevertheless, Jacobi—whose 1799 “Open Letter to Fichte” associated Johann Fichte with Spinozism and thus atheism—withheld even so much as his ‘conditional praise’ for Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher understood that Jacobi’s accusation of Fichteanism was tantamount to the charge of atheism” (Kipton Jensen, “The Principle of Protestantism: On Hegel’s (Mis)Reading of Schleiermacher’s Speeches,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71/2 (2003), 408). Yet one point of affinity is their understanding of the starting point of dogmatics. For Fichte, Christian religious propositions cannot have the “slightest admixture of philosophical *Räsonnement*.” Rather, the proper subject of religion is God’s being in relationship with humanity. Moreover, Christianity is a religion of the heart. Cf. Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher’s Glaubenslehre* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 117.

<sup>24</sup> Julia Lamm, “Schleiermacher’s Post-Kantian Spinozism: The Early Essays on Spinoza, 1793-94,” *The Journal of Religion* 74/4 (Oct., 1994), 498.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 499.

Thus, although Schleiermacher is closely associated with the “turn to the subject” in modern theology, he consistently maintains both a critically realistic view of the relation between the human subject and the world, and a clear distinction between the world and God.<sup>26</sup>

Returning to the charge of Idealism: Because Schleiermacher was associated with Fichte, it is perhaps no surprise that he was also associated with Schelling who was an early disciple of Fichte (though he later developed an independent system) and who related his version of Transcendental Idealism to the work of Spinoza.<sup>27</sup> In a critique that compared Schleiermacher’s thought to that of Schelling, Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860) identified a parallel between “three moments” in Schleiermacher’s understanding of the idea of God and Schelling’s “three principles.”<sup>28</sup> Schelling’s three principles include: “1) God as the highest primordial ground, the indifference, 2) nature or the real, the ground in God, and 3) God in immanent meaning, i.e., God as Spirit or as Ideal.”<sup>29</sup> These correspond, Baur suggests, to Schleiermacher’s three moments in the idea of God: “1) absolute God in the most strict sense, 2) God as God, without any relation to Christ as the Redeemer, and 3) God in Christ or the perfect idea of God through the consciousness

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<sup>26</sup> See also D. Paul La Montagne, *Barth and Rationality: Critical Realism in Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 14-27. I will return to an explication of critical realism in chapter four.

<sup>27</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), xix.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. F.C. Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes in ihre Geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Osiander, 1841). Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider, and Heinrich Gottlieb Tzschirner also compared Schleiermacher to Schelling (See *OG*, 99). See also Martin Redeker who acknowledges a similarity between Schleiermacher and Schelling: “In the period from 1806 to 1811 Schleiermacher stood closer than ever to the idealist philosophy of identity and Schelling’s metaphysics in particular....During this time Schleiermacher adopted a middle position between Jacobi and the speculative metaphysics of Schelling and Hegel” (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 102-3).

<sup>29</sup> *OG*, 104, footnote 28.



of redemption in Christ.”<sup>30</sup> Although I will not undertake a detailed study of Schelling’s philosophy in order to respond to Baur’s charge, my work in this and the next chapter will show that although the order of Schleiermacher’s dogmatics may mislead some readers, in no way may a faithful interpreter of that work claim that he is concerned with either “absolute God in the most strict sense” or with “God as God, without any relation to Christ as the Redeemer.” Schleiermacher would find an exploration of those concerns to be out of theological bounds on the basis of their speculative nature. Schleiermacher, like Calvin, thinks himself concerned only with God *ad extra* (i.e., in relation to creation), rather than *in se* (i.e., in Godself, or apart from any relation to creation).

Yet although Baur may have misconstrued the character of the similarities between Schelling and Schleiermacher’s understandings of God, he at least correctly identified one of Schleiermacher’s goals, which coincides with one of the goals of Kant and the German Idealists—namely, to overcome early modernism’s split between empiricism and rationalism. Baur argued that the *Glaubenslehre* is an example of “ideal rationalism” because “it seeks to mediate between the supernaturalism of traditional church doctrine and the claims of reason.”<sup>31</sup> He defined ideal rationalism as “those historical forms of consciousness in which the ideas of reason appear in the course of temporal-historical development.”<sup>32</sup> Baur is certainly on the right track here:

Schleiermacher seeks to describe church doctrines as grounded in the concrete faith of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Baur understands such ideal rationalism as Christian gnostic philosophy of religion (*OG*, 98). For more on Baur, see Alister McGrath, “The Hegelian Critique of Schleiermacher: Strauss, Baur and Feuerbach,” in *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 32-52.

<sup>32</sup> *OG*, 98.

Christian communities as they are receptive to the always-prior divine economic activity, while describing those doctrines such that they are intelligible to an Enlightenment audience. He does so, I will argue below, by adopting, especially in the First Part of the *Glaubenslehre*, Kant's transcendental method whereby one takes a given thing (i.e., the feeling of absolute dependence) and considers the conditions for its possibility.<sup>33</sup> Doing so allows Schleiermacher to attend to the concrete piety of believers while ordering and circumscribing the dogmatic material. In this way, his work is indeed inspired in part by Kant's Transcendental Idealism.

In addition to Schleiermacher's philosophical association with Idealism based on perceived similarities with Fichte and Schelling, he was also associated with German nationalism, which was intensified in World War I and II, and which was thought to be at least partially fueled by German Idealism. In fact, Richard R. Niebuhr claims that modern

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<sup>33</sup> A word on "transcendental arguments:" "Although Immanuel Kant rarely uses the term 'transcendental argument', and when he does it is not in our current sense (cf. Hookway 1999: 180 n. 8), he nonetheless speaks frequently of 'transcendental deductions', 'transcendental expositions', and 'transcendental proofs', which roughly speaking have the force of what is today meant by 'transcendental argument'. Prior exemplars of such arguments may perhaps be claimed, such as Aristotle's proof of the principle of non-contradiction (see *Metaphysics* 1005b35–1006a28; Illies 2003: 45–6, Walker 2006: 240 and 255–6); but Kant nonetheless formulated what are generally taken to be the central examples of such arguments, so the history of the topic is usually assumed to start here, with the *Critique of Pure Reason* and its Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, Second Analogy, and Refutation of Idealism." Robert Stern, "Transcendental Arguments," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/transcendental-arguments/>>. Martin Redeker acknowledges, "he drew the conceptual tools of his theology from the movement of transcendental and critical idealism" (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 151). Yet here I do not wish to reinscribe Wilhelm Dilthey's far-reaching statement that Schleiermacher is "the Kant of Protestant theology" (*Schleiermachers System als Theologie*, ed. Martin Redeker [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966], 531. Cf. Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre* [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994], 83). Rather, I would claim that this judgment is only true on the basis of Schleiermacher's use of the transcendental method, his anti-speculative convictions, and as Redeker puts it, "a similar upheaval in the destruction of outdated metaphysics in theological thinking as Kant did in the realm of philosophy" (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 150). For the argument that Schleiermacher did not consistently apply this method, see Van A. Harvey, "A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher's Theological Method," *The Journal of Religion*, 42/3 (1962), 151-170.

political history is the primary reason for Schleiermacher's fall from grace in the minds of his twentieth century Anglophone interpreters. He explains,

Schleiermacher believed that the Christian church has a responsibility to culture, although he fought for the independence of the church from the state. He also became a nationalist of sorts during the German struggle with Napoleon. These elements of history have helped to share the resentment of our times against him as one who espoused a culturally conditioned Protestantism and the German *Volkgeist*. Above all the fate that put Schleiermacher in the midst of the halcyon days of philosophical idealism has tarnished his name in the post-WWI and -WWII era, when idealism is the scapegoat for so many misfortunes and new difficulties Europe has had to face.<sup>34</sup>

For interpreters who associated Schleiermacher with Idealism, when the latter was vilified so too was Schleiermacher.<sup>35</sup>

## **B. Psychological Subjectivism and Experiential Expressivism**

A third, and perhaps today the most prevalent, critique of Schleiermacher's work

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<sup>34</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1964), 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Crouter argues, however, that this association and vilification are largely unwarranted: "Early in his publications Schleiermacher, reflecting his early upbringing among the Moravians, saw that religious and church life needs to have a relative independence in relation to the state. Although his personal confession was Reformed, his teaching on church and state at times approximates a sharply delineated version of Luther's two-realms doctrine. There must be some basis for religious values, as well as for a religious community whose life is inviolable and allowed to freely unfold in relationship with, but not subordinated to, the state. Such themes occur early in his work, are vigorously attested to by passages from the third and fourth speeches, and remain throughout his lifetime. By contrast, Hegel sees religious life more tightly bound up with the state, virtually as the realm of inner meaning and spiritual direction of the nation. If we should try to differentiate them by asking what each thinker takes as the primary community to which his thought is directed, then I believe that the church occupies the place in Schleiermacher that the state eventually assumes for Hegel" (Richard Crouter, "Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48/1, 30). Indeed, "Although we are familiar with the revolt of the later nineteenth century against Hegel, we are insufficiently aware that the revolt was anticipated, if not precipitated, during his lifetime at his own university by a teacher of theology. Schleiermacher is thus the initial harbinger and herald of the revolt against Hegel, whether it is done by Kierkegaard in the name of an existential religiousness or by Marx as a quest for a just social order" (*ibid.*, 40).

is that he is a psychological subjectivist or “experiential expressivist.”<sup>36</sup> Karl Barth bulks large when considering this current of critique, which runs from his and Emil Brunner’s work through H.R. Mackintosh to George Lindbeck. Although Barth initially entertained the thought that Schleiermacher’s *Speeches* were “the most important and correct writings to appear since the closing of the New Testament canon,” his view drastically changed by 1921.<sup>37</sup> As he says in the winter semester of 1923-24,

I have indeed no reason to conceal the fact that I view with mistrust both Schleiermacher and all that Protestant theology essentially became under his influence, that in Christian matters I do *not* regard the decision that was made in that intellectually and culturally significant age as a happy one, that the result of my study of Schleiermacher thus far may be summed up in that saying of Goethe: "Lo, his spirit calls to thee from the cave: Be a man and do *not* follow me."<sup>38</sup>

The charge Barth holds against Schleiermacher is largely consistent with that of Emil Brunner, even though Barth sought to distance himself from Brunner in some ways.<sup>39</sup> He

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Luther himself was charged similarly in his own day. Brian Gerrish sums up the “very old Roman Catholic image of Luther: the rebel whose vigorous individualism had its source in pride, and its consequences in a fragmented church and a secular culture... The primary token of this proud attitude was his rejection of what the church had taught for one and a half millennia in favor of his *private* interpretation of Scripture” (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 47-48, my emphasis). Gerrish first rejects this understanding of Luther, claiming that “he builds on a single principle, which is the strict correlation of subject and object” (ibid., 48). When this is made clear, Gerrish goes on to point out the similarities between Luther and Schleiermacher: “No more than Luther did Schleiermacher lose the religious object in subjectivism; like the Reformer, he held that the Christian God is not to be had as an object, but only in piety or believing. More than this, he also made religious subjectivity the actual referent of dogmatic statements, the content of ‘doctrine.’ In so doing, he believed himself to be a disciple of Dr. Martin Luther. Schleiermacher, too, held that experience makes a theologian (cf. LW 54:7), venturing to write on the title page of his dogmatics his quotation from Anselm... by focusing theological interest on what it means to live by faith, Luther created a theology of experience that foreshadowed the modern view of theology as an anthropocentric study of a theocentric phenomenon” (ibid., 56). I am not sure “theology of experience” is an apt phrase to use of either Luther or Schleiermacher. Yet they both recognize the relational and contextual character of theologizing. In this, they were both accused of subjectivism.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Barth, “Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher,” in *Theology of Schleiermacher*, 262.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures At Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923-24* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 16.

<sup>39</sup> Barth distanced himself from Brunner in *Zwischen den Zeiten*, though he agreed that Schleiermacher’s theology did not do justice to the word of God; see Karl Barth, “Brunner’s Schleiermacherbuch,” *Zwischen den Zeiten* 8 (1924): 49-64. In Brunner’s *Die Mystik und das Wort*, he chastises Schleiermacher for being a

puts it as follows in his discussion of paragraph nine of *The Christian Faith*:

A theology of man is not an impossibility as such, though by itself it would not fulfil [*sic*] the task of *Christian* theology. But it would have to be the story of the 'sickness unto death' from which man suffers in relation to God. Schleiermacher's theology, however, is even further afield from the task of Christian theology than Kierkegaard's, for under the pretext of Christian theology it raises a *song of triumph* to man, celebrating both his union with God and his own cultural activity, and necessarily coming to grief in so doing.<sup>40</sup>

Further,

A theology that has chosen piety as its theme—even though this be Christian

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mystic bent on human subjectivism. Brunner thought Schleiermacher began with a general theory of religion in which individuals were mystically united to "the All." There are two problems with this, according to Brunner. As Christine Helmer explains, "First, Brunner saw mysticism as a threat to the theology of the word. Mystical human subjectivism undermined the radically alien and objective divine word of judgment and gospel. Second, mysticism's illegitimate conflation of nature and spirit was due to its unholy alliance with philosophy. Together, mysticism and metaphysics provided grounds for a theology that betrayed the witness of the Bible and the Reformation" (Christine Helmer, *Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory*, *The Journal of Religion* 83/4 [2003], 517). "In Brunner's case," Helmer continues, "the hostility is construed as a contradiction between the biblically based Christianity of the Reformation and the subjectivist turn of modern religion. According to Brunner, Schleiermacher's transgressions consist of theologically depicting sin as a psychological state, and transforming justifying grace into an actuality already immanent in, rather than imputed to, self-consciousness" (ibid., 525). Helmer argues, in contrast, that if mysticism is to be found in Schleiermacher's work, "the mystical moment is to be explained in the soteriological terms of Jesus' person-forming influence: the mystical relationship constitutes the self at the level of immediate self-consciousness in the process of being redeemed" (ibid., 518). As such, "Schleiermacher's construal of the individual believer's relation to the *Christus praesens* as a mystical relation" is "based on the objective mediation of Christ within the Christian community" (ibid., 527). Thus, "As [Brian] Gerrish notes, Brunner's misunderstanding of Schleiermacher is centered precisely on the point concerning the essence of Christianity as merely a historical manifestation of a more generic feeling of absolute dependence rather than as located in Christianity as a positive religion" (ibid., 529). Schleiermacher himself claims that theology is a "positive" science, whereby he means "the theological exposition of the contents of Christian revelation—in contrast with the natural theology of the Enlightenment, which identified revelation and reason" (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 105). Thus, Helmer continues, "Schleiermacher's soteriological-ecclesial determination of the mystical element immunizes him against Brunner's attacks. Brunner's worries concerning the mystical erasure of individuality and the philosophical usurping of a theological truth are abated by Schleiermacher's own soteriological specification of the mystical encounter with Christ. This account of mysticism is in fundamental agreement with Gerrish's argument that Schleiermacher's essence of Christianity "contains more than the feeling of absolute dependence" and that, in spite of its logical order, *The Christian Faith*'s material center is a distinct Christian consciousness and its Christian experience" (Christine Helmer, "Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory," *The Journal of Religion* 83/4 [2003], 536). Cf. Emil Brunner, *Die Mystik und Das Wort: Der Gegensatz zwischen moderner Religionsauffassung und christlichen Glauben* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1924).

<sup>40</sup> Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures At Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923-24* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 230.

piety—may not and cannot reach any other conclusion than that of the relativism which finds revelation in the individual *as such* and therefore in principle in *every* individual.<sup>41</sup>

It should be clear from these passages that Barth did not find Schleiermacher's theology adequate by any means. He sees it, rather, as a form of anthropology that is not concerned with matters of truth. When he claims that “§14 restricts faith to the inner emotion of real sensing,” he means that Schleiermacher is not attending to the objective revelation of God.<sup>42</sup> Or, put vis-à-vis the doctrine of sin, “We understand the whole tragedy when we consider that, faithful to his historico-psychological methodology, Schleiermacher means by grace and sin no more than two corresponding states in the religious consciousness of the Christian.”<sup>43</sup> Barth judges Schleiermacher's theology as failing precisely in limiting itself to the subjective religious self-consciousness rather than taking its starting point and content as the objective revelation of the Word of God.<sup>44</sup>

Accordingly, H.R. Mackintosh, one of Barth's Anglophone devotees, claims that Schleiermacher did not take seriously the self-revelation of God in God's word, instead encouraging the religious believer to become bent inward on herself, the soul becoming

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>43</sup> Karl Barth, § 50 *God and Nothingness*. In *Church Dogmatics Volume III,3*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 333.

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted as well that “there was always a political cast to Barth's suspicion of Schleiermacher; the young Swiss theologian wondered if the Berlin pastor would have signed the manifesto favoring the Kaiser's aims in World War I as readily as did Barth's own theological teachers” (Richard Crouter, “Schleiermacher and the Theology of Bourgeois Society: A Critique of the Critics,” *The Journal of Religion* 66/3 [1986], 305. Even so, in his 1923-4 lectures on Schleiermacher's theology he says, “At this point we have to respect his insight and vision, for this principle is no other than that of social equality. Like the question of the absoluteness of Christianity, this is a theme that is constantly mentioned and discussed in these sermons, and to the best of my knowledge this side of his ethics has never been investigated or presented in context” (ibid., 309-10).

“absorbed in its own states,” rather than listening to the voice of God.<sup>45</sup> As Mackintosh puts it:

It is only in a relative sense, therefore, that we can speak of the *Dogmatic* of Schleiermacher as an authentically Christian book. ...it would be roughly true to say that he has put discovery in the place of revelation, the religious consciousness in the place of the Word of God, and the mere ‘not yet’ of imperfection in the place of sin. Thus the gulf set between him and the Reformers is wide and deep.<sup>46</sup>

These words were published in Great Britain in 1937, just nine years after the first English translation of the *Glaubenslehre* was produced. Readings of this type persisted throughout the late twentieth century at least in part because Mackintosh’s work was a point of reception for Brunner and Barth’s interpretations of Schleiermacher and alternative visions for Christian theology.<sup>47</sup>

Following Barth’s earlier critique in some respects, and building on the American edifice of neo-orthodoxy, George Lindbeck argues in *The Nature of Doctrine* that Schleiermacher is an “experiential expressivist” who is only interested in doctrines as “noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations.”<sup>48</sup> The similarity with Barth’s view is apparent. On this view,

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<sup>45</sup> Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1937), 48. A contemporary critique of the same sort is offered by Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>47</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr also advances this view in a different way by placing the early Schleiermacher in the category of cultural accommodation. Crouter describes both Niebuhr’s critique of Schleiermacher and its irony: “His [i.e., Niebuhr’s] aphorism in *Kingdom of God in America* (1937) neatly summed up the shallow outcome of this theological direction [i.e. Liberalism]: ‘A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.’ Niebuhr’s credentials as a critic of the view he describes are as impeccable as Barth’s, even though based on a different theological stance” (Richard Crouter, “Schleiermacher and the Theology of Bourgeois Society: A Critique of the Critics,” *The Journal of Religion* 66/3 [1986], 306).

<sup>48</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 16. See also Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospels*

The general principle is that insofar as doctrines function as nondiscursive symbols, they are polyvalent in import and therefore subject to changes of meaning or even to a total loss of meaningfulness, to what Tillich calls their death. They are not crucial for religious agreement or disagreement, because these are constituted by harmony or conflict in underlying feelings, attitudes, existential orientations, or practices, rather than by what happens on the level of symbolic (including doctrinal) objectifications.<sup>49</sup>

In other words, what is important for experiential-expressivists is not truth but the inner states of the soul. Implicit within this approach, Lindbeck argues, is the view that different religions are different expressions of a common experience of the Ultimate.<sup>50</sup> He argues against this view, claiming that one can “no more be religious in general than one can speak language in general.”<sup>51</sup> As I will show in the chapters to follow, Schleiermacher is an odd choice of theologian to whom to attribute an affirmation of religiosity in general. In addition, Lindbeck is mistaken in conceiving of Schleiermacher’s theology as concerned solely with prereflective experiences.<sup>52</sup> Yet his

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as *Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1985) 25-31; “Piety, Narrative, and Christian Identity,” *Word and World* 3 [1983] 148- 59, reprinted in *Constructing Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991) 126-41. Brian Gerrish defends Schleiermacher against Lindbeck’s charge in Brian Gerrish, “The Nature of Doctrine,” *The Journal of Religion* 68 (1988): 87-92. See also Georg Behrens, “Schleiermacher Contra Lindbeck on the Status of Doctrinal Sentences,” *Religious Studies* 30/4 (1994), 399-417.

<sup>49</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 17.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Lindbeck’s sole evidence, cited in *The Nature of Doctrine*, for understanding Schleiermacher as an experiential-expressivist is a reference (without interpretation) to not even two pages within paragraph four. Within those two pages (§4.4), Schleiermacher explains the “identification of absolute dependence with ‘relation to God’” in his fourth proposition: “The common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety, by which these are conjointly distinguished from all other feelings, or, in other words, the self-identical essence of piety, is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God” (*CF*, 12). In §4.4, Schleiermacher makes two claims. First, he claims that the source of the feeling of absolute dependence is God, who is not identical to the world or any part of the world. Second, the feeling of dependence does not require previous knowledge of God. Rather, “God is given to us in feeling in an originary way” (*CF*, 17), rather than given to us “outwardly” in a “perceptible object” (*CF*, 18). How these two claims make Schleiermacher an experiential expressivist is unclear to me, not only because he identifies God as distinct from the world or any part of it—including one’s experiences of God—but also because of Schleiermacher’s less than flattering reference in that section to “purely



understanding of Schleiermacher has been influential in the reception of Schleiermacher's work in recent decades.<sup>53</sup>

As an example of this, Wendy Farley, whose recent work in *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* is engaged in chapter five, also tends in this direction. However, instead of deriding Schleiermacher on that account, she praises him for his attention, as she understands it, to the non-dual root of humanity's subjectivity. In either case, whether criticizing or praising Schleiermacher for his alleged experiential expressivism, I will argue that such an interpretation of Schleiermacher's mature work is misguided. Indeed, it is one of the main burdens of this dissertation to show that Schleiermacher is not an experiential expressivist or psychological subjectivist but rather a Reformed and reforming theologian whose dogmatic content is God in relation to humanity.<sup>54</sup>

### C. Sexism

A fourth criticism of Schleiermacher's work is that it is sexist. Contemporary feminists are chief among those who take up this criticism. There is, however, interpretive disagreement about Schleiermacher's various works and legacy.<sup>55</sup> Some

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arbitrary symbolism," which some use to represent God (*CF*, 18).

<sup>53</sup> For example, Michael Horton claims, "If the object of theology is really ethics for Kant, and Absolute Spirit for Hegel, then for the father of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher 1768-1834), it is universal religious experience, especially 'the feeling of absolute dependence'" (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011], 70).

<sup>54</sup> As Redeker puts it, his object is "the living community with Christ the Redeemer which contains the relationship of faith between God and man," (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 108).

<sup>55</sup> See Patricia Ellen Guenther-Gleason, *On Schleiermacher and Gender Politics* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 1-6.

praise him for his attention to female characters and use of irony in employing stereotypical gender images.<sup>56</sup> Others argue that his appreciation of “the female character” and his association of femininity with religion is a result of the socioeconomic shift of the time, which led to an increase in the relegation of women to the home.<sup>57</sup> As such, even though Schleiermacher’s appreciation of “the feminine” may seem positive to some feminists, that appreciation itself is arguably tied to a patriarchal rather than a feminist agenda.<sup>58</sup> I am inclined to agree with the latter authors insofar as they raise awareness of the ways in which Schleiermacher did not fully overcome the sexism of his day.

Granted those legitimate and important criticisms, I disagree with the more general charge that Schleiermacher relegates religion to the “private” sphere. Grace Jantzen’s argument regarding Schleiermacher’s “privatization” of religion as it is correlated with women’s relegation to the home is representative:

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<sup>56</sup> See Kurt Lutni, *Feminismus und Romantik: Sprache, Gesellschaft, Symbole, Religion* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1985), 183-86. Ruth Drucilla Richardson, *The Role of Women in the Life and Thought of the Early Schleiermacher (1768-1806)* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen, 1991). Dawn DeVries, “Schleiermacher’s Christmas Eve Dialogue: Bourgeois Ideology or Feminist Theology?” *Journal of Religion* 69 (1989), 169-83.

<sup>57</sup> For critiques of Schleiermacher more generally as a bourgeois theologian, see Yorick Spiegel, *Theologie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Sozialphilosophie und Glaubenslehre bei Friedrich Schleiermacher* (München: C. Kaiser, 1968); Dieter Schellong, *Burgertum und christliche Religion: Anpassungsproblem der Theologie seit Schleiermacher* (München: 1975). For a response to these critiques, see Richard Crouter, “Schleiermacher and the Theology of Bourgeois Society: A Critique of the Critics,” *The Journal of Religion* 66/3 (1986), 302-323. Crouter concludes, “If Schleiermacher accommodated himself to anything, it was to the reform efforts that failed but that challenged the prevailing prerogatives of aristocracy and crown in his nation” (ibid., 320).

<sup>58</sup> Marilyn Chapin Massey, *Feminine Soul: The Fate of an Ideal* (Boston: Beacon, 1985). Sheila Briggs, “Schleiermacher and the Construction of the Gendered Self,” in Iain G. Nicol, ed. *Schleiermacher and Feminism: Sources, Evaluations, and Responses* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen, 1992), 87-94. Katherine Faull, “Schleiermacher—A Feminist? Or, How to Read Gender Inflected Theology,” in Iain G. Nicol, ed. *Schleiermacher and Feminism: Sources, Evaluations, and Responses* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen, 1992), 13-32.

Thus for Schleiermacher the individual subject of the Enlightenment has private intense feelings which are seen as the core of religion. Cultural or material positioning would not at bottom affect the experiences or even the subjects who have them; only the way they would later describe the experiences would be affected. By such a gesture of privatization, religion could be removed from the political realm. ... There is, however, every reason to see that his account of religion was highly congenial to the dominant classes in an age of capitalist and imperialist expansion. It became possible simultaneously to foster depth of inward 'religious feeling' and to aver that spirituality has nothing to do with politics, that it is quintessentially private: a view still often maintained in society at large.<sup>59</sup>

In this passage, Jantzen combines her understanding of Schleiermacher as focused on "private intense feelings" with a critique of the way that view can be used politically to relegate women to the private sphere and maintain power over non-dominant classes. However, Jantzen's critique is not appropriately aimed at Schleiermacher's theology understood as a whole. As I will show in the chapters to follow, Schleiermacher understands the essence of religion as distinct but not separate from the rest of human knowledge and activity. Indeed, his emphasis on the one eternal divine decree that orders the entire universe as a whole, along with his understanding of the perfecting activity of God in Jesus Christ and the Church, require that piety be conceived as connected with and issuing forth into the world in all its activities. The fact that Schleiermacher engaged in political activity as a pious Christian might also provide evidence that his system of thought does not lead to a privatization of religion.<sup>60</sup> Further, I will argue that the system

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<sup>59</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University, 1999), 117.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Crouter explains, "Though discussion of the political teaching of Schleiermacher has never attained the intensity of discussion of his theology, it is well known that much of his life work focused on a theory of politics and society, including his ethics, his lectures on the state, occasional papers and addresses before the Berlin Academy and other bodies, his Plato translations and prefaces (especially the Republic) not to mention the political dimension of numerous sermons or his direct involvement in the movement of Prussian Reform. To this day no study integrates the diverse strata of Schleiermacher's theological and political teaching into a full-scale treatment of his thought" (Richard Crouter, "Schleiermacher and the Theology of Bourgeois Society: A Critique of the Critics," *The Journal of Religion* 66/3 [1986], 302).

of doctrine he constructs is useful for advancing contemporary feminist constructive theology.

Before leaving Schleiermacher's reception in the English-speaking world, I would be remiss if I did not note that at least a few of Schleiermacher's Anglophone interpreters seemed to be on the right track. At the same time as Lindbeck was writing *The Nature of Doctrine*, for instance, Hans Frei was giving lectures that were collected and posthumously published as *Types of Christian Theology*.<sup>61</sup> In this work, Frei characterizes Schleiermacher as a theologian of the third type, situating him quite close to

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Crouter goes on to argue against those who criticize Schleiermacher for neglecting the connection of his theology to its social setting: "What is so singular about the newer criticism is the way that it imputes a kind of "deductivism" to Schleiermacher, as if he, along with the German idealists and romantics among his peers, only thinks speculatively and abstractly, while missing the connectedness with social reality where change and real life take place. Against this, I contend that the shoe is on the other foot; if anything is "deductive" it is the habit, apparently on the increase, of basing an analysis of Schleiermacher's theology and politics on anachronistic assumptions" (ibid., 304). While Schleiermacher claims for religion a separate sphere than the state, "Precisely because the spiritual realm has a degree of cultural independence, the religious community provides Schleiermacher with a basis for launching a critique of the politics of his era" (ibid., 309). For an overview of Schleiermacher's political engagement, see pages 311-323 of the same essay just cited. See also Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Letters on the Occasion of the Political-Theological Task and the Open Letter of Jewish Householders" in Friedländer, David; Schleiermacher, Friedrich; Teller, Wilhelm Abraham, *A Debate on Jewish Emancipation and Christian Theology in Old Berlin*, Trans. and eds. Richard Crouter and Julie Klassen. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004), 80-112.

<sup>61</sup> Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* (New Haven: Yale University, 1992). There are five types in total: 1) In the first type, "theology is a philosophical discipline within the academy," and its prototypical figures are Immanuel Kant, Gordon Kaufman, and J.G. Fichte (ibid., 3). 2) In the second type, theology is subsumed "under a general philosophical *Wissenschaftslehre*, but under the governing auspices of the latter it seeks to correlate specifically Christian with general cultural meaning structures such as natural science or the 'spirit' of a cultural era." Figures of the second type include Rudolf Bultmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, David Tracy, Karl Rahner, and Carl Henry (ibid., 3). 3) The third type "also seeks to correlate theology as a procedure subject to formal, universal, transcendental criteria for valid thinking, with theology as specific and second-order Christian self-description; but unlike the second type, it proposes no supertheory or comprehensive structure for integrating them, only ad hoc procedures" (ibid., 3). 4) The fourth type "argues that Christian theology is a nonsystematic combination of normed Christian self-description and method founded on general theory. But unlike the third, it does not propose a correlation between heterogeneous equals, and it reverses the priority ordering of the second type: the practical discipline of Christian self-description governs and limits the applicability of general criteria of meaning in theology, rather than vice versa" (ibid., 3-4). 5) Christian theology, on the fifth type, "is exclusively a matter of Christian self-description." On this type, "There is no formal, context-independent or independently describable set of transcendental conditions governing that internal logic" (ibid., 4). Examples of this view include "Wittgensteinian fideists" and D.Z. Phillips.

Barth who exemplifies the fourth type.<sup>62</sup> This was a bold move in an interpretive era when Schleiermacher and Barth were taken to be on opposite sides of the spectrum. In contrast to the usual interpretation, Frei claims, “between them they best exhibit both the possibilities and problems of significant second-order restatement of the tradition of the major hermeneutical and theological consensus in Western Christianity.”<sup>63</sup> Frei argues that Barth more adequately conceives of the theological task and method. Yet he takes Schleiermacher to be driven primarily neither by pure self-description of inner pious states of Christian feeling nor by philosophical principles. Rather, Schleiermacher is committed both to the placement of theology within the modern academy as a scientific endeavor and to theology as self-description and self-criticism of the Christian Church.<sup>64</sup> By describing Schleiermacher as having twin concerns—academic and ecclesial—and by placing his theological method quite close to Barth’s, Frei exemplifies a strand of Schleiermacher reception that is much more accurate than Lindbeck’s.<sup>65</sup>

To summarize the currents of critique Schleiermacher’s work has endured, we might say that from his own time until today, theologians have been unsatisfied, uncomfortable, and/or indignant with him.<sup>66</sup> And yet, for all the discomfort theologians have experienced when engaging Schleiermacher’s work, we continue to encounter it. Indeed, even as his fiercest critics openly expressed their opposition to him, they did so

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 3. I will return to this topic in the beginning of chapter three, when I discuss the task of theology.

<sup>65</sup> Although I disagree with many details in his work, Stephen Sykes generally presents a balanced account of Schleiermacher’s work in Stephen Sykes, *Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Makers of Contemporary Theology Series) (Atlanta: John Knox, 1971).

<sup>66</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 6, 11: “Contemporary Protestant theologians and students of the history of Christian thought are, for the most part, uncomfortable in the presence of Friedrich Schleiermacher.”

“with a grudging acknowledgement of Schleiermacher's genius and achievement.”<sup>67</sup> As a contrast to the cacophony of voices with which I began this section, consider the following. Brunner describes him as the only great theologian of the nineteenth century. Likewise, Barth admitted, in the “Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher,”

It may be surprising that I have declared myself to be at odds with Schleiermacher only with reservations: *rebus sic stantibus*, ‘for the present,’ ‘until better instructed.’ Something like a reservation, a genuine uncertainty, may rightly be detected here. The door is in fact not latched. I am actually to the present day not finished with him. Not even with regard to his point of view. As I have understood him up to now, I have supposed and continued to suppose that I must take a completely different tack from those who follow him. I am certain of my course and of my point of view. I am, however, not so certain of them that I can confidently say that my “Yes” necessarily implies a “No” to Schleiermacher's point of view. For have I indeed understood him correctly? Could he not perhaps be understood differently so that I would not have to reject his theology, but might rather be joyfully conscious of proceeding in fundamental agreement with him?<sup>68</sup>

Barth continues with a hope for the future of theology: “I would like to reckon with the possibility of a theology of the Holy Spirit, a theology of which Schleiermacher was scarcely conscious, but which might actually have been the legitimate concern dominating even his theological activity.”<sup>69</sup> Mackintosh follows suit, also sounding a note of respect for Schleiermacher when he says,

Next to the *Institutes* of Calvin, it is the most influential dogmatic work to which evangelical Protestantism can point, and it has helped to teach theology to more than three generations. One could no more understand present-day systematic thought without this book—its faults equally with its virtues—than one could understand modern biology without Darwin.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Mattias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (New York: Oxford, 2006).

<sup>68</sup> Karl Barth, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Making of Modern Theology Series), ed. Clifford Green (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 274-5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>70</sup> Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1937), 60.

Continuing this train of thought, Richard R. Niebuhr argues that the “study of Schleiermacher is eminently worthwhile, if only because it forces the imagination out of the provincialism and parochialism of the present and requires us to think the perennial problems and affirmations of Christianity from a standpoint other than that from which we are accustomed to proceed.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, although Schleiermacher’s work has been vilified over and over again variously as Spinozistic, Idealistic, Subjectivistic, and/or sexist, he remains an important figure.

More specifically, I would argue that because many of Schleiermacher’s readers (sympathetic or otherwise) are also students of Barth, the current question of Schleiermacher’s value in contemporary theological conversations will largely be answered with reference to his relation to the Reformed tradition. Is Schleiermacher simply a foil that allowed Barth to become the towering Reformed theologian he has become? Or is it the case that Schleiermacher is faithful to the Reformation heritage? According to Gerrish, “The difference between Schleiermacher and Barth is a difference over what the Reformation heritage is.”<sup>72</sup> As such, I will turn in the next section of this chapter to my understanding of Schleiermacher as Reformed and reforming. Placing his work in the stream of Reformed theology is important not only as a way to engage those who have been Schleiermacher’s primary interpreters, but also because doing so allows me to argue against the erroneous interpretations I have considered above by offering a positive account of his theology. As part of the Reformed tradition, Schleiermacher is

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<sup>71</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 14.

<sup>72</sup> B. A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1984), 22.

always keen to distinguish the Creator from creation, to consider God always and only in relation to the pious Christian reception of the divine activity, to keep ever before his readers the eternality of the divine activity that sovereignly determines the world, and to highlight the distinctively Christian piety of believers in local church communities, even as they enact their hope for the universal reign of God on earth.

## II. Schleiermacher as Reformed and Reforming Theologian

By describing Schleiermacher as Reformed and reforming, I want to undermine some of the misguided critiques of his work that have been catalogued above. I will argue that Schleiermacher is a Reformed and reforming theologian by analyzing his work in relation to John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.<sup>73</sup> I compare Schleiermacher with Calvin for the obvious reason that Calvin is a figure who we can with ease claim is Reformed.<sup>74</sup> The idea is that if we may identify a number of similarities between Calvin

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<sup>73</sup> Brian Gerrish is the most prominent leader in making this move: Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993). Even so, Gerrish says, "It would be a mistake to ask, Whose doctrines does Schleiermacher come closest to? as though that were the real question of Schleiermacher and the Reformation" (ibid., 183). The context of this passage shows that Gerrish is not here disclaiming his thesis that Schleiermacher is indebted to Calvin and that we see his debt by looking at their doctrinal works. Rather, Gerrish is emphasizing that Schleiermacher was not interested in uniformity of doctrine with one individual. This is the point of his citing Schleiermacher's affinity for Erasmus, "whose freedom of spirit, despite all that could be said against him, set him apart from those on both sides of the confessional split" (ibid.). See also Alexander Schweizer, *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt*, 2 vols, (Zurich: Orell, Füssli, 1844-47); Wilhelm Niesel, "Schleiermachers Verhältnis zur reformierten Tradition," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 8 (1930): 511-25; Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Scribner's, 1964), 248-259; Van A. Harvey, "A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher's Theological Method," *Journal of Religion* 42/3 (July 1962), 151-70. For an argument against Harvey, see Kenneth Hamilton, "Schleiermacher and Relational Theology," *The Journal of Religion* 44/1 (1964), 29-39.

<sup>74</sup> Even so, I do not think that Reformed theology is synonymous with Calvin. As Muller explains, "Reformed theology appears not as a monolithic structure—not, in short, as 'Calvinism'—but as a form of Augustinian theology and piety capable of considerable variation in its form of presentation, and capable also of clarification and augmentation on fine points of doctrine" (Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree*:



and Schleiermacher, then we may conclude with a reasonable degree of confidence that Schleiermacher is a Reformed theologian.<sup>75</sup> Going further, to argue that Schleiermacher is not only Reformed but also reforming, I highlight a few significant differences between Schleiermacher and Calvin, emphasizing Schleiermacher's historical context "between

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*Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 176). Gerrish argues that many emphases of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God are also found in Zwingli: "In his *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Zwingli's stress on the immanence of God (*Hoc est deus in mundo, quod ratio in homine!*), his close identification of natural and divine causality, his conception of God as the life and motion of all that lives and moves, the abundant goodness that loves to impart itself—all of these characteristically Zwinglian thoughts find an echo in Schleiermacher" (*Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 183). Schleiermacher has affinities with Jonathan Edwards as well. As Niebuhr describes it, "The hiatus between feeling or religious affection and discourse that so struck [William] James [in *Varieties of Religious Experience*] did not exist for Edwards and Schleiermacher. Hence, they not only shared a common idea of human nature, which Edwards stated as the conviction that '...affections [are] the springs that set men going, in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits...he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affections, never is engaged in the business of religion'; but they also agreed that theological discourse can remain faithful to the stuff of human religion and still be coherent, that theology can unite the affectional and rational dimensions of human nature and therefore need not subsist either upon mere semantic and logical conventions nor upon esoteric and incoherent attestations of mystery" (Richard R. Niebuhr, "Schleiermacher: Theology as Human Reflection," *The Harvard Theological Review* 55/1 [1962], 25-6). Yet although Schleiermacher may be compared with other Reformers, he regarded Calvin most highly. Gerrish explains, "Schleiermacher admired the *Institutes* for two main reasons, neither of which comes as any surprise. First, the *Institutes* is a priceless work because it never loses touch with the religious affections, even in the most intricate material...In other words, Calvin, we may say, never lost sight of the fact that theology really is about the actual Christian religion. Second, Schleiermacher ranked the *Institutes* highly for sharpness of method and systematic compass...what Schleiermacher admired most in Calvin's *Institutes* was exactly what he himself strove to achieve in his own *Glaubenslehre*: a dogmatics that has at once a churchly character, given by its consistent reference to the Christian affections, and a scientific character, given by the exactness and mutual coherence of its concepts" (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 184-5).

<sup>75</sup> Schleiermacher himself notes in *On the Doctrine of Election* that he does not "intend to earn or justify any reputation of being a bold and determined disciple of Calvin" (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On the Doctrine of Election*, trans. Iain G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012], 23). (Hereafter, cited as *DE*.) The idea, then, is not to show that Schleiermacher follows Calvin or conceives of himself as at every point Calvinian, but that he is influenced by and seeks to advance the Reformed tradition – something Schleiermacher never denies. At the same time, I do not want to obscure the fact that Schleiermacher's mature work has much in common with the work of other traditional figures, like Thomas Aquinas, for instance. In Brian Gerrish's estimation, "perhaps it is only with the much earlier masterpiece of Western theology, the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, that the *Glaubenslehre* can be justly compared. At any rate, this—from the other side, so to say—was the verdict pronounced by Johannes Evangelist von Kuhn (1806-87), of the Catholic Tübingen School, who wrote, 'Among all the later and present-day theologians, only Schleiermacher can be compared with him [Thomas] as far as scientific force and power are concerned' (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 148).

Enlightenment and Romanticism” where he consciously does theology in the modern era.<sup>76</sup> By showing the way that Schleiermacher both shares similarities with Calvin and diverges from him in ways that are consonant with the dynamics of Calvin’s work, my work in this section helps subdue the critiques of the previous section. Schleiermacher is not the progenitor of an entirely new, modern, “liberal” way of doing theology. Rather he stands in the Reformation tradition, building on and intensifying Reformed convictions. My approach here is both truer to his texts and avoids falling into the tired lines of interpretation catalogued above.

In what follows, I will begin by briefly pointing to Schleiermacher’s audiences in the *Glaubenslehre*. I will then analyze a few poignant points of similarity and departure in the content of their mature works. In doing so, I will show how Schleiermacher is Reformed and, in some ways, intensifies a dynamic embedded in Calvin.

### **A. The Audiences of the *Glaubenslehre***

As Chair of Theology and Rector of the University of Berlin, as well as Pastor of Trinity Church, Schleiermacher wrote *Der christliche Glaube*, first published in 1821/22 and revised in 1830/31, for at least two corresponding purposes and for two audiences: first, to address his academic colleagues in Berlin who were interested in what role and place theology has in the modern academy, and second, to guide the “future leaders of the

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<sup>76</sup> Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge, 2005).

believing community in their work as preachers.”<sup>77</sup> As for his first audience, Thomas

Albert Howard provides the context:

The University of Berlin was the first German university, at least in the formulations of its founders if not entirely in actual practice, to sever the centuries old tie between confessionally defined Christianity and university education. It was the first European university founded under purely national, secular auspices, bearing the imprimatur of neither emperor nor pope.<sup>78</sup>

Schleiermacher’s “models of university and theology,” he continues, “helped establish the institutional conditions for the renewed legitimation and ‘scientization’

(*Verwissenschaftlichung*) of theology in the nineteenth century.”<sup>79</sup> For his academic

audience, then, Schleiermacher argues that theology is not *unwissenschaftlich*

(unscientific). Rather, he defines theology as offering didactic description of the doctrines

of the Christian Church at a given time and place—emphasizing that dogmatics is a

context-specific endeavor that requires conceptual and logical rigor, aiming at precision,

clarity, and accuracy. The didactic character of dogmatics consists in “its descriptive

instruction,” that is, “instructing by description or representation.”<sup>80</sup> Dogmatic theology

consists in the “doctrine now current in the Evangelical [Protestant] Church.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> B. A. Gerrish, Foreword to *The Christian Faith*, eds. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: T&T Clark, 1999), 88. The *Glaubenslehre* was designed for use in courses at Schleiermacher’s university (*OG*, 75). See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense* (1808). See also Brian Gerrish, “From *Dogmatik* to *Glaubenslehre*: A Paradigm Change in Modern Theology,” in *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 239-273.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 131. Howard’s account casts Schleiermacher “as a Prussian academic bureaucrat, an intellectual architect of the University of Berlin, a theological educator, and the first dean and enduring cornerstone of Berlin’s first theological faculty” (*ibid.*, 133).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>80</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, Eds. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: T&T Clark, 1999), 79, 80. Hereafter, cited as *CF*.

<sup>81</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, trans. William Farrer (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1850), 161. Hereafter, cited as *BO*.

Accurately accounting for such doctrine requires broad historical knowledge about the development of doctrine throughout the centuries. As such, although Schleiermacher retains the word “dogmatics” in his system, “the heart of the program” is “in the change of nomenclature that Schleiermacher had proposed: from *Dogmatik* (‘dogmatics’) to *Glaubenslehre* (‘the doctrine or science of faith’).”<sup>82</sup> Gerrish explains,

Historical thinking had dissolved the concept of dogma as a permanently valid definition of the church’s teaching, and where there are no dogmas there is (strictly speaking) no more dogmatics. The theological task is to give a disciplined account of the faith that prevails in a particular religious community at a particular time. And yet, the new theology was not simply separated from the old.<sup>83</sup>

By conceiving of dogmatics in terms of *Glaubenslehre*, which requires historical knowledge and is grounded in present communities, Schleiermacher was able to argue for theology’s place in the modern academy as a humanistic discipline.

Even though Schleiermacher places dogmatics within “Historical Theology,” I hasten to add that he did not want to entangle dogmatics with historical science, understood principally as an investigation into the accuracy of past events. Instead, it is a description of the Christian faith as it exists within particular communities, which are receiving the gracious action of God in Christ by way of the Spirit. In this way, Schleiermacher argued for the inclusion of dogmatics within the modern university as a humanistic and historical discipline while retaining its particular character as pertaining to piety.

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<sup>82</sup> Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 11.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

In the introduction to the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher details the scope and place of dogmatics, relates concepts used in dogmatics to other fields of study, and sets out the method he will follow in the work. He begins by discussing religion and piety in general. As a way of preparing his academic audience for and moving them gradually toward the heavily particular and traditioned *Glaubenslehre* that is to follow. By beginning in this way, he signals to his academic colleagues that the study of religion is not an exercise in speculation that is ungrounded in the empirical world, but is rather an endeavor that aims at clarity and precision.<sup>84</sup> By explaining the connection of Dogmatics—which is part of Historical Theology—to history, hermeneutics and exegesis, geography, philology, and philosophy, ethics, and psychology, Schleiermacher situates Dogmatic Theology within the scope of modern academic investigation.

As for his second audience, namely, clergy-in-training, Schleiermacher “presents theology as the servant of the church’s preaching.”<sup>85</sup> It is second-order reflection of the Church on its own beliefs and practices. Thus, while theology “is related genetically and linguistically and institutionally to preaching, it is not the same thing as preaching.

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<sup>84</sup> Schleiermacher explains that his analysis of self-consciousness is “simply and straight forwardly empirical...Tell me,” he says, “is it really not sufficiently clear that, when I speak of the consciousness of sin, the need for redemption, and the contentment that we find in Christ, I am referring to actually experienced facts and not to facts of consciousness prior to experience?” (*OG*, 45). Likewise, he asks, “Is there any phrase which expresses less what is essential to my work than that I deduce Christianity from the feeling of dependence?” (*OG*, 70). Thus, although Schleiermacher may, in his doctrine of God, consider the conditions for the possibility of the feeling of dependence, that feeling is itself grounded in Christianity empirically considered.

<sup>85</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 15. Cf. Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 105. For a full treatment, see Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996).

Theology is an instrument of criticism not of conversion.”<sup>86</sup> In theological reflection, the Church subjects its own beliefs and practices to criticism and refinement in the service of the gospel.

Further, the tone and content of Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre* suggest that he kept in view would-be clergy and church members’ concerns during a period of great intellectual and social unrest. As Schleiermacher says, “The Protestant treatment of Dogmatics must strive to bring into distinct consciousness the relation sustained by every separate article of doctrine to the antagonism that governs the period in which we live.”<sup>87</sup> In this he particularly strove to address the concerns of Christians regarding scientific activity of the day. As Richard R. Niebuhr explains,

The proper and most economical arrangement of the parts so as best to exhibit the integrity and vitality of the whole of the content of faith evidently struck him as the most effective means for clarifying and preserving the identity of the Christian community and man in the intellectually and socially tumultuous days of the early nineteenth century, especially in the face of the rise of the natural and historical sciences with their latent threat of cultural imperialism.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, in *On the Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher says decisively,

Unless the Reformation from which our church first emerged endeavors to establish an eternal covenant between the living Christian faith and completely free, independent scientific inquiry, so that faith does not hinder science and science does not exclude faith, it fails to meet adequately the needs of our time and we need another one, no matter what it takes to establish it. Yet it is my firm conviction that the basis for such a covenant was already established in the Reformation.... Precisely this position, my dear friend, represents that of my *Glaubenslehre*. Since I am firmly convinced of it, I thought I should show as best I could that every dogma that truly represents an element of our Christian

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<sup>86</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964), 15.

<sup>87</sup> *BO*, 170.

<sup>88</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, “Schleiermacher: Theology as Human Reflection,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 55/1 (1962), 38.

consciousness can be so formulated that it remains free from entanglements with science.<sup>89</sup>

In short, Schleiermacher's aims with regard to his ecclesial audience are both to serve the needs of preachers in reflection on the faith and to disentangle Christian faith from scientific inquiry in an effort to show the covenantal relationship between them. Given this relationship, the Christian may rest firmly assured of God's providential activity in the whole scope of the universe, despite the wide-reaching intellectual changes of the time.<sup>90</sup> As such, his work aimed at inculcating a calm enjoyment of the eternal divine activity as manifested in the universe shaped by Christ.<sup>91</sup>

While Schleiermacher may have aimed at the inculcation of calm enjoyment of the divine activity that Christian faith proclaims, he nonetheless risked undermining that effort by the arrangement of his *Glaubenslehre*. He began, as I noted above, with an outline of the relation of dogmatics to other disciplines in the academy. His comments there sounded the alarm for those concerned about the breakdown of traditional theology. Schleiermacher had assumed that the future leaders of Christian communities would keep in mind as they read his text their firm conviction that Christ is the Redeemer through

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<sup>89</sup> *OG*, 64. See also Andrew Dole's *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (New York: Oxford, 2009); and idem, "Schleiermacher and Otto on Religion," *Religious Studies* 40/4 (2004), 389-413.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Jones makes a suggestion similar to this argument in his review of Thomas Albert Howard's *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (New York: Oxford, 2006). Jones argues that "while it cannot be denied that German protestant liberalism lacked a sufficiently self-conscious attitude toward the achievements of *Wissenschaft*, one should beware thinking that Christian theology here underwent a regrettable decline, spurred on by an unthinking pursuit of intellectual respectability. It is at least possible to argue that liberal theology's affiliation with modern thought was driven by the belief that, since Christ had 'overcome the world,' theology could do the same. On this reckoning, Protestant liberalism's engagement with modern thought is less a matter of capitulating to 'secular' standards, more a matter of overconfidence — the presumption being that there was absolutely nothing to fear" (Paul D. Jones, "Review of *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*," *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 75/4 [2007], 1009).

<sup>91</sup> Note Schleiermacher's similarity to Calvin, whose understanding of faith is a certain knowledge of God's goodwill. See *ICR*, III.ii.7, 15, 21. Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 179.

which they are brought into a familial relationship with God. As he explains to his critics in the second of his *Letters to Dr. Lücke*, “I presumed—and did not fail to say so—that all would somehow bring along with them in their immediate self-consciousness what was missing [from the *Glaubenslehre*’s introduction], so that no one would feel short-changed, even though the content was not presented in dogmatic form until later.”<sup>92</sup>

Schleiermacher presumes, then, that Christians can only understand any presentation of the Christian faith with and through a firm conviction regarding the Redeemer. As such he does not feel compelled in the introduction and the first part of *The Christian Faith* to focus on the connection between the capacious receptivity of humanity to the divine activity, on the one hand, and the Redeemer’s person and work, on the other. Although I admire Schleiermacher’s optimism about his Christian readers, the history of his reception bears out the suggestion that he may have done better to take a less rosy view of the interpretive charitability of his Christian audience. In part, the structure of my dissertation is an attempt to take into account the need for Christian readers of Schleiermacher’s work to recognize from the beginning his distinctively Christian and Reformed theology.

While a close comparison between Schleiermacher and Calvin’s audiences would be inappropriate due to their radically different contexts, ranging from sixteenth-century France and Switzerland to nineteenth-century Germany, it is interesting to note a certain limited similarity. Calvin’s original readers of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* were political authorities on the one hand, as indicated by his preface to Francis I, and

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<sup>92</sup> *CF*, 57.



candidates in sacred theology in the context of the rise of humanism, on the other. By writing to these audiences, he attempts to shape their dispositions and, in turn, their social activity, such that Protestant Christians would be considered inappropriate candidates for religious persecution.<sup>93</sup> Somewhat similarly, Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* can be viewed in part as an argument for Christian theology's existence in the modern academy, which is, of course, partly a political argument, and a treatise for his ecclesial readers such that they would not have to retreat into protectionist mode, defending themselves against the assaults of modern science. Although these similarities of audience may be somewhat superficial, given the deep differences between the political authorities and churchly readers each author has in view, the fact that Schleiermacher and Calvin speak both within and outside the church simultaneously is a significant feature of their work insofar as it attests to their shared Reformation view that genuine Christian faith and intellectual inquiry that is not preemptively regulated by church authority need not be antithetical but may work together hand in hand.

Moving now from an emphasis on the primary audiences addressed by Schleiermacher's mature work, I turn more explicitly to the similarities that Schleiermacher and Calvin share in terms of theological content. This section will also give further nuance to the claims made above, namely, that both Calvin and Schleiermacher are performing the theological task with their particular audiences in view. Primarily, however, I will argue in the section below that both figures center their theologies on divine activity, and this activity is always already shaped by the revelation

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<sup>93</sup> *ICR*, Preface.1.

of God in Christ within history and the activity of the Holy Spirit. At its end I will also describe two poignant differences between Schleiermacher and Calvin's work.

## **B. Theological Content: Theocentrism and Christomorphism**

### ***1. Theocentrism***

#### **a. Orientation of the Human Subject to God**

Book One of Calvin's *Institutes* opens with the following words:

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern. ...the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him. Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize himself.<sup>94</sup>

In this passage, Calvin couples knowledge of God and human selves as two aspects of wisdom. Not only does he couple these aspects of wisdom, he says it is difficult to know which one is prior to the other. At least this much is true, he explains: "we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accompanied by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves."<sup>95</sup> These texts suggest that for Calvin, knowledge of God and self-knowledge are intertwined; one cannot know God without knowing the self, and vice versa.<sup>96</sup>

Yet Serene Jones argues that in these opening words Calvin is not making a straightforward theological description or argument regarding the knowledge of God.

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<sup>94</sup> *ICR*, I.x.1-2.

<sup>95</sup> *ICR*, I.xv.1.

<sup>96</sup> Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952). This is remarkably similar to the perspective of Schleiermacher inasmuch as the God-consciousness is enveloped within the self-consciousness.

Rather, he is using a puzzle familiar to his humanist readers in order to draw in a wide audience for his *Institutes*. She explains,

Although he does present his own position on the matter at the end of the third paragraph [i.e., that an affirmation of divine knowledge is the only proper starting point in the quest for divine wisdom], the ‘argument’ of the chapter appears to have been designed to orient the reader dispositionally toward Calvin’s project rather than simply to put forth arguments in support of either self-knowledge or divine wisdom. In other words, his account of theological methodology functions to dispose or situate the reader toward the project he has undertaken rather than to discuss, in more abstract terms, the proper starting point for theology.<sup>97</sup>

Calvin’s opening chapter is meant to draw his humanist audience into the conversation.

On one level, what I am pointing to here is simply an extension of my claim in the foregoing section of this chapter, namely, that Calvin was aware of his audience when structuring his masterwork. In addition to this claim, however, I want to stress the theological assumption that undergirds Calvin’s rhetorical strategy: for him, God is always already at work in relation to humanity. As Jones puts it, “If Calvin’s apologetic strategy has been effective, the inward glance that was considered productive in the first paragraph and then considered vacuous in the second paragraph has now been entirely replaced by an upward glance toward God.”<sup>98</sup> In short, Calvin begins with a question about how one might come to knowledge of God, recognizes the ways in which knowledge of God and of self are intertwined, only to catch the interest of his humanist readers before turning their attention to the prevenient being, action and glory of God. As such, Calvin’s puzzle about how one comes to knowledge of God turns within three

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<sup>97</sup> Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 109, 112.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

paragraphs from the priority of the knowledge of self to the priority of the knowledge of God to the majesty of God that precedes and envelops all creatures.

Because of Calvin's claim that the "order of right teaching" requires that we discuss knowledge of God first, however, some might view Calvin and Schleiermacher as taking opposite paths.<sup>99</sup> Whereas Calvin proceeds by discussing knowledge of God, Schleiermacher begins with human self-consciousness. Perhaps surprisingly, then, contrary to those who criticize Schleiermacher as being concerned with the human subject to the detriment of the true divine subject of theology, it seems to me that Schleiermacher's work in the introduction to the *Glaubenslehre* is similar to Calvin's opening remarks. For where Calvin uses various rhetorical maneuvers to insist that the Christian in relation to God is grasped, shaped, and undergoes a dispositional reorientation by the always chronologically and logically prior divine activity, Schleiermacher does the same by characterizing piety as human receptivity to the divine activity. He explains,

The common element [*Gemeinsame*] in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety [*Frömmigkeit*], by which these are conjointly distinguished from all other feelings [*von allen andern Gefühlen unterscheiden*], or, in other words, the self-identical essence of piety [*das sich selbst gleiche Wesen der Frömmigkeit*] is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent [*selbst als schlechthin abhängig*], or which is the same thing, of being in relation with God [*in Beziehung mit Gott bewußt sind*].<sup>100</sup>

As regards the identification of absolute dependence with 'relation to God' in our proposition: this is to be understood in the sense that the Whence [*Woher*] of our receptive and active existence [*unseres empfänglichen und selbsttätigen Daseins*], as implied in this self-consciousness [*in diesem Selbstbewußtsein mitgesetzte*], is to be designated by the word 'God' [*durch den Ausdruck Gott bezeichnet werden*]

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> *CF*, 12; *OG*, 44.

*soll*], and that this is for us the really original signification of that word [*und dieses für uns die wahrhaft ursprüngliche Bedeutung desselben ist*].<sup>101</sup>

In other words, for Schleiermacher, piety is the consciousness that one depends absolutely upon God, the Whence of humanity's existence. Keeping in the background Calvin's words regarding the circularity within which the pious Christian finds herself when reaching toward knowledge of God, consider Schleiermacher's text:

So that in the first instance God signifies for us simply that which is the co-determinant in this feeling [*Gefühl*] and to which we trace our being in such a state. ... Now this is just what is principally meant by the formula which says that to feel oneself absolutely dependent and to be conscious of being in relation with God are one and the same thing; and the reason is that absolute dependence is the fundamental relation which must include all others in itself. This last expression includes the God-consciousness in the self-consciousness in such a way that, quite in accord with the above analysis, the two cannot be separated from each other.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, both Schleiermacher's emphasis on humanity's absolute dependence upon and receptivity to divine activity and Calvin's opening remarks about knowledge of self and knowledge of God have the same effect, namely, to claim that the divine activity is always prior to creaturely being, acting, and knowing and that the creaturely receptivity of divine activity is always already conditioned by prior divine activity. As one interpreter puts it, "The form of the subjective pole (consciousness) is unintelligible without reference to the objective pole (the divine causality)."<sup>103</sup> That is, the two poles are asymmetrically related, with the objective pole taking priority.

Far from leading the religious person into solipsistic reflection on the self, then, the feeling of absolute dependence, which is at the heart of piety, leads her always to

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<sup>101</sup> *CF*, 16.

<sup>102</sup> *CF*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Van A. Harvey, "A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher's Theological Method," *The Journal of Religion*, 42/3 (1962), 154.

keep in view God's prior activity as that on which she depends for existence and sustenance. In both Calvin and Schleiermacher's cases, the intertwining of self-knowledge and consciousness of God is used to point the reader's attention to God. If my interpretation of Schleiermacher and Calvin is accurate, then it should come as no surprise that Calvin begins chapter two, which has as its topic the knowledge of God, as follows: "We shall not say that, properly speaking, God is known where there is no religion or piety."<sup>104</sup> With this passage, Calvin turns to Christian piety as the context within which he discusses knowledge of God. As such, both Calvin and Schleiermacher emphasize the prevenient divine activity, and consider God always on the basis and in the context of Christian piety. The point is that the theocentrism present in both Calvin's and Schleiermacher's mature works is not contrary to but complemented by an emphasis on human self-consciousness.<sup>105</sup>

### **b. Piety in Relation to God**

A first similarity between Calvin and Schleiermacher, then, is that they both intertwine awareness of the self and God at the beginning of their works in an effort (in Schleiermacher's case, subtly) to reorient their humanistic and modern readers toward the divine. This rhetorical move adverts to the theocentrism of each figure's work. A second similarity builds on the first: for both figures, piety does not primarily involve possessing a clear and distinct concept of God. Though Calvin foregrounds knowledge of God, for

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<sup>104</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.1.

<sup>105</sup> My description of the doctrine of God in Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* in chapters two through four will substantiate this claim further.

both thinkers “piety” [*pietas* and *Frömmigkeit*] carries connotations of intimacy and deeply arising feeling for or with another.

For Calvin, one always only knows God and oneself within a relational context. He states, “The knowledge of God, as I understand it, is that by which we not only conceive that there is a God but also grasp what befits us and is proper to his glory, in fine, what is to our advantage to know of him.”<sup>106</sup> Knowing God is not, in other words, a purely “academic” affair, using the term in its (now) pejorative sense. One cannot know God as God is in Godself; rather, one knows God as God is in relation to creation, *ad extra*, or as Karl Barth would put it, *pro nobis*. Knowledge of God occurs in relation to creation, humanity, Jesus Christ, and the Church. As Jones explains, knowledge of God “is a knowledge that cannot be held apart from the disposition he refers to as religion (*religio*) or piety (*pietas*).”<sup>107</sup> Coming to know God in relation to creation, humanity, and oneself, which includes coming to an awareness of the infinite benefits God bestows upon those to whom God is related, has the effect of inducing “reverence joined with love of God.”<sup>108</sup> “For,” Calvin asks, “how can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realizing immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him?”<sup>109</sup> Humans should know themselves as those who “owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should

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<sup>106</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.1.

<sup>107</sup> Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 123.

<sup>108</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.1.

<sup>109</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.2.

seek nothing beyond him.”<sup>110</sup> In these ways, although concepts, notions (*notitia*), or cognitions (*cognitio*) play a part in the Christian’s orientation to God insofar as God is conceived as the creator and sovereign of all created beings, that orientation is primarily attuned to the asymmetrical relation of dependence upon God that the Christian feels and the reverence such awareness of one’s dependence nurtures.

All of this could be said of Schleiermacher’s understanding of piety as well, save the use of the term “knowledge.” Because Schleiermacher is situated between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, where “knowledge” is understood less in the sense of intimate familiarity and more in the sense of objective, disinterested “scientific” investigation, he identifies piety (*Frömmigkeit*) as a particular feeling (*Gefühl*) rather than a knowing or acting: “The piety which forms the basis of all ecclesial communions is, considered purely in itself, neither a knowing nor a doing, but a modification of feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness.”<sup>111</sup> Even so, piety is not mutually exclusive of either knowing or doing. As Schleiermacher explains,

For, indeed, it is the case in general that the immediate self-consciousness is always the mediating link in the transition between moments in which knowing predominates and those in which doing predominates... And thus it will fall to piety to stimulate knowing and doing [*so wird auch der Frömmigkeit zukommen, Wissen und Tun aufzuregen*], and every moment in which piety has a predominant place [*und jeder Moment, in welchem überwiegend die Frömmigkeit hervortritt*] will contain within itself one or both of these in germ [*wird beides oder eines von*

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<sup>110</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.1.

<sup>111</sup> *CF*, 5. By focusing on piety, Schleiermacher claims of himself that he is a “pietist (*Herrnhuter*) of a higher order.” Cf. Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher’s Glaubenslehre* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 119-20: “Schleiermacher remains equally loyal to his own Moravian origins in defining the ‘positive’, practical nature of Christian theology. Count Zinzendorf’s praise for ‘practical philosophy’ combines neatly with the anti-scholastic, anti-speculative stamp of his thought—and the resonance with Schleiermacher is profound. Schleiermacher would certainly have approved Zinzendorf’s struggle to liberate religion from the stultifying embrace of men of ‘intelligence’ and persons ‘who have the greatest reason’.” See Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (New York: Oxford, 2006), chapter 2.



*beiden als Keime in sich schließen*]. . . for were it otherwise the religious moments could not combine with the others to form a single life, but piety would be something isolated and without any influence upon the other mental functions of our lives.<sup>112</sup>

By speaking of piety as a feeling, Schleiermacher intends to ensure, for those in his post-Kantian context, first, that religion does not become isolated from other human activities (reason or ethics, for instance). He explains, feeling is “not to be thought of as something either confused or inactive; since, on the one hand, it is strongest in our most vivid moments, and either directly or indirectly lies at the root of every expression of our wills, and, on the other hand, it can be grasped by thought and conceived of in its own nature.”<sup>113</sup> Although piety is identified as a feeling, then, Schleiermacher does not claim that it is thereby rendered untouchable by language or concepts. Rather, the feeling of piety can be clearly conceived and motivates Christian activity, and pious feeling always points outward to the ever-present and unconditioned activity of God.<sup>114</sup>

Second, Schleiermacher wants to ensure that it not be asserted that “the amount of knowledge [or, alternatively, certainty] in a man must be the measure of his piety.”<sup>115</sup>

For,

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<sup>112</sup> *CF*, 8-9. Although feeling is the mediating link between knowing and doing, its definition is not middle-way between the definition of knowing and doing. As LeRon Shults explains, “While Doing is wholly a ‘passing-beyond-self,’ and Knowing is a form of consciousness but only becomes real by a ‘passing-beyond-self,’ Feeling alone belongs ‘altogether to the realm of receptivity, it is entirely an abiding-in-self’” (F. LeRon Shults, “Schleiermacher’s ‘Reciprocal Relationality’: The Underlying Regulative Principle of his Theological Method,” in *Schleiermacher on Workings of the Knowing Mind: New Translations, Resources, and Understandings*, ed. Ruth Drucilla Richardson [New York: Edwin Mellen, 1998], 181).

<sup>113</sup> *CF*, 11-12.

<sup>114</sup> Thus, as chapters 2-3 might suggest, on the whole I agree with Samuel Powell’s estimation that “the fulcrum on which his theology rests is not feeling, but divine causation.” What Schleiermacher feared was not claims of human knowledge about God, but “the reduction of theology to a merely objective knowledge that is indistinguishable from metaphysics” (Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* [New York: Cambridge, 2001], 89).

<sup>115</sup> *CF*, 9.

If piety is that knowledge, then the amount of such knowledge in a man must be the measure of his piety. For anything which, in its rise and fall, is not the measure of the perfection of a given object cannot constitute the essence of that object. Accordingly, on the hypothesis in question, the most perfect master of Christian Dogmatics would always be likewise the most pious Christian. And no one will admit this to be the case.<sup>116</sup>

Likewise, in *On the Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher says that if Christians must first have an idea of God before having true piety, “there would then emerge a hierarchy of intellectual cultured, a priesthood of speculation, which I for my part cannot find to be very Protestant.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, however unusual it may now sound in light of the history of Schleiermacher’s reception, these passages show that he insists on defining piety as a feeling because he wants to focus dogmatics on the activity of God as it is received by the pious, rather than on the cognitive skill of some human beings who may or may not stand within concrete Christian communities. In sum, by describing piety as a feeling, Schleiermacher stands within a tradition that understands the significance of religion for human knowing and activity and that affirms the priesthood of all believers.

What I am pointing to is that the difference between Schleiermacher and Calvin on their understandings of piety is one of context and language, not one of substance. As Edward Dowey has argued,

The term ‘knowledge of God’ throughout Calvin’s writings does not refer to the knowledge of observation, or discovery, or remembering, but it is an elliptical expression, a shorthand including both divine revelation and its reception in human knowledge. In strictest adherence to Calvin’s own conceptuality, ‘The ‘knowledge of God’ is always man’s knowledge of God’s revelation (according to the principle of accommodation) and the very revelation of God always in a

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<sup>116</sup> *CF*, 9.

<sup>117</sup> *OG*, 41.

radical way implies man's self-knowledge (according to the principle of correlation).<sup>118</sup>

Though Calvin leads with *notitia* whereas Schleiermacher does not, the similarity lies here: for Schleiermacher consciousness of God is included in consciousness of the self, such that the pious believer can never be aware of herself without being oriented toward the always prior divine activity with an attitude of grateful receptivity. As Martin Redeker has it, "One could say in simplified formulation that Schleiermacher builds the theology of the second and third articles of the Christian creed on that of the first article. In it the theological content of the pious Christian's feeling of creatureliness and confession is depicted: 'I believe that God has made me and all creatures.'"<sup>119</sup>

For Schleiermacher, the human subject is consistently oriented toward the divine both in theological rhetoric and substance. In this way, he is faithful to Calvin's theocentrism. Both figures primarily point to the divine activity that the pious recognize always in their relation to God. It may be, as his critics have charged, that Schleiermacher unduly emphasizes feeling in the beginning of his *Glaubenslehre*. If so, then this emphasis is at odds with what he is doing in the system of doctrine overall. Regardless of whether he "overdid" it, it is clear that Schleiermacher's faithful readers cannot abstract pious feeling from the whole round of divine activity and its reception in the Christian believer. Likewise, it is improper for an interpreter to ignore the cognitive dimensions of piety, for even as Schleiermacher "begins" with feeling, he does not stop here. Piety is integrally linked with knowing and doing.

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<sup>118</sup> Edward A. Dowey, Jr. *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 248-9.

<sup>119</sup> Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 109.

## 2. Christomorphism

A second prominent feature of Schleiermacher's mature work, which is also the site of a cluster of affinities he has with Calvin, is his Christomorphism.<sup>120</sup> By that term, I mean that the divine activity is always conceived in the context of and thereby shaped or formed by the existence and activity of Jesus Christ in history. That is to say, the Redeemer grounds Schleiermacher's theocentrism and gives content to his theology.<sup>121</sup> In order to offer a precise description of his Christomorphism in *Der christliche Glaube*, I begin by turning to Calvin and Schleiermacher's convictions regarding the historical context and character of divine revelation.

A negative way of summing up the affinity between Calvin and Schleiermacher in this regard is to say they are both anti-speculative. "The pious mind," Calvin explains, "does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God. And it does not attach to him whatever it pleases, but is content to hold him to be as he manifests himself."<sup>122</sup> As I have highlighted above, knowing God is enabled by the

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<sup>120</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr and Alister McGrath use this term. Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock), 210. See also Alister E. McGrath: "Although it would not be correct to describe Schleiermacher's theology as Christocentric in the strict sense of the term, it is certainly Christomorphic, in that the whole of his theology is 'shaped' by the interpretation, clarification and restructuring of the datum of Christian experience in the light of the person of Christ" (Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* [New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986], 26). Brian Gerrish also endorses this understanding of Schleiermacher, citing Richard R. Niebuhr's expression as "apt." He continues, "And insofar as this makes Christ the 'reformer' of human knowledge of God, Niebuhr rightly claims that Schleiermacher was more faithful to Calvin than was Barth" (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 176. Martin Redeker, in a different formulation, says Schleiermacher's thought is best characterized "christocentrically" but not "Christomonistically" (cited in *ibid.*, 176, footnote 36). I take Redeker's caveat with regard to Christocentrism as a way of recognizing the theocentrism of Schleiermacher's work.

<sup>121</sup> In addition, the person of Christ is also person-forming in the *ecclesia*.

<sup>122</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.2. Cf. *ICR*, I.xiv.4.

manifestation of God's powers, "by which he is shown to us not as he is in himself, but as he is toward us: so that this recognition of him consists more in living experience than in vain and high-flown speculation."<sup>123</sup> For Calvin, speculation is conceived in contrast to living experience, and individuals' living experiences are always set in the context of and made possible by the manifestations of God's powers in human history. What I want to emphasize is that for Calvin, such living experience is not purely inward, arising from a subjective spring of divine knowledge that is somehow separate from humanity's or the individual self's historical life. Rather, knowledge of God depends upon the historical divine revelation that occurs in Jesus of Nazareth and the living present Christ who is attested to by and encountered within Christian communities by the power of the Holy Spirit; this is the connection between Christomorphism and anti-speculation.

I have already highlighted Schleiermacher's distaste for speculation by pointing to his agreement with Calvin that one cannot know God except within a relational context; piety is not merely ideational, but deeply felt in an encounter with Christ.<sup>124</sup> Going further than this, Schleiermacher explains that the pious immediate self-consciousness, or God-consciousness, can never be a general, ahistorical experience.<sup>125</sup> God-consciousness,

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<sup>123</sup> *ICR*, I.x.2.

<sup>124</sup> The statement that Schleiermacher has a disdain for speculation must be qualified, since he was not averse to speculation in the philosophical realm. As Gerrish explains, "Speculation has its own legitimacy, but it belongs on the scientific tree at another point than dogmatics. And if the dogmatic theologians find it useful to appropriate speculative categories, they may do so only insofar as the content of the categories is determined by their own science, not by that of the philosophers. The fundamental question concerns the way in which talk about God is generated. The dogmatist's sole concern is with statements that arise out of the immediate religious consciousness" (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 154-5).

<sup>125</sup> In an essay on the immediate self-consciousness in Schleiermacher's mature philosophy, Jeffrey Hoover cautions Schleiermacher's readers not to equate immediate self-consciousness with the feeling of absolute dependence, or the God-consciousness. He explains, "One is an immediate self-feeling that is not the result of intermediate states of consciousness—it is the direct self-awareness that is present at all times in our

or the awareness of being in relation to God as an absolutely dependent creature, always occurs within contextual, communal living. Schleiermacher explains, “God-consciousness, as it is here described, does not constitute by itself alone an actual moment in religious experience, but always in connexion with other particular determinations.”<sup>126</sup> Specifically, “within the Christian communion, there can be no religious experience which does not involve a relation to Christ.”<sup>127</sup> Further, scripture and the communities who preserve and interpret it, as well as the doctrines created and revised by members of the Church throughout the centuries, inform the Christian’s relation to and encounter with Christ. Schleiermacher summarizes:

In the actual life of the Christian, therefore, the two are always found in combination: there is no general God-consciousness which has not bound up with it a relation to Christ, and no relationship with the Redeemer which has no bearing on the general God-consciousness. The propositions of the first part [of the system of doctrine], which lay less direct stress on what is distinctively Christian, are on that account often treated as Natural Theology of an original and

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conscious lives, even during the earliest stages of human consciousness in the child. In the case of the feeling of absolute dependence, Schleiermacher consistently refers to it as a feeling belonging to a “higher consciousness,” a third level of consciousness that is a further development beyond that of reflected consciousness, in which the subject overcomes the subject-object relation and identifies with its object immediately. Religious sentiment, as an expression of this “higher consciousness,” is clearly understood by Schleiermacher as a return to a kind of non-conceptual conscious determination. However, while this feeling of absolute dependence is non-conceptual, it is not pre-conceptual. As Robert Merrihew Adams has pointed out, ‘non-conceptual’ in this context means only that it is not structured by concepts: ‘This does not imply that feeling is causally independent of conceptual thought. In fact, it is evidently Schleiermacher’s view that the feeling of absolute dependence will exist in a pure, clear, strong form only in contexts in which it is supported by appropriate conceptual thought.’” Jeffrey Hoover, “The Mediated Self and Immediate Self-Consciousness in Schleiermacher’s Mature Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48/3, 391-392. I agree with Hoover and Merrihew Adams regarding the fact that the feeling of absolute dependence requires concepts for its existence, which come about through historical interactions with Christ and Christ’s community. On term usage, however, note that I am following Schleiermacher’s use of terms in the *Glaubenslehre*. There he defines piety as “a modification of feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness” (CF, 5). Piety is the “the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God” (CF, 12). As such, Schleiermacher includes the God-consciousness within the pious immediate self-consciousness, which is alternately called simply piety or the feeling of absolute dependence. Thus, in my discussion I use “pious immediate self-consciousness” and “God-consciousness” interchangeably.

<sup>126</sup> CF, 132.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

universally valid kind, and as such are overrated by those who are themselves less permeated by the distinctive element in Christianity. Others, again, underrate these propositions as attainable even apart from Christianity, and will only allow those propositions which express a relation to the Redeemer to rank as specifically Christian. Both parties are in error. For the former propositions are in no sense the reflection of a meager and purely monotheistic God-consciousness, but are abstracted from one which has issued from fellowship with the Redeemer.<sup>128</sup>

Thus, for Schleiermacher, dogmatics is not founded on speculation regarding a “general” or “purely monotheistic God-consciousness.” Rather, dogmatics always proceeds on the basis of positive, historical, living experience within Christian communities.<sup>129</sup>

It is a fair question to ask why Schleiermacher would abstract statements about the God-consciousness from concrete, actual fellowship with the Redeemer through historical communities and place them at the beginning of his work if he so disdains theological speculation.<sup>130</sup> I have suggested above that he does so at least in part as a rhetorical move to bring his academic audience into the reading of his text and that he thinks it will not do much damage to his Christian readers since they will bring their own convictions regarding the Redeemer with them in their reading of the work. Whatever Schleiermacher’s reasons for putting abstractions into *Der Christliche Glaube*’s introduction, they clearly backfired. That, however, ought not blind us to the fact that in

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>129</sup> Here we see just how far criticisms like the following miss their mark: “Yet (*contra* Schleiermacher) this relationship of dependence is not a generalized ontological fact that can be known by anyone through a bit of disciplined introspection.... The form of a person’s dependence is a function of her calling in Christ” (Ian McFarland, *The Divine Image: Envisioning the Invisible God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 81). As Schüssler Fiorenza explains, “The consciousness of grace is such that the Christian experience is not as such an experience of ‘utter dependency’ but rather an experience of the power of our redemption” (Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Understanding God as Triune,” *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña [New York: Cambridge, 2005], 182).

<sup>130</sup> Indeed, he has been roundly criticized for such abstraction. Curran, for example, exclaims, “I leave aside the intriguing question of any possible relation Christian piety might have to a work as abstract, dry and abstruse as Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*!” (Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher’s Glaubenslehre* [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994], 323).

the whole of the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher argues against theological understandings that separate redemption by God through Christ, or God-consciousness, from historical life. As he says, speculation “destroys the essence of Christianity by postulating an activity of Christ that is not mediated in time and space; and at the same time it so isolates itself that what has been achieved in it can have no continuing influence.”<sup>131</sup> At all points, then, the Christian faith is formed in and through the historical Christian community, which testifies to and continues the influence of the historical and still-active Christ.<sup>132</sup>

In these ways, both Calvin and Schleiermacher are anti-speculative; their understandings of what it is to live piously are always set within the context and on the assumption of the spatio-temporal historical reality of creation and the redemption and revelation brought about in and through Christ and Christ’s Spirit.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *CF*, 360.

<sup>132</sup> See Kevin Hector, *Theology without Metaphysics: God, Language and the Spirit of Recognition* (New York: Cambridge, 2011), 47-102.

<sup>133</sup> In a recent essay, Mark Husbands argues that Schleiermacher and Calvin are dissimilar in that “Calvin resists appealing to the innate *sensus divinitatis* as a foundation upon which one might reasonably construct a dogmatic project. In addition,” he explains, “his insistence that there is a ‘seed of religion’ given to everyone does not serve nearly as positive a role as does Schleiermacher’s feeling of absolute dependence” (Mark Husbands, “Calvin on the Revelation of God in Creation and Scripture: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities,” in *Calvin’s Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilities*, eds., J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012], 29). As should be clear from the foregoing, I do not attribute to Calvin a heavy use of the *sensus divinitatis*. Serene Jones has compellingly shown that Calvin uses the concept rhetorically and does not substantially rely on it. In this she and Husbands are in agreement. Yet Husbands goes on to claim that Schleiermacher’s feeling of absolute dependence is similar to the *sensus divinitatis*. That is, both concepts are, in his view, meant to underscore knowledge of God apart from revelation. What I hope to have shown in this section of the present chapter is that nothing could be further from the truth in Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*. Schleiermacher everywhere supposes that the God with which we have something to do is the God revealed in Christ and the Church. As such, it is entirely inaccurate to claim as Husbands does, that “The consequence of Schleiermacher’s perspective is that ‘the Gospel stories are taken as examples, allegories, symbols, expressions of consciousness, poetic expressions of doctrine,’ but not, we might add, true narratives of God’s saving work in and through the history of Jesus. By contrast,” Husbands continues, “for Calvin, incarnation, baptism, atonement, and resurrection were all of central importance, without which one could not hope for salvation. In sum, our examination of Schleiermacher’s work shows that he thoroughly



### C. Reformed and Reforming: *ecclesia semper reformanda est*

In the section above I have shown two significant similarities between Calvin and Schleiermacher, namely, their theocentrism and Christomorphism. In this section I will describe one of their differences, which I take as an example of the way that Schleiermacher is not only Reformed but also reforming. Indeed, I view the following difference between Calvin and Schleiermacher as an indication that Schleiermacher carried Calvin's train of thought to its logical conclusions.

While Calvin and Schleiermacher share an aversion to speculation on account of their Christomorphism, they treat divine revelation differently in their works. In short, Calvin operates with a distinction between knowledge of God as Creator and God as Redeemer, whereas Schleiermacher operates without such a distinction, understanding God most basically as Creator. To understand what this means, consider the following descriptions of the two figures' work.

For Calvin, there are two kinds of knowledge made available to humanity by God of "his own most hallowed lips" within history:

First in order came that kind of knowledge by which one is permitted to grasp who that God is who founded and governs the universe. Then that other inner knowledge was added, which alone quickens the dead souls, whereby God is known not only as the Founder of the universe and the sole Author and Ruler of all that is made, but also in the person of the Mediator as the Redeemer.<sup>134</sup>

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departed from Calvin with respect to the fundamental and authoritative sources of knowledge of God....As a result, his reconstruction of the doctrine of God (in which a discussion of the Trinity is no more than an appendix to *The Christian Faith*) and Christology (to name just two of a number of crucial dogmatic loci) no longer bears a family resemblance to the classical Reformed tradition represented in the theology of Calvin" (ibid., 31). I will continue to argue against this view in chapters two and three.

<sup>134</sup> *ICR*, I.vi.1.

In other words, God is known first as the Creator. In a second step, God is known inwardly when one realizes that the Creator is also the Redeemer of that creation. This polarity between knowledge of God the Creator and knowledge of God the Redeemer, also referred to as the *duplex cognitio Domini*, saturates Calvin's work. Dowey explains, "The *duplex cognitio Dei*, although formulated exactly for the first time by Calvin in the *Institutio*, 1559, is not an *hapax legomenon*, but an unvarying element characteristic of his thought from at least 1539 on."<sup>135</sup>

There is, however, a difference between Calvin's usual treatment of the distinctions within divine revelation and the way he treats it in the passage from the *Institutes* cited above. In the usual treatment, the distinctions are more dialectical than chronological. Dowey explains that the relation between knowledge of God the Creator and of God the Redeemer is a dialectical "double presupposition":

(1) The redemptive knowledge must be seen to have come from God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the same God to whom Scripture points in the natural order and the moral law, whom Scripture describes as the Triune Creator and Sustainer of the world. This is a logical or conceptual presupposition. It is not a propaedeutic or a first lesson in redemption, for merely opposing a Christian interpretation of the Creator to a heathen one does not produce faith; we know the Creator only in the gratuitous promise of mercy in Christ which is the other presupposition: (2) The knowledge of God the Creator comes only to those illuminated by the Spirit in faith, although the knowledge of faith, properly speaking, is not God as seen in his general creative activity, but as seen in the special work of redemption in Christ. Thus, the knowledge of the Redeemer is an 'epistemological' presupposition of the knowledge of the Creator.<sup>136</sup>

In other words, Christians only know God as the Creator through their knowledge of the Redeemer. Even so, once these two kinds of knowledge have been realized by divine

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<sup>135</sup> Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 253.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

revelation in and through the Redeemer, one may appropriately speak of God the Creator and God the Redeemer in logical distinction from one another.

Like Calvin, Schleiermacher insists that for the pious everything is connected to the Redeemer, and he sometimes writes of Creation and Redemption as distinct activities. Yet ultimately, he maintains that there is just one kind of revelation given by God within history, namely, that God is the Creator. More specifically, as I have been emphasizing, God's creative power is Christomorphic. That is, the divine activity in creation is centrally shaped or formed by the revelation of Christ.<sup>137</sup> As Iain G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson explain with regard to Schleiermacher's *On the Doctrine of Election*, "Schleiermacher contends that the ways in which God works in both creation and redemption are congruous. Throughout the document, Schleiermacher holds forth the conditions of creation as demonstrative of the manner in which God works redemption."<sup>138</sup> I would go even further than Nicol and Jorgensen, as "congruity" does not seem strong enough. Indeed, I cannot stress too much the inseparability of creation and redemption in Schleiermacher's thought.<sup>139</sup> A key text in the *Glaubenslehre*, which grounds my interpretation, is the following: "Christ therefore was determined as He was, only because, and in so far as everything as a whole was determined in a certain way; and conversely, everything as a whole was only so determined, because, and in so far as,

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<sup>137</sup> Further, the encounter with Christ is person-forming. I will return to this important aspect of Schleiermacher's Christomorphism especially in chapter five.

<sup>138</sup> Iain G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson, "On the Doctrine of Election: An Introduction," in *On the Doctrine of Election, with Special Reference to the Aphorisms of Dr. Bretschneider*, trans. Iain G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 16.

<sup>139</sup> For corroboration of my view, see Jacqueline Mariña, "Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher," *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (New York: Cambridge, 2005). 160-161.

Christ was determined in a certain way.”<sup>140</sup> This passage shows that in addition to recognizing the “congruity” between creation and redemption, faithful interpreters ought also to maintain that for Schleiermacher, redemption cannot be taken as logically or conceptually distinct from the activity of creation. Redemption is the “completion, only now accomplished [in Christ and the new corporate life], of the creation of human nature.”<sup>141</sup> As such, we might say that on Schleiermacher’s understanding, complete creation (i.e., redemption) is God’s ultimate goal, which is achieved progressively in time.

To sum up: On Schleiermacher’s way of understanding creation and redemption, there is a chronological distinction at work: He treats first the beginning of creation, and then the completion of creation in Christ. Although we call the completion of creation “redemption,” it would be inappropriate to make a hard and fast conceptual distinction between creation and redemption. They are both instances of a unified creative activity, carried out differently through time and space. Thus, whereas Calvin has two conceptual poles between which he moves in a theological dialectic of creation and redemption, Schleiermacher has a conceptually unified understanding of divine activity. For Schleiermacher, God is simply the Christomorphic Creator.

Schleiermacher found this way of understanding God in relation to creation useful for solving theological problems. While describing one of these problems, namely, how to understand the Fall with regard to God’s intentions for humanity, he highlights the difference between himself and Calvin on exactly the point I have been describing above:

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<sup>140</sup> *CF*, 555.

<sup>141</sup> *CF*, 366.

Calvin understands creation and redemption as conceptually distinct, whereas

Schleiermacher himself does not. He explains,

Thus, I cannot possibly do otherwise than also to concur with Calvin in this matter too [i.e., that the fall is grounded in divine predestination], although I would not want to say it as he did, that Adam as Adam was destined to fall; but, rather, I would want to say that it was on account of the fact that the human race was destined to sinfulness and to redemption that Adam became the Adam who was to fall. Moreover...one could come off more easily if one were to say that prior to Christ human nature in general would have possessed neither the capacity to resist nor the ability not to sin. Moreover, this does much to resolve the matter at issue here in that it is easier to account for the way in which God created a human nature that, as it were, would first come to completion through a second creation than to assume that God in fact created in its first exemplars a better nature but willed that thereafter they would change for the worse.<sup>142</sup>

In this passage, Schleiermacher identifies a difference between himself and Calvin:

whereas Calvin understands the Creator as willing creation and redemption,

Schleiermacher understands the Creator as willing an ongoing creation, in service of redemption, through time.

The distinctions made here, between Calvin's *duplex cognitio Dei* and, we might say, Schleiermacher's *unum cognitio Dei*, may seem fine points. However, the difference between Calvin and Schleiermacher on the structure of divine revelation exemplifies Schleiermacher's thoroughgoing anti-speculative commitment. In other words, by maintaining the unity of the divine activity as Christomorphically Creative, Schleiermacher more faithfully derives the divine attributes from lived Christian piety—anchored in God's redeeming activity—than does Calvin. He does so by maintaining that the Christian conception of God must be essentially related to the feeling of absolute dependence that is induced by a Christian's encounter with Christ by way of the Spirit.

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<sup>142</sup> *DE*, 59.

That is, he understands God's creative activity Christomorphically in a more thoroughgoing way than does Calvin. Although both Calvin and Schleiermacher maintain that knowledge of God the Redeemer is an epistemological presupposition of knowledge of God the Creator, Schleiermacher does not go on to maintain a conceptual distinction between God the Creator and God the Redeemer. He wants to keep always in view the connection of Christian belief about God with the living Christ encountered in historical communities. That is, he is thoroughly anti-speculative.

Although the history of Schleiermacher's reception may suggest otherwise, by comparing and contrasting the mature works of Calvin and Schleiermacher, while taking into account their rhetorical strategies and audiences, I have argued that in the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher is usefully read as a Reformed and reforming theologian who is not only faithful to Calvin's theocentrism and Christomorphism, but takes these emphases even further.<sup>143</sup>

### III. How to Read Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*

If my argument in the section above proves persuasive, then why, we might ask, have so many interpreters of Schleiermacher up to this point been blind to his Reformed character? It seems to me that in addition to reasons pertaining to the particularities of each individual interpreter, the answer has much to do with the tradition of interpreting the *Glaubenslehre* through the *Reden*. It is not entirely clear whether doing so has been a

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<sup>143</sup> I will extend this argument in chapter two, when I treat Schleiermacher's discussion of the Trinity. There, too, he takes the anti-speculative commitment we find in Calvin to lengths that Calvin could not go.

significant cause of the many misinterpretations of Schleiermacher's work, but it has certainly been a constant correlation.

It makes sense both to read an author's works chronologically and to read what comes later with the earlier works in mind for comparison. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that if an author does not renounce an early work but continues to revise it, then the author probably remains in essential agreement with the content of that work. Since Schleiermacher continued to revise the *Reden*, publishing a second and third edition in 1806 and 1821, the hermeneutical tradition of interpreting the *Glaubenslehre* in light of the *Reden* is not unreasonable. What is indeed unreasonable, however, is the combination of these two practices with a substantial disregard for the contexts and rhetorical maneuvers of the two works in relation to their audiences, resulting in the tradition of reading the *Reden* as an interpretive key to the *Glaubenslehre*. It seems to me the *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology* would be a much better candidate for an interpretive key to his masterwork than the *Reden*. By not paying enough attention to the contexts and purposes used in the *Glaubenslehre* and *Reden*, Schleiermacher's readers have neither interpreted nor evaluated his work as well as they could.

In this chapter, I have argued that although Schleiermacher's work has come under heavy criticism from his own day to ours, his mature theology is a genuine enactment of Reformed and reforming thought. Yet a persistent critique of Schleiermacher's work that has been left unaddressed thus far is that he relegates the

Trinity to an appendix at the end of the *Glaubenslehre*.<sup>144</sup> Such treatment of the Trinity, so the criticism goes, is unconscionable and removes Schleiermacher's work from the distinctively Christian arena. He may be able to teach Christian theologians something about hermeneutics, or the importance of local church communities for doing theology, and he is certainly to be appreciated as the foil that contributed, even if in a negative way, to the theology of Karl Barth. Yet his system of doctrine is ultimately irrelevant for the creation of contemporary theologies, so the critics say. Because I seek to engage readers who would otherwise not pay his work the serious attention it deserves, in the chapters to follow I will adopt a different hermeneutical method than has typically been employed. I will read the *Glaubenslehre* backwards, beginning with Schleiermacher's explicit treatment of the Trinity.

Not only does such a reading have the benefit of challenging a critique of Schleiermacher's work head-on, but beginning with the Trinity is also a partial enactment of what Schleiermacher wondered about in his *Letters to Dr. Lücke*, where he said that he may have done better to reverse the order of his dogmatics: "Ever since I first conceived the work, I have debated whether I should arrange the parts as I did or should reverse them, beginning with what is now the second part and concluding with the present first one. As I hope you will soon see, I have left them as they were. Surely, it would have been natural and proper for a theologian who comes from the reformed tradition...to have

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<sup>144</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. New York: Harper One, 1991), 251: "Friedrich Schleiermacher, for example, relegated the doctrine of the Trinity to an appendix to Christian theology. ... Schleiermacher was of the opinion that one could give a better account of the experience of Christian faith by excluding the dogmatic overlay of Trinitarian doctrine." It is telling that her footnote for the paragraph is simply a reference to *The Christian Faith* in its entirety.



followed much more closely the outline of the Heidelberg Catechism.<sup>145</sup> Although I think Schleiermacher had good reasons to proceed in the way that he did, treating his work in reverse order paints it in different colors and allows different emphases to come through—emphases that were there all along but hermeneutically overshadowed by the dominance in his readers’ minds of the claims of the *Reden*.<sup>146</sup> By beginning with the distinctively Christian elements of Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God, I hope to offer his readers a fresh look at his masterwork. My argument regarding Schleiermacher’s placement of the Trinity as the keystone of the *Glaubenslehre* will offer further reason for reading the work backwards.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> He continues, “Of course, a catechism is not the same as a dogmatic theology. Therefore, I saw no harm in following a procedure in my dogmatics that I would fault in a catechism. Catechisms are designed primarily for young people, who have neither the personal experience nor the personal knowledge of human nature that would make them very sensitive to the need for salvation. But the basic feeling of each and every mature and enlightened Christian must be the ancient one that is given to humans by no other salvation [Heil] and no other name, although there can always be a great variety of ways of representing it. Would it not, therefore, have been most natural and orderly for me to begin from this point and to view everything from this perspective, especially since I have so definitely asserted that Christians have their complete consciousness of God only as it is produced in them through Christ? The doctrine of God itself would in no way be shortchanged. But the Father would have been perceived first in Christ. The first definite statements about God would have been that, in sending Christ, God renews the human race and establishes the spiritual Kingdom in us. The first divine attributes would have been wisdom and love. In short, the entire doctrine would have been treated as it is now, but in reverse order” (*OG*, 55-6).

<sup>146</sup> There are at least two reasons for proceeding as he did. Schleiermacher explains, 1) “The whim, my friend, is my strong dislike for such an anti-climax...[2].) After a complete discussion of the doctrines of redemption and the kingdom of God, there would have been scarcely any other option than to deal as briefly as possible with all those doctrines now contained in the first part. And there can be no doubt that this would have been detrimental not only to the book itself, nor just as it pertains to me personally, i.e., as a reflection of my point of view, but also as it relates to the present needs of our church” (*OG*, 60). He goes on to discuss challenges posed by natural and historical science. In short, “Schleiermacher considered it necessary to rid Christian faith in God of all unnecessary metaphysical and mythological ballast in order to testify to the pious experience of the reality of God when confronted with the modern scientific world view” (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 110).

<sup>147</sup> Bruce McCormack says, “My own view is that even if Schleiermacher had been right to think that the first set of ‘attributes’ were empty ‘forms’ until filled with a meaning which only emerges in relation to the third and last set of ‘attributes’ treated (love and wisdom), he would still have been wrong to assume that a reversal of order would have made no difference. On the face of it, having the ‘forms’ of omnipotence, etc. in place in advance of the treatment of the divine love and wisdom would certainly seem to de-limit the kind of ‘corrections’ that can be made to the former on the basis of the latter—and to just that extent, the

In addition to departing from the order of Schleiermacher's text, I will also depart from his method. In the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher develops the doctrine of God alongside his descriptions of the religious affections. He does not treat God as a subject to be discussed independently of historical human receptivity to the divine. In contrast, I will gather the relevant doctrinal statements from the work as a whole and present them together. Although in doing so I am differing quite markedly from Schleiermacher's method, this approach is useful in assisting Schleiermacher's readers in holding his whole doctrine of God in mind at once, thereby highlighting areas of his thought that cohere brilliantly and areas that could use further clarification or correction. In chapters four and five, I will argue that although Schleiermacher's doctrine demonstrates remarkable systematic coherence, his denial of divine personhood is at odds with the primary ways he describes the Living God.

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former would, in fact, be exercising a highly material influence on the latter. In truth, however, the problems are actually much more serious than even this line of reflection would seem to suggest. The treatments of the being and attributes of God in Parts I and II are not finally compatible due to the role played in Part I by the ancient concept of the ineffability of God" (Bruce McCormack, "Not a Possible God But the God Who Is," *The Reality of Faith in Theology*, eds. Bruce McCormack and Gerrit Willem Neven [Peter Lang, 2007], 118-119). He continues, "The move to a more strictly redempto-centric account would have come with a price. The price Schleiermacher would have paid is that he would have succeeded in overcoming metaphysics only by losing the critical element by means of which he preserved the 'otherness' of God. I noted above that Schleiermacher sought to secure a realistic conception of the 'otherness' of God by thinking for long stretches in an idealistic, transcendental frame of reference. And certainly, thinking in this way does preserve a kind of 'otherness' – and to just that extent, serves the interests of a critical theology which will not allow the being of God to be directly identified with any empirical reality. But we have also seen that he failed in his intention to exclude speculation in Part I. The only way to preserve the 'otherness' of God without giving in to that abstractive reasoning which is basic to speculation is by turning to the one empirical reality in which God is both empirically given and non-given at the same time, viz. the God-human in whom divine and human exist in a single Subject – without confusion and without separation. Thinking about God on this basis would indeed preserve divine 'otherness' – without lapsing into speculation" (ibid., 138-9). In these passages, we see that McCormack believes ancient metaphysics was driving Schleiermacher's claims in part one of the *Glaubenslehre*, and that the two parts are ultimately incompatible. I will argue against that view in chapter three, admittedly while reading the first part in lieu of the second part. Yet I agree with McCormack's assessment insofar as ineffability—its placement and role—poses interpretive and theological problems in Schleiermacher's text. In addition, I agree with McCormack that Schleiermacher needs to preserve God's otherness by rooting it in the person of Christ. I turn to that constructive project in chapters four and five.

Finally, by beginning with the Trinity, I develop the present chapter's emphasis on theocentrism and Christomorphism as two prominent features of Schleiermacher's mature theology, this time bringing the two into closer alignment and elaborating in ways that were not possible here. I will argue that Schleiermacher's "essential Trinitarianism" centers his theology in God's activity in the world, which is always shaped by the being and activity of God in Christ and the Church.

**Chapter Two: Kataphatic Elements of Schleiermacher's Doctrine of God:  
Christomorphic Theocentrism as "Essential Trinitarianism"**

In the last chapter, I took account of some of the main currents of critique that Schleiermacher's work has sustained from his own day to the present. By comparing his mature work to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I sought to undermine some of these critiques and to highlight the theocentrism and Christomorphism present in both Calvin and Schleiermacher's work, while taking account of their contextual and theological differences. In this chapter, I will begin to make good on my promise to read Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* backwards. Doing so speaks to the persistent critique that Schleiermacher ought to be ousted (or at least sidelined) from intra-Christian dialogue because he treats the Trinity as an appendix.

For Schleiermacher, the Trinity is the perfect summary, or the essence, of his dogmatics as a whole. The Trinity is a distillation of the Christomorphic theocentrism that undergirds and motivates his work, and it can beneficially guide his readers in their hermeneutical endeavors. My hope is that by beginning with the Trinity, some of Schleiermacher's readers will gain a new appreciation for both the reasons he rejects the doctrine of the Trinity as it has been historically developed and the ways that he embraces and makes essential for his entire presentation the Trinitarian activity of God in relation to the world. Schleiermacher is an "essential Trinitarian" in two ways: first, he affirms the essential aspects of the historical development of the Trinity (i.e. the one divine essence is in the person of Christ and the Holy Spirit); and second, he affirms three essential distinctions-in-relation within his description of the divine life, even though he does not affirm a statement about the being of God *in se* as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That is because he denies any statement about God *in se* that is not a condition for the possibility of the feeling of absolute dependence upon God in Christ and the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will also include my interpretation and analysis of the other kataphatic aspects of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God. Beginning with the Trinity, I will move through the divine causality, love, and wisdom. Further on, I will discuss the actualization of the divine decree in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Finally, I will move on to the holiness and justice of God. As these topics will be treated in the span of one chapter, my discussion of them cannot be exhaustive. In addition to the aim of demonstrating that Schleiermacher is an "essential Trinitarian," my choice of material is guided by my intention to show that Schleiermacher is primarily a kataphatic theologian. As such, this chapter anticipates chapter five, where I turn to that argument more explicitly.

## **I. Trinity as the *Glaubenslehre*'s Keystone [*Schlußstein*]**

### **A. Placement**

If one assumes that Schleiermacher's interpreters have engaged in an even cursory reading of the entire *Glaubenslehre* rather than attending only to its introduction, the reception of his work on the Trinity is eminently befuddling.<sup>2</sup> Catherine LaCugna's

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<sup>1</sup> Many will object to calling Schleiermacher Trinitarian, since "the doctrine of the Trinity" in common usage implies both the immanent and economic Trinities. I am attempting, by calling Schleiermacher an essential Trinitarian, to use "the Trinity" as a general notion in a way Schleiermacher would accept—not as synonymous with the historical development of the doctrine, but as indicating that the one God is in the person of Christ and the Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Early in his career, it may be remembered that Barth advised his students that only the first twelve sections of the *Glaubenslehre* needed to be read before deciding it was not worth reading the whole. Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923-24*, ed. Dietrich

comment is representative: “Friedrich Schleiermacher, for example, relegated the doctrine of the Trinity to an appendix to Christian theology.”<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Alister McGrath explains, “This doctrine is placed right at the end of the work, as an appendix.”<sup>4</sup> Or, as Ted Peters claims, “I must disagree with Schleiermacher to the extent that he makes the doctrine of the Trinity an expendable appendix to monotheism.”<sup>5</sup> Because of this quite erroneous but widespread view of Schleiermacher’s relation to Trinitarian thought, I begin by allowing Schleiermacher to speak for himself on the subject.

The following passages show that the essential content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the keystone [*Schlußstein*] of his entire *Glaubenslehre*:<sup>6</sup>

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Ritschl (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 243. I was alerted to this portion of the text by Jacqueline Mariña, “Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher,” *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 160.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper One, 1991), 251. Hegel is her predecessor in this view (though I do not have reason to suspect a direct line of inheritance). As Curran has it, “Hegel notes in exasperation, the Trinity has a central role to play in the whole ecclesiastical history of Christian piety, but by the time we get to the end of the *Glaubenslehre*, there doesn’t seem to be any room at the inn!” Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher’s Glaubenslehre* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 299. See G.W.F. Hegel, “Auszüge und Bemerkungen: Aus Schleiermachers ‘Glaubenslehre’ Bd. 2, 1822” in *Berliner Schriften: 1818-1831* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1997), 684-688.

<sup>4</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 258. McGrath goes on to say that for some this demonstrates Schleiermacher’s disregard for the doctrine, while for others it is the climax of the theological system. Even so, his repetition of the view that it was an “appendix” is itself misleading. As Samuel Powell explains, “Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith* does indeed contain appendices to various chapters and to these appendices he does in fact relegate discussion of traditional doctrines for which he has little use. The doctrine of the Trinity, however is contained, not in an appendix (*Anhang*), but in the conclusion (*Schluß*)” (Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 90).

<sup>5</sup> Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 89. See also Mark Husbands, “Calvin on the Revelation of God in Creation and Scripture: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities,” in *Calvin’s Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilities*, eds. J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 31.

<sup>6</sup> Both “coping-stone” and “keystone” are appropriate translations, but they are not synonymous. As Thomas Curran explains, “Whereas coping-stone (or cope-stone) derives its status from the cope of a wall (which is its top), the keystone is the stone placed ‘at the summit of an arch, which being the last put in, is looked upon as locking the whole together’. This means that the ‘coping-stone’ may be considered as the crown or completion of an edifice, but it need not carry any stronger sense than ‘finishing touch’. The keystone has a more decidedly architectonic function: by analogy, it becomes ‘the central principle of a

*All that is essential in this Second Aspect of the Second Part of our exposition [i.e., the Explication of the Consciousness of Grace, which comprises over half of the Glaubenslehre and includes discussions of Christ, the fellowship of individuals with the Redeemer, the world and the Church] is also posited in what is essential in the doctrine of the Trinity [Alles Wesentliche in dieser andern Seite des zweiten Teils unserer Darstellung ist auch in dem Wesentlichen der Trinitätslehre gesetzt].<sup>7</sup>*

An essential element of our exposition in this Part has been the doctrine of the union of the Divine Essence with human nature, both in the personality of Christ and in the common Spirit of the Church; *therewith the whole view of Christianity set forth in our Church teaching stands and falls [mit welchem die gesamte Auffassung des Christentums in unserer kirchlichen Lehre steht und fällt]*. For unless the being of God in Christ [*ein Sein Gottes in Christo*] is assumed, the idea of redemption could not be thus concentrated in His Person. And unless there were such a union [*Vereinigung*] also in the common Spirit of the Church [*Gemeingeist der Kirche*], the Church could not thus be the Bearer and Perpetuator of the redemption through Christ. Now these exactly are the essential [*wesentlichen*] elements in the doctrine of the Trinity [*der Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit*].<sup>8</sup>

The doctrine of the Trinity has no origin but this; and at first it had no other aim than to equate as definitely as possible the Divine Essence considered as thus united to human nature with the Divine Essence in itself. ... In virtue of this connexion, we rightly regard the doctrine of the Trinity, in so far as it is a deposit of these elements, as the keystone [*Schlußstein*] of Christian doctrine, and this equating with each other of the divine in each of these two unions, as also of both with the Divine Essence in itself, as what is essential in the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>9</sup>

As these passages show, Schleiermacher does not treat the Trinity as an “appendix,” an afterthought, or an interesting side-note at the end of his *Glaubenslehre*. Rather, the

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system...upon which all the rest depends” (Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre* [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994], 306). Curran argues that *Schlußstein* ought to be taken as the coping-stone rather than the keystone, because “the doctrine of the Trinity should be considered independently of *Gottesbewußtsein*” (Ibid.). I am not at all convinced by the reasons he offers, however, since he does not make a distinction between the historical form of the doctrine and the doctrine in its essence, a distinction Schleiermacher makes at every turn. Clearly, the doctrine of the Trinity in its historical form is not the keystone of the *Glaubenslehre*. But it is equally clear to me—and Schleiermacher says so—that the essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is, in fact, that without which the entire system falls apart.

<sup>7</sup> CF, 738.

<sup>8</sup> CF, 738. My emphasis.

<sup>9</sup> CF, 739.

essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is that which holds his entire presentation together and aptly summarizes it.<sup>10</sup> The union of God with human nature is the keystone placed in the center of an arch that keeps both sides from collapsing, where the “sides” of the arch include union of the divine essence and human nature in the Person of Christ and the Church. Without the being of God in human nature, both redemption through Christ and its communication through the Church as “bearer and perpetuator” of that redemption, would fail—more than that, they would not even get off the ground. The Trinity is the keystone and perfect summary of Schleiermacher’s understanding of the Christian faith.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Carol Jean Voisin, *A Reconsideration of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Treatment of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1982). Therein, Voisin argues that the Trinity is the keystone of Schleiermacher’s Christian doctrine, which is demonstrated in his reconstruction of Sabellianism in “Über den Gegensatz zwischen der Sabellianischen und der Athanasianischen Vorstellung von der Trinität” (1822), translated by Moses Stuart as “On the Discrepancy between the Sabellian and the Athanasian Method of Representing the Doctrine of the Trinity,” *The Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer*, 5/18 (April 1835), and in the conclusions of the 1822 and 1831 editions of the *Glaubenslehre*. She summarizes: “In the 1822 and 1831 conclusions of the Gl., Schleiermacher defined the doctrine, rigorously criticized its ecclesiastical form, and called for a revision of the same. None of these can actually be considered salient or novel in light of the history of the doctrine, especially since the emergence of the Protestant church. However, if calling for a revision of the doctrine seems to strike a new chord, perhaps in an unprecedented way, it does call for a critical and constructive investigation of the doctrine. Moreover, the call for such an investigation could well have been an urgent one, in light of the Trinitarian formulas which were emerging from universal rationalist grounds, such as Hegel’s Trinitarian theology. However, this call for a revision does not alone suffice for the pith of what these texts assert, because calling for a revision says nothing constructive or positive about the content or purpose of the doctrine itself. Rather, the most salient assertion concerning the Trinity in these texts is that the doctrine of the Trinity is the true keystone of Christian doctrine. Not since the Nicean and Constantinopolitan Councils and Augustine has the doctrine been acknowledged as such a pivotal and creative part of the Christian doctrine of faith. To be sure, no Protestant made such a claim for the Trinity before Schleiermacher” (ibid., 142-3). See also Robert Francis Streetman, *Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Doctrine of the Trinity and its Significance for Theology Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1975). He says, “We must come to terms with his statement that Protestantism has not yet added anything distinctive in its treatment of the Trinity, and that therefore the doctrine remains incomplete. This may be taken as an exhortation to Protestants, of a non-speculative cast, to reaffirm the essential truth of the doctrine (which as a Christian Schleiermacher could never have relinquished), on a Biblical, practical and evangelical base” (ibid., 312). See also Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 87-103; Eckhard Lessing, “Zu Schleiermachers Verständnis der Trinitätslehre,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 76 (1979): 450-488.

<sup>11</sup> I refer to the Trinity both as the keystone that holds the entire presentation together and as a perfect summary of *The Christian Faith*. These two ways of describing the Trinity have different emphases—the first serving a much more prescriptive and the second a more descriptive function. To be clear about these different emphases: I take it that the essential Trinity is the keystone of the *Glaubenslehre*; as such, it is a



Thus, as Powell states, “the doctrine of the Trinity occupies the conclusion, not because it is unimportant, but because it is the logical culmination of his doctrine of God, which spans the entire second part of *The Christian Faith*.”<sup>12</sup> It is that by which the whole view of Christianity presented in the *Glaubenslehre* stands and falls.

Perhaps Schleiermacher’s interpreters did not take him at his word about the importance of the Trinity because of its placement at the very end of the *Glaubenslehre*. If that is the case, they assume that the subjects to be dealt with appear in the text in the order of importance—a curious assumption to maintain when reading a systematic theology.<sup>13</sup> What Schleiermacher tells us, instead, is that he concludes rather than begins

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useful way of summarizing the work.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 90.

<sup>13</sup> As Karl Barth put it, “Nevertheless, the choice of this order, irrespective of the reasons for it, is unmistakably a factual confirmation of the presence and urgency of at least the problem of the Trinity. The same naturally applies to Schleiermacher too, who could put the doctrine of the Trinity outside the series of other dogmatic Loci and use it as a solemn conclusion to his whole dogmatics. Of course, the fact that Schleiermacher can use his doctrine of the Trinity only as the conclusion to his dogmatics and not equally well as its beginning shows that it does not have constitutive significance for him either, so that here again the fact is more important than the intention or the matter” (Karl Barth, *CD* I/1, 303). To my mind, this is exactly the opposite conclusion one should draw when considering the systematic character of Schleiermacher’s thought. If it is truly systematic, then although it may be prudent to begin in one place rather than another, and although of course the location of a doctrine within a specific section will bear on its meaning, still every doctrine is interdependent with the others such that the significance of a doctrine’s location (if it is taken within its particular section) is substantially mitigated. Schleiermacher addresses the nature of his work in a similar way, where he says, “it does seem strange that some of my critics claim that the one merit due my work is for its systematic arrangement, when I do not care whether or not the second part comes first. But so be it. Of course, I do not care for poems, whether Greek or German, that can be arbitrarily begun at any line and read either forwards or backwards. Nor would I consider it feasible in philosophical systems to reorganize the various propositions and their groupings, if I may give my opinion as a dilettante. But a dogmatics can never become a poem, even though its author may consider it to be no more true than poetry. Nor should it be a philosophical system, even if its author is quite philosophical. Therefore, not only is a dogmatics a quite different case, but I could be so bold as to claim that it is advantageous for a dogmatics to undergo such a reorganization. It is a sign that the dogmatics stays within its limits and seeks to be nothing more than a suitable and skillful arrangement of what is simultaneously present and mutually interrelated” (*OG*, 69). (If readers here stumble on Schleiermacher’s hypothetical claim that “its author may consider it to be no more true than poetry,” recall that he devoted his entire life to the Christian faith, both as a theologian and as a pastor. If the hypothetical is to be understood as true for Schleiermacher, it is much more likely that it displays his high regard for poetry, rather than his low regard for dogmatics.) Later in life, Barth seems to have understood that starting and ending points in systematics are rather less important than he had previously believed. For example, he states: “I opposed

with the Trinity because he wants to show that one may maintain the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity without espousing it in its conventional and historical form: “it is important to make the point that the main pivots [*Hauptangelpunkte*; head crucial/central points] of the ecclesiastical doctrine [*der kirchlichen Lehre*]*—*the being of God in Christ and in the Christian Church*—*are independent of the doctrine of the Trinity” as historically developed dogma.<sup>14</sup>

## B. Reformed Motivation

Schleiermacher is not alone in wondering about the beneficial character of the doctrine of the Trinity as it has been historically developed. Gerrish notes a precedent in Martin Luther:

To some extent Schleiermacher is echoing a sentiment of the Protestant Reformers. Luther, in particular, expressed strong doubts about the practical usefulness of technical Trinitarian language, even of the term ‘Trinity’ itself; and in an exposition of Exodus 12 (1525) he let slip this remark: ‘Christ is not called Christ because he has two natures. What is that to me?’<sup>15</sup>

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Schleiermacher and subjectivism because it was necessary at the time. Another time, those who have learned something from the Church Dogmatics may perhaps begin with Christian subjectivism. Why not?” Karl Barth, *Karl Barth’s Table Talk*, recorded and edited by John D. Godsey (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), 13.

<sup>14</sup> *CF*, 741. Thus, if the doctrine is considered in its historical form, then Richard Crouter may be right in claiming that “In his suspicion of the mediation of our experience by thought Schleiermacher makes relatively short shrift of the doctrine of the Trinity” (Richard Crouter, “Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48/1, 39). If, however, the doctrine is considered in its essentials, then Crouter’s statement is surely inaccurate. I explain further reasons Schleiermacher wants to show that the essentials of the Trinity can be espoused apart from its historical development in what follows.

<sup>15</sup> B.A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1984), 39.

Calvin, too, has misgivings about some construals of the doctrine of the Trinity, which he thinks are rather confusing.<sup>16</sup> The inclusion of such confusing doctrines within Reformation thought runs contrary to a motive Luther and Calvin share, namely, to make the Christian faith accessible and relevant to the concrete lives of lay Christians. As Dillenberger puts it, Calvin's "religious exposition serves the life and understanding of the believer."<sup>17</sup> Thus, whatever doctrines he espouses must serve the believer in some way. As I have shown in chapter one, Calvin is eminently concerned that pious knowledge of God includes what is to our advantage to know of God. The same could be said of Luther and Schleiermacher in their own ways. As Claude Welch explains, "Here Schleiermacher's view was continuous with Luther's constant insistence on the *for us* and Calvin's opening statement in the *Institutes* that the knowledge of God and of self are

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<sup>16</sup> Such confusion is grounded in the essence of God as unknowable, for Calvin: "Here, indeed, if anywhere in the secret mysteries of Scripture, we ought to play the philosopher soberly and with great moderation; let us use great caution that neither our thoughts nor our speech go beyond the limits to which the Word of God itself extends. For how can the human mind measure off the measureless essence of God according to its own little measure...? ...Let us then willingly leave to God the knowledge of himself...But we shall be 'leaving it to him' if we conceive him to be as he reveals himself to us, without inquiring about him elsewhere than from his Word" (*ICR*, I.xiii.21). As such, he claims, "I could wish that they [i.e. Trinitarian terms] were buried, if only among all men this faith were agreed on: that Father and Son and Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are differentiated by a peculiar quality" (*ICR*, I.xiii.5). Calvin affirms the immanent Trinity for two reasons: first, because scripture attributes different activities and characteristics to the Father, Son and Spirit, and second, because it comports with the usual manner of human thinking about God. As he explains, "It is not fitting to suppress the distinction that we observe to be expressed in Scripture. It is this: to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity. ...For the mind of each human being is naturally inclined to contemplate God first, then the wisdom coming forth from him, and lastly the power whereby he executes the decrees of his plan. For this reason, the Son is said to come forth from the Father alone; the Spirit, from the Father and the Son at the same time" (*ICR*, I.xiii.18). While Calvin affirms that these distinctions are found in scripture and in the natural inclination of the "mind of each human being," he claims that the doctrine of the Trinity as it has been historically formulated is rather confusing. See *ICR*, I.xiii.5, on the "Limits and Necessity of Theological Terms." Calvin adopts "what he believes would otherwise be confusing doctrines" because he thinks that aspects of these doctrines "might serve either to strengthen the faith of believers or to judge the impiety of the reprobate" (Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 32).

<sup>17</sup> John Dillenberger, "An Introduction to John Calvin," *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 20.

given together.”<sup>18</sup> Luther, Calvin, and Schleiermacher are theologians interested in the edification of Christians; they are not interested in maintaining historical doctrines simply because they are traditional. In this way, a Reformation motive lies behind Schleiermacher’s treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>19</sup>

### C. Specific Concerns

#### 1. *God in se*

The portion of the historical doctrine (or, better, here—“Dogma”) of the Trinity that is particularly troubling for Schleiermacher is the immanent Trinity. On an immanent Trinitarian account,

Each of the two above-mentioned unions [of the divine essence with human nature in the person of Christ and the Spirit of the Church] is traced back to a separate distinction posited independently of such union, and eternally, in the Supreme Being as such; further, after the member of this plurality destined to union with Jesus had been designated by the name ‘Son,’ it was felt necessary to posit the Father in accordance therewith as a special distinction.<sup>20</sup>

Schleiermacher does not affirm the immanent Trinity whereby distinctions between the divine persons *in se* are posited on the basis of the union of the divine essence with human nature in the economic divine activity.

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<sup>18</sup> Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 1, 1799-1870* (New Haven: Yale University, 1972), 78.

<sup>19</sup> Yet, as my discussion above has shown, Michael Horton is surely wrong to say that this Reformed motivation “led Schleiermacher to consider the dogma of the Trinity at best unimportant” (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011], 214). Rather, the Trinity is for Schleiermacher the keystone of the Christian faith.

<sup>20</sup> *CF*, 739. When Schleiermacher describes the “ecclesiastical doctrine,” he refers to Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, and Augustine’s *Confessions*, along with the *Gallic Confession* (1559), the *Belgian Confession*, and the Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque Vult*). Although Schleiermacher affirms the intention of the Athanasian Creed, namely, that there be an equality of the three persons and one divine essence, he disagrees with how the unity and trinity of God are to be described and understood.

He offers a number of reasons to reject the immanent Trinity, most important among which is the claim that it does not pass the test for inclusion in dogmatics: it is not an utterance that concerns the pious immediate self-consciousness. “We cannot attach the same value to the further elaboration [*Ausbildung*; development] of the dogma [beyond its essence],” he explains, because “the assumption of an eternal distinction in the Supreme Being is not an utterance concerning the religious consciousness [*ein frommes Selbstbewußtsein*], for there it could never emerge.”<sup>21</sup> As I have mentioned in chapter one, the eternal distinctions that are posited in the immanent Trinity could never come from (*vorkommen*) the pious self-consciousness since the latter has to do with God considered in relation to humanity—specifically, with God in Christ—whereas immanent eternal distinctions deal with God considered apart from creation. As Schleiermacher asks, “Who would venture to say that the impression made by the divine in Christ obliges us to conceive such an eternal distinction as its basis?”<sup>22</sup> The pious self-consciousness has always and only before itself an awareness of God in relation to creation. More than this, the immediate religious self-consciousness includes only that which is essential to the pious reception of the redemption of humanity by God in Christ. The believer’s redemptive encounter with Christ does not require eternal, immanent distinctions between Father, Son, and Spirit.

On one level, Schleiermacher is surely correct. A thorough understanding of the immanent Trinity as including real distinctions among the persons is not required for the believer to piously receive redemption by God in Christ. On another level, however, it

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<sup>21</sup> *CF*, 739.

<sup>22</sup> *CF*, 739.

seems that Schleiermacher will affirm—perhaps despite himself—something quite similar to the dynamics of the immanent Trinity in his discussion of the eternal divine decree or causality. Such causality includes (1) the pure activity of (2) divine love and (3) wisdom.<sup>23</sup> I will return to this suggestion below.

For now, I simply want to note that Schleiermacher is using “eternity”—here connected with God *in se* and the immanent God—in a slightly different way than he uses it in part one of the *Glaubenslehre*. As I will show in the next chapter, in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, “divine eternity” has two basic meanings: God is not conditioned by time or anything temporal and God conditions time itself. Both of these meanings of eternity are conditions of the possibility for the feeling of *absolute* dependence. They may be stated positively: God is purely active and God determines all things. Without these claims, the pious feeling of dependence would be partial and relative. In part one, then, “eternal” has to do with specific claims regarding what must be true about God on the basis of the feeling of absolute dependence upon God in Christ, even though the content of those claims is not part of creaturely experience; in the

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<sup>23</sup> Schleiermacher’s readers may wonder, if the economic Trinity is the genuine self-revelation of God, then why deny that God in Godself is eternally triune? In Karl Barth’s work, for example, the question arises: “One may well ask whether revelation can be believed if in the background there is always the thought that we are not dealing with God as He is but only with a God as He appears to us...this means that God in His revelation is not really God. To take this unreal God seriously as God is diametrically opposed to monotheism even though it was and is the point of the distinction to protect this. The result is—and this gives rise to the questions we should put specifically to modern Sabellianism too [i.e., Schleiermacher]—that belief in revelation necessarily becomes idolatry” (Karl Barth, *CD* I/1, 353). For Barth, Schleiermacher’s denial of the eternal distinctions that constitute the immanent trinity is tantamount to idolatry and polytheism. Indeed, this would be a critical blow to Schleiermacher’s system of doctrine if it were not the case that Schleiermacher has an implicit Trinitarianism within his discussion of the divine causality, love, and wisdom. This would be a critical blow because there does not seem to be good reason not to infer from God’s activity in the world something about the being of God as God is. Schleiermacher does make such inferences, albeit implicitly, while always recognizing that in doing so he does not transcend his limits epistemologically.

creaturely world, humanity experiences passivity and activity, and an interdependent determination of all things. As such, the claims that God is not conditioned by time and conditions time itself can only be understood by contrast to finite ways of being (e.g. passivity and reciprocity). In that sense, these specific claims have to do with God *in se*, though they are made on the basis of the reception of God's activity *ad extra*. The "eternal God" in part one, then, refers to God *in se* with the recognition that the claims being made about God *in se* are made on account of a pious reception of the divine activity *ad extra*.

In Schleiermacher's discussion of the Trinity, however, "eternal" refers to God *in se* where the claims being made about God are not conditions for the possibility of a pious reception of the divine activity *ad extra*. That is, in the Trinity section of the *Glaubenslehre*, the "eternal God" is God considered entirely apart from creation, where the emphasis is on "*considered* entirely apart." By denying knowledge of the immanent Trinity—that is, eternal distinctions considered antecedently to the economic triune divine activity—Schleiermacher is underscoring the fact that any consideration of God always occurs through creation itself. In other words, created faculties are used for the activity of considering God. As such, strictly speaking, God can never be *considered* apart from creation.

While Schleiermacher uses "eternity" differently in parts one and two of the *Glaubenslehre*, they are not inconsistent with one another. God's timelessness, for instance, may be affirmed as an attribute of God *in se* because it is made on the basis of considering the conditions for the possibility of the pious feeling of absolute dependence,

and its explication is made by contrast to the finite. In both of these ways, the “immanent” or “eternal” God is described on the basis of God’s relation to creation. Thus, Schleiermacher speaks of God as God must be, though inexperienceable as such. In short, Schleiermacher employs a transcendental argument, which is highlighted in part one. That transcendental argument, in turn, upholds the distinction between God *in se* and *ad extra*, which is emphasized in his discussion of the Trinity.

Dispensing with the double meaning of “eternity,” we might put it clearly as follows: An affirmation of God *in se* as inaccessible to the human being indicates Schleiermacher’s post-Kantian epistemological convictions. All claims made by human beings are made in, with, and through creaturely faculties in creaturely contexts. Yet Schleiermacher may and, as I will argue below, does speak of the immanent life of God—where “immanent” is not synonymous with “*in se*” but means a description of the divine being as the purely active determiner of all things. Schleiermacher textures his understanding of that eternal divine decree with reference to causality, love, and wisdom. It may seem, then, that although Schleiermacher clearly states that Christians ought not to speculate about God *in se*, his remarks about the divine causality may be a somewhat muddled performance of the theological move Barth made later regarding the ability of God to overcome the Kantian distinction between God *in se* and *ad extra*, thereby allowing a legitimate inference from God *ad extra* to God *in se*. Although this might be one way of stating the case, it seems more accurate to claim that Schleiermacher upholds the Kantian distinction while allowing a re-conceptualization of “immanent” such that it is no longer synonymous with “*in se*.” I will return to this suggestion below.



To summarize: For Schleiermacher, it is inappropriate to infer from the temporal distinctions that attend creation's reception of the eternal divine activity (e.g., the preparation for the union of the divine essence with human nature, then the union of the divine with Christ, followed by the divine union with the common Spirit of the Church) that there are three persons within the being of God *in se*. For "underlying the elaboration of the doctrine [of the immanent Trinity] is not merely a desire to reproduce very exactly our Christian consciousness that the Divine Essence in both forms of union is the same, and also is equal to the being of God *per se*."<sup>24</sup> This much, Schleiermacher is very keen to affirm. What he wants to avoid is making claims about God considered apart from creation that are not required as conditions for the possibility of the pious feeling of absolute dependence.<sup>25</sup> As he explains in his essay, "Über die Gegensatz zwischen der Sabellianischen und der Athanasianischen Vorstellung von Trinität,"

The dominant symbols of the church maintained that there is in God a trinity which is purely internal; that there is something that was originally distinct and separate *independent of all operations of the deity*; that the deity was Father, Son and Holy Spirit in itself, from eternity, and *would have been such even if there had been no union with human nature, and no indwelling in the community of faith*.<sup>26</sup>

Schleiermacher is averse to this immanent Trinity insofar as it is posited at a remove from the union with human nature and indwelling in the community of faith. Such a

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<sup>24</sup> *CF*, 740.

<sup>25</sup> See John Calvin on divine accommodation, *ICR* I.xiii.1. Cf. Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," *Interpretation* 31/1 (1977): 19-38. Eternalizing divine distinctions could be an instance of not recognizing God's accommodation to human capabilities.

<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Discrepancy Between the Sabellian and Athanasian Method of Representing the Doctrine of a Trinity in the Godhead," trans. Moses Stuart, *Biblical Repository and Quarterly Observer*, 1835. In German: *Friedrich Schleiermacher und die Trinitätslehre*, ed. Martin Tezt, *Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte*, vol. XI (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1969). Quoted in Robert Williams, *Schleiermacher the Theologian: The Construction of the Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 144. My emphasis.

doctrine is speculative. That is, it forces the Christian to make claims about God as God *would have been* apart from creation. Robert Williams explains the danger of such immanent Trinitarianism by suggesting that without the relation to creation through Christ, the Trinity becomes a locus for universal ontological structures or principles:

The terms ‘Father,’ ‘Son,’ and ‘Spirit’ are not simply universal ontological structures or potencies generally accessible to reflection, rather they are historically and culturally shaped elements of the divine self-disclosure constitutive of the economy of redemption. To render these elements as an immanent ontological trinity in the above sense is to begin the speculative enterprise of transforming them into general ontological principles.<sup>27</sup>

Because Schleiermacher understands theology as describing the religious affections of Christian believers in a Reformed anti-speculative mode, he thinks it inappropriate to make claims about the divine essence that would indicate a separation in thought and being of the divine essence in itself from the divine essence as united with human nature. This is not a legitimate inference, for him, because it seeks to overcome the limits of human knowledge. We simply do not know what God would have been or been like apart from Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Naturally, some readers of Schleiermacher disagree. For example, in an essay entitled “The Trinity, Prayer and Sexuality,” Sarah Coakley pits herself against his rejection of the historically constructed doctrine of the Trinity, because it seems she

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Williams, *Schleiermacher the Theologian: The Construction of the Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 144.

<sup>28</sup> For Schleiermacher, the Trinity is, therefore, grounded “neither through speculation nor through direct immediate experience, but rather in terms of the Christian community’s historical experience of the presence of God’s being as ‘person-forming’ in Christ and as ‘community-forming’ in the Christian community. The Trinity is not based upon a Hegelian conception of God in God’s self-consciousness. Instead, it is the Christian consciousness of the deity of the Son and the Spirit that necessitates a threeness of God as Father, Son, and Spirit” (Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Understanding God as Triune,” *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña [New York: Cambridge, 2005], 181).

thinks it is possible for believers to experience the immanent Trinity in the practice of wordless prayer. Thus:

The revival of a vibrant Trinitarian conceptuality, an ‘earthed’ sense of the meaningfulness and truth of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, most naturally arises out of a simultaneous renewal of commitment to prayer, and especially prayer of a relatively wordless kind.... I shall be arguing that Christian prayer practice is inherently Trinitarian. In a way this is a belated riposte to the charge of the great German ‘liberal’ theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, that the Trinity can never be experienced, can never be, as he put it, ‘direct to consciousness’. This I want to challenge.<sup>29</sup>

It is true, of course, that Schleiermacher does not think that the immanent Trinity, posited in contrast to an economic Trinity, can be an expression of the pious self-consciousness, because it is never “direct to consciousness.” That is, the immanent Trinity is not an immediate utterance of the religious self-consciousness. Eternal distinctions within God *in se* are not essential to a pious reception of divine redemption through Christ. Yet what Coakley’s statement in the passage above occludes is that Schleiermacher accepts and, indeed, highlights the triune relatedness of God to humanity in the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church, and the relatedness of God to humanity in the preparation for these unions. What Schleiermacher rejects is reifying such triune relations into God considered antecedent to creation. Thus, it is not accurate to say that for Schleiermacher Christians cannot encounter God as triune in and through the divine providential activity of God, which is ultimately shaped by God’s activity in Christ and the Spirit of the Church. Indeed, it is a burden of my work to show that Schleiermacher’s theocentrism is Christomorphic, which implies Pneumatomorphism as

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<sup>29</sup> Sarah Coakley, “The Trinity, Prayer and Sexuality,” in *Feminism and Theology*, eds. Janet Martin Soskice and Janet Lipton (New York: Oxford, 2003), 258.

well.<sup>30</sup> What Schleiermacher wants to avoid is a speculative separation between a Trinity within God in Godself and a temporal Trinity within God as God is related to creation. In other words, Schleiermacher wants to uphold an apophatic reserve about God *in se* while making a strong claim about the Christian reception of divine activity. Thus, there remains a particular kind of divine triunity that is present in the God-consciousness of Christians: humanity (as part of the universe) is absolutely dependent upon the being and activity of God, who determines the historical world (past, present, and future) in relation to the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and by way of the Spirit. To the extent that criticisms like Coakley's hide this feature of Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*, they miss the mark. She may be correct that the Trinity can be encountered in prayer, but this is not a challenge to Schleiermacher himself if "Trinity" is stated without qualification—that is, without specifying whether the referent is the immanent and/or economic Trinities. Schleiermacher rejects the immanent Trinity based

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<sup>30</sup> I focus on Schleiermacher's Christomorphism rather than his Pneumatomorphism. Such a focus is not in any way a reflection of my view that Schleiermacher's (or Calvin's, before him) theology is not significantly formed by a focus on the Spirit. Indeed, it is one of the many and primary benefits of Schleiermacher's system that it does not confine the Spirit to the sidelines but gives the Spirit's work an eminently significant place. (See Bruce McCormack's "Review of Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher," *Theology Today* 55/3, 484.) The reason I focus on Schleiermacher's Christomorphism, which implies his Pneumatomorphism, is that one of my primary purposes here is to dissuade his readers from the view that he is primarily an apophatic theologian. Given the association, at least in the imagination of many Christian minds, between Spirit-focused theologies and mystical experiences, or pneumatological emphases and the ahistorical, and given the constraints and aims of my work here, I have chosen to focus on Christ rather than the Spirit. Whether that is an adequate choice is an open question, especially given the important influence on feminist theology of Elizabeth Johnson's *She Who Is*, wherein she advocates beginning with the Spirit in feminist work. Although I agree with her that the Spirit ought to be given primacy of place as the leading edge of God's activity, still logical priority ought to be given to the being of God in Christ as that to which the Spirit witnesses and conforms Christians. Thus, in future works I may find myself tending in a Pneumatologically focused direction, where the Spirit is still always tethered to God in the person of Jesus Christ. Here, however, it seems prudent to emphasize Schleiermacher's Christomorphism, which implies his Pneumatomorphism.

on the limits of contextual and pious knowledge of God, but his entire system relies upon what is essential in Trinitarian thought.

## ***2. Conceptual Difficulties***

I turn now to the conceptual problems Schleiermacher highlights with regard to the doctrine of the immanent Trinity as it has been historically developed. Treating these difficulties will bring into view the specific developments within the definition and elaboration of the doctrine of the Trinity that Schleiermacher is opposing. Such difficulties, the reader will no doubt notice, are not new. Indeed, the familiarity of these objections to the historical formulation of the Trinity ought to be instructive. For it demonstrates that in criticizing the historical doctrine, Schleiermacher is not placing himself “outside” the Christian community. He is simply doing what many Christian theologians throughout the centuries have done: engaging a doctrine by exploring its problems and merits. In this task he joins the faithful who have gone before him. The basic familiarity of the following problems one encounters in Trinitarian thought ought to indicate that Schleiermacher’s comments at the end of his *Glaubenslehre* are not a final deviation from the long line of esteemed theologians who came before him, but a request for continuing conversation.

### **a. Polytheism Not Guarded Against in the New Testament**

Schleiermacher argues that one problem with the historical doctrine of the Trinity is that it generates the need to guard against polytheism, though this need is not evidenced in the New Testament. As he explains,

For underlying the elaboration of the doctrine is not merely a desire to reproduce very exactly our Christian consciousness that the Divine Essence in both forms of union is the same, and also is equal to the being of God *per se*; rather, it was only after the distinction had been eternalized and made antecedent to the union that there arose a need to guard against the semblance of polytheism, and to secure that this, in a sense separated, being of God was none the less embraced within the unity of the Divine Essence.<sup>31</sup>

Schleiermacher argues more particularly that because there can be found no need to guard against polytheism in the Gospel according to John, the evangelist most likely did not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity as it is now known. Samuel Powell explains,

The eternal personal distinctions posited by the orthodox doctrine have no support in the Gospel according to John, where such support might be expected. In particular, Schleiermacher disputed the customary way of interpreting the opening verses of that Gospel, according to which the Logos is understood to be an eternal and personal being distinct from God the Father. Schleiermacher drew attention to the fact that both Trinitarians and Arians used these verses and construed them in their own way, a fact suggesting that both Trinitarian and Arian interpretations are anachronistic. He also commented on the absence of any mention of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel's prologue, an omission that likewise casts doubt on the supposition that the author believed what the later creeds would assert.<sup>32</sup>

For Schleiermacher, then, although the New Testament writers refer to God, Logos, and Spirit, because they do not see the need to defend monotheism against polytheism on the basis of their use of these terms, neither should Christians today affirm a doctrine of the Trinity that would occasion the need for such a defense.

This argument, though *prima facie* plausible, is ultimately unconvincing. First, it relies on silence, which is a weak form of argument given that silence, by its character, does not clearly or explicitly give reasons for such silence. Second, if one takes an organic view of doctrinal development, the early church fathers' development of

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<sup>31</sup> *CF*, 740.

<sup>32</sup> Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 92.

arguments against polytheism could be taken as evidence of the sort of Johannine protestations Schleiermacher was looking for. That is, later exegetes may see something in John's work to which the author himself was blind, but which arises out of his view. In any case, Schleiermacher argues that the lack of John's protestations against polytheism is an indication that the view of God with which he was operating would need no argument against it, though the same cannot be said for the historical doctrine of the Trinity.

Schleiermacher admits, however, that if the doctrine of the immanent and economic Trinities "arose so definitely out of the utterances of Christ Himself and of the Apostles concerning him that we had to accept it on their testimony," then: "The doctrine of the [immanent and economic] Trinity in that case would be a fully elaborated doctrine of this type, and we should accept it as a combination of testimonies regarding a supersensible fact."<sup>33</sup> In this passage, Schleiermacher shows his willingness to accept supersensible facts if they arise out of the utterances of Christ, as witnessed to by the biblical writers. Even if such exegesis could be established firmly, however, the doctrine would not be "a 'doctrine of faith' in the really original and proper sense of that phrase."<sup>34</sup> That is because "our faith in Christ and our living fellowship with Him would be the same although we had no knowledge of any such transcendent fact, or although the fact itself were different."<sup>35</sup> That is to say: since the historical doctrine of the Trinity does not arise from the immediate utterances of the religious self-consciousness, it is not an

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<sup>33</sup> CF, 740, 741.

<sup>34</sup> CF, 741.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

essential part of the Christian faith. The essence of the Christian faith, recall, is redemption by God through Christ in the union of the divine essence with human nature. Thus, even if exegesis could be firmly established to affirm that Jesus and the disciples believed in the immanent Trinity, it would be accepted as a supersensible fact on the authority of their testimony in the gospel narratives, rather than as an immediate and essential utterance of the God-consciousness. This being the case, “we can wait all the more calmly to see whether the exegetical results on which these expansions of the doctrine rest are any more fully confirmed by the latest work on the subject than has hitherto been the case.”<sup>36</sup> The approach taken here is a good example of the way that Schleiermacher provides a way for his ecclesial audience to recognize and appreciate the advances being made in exegetical science without fearing that those results would dramatically change the substance of their faith. Though the Trinity is, of course, an essential part of the Christian faith, the historical elaboration of it is not—and this would be the case with or without a firm exegetical argument for the view that the biblical authors were on their way to the doctrine of the Trinity as it has been developed ecclesiastically.

#### **b. Equality Between the Persons, and Between the Essence and the Persons**

A second problem with the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity, as Schleiermacher sees it, consists in the fact that the doctrine of the immanent Trinity requires equality between the essence and the three persons, along with an equality of

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<sup>36</sup> *CF*, 741.



each of the persons in relation to the others, yet such equality is impossible to maintain. Of course, those who espouse the ecclesiastical doctrine clearly state that the divine essence is not superior to or separate from the three persons and that each of the persons are fully divine. For Schleiermacher, “this obviously would be sufficient to bar out all inequalities, if it were not for the inconsistency which emerges as soon as side by side with this equality the attempt is made to perpetuate the method of distinguishing the Persons.”<sup>37</sup> Schleiermacher explains that in order to distinguish them, the theologian “can only represent the Persons in a gradation, and thus either present the unity of the Essence as less real than the three Persons, or vice versa.”<sup>38</sup> The result is a tendency toward equality of the persons in Tritheism or inequality of the persons in Monarchicalism.

Supporters of traditional Trinitarianism will neither grant Schleiermacher the suppositions that distinguishing the divine persons requires gradation, nor that upholding the equality of the persons ends in Tritheism. Thus, to explain Schleiermacher’s train of thought, let me take each of these in turn, beginning with the danger of gradation and Monarchicalism. To see how Monarchicalism might result from the procedure of traditional Trinitarianism, take, for instance, the distinction between the Father and the Son. It consists in “the fact that the Father eternally begets, but is Himself unbegotten, while the Son is begotten from all eternity but not Himself begetting.”<sup>39</sup> “Begetting,” here, indicates a relation of dependence. The Son originates from, or depends for his

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<sup>37</sup> *CF*, 743.

<sup>38</sup> *CF*, 742.

<sup>39</sup> *CF*, 743.

existence on, the begetting activity of the Father. This relation of dependence, for Schleiermacher, implies that greater power and glory should be attributed to the Father:

If power has dwelt in the Father from all eternity to beget the Son as a second divine Person, whereas in the Son no such power dwells, and no relation of dependence in which the Father stands to Him can be adduced as a counterweight, undeniably the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son, and in addition the glory which the Begetter has with the Begotten must be greater than that which the Begotten has with the Begetter. The same holds true for the Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, superiority is attributed to the Father because he possesses a power that is lacking in the Son. In other words, additional power provides the Father additional glory, which leads to the claim that “the Father is superior to the other two Persons.”<sup>41</sup> Such inherent superiority, or gradation, indicates a tendency toward Monarchicalism.

One argument against Schleiermacher’s view here might be that the “counterweight” Schleiermacher thinks is lacking between the Son and the Father is found in the Son’s power to confer on the Father the title “Father.” In other words, one cannot be a father without a child, just as one cannot be a child without a father, at least strictly biologically speaking. As such, the Father has the power of rendering the second Person the Son, and the Son has the power of rendering the first Person the Father. This counterargument ultimately does not prevail, however, since the power of the Son, on this scenario, is not the same kind of power that the Father possesses. The Son’s presence may allow the begetter to be called “Father,” but without the Father’s power to beget in the first place, the Son would not have such naming power. The relation between the Father and Son, in other words, depends entirely on the Father. Only after the Father’s

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> *CF*, 743.

originative power is exercised might one say that the Father and Son have mutuality with regard to their relational namings. If it be averred that “Fathering” and “Son-ing” in God are co-eternal, then it seems to me the analogy may have reached the limits of its usefulness. That is, to be illuminating, readers may need another analogy to understand co-eternal “Fathering” and “Son-ing.”

A more damaging response to Schleiermacher’s argument is that Schleiermacher himself allows for relations of dependence within his own understanding of the divine causality, as I will show below, and these relations do not indicate gradation, superiority, or Monarchicalism. This indicates to me that the particular language of “persons” of the Trinity might be the genuine stumbling block for Schleiermacher regarding the immanent Trinity. For if relations of dependence are taken out of the context of distinct “persons,” it seems his concern over gradation, subordination, and Monarchicalism dissipates.

For Schleiermacher, a further problem consists in the fact that the distinctions between the Persons are a cause not only for inequality among the Persons, but also for inequality between the Persons on the one hand, and the Divine Essence on the other. In this situation, again, one must adopt either Monarchicalism, wherein the Son and Spirit are subordinated to the Father who is identified with the divine Essence, or Tritheism, wherein the divine Essence is subordinated to the Persons. To see how Schleiermacher arrives at that dichotomy once again, consider the following line of reasoning. He describes the traditional position in the following passage:

The Persons are distinguished from each other by peculiar properties not predicable of the Divine Essence in itself, while the Divine Essence itself has existence only in these three Persons, but not outside or apart from them (whether

as a fourth Person or impersonally), and even in them does not distribute different attributes to different Persons, but resides in each Person whole and undivided.<sup>42</sup>

To understand this position, Schleiermacher thinks the best aid is an analogy with “the conception of a species with the individual members it contains; for the conception of a species is similarly present whole and undivided in its individuals, but nowhere outside them.”<sup>43</sup> Some theologians allow the analogy, while others do not.<sup>44</sup> Without the analogy, for Schleiermacher, Christians “really are not in a position to form any definite ideas on the subject.”<sup>45</sup> However, if allowed, the analogy does not get Christians much farther; it simply pushes the question back one level. The same problem of inequality results in terms of emphasis: we must begin either from the unity of the Essence (i.e., the species), “in which case the distinction of Persons appears subordinate and falls into the background,” or from the distinctions of the Persons (i.e., the individual members), “in which case the unity as being abstract falls into the background.”<sup>46</sup> Between these two starting points, “no genuinely middle course seems possible which would not really be an approximation to one or the other.”<sup>47</sup> As such, if the “ecclesiastical doctrine” is to be adopted, “we remain hesitating between the two,” and “the doctrine can do little to secure those two main points [i.e., “the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the divinity of Christ, as also the relation of Christ as Son to the Father”] (which alone are in question), or to place

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<sup>42</sup> *CF*, 744.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, “To Ablabius,” in *The Trinitarian Controversy*, ed. William G. Rusch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 149-161.

<sup>44</sup> Schleiermacher cites Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil, and Theodore as allowing the analogy, and Augustine as rejecting it.

<sup>45</sup> *CF*, 744.

<sup>46</sup> *CF*, 744.

<sup>47</sup> *CF*, 745.

them in a clearer light.”<sup>48</sup> In this way, those who adopt the historical formulation of the Trinity vacillate between Monarchicalism and Tritheism.

Such vacillation, in turn, places in doubt the truly divine character of the person of Christ. The Christian consistently doubts whether the being of God in Christ’s person is a full existence of God in him (on par with the being of God in the Father), and whether there truly is a being of God in Christ’s person (vs. simple monotheism). Thus, as Kevin Hector puts it, “Schleiermacher’s concern with the traditional doctrine is that it obscures Christ’s divinity.”<sup>49</sup> This is surely a surprising conclusion for those interpreters of Schleiermacher who have been influenced by the hermeneutical tradition that understands him as having a “low Christology.”<sup>50</sup> A close reading of Schleiermacher’s Christology proves just the opposite. I will treat Schleiermacher’s Christology in more detail in the third section of this chapter.<sup>51</sup>

As for the substance of Schleiermacher’s critique of the Trinity as historically developed, it seems to me quite accurate insofar as there is, in Trinitarian thought, vacillation between the one essence and three persons, though supporters would no doubt prefer the term “dialectic” rather than “vacillation” and “hesitation.” Whatever term is

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Kevin W. Hector, “Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 (July 2006), 320.

<sup>50</sup> Of course, it could be objected that although Schleiermacher’s motivation for rejecting the ecclesial doctrine of the Trinity is pure (enough), the rejection itself is a bad move. One’s motivation, of course, does not automatically justify one’s course of action. By demonstrating Schleiermacher’s Reformed approach to theology and by cataloguing the conceptual difficulties with the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, however, I hope to show that Schleiermacher at least had legitimate reasons for taking the course of action he did.

<sup>51</sup> The Sabellian-inspired account Schleiermacher will suggest tries to account for this problem by making the Unity of God synonymous with God *in se*, while the economy of divine self-revelation is synonymous with the Trinity of God. Yet as I will show in the rest of this chapter, the unity of God, which Schleiermacher describes in his discussion of the eternal divine decree (or causality) contains within itself threeness: causality, love, and wisdom. Such threeness seems not to run into the same problem of emphasizing either the oneness or threeness of God, again because the analogy is not a personal one.

chosen, it is not clear to me that such movements between emphases is ultimately damaging to the desire to hold the two together. Indeed, I will argue that Schleiermacher himself aims at a dialectical tension between kataphasis and apophasis in his *Glaubenslehre* and this is a sign of subtlety in his work rather than an inherently damaging critique.

### c. Relation of Unity or Trinity and Causality

A third problem Schleiermacher identifies with the historical doctrine of the Trinity is “to show how unity and trinity are related to the divine causality...alike in redemption and sanctification and generally in creation and preservation.”<sup>52</sup> This problem results in the same dichotomy as the second:

Either that these causalities all belong to the one Divine Essence as such, and to the Persons only in so far as they are one in Essence, but not in so far as they are distinct from each other, or they belong to the three Persons as such, and to the unity of Essence only in so far as it consists of the Persons.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, Schleiermacher believes the question comes down to the same choice in emphasis between Monarchicalism and Tritheism.

These conceptual difficulties with the historically formulated doctrine of the Trinity are not new; they have persisted from the patristic to the contemporary age. Because Schleiermacher does not think the traditional formulation is essential to the Christian God-consciousness, and because he thinks the conceptual difficulties inherent in it actually cloud the essentials, he insists that the immanent Trinity ought to be

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<sup>52</sup> *CF*, 745.

<sup>53</sup> *CF*, 745.

abandoned, even as he upholds the distinction between God *in se* and God *ad extra*. As he explains, “we have no formula for the being of God in Himself as distinct from the being of God in the world, and should have to borrow any such formula from speculation, and so prove ourselves disloyal to the character of the discipline at which we are working.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, Schleiermacher is committed to the teaching of the faith as anti-speculative and in service to Christian believers. Even if his arguments concerning the problems with relating the persons to one another are ultimately unsatisfying, his anti-speculative motivation is still legitimate.

#### **D. Placement Re-visited**

That anti-speculative concern is attested to by his decision to discuss the Trinity at the end of his *Glaubenslehre*. He objects to placing the doctrine of the Trinity at the beginning because by the older arrangement of dogma, “the theological character of the entire presentation is distorted,” and,

Neither the criticism nor the points of attachment needed for the new construction can be placed on a right foundation if the doctrine in question (which is not directly a statement about our Christian consciousness at all) is set up as a fundamental doctrine, and therefore, of course, arrived at in a speculative way. The same speculative tone then comes to be imported into the doctrine of the Redeemer and of the Holy Spirit, as being dependent on the doctrine of the Trinity; and thus the door is opened wide to the influx of speculative elements.<sup>55</sup>

In this way, placing the Trinity at the beginning of a dogmatic system orients the system toward speculative elements. This was particularly important in establishing his approach to the study of the Christian religion in the modern university, and his approach has

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<sup>54</sup> *CF*, 748.

<sup>55</sup> *CF*, 749-50.

continued relevance for contemporary theologians. It seems to me that a viable doctrine of the Trinity would, indeed, be built in light of more concrete and immediate contents of piety.

In addition to its anti-speculative motivation, Schleiermacher places his explicit discussion of the Trinity at the end of his work because he is also concerned that his own *Glaubenslehre* be in service to pious Christians, some of whom would have been disenfranchised by a placement of the Trinity at the beginning of dogmatics. As he explains,

It is natural that people who cannot reconcile themselves to the difficulties and imperfections that cling to the formulae current in Trinitarian doctrine should say that they repudiate everything connected with it, *whereas in point of faith their piety is by no means lacking in the specifically Christian stamp*. This is the case often enough at the present moment not only in the Unitarian societies of England and America, but also among the scattered opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity in our own country. That circumstance supplies a further reason why we should strive to *secure freedom for a thoroughgoing criticism of the doctrine in its older form, so as to prepare the way for, and introduce, a reconstruction of it corresponding to the present condition of other related doctrines*. The position assigned to the doctrine of the Trinity in the present work is perhaps at all events a preliminary step towards this goal. One who is a believer in the ecclesiastical sense of that word can scarcely arm himself with the equanimity needful alike for an impartial criticism of the old procedure and for a new construction, until he has become convinced that *it is possible for our faith in the divine present in Christ and in the Christian communion to find fit theological expression, even before anything has been heard of those more exact definitions which go to form the doctrine of the Trinity*.<sup>56</sup>

In other words, because many Christians take the immanent Trinity as it has been historically developed as essential to Christianity, and because they have difficulty conceiving of the doctrine—perhaps because of the difficulties with it that Schleiermacher addresses—they may leave the Christian faith. In Schleiermacher's view,

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<sup>56</sup> *CF*, 749. My emphasis.



a Unitarian exodus need not take place since a Christian understanding of the Trinity need not be bound by its historical formulation.<sup>57</sup> Notice again that Schleiermacher does not call for the eradication of the doctrine of the Trinity, but rather its reconsideration and reconstruction. What is to be rejected is not the essentials of the Trinitarian doctrine, which hold Schleiermacher's entire system of doctrine together, but the "exact definitions" that have been developed historically.

If the history of Schleiermacher interpretation were otherwise than it is, I would stop here. Because of that history, however, at the risk of repeating myself too often, I entreat the reader to consider once again the reasons for Schleiermacher's rejection of the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Powell sums it up:

Schleiermacher condemned the traditional doctrine of the Trinity for lacking a relation to Christian faith and piety, for its lack of Biblical support, for its incoherence and for its speculative character. ...Its customary position in the system of theology opposed the fundamental principle of Christian theology—the restriction of authentic knowledge of God to the revelation of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

However, Schleiermacher's rejection of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity does not in any way mean that he wants to consign it to obsolescence. Rather, this is the starting point for continued reflection on the Christian faith, as his considerations are only a "preliminary step." Thus, at the end of his masterwork, he urges his readers to continue thinking on two unsolved difficulties with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity.

First, not surprisingly, he suggests that his readers consider "the relation of the unity of the Essence to the trinity of the Persons":

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<sup>57</sup> I am not aware of Schleiermacher having any direct contact with or knowledge of William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) or other leaders in the Unitarian movement.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 95.

Here everything depends on the original and eternal existence of distinctions within the Divine Essence.... The question is whether formulae cannot be devised which, without asserting eternal distinctions [*ewige Geschiedenheiten*] in the Supreme Being, are yet equally capable of exhibiting in their truth both unions of the Essence with human nature. Only, no mutability must thereby be ascribed to the Supreme Being;...for we cannot conceive the divine causality [*die göttliche Ursachlichkeit*] otherwise than as decree in its eternity, while yet we cannot represent its fulfillment otherwise than in time.<sup>59</sup>

In other words, Schleiermacher asks his readers to consider whether one could develop the doctrine of the Trinity in a way that is both faithful to its essence and avoids ascribing distinctions to God *in se*. In short, he is suggesting a doctrine of the economic Trinity and calling a halt to thinking about God *in se*. In calling this halt, Schleiermacher is not just unable to imagine differentiated simplicity. As I will show, he affirms, for example, the simplicity of the divine essence while maintaining distinctions between divine love and wisdom. He is simply unwilling to separate the immanent from the economic Trinity by eternalizing *in se*, as “persons,” the distinctions involved in the *oikonomia* (economy) of salvation.

Second, Schleiermacher asks his readers to consider, with regard to their readings of scripture, “whether it was right at the outset to give the name ‘Son of God’ solely to the divine in Christ, and to relate the term ‘Father’ to one of the distinctions in the Divine Essence and not rather to the unity of the Divine Essence as such.”<sup>60</sup> As he puts it,

If it transpires that by ‘Son of God’ Scripture always and exclusively means the whole Christ Himself, and recognizes no difference between ‘God,’ as denoting the Supreme Being, and ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ but uses the latter name in exactly the same sense as the former, we should then have to try whether

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<sup>59</sup> *CF*, 750.

<sup>60</sup> *CF*, 751.

a similar question might not be raised with regard to the Holy Spirit, with a similar answer.<sup>61</sup>

Here Schleiermacher is doing more than pointing us to the utterances of Christ and New Testament scripture. He is also considering the prospect of a Sabellian reading of the Trinity.<sup>62</sup> On this view, God is eternally One, conceived without eternal distinctions of “persons” within the Godhead. At the same time, however, God eternally decrees and prepares for the union of the divine essence with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ and in the common Spirit of the Church. The view Schleiermacher is suggesting is Sabellian insofar as he maintains the economic Trinity and the unity of God, but not the Athanasian account of the immanent Trinity.<sup>63</sup> By asking his readers to consider a Sabellian account of the Trinity at the end of his *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher is petitioning his readers to consider whether his work has been successful and to continue thinking on the questions he raises.<sup>64</sup> The rest of this chapter will continue to attend to Schleiermacher’s account of the Trinity.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. This view might seem to raise questions for feminists, who are wary of identifying the Son of God with the whole, male Christ. I address this concern in chapter four.

<sup>62</sup> As Carol Jean Voisin explains the difference between the Athanasian and Sabellian view, “The difference between the two presentations with regard to their conceiving the necessity of Three is this: the Athanasian way was to conceive the Three as eternally Three, that is, separate and apart from human history, God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and herein lies the basis for the necessity of Three; the Sabellian view sought the divine dispensations in the basic facts of redemption wherein Christ and the Holy Spirit are revealed to us. The former conceives that God reveals Himself from Himself, while the latter believes that God reveals Himself in and through redeeming love” (Carol Jean Voisin, *A Reconsideration of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Treatment of the Doctrine of the Trinity* [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1982], 54-55.)

<sup>63</sup> See chapter three, “The Resuscitation of Sabellianism,” in Robert Francis Streetman, *Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Doctrine of the Trinity and its Significance for Theology Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1975), 96-188.

<sup>64</sup> Schleiermacher considers Sabellius’ view, but not Sabellianism as it has been known to theologians and historians of doctrine. “Sabellianism as a heresy,” Voisin explains, “maintained the unity or divine monarchy without comprehending the distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These distinctions were conceived only in name or as transitory apparitions of the divine Being. Therefore, the predominance of the monarchy was so severe that the Father was actually identified with it, and since no substantial distinction

To summarize; Schleiermacher arranges his *Glaubenslehre* the way that he does, proclaiming only at its conclusion that the essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is its keystone, because he is a thoroughly Reformed and reforming theologian whose work aims at excluding speculation and building up the piety of Christian believers within the church who affirm the divinity of Christ. As such, Schleiermacher's treatment of the Trinity performs a summary function at the climax of his mature work at the same time as it pushes his readers to continue the work he has begun.

In the next section of this chapter, I will consider Schleiermacher's understanding of the singular God and the divine temporal activity, highlighting the kataphatic elements of his doctrine of God. In doing so, I am continuing to develop my argument that Schleiermacher is an "essential Trinitarian," and I am laying the groundwork for my argument in chapter five that Schleiermacher ought to be understood primarily as a kataphatic theologian. That argument will be important not only for Schleiermacher interpretation as such, but for using Schleiermacher to halt a totalizing form of radical apophysis in current feminist theology.

## II: The Singular God

Three emphases run through Schleiermacher's understanding of the singular God.<sup>65</sup> First, God is the original causal activity that determines the universe. Second,

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was made between the Father and the Son, the charge of patripassianism was linked with Sabellianism. Schleiermacher's discussion takes exception to any such definition, and in its place he offers a poignant reinterpretation of Sabellius' trinitarian doctrine" (Carol Jean Voisin, *A Reconsideration of Friedrich Schleiermacher's Treatment of the Doctrine of the Trinity* [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1982], 69).

<sup>65</sup> By "singular" in this context, I mean the distinctive character of God. I resist using the word "single,"

further specifying the kind of activity that God is, God is love. Third, divine wisdom is identified as the planning and purposing of the outworking of divine love. In what follows, I will treat these three emphases in turn. Before doing so, however, at the risk of stating the obvious, I want to alert the reader to the fact that there are three emphases in Schleiermacher's understanding of the one God. Without overstating the case, I suggest that while he explicitly renounces an adoption of the immanent Trinity as it has been historically developed, he retains three distinctions that nuance his conception of the divine life. These are "real distinctions" in the sense that they describe the full scope of God's working and they are conceptually dependent upon one another even as they are perichoretically related (i.e., mutually inhering). Thus, although he everywhere maintains that Christian theologians ought not speak about the God with whom we have nothing to do, i.e., God *in se*, the divine causal activity, love, and wisdom are perichoretic attributes that undergird each mode of temporal divine activity. In this way, God is not to be imagined as an undifferentiated monad working in three different modes through time, having discursive thoughts, as it were, and carrying them out one after another: first, preparation for the union between the divine and humanity, second, the union in Christ, third, union in the common Spirit of the Church. Rather, the divine activity is better imagined as a purely active decree that is formed by divine wisdom for the purpose of temporally enacting the divine love.<sup>66</sup> This triune characterization of God, inferred from the economic Trinity, keeps Schleiermacher's Sabellian tendencies from being modalistic

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because it is more straightforwardly numerical, whereas Schleiermacher is concerned not to attribute number to God.

<sup>66</sup> "Purely active decree" is simply a specification of what divine causality means. I will provide further explanation in the section to follow.

in an unsophisticated way. That is, it keeps his account from being “heretical” in the way Sabellius has typically been understood.<sup>67</sup> He retains, that is, the immanently Triune life of God if “immanent” here is not understood as “*in se*” but as the texture of the divine life which grounds the economic Trinity.

At the end of the *Glaubenslehre*, just before his treatment of the Trinity, Schleiermacher says, “The divine causality presents itself to us in the government of the world as Love and as Wisdom.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, he states that “God is love,”<sup>69</sup> and affirms that “the divine wisdom is the principle which orders and determines the world for the divine self-imparting which is evinced in redemption.”<sup>70</sup> In what follows, I will interpret these claims with a view to establishing that Schleiermacher is not an unsophisticated espouser of Sabellianism. His version of it is, as I have suggested, an “essential Trinitarianism,” whereby he can describe the triune life of the divine while not claiming that he is peeking through the veil that separates God *in se* from God *ad extra*. In other words, Schleiermacher indicates the dynamics of the divine life, connecting them with the work of Christ and the Spirit, without espousing the immanent Trinity as historically developed.

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<sup>67</sup> See the footnote above on typical understandings of Sabellianism.

<sup>68</sup> *CF*, 726.

<sup>69</sup> *CF*, 730.

<sup>70</sup> *CF*, 732.

### A. Original Causal Activity: One Divine Decree

For Schleiermacher, the singular God is most basically identified with “the sole original activity” or “the sole Determinant” of the universe.<sup>71</sup> In other words, as I have indicated in chapter one, God is the “Whence” of the universe. As the universe’s Original Determinant, God arranges it and provides its purpose. As such, Schleiermacher’s conception of God is not that of a First Principle that is devoid of content, serving only as a stopgap for an infinite regress of causes. Rather, God is the content-filled causal activity that purposefully places the universe in an asymmetrical relation of absolute dependence upon God.<sup>72</sup>

In order to highlight the content-filled character of the original divine activity, Schleiermacher conceives of that activity as a decree. He says, “We cannot conceive the divine causality otherwise than as decree in its eternity.”<sup>73</sup> In his lectures *On the Doctrine of Election*, Schleiermacher further specifies that the eternal divine decree is single: “only one divine decree can be assumed, one that embraces all, namely, the decree concerning that arrangement within which those of the mass who are capable of individual spiritual life are gradually quickened.”<sup>74</sup> The divine decrees that may be familiar to his Reformed readers—for example, decrees of creation, fall, and election—are not to be considered

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<sup>71</sup> *CF*, 144, 146.

<sup>72</sup> Albert Blackwell notes, “As an application of Schleiermacher’s assertion we may observe that in the opening sections of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* John Calvin speaks of God as Creator and Maker, Author and Fashioner, Fountainhead and Source. Each of these characterizations of the divine expresses originating causality, and thus each lies close to religion’s root in the feeling of absolute dependence” (Albert Blackwell, “The Antagonistic Correspondence between Sack and his Protégé Schleiermacher,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 74/1 [1981], 108).

<sup>73</sup> *CF*, 750.

<sup>74</sup> *DE*, 65. For a treatment of Schleiermacher’s similarities and differences with Calvin’s doctrine of election, see Suzanne McDonald, “Theology of Election: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities,” in *Calvin’s Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilities*, eds. J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), esp. 122-127.

separately from the one ultimate decree. Rather, the single divine decree is all-inclusive; it refers to the whole and essential divine will.<sup>75</sup> As Schleiermacher explains,

There is only one eternal and general decree justifying men for Christ's sake. This decree, moreover, is the same as that which sent Christ on his mission, for otherwise, that mission would have been conceived and determined by God without its consequences. And once more, the decree that sent Christ forth is one with the decree creating the human race, for in Christ first human nature is brought to perfection.<sup>76</sup>

In the one eternal divine decree, God's intention and its realization are included. God's action proceeds from eternal plan to temporal fulfillment. In this way, there is one eternal decree of humanity's creation within the universe and foreordination to redemption by and through Christ. As Matthias Gockel explains, "A consistent doctrine of election must be based on the idea of a single, unconditional divine decree that comprehends and conditions the entire order of the development of the spiritual world."<sup>77</sup> Thus, highlighting the originality of the divine causal activity, Schleiermacher says,

Nothing is ever given to God and...it is God who always originates all things. For that reason one certainly cannot think of any divine decree as consequent upon something else but can think of it only as preceding all things....Humans are not indeed conditioned apart from God but first receive conditioning by means of the same indivisible divine decree in which election is also included. To this extent, it must indeed be called unconditional since it is the decree itself that first conditions all things.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of the Protestant Scholastics' understanding of the divine decrees, see Heinrich Heppe, "The Decrees of God," in *Reformed Dogmatics*, Ed., Ernst Bizer, Trans. G. T. Thomson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 133-149. In paragraph six, Heppe states, "Since then the divine decree is the being and will of God Himself, it is unconditioned by anything else and is the absolute, eternal and unchangeable. For that very reason it is also absolutely determinative of all that achieves reality, including its conditions, and is thereby the first cause of all things" (ibid., 138). See also Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

<sup>76</sup> *CF*, 501.

<sup>77</sup> Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 30.

<sup>78</sup> *DE*, 67. See Calvin, *ICR*, III.xxiv.1-5, wherein Augustine is copiously cited.



In short, the divine activity is an original and single decree that determines all things in the universe. The anti-Pelagian force of this claim is also implicitly anti-Manichean. For if the divine decree first conditions all things, then not only is redemption entirely dependent upon God, but creation and its maintenance through history are also utterly dependent upon the activity of God.<sup>79</sup> Notice also that redemption is given priority over creation. Creation, that is, is a means to a salvific end. These are important points to keep in mind because they highlight, now with regard to divine causality or decree, Schleiermacher's understanding of divine activity in Christomorphic creation. What decree language adds to my discussion in chapter one is an emphasis on the content-filled divine will, intention, or purpose as the originating cause of all things.

## **B. Love: Union with Neighbor**

Designating the "decree" as divine will is significant, for according to Schleiermacher, "nothing which does not represent the divine will can reveal the divine love."<sup>80</sup> That is because, most concisely and essentially, God's will or decree is love. As Schleiermacher states, "love alone and no other attribute can be equated thus with God," being "made the equivalent of the being or essence of God."<sup>81</sup> As he puts it simply in

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<sup>79</sup> Iaian Nicol and Allen Jorgenson explain with reference to Schleiermacher's anti-Pelagianism and anti-Manicheanism: "In Schleiermacher's estimation, anti-Pelagian and anti-Manichean emphases mark the contours of this received tradition [i.e., the Augustinian treatment of predestination]. The former underscores the inadmissibility of any precondition for redemption apart from God's unmerited grace. The latter points to the need to consider the significance of the fact that it is the predestining God who is subject of both creation and redemption and who acts in an utterly congruous character on both accounts" (Iaian G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson, "On the Doctrine of Election: An Introduction," in *On the Doctrine of Election, with Special Reference to the Aphorisms of Dr. Bretschneider*, trans. Iaian G. Nicol and Allen G. Jorgenson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 12-13).

<sup>80</sup> *CF*, 730.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* Note that in §167.2, Schleiermacher associates both love and wisdom with the essence of God:

§167, God is love. Schleiermacher defines love, in turn, as “the impulse to unite self with neighbor [*anderem*] and to will to be in neighbor.”<sup>82</sup> In short, the divine decree is incarnation—the will to unite the divine essence with human nature, so as to enable action on both sides. That is, the divine decree is redemption. The will of God is love of neighbor, union with the other. In other words, God is self-imparting.<sup>83</sup> The essence of God, then, is neither a speculative reification of the Triune divine life, nor an amorphous Unknown that can be felt only through pre-reflective, pre-linguistic, ahistorical experience. Rather, the essence of the Christian God is the activity of redemptive incarnation: the loving will to be in and with the neighbor, which, we will see, is effected in the person of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of the Church.<sup>84</sup>

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“Love and wisdom alone, then can claim to be not mere attributes but also expressions of the very essence of God” (CF, 731).

<sup>82</sup>CF, 726. The translators of *The Christian Faith*, H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, have used “neighbor” here to translate “*anderem*.” This choice is not the most literal, as *andere* means “other” or “the other.” I have retained their loose translation, however, because it coheres theologically with the Johannine texts on which Schleiermacher depended heavily. For example, see John 13:34-35, 15:12; 1 John 3:11, 4:7, 4:12. On Schleiermacher’s understanding of love in his early writings, John Wallhauser explains that Schleiermacher avoided “a self-absorbing narcissistic love which he sensed in Friedrich Schlegel’s novel, *Lucinde*.” He cites the *Confidential Letters*, trans., Blackwell: “Does not love in this book [*Lucinde*], for all the completeness of its presentation, retreat a bit too much into itself? I would have liked to see it extend also outward into the world, and there accomplish something excellent. The frivolous hero should have this much of the knight in him.” According to Wallhauser, Schleiermacher’s “insistence on the active, productive character of love contains a corrective to a ‘one-sided’ romantic preoccupation with the affective experience of lover” (John Wallhauser, “Locating the Presence and the Activity of Love in Schleiermacher’s Early Ethics,” paper delivered at the Naples Conference on Romantic Dialectic [1994], 5). I was made aware of this source by Gilya Gerda Schmidt, “German Romanticism and Friedrich Schleiermacher in Relation to Martin Buber’s Idea of Jewish Renewal,” *Schleiermacher on Workings of the Knowing Mind: New Translations, Resources, and Understandings*, ed. Ruth Drucilla Richardson (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1998), 219, footnote 100.

<sup>83</sup> Gerrish explains, “The only attribute of God that answers to the experience of redemption is love. For the work of redemption has been shown to turn upon the union of the divine essence (*Wesen*) with human nature in Christ, and by God’s ‘love’ is meant that in God which corresponds with the human inclination to want union with another; it is the underlying divine disposition (Gl., §165.1, §166.1)” (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 168-9).

<sup>84</sup> It would be easy to get ahead of ourselves here and in what follows, moving from the decree to its temporal fulfillment in creation, Christ, and the Church, because of the interconnections Schleiermacher makes between the dynamics of the divine life and their temporal actualizations in the economy of

The divine essence is revealed as love directly in the pious God-consciousness. That is to say, Schleiermacher claims that the revelation of God's essence as love is most clearly recognized where humanity's immediate awareness of its absolute dependence upon God is nurtured. He explains, "Divine love does not reveal itself unequivocally except where it shows a generally protective and fostering care of what is highest and most specific in man, namely, his God-consciousness."<sup>85</sup> In other words, when humanity's awareness of its absolute dependence upon God is fostered by divine redemptive activity in Christ, then it may apprehend most clearly and feel most deeply that God wills to be united with it. Divine love is revealed clearly in the asymmetrical relation between God and creatures, which is inseparable from the existence and perfection of Christomorphically determined creation, which, in turn, is inseparable from the person of Christ. As such, the divine love is felt directly in the Christian consciousness of redemption through God in Christ, that is, the Christian God-consciousness.

God protects and fosters the Christian God-consciousness through the communication of the person of Jesus Christ to others in and through the Spirit that directs and indwells the Church. In Schleiermacher's own words, "When we trace to the divine causality our consciousness of fellowship with God, restored through the efficacy of redemption, we posit the planting and extension of the Christian Church as the object

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salvation. Indeed, any discussion of Schleiermacher's work in this regard is almost required to do so, moving back and forth between the one divine decree and its fulfillment in three temporal loci, allowing no great disjunction between them. However, here I want to emphasize and explicate the divine activity as love, treated at something of a remove from the temporal economy of salvation, in order to clearly explicate the many ways it connects with the rest of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God.

<sup>85</sup> *CF*, 728.

of the divine government of the world.”<sup>86</sup> That is, God’s causal activity, or decree of love, is revealed unequivocally in the redemption received in and through Jesus Christ, and the common Spirit of the Church, which nurtures the consciousness of humanity’s relation of absolute dependence on God. I discuss Schleiermacher’s Christology and Pneumatology in more detail below. At the outset of my analysis of the kataphatic elements of his doctrine of God, and following on the heels of the section on the Trinity above, note that the character of the divine decree as love is integrally bound up with his conviction that one must always understand God as related to humanity in the temporal universe. For Schleiermacher, divine activity is love of God’s neighbor.<sup>87</sup>

### **C. Wisdom: Realization of Love**

While love is the will or decree to unite with neighbor, wisdom is the way in which that will is actualized. Wisdom, Schleiermacher explains, is “the right outlining of plans and purposes” of the will, “these regarded in their manifold characteristics and in the whole round of their reciprocal relations.”<sup>88</sup> In other words, wisdom is “the art (so to speak) of realizing the divine love perfectly.”<sup>89</sup> As such, given the content of the divine decree, wisdom’s proper work “is precisely the spread of redemption,”<sup>90</sup> where redemption is the Christian’s being brought to powerful and constant awareness of her relation of absolute dependence upon God in Christ and the Spirit. Note that divine

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<sup>86</sup> *CF*, 723.

<sup>87</sup> Note the inherently ethical implications of Schleiermacher’s theology, even as he wants to treat human action somewhat separately from religious affections.

<sup>88</sup> *CF*, 727.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *CF*, 735.

wisdom is logically dependent on the divine essence as love. That is, wisdom depends on love for its object or content. Put alternatively, without the plans and purposes of the will, there would be nothing to outline properly. As Gerrish says, “The forgiven person is directly conscious of himself or herself as the object of the divine disposition of love; only by an extension of self-consciousness does the experience of redemption lead one to affirm the perfect harmony of all things.”<sup>91</sup> That is to say, insofar as the Christian is immediately conscious of divine love in redemption, love has priority. Divine wisdom follows as a description of the way in which God brings into being the one divine decree of love.

The divine wisdom perfectly orders all things in order to bring about perfect divine self-impartation or incarnation. As Schleiermacher explains,

Without ascribing any limitation to God, therefore, we may assert that the divine wisdom is not capable of producing any other disposition of things, or any other ordering of their course, than that in which the divine love is most perfectly realized; and just as little is the divine love capable of leading to self-impartations other than those in which it itself finds perfect satisfaction, and in which accordingly it presents itself as absolute wisdom.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 169.

<sup>92</sup> *CF*, 727. Note that the focus here is on the optimal working of a loving God, rather than on the Almighty or Powerful God. Power is, of course, implied on account of the divine simplicity. However, Schleiermacher resists talk of “power” here, focusing instead on the essence of God as love. This is important because it highlights how he negotiates the divine identity in its fundamental relation to creation. That relation is neither one of free to determined, nor of powerful to absolutely passive and inactive. Rather, God transcends such antitheses, annulling them *qua* antitheses. In addition, as Francis Schüssler Fiorenza explains, “It is the distinctively Christian experience of the divine causality that experiences and understands God not as power, but primarily as love (with wisdom the perfection of love)—so much so that God’s very being is love. Schleiermacher has thereby transformed the traditional Neo-Platonic triad of power, goodness, and wisdom. The consciousness of God as love perfected in wisdom is the heart of the Christian faith, whereas the consciousness of God as power is an abstraction from the Christian experience of God as love” (Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Understanding God as Triune,” *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña [New York: Cambridge, 2005], 176).

Divine wisdom, then, actualizes not one among other equally viable plans. Rather, divine wisdom perfectly realizes the divine love in the only way that love may find perfect satisfaction. Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* culminates, then, in "an essentially aesthetic vision of the world as the theater of redemption. In other words, it ends on a note much loved by the old Reformed divines: the world is *manifestatio gloriae Dei*."<sup>93</sup> Divine wisdom artfully and perfectly realizes the divine love by outlining its plans and purposes in the sphere of reciprocal relations, that is, in the universe.<sup>94</sup>

Before turning to the contents of the temporal actualization of the wise decree of divine love, let me return to an earlier suggestion: Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, described here in three sections—original causality, love, and wisdom—bears marked similarity to Calvin's description of the eternal God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (and thereby to other descriptions of the immanent Trinity as historically developed).<sup>95</sup> For

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<sup>93</sup> Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 169.

<sup>94</sup> So far, then, I have considered the divine causality, love, and wisdom. In this description, we see the coherence of Schleiermacher's beginning and ending in the *Glaubenslehre*. In both places, Schleiermacher draws out the essence out of the concrete actualization of the divine decree in the universe. Likewise, in both places, what is central is the divine activity of love whereby humanity is in a relation of absolute dependence upon God. Thus, the priority of Schleiermacher's thought lies in the loving creative-redemptive activity of God in relation to the universe. Christians are deeply aware of their relation of absolute dependence upon God because in their encounter with and redemption by Christ it is revealed to them that the entire universe is the result of the always prior activity of God. Moreover, the divine activity is not revealed as a cognitive construct that may be used as a stop-gap for the infinite regress of causes in the universe. Rather, the essence of God is the activity of love, that is, divine self-impartation by which God is united with human nature in Christ and the Church. Once again, it is impossible to separate, even for the purpose of elucidation, the essence of God from God's activity in relation to the universe. The essence of God is the loving will to unite with humanity, which is beautifully outlined and ordered by the wisdom of God. Even as this is the distillation of the climax of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, it cannot be described with any degree of adequacy until it is filled in with concrete content. To be clear about the nature of the various parts of the *Glaubenslehre*: Paragraph four is formal, the dogmatics proper is concrete, and the concluding remarks about God, of which this is a part, are summative or essential. Keep in mind, for Schleiermacher, the "essence" of God is always the essence as it is related to creation.

<sup>95</sup> See Calvin, *ICR*, I.xiii.18: "Nevertheless, it is not fitting to suppress the distinction that we observe to be expressed in Scripture. It is this: to the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the

Schleiermacher, original causality signifies that God is the unconditioned determinant of the universe. That is, divine causality is the original decree concerning all things. Further, the content of that decree is divine love, which is humanity's redemption. Finally, the divine decree of love is outlined and realized through the divine wisdom. As such, wisdom is logically dependent on love and causality, as it is a further specification of the loving decree. For Schleiermacher and Calvin, then, there is a logical dependence of the efficacious realization of the divine counsel on that counsel itself and a logical dependence of the actualized disposition of all things on the original activity, the wellspring of all things. This much Schleiermacher and Calvinian Trinitarians have in common, and it is significant overlap. Indeed, as Schüssler Fiorenza explains, "He is not maintaining that love and wisdom are merely the revealed manifestations of a hidden unknown monad. Instead, Schleiermacher is making a claim about the very essence of God."<sup>96</sup> The essence of God is the activity of love and wisdom.

Given these similarities, the question may be raised: Does Schleiermacher employ a kind of immanent Trinitarianism despite himself? Even though he rejects the immanent Trinity as historically developed, does he in fact retain a sort of immanent Trinity to describe the dynamic being of God? First, pause to take in the irony of the situation. I am now in the position of defending Schleiermacher against the possible charge of being an immanent Trinitarian despite his own unpopular claims to the contrary. The fact that this question may be raised should give pause to those who want to recuse themselves from a

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Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity." Calvin cites Augustine copiously in this section: Augustine, *Faith and the Creed* ix.17; *On the Trinity* I.i.2,3, I.xiii.25, I.xvi.3, I.xvi.5.

<sup>96</sup> Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Understanding God as Triune," *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 179.

sustained conversation about Schleiermacher as a distinctively Christian theologian. Even so, in order not to overstate the case, I must answer the question in the negative if “immanent” is taken as synonymous with “*in se*.” As I have shown above, the difference between Schleiermacher and classical Trinitarians is this: classical Trinitarians separate the immanent Trinity from the economic and make the former antecedent to the latter; Schleiermacher does not, because he refuses to think in sustained ways about God *in se*, where “*in se*” means what God would have been like without creation. That fact, however, does not preclude him from conceiving of the lively dynamics of the being of God as it is revealed through the divine activity in Christ, the Church, and the preparation for the union of God with Christ and the Church. God is, for Schleiermacher, the original causal activity of love carried out wisely.<sup>97</sup>

However, Schleiermacher calls a halt with the reification of these relations of dependence in God considered antecedently and separately from God in relation to creation, such as can be found, for instance, in Anselm’s *Monologion*: “Now, this is certain: we have got, on the one hand, what they are in essence, and, on the other, what they are in relation to creation.”<sup>98</sup> The distinction between God *in se* and God *ad extra* results in the familiar dialectic between the one essence and the three persons. As Anselm puts it, “One and a unity by virtue of the one essence, three and a Trinity by virtue of the three—three I-do-not-know-whats.”<sup>99</sup> As I have shown above, although Schleiermacher is not averse to using distinctions like causality, love, and wisdom to texture his

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<sup>97</sup> In other words, Schleiermacher’s essential Trinitarianism is not characterized by the three “persons” of the economic Trinity. The suggestion is that one may call this genuine Trinitarianism nonetheless.

<sup>98</sup> Anselm, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.



understanding of the divine life, for him those distinctions ought not be turned into three I-do-not-know-whats, separated from God in relation to creation. There is one divine essence—love—and three perichoretic but ordered ways to conceive the dynamics of the divine being: causality, love, and wisdom. As such, Schleiermacher’s understanding of God, though not classically Trinitarian, still has a Trinity-like cast. Indeed, it might even be called an immanent Trinity so long as “immanent” is not taken to mean “*in se*.”

The Trinitarian cast of Schleiermacher’s discussion of the singular God comes most forcefully into view when considering the concrete manifestations of the divine activity. Consider the following two passages, which push further on the notion that Schleiermacher’s view is not a crude form of Sabellianism:

Working backwards we must now say, if it is only through Him [Christ] that the human God-consciousness becomes an existence of God in human nature, and only through the rational nature that the totality of finite powers can become an existence of God in the world, that in truth *He alone mediates all existence of God in the world and all revelation of God through the world*, in so far as He bears within Himself the whole new creation which contains and develops the potency of the God-consciousness.<sup>100</sup>

This eternal activity means for us simply a divine decree, identical as such with the decree to create man and included there; but the aspect of this decree which is turned towards us as activity, or its manifestation in the actual beginning of the life of the Redeemer, through which that eternal decree realized itself, as at a single point of space so also at a moment of time, is temporal. So that the temporality has reference purely to the person-forming activity of the human nature, during which it was taken up into the union; and *we can with equal justice say that Christ even as a human person was ever coming to be simultaneously with the world itself*.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *CF*, 388.

<sup>101</sup> *CF*, 401-2. With this move, Schleiermacher is endorsing a version of the notion that the Logos creates the world in which he appears. Yet because of Schleiermacher’s three well-integrated (i.e., perichoretic) distinctions within the divine life, he cannot claim, as traditional Trinitarians do, that it is the Logos as opposed to the Holy Spirit who is incarnate in history. Rather, he may claim—with important historical precedent from the Hebrew Bible and Deuterocanonical texts—a close association between divine Love and Wisdom in the incarnation. Cf. Proverbs 1, 8, 9; Sirach 24:23, 51:26; Wisdom of Solomon 7:1230,

In these passages, Schleiermacher reveals himself not as a crude modalist for whom God is an undifferentiated monad, simply acting in different times and places in different modes. Rather, for Schleiermacher, the divine decree is always already textured in a threefold way: 1) God acts as original determinant of the universe 2) in and through the divine love actualized in the person of Christ 3) according to God's own wisdom. There are real distinctions within the life of God, conceived as divine decree or causality, and these distinctions are not merely attributes of God that ultimately give way to the simplicity of God but are essential distinctions within the being of God.

Thus, in this section I have been substantiating and refining the claims of Claude Welch, who suggests that instead of calling Schleiermacher a Sabellian or merely economic Trinitarian, we adopt for him the term "essential Trinitarian."<sup>102</sup> As Welch says, "I quite agree with Schleiermacher that there can be no doctrine worthy of the name Trinity which does not affirm the 'essential' character of the distinctions—to say less than this is only to point to the event of revelation, and inadequately at that—and I should

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9:18; Baruch 3:37, 41:1-2. This close association between Christ and the Spirit continues in the rest of his system of doctrine, as I will show below.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Williams follows suit, explaining, "The economic trinity means simply the threefoldness of God in his historical manifestation, which is not grounded in God himself, but only in the relation between God and the world. This is theologically unacceptable since it fails to show how redemption is grounded in God himself. The essential trinity includes the doctrines of *homoousios*, coeternity, and coequality, including terms to express the essential nature of such distinctions in God. Finally, there is the immanent trinity, which adds to the essential trinity the doctrines of internal relations (generation and procession) and perichoresis or coinherence. Given such distinctions, it is fair and accurate to say that Schleiermacher teaches an essential trinity" (Robert Williams, *Schleiermacher the Theologian: The Construction of the Doctrine of God* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 153). Correcting Williams's description a bit (who follows Welch), Schleiermacher's use of causality, love and wisdom involve relations of logical dependence and perichoresis. Yet he is right to distinguish essential Trinitarianism from immanent Trinitarianism, insofar as the immanent Trinitarian treats such relations of dependence as relations between three "I-know-not-whats," which can be considered antecedently to God in relation to creation. This Schleiermacher does not do. As such, it is important that his interpreters neither mistake him for an immanent Trinitarian on the one hand, nor an exclusively economic Trinitarian on the other. See also *ibid.*, 159 (fn. 29).

also hold that there can be no doctrine of an ‘essential’ Trinity that does not include the doctrine of relations.”<sup>103</sup> All this is in congruence with Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God. Deviating from Welch a bit, I would describe the difference between immanent and economic Trinitarianism, as historically developed, as the difference between speaking of God *in se* and *ad extra*. Schleiermacher’s version of essential Trinitarianism speaks only of God *ad extra* and avoids talk of three I-know-not-whats, but does so in a sophisticated way by including the coeternity and coequality of the three distinctions-in-relation within the being of God.

To further explain and develop these claims, I will turn in the following section to the way the wise and loving divine decree is actualized temporally through the union of the divine essence and human nature in the person of Jesus Christ and the common Spirit of the Church, and in God’s preparation for these unions within history.

### **III. Triune Temporal Fulfillment of the Divine Decree**

I will begin with the union of the divine essence with human nature in the person of Christ, followed by that union in the Church, and then God’s preparation for these unions. I proceed in this way (rather than strictly backwards) because of Schleiermacher’s Christomorphic theocentrism. As he puts it, “Christ therefore was determined as He was, only because, and in so far as everything as a whole was determined in a certain way; and conversely, everything as a whole was only so

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<sup>103</sup> Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1952), 294.

determined, because, and in so far as, Christ was determined in a certain way.”<sup>104</sup> Thus, by beginning with Schleiermacher’s treatment of Jesus Christ, I emphasize the Christomorphism of Schleiermacher’s theocentrism.

### **A. Jesus Christ**

Given that Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God is primarily characterized by the divine decree that Christomorphically determines the universe, it should come as no surprise that he understands the redemptive person and work of Jesus Christ as “the completed creation of human nature.”<sup>105</sup> This should not be surprising because both creation’s and humanity’s beginning and completion “go back to one undivided eternal divine decree,” which forms “only one and the same natural system.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, he understands the person and work of Christ not as a correction or supplement to a previous decree gone awry, but as the wise temporal actualization of the one decree of loving creative activity. In short, divine love is incarnate in the person of Christ, by which divine causality wisely completes the creation of humankind; the person of Christ is a new creation.

This works against any notion of adoptionism in Schleiermacher’s doctrine. God does not find Jesus of Nazareth extraordinary or useful and therefore adopt him as God’s Son. As with all other occurrences in history, God determines the person of Jesus Christ. What is unique about Christ is that God creates in him something new—a powerful and

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<sup>104</sup> *CF*, 555. Note that a sense of “history” is enabled by Christology and pneumatology.

<sup>105</sup> *CF*, 389. As such, the Holy Spirit is the continuation/realization of the completion of human nature in Christians.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

constant God-consciousness.<sup>107</sup> Through that new creation, Jesus Christ is God incarnate. The Redeemer “is like all men in virtue of the identity of human nature, but distinguished from them all by the constant potency of His God-consciousness [*die stetige Kräftigkeit seines Gottesbewußtseins*], which was a veritable existence of God in Him [*ein eigentliches Sein Gottes in ihm*].”<sup>108</sup> What Schleiermacher is emphasizing here is the *sola gratia* existence of the Redeemer.<sup>109</sup>

The “veritable existence of God” in Christ, made by means of the “implanting” of a potent God-consciousness in him, is the actualization of divine love.<sup>110</sup> Note, again, the significance of understanding the attributes of God and the person of Christ in terms of activity. The existence of God within Christ was not a union of an individuated human “nature” and the divine “nature” of God *qua* Son. Rather, the existence of God in Christ is the divine power or activity of love. In this way, Schleiermacher takes seriously the notion that God is *actus purus*. As Kevin Hector explains such “actualism,” “Christ is the One who reproduces God’s pure, loving act in human history, and is therefore God incarnate. The key to this reproduction is Christ’s God-consciousness, which functions as the organ by which God’s pure act is apprehended and turned into Christ’s own

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<sup>107</sup> *CF*, 389. Note, however, that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature; he did not begin with a complete God-consciousness, but it developed at the perfect rate of progress in conjunction with his other functions and properties. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Jesus*, ed. Jack C. Verheyden, trans. S. Maclean Gilmour (Lives of Jesus Series, ed. Leander E. Keck) (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler), 98ff.

<sup>108</sup> *CF*, 385.

<sup>109</sup> As such, Michael Horton’s claim that “Schleiermacher’s Christology is basically adoptionistic and Arian,” is surely inaccurate (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011], 480).

<sup>110</sup> As Schleiermacher states, “Now this ‘divine’ is the divine love in Christ which, once and for all or in every moment—whichever expression be chosen—gave direction to His feelings for the spiritual conditions of men” (*CF*, 407).

activity.”<sup>111</sup> Such “reproduction” should be taken not in an industrial mode, but as a species of the notion that God indwells Christ and is communicated through him.<sup>112</sup> As Catherine Kelsey explains, “The influence of God in his [i.e. Christ’s] immediate awareness [is translated] into every thought and action” of his life.<sup>113</sup> In other words, every moment of Jesus’s life was a perfect indwelling, revelation, and communication of the divine activity of wise love.

Such indwelling and communication occurs in the Person of Christ through Christ’s powerful and constant God-consciousness. That is to say: Christ’s God-consciousness is significant because it is the means by which there is a veritable existence of God in him. Hector explains,

‘Perfect God-consciousness’ can be equated with ‘divinity’ precisely because Christ’s God-consciousness is the human organ through which God’s activity becomes incarnate. The important thing about Christ, then, is not his God-consciousness *per se*, but the fact that this consciousness is the means through which God’s being is incarnated.<sup>114</sup>

The importance of this distinction cannot be overstated. This distinction allows Christ’s *God-consciousness* to be quantitatively rather than qualitatively distinct from other humans’ God-consciousness, as it is more powerful and constant than others. At the same time, the distinction allows the *Person* of Christ to be qualitatively rather than merely quantitatively distinct from all other human persons. That is to say, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that Christ’s God-consciousness and the human Person of Christ

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<sup>111</sup> Kevin Hector, “Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 (July 2006), 311.

<sup>112</sup> A better verb might be “manifests” or “realizes.” The point, however, is exactly right.

<sup>113</sup> Catherine Kelsey, *Thinking About Christ with Schleiermacher*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 73. See also *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>114</sup> Kevin Hector, “Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 (July 2006), 312.

are not synonymous: Christ's God-consciousness is the means by which he perfectly apprehends and realizes God's activity; the Person of Christ is that perfect apprehension and realization of the divine love in the fullness of his life.<sup>115</sup>

Further, it is important to note that the pious feeling of absolute dependence, or the God-consciousness, or the consciousness of being in a relation of absolute dependence on God, is not a faculty. Bruce McCormack explains,

Feeling, as Schleiermacher described it, is not a faculty, standing alongside intellect and will. It is distinguished from knowing and doing in two ways. First, unlike knowing and doing—each of which involves a self-movement of the human subject toward something which lies without—feeling 'is not effected by the subject, but simply takes place in the subject.' Second, and even more basically, the Source of this feeling does not belong to the series of 'objects' known and acted on by the human subject but is to be fundamentally distinguished from them.<sup>116</sup>

The first distinguishing feature of pious feeling underscores once again the *sola gratia* character of Christ's God-consciousness. The second highlights the fact that the person of Christ, made possible through his consciousness of being in a relation of absolute dependence upon God, is the image of the invisible God, i.e., is God incarnate. On both counts, then, the Person and work of Christ are determined and established by God.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> This feature of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God works against a Docetic understanding of Schleiermacher's Christology. There is no doubt he has a high Christology. But because Christ's perfect God-consciousness is implanted within him as a creature, which means that the perfect God-consciousness is not synonymous with the person of Christ in his full humanity but is a part of what it means to be Christ, his Christology remains orthodox. In other words, Christ's God-consciousness is how Christ is the revelation of God for us, but God is not bound by the limits of Christ as a human person. The existence of God in Christ is the divine activity Christ receives through the God-consciousness, which then determines him as a human person.

<sup>116</sup> Bruce McCormack, "Revelation and History in Transfoundationalist Perspective: Karl Barth's Theological Epistemology in Conversation with a Schleiermacherian Tradition," *Journal of Religion* 78/1 (1998), 21.

<sup>117</sup> As Lori Pearson describes it, Schleiermacher's Christology underscores the individual humanity and development of the Redeemer (a parallel to Theodore and Nestorius), while at the same time emphasizing the priority and dominance of the divine in the Redeemer, so that this divine element constitutes the center

To underscore this point: the existence of Christ is inexplicable on the basis of his natural history alone.<sup>118</sup> That is, Christ's existence is miraculous. Christ is a new creation and the existence of God in him is the union of the divine essence with human nature. Yet at the same time, the operations of grace do not overturn the natural progression of history. As Catherine Kelsey explains,

The only miracle is that a person with a perfectly sinless God-consciousness, Jesus Christ, came to adulthood in the context of an overall life of sin, that is, without benefit of a [Christian] community of faith. That point is the only one at which the supernatural enters in. Christ himself incorporates into the natural world by living that God-consciousness which was not yet part of the natural order. Having lived it, he has made it part of the natural order of human life, so no further intervention of the supernatural is necessary for redemption.<sup>119</sup>

In other words, although the potency of Christ's God-consciousness is inexplicable on the basis of his history, after it has been implanted within him everything that he does is purely and naturally human. As Schleiermacher explains,

[Everything that] comes into existence through the being of God in Christ is all perfectly human, and in its totality constitutes a unity, the unity of a natural life-story, in which everything that emerges is purely human, and one thing can be deduced from another, since every moment presupposes those which have gone before, yet in which everything can be completely understood only upon the presupposition of that union through which alone this Person could have come into being, so that every moment also reveals the divine in Christ as that which conditions it.<sup>120</sup>

Christ is, then, both fully human and God incarnate. Schleiermacher defines "supernatural" as what is created first:

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of who he is and the source of all that he does (a debt to Cyril, and behind him to Athanasius)" (Lori Pearson, "Schleiermacher and the Christologies behind Chalcedon," *The Harvard Theological Review* 96/3 [2003], 350-351).

<sup>118</sup> *CF*, 381.

<sup>119</sup> Catherine Kelsey, *Thinking About Christ with Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 62.

<sup>120</sup> *CF*, 408-9.



Whenever I speak of the supernatural, I do so with reference to whatever comes first, but afterwards it becomes secondly something natural. Thus creation is supernatural, but it afterwards becomes the natural order. Likewise, in his origin Christ is supernatural, but he also becomes natural, as a genuine human being. The Holy Spirit and the Christian church can be treated in the same way.<sup>121</sup>

Schleiermacher is here affirming both God's priority in creatively actualizing the divine decree of love in Christ and the nature-system's integrity. In Christ there is a veritable existence of God. Yet since Christ and his newly implanted God-consciousness become part of the natural order, the expansion of the existence of a more perfect God-consciousness to other human beings is not only *not* miraculous, it is to be *expected* given the interdependence of humankind, which is itself decreed by God. As Schleiermacher puts it:

This God-consciousness, manifesting itself in this potency, can have come into existence only outside the sinful corporate life. And since the whole human race is included in this sinful corporate life, we must believe that this God-consciousness had a supernatural origin, though only in the sense postulated above. So too, in relation to the Redeemer Himself, the new corporate life is no miracle, but simply the supernatural becoming natural.... But in relation to the corporate life of sinfulness, which hitherto had included everything and dominated every formation, the new is something that has come into being supernaturally.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *OG*, 89. Andrew Dole explains, "We can say that in this particular sort of usage the term 'supernatural' can be applied to different sorts of phenomena, but one can only call a thing 'supernatural' in relation to a specific set of preceding conditions. The phenomenon in question will count as supernatural relative to those conditions only if its occurrence could never have come about solely on the basis of those conditions, but requires the contribution of a new element from outside. Thus, the same phenomenon will count as natural relative to some sets of conditions and supernatural with respect to others" (Andrew Dole, "Schleiermacher and Otto on Religion," *Religious Studies* 40/4 (2004), 406).

<sup>122</sup> *CF*, 365. Cf. §13.1: 'Even the most rigorous view of the difference between Him and all other men does not hinder us from saying that His appearance, even regarded as the incarnation of the Son of God, is a natural fact. For in the first place: as certainly as Christ was a man, there must reside in human nature the possibility of taking up the divine into itself, just as did happen in Christ. ...Secondly: even if only the possibility of this resides in human nature, so that the actual implanting [*einpflanzen*] therein of the divine element must be purely a divine and therefore an eternal act, nevertheless the temporal appearance of this act in one particular Person must at the same time be regarded as an action of human nature, grounded in its original constitution and prepared for by all its past history' (*CF*, 64).

Thus, while the person-forming influence of Jesus' activity on others is natural, it is made possible through his miraculously implanted God-consciousness. To sum up:

In this whole matter we posit, on the one side, an initial divine activity which is supernatural, but at the same time a vital human receptivity in virtue of which alone that supernatural can become a natural fact of history. This is the link which connects the corporate life before the appearance of the Redeemer with that which exists in the fellowship with the Redeemer, so as adequately to bring out the identity of human nature in both.<sup>123</sup>

Thus, redemption through Christ is made possible by the supernatural divine activity of implanting a new, powerful and constant God-consciousness within him. At the same time, in his humanity Christ is vitally receptive to the divine activity. That aspect of his humanity is shared with others, allowing what was originally a new creation in Christ to become part of the natural life-history of all who have fellowship with the Redeemer.<sup>124</sup>

This brings us from considerations regarding the person of Christ to his redeeming work, though these two ought never to be, and in Schleiermacher's system cannot be, divorced from one another. For Schleiermacher, redemption is grace-effected receptivity to the divine activity in Christ, which fosters in the Christian a more potent and more constant consciousness of the wise and loving asymmetrical relation between God and creatures.<sup>125</sup> That is, redemption is "a creative [i.e., gracious] production in us of the will to assume Him into ourselves, or rather...our assent to the influence of His

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<sup>123</sup> *CF*, 365.

<sup>124</sup> Christ's vital receptivity is his powerful and constant God-consciousness. Humanity and Christ share receptivity and vital receptivity in different degrees.

<sup>125</sup> The sinlessness and perfection of Christ is not communicated by teaching and example. As Schleiermacher explains in *On the Glaubenslehre*, "in two different essays from this school [i.e., Tübingen] I have had to read that, according to my teaching, the communication of the sinlessness and perfection of Christ occurs by teaching and example, even though I have stated the very opposite" (*OG*, 37). See paragraph 121.1 of *The Christian Faith*. The communication of Christ's person occurs, rather, organically through encounter with the Living God in Christ.

activity.”<sup>126</sup> To put it another way, in opening themselves to the person and work of Christ, subsequent to the discrete and gracious action of God, Christians enter into vital fellowship with him. Through such fellowship with Christ, they receive in their own persons the creative activity of God, such that Christ’s total effective influence “is only the continuation of the creative divine activity out of which the Person of Christ arose.”<sup>127</sup> Thus, Christ is the sole mediating Redeemer, the “Second Adam,” and the “first-born of many brethren.”<sup>128</sup>

In this description of Jesus Christ in relation to the divine activity, I have underscored the Christomorphism of Schleiermacher’s theocentrism. For just as the divine decree regarding the creation of human nature finds its completion in Jesus of Nazareth through his supernatural origin, so too does the communication of that creative-redemptive activity to all of humanity depend upon the Person and work of Christ in natural, human history. To that communication I now turn more directly.

## **B. The Holy Spirit**

On Schleiermacher’s understanding, the Holy Spirit is the union of the divine essence with human nature “in the form of the common Spirit animating the life in common of believers.”<sup>129</sup> As such, the Holy Spirit is not identified with the “Spirit to whom a participation in the creation of the material world is ascribed, or the Spirit whose indwelling is the cause of all sorts of extraordinary talents, or even the Spirit mentioned in connexion with the incarnation of Christ, at least so far as a physical effect is there

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<sup>126</sup> *CF*, 426. Note again that receptivity is itself a consequence of grace.

<sup>127</sup> *CF*, 427.

<sup>128</sup> *CF*, 388. This has patristic precedent, especially in Origen and Athanasius.

<sup>129</sup> *CF*, 569.

ascribed to Him.”<sup>130</sup> Rather, the Holy Spirit is Christians’ common consciousness of their “sonship with God and of the Lordship of Christ” made possible by “the power of the self-communicating life of Christ.”<sup>131</sup>

This way of understanding the Holy Spirit, i.e., as Christians’ common consciousness of their “sonship,” emphasizes God’s activity in the work of the Church through Christ. As Samuel Powell explains,

Schleiermacher began his doctrine of the Spirit with the observations that everything godly in the regenerate derives from Christ, and that Christ [after his death and resurrection], no longer being a historical person, no longer exercises any directly personal influence on the regenerate. From this twofold observation he concluded that there must be something divine within the church that is the source of spiritual life and power. In fact, this something is the being of God in the corporate church, just as God was in Christ individually; and it is this being of God in the church that communicates to the regenerate the ‘perfection and blessedness of Christ.’ The being of God in the church is the Holy Spirit.<sup>132</sup>

As I have mentioned above, the union of the divine with human nature in the community of believers consists in the community’s “bond with the living influence of Christ,”<sup>133</sup> where the work of the Holy Spirit in that bond is “to bring Christ into memory and glorify Him in us.”<sup>134</sup> Thus, for Schleiermacher, the following three concepts mean one and the same thing: being drawn by the union of the divine essence with human nature in the person of Christ “into the fellowship of believers, having a share in the Holy Spirit, and being drawn into living fellowship with Christ.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> *CF*, 570.

<sup>131</sup> *CF*, 574.

<sup>132</sup> Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 98.

<sup>133</sup> *CF*, 575.

<sup>134</sup> *CF*, 576.

<sup>135</sup> *CF*, 575.

Because the union of the divine essence with human nature in believers is a corporate activity, it is not a “person-forming union” in the same way that it was in Christ.<sup>136</sup> That is, when the divine essence unites with the human nature in the corporate life of the church, one Person does not result from that union. Rather, the many members of the Church remain distinct persons; indeed, the Church is a voluntary association of individual persons.<sup>137</sup> Within the communion of the Church, however, individual persons are, indeed, formed and influenced by one another. Indeed, such individuals associate because of their “inward impulse to become more and more one in their common co-operative activity and reciprocal influence.”<sup>138</sup> That is, church members share the will to increasingly cooperate with and influence one another; they will to be in and with their neighbors. As such, Christians engage within the Church in the activity of love, which is in this case both individual person- and community-forming in relationship to Christ. For, “what each recognizes in the other is a common love to Christ,”<sup>139</sup> such that “the fellowship of believers with each other and that of each with Christ are one and the same thing.”<sup>140</sup> That is, a Christian comes to love Christ who wills to be in and with neighbor, just as Christ himself is the realization of God’s will to be in and with neighbor. In the

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<sup>136</sup> *CF*, 573.

<sup>137</sup> In the *Glaubenslehre*, he defines “Church” as “nothing but a communion or association relating to religion or piety” (*CF*, 5). This communion develops on the basis of the “consciousness of kind,” which is an essential element of human nature (*CF*, 27). The human being recognizes the facial expressions and gestures of others as indications of their state of mind, a “revelation of the inward,” such that a person “always finds himself, with the concurrence of his conscience, involved in a multifarious communion of feeling, as a condition quite in conformity with his nature, and therefore that he would have co-operated in the founding of such a communion if it had not been there already” (*CF*, 27).

<sup>138</sup> *CF*, 560.

<sup>139</sup> *CF*, 562.

<sup>140</sup> *CF*, 718.

Christian community, the believer sees this redemptive-creative activity come to life and fruition by willing to be in communion with those who have a common love of Christ.

However, believers' common love for Christ and therefore their will to live and act as a community does not find its limit in the Church. Rather, their love continues to ramify outward toward all of humanity: the Church not only loves one another and God in Christ, but also loves humanity as a whole. Schleiermacher identifies such universal love of humanity with "the will for the Kingdom of God in its widest compass."<sup>141</sup> For believers, Schleiermacher explains, "the common spirit of the Christian Church, and every Christian's universal love for men as a love alike for those who have already become citizens of the Kingdom of God and for those to whom this experience is yet to come, are the same One Holy Spirit."<sup>142</sup> Here we see that once again, Schleiermacher's thought does not end in subjectivism, wherein a person is enclosed within herself or the Christian community. Rather, his thought is always expanding outward from a consideration of the piety of Christians to the source of that piety (i.e., God) and the interconnection and interdependence of Christian piety with the rest of creation (i.e., humanity as a whole and the universe).<sup>143</sup> Thus, he understands the Church as part of the single divine decree, which is universal in scope. "There is a single divine fore-ordination [to blessedness], according to which the totality of the new creation is called into being out of the general mass of the human race," Schleiermacher explains, and "the totality of

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<sup>141</sup> *CF*, 565.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. 536.

<sup>143</sup> As Claude Welch has it, "he was not speaking of the self in an enclosed or merely 'subjective' immediacy, but always of an objective determinant of the self's existence, that is, of its determination by what it is not" (Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 1, 1799-1870* [New Haven: Yale University, 1972], 67).

the new creation is equal to the general mass.”<sup>144</sup> The Holy Spirit, which is the will to be with and in neighbor, that is, the universal love of humanity, is to encompass the entire universe. The work of the Spirit of Christ in the Church aims to unite the divine essence with humankind as a whole. As such, there is “only a single unconditional decree by which the whole, as an undivided system, is what it is in virtue of the divine good-pleasure.”<sup>145</sup> The Church, then, is not an insulated entity that encloses itself with its members. It is part of the single divine decree to Christomorphically love one’s neighbor.

In order for the will for the Kingdom of God in its widest compass to be actualized in the temporal sequence of history, Christ had to depart from the community: for “the more a common life depends on an individual life, the less is it an existence in common.”<sup>146</sup> That is to say, the more a community depends on one of its members for its existence and preservation, the less the community is required to band together with one another and exhibit spontaneous activity themselves. Of course, that is not to say that Christ is unimportant for the Christian community. On the contrary, everything in Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God points in the opposite direction. As he explains,

As long as all spontaneous activity was in Christ alone, but in them [the disciples] mere susceptibility, the Kingdom of God in the narrower sense was confined to Christ alone.... And just as then in the disciples, so now in everyone the reminiscent apprehension of Christ must grow into a spontaneous imitation of Him. This common spontaneous activity—which indwells all and in each is kept right by the influence of all, and prolongs the personal action of Christ—in its

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<sup>144</sup> *CF*, 550. The language of “mass” is Augustinian. See *DE*, 73: “We can say that there is only one decree by which God determines what will become of each and every human being and thus that this decree is not at all different from the order according to which the dead mass is quickened by the divine Spirit.”

<sup>145</sup> *CF*, 558.

<sup>146</sup> *CF*, 566. Schleiermacher is being faithful here to the dynamics of the fourth gospel, especially as seen in chapter 17. See also *On the Glaubenslehre*, where Schleiermacher states, “even as a historical phenomenon, therefore, redemption remained an insignificant force as long as Christ was on earth” (*OG*, 47).

unity and identity we have full right to call the common spirit of the Christian Church.”<sup>147</sup>

Thus, in order to effect the Kingdom of God, followers of Christ must not only be receptive to the influence of God in Christ, but must grow into active Christians. As a first step, people receive an apprehension of the Person of Christ through his witnesses in the Church and its scriptures. Thereafter, they grow in discipleship and spontaneous imitation of Christ. Hector explains in broad outline:

The Spirit transforms one into God’s child, he [i.e., Schleiermacher] claims, by conforming one to Christ, and he explains the process through which one becomes so conformed in terms of a chain of recognition that stretches back to Christ himself. This chain of recognition, in turn, is understood as the Spirit’s work, since what is carried forward through this chain just is the normative Spirit of Christ: the Spirit, on this account, is first of all the Spirit of Christ’s recognition of what counts as following him, a Spirit that he conveyed to those whose practices he recognized, and that they conveyed to still others. In this way the norms according to which Christ assessed whether one was following him were passed along to others, and, since these norms are the means by which one is conformed to Christ, it follows that this account provides some explanation of one of the central works traditionally ascribed to the Holy Spirit. [These works include, for instance,] ...to guide his [i.e., Christ’s] followers into all truth, to transform them into God’s children, to write God’s law on their hearts, and so forth.<sup>148</sup>

Over time, then, the apprehension of what it means to follow Christ grows into active conformation to Christ. In other words, people encounter the living Christ in the Church and come to recognize what counts as following Christ.<sup>149</sup> Over time, they become

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<sup>147</sup> *CF*, 568.

<sup>148</sup> Kevin Hector, *Theology Without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (New York: Cambridge, 2011), 92.

<sup>149</sup> This mitigates Schleiermacher’s own distinction between the Protestant and Roman Catholic communions. See §24. As Mariña explains, “In entering into the historical life of the human race, and founding a community within it, Jesus communicates the God-consciousness and the activity of divine love....Hence one cannot ‘share in the redemption and be made blessed through Christ outside the corporate life that he instituted.’ One cannot ‘be with Christ, as it were, alone,’ that is, to be with Christ is to be in the Christian community, and to live out the new way of being towards others that he instituted (*CF*, § 87.3)” (Jacqueline Mariña, “Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher,” *The Cambridge*



imitators of Christ through spontaneous activity. These Christians are identified by their common Spirit, which is most basically the will to be in and with the neighbor.<sup>150</sup> This will, which is a spontaneous imitation of Christ, is the communication of the Holy Spirit from Christ to the Church and out into the world.<sup>151</sup>

This sketch of Schleiermacher's understanding of the divine essence as it is united to human nature in the Church highlights both the Christomorphism of Schleiermacher's theocentrism and the universal scope of God's activity in the world. It also works against the notion that Schleiermacher privatizes religion or wants it to remain in the sphere of feeling rather than influencing one's knowledge or activity. On the contrary, the understanding of the Spirit I have outlined here demonstrates Schleiermacher's expansive vision of God's activity in and for the world through the Church, even as his thought remains distinctively Christomorphic.

### **C. Divine Holiness and Justice**

I take a step backwards now, from the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the common Spirit of the Church to the preparation for these unions. For while the divine activity in completing the creation of human nature in the person of Christ is supernatural, both the subsequent communication of Christ's person and work in the Church and the preparation for the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church are natural. This is to reiterate what I mentioned above, namely,

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*Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña [New York: Cambridge, 2005], 166).

<sup>150</sup> Cf. 1 John 4.

<sup>151</sup> *CF*, 569.

that the character of the incarnation as *sola gratia* does not erase nature and history.

Rather, by engaging in legislative and retributive activity, the Wisdom of God works through natural and historical channels to prepare for and thereby enable the fulfillment of the divine decree to unite the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church.

By legislative and retributive activity, Schleiermacher refers to all of God's activities in determining the universe: the "whole historical process is ordained by this divine causality."<sup>152</sup> As such, God's legislative and retributive activity is capacious; it is not limited to one period of time over another. At the same time, however, as the unions of the being of God in Christ and in the Church might be associated with the "Son" and the Spirit, the legislative and retributive activity of God in preparation for these unions might be associated with the "Father." This seems to be recognized by Robert Francis Streetman. Powell summarizes his view:

Schleiermacher's theology intends to associate the Father with our consciousness of sin and with the divine attributes of holiness and justice, just as the Son and Spirit are associated with our consciousness of redemption and the attributes of love and wisdom. As a result, the Father is regarded not only as the creator but also as the legislator, thus connecting the Father more firmly with redemption.<sup>153</sup>

Streetman is overplaying the distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit that might be loosely suggested here. In addition, he is overlooking the Calvinian fashion in which Schleiermacher sets his discussion of sin in the context of redemption, which I will discuss below. Even so, in Streetman we have confirmation of a loose analogy between

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<sup>152</sup> *CF*, 344.

<sup>153</sup> Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (New York: Cambridge, 2001), 101. See Robert Francis Streetman, *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Doctrine of the Trinity and its Significance for Theology Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1975), 79-82.

the three aspects of his essential Trinity and the three temporal modes of the divine activity in history. Granted the weak analogy, it would be more appropriate to claim that the legislating activity of God is the way the Wisdom of God sees fit to prepare for the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church.

When the case is put this way, Christian readers will no doubt bring to mind the God attested to by the Hebrew scriptures when considering the divine legislating activity. So it is that we come to Schleiermacher's unpopular and regrettable remarks regarding the relation of the Christian faith to God's covenant with the people of Israel. There are at least two primary reasons that Schleiermacher distances himself from the claim that the Christian faith is dependent upon the divine activity attested to in relation to the Jewish people. First, he is keen to emphasize the universality of the divine activity, as I have shown above with reference to the Spirit, and supposes that the particularity of Israel undermines that claim. Second, he does not want to make the Christian faith rely on successful literary and historical argumentation to the effect that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the ancient Hebrew prophecies regarding the Messiah. Doing so would make faith dependent upon knowledge. As Schleiermacher states, "I could never confess that my faith in Christ is derived from knowledge."<sup>154</sup> Once again, for Schleiermacher, faith cannot be derived from knowledge because that would make the most knowledgeable the most pious. He does not want to institute a "hierarchy of speculation," but recognizes as genuine the faith of believers who believe on the basis of their encounter with the living God through Christ in the Church. Just as faith does not rely on philosophical or

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<sup>154</sup> *OG*, 63.

theological “speculation,” neither does it rely on empirical or historical science, which might investigate the prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures and the life of Jesus of Nazareth in an effort to prove or disprove that he is the Messiah. Rather, as Schleiermacher says, “the need must always arise from within, and we do not need a prophetic plea for that.”<sup>155</sup> Going further, he claims that not only are prophetic pleas for the Messianic character of Jesus unnecessary, but also that if such prophecies were proven false, it would not be disastrous for the Christian faith. In his own words: “A definite suspicion that those prophecies do not fit Jesus would not even have held back from faith a Jew of those times who would have been on the road to belief.”<sup>156</sup> As such, he continues, “I cannot regard the attempt to prove Christ from prophecies a joyful task, and I regret that so many prominent scholars still bother with it. For this reason I cannot help but suspect that such an attempt is basically wrong and that placing great value on these external proofs is due at least to a lack of trust in the inner power of Christianity.”<sup>157</sup> For Schleiermacher, then, faith in Jesus Christ is not dependent upon scriptural proofs from prophecies that he is the Messiah but upon the Christian’s encounter with the living Christ.

Many of Schleiermacher’s readers bristle at these words, and rightly so, not only because the arguments he offers are suspect, but also because they seem to rend Christianity from its Jewish roots. There can be no doubt that Schleiermacher did not adequately acknowledge the faith, scripture, traditions, and overall context of the Jewish

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<sup>155</sup> *OG*, 66.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

people as the cradle and context of Jesus of Nazareth and Christianity. This is surprising, given his otherwise heightened attunement to the interdependence of creatures in their historical contexts.

A full exploration of Schleiermacher's relationship with Judaism is outside the scope of my argument, yet we might look to Schleiermacher's context, not in an effort to excuse but with the goal of at least pointing toward an explanation. Joseph Pickle argues that in Schleiermacher's writings concerning Judaism, he was arguing both with and against Haskalah- or Enlightenment-influenced Judaism, "the *maskilim* represented in the journal *Ha-Meassef*" (1783):

It is the group of disciples of Moses Mendelssohn, deists, influenced by Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Montesquieu as well as by Kant, who lead the quest for improved civil status among the Jews, and who ultimately are acknowledged as the reformers and architects of renewal of the Jewish religion.<sup>158</sup>

It is unclear to what extent Schleiermacher was aware of the full activities of this circle, but Pickle indicates that his closest Jewish friends were very familiar with them, and he was at least acquainted with David Friedländer. Friedländer's early formulation of the Haskalah critique of Judaism is as follows:

Your God, you say, has commanded fire not to strike certain households, which in the normal course of things should have been consumed, because their ancestors have held more correct conceptions of the almighty Being than have other peoples. Hypocrite! As you attribute to God these feeble, fleshly, base qualities, you are demolishing that very correct conception, which, in your opinion, God sets such store... You say further that God sits on a throne under which a portrait of our forefather Jacob lies, and when his anger boils over, he quickly glances at the beloved picture and calms down. Isn't that the most wretched idol ever chosen by a barbarous people to be its God? And still God is supposed to perform miracles for

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<sup>158</sup> Joseph W. Pickle, "Schleiermacher on Judaism," *The Journal of Religion* 60 (1980), 121. Figures included: Isaac Euchel, Isaac Satanow, Herz Homberg, Saul Ascher, Lazarus Bendavid, Halle Wolfsohn, Naphtali Herz-Wessely, and David Friedländer. Schleiermacher was acquainted with at least Friedländer.

the sake of this people?<sup>159</sup>

Schleiermacher's critique of Judaism in the *Reden* is similar to this one. Indeed, such a critique was not new or unique by any means.<sup>160</sup> Schleiermacher was picking up a critique internal to Judaism and using it for Christian theological purposes. In fact, Gilya Gerda Schmidt argues that Martin "Buber's own opinion of the Jewish ritual concurred with Schleiermacher. He, too, saw the tradition as a fossil to be abolished or renewed."<sup>161</sup> In this way, Schleiermacher's critique of Judaism was similar to that of the Haskalah-influenced Jewish community of his time.

Unlike Friedländer, however, Schleiermacher wants to separate clearly the Church from the State, arguing against the forced conversion of Jewish people to Christianity in order to become citizens. He argues that the oppression of Jewish people should end and forced conversion eradicated. As such, he argues for the autonomy of Judaism.

Furthermore, Schleiermacher is unlike those in the Haskalah-influenced community for

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<sup>159</sup> Friedländer to Meir Eger, September 1789, listed as no. 2 in Ludwig Geiger, "Ein Brief Moses Mendelssohn's und sechs Briefe David Friedländer's," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 1 (1887): 261. I was made aware of this source through Joseph W. Pickle, "Schleiermacher on Judaism," *The Journal of Religion* 60 (1980), 122.

<sup>160</sup> See Amy Newman, "The Death of Judaism in German Protestant Thought from Luther to Hegel," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61/3 (1993), 455-484; see especially pages 462-465 for her treatment of Schleiermacher's view as expressed in the *Reden*. In her essay, Newman argues against Pickle's view, claiming that Schleiermacher's Jewish friends were mostly wealthy women, and thus were illiterate in Judaism and not at all representative of the majority of the Jewish European population at the time. Indeed, she argues that Jewish women in Berlin's salons were typically taken as lacking genuine human feelings during Schleiermacher's time. As such, Schleiermacher adopts Luther's and Kant's descriptions of Judaism as a dead religion, and this is not positive in the least.

<sup>161</sup> Gilya Gerda Schmidt, "German Romanticism and Friedrich Schleiermacher in Relation to Martin Buber's Idea of Jewish Renewal," in *Schleiermacher on Workings of the Knowing Mind: New Translations, Resources, and Understandings*, ed. Ruth Drucilla Richardson (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1998), 200. According to Schmidt, the difference between Buber and Schleiermacher was the following: "while Schleiermacher and the Romantic circle focused only on a revival of the German Christian spirit, Buber was interested in adapting their methods of renewal for the German Jewish spirit" (ibid., 201). Buber "recognized that the agenda of his people differed in essence from that of the German Romantics. Because he recognized this basic difference, he was able to extract from the Romantic regeneration movement what was useful for his own purpose, such as Schleiermacher's conception of religion, without taking offence at his overall opinion of Judaism" (ibid., 220-1).

whom “interpretations of Judaism were grounded in natural religion perspectives.”<sup>162</sup> He “does not accept Friedländer’s formulation of rational religion as essential Judaism. It must be more (and more positive) than that.”<sup>163</sup>

Thus, we might say that although Schleiermacher’s remarks about Judaism are eminently regrettable—especially in the post-WWII era—he was attempting to argue both with and against his Jewish contemporaries: arguing along with them that Judaism in its current form is unsatisfactory and arguing against them that Judaism cannot be renewed through natural theology but only through more positive religion. I concur with Pickle’s assessment:

One can only wish that Schleiermacher’s theological dispositions had been matched with an equally comprehensive awareness of Jewish piety, tradition, and insight. That it was not is a reminder of Schleiermacher’s own conviction that dogmatics (and any other theological formulation) reflect the doctrines (and sensibilities) prevalent in a religious community at a given time. It is too much to expect Schleiermacher not to have been a man of his own time.<sup>164</sup>

Such explanations of Schleiermacher’s comments about the relationship of Judaism to Christianity and of the Hebrew scriptures to the New Testament do not excuse Schleiermacher. His views of Judaism and its relation to Christianity ought to be sharply and roundly criticized, especially by those whose chief interests in Schleiermacher are his understanding of Judaism and his use of the Hebrew scriptures.

At the same time, however, I do not want to miss the important theological motivations that undergird Schleiermacher’s claims regarding the prophetic task. As unfortunate as these claims are, he makes them because he is staking his faith on an

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<sup>162</sup> Joseph W. Pickle, “Schleiermacher on Judaism,” in *The Journal of Religion* 60 (1980), 116.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

encounter with the living God in the person of Christ communicated through the Church, rather than making faith dependent on knowledge gained through historical and exegetical science about the fulfillment of prophecy. To reiterate my claims in the first chapter, Schleiermacher is attempting to ground dogmatics in the life of actual Christian communities for his academic audience on the one hand, and to provide assurance for his Christian audience, on the other, that they may rest with calm assurance of their relation to God in Christ through the Church despite the advances of the sciences into the arena of what had previously been *sacra doctrina*.

Before leaving this topic, I want to emphasize that Schleiermacher's system of doctrine provides his readers with tools that may be used against his own stated view of Judaism. Contemporary readers may use his focus on the universal activity of God and the personal encounter with Christ to correct his view of the relation of Judaism and Christianity. For example, when Schleiermacher refers to the legislative activity of God by which God ordains the whole historical process, I would emphasize that such legislative activity includes, even if it is not circumscribed by, God's covenantal relationship with Israel. Indeed, even though Schleiermacher does not accord the work of God in and with the Jewish people as a "special revelation" in the *Glaubenslehre*, he never wavers regarding the good-pleasure of God to determine the world in its entirety such that Christ would arise in the context of the Jewish people. In chapter four, I will consider the Jewish particularity of Christ, including Schleiermacher's claim that "the racial too in Him is ideally determined, both in itself and in its relation to the whole of



human nature.”<sup>165</sup> Given statements like this one and his focus on the universality of the divine activity, along with his attention to the historical interdependence of creatures, Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God could be corrected with regard to God’s relation to the Jewish people and the relation of the Christian faith to Judaism.

Let us return, then, to a consideration of the universal legislative and retributive activity of God. This activity has two aspects, according to Schleiermacher, which are summed up by the divine attributes of holiness and justice. These are the divine activities that realize the temporal beginnings of God’s wise plan for bringing about creative-redemptive love.

### ***1. Divine Holiness: Legislation***

Schleiermacher understands holiness as the “divine causality that legislates in the corporate life of man,” which is part of God’s ordination of the “whole historical process.”<sup>166</sup> God legislates through two types of law: moral and civil. Let me take each in turn. Moral law is constituted by the demands that spring from humanity’s consciousness of its relation of absolute dependence upon God.<sup>167</sup> In other words, humanity, conscious of its relation of absolute dependence upon God to varying degrees and at various times, experience internal mandates for its actions on the basis of that relation.<sup>168</sup> As Schleiermacher explains,

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<sup>165</sup> *CF*, 384. This makes Schleiermacher’s comments about the Hebrew Bible’s insignificance for Christians rather dubious as well. See *OG*, 66.

<sup>166</sup> *CF*, 344.

<sup>167</sup> *CF*, 341-2. This again shows the interconnection of feeling, knowing, and doing.

<sup>168</sup> Consciousness of one’s relation of absolute dependence on God is not synonymous with conscience: “for apart from the discrepancy between the form of God-consciousness as understanding and its

All modes of activity issuing from our God-consciousness and subject to its prompting confront us as moral demands, not indeed theoretically, but asserting themselves in our self-consciousness in such a way that any deviation of our conduct from them is apprehended as a hindrance to life, and therefore as sin.<sup>169</sup>

In other words, just as Calvin would have it, when you become conscious of your relation of absolute dependence upon God, you come to realize “immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him.”<sup>170</sup> The internal mandates that arise out of this relation, Schleiermacher calls moral law, or true conscience.<sup>171</sup>

True conscience, in turn, finds “outward expression in civil law.”<sup>172</sup> That is, humanity legislates into civil law what it experiences as inner mandates for right action. It is important to note that Schleiermacher considers both moral and civil law in relation not to individuals but to humanity considered more generally. For the strength and purity of a generation’s will “would of necessity influence the succeeding generation by

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emergence as will, and indeed apart from this discrepancy as combined with a tendency to agreement, there would be no conscience at all” (*CF*, 342). In short, conscience is a result of an imperfect God-consciousness.

<sup>169</sup> *CF*, 341.

<sup>170</sup> *ICR*, I.ii.2.

<sup>171</sup> Schleiermacher recognizes that “conscience” is universally experienced, and that for many the moral law corresponds to the idea of the good, rather than to a relation to God. He explains that while the purely Christian account of the matter is that “conscience is present only along with the need of redemption,” “it must not be taken to mean that we would assume the presence of conscience only where the need of redemption is *recognized*” (*CF*, 342-3, my emphasis). Rather, Schleiermacher starts from the assumption that “redemption through Christ is ordained for the whole human race, and that all mankind are in the state of needing redemption” (*CF*, 343). As such, humankind (Christian and non-Christian alike) experiences the moral law because it is in need of God’s redemption. Schleiermacher has precedent in Paul, who says in Romans 2:12-16, “All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.”

<sup>172</sup> *CF*, 344.

awaking conscience in the adolescent; and the same thing would apply to the greater differences in development within a single generation.”<sup>173</sup> Not only, then, does Schleiermacher see the need to understand conscience trans-generationally, but also within each generation. For, to treat the latter, one individual’s conscience might not be indicative of the conscience of humanity as a whole, that is, of human nature. Rather, since human nature is constituted by each instantiation of it in individuals, true conscience, or moral law, is that about which humanity considered generally agrees is the right way to act.<sup>174</sup> Despite such “universal” agreement, the moral law needs to be legislated into civil law, as human nature is not developed enough for each individual to always listen to true conscience without external support.

When humanity does not act in accordance with the moral law, it sins. Schleiermacher regards “sin” as a disturbance or disruption (*Störung*) of human nature that is “a result of the unequal development of insight [i.e., conscience] and will-power.”<sup>175</sup> He alternately defines sin as “Godlessness, or, better, God-forgetfulness.”<sup>176</sup> It is “a state of bondage,” in which “the free development of the God-consciousness” has

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<sup>173</sup> *CF*, 343.

<sup>174</sup> We have already seen this way of thinking in Schleiermacher’s treatment of the Trinity, where he discusses the analogy one might use to understand the one divine essence and three persons.

<sup>175</sup> *CF*, 275. Cf. Romans 7. The English translators chose to translate “*Störung*” as “derangement.” Although I do not think Schleiermacher’s work has been fairly criticized with regard to its doctrine of sin, here it seems the translators should have adopted a weaker word than “derangement.” Even so, I agree with Redeker who explains, “Schleiermacher’s doctrine of sin cannot be refuted simply as a theology of human weakness. Sin is a human act, it is an antagonism toward God arising from the innermost center of life” (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 129). See Walter Wyman, Jr., “Rethinking the Christian Doctrine of Sin: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Hick’s ‘Irenaean Type,’” *The Journal of Religion* 74/2 (1994), 199-217.

<sup>176</sup> *CF*, 54.

been arrested.<sup>177</sup> In short, sin is an imperfect or incomplete consciousness of the wise, loving, and asymmetrical relation of dependence between God and creatures.<sup>178</sup>

The foregoing discussion of sin is required for explaining Schleiermacher's doctrine of God because, according to him, the holiness of God is the cause of human sin, true conscience, and civil law. That is, holiness is the "divine causality through which in all corporate human life conscience is found conjoined with the need of redemption."<sup>179</sup> Indeed, "the fact that the inefficacy of the God-consciousness becomes sin in us is likewise wrought by Him, and wrought with a view to redemption."<sup>180</sup> In other words, when humanity is considered as a whole, it exhibits a moral law, which is expressed outwardly in civil law, and these laws are evidence of the need for creative redemption in

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<sup>177</sup> *CF*, 335, 271. In *On the Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher alternately describes sin as "the self's struggle with itself to submit to God's will" (*OG*, 46). When the self does not submit to God's will, sin is the disavowal of the divine will (*CF*, 336). Yet such a disavowal is only properly called "sin" when there is a consciousness of things being done better. Without this, "we regard their imperfection and the power of the flesh in them not as sin, but as grossness and ignorance (*CF*, 277). Thus, "the experience of an abatement in will-power and the consciousness that sin can be avoided, as also the conception of sin as a derangement [*Störung*] of our nature, are so far one and the same" (*CF*, 278). Although Schleiermacher takes a disturbance of human nature and the inadequacy of will-power as synonymous, since both might be best described as an inability of the human being to do the divine will, I have highlighted only the unequal development of human nature above because it does not bring into play the notion of the divine will as something separate from the actual state of affairs. The actual state of affairs is an unequal development of human nature in terms of insight and will-power, and this is God's will. When Schleiermacher says that humanity cannot, in this lower state of development, do the will of God, he means that they cannot act in the way they would act if they were already redeemed. But this does not require Schleiermacher to attribute two wills in God—a creating will and a redeeming will. To avoid the confusion, I have remained with Schleiermacher's language of a disturbance of human nature and/or arrestment of the free development of the God-consciousness. Compare John Calvin: "they babble and talk absurdly who, in place of God's providence, substitute bare permission—as if God sat in a watchtower awaiting chance events, and his judgments thus depended upon human will... To sum up, since God's will is said to be the cause of all things, I have made his providence the determinative principle for all human plans and works, not only in order to display its force in the elect, who are ruled by the Holy Spirit, but also to compel the reprobate to obedience" (*ICR*, I.xviii.1, 2).

<sup>178</sup> As Mariña puts it, "In the state of sin the self shuts itself off from the power of God by thinking of itself as independent, as the source of its own existence" (Jacqueline Mariña, "Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher," *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña [New York: Cambridge, 2005], 163).

<sup>179</sup> *CF*, 341.

<sup>180</sup> *CF*, 336.

which the God-consciousness might become stronger and more constant. As

Schleiermacher explains,

It is through the commanding will of God present within us that the impotence of the God-consciousness becomes sin for us. By that will, accordingly—though it may be impossible to ascribe any particular act of sin to a divine causality specially pertaining to it—sin has been ordained by God, not indeed sin in and of itself, but sin merely in relation to redemption; for otherwise redemption itself could not have been ordained.<sup>181</sup>

Divine holiness is, then, always to be understood in the context of creative-redemptive activity considered more capaciously. In this way, Streetman is right to claim that divine legislation connects the “Father” firmly with redemption. The divine creative causal activity, which extends to all things and conditions all things, determines humanity’s need for redemption. Because God created the world in precisely this way, Schleiermacher is “able to refer the conception of God’s holiness directly to His omnipotence and omniscience, and regard these as holy.”<sup>182</sup> That is just to say, God creates and determines all things—including sin—with a view to redemption.

Schleiermacher is here reiterating Calvin’s link between sin and the redemptive framework within which it appears. As Serene Jones explains, for Calvin,

‘Sin’ is identified as a theological concept: it makes sense only within a theological framework where God’s positive purposes for humanity are a normative model for what sin deforms. ‘Sin’ is therefore not an all-purpose word describing everything ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ as measured by our own personal standards or general social codes. To use the term ‘sin’ properly, one must have a theological measure—grounded in scripture and authenticated by the Spirit—that tells us what goes against God’s will for humanity.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *CF*, 337.

<sup>182</sup> *CF*, 345. I will discuss the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience in chapter three.

<sup>183</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 98.

By describing humanity's sin as ordained by God, then, Schleiermacher, like Calvin, emphasizes the redemptive framework within which all of human history is encapsulated. There is no sin apart from God's redemptive will for humanity, which corresponds to the divine holiness.<sup>184</sup>

More specifically, as I have mentioned in a footnote above, for Schleiermacher, humanity's need for redemption may only be fully recognized given the advent of Christ. As he says,

It is of course true that the consciousness of sin comes from the law, but as the law in the very multitude of its precepts is but an imperfect representation of the good, and even in the unity of an all-embracing maxim does not show how it can be obeyed, the knowledge of sin that arises out of it is ever in some respects incomplete and in some uncertain; and it is only from the absolute sinlessness and the perfect spiritual power of the Redeemer that we gain the full knowledge of sin.<sup>185</sup>

In other words, once again divine causality—here, *qua* holiness—is Christomorphic. For God's determination of humanity's need for redemption is only fully understood given the person and work of Christ. As Schleiermacher explains, “the very statement that the Redeemer appeared when the fullness of the time was come makes it quite clear that from the beginning everything had been set in relation to His appearing.”<sup>186</sup> This is important to highlight because the Christomorphism of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God is a further link to his Reformed tradition. Recall my discussion of Calvin's Christomorphism in chapter one with regard to knowledge of God. There I demonstrated that for Calvin God is not truly known except in relation to the creature. That is, knowledge of God and

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<sup>184</sup> Schleiermacher and Calvin both shy away from language of permission, and squarely raise the idea that God is the Author of sin.

<sup>185</sup> *CF*, 279.

<sup>186</sup> *CF*, 328.

knowledge of creatures are intertwined. Moreover, God determines to reveal Godself to the creature through Christ. If these two insights are brought together in the context of human sin, then it becomes clear that human sin cannot be truly known unless it is compared with the glory of God in the sinless Christ. In the passage quoted above, then, Schleiermacher shows again his faithfulness to Calvin's train of thought.

While Schleiermacher carries on Calvin's way of thinking, Martin Redeker highlights a significant difference between Schleiermacher and Luther on this score. The difference is "perhaps most clearly drawn in an 1830 sermon by Schleiermacher, the theme of which he formulated as: 'Nothing need be taught concerning the wrath of God.'"<sup>187</sup> Nothing needs to be taught regarding God's wrath because "for Schleiermacher the biblical images of wrath and judgment of God were anthropomorphisms. Wrath is a psychological emotion that has no place in the Christian understanding of God. God's 'No' to sin is identical with his redemptive love."<sup>188</sup> In other words, because of Schleiermacher's thoroughgoing commitment to the oneness of God, the divine attribute that corresponds to human sin is neither wrath nor condemnation but holiness. Even so, this does not mean that Schleiermacher ignores sin, holiness, or justice. Rather, within the Christian church one becomes aware of sin only after one is already enveloped in the redemptive activity of God in Christ. In this way, "Schleiermacher stands closer to Zinzendorf's viewpoint, according to which the fundamental disposition of Christianity is

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<sup>187</sup> Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 130. See Schleiermacher's *Augsburg Confession Sermons of 1830*, Sermon 9.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

the joy and blessedness of experienced grace.”<sup>189</sup> As such, divine holiness, which corresponds to human sin, is God’s creating-redeeming love *qua* legislation.

## **2. Divine Justice: Corporate Punishment of Sin**

Whereas holiness is the divine cause by which conscience is conjoined with the need of redemption, justice is “that divine causality which in the state of universal sinfulness there is ordained a connexion between evil and actual sin.”<sup>190</sup> More specifically, “the measure in which sin is present is the measure in which evil is present.”<sup>191</sup> That is, divine justice is the causality by which we find that sin is accompanied by the same degree of evil. Indeed, evil is the inevitable punishment of sin; it is the retributive justice of God.<sup>192</sup> Here, as in the rest of this section, I implore the reader to keep in mind the corporate nature of Schleiermacher’s understanding of sin and evil, which is coherent with his corporate understanding of humanity. That is, at no point does Schleiermacher claim that God punishes an individual for her sin in a direct, individual way. Rather, evil attends sin as it relates to the interdependence of all creatures. Divine justice says nothing of the particular case except as it is part of the

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<sup>189</sup> Nicolaus Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), was a Moravian bishop. Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 130. For the connection of the Christian faith with joy, see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on the Incarnation*, trans. Terrence N. Tice (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1967). German edition: *Die Weihnachtsfeier: Ein Gespräch*, Zweite Ausgabe (Berlin, 1826).

<sup>190</sup> *CF*, 345.

<sup>191</sup> *CF*, 317.

<sup>192</sup> *CF*, 316: “Evil arises only with sin,” and “given sin, it arises inevitably.” *CF*, 346: “Hence the divine justice can be retributive only. But even of retributive justice our interpretation covers only the half; for the term is used to denote not only the punishment of wickedness, but also the rewarding of goodness, while our definition has nothing to say of a connexion between well-being and the power of the God-consciousness, but refers only to that between evil and sin—precisely that connexion, in fact, which we call punishment.”



comprehensive divine determination of the universe. I will explain, first, the nature of evil in contrast to the nature of sin, and second, I will describe the way in which evil is connected to sin as its punishment.

For Schleiermacher, evil is, for sinful humanity, a state of the world in which there are “persistent causes of hindrance to his [i.e., humanity’s] life,” which is “an inhibition of the God-consciousness.”<sup>193</sup> Put another way, humanity’s inhibited God-consciousness (i.e., sin) exists within a world that is felt as including persistent causes of hindrance to the God-consciousness (i.e., evil). There are two kinds of such evil: natural and social. Natural evils pertain to scarcity and need, while social evils pertain to oppression and conflict. As such, “just as the human race is the proper sphere of sin, and sin [is] the corporate act of the race, so the whole world in its relation to man is the proper sphere of evil, and evil [is] the corporate suffering of the race.”<sup>194</sup> In other words, evil is the suffering of sinful humanity. The difference between sin and evil is this: sin is an action of humanity, while evil is the consequent state of the world in which sinful humanity suffers.<sup>195</sup> As such, “evil is to be regarded as the punishment of sin.”<sup>196</sup> If

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<sup>193</sup> *CF*, 315. Evil does not include “natural death and the bodily afflictions that precede it in the shape of disease and debility,” since these do not have to be “construed by the corporate consciousness as an obstruction to life,” where that “obstruction” does not mean simply the annihilation or lack of biological life, but bondage or inhibition of the God-consciousness (*ibid.*) Hence,” Schleiermacher explains, “it is not by death, but, as Scripture says, by the fear of death, that we are subject to bondage” (*CF*, 316). The reason people consider obstructions of bodily life as evil is because in them “the predominant factor is not the God-consciousness but the flesh,” where “flesh” is not a synonym for physicality, but for that which exists apart from the higher consciousness, which could be physical, mental, emotional, volitional, and so on (*ibid.*).

<sup>194</sup> *CF*, 317.

<sup>195</sup> *CF*, 340.

<sup>196</sup> *CF*, 317. Social evil is the punishment of sin directly, whereas natural evil is punishment only indirectly (*Ibid.*). Schleiermacher goes on to explain that natural evils, “objectively considered, do not arise from sin; but as man, were he without sin, would not feel what are merely hindrances of sensuous functions as evils, the very fact that he does so feel them is due to sin, and hence that type of evil, subjectively considered, is a penalty of sin” (*CF*, 319). In short, “it is through sin alone that natural imperfections come to be

humanity sins, humanity will suffer. Notice again that for Schleiermacher, evil is only the punishment of sin when considering corporate humanity, not individuals. He explains, “On no account must the evils affecting the individual be referred to his sin as their cause.”<sup>197</sup> Rather, “we posit the idea of a corporate penalty along with that of a corporate guilt,” and in so doing, “we reach a complete vindication of the principle that all sin is reflected in evil, and that all evil can be explained by sin.”<sup>198</sup> Working within a corporate rather than individualistic vision, then, Schleiermacher claims that God’s retributive justice consists in corporate suffering as a punishment for corporate sin.

Although the divine causality corresponding to evil may be summarily referred to as retributive justice because evil follows upon sin as its punishment, such punishment is not for the purpose of vengeance but for prevention and deterrence.<sup>199</sup> That is, God uses the connection between sin and evil in order to “prevent his [i.e., humanity’s] dominant sensuous tendencies from meanwhile attaining complete mastery through mere unchecked habit.”<sup>200</sup> Schleiermacher explains, “Without that consciousness of penal liability, conscience would have no means of gaining a secure hold in any human soul still under the dominion of the flesh, and thus no means of generating there a

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incorporated with social evils” (*CF*, 320).

<sup>197</sup> *CF*, 320. Moreover, “the consciousness of [the connection of sin and evil] does not demand a passive endurance of evil on account of sin” (*ibid.*, 322).

<sup>198</sup> *CF*, 348-9.

<sup>199</sup> *CF*, 350. Yet there is no corporate or individual reward proceeding from divine justice. Anything that might be called a corporate or individual reward is actually unmerited grace. The sole exception is Christ: “The rewarding side of the divine justice can have no other object than Christ, and Him only as one who is different from all other men” (*CF*, 346). In other words, whereas corporate penalty is coupled with corporate guilt for the sake of prevention and deterrence of sin, individual “reward” is coupled with individual “merit” only in Christ, and that for the sake of the completion of human nature through the union of the Divine Essence with human nature in the person of Christ.

<sup>200</sup> *CF*, 351.

consciousness of the need of redemption.”<sup>201</sup> That is, apart from the punishment that follows upon sin—either internal suffering experienced because of impediments to the development of the God-consciousness, or external suffering experienced on account of undergoing the consequences of disobeying civil law—the imperfect God-consciousness would not be able to secure the connection in conscience between humanity’s sin and its need for redemption. Thus, in order to retain within sinful humanity a consciousness of its sin and its need of redemption, and more fundamentally, a consciousness of its absolute dependence upon God, the divine causality ordains that evil be a punishment for sin. In this way, God brings the “spiritual and the sensuous” into agreement during the period of humanity’s incomplete God-consciousness.<sup>202</sup> Since sinful humanity, in the period before the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church, is liable to sink into complete God-forgetfulness, God ordains that corporate guilt be accompanied by corporate suffering such that the consciousness of humanity’s sin and need of redemption will stay alive. For without this consciousness, humanity cannot receive redemption. As such, Schleiermacher says that divine justice “would more aptly be designated wisdom.”<sup>203</sup> By ordaining a connection between sin and evil, which is not always proportionately tied to evil-doers, God ensures that in the fullness of time the union of the divine essence with human nature will be efficacious for the redemption of humanity.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid. In this and similar passages, “flesh” or the “sensuous” does not refer to physicality but to human desires that are unhinged from the consciousness of one’s absolute dependence upon God and the consequences of that consciousness, i.e., the moral demands placed upon the individual in relation to God and others. In short, it refers to sin.

<sup>202</sup> *CF*, 352.

<sup>203</sup> *CF*, 346.

To summarize the divine attributes of holiness and justice: holiness is the divine causality that legislates in the corporate life of humanity through moral and civil law. Divine holiness corresponds to God's love insofar as sin is ordained only for the sake of redemption. Justice, on the other hand, is the divine causality that ordains that in the state of universal sinfulness evil is the punishment for actual sin. As such, divine justice corresponds to divine wisdom insofar as evil is ordained only for the sake of the good of redemption. Schleiermacher's doctrine of God is unified in perichoretic relations, from the essential Trinity of causality, love, and wisdom, to the temporal actualization of the divine causality in Christ, the Spirit of the Church, and the preparation for the union of the divine essence with human nature through God's holiness and justice. Thus, Schleiermacher's doctrine of God is essentially Triune, involving at every point the divine causality whose dynamic life is characterized by creative-redemptive love and wisdom.

In this chapter, I have addressed a persistent critique of Schleiermacher's work, namely, that it relegates the Trinity to an "appendix." Although I suggest that his concerns are not unfounded about a rush to full-blown Trinitarianism as it has been historically developed, by attending to the kataphatic elements of his doctrine of God I have argued that Schleiermacher offers an essential Trinitarianism. As such, he centers his theology in God's activity in the world, which is always shaped by the being and activity of God in Christ and the Spirit of the Church. In other words, Schleiermacher's primarily theocentric focus is on the divine causality, love, and wisdom, and his thoroughgoing Christomorphism means that at every turn the wise and loving divine

causality is shaped with reference to the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church.

More specifically, I have argued that God is, according to Schleiermacher, the originally active causal decreeing of love through wisdom. Such divine activity occurs temporally in Christ, in the Spirit of Christ in the Church, in humanity's conscience and civil law, and in the corporate suffering that attends actual sin. These are the kataphatic elements of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, perfectly summarized by the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity. For here we find Schleiermacher detailing divine wisdom's work in the spread of redemption, which is the actualization of the divine love—the will to be with and in neighbor. That actualization occurs temporally through the preparation of humanity for God's union with human nature in the person of Christ, that union itself, and the subsequent union of the divine essence with human nature in the Christian Church. The kataphasis that is exhibited here is, then, the perfect “satisfaction” of the divine love and wisdom in God's legislation of humanity prior to Christ, in Christ himself, and in the Spirit of the Church.

By reading the *Glaubenslehre* backwards thus far, I have laid the groundwork for chapter three, in which I will continue to substantiate the claim that Schleiermacher's primary focus is divine causality, love, and wisdom, even with reference to the apophatic elements of his doctrine of God. More specifically, I will argue that when the *Glaubenslehre* is read backwards, it becomes clear that Schleiermacher's use of apophasis in his employment of the *via causalitatis*, his construal of the otherness of God in terms of eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and his non-personal

understanding of God as Living Spirit, consistently points his readers to the kataphatic elements of his doctrine of God. In a nutshell, Schleiermacher purposefully uses a circumscribed form of apophasis in order to nuance and highlight the Reformed character of his kataphatic claims.

### **Chapter Three: Apophatic Elements of Schleiermacher's Doctrine of God**

Having considered the kataphatic elements of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God in the previous chapter, I will move further backwards in the *Glaubenslehre*, to the relatively apophatic theological claims found in its first part.<sup>1</sup> As chapters one and two have shown, it is difficult to separate Schleiermacher's doctrine of God into a treatment of God as Creator and God as Redeemer. Nonetheless, the apophatic portion of the *Glaubenslehre* can appropriately be said to emphasize the divine in relation to creation, generally considered. In this chapter, I will interpret and analyze Schleiermacher's understanding of the theological task and method, followed by his understanding of the otherness of God construed in terms of eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and his non-personal understanding of God as Living Spirit.

My discussion of these elements of the *Glaubenslehre* aims at establishing the following two-pronged argument. There is a tension between part one and part two of Schleiermacher's masterwork, the former emphasizing apophasis and the latter emphasizing kataphasis. Some of his interpreters reconcile the tension by prioritizing part one, which they see as his development of a natural theology, a natural base upon which a particular and positive Christian theology might be developed.<sup>2</sup> The natural base might be elaborated by different interpreters in terms of philosophy, classical reasoning about a Supreme Being, or sociology. Contrary to this view, the first prong of my argument is that Schleiermacher prioritizes the second, kataphatic, part of the *Glaubenslehre*. In

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<sup>1</sup> In this, Schleiermacher follows Calvin by treating God the Creator prior to God the Redeemer. Calvin has a more developed doctrine of God as Creator in the beginning of his *Institutes*, however, because he includes there a discussion of the Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Andrew Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (New York: Oxford, 2010).

support of my argument, I will consider in more detail than I have in chapter one both the task of theology as Schleiermacher conceives of it, and the theological method he adopts.

The task of theology, according to Schleiermacher, is both descriptive and regulative. Because of these two facets, theology is accurately portrayed neither as exclusively empirical nor exclusively philosophical or, more broadly, critical. Rather, Schleiermacher is a Reformed theologian who is concerned about the lived piety of believers, and he is a reforming theologian who engages in critical reasoning in order to correct and guide the Church in its self-reflection on its piety. Second, the method Schleiermacher adopts, namely, the *via causalitatis*, or the way of causality, is primarily kataphatic. It points to the asymmetrical causal relationship between God and the world. Although his primary method is kataphatic, however, the *via causalitatis* is secondarily attended by an apophatic emphasis on the distinction between God and the world. That is, the *via negativa* (way of negation) is used secondarily in order to ensure that Schleiermacher's kataphatic emphasis on the loving and wisely determining relation between God and the world through divine causality, Christ, and the Church does not run over its proper boundaries. If apophasis were not used at all in his theological method, the Christian might turn her attention so exclusively to the kataphatic self-impartation of God that she might forget the differences between God and the world, that is, the ways in which God is other than creation. As such, Schleiermacher primarily takes a kataphatic approach, and apophasis has a limited but important secondary role to play. In this way, a consideration of Schleiermacher's theological purpose and method will be used as evidence for the first prong of my argument in this chapter, namely, that he is primarily a



kataphatic theologian, which is reflected in the priority of the second part of the *Glaubenslehre* over the first.

The second prong of my argument is that even within the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, apophasis is correlated with kataphasis. Such correlation amounts to an anticipation of the claims of the second part. If the *Glaubenslehre* is read backwards, then, the more apophatic aspects of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God may be read as both pointing to and deepening his kataphatic claims. In short, in this chapter I will argue that Schleiermacher puts apophasis to a limited but purposeful use in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*: apophasis 1) circumscribes the limits of Schleiermacher's primarily kataphatic claims, or, put another way, reminds the reader of the distinction between God and the world that is always assumed and necessitated for the establishment of a real relation between God and creation; and 2) anticipates (read forwards) and deepens (read backwards) Schleiermacher's primarily kataphatic claims.

Before going further and risking entanglement in a definitional thicket, let me turn briefly to various meanings and uses of the term "apophasis," and identify the way I use the term. Sarah Coakley explains that the Greek noun *apophasis* may derive from either of two verbs. It may come from the verb *apophemi*, which means "saying no" or "saying negatively," or it may derive from the verb *apophaino*, which carries the connotation of revelation. In the former case, apophasis is synonymous with the *via negativa*.<sup>3</sup> However,

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<sup>3</sup> Let me be clear about the way I will use the phrase "negative theology," or the *via negativa*, in this chapter. I will employ that phrase in the first sense Bernard McGinn offers in his threefold typology. On that account, negative theology means "the theological practice of 'unsaying' claims about God, of negating the positive to express God's uniqueness and transcendence" (Sarah Coakley, "Introduction: Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite," in *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009], 9-10, footnote 30). A second type of negative theology is "the ascetic practice of detachment of the human

in the latter case, the Greek has an additional meaning, going beyond the Latin. I will focus my attention on apophaticism in the former sense, meaning “saying no” or “saying negatively.”<sup>4</sup> However, those who employ the *via negativa* do not only say “no.” Rather, “the more they speak, the more they unspeak; and yet because of the infinity of which they speak, it would seem they can never stop speaking.”<sup>5</sup> In this sense, kataphasis is not the affirmative opposite of apophasis. Yet those who take the apophatic way, peel away

the linguistic accretions, like barnacles, of finite images...for any God-talk can harden, it was recognized, into the smuggest of idols. So Meister Eckhart, in an outburst of reverent iconoclasm, utters the single most succinct moment of apophasis in Christian literature: ‘I pray God to rid me of God.’ At its negative edge theology recognizes its own jeopardy—the intimate temptation we may call theolatriy.<sup>6</sup>

Both primarily kataphatic and primarily apophatic figures share a concern about idolatry and theolatriy. However, those who are primarily apophatic see talk of God as much more problematic than primarily kataphatic theologians. I will return to this issue in chapter five, where I critique a current apophatic strain of feminist theology. For now, suffice it to say that I recognize the interrelation between apophasis and kataphasis, while I also think it possible to distinguish a primarily apophatic approach from a primarily kataphatic approach.

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will/desire from false goals.” Third, negative theology is “the paradoxical theology of divine absence as divine affliction.” To McGinn’s three-fold typology, Coakley adds a fourth: “the distinctively modern expression of radical divine absence,” where “modern atheism, as well as Kant’s problematic noumenal darkness, hover in the background.” So I use the phrase “negative theology” to mean “‘unsaying’ claims about God,” or “negating the positive to express God’s uniqueness and transcendence.”

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Coakley, “Introduction: Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite,” in *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 9-10, footnote 30.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller, “Introduction,” in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative theology, Incarnation, and Relationality* (New York: Fordham University, 2010), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.

Even if these approaches may be distinguished, it is a valuable question to ask why I might want to use the terms “apophatic” and “kataphatic” to address Schleiermacher’s mature work—both to distinguish its first from its second part and to characterize the work as a whole. In one sense, these specific terms are not integral to the analysis and argumentation I am offering. They could be substituted relatively easily by the words “transcendence” and “immanence” or “hidden” and “revealed.” In this sense, I am using the words “apophatic” and “kataphatic” to indicate two different themes within Christian theology: God is both beyond and present, God is both veiled and unveiled, God is both ineffable and incarnate. Yet I have not chosen “apophatic” and “kataphatic” at random. For while they indicate particular concepts within every Christian theology that aim to speak about God while recognizing the limitations of such speech, they also indicate traditions of thought or primary tendencies of thought. Perhaps all would agree, for example, that process theologians are primarily kataphatic, while mystics are primarily apophatic. By using the terms “apophatic” and “kataphatic,” then, I am indicating both two necessary aspects of any Christian theology, on the one hand, and two different and conflicting overall approaches to Christian theology.

These terms, both as conceptual polarities and as methodological approaches, are appropriate descriptors of Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*. Indeed, as a post-Kantian theologian, Schleiermacher wrestles with the limits of human knowledge and speech in a way peculiar to his historical circumstance, peculiar for its heightened philosophical sensitivity to the disjunction between what can and cannot be known or said about God, and on what basis. As such, Robert Williams claims, “It is no exaggeration to say that

Schleiermacher's doctrine of God and divine attributes is structured by the fundamental contrast between God hidden and revealed."<sup>7</sup> The question of how Schleiermacher primarily deals with this contrast is the subject of this chapter and chapter five.

## **I. Tension between Part One and Part Two**

By setting the apophatic elements of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God in contrast to its kataphatic elements, I am highlighting the tension in his work, which especially comes to the fore when reading the *Glaubenslehre* by beginning with part one and moving to part two. In the former, even though Schleiermacher ties his doctrine of God to the pious self-consciousness, which gives it a kataphatic direction, it seems as though he is most concerned to keep anthropomorphism at bay. As he says, "it has been from the beginning the business of Christian Dogmatics to regulate these representations, so that the anthropomorphic element, to be found more or less in all of them, and the sensuous which is mixed in with many, may be rendered as harmless as possible."<sup>8</sup> And again, concerning his theological method, he states,

Here at the start we must premise for one thing that to this conception [i.e., causality] the other methods must first be applied, i.e., that the finitude of causality must be denied and its productivity posited as unlimited; and again, that in so far as a plurality of attributes is developed out of the idea of the divine causality, this differentiation can correspond to nothing real in God; indeed, that neither in isolation nor taken together do the attributes express the Being of God in itself (for the essence of that which has been active can never be known simply from its activity alone).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Williams, *Schleiermacher the Theologian: The Construction of the Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 147.

<sup>8</sup> *CF*, 195.

<sup>9</sup> *CF*, 198.

In the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, then, Schleiermacher seems keen to emphasize the negations and qualifications that ought to attend any positive claims about God. He does so through a series of doctrines that underscores the negative: God is not temporal, God is not localizable, God is not limited in power or knowledge. These are the divine attributes that express the relationship between God and the world. Schleiermacher's apophatic accent in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre* contrasts with his kataphatic accent in the second.

Schleiermacher recognizes the tension between the two parts and prioritizes the kataphatic elements of his doctrine of God, wherein he treats the Christian consciousness of the antithesis of sin and grace. Specifically, in part two he explicates the "facts" of the religious self-consciousness, whereas in part one, he develops the religious self-consciousness that is always "presupposed by" and "contained in" every Christian religious affection.<sup>10</sup> Schleiermacher explains, "As regards the attributes which we arrived at in the first part of this work, they made then no claim to rank as such designations of the Divine Essence that they could be substituted for the name 'God.'"<sup>11</sup> Even further than this, at the end of the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher seems to qualify the work he has done in the first part:

Even although we explain omnipotence as the attribute in virtue of which all finite things are through God as they are, while we certainly in that case posit the divine act in its entirety, it is without a motive, and therefore as an action wholly indeterminate in character. ... Unless we pass out beyond the finite sphere we all the time remain uncertain as to the nature of the will of God which as such is implied in omnipotence. The same thing of course holds true of the other divine attributes treated of in the same context. We arrived at each of the them by

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<sup>10</sup> *CF*, xv, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> *CF*, 730.

abstraction from the definite feeling-content of our God-consciousness; hence if we are not to project them in thought into the attributes yielded by reflection on this feeling-content (as happens in the formula that God is omnipotent or eternal love), but rather take them strictly by themselves, we are bound to say that belief in God as almighty and eternal is nothing more than that shadow of faith which even devils may have.<sup>12</sup>

Schleiermacher is, in the first part, holding in abeyance the particular antithesis of sin and grace that takes the forefront in the second part. As such, he goes on to say that holiness and justice, for example, do not have any existence for God, “considered solely in Himself.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, “it is only when we cancel this separation and resolve them into those attributes which we are now discussing as the result of the second half of our exposition, that they are recognizable as divine attributes at all.”<sup>14</sup> With these and similar words, Schleiermacher prioritizes the second part and insists that those attributes dealt with in the first part only gain propriety when they are considered in concert with those from the second part. In the two parts of the *Glaubenslehre*, he is engaging different aspects of the Christian self-consciousness, namely, its presuppositions and its “facts.” Schleiermacher’s emphasis on the importance of the second part is significant because it shows Schleiermacher’s true kataphatic colors.

Still, Schleiermacher is overstating the difference between the two parts of the *Glaubenslehre*. Even in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, “purely negative” definitions are complemented by a series of kataphatic claims. As such, the attributes of the first part anticipate those of the second. Thus, although I agree with Schleiermacher that the material in the first part of the work cannot be properly understood without reading the

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<sup>12</sup> *CF*, 731.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

second part, such that only the attributes of the second part are “truly predicated” of God, I will argue that his doctrine of God—even in its apophatic elements—is always pushing the reader forward to the kataphatic self-impartation of God in Christ and the common Spirit of the Church. For, as Schleiermacher himself puts it, “negation by itself is no way to posit any attribute, unless something positive remains behind the negation.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, even in his apophatic moments, Schleiermacher is always implicitly nudging his readers toward kataphasis, that is, the facts of the Christian consciousness as determined by the antithesis between sin and grace.

I begin this chapter by considering, in more detail than that offered in chapter one, Schleiermacher’s understanding of the theological task and the most appropriate theological method to carry out that task, namely, the *via causalitatis*. With regard to the theological task and method, apophasis serves to circumscribe kataphatic claims. Subsequently, I will consider the ways in which the attributes of divine otherness anticipate and deepen the kataphatic claims Schleiermacher makes in part two. In addition to showing how even in the apophatic aspects of Schleiermacher’s thought he is pointing to kataphatic claims, this chapter also sets the stage for chapter four. There, I will further consider Schleiermacher’s denial of divine personhood. In this denial, too, there are kataphatic elements. For while he rejects divine personhood, he affirms some key aspects of the same in his doctrine of God considered as a whole. For now, I will consider first the *via causalitatis* and then move to a discussion of divine otherness.

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<sup>15</sup> *CF*, 197.

## II. The *Via Causalitatis*: Apophasis Attends Kataphasis

### A. The Task of Theology

In chapters one and two, I have already shown that throughout the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher is careful to refer to the divine essence only as it is represented to humanity. God is not to be considered apart from the world, which would be an impossible task, but always in relation to it. The task of dogmatics is not, therefore, to speculate about the divine essence as it is “in itself.” Rather, as Schleiermacher puts it, “Dogmatic theology is the science which systematizes [or, is a science of the coherence (*dem Zusammenhange*) of] the doctrine prevalent in a Christian Church at a given time.”<sup>16</sup> Dogmatic theology describes and reforms the beliefs of present Christian churches—in his case, the newly united German Evangelical and Reformed Church.<sup>17</sup> Each systematic presentation confines itself to those “doctrines which are dogmatic

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<sup>16</sup> *CF*, 88. By “*Zusammenhange*,” Schleiermacher indicates the way many things hang together, or are joined together in coherence or continuity. His sense of coherence, and the kindred connections of dogmatic statements, is important for my argument, which aims to render his system of doctrine more coherent within itself and in relation to the piety of Christians.

<sup>17</sup> From 1809, Schleiermacher served Trinity Church in Berlin, Prussia’s capital. Prussia was a conglomerate of territories in the North and East of what is now Germany. After the French invasion of Halle in 1806, many hoped for German unification, including Schleiermacher, who was the son of a Reformed Chaplain to the Prussian army. Under the rule of King Friedrich Wilhelm III, Schleiermacher worked for unification academically, politically and ecclesiastically. Academically, he was heavily involved in the foundation of the University of Berlin (1810), led by Wilhelm von Humboldt. He became the chair of theology and the first Dean of theological faculty in 1810, and became Rector of the University in 1815. Politically, Schleiermacher was appointed as an advisor on education in the Ministry of the Interior. He also edited the *Prussische Zeitung* from 1810-1814, which was a newspaper arguing for a popular uprising against Napoleon. When in 1813 Napoleon was in retreat from Russia, Schleiermacher preached at Trinity Church to encourage young Berlin students who had enlisted to help beat Napoleon back. Schleiermacher preached weekly at Trinity Church, and this was one of his chief means of influence in Berlin. He welcomed the unification of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches that Friedrich Wilhelm III desired, and joint communion was celebrated there in 1817. The extended title of *The Christian Faith* is “Connected Exhibition of the Christian Faith, according to the Principles of the Evangelical Church.” The title indicates “one of its underlying motives, that of providing a coherent, unifying theology for the new united Church of Prussia” (Keith Clements, “Schleiermacher in His Context,” *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 33).



expressions of that which, in the public proceedings of the Church (even if only in certain regions of it), can be put forward as a presentation of its common piety without provoking dissension and schism.”<sup>18</sup> In more colloquial terms, for Schleiermacher, theology is the daughter of religion.<sup>19</sup> That is, “the present work entirely disclaims the task of establishing on a foundation of general principles a Doctrine of God, or an Anthropology or Eschatology either, which should be used in the Christian Church though it did not really originate there.”<sup>20</sup> To reiterate, theology, for Schleiermacher, is both of and for the Church. In short, he embarks on the task of “presenting the God-consciousness developed in the Christian Church, as we all have it within us, in all its expressions, so that it always appears as pure as possible in each of its individual elements and so that the individual determinations that arise in this way and strive toward unity can be viewed together.”<sup>21</sup> That is, theology includes the scientific aim of achieving clarity and coherence between the various parts of the Christian Church’s common piety at a particular time and place.

What this means is that for Schleiermacher, dogmatics is both concretely grounded and does more than describe concrete facts. It is important to keep both of these tasks in mind. For if one considers only the concrete expressions of Christian piety found in the Church, which the theologian describes, then dogmatics becomes basically

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<sup>18</sup> *CF*, 89-90.

<sup>19</sup> *CF*, 41. See also *On the Glaubenslehre*: “I do not know where a dogmatics would come from unless piety were already present” (*OG*, 42). Likewise, see the lines from Anselm that precede the whole *Glaubenslehre*: “Nor do I seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand,” and “For he who does not believe does not experience, and he who does not have experience, does not understand.”

<sup>20</sup> *CF*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *OG*, 51.

reportage. Richard Crouter describes that reading of Schleiermacher's understanding of the task of theology:<sup>22</sup>

Taken literally, the statement sounds like Schleiermacher is willing to take as theologically true the level of opinion prevailing in the church at any given time. In that situation religious truth would be more a matter of sociological research than the science of divine and eternal things. Such practice, if carried out, would reduce the eternal to the level of insight of any given era, be it good, bad, or indifferent.<sup>23</sup>

This reading of Schleiermacher's theology is inaccurate. For Schleiermacher, the theological task is not only descriptive but also regulative.<sup>24</sup> Or, as I have put it in chapter one, Schleiermacher's work is both Reformed, attending to the lived piety of Christian believers, and reforming, engaging critical reasoning to examine, critique, and correct current Christian beliefs and practices. As such, Schleiermacher claims that the theologian may, indeed, have

an influence upon the form and manner of treatment, and [this regulative influence may] even assert itself at particular points by intentional correction of the usual position. And this of itself makes it clear that our definition by no means excludes improvements and new developments of Christian doctrines.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, Christian theology is not sociology. It is not solely description and analysis. Rather, dogmatics includes both an account and guidance of Christian piety. "Therefore," Schleiermacher continues, "this purifying and perfecting is just the work

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<sup>22</sup> Crouter's use of "sociological," in the passage cited below, is quite loose. Surely, he means something like basic reporting.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Crouter, "Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48/1, 38.

<sup>24</sup> I am adopting here a phrase, "descriptive and regulative," that Paul Jones uses in an unpublished essay on Schleiermacher and Postliberalism. Both of these terms occur in many places throughout Schleiermacher's text. See *CF*, 195.

<sup>25</sup> *CF*, 90.

and the task of Dogmatic Theology.<sup>26</sup> Richard Niebuhr helpfully explains by contrasting the purpose of dogmatics with the task of preaching:

If it is the business of preaching to confess faith and to exhort others to faith, the business of dogmatics is to examine the confessional and hortatory language of preaching (and also of hymns, the liturgy, etc.), less as a censor than as a Socratic partner who is concerned that contradictions, inconsistencies and superfluous connotations be purged and that in the process the integrity of the consciousness out of which this discourse arises be more steadily acknowledged. Thus, the dialogue of dogmatics with the church is unending, and in its fundamental purpose of drawing forth the content of that consciousness and representing it in the clearest fashion humanly possible it must play the role of critic as well.<sup>27</sup>

For Schleiermacher, then, the theologian is in constant dialogue with the Christian Church. Dialogue here chiefly indicates that the communication between the Church and the theologian is not one-way. In addition, it indicates that Schleiermacher is not offering a philosophically driven “natural theology” that infers God’s existence and character from general principles or facts of the world considered generally. Rather, dogmatic theology is in dialogue with the Christian Church, describing and regulating its pious expressions.

As I have mentioned in chapters one and two, the principle by which Schleiermacher believes Christian theologians ought to regulate the dogmatic material is this: everything within the Christian system of doctrine must conceptually allow Jesus Christ to be the Redeemer of humanity.<sup>28</sup> That is, if anyone claims that a doctrine is Christian and yet precludes the possibility that Christ is the Redeemer, then it has merely

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<sup>26</sup> *CF*, 92.

<sup>27</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, “Schleiermacher: Theology as Human Reflection,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 55/1 (1962), 35.

<sup>28</sup> *CF*, 98.

the appearance of a distinctively Christian character. This Christological regulative principle is related to apophasis in the following manner:

If we find that everything which would destroy His presence in us must specially be denied of God, and everything which favours His presence in us specially be affirmed of Him, we can say in our own way that thus divine attributes are formulated by the methods of removal of limits and negation; but those which arise from present observation, and there will be such, are reached by the method of causality.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, nothing in the Christian system of doctrine may conceptually destroy God's presence in the pious, which is achieved by divine causality in light of the communicative redeeming activity of Christ and Christ's Spirit.

In order to avoid positing that which would destroy God's presence in humanity, Schleiermacher sets out to avoid four heresies when regulating the dogmatic material, namely, the Docetic, Nazarean, Manichean, and Pelagian.<sup>30</sup> According to Schleiermacher's description, each of these heresies define either the character of Christ or the character of humanity in such a way that eradicates the ability for humanity to receive redemption by God through Christ.

I will detail the heresies in the chapter to follow. For now I wish only to highlight the regulative nature of the dogmatic task, the key principle for doing so, and the fact that apophasis is used in a limited and purposeful way in order to safeguard and circumscribe

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<sup>29</sup> *CF*, 200.

<sup>30</sup> Niebuhr elaborates: "The *Christian Faith* as an instance of dogmatic theology really pre-supposes the work of this philosophical theology, and accordingly, Schleiermacher here does no more than stipulate that the ultimate boundaries beyond which no theological reflection and instruction may go are drawn by the four classical heresies (Docetism, Adoptionism, Manicheanism and Pelagianism), while the proximate boundaries and more specific marks of ecclesiastical identity are to be found in the symbolical books and catechisms of the communion in question." (To be sure, as we have seen, Scripture lies under all of these marks of identity, but they in turn furnish the guides for the approach to Scripture in that particular church.)" (Richard R. Niebuhr, "Schleiermacher: Theology as Human Reflection," *The Harvard Theological Review* 55/1 [1962], 36).

the kataphatic doctrine of God. I will suggest that Schleiermacher's Christological regulative principle allows him to avoid the heresies he identifies by using apophasis in a limited way.

Notice that Schleiermacher's principle for regulating the dogmatic material allows plenty of space for varying theological positions within Christian communities. For although Schleiermacher insists on regulating or reforming Christian doctrine as one describes the piety of Christian communities, his understanding of heresy does not preclude a robust appreciation of heterodoxy, which he defines as theological beliefs that are not heretical and yet would not find general acceptance among the church community under consideration.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Schleiermacher understands his own work on the Trinity, which I have examined in chapter two, for example, as a specimen of heterodoxy that he hopes will someday find general acceptance.<sup>32</sup> What Schleiermacher is attempting to do through his reforming principle, here inflected apophatically, is to circumscribe the space within which the Christian faith may freely develop while maintaining its distinctive character.

My interpretation of Schleiermacher's understanding of the task of theology and his use of apophasis within that task is contentious. Because his apophatic claims in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre* may be reminiscent of a philosophical type of reasoning

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<sup>31</sup> Schleiermacher explains in the *Brief Outline*, "Every element of doctrine that is constructed in the spirit of a desire to hold fast that which is already a matter of general acknowledgement, along with the natural inferences therefrom, is of an orthodox character; every element constructed with a tendency to keep the System of Doctrine in a state of mobility, and to make room for other modes of apprehension, is heterodox" (*BO*, 165). For more on heterodoxy, see Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 285-295.

<sup>32</sup> In *On the Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher says, "I am firmly convinced, however, that my position is an inspired heterodoxy that in due time will become orthodox, although certainly not just because of my book and perhaps not until long after my death" (*OG*, 53).

and because he treats the relation of God to the world without explicit reference to the person of Christ, those who heavily rely on the *Reden* to interpret the *Glaubenslehre* have taken him as a thinker primarily in dialogue with philosophy, attempting to perform natural theology. To see how this view is mistaken, consider the regulative function of theology for Schleiermacher. There are two sides to his regulative mode, one influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, the other doctrinally grounded. Philosophically speaking, we might say that Schleiermacher's method in part one is a kind of transcendental argument, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter's discussion on the Trinity. Schleiermacher takes as a given the Christian consciousness of absolute dependence on God, or pious receptivity to the divine activity, and does not explicitly mention the particular way that the God-consciousness is routed through the person of Christ. Taking the God-consciousness as a given, he subsequently asks what must be the case in order to allow and preserve that Christian piety. The theologian asks herself, in other words, "What are the conditions for the possibility of this given?" This philosophically influenced method, however, is ultimately grounded in a distinctively Christian conviction. Since Christ proclaims the redemption of humanity, and since for him "there is only one source from which all Christian doctrine is derived, namely, the self-proclamation of Christ,"<sup>33</sup> any position that does not conceptually allow for Christ to be the Redeemer is ruled out of court as a distinctively Christian doctrine.<sup>34</sup> Thus,

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<sup>33</sup> *CF*, 92.

<sup>34</sup> Thus, Michael Horton is incorrect in claiming that "Schleiermacher's view of revelation leaves no place for the concept of the 'Word,' since cognitive communication is inherent in the term" (Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011], 124). For Schleiermacher, although religion has its primary province in feeling, piety is always interconnected with knowing and doing. I return to this topic in chapter four.

although Schleiermacher finds Kant's transcendental method useful, he employs it on the basis of a distinctively Christian conviction, namely, that all Christian doctrine is derived from Christ's person and work. Nonetheless, in part one, the Christological grounding of the transcendental method is not explicitly addressed in a sustained fashion. This lack is part of the critique and correction of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God that I will make below regarding the personhood of God. Christ's personhood, on my reading, should be the link between Schleiermacher's doctrine of God in the first and second parts of the *Glaubenslehre*.

Put in relation to various interpretations of Schleiermacher's work, my point is simply this: I see in his theological method a balance between descriptive and reforming activity through the use of a Christomorphic lens. The dogmatic criterion bears repeating: everything within the Christian system of doctrine must conceptually allow Jesus Christ to be the Redeemer of humanity. Although such a criterion sets a clear boundary around Christian dogmatics, it is not totalizing but allows for many different expressions of Christian piety. Moreover, his circumscription of Christian dogmatics highlights the fact that his *via causalitatis* is not an attempt at "natural theology," but a way of including the entire scope of the divine activity in God's identity (i.e., theocentrism), as it is Christomorphically shaped. Even so, because he does not affirm the personhood of God, his work on the doctrine of God in the first part is not directly related to the person of Christ. That is to say, although his theological method in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre* is related to the person of Christ and his doctrine of God in the second part is related to the person of Christ, his doctrine of God in the first part is not clearly related

to the person of Christ. Yet there ought to be coherence between the way one comes to theological claims and the result of that method. That is, there ought to be coherence between theological epistemology and ontology. This is a distinct failure on Schleiermacher's part, and I will argue for its correction in chapters four and five.

## **B. Theological Method**

As I have already indicated, Schleiermacher correlates the feeling of absolute dependence on God in Christ with divine causality.<sup>35</sup> As he explains, "causality stands in the closest connexion with the feeling of absolute dependence itself."<sup>36</sup> Causality, then, is the link between the kataphatic content of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God and his theological method (i.e., the *via causalitatis*), which gives the *Glaubenslehre* its form. This should not be surprising, given my discussion in the previous chapter of the divine original causal activity. There, I noted that for Schleiermacher God is the original causal activity that determines the universe. Here, it is important to see that divine causality is the activity that both describes the content of and grounds the Christian feeling of absolute dependence. Schleiermacher uses the *via causalitatis*, the way of causality, as his method: "all the divine attributes to be dealt with in Christian Dogmatics must somehow go back to the divine causality, since they are only meant to explain the feeling of absolute dependence."<sup>37</sup> Yet, as I have indicated in the opening remarks above, to the mode of causality "the other methods must first be applied, i.e. that the finitude of

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<sup>35</sup> *CF*, 198.

<sup>36</sup> *CF*, 197.

<sup>37</sup> *CF*, 198.



causality must be denied [*via negationis*] and its productivity posited as unlimited [*via eminentiae*].”<sup>38</sup> That is to say, if God is the Whence of the universe, that Whence is not a finite cause. Thus, both the theological task and method have apophatic, that is, negative, aspects. Apophasis sets the limits of Christian dogmatics, such that the relation between God and the world, which requires a fundamental distinction between them, will be upheld.

Turn with me, then, to Schleiermacher’s distinction between God and creation, or divine and creaturely causality. To understand the difference, he urges his interpreters to “observe more carefully the difference between a universal and an individual cause”:

For in the totality of finite being only a particular and partial causality is given to each individual, since each is dependent not on one other but on all the others; the universal causality attaches only to that on which the totality of this partial causality is itself dependent.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the universal cause is the Whence of the totality of all partial causality, while an individual cause is the whence of each particular and partial causality. That is, divine activity is different from creaturely activity insofar as divine activity regards the totality of all creaturely activity. Another way to put it is that God does not intend particular and partial activities *per se*, but always intends particular and partial activities only in relation to the whole. As such, divine causality is distinct from reciprocal activity insofar as divine causality is unconditioned.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> *CF*, 175.

<sup>40</sup> Another way of thinking about the difference between the universal and individual causes is in terms of necessity and contingency, where necessity relates to the “primary” cause, which is the divine determination of all things, and contingency relates to the relative condition of each individual “secondary” cause within the world. See Francis Turretin: “For God, who works all in all, so governs and rules second causes as not to take away their nature and condition....So it was necessary for Joseph to be sold by his

The *via causalitatis* Schleiermacher employs, then, is not a simple reading of the divine identity in activity from each individual effect in the world. That is, his method does not allow him to take individual events individually and ask theological questions about them regarding the divine identity. Doing so can have disastrous consequences, as when people claim that a tragedy has befallen an individual on the basis of her sinful actions. Schleiermacher rules out making such claims, as we have seen in the previous chapter's section on divine holiness and justice. Instead, his *via causalitatis* is correlated with the feeling of absolute dependence, which must be upheld by conceiving of the universe as a whole as the effect of the divine causality. To put these thoughts in the proper order: for Schleiermacher the divine causality grounds the feeling of absolute dependence, which in turn grounds his theological method as *via causalitatis*, through which he performs the descriptive and regulative task of theology as it pertains to God's relationship to the entirety of the created order. As he says, "It necessarily follows that the ground of our feeling of absolute dependence, i.e., the divine causality, extends as widely as the order of nature and the finite causality contained in it; consequently the divine causality is posited as equal in compass to finite causality."<sup>41</sup> Even so, the divine causality is different from finite causality in its universal scope and motivation. In this way, the effects of the divine causality are infinite while the divine decree is single. That

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brethren and to go down to Egypt because it had been so determined by God for the preservation of Jacob's family. Yet it was contingent with respect to the brothers of Joseph who might either have killed him or not have sold him. Therefore things which are absolutely and in every way necessary (both as to their futurity and as to the mode in which they are done and produced) differ from those which are of a hypothetical necessity from the divine ordination" (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. George Musgrave Giger, Ed., James Dennison, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1992], 500).

<sup>41</sup> *CF*, 201.

is to say, the divine activity extends to every causality in the universe, without being identical to finite causalities. Thus, the *via causalitatis* emphasizes two creaturely characteristics that are theologically illegitimate as applied to God: finite being, which is necessarily plural and compound, and reciprocal activity, which is reactive and thereby limited productivity.

To conclude, in this section I have described the relationship between apophasis and Schleiermacher's theological task and methodology. I have argued that for him apophasis is put to limited and purposeful use in his *Glaubenslehre*, as it circumscribes the arena within which kataphatic claims may be made. While reminding the reader that God is other than creation, apophasis still allows a genuine relation between God and creatures. In this way, Schleiermacher's use of apophasis serves to establish one condition for the possibility of redemption. Here, then, we can see that Schleiermacher uses apophasis, but not for the purposes of a primarily apophatic approach to theology.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the significant limiting function apophasis plays in Schleiermacher's theological task and method, the more apophatic attributes of God to be considered below also nuance the kataphatic attributes discussed in part two.

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<sup>42</sup> For example, in the theological anthropology of Pseudo-Dionysius as described in *The Mystical Theology* and *Divine Names*, which is admittedly a much smaller subset within apophatic theology in general, Charles Stang explains, "the process of un-selfing is figured as a stark clearing away that renders the self neither itself nor someone else." Charles Stang, "'Being Neither Oneself Nor Someone Else': The Apophatic Anthropology of Dionysius," in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative theology, Incarnation, and Relationality* (New York: Fordham University, 2010), 67. In contrast to an apophatic approach like this one that wants to clear away the distinction between self and other to enter into ekstatic union of divine and human, Schleiermacher uses apophasis in a limited way to effect just the opposite: a clear and abiding distinction between God and creatures.

### III. The Otherness of God: Apophasis Anticipates Kataphasis

In this section, I will describe the apophatic divine attributes that guard against finitude and reciprocity within a Christian doctrine of God, namely, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. By highlighting the apophatic divine attributes, I will be keen to show the ways that the kataphatic and apophatic elements in his doctrine of God complement and cohere with one another, rather than being at odds. Indeed, whereas Schleiermacher's conception of the task and method of theology highlights the way in which apophasis circumscribes kataphasis, his treatment of the otherness of God highlights how apophasis anticipates kataphasis. In this way, I will further emphasize the priority of kataphasis within Schleiermacher's thought. Doing so will fuel my argument against a feminist form of apophatic theology.

#### A. Eternity

Schleiermacher defines eternity negatively by contrasting it with temporality: "The idea of eternity does, of course, express a contrast to the causality contained in the natural order, but primarily only as far as this is conditioned by time."<sup>43</sup> That is, whereas natural causality is temporal, eternal causality is not.<sup>44</sup> "Eternal causality" is meant, then, to indicate that the divine activity is not conditioned by time. Moreover, eternal causality "conditions not only all that is temporal, but time itself as well."<sup>45</sup> As such, the divine causality "must so much the more be thought of as utterly timeless."<sup>46</sup> Because

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<sup>43</sup> *CF*, 202.

<sup>44</sup> *CF*, 201.

<sup>45</sup> *CF*, 203.

<sup>46</sup> *CF*, 204.

Schleiermacher understands eternity in contrast to temporality, divine timelessness may be explicated further by considering it in relation to that which is negated.

Schleiermacher conceives of time vis-à-vis three notions: reciprocity, externality, and change. Divine timelessness, or eternity, is therefore alternately described as unconditionality, inwardness, and changelessness. I will consider each of these ways of describing time and eternity, beginning with temporal reciprocity and eternal unconditionality. For Schleiermacher, reciprocity is essentially bound up with the temporal sequence of the finite world. That is, reciprocal action means having first one action and then another that corresponds to it. As such, each action has a bearing on those that may follow it, either performed by the same or other agents. As Schleiermacher puts it, objects in the universe are engaged in an “interrelationship of partial causality and possibility.”<sup>47</sup> Every finite object is dependent on others, being both partially determined by and determining other objects.<sup>48</sup> In this way, finite objects are always mutually conditioning and mutually conditioned by other objects. Even with regard to forces of nature, Schleiermacher states, “we ourselves do, in the same sense in which they influence us, exercise a counter-influence, however minute.”<sup>49</sup> As such, “our whole self-consciousness in relation to the World or its individual parts remains enclosed within these limits.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, the human being is always both conditioned by and conditioning the world; she is both passively receptive and spontaneously active. The world acts on her and she acts on the world.

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<sup>47</sup> *CF*, 201.

<sup>48</sup> *CF*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

God, on the other hand, is not characterized by such reciprocity. God is not conditioned, or acted upon, by finite objects. Rather, for Schleiermacher, God is absolutely unconditioned (*Unbedingte*), not being susceptible to any counter-influence. As Schleiermacher explains: “there is nothing in God for which a determining cause is to be posited outside God.”<sup>51</sup> God’s eternity considered in terms of unconditionality is, thus, an expression of the divine infinitude. As God is not conditioned by anything other than God, but all finite things are related in a web of interdependence, God is not finite: “For infinite does not really mean that which has no end, but that which is in contrast to the finite, i.e. to that which is co-determined by other things.”<sup>52</sup> Put positively, this means that God is purely active, or pure activity. As Schleiermacher says, “God’s existence can only be apprehended as pure activity,”<sup>53</sup> for, “in God there can be no distinction between essence and attributes.”<sup>54</sup> More specifically, as I have explained in chapter two, God is the pure activity of love. If divine love is to be *actus purus*, then it must be unconditioned, since conditioned actions require prior passivity. God’s love is not an active response to the created world. Rather, God’s love precedes creation and is unconditioned by it. This means that the entirety of the universe is the way that it is because of the unconditioned divine will. Schleiermacher explains,

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<sup>51</sup> *CF*, 219.

<sup>52</sup> *CF*, 231.

<sup>53</sup> *CF*, 387. Kevin Hector calls this feature of Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God his “actualism,” which we have already encountered in chapter one. By “actualism,” Hector means “something along the lines of George Hunsinger’s definition: actualism, he asserts, means thinking ‘primarily in terms of events and relationships rather than monadic or self-contained entities’” (Kevin Hector, *Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher*, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 [July 2006], 307-8). Cf. George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30.

<sup>54</sup> *CF*, 730.

Both the essence of things in their relations to each other and the order of reciprocal interaction between them...exist through God (in so far as they do exist) relatively to the redeeming revelation of God in Christ, by which the human spirit is developed to perfection. Everything in our world, that is to say—human nature in the first place and all other things in direct proportion to the closeness of their connexion with it—would have been disposed otherwise, and the entire course of human and natural events, therefore, would have been different, if the divine purpose had not been set on the union of the Divine Essence with human nature in the Person of Christ, and, as a result thereof, the union of the Divine Essence with the fellowship of believers through the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, if the *Glaubenslehre* is read backwards, we can see that everything within creation depends upon the divine good-pleasure, or the divine purpose of self-impartation in Christ and the Church. As the passage above shows, God does not act in response to activities within the world that are independent of God, to which God submits Godself passively.<sup>56</sup> Rather, the world is the way that it is in all its determinations because of the divine will, or the divine love, which is pure activity. This is simply another way of saying that “in relation to God no distinction between the potential and the actual can be allowed.”<sup>57</sup> There is no potentiality in the divine causality such that God could do one thing or another in response to worldly activities. Rather, all things are the way that they are because of the divine decree. To say that the divine decree is eternal, then, is to say that it is unconditioned. Put positively again, the first sense in which God is eternal is that God is purely active love.<sup>58</sup> It is true that Schleiermacher holds back this stronger claim in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*. What I want to do is show how he is laying the groundwork for that claim.

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<sup>55</sup> *CF*, 724.

<sup>56</sup> See also paragraph 46, postscript, p.175.

<sup>57</sup> *CF*, 219, 214.

<sup>58</sup> For more on the active nature of divine eternity and causality, see Bruce L. Boyer, “Schleiermacher on the Divine Causality,” *Religious Studies* 22/1 (1986), 113-123.

Consider a second feature of time, which illuminates the second aspect of Schleiermacher's notion of eternity. He associates time with material or external objects, since such objects may only exist at a particular time or times. In other words, no material object could exist without existing in at least one particular temporal moment. Since God is not a material object, however, "the temporal oppositions of before and after, older and younger disappear in coincidence when applied to God."<sup>59</sup> Schleiermacher puts this attribute positively by describing it as absolute inwardness: "If, that is, time and space everywhere represent externality, and we here always presuppose a something which, by extending itself in time and space, becomes an external object, in the same way the antithesis to time and space may be described as absolutely inward."<sup>60</sup> Just as God is not conditioned by the activity of finite objects but is *actus purus*, neither is God materially extended in space but is absolutely "inward."

Schleiermacher's word choice here is somewhat unfortunate, since "inwardness" may evoke in his reader's mind the notion that God is detached from the world and gazes on Godself in perpetuity. As I have shown in chapter two, however, Schleiermacher understands God as oriented toward the other, God's neighbor. Indeed, God's very essence is self-impartment, the will to be with and in neighbor. Thus, to avoid the misleading resonances of the term "inward," I find it more satisfactory to think of his denial of divine spatial and temporal extension as an embrace of God as "Spirit."<sup>61</sup> I will

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<sup>59</sup> *CF*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> *CF*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> By speaking of inwardness here, Schleiermacher is likely drawing on the Protestant Scholastic use of the phrase *opera Dei ad intra*, the internal activity of God. Muller describes the term: "In contrast to the *opera Dei ad extra*, the internal works of God are accomplished apart from any relation to externals and are, by definition, both eternal and immutable" (Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*:



describe Schleiermacher's understanding of God as Living Spirit in more detail below, within my discussion of God as non-personal. Here, simply note that for Schleiermacher the divine is not materially extended. Even so, the divine activity has the entire universe as its scope. To say that God is eternal, then, is to emphasize that God is not a material object, but the divine Spirit acts expansively on all material objects through time.

Finally, I turn to Schleiermacher's third description of time, to which he contrasts divine eternity. For him, time is not only understood in terms of mutual conditioning and spatial extension but also in terms of change. Thus, because divine causality is timeless, it is also unchanging. One way of putting Schleiermacher's train of thought in this regard is as follows. If a worldly object changes, it has either gained or lost at least one property. The object could not lose an essential property, for in doing so the object as such would cease to exist. In the same way, it could not gain an essential property, for then it would not have been "that object" in the first place. Thus, if the object changes while remaining an instance of the object it was in the beginning, then it either gains or loses an accidental property. For God, gaining or losing an essential property is as inconceivable as it is for a worldly object. Yet for God, unlike created objects, the gain or loss of an accidental property is also impossible because God has no accidental properties. All of God's attributes are essential. Yet to say "all of God's attributes" is rather imprecise, since God does not possess separate attributes. Rather, God is simple—every attribute is identical with every other attribute: "there is in His being no manifold of parts."<sup>62</sup> If that is the case, then it should be even clearer that there can be neither gain nor loss of divine

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*Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985], 211).

<sup>62</sup> *CF*, 206.

properties, for if one part were gained or lost, the entire divine being would be changed or cease to exist. Thus, to anticipate, given Schleiermacher's understanding of love as the one attribute that can be equated with the essence of God, the claim that God is eternal as opposed to temporal is to say that God is unceasing love.<sup>63</sup>

Eternity, therefore, safeguards divine causality from being confused with finitude. The eternal God is unconditioned, immaterial, and unchanging activity. When taken together with the kataphatic elements of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, the statement that God is eternal means that the divine Spirit freely and actively decrees to be in and with God's neighbor by uniting with human nature in the person of Christ and the Christian Church. What I mean to emphasize here is that divine eternity is not synonymous in Schleiermacher's thought with a flat and entirely negative description of God as "timeless." Rather, divine eternity refers to God in relation to the whole of time, insofar as God determines all that is temporal in accord with God's being—the divine decree of incarnate love. As such, divine eternity, though an apophatic aspect of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, elucidates further his understanding of God in relation to the world when the second part of the *Glaubenslehre* is read first. However, even if the *Glaubenslehre* is read in order, the apophatic aspects of the doctrine of God point the reader onward toward the kataphatic aspects of the same. It does so by complementing the negative aspects of divine eternity with kataphatic ones: God is pure activity, absolute

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<sup>63</sup> Overlaying the Aristotelian distinction of essence and (accidental) attribute is legitimate as a heuristic tool for describing Schleiermacher's notion of eternity insofar as such reasoning is found in the text itself, and is part of the reformed tradition Schleiermacher is drawing upon and advancing. As Muller explains the movement toward orthodoxy in Protestant Scholasticism, Aristotelian categories were routinely employed, including the doctrine of the divine essence and attributes. See especially Jerome Zanchi (1516-1590), discussed in Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 121.

Spirit, and simple. Here, we can see that part one describes the relationship between God and the world, whereas part two explicates the Christian consciousness of sin and grace via Christ and the Spirit.

In the first part of the *Glaubenslehre*, then, Schleiermacher is not saying that God is other than creation in the sense of an unknown and unknowable other, which can only be referenced negatively. Rather, when his masterwork is read forwards, apophatic claims are formally anticipatory of kataphatic claims and later are substantively overtaken by those claims regarding redemption. When it is read backwards, the apophatic in Schleiermacher's thought serves to deepen his kataphatic understanding of God. In brief, the eternality of God means that God is the pure activity that determines the universe apart from any influence from creation. The apophatic terms "unconditioned," "immaterial," and "unchanging" serve to deepen the Christian's understanding of the divine activity of love insofar as they emphasize the supralapsarian will of God to be in and with God's neighbor on account of the divine good-pleasure. God wills to be united with humanity not because humanity became sinful and the incarnation was the only means for God save it. Rather, it is God's intention to unite with humanity, simply because that is who God is, absolutely. By emphasizing divine eternity, Schleiermacher's readers are asked to consider the expansive gracious activity of God in relation to the universe.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> This is a feature of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God that seems particularly fruitful for feminist theology. Here the divine identity, rather than human sin, is the motive for the incarnation. This allows humanity, and particularly women, who have historically been blamed for human sin, to embody a spirit of true Christian joy in response to the divine identity, rather than to bear a sense of shame, guilt, and need of punishment for sin. Although, of course, according to Schleiermacher, humanity is responsible for its sinful actions and is corporately punished for sin, as I have described in chapter two, by placing the emphasis on

It is important to see here and in the sections that follow that Schleiermacher is making such claims on the basis of a transcendental argument that takes as its given the feeling of absolute dependence upon God. Eternity is one condition for the possibility of that feeling, which corresponds to the divine causality. If Schleiermacher's interpreters forget that correspondence, they will be likely to view the transcendental arguments employed in the first part of the *Glaubenslehre* as involved with ancient metaphysics regarding the Supreme being, in contrast to the *via causalitatis* that attends to the empirical world of revelation used in the second part. Instead of this contrast, I am suggesting that Schleiermacher uses transcendental argumentation as a supplementary procedure to the *via causalitatis*. More sharply, I am suggesting that the apophatic aspects of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God are meant to safeguard and deepen the doctrinal claims arrived at by means of the *via causalitatis*.

## **B. Omnipresence**

Schleiermacher has already introduced space as a corollary of time in his treatment of divine eternity. As such, I have already briefly mentioned God in relation to space as the unconditioned condition of space and all spatially extended things. The divine attribute of omnipresence brings this relation into the foreground. As Schleiermacher says, "By the omnipresence of God we understand the absolutely spaceless causality of God, which conditions not only all that is spatial, but space itself as

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the divine good-pleasure as the motivating force for the incarnation, humanity is both placed properly in relation to God, that is, not determining God's actions, and humanity is affectively oriented primarily toward joy rather than guilt and/or shame by rejoicing in the divine identity of pure love. Schleiermacher's construal of divine eternity is, then, an important resource for feminist doctrines of God. In addition, this underscores the way that eternity cannot be equated with God *in se*.

well.”<sup>65</sup> The spaceless divine causality can be examined in two ways, which are two sides of the same coin: the apophatic negation of divine absence and the kataphatic affirmation of divine presence.

The spaceless causality of God means that God is neither absent nor distant from creaturely affairs. Divine causality is characterized, rather, by “the negation of all remoteness.”<sup>66</sup> In contrast to finite causality, which has effects that are more or less distant from their cause, divine causality does not become “weakened by distance from its place of origin or central point.”<sup>67</sup> That is to say, divine causality is different from finite causality insofar as divine causality is always and everywhere powerful to the same degree within the universe. It is not as though, for instance, God creates powerfully in the beginning—setting the universe into motion—and then retreats into the bliss of the inner divine life. Neither does God create powerfully in the perfection of human nature in Christ and then leave the scene, so to speak, allowing the divine causality in Christ and in those to whom Christ communicates to dissipate through the further historical progression of the Church. Rather, as I have shown in chapter two, and as the divine eternity emphasizes, because the divine decree is single and unconditioned, it is actualized within time and space while never becoming distant from God’s intention to unite the divine essence with human nature. As such, no time or place is more distant from the divine causality: “the effects of his causal being-in-Himself are everywhere.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, “whenever a person either moves or is moved, he is drawn to a conscious

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<sup>65</sup> *CF*, 206.

<sup>66</sup> *CF*, 208.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *CF*, 209.

apprehension of the power of the Highest directly near to him in all finite causality.”<sup>69</sup> If in some places the presence of God is not conscious to humanity, “no distinction in the almighty presence of God is hereby posited, but only in the receptivity of the finite being to the causal activity of which the divine presence is related.”<sup>70</sup> That is to say, God is everywhere powerfully active, but finite beings vary in their receptivity to the divine activity. Put positively and in concert with Schleiermacher’s kataphatic claims, divine omnipresence indicates that God’s love, through the divine wisdom, is effective and active throughout the entirety of the spatially extended universe. As he puts it in *On the Glaubenslehre*, omnipresence makes itself manifest “in the activity of the divine spirit.”<sup>71</sup>

Since divine eternity and omnipresence are two ways of distinguishing God from the universe in its finitude as created, much of what could be said about divine omnipresence has already been treated above, in my discussion of divine eternity. The difference, we might say, is that divine eternity indicates the depth of God’s gracious love in the divine decree, while divine omnipresence indicates the breadth of the actualization of the decree within the whole of the universe. Whereas eternity signifies that the divine decree is entirely owing to the gracious activity of God alone, apart from any creaturely action, omnipresence signifies the multiplicity and diversity of the actualization of the divine gracious activity in the entire universe.

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<sup>69</sup> CF, 207.

<sup>70</sup> CF, 208.

<sup>71</sup> OG, 57.

### C. Omnipotence

Divine omnipotence is a way of summarizing what has already been affirmed in eternity and omnipresence, namely, God's relation to time and space. Here again, the focus in part one of Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* is on the relationship between God and the world, whereas in part two he turns to that relation as it is enacted in redemption explicitly. If we read the work backwards, his claims regarding divine omnipotence underscore the depth and breadth of the scope of the divine activity in creation and redemption, enacted within the nature system: "The entire system of Nature, comprehending all times and spaces, is founded upon divine causality."<sup>72</sup> In other words, omnipotence "puts the whole of finite being under the divine causality."<sup>73</sup> Clearly, Schleiermacher's use of the apophatic divine attributes is repetitive. He says with regard to omnipotence exactly what he said with regard to divine eternity and omnipresence, namely, that divine causality is unconditionally determinative for all of creation. By repeating himself in this way, once the *Glaubenslehre* has been read through, the first part is the emphatic performance of the claim that when it comes to the divine activity, it is the same loving decree all the way down, so to speak. By treating the divine omnipotence separately from eternity and omnipresence, Schleiermacher emphasizes the universal scope of the divine activity grounded purely on God's good-pleasure.

For him, divine omnipotence indicates that nothing exists that falls outside the scope of God's activity: "the divine causality is posited as equal in compass to finite

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<sup>72</sup> *CF*, 211.

<sup>73</sup> *CF*, 201.

causality.”<sup>74</sup> This means, first, that everything that God wills comes to be, and nothing that God does not will comes to be. That is, God is the Whence of everything in the universe. Moreover, everything that God wills is willed eternally, so that “there is never anything of any kind which can begin to be an object of the divine causality though previously—hence somehow independent of God and opposed to Him—in existence.”<sup>75</sup>

In brief, divine power is comprehensive and eternal. Second, divine omnipotence means that “the divine causality...is completely presented in the totality of finite being, and consequently everything for which there is a causality in God happens and becomes real.”<sup>76</sup> That is to say, finite causality is the actualization of the divine causality in total.

There is no remainder of divine causality. Schleiermacher makes this claim because for him there is no distinction in God between potential and actual, or “can” and “will.”<sup>77</sup>

This means that for Schleiermacher omnipotence is not God’s power to do anything, or to do anything logically possible. Rather, omnipotence indicates that the entire universe is what God wills, and there is no surplus on either side. There is nothing that exists outside of God’s will, and no aspect of God’s will remains unactualized.<sup>78</sup> In short, “the entire omnipotence is, undivided and unabbreviated, the omnipotence that does and effects all.”<sup>79</sup> Here, Schleiermacher is beating the Reformed drum of divine sovereignty and aiming to avoid Molinism with its “so-called mediate knowledge of God, by means of

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<sup>74</sup> *CF*, 201.

<sup>75</sup> *CF*, 212.

<sup>76</sup> *CF*, 211.

<sup>77</sup> We have seen this already in the divine wisdom.

<sup>78</sup> *CF*, 214.

<sup>79</sup> *CF*, 215. This is, as Gerrish puts it, “the way the devout mind perceives the natural order” (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 203).



which He would know just what would have resulted had something happened which did not happen.”<sup>80</sup> Instead of endorsing middle knowledge, Schleiermacher upholds the divine determination of everything real without deliberation.

Yet divine sovereignty does not replace or compete with human causal activity. Instead, the relationship between God, or universal causality, and the world, or individual causalities, is a harmonious one. Throughout Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*, divine and finite causality are always distinguished from one another.<sup>81</sup> Divine causality conditions time and space and all temporal and extended things, whereas finite causality is temporal and effective at a particular place.<sup>82</sup> Divine causality works on the whole, whereas finite causality affects only a part of the universe. Moreover, divine causality is unconditioned, while finite causality is conditioned. How, then, do divine and finite causality exist harmoniously? For Schleiermacher, “everything is and becomes altogether by means of the natural order, so that each takes place through all and all wholly through the divine omnipotence, so that all indivisibly exists through One.”<sup>83</sup> That is, although everything in

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<sup>80</sup> The focal point of divine sovereignty is, as I have shown in chapter two, the new creation that occurs in Christ. As he puts it in *On the Glaubenslehre*, “omnipotence makes itself manifest in the consciousness of the new spiritual creation” (*OG*, 57). For a treatment of middle knowledge in Protestant Scholasticism, see Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. George Musgrave Giger, Ed., James Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1992), 212-218.

<sup>81</sup> *CF*, 192.

<sup>82</sup> In this way, Schleiermacher is continuing Thomas Aquinas’ use of universal and particular causes, or primary and secondary causes. As Thomas says, “God’s immediate provision over everything does not exclude the action of secondary causes; which are the executors of His order” (I., q.22, a.3, ad.2). Yet, Schleiermacher, more explicitly than Thomas, shows that the distinction of causes is not that of fundamental and intermediary causes that operate on the same level, so to speak, but of universal and particular causes, which are different in quality and scope. The distinction of causes is still operative in Calvin, where he says, “although each one has by nature been endowed with its own property, yet it does not exercise its own power except in so far as it is directed by God’s ever-present hand” (*ICR*, I.xvi.2). While Calvin is most concerned to show that God “attends to the regulation of individual events,” Schleiermacher emphasizes that all individual events and finite causes are part of the whole system of nature, which is willed absolutely by God (*ICR*, I.xvi.4).

<sup>83</sup> *CF*, 212. Here Schleiermacher intones a Spinozist theme of “the One and the All.” See Julia Lamm’s *The*

the universe exists according to the natural order, within which divine activity does not “enter as a supplement (so to speak),” the natural order as a whole exists because of the divine causality.<sup>84</sup> In brief, finite causality depends on the universe as a whole, and God eternally determines the universe as a whole.<sup>85</sup> On Schleiermacher’s way of understanding the relation between God and the world, then, in the world there is neither a possibility that either natural causes or divine causality might be entirely absent, nor that they might be at odds.<sup>86</sup> Rather, divine causality is everywhere present in the world, and it is that on which finite causality depends. Thus, divine and finite causality are not on the same playing field. This makes using the word “cooperation” misleading. Yet, if we must use the term, then it is best to say that “God co-operates in every case with activities which are appropriate to the nature of the active thing, but only and always according to his own causality, which is entirely different from that which belongs to the sphere of reciprocal action.”<sup>87</sup> Gockel explains:

The absolute causality of God is at once principally different from and equal in scope with the relative causality of the world. Everything that exists is rooted not only in the unity of finite being as a whole but also in the divine omnipotence; it is both interdependent and absolutely dependent on God, and there is no rivalry between divine preservation and human agency.<sup>88</sup>

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*Living God: Schleiermacher’s Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State, 1996), 226.

<sup>84</sup> *CF*, 212.

<sup>85</sup> *CF*, 215.

<sup>86</sup> As he puts it: There is no “sphere, i.e., that of natural causes, in which finite and divine causation met, and alongside it two others, that of mechanical or rather apparent causation where only divine causality reigned and finite causality was absent, and that of free causality where only finite cause reigned and divine causality was absent” (*CF*, 191).

<sup>87</sup> *CF*, 192.

<sup>88</sup> Matthias Gockel, *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 99. So far from being an enemy to her theology, then, Schleiermacher is Kathryn Tanner’s ally in her quest for a non-competitive relation between God and the world. Not recognizing this, however, she cites Schleiermacher as an example of “a typically competitive understanding of the relation between God and world.” Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A*

Thus, Schleiermacher preserves human agency as distinct from and not competing with God's causality, because divine causality is the originating causality that creates and preserves the universe as a whole, within which relative causalities are exhibited.

Schleiermacher puts it as follows:

So with regard to every individual thing—the fact that it exists and that it exists in this way—we can say that God wills it conditionally, because everything is conditioned by something else. But that whereby something else is conditioned is itself conditioned by the divine will; indeed in such a way that the divine will upon which the conditioning rests, and the divine will upon which the conditioned rests is not different in each case, but one only and the same; it is the divine will embracing the whole framework of mutually conditioning finite being: and this naturally is the absolute will, because nothing conditions it. In this way everything individual would be willed by God conditionally, but the whole willed absolutely as a unity.<sup>89</sup>

In short, every finite object is conditioned by other finite objects, and God wills these objects' mutual conditioning within the whole that they compose. No individual thing is willed apart from the others. Rather, interdependence characterizes the state of all creaturely things.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, God absolutely wills the whole.

To summarize: Divine omnipotence is an affirmation that God acts eternally and everywhere as the sovereign creator. And, as we have already seen, “the content and final goal of God's eternal omnipotence is the redeeming love in Christ. ‘God is loving

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*Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 8. Gerrish sums it up: “God and nature are not, so to say, in competition in the religious consciousness, as though what is assigned to natural causality must inevitably be taken away from God. Divine causality and natural causality, though different in kind, are coextensive; they belong together” (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 204).

<sup>89</sup> *CF*, 216.

<sup>90</sup> See Katherine Sonderegger, “The Doctrine of Creation and the Task of Theology,” *Harvard Theological Review* 84/2 (1991): 185-203.

omnipotence or omnipotent love.”<sup>91</sup> Divine omnipotence is, then, an apophatic doctrine in the sense that it denies the reciprocity of divine causality and otherwise distinguishes it from finite causality. Divine omnipotence is not simply finite causality writ large. Yet it should also be clear that divine omnipotence is not only an apophatic doctrine. The doctrine’s apophatic elements are continuously complemented by kataphatic claims that say positively what divine omnipotence is. It is the expansive, sovereign power that determines everything in the universe. When the *Glaubenslehre* is read backwards, we can see that such universal determination is shaped by the divine good-pleasure to create and redeem through Christ.

#### **D. Omniscience**

For Schleiermacher, omniscience “well emphasizes the fact that omnipotence is not to be thought of as a ‘dead’ force.”<sup>92</sup> That is, divine causality is “living,” “vital,” or absolutely “spiritual.”<sup>93</sup> Schleiermacher thus claims that omniscience could be expressed just as adequately by using the phrase “Absolute Vitality.”<sup>94</sup> The vitality or spirituality of God is of fundamental importance, since “a lifeless and blind necessity would not really be something with which we could stand in relation.”<sup>95</sup> Here, “standing in relation to” is

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<sup>91</sup> Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 123.

<sup>92</sup> *CF*, 203. Divine omniscience goes hand in hand with omnipotence, and it is one of the most significant divine attributes for my purposes in chapter five. There, I will argue that Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God ought to be modified to affirm a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of personhood for God (which I will develop in chapter four), and that doing so is not entirely at odds with the doctrine of God already exhibited in the *Glaubenslehre*. Schleiermacher’s treatment of divine omniscience goes a long way toward establishing that claim.

<sup>93</sup> *CF*, 219.

<sup>94</sup> *CF*, 203.

<sup>95</sup> *CF*, 219.

clearly not to be understood merely as a spatial or causal relation. For instance, it may be said that an apple stands in relation to an orange by being set on the same table. Or, it may be said that a struck billiard ball stands in relation to the cue ball that struck it. In the context of Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*, on the other hand, "standing in relation to" is not identical to these kinds of relation, which could be construed as "dead" or "mechanical." For him, the relation of God to those within the world is one between "vital," or "living" relators. As Julia Lamm puts it, "To say that God is living is to say that divine causality is not 'blind' but acts with 'purpose' and that this divine causality is something with which we stand 'in relation' because there is communication, a divine 'self-presentation and impartation' (Gl. §168.1; CF 733)."<sup>96</sup> To put it more sharply, God is purposive in determining to love God's neighbor, and this is manifest in the Christian's "consciousness of divine grace and favor."<sup>97</sup>

And yet, as Gerrish explains, the attribution of Vital Spirit to God is not meant "to assert that God has a consciousness like ours."<sup>98</sup> Unlike human consciousness, which is characterized by the succession of thinking or knowing followed by willing (or vice versa, as the case may be), divine knowledge just is the divine will. God does not know anything apart from God's determination of it, since, as I have shown above, nothing exists apart from its divine determination. Moreover, the divine will just is the divine activity. That is, God does not choose from among a number of potentialities and then actualize them. Rather, as I have shown above, within God there is no distinction

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<sup>96</sup> Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State, 1996), 223.

<sup>97</sup> *OG*, 57.

<sup>98</sup> B.A. Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 162.

between the potential and the actual. God's knowledge of the world is, accordingly, God's creation of it.<sup>99</sup> Herein lies the coincidence of omniscience and omnipotence. Put concisely, "God knows all that is; and all that God knows is, and these two are not two-fold but single; for His knowledge and His almighty will are one and the same."<sup>100</sup> God's knowledge, then, is neither consequent upon the existence of objects within the universe, nor upon potentialities within God Godself. Indeed, there can be no potentialities within God, which would amount to "a mass of rejected thoughts" eternally in God.<sup>101</sup> God providentially governs the world of time and space in and through God's determinative knowledge of it. That is to say, God knows as God wills, and God wills as God is active, and God's activity is love. Such is Absolute, Vital Spirit.

In sum, God's omniscience emphasizes that the Whence on whom the universe depends for its existence is not a "dead" force but vital, purposive, knowing and willing Spirit. The world's existence and sustenance is a result of the unconditioned activity of divine love, wisely planned and carried out throughout time. Omniscience ensures, then, that God in God's omnipotence is One to which humanity can stand in vital relation. In

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<sup>99</sup> *CF*, 220.

<sup>100</sup> *CF*, 222. More fully explained, "the perfect knowledge of a thing's existence for itself is the same as the knowledge of the inner law of its development, and the perfect knowledge of a thing's place in the sphere of universal interaction is one with the knowledge of the influence of all other things on it. . . both these perfect kinds of knowledge form in God one and the same timeless knowledge, determining the existence of the object" (*CF*, 223). In yet other words, divine omniscience is divine decree: "The divine thinking is the same as the divine will, and omnipotence and omniscience are one and the same. And since in God there is no duality between thought and word... this precisely is the point expressed in all formulae which exhibit the divine Word as creating and preserving; and it is quite correct to say, as has been said in multifarious ways, that everything exists by reason of God's speaking or thinking it" (*CF*, 221).

<sup>101</sup> *CF*, 225.

this way, Schleiermacher's treatment of omniscience both distinguishes God from created knowers, and positively affirms the Absolute Spirituality of God.<sup>102</sup>

### **E. Non-Personal**

Recall that one of the tasks of dogmatic theology is to regulate doctrines, themselves descriptions of the beliefs of churches at given times and places. More specifically, "it has been from the beginning the business of Christian Dogmatics to regulate these representations, so that the anthropomorphic element, to be found more or less in all of them, and the sensuous which is mixed in with many, may be rendered as harmless as possible."<sup>103</sup> For Schleiermacher, personhood is inextricably bound up with the sensuous and anthropomorphic. As such, it is a representation that would be rendered meaningless in the attempt to render it harmless as a divine attribute.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Note that Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, though in many other ways critical of previous metaphysical and epistemological positions, here is quite in line with a fairly standard view, following Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>103</sup> *CF*, 194-5. My emphasis.

<sup>104</sup> Schleiermacher's ecclesiastical superior, Sack, was the first to engage with Schleiermacher on this point intensely, following the publication of the *Speeches*. He wrote, "I despise, disparage and condemn without reservation the (so-called) philosophy—execrable, in my view—that acknowledges at the summit of the universe no self-conscious, wise and good Being; that makes me the creature of an Omnipotence and Wisdom that is nowhere and everywhere; that would rob me of the exalted joy, the indestructible, sweet need to lift up my eyes in thanksgiving to a Benefactor; that in the midst of my suffering cruelly deprives me of the comfort that there is a Witness of my painful feelings and that I suffer under the rule of a Goodness mindful even of my own well-being" (Albert Blackwell, "The Antagonistic Correspondence between Sack and his Protégé Schleiermacher," *The Harvard Theological Review* 74/1 (1981), 107). Schleiermacher replied: "No religion evolves out of the concept of the personality of God; this concept is not the source of devotion; no one is conscious of the source of his own devotion in that concept; more likely, the concept distorts devotion" (*ibid.*, 107-8). What I wish to show in chapter four is not that Schleiermacher's system can and ought to be corrected by making the concept of personhood the basis for dogmatics, but to show that Schleiermacher, on his current system, ascribes to God important aspects of personhood, namely, intentionality, causal activity, relationality, and being irreducible to and not circumscribable by concepts and/or propositions. In this way, I wish to show that his system of doctrine could be corrected to avoid Sack's critique.

To see how, consider Schleiermacher's understanding of the terms "person" (*Person*), "personal" (*persönlichen*), and "personality" (*Persönlichkeit*), which are used synonymously in the *Glaubenslehre*. These terms are used interchangeably with yet other terms. First, he uses "person" and its derivatives interchangeably with "individual" (*Einzelne*) or "individuality."<sup>105</sup> As such, personhood is correlated with the human "organism" (*Organismus*), that is, the human body.<sup>106</sup> In this sense, persons are biological "individuals existing independently by themselves."<sup>107</sup> Secondly, Schleiermacher uses "person" and its derivatives synonymously with "subject" (*Subjekt*) or "ego" (*Ich*).<sup>108</sup> In this regard, personhood is that which gives someone psychological unity or the "unity of a natural life-story," i.e., that which makes someone the same someone over time.<sup>109</sup> Personhood is the inner ground of a human being or the "continuous unity of self-consciousness."<sup>110</sup> Finally, in other instances, personhood is integrally linked with reason and will, including especially the distinction between reason and will. Thus, for Schleiermacher, persons are finite entities with distinct rational and willing capabilities. They are distinguished from one another as particular subjects of different natural life-stories. Further, a person's self-consciousness depends on the physical entity connected to her psyche.

When personhood is understood this way, it is clear why Schleiermacher rejects it as an appropriate description of the divine. Given Schleiermacher's thoroughgoing

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<sup>105</sup> *CF*, 364, 365, 393. Most of the occurrences of "person" and its derivatives are found within the *Glaubenslehre* in the sections dealing with Christ's Person.

<sup>106</sup> *CF*, 384.

<sup>107</sup> *CF*, 399.

<sup>108</sup> *CF*, 391, 393.

<sup>109</sup> *CF*, 400, 413, 409, 393.

<sup>110</sup> *CF*, 573. See also *CF*, 709.



conviction that God's essence is pure activity, which is not outwardly "given" in any way, he rightly rejects divine personhood understood as biological individuality.

Likewise, since God is not externally extended, Schleiermacher also rejects the second understanding of personhood as an adequate description for God: God is not finite, and does not have a consciousness that is like human consciousness. As Schleiermacher explains,

And since this activity of the God-consciousness occurs in us only in connexion with our physical and bodily organism, if we would argue regressively from the likeness or image of God, as it is and has been described here, to God Himself, then we should have to accept one of two alternatives: either the whole world is related to God in the same way as our whole organism is related to the highest spiritual power in us, in which case it would be difficult to see how God could fail to be identical with the world; or else there is something in God which at least corresponds to our psychical organization, which is largely constituted by the so-called lower psychical forces; and in this way the idea of God would acquire a strong and really defiling admixture of humanity, and attributes would have to be ascribed to God which can mean nothing when taken as divine, or else attributes would have to be ascribed to men which could not be thought of as human.<sup>111</sup>

In addition to the claims Schleiermacher is making here about the difference between human and divine consciousness, notice his clear disavowal of pantheism. Likewise, in his 1821 "Explanations" within the revision to the *Speeches*, he says,

As it is so difficult to think of a personality as truly infinite and incapable of suffering, one should make a great distinction between a personal God and a living God. The latter concept alone offers a proper distinction from materialistic pantheism and from atheistic blind necessity.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *CF*, 252-3.

<sup>112</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (New York: Harper Torch books, 1958), 116. Although I generally avoid interpreting the *Glaubenslehre* through the *Reden*, because of the history of interpretation that has attended such a practice, I cite this passage because it is the only one (to my knowledge) where Schleiermacher makes a clear distinction between "personal" and "living," while stating his preference for the latter. Although the distinction and choice are most explicit here, they are implicit in the *Glaubenslehre*. This passage is significant not only because of the clear distinction made within it, but also as a counterweight to the praise of Spinoza in the 1799 *Speeches*.

Because consciousness in human persons is integrally bound up with the “bodily organism” and “the so-called lower psychological forces,” God cannot be said to have human-like consciousness. Finally, because of Schleiermacher’s maintenance of divine simplicity, by which the divine attributes are not really separate from one another but indicate the one divine essence, he denies that God is personal as understood on the third definition, which requires that persons have finite and distinct capacities of reason and will. Schleiermacher states clearly in a letter to Jacobi, opting for the latter:

If you form to yourself a living conception of a person, must not this person of necessity be finite? Can an infinite reason and an infinite will really be anything more than empty words...? And if you attempt to annul the distinction between reason and will, is not the conception of personality destroyed by the very attempt?<sup>113</sup>

Since God is not finite, and God’s reason and will are not distinct from one another, Schleiermacher maintains that it would simply be meaningless to claim that God is personal after one has made the appropriate caveats. For these reasons, he asserts that God is not adequately perceived as personal, conceived on the analogy of human persons. Given Schleiermacher’s understanding of human personhood and his concern to regulate

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<sup>113</sup> “Schleiermacher to Jacobi, 30 March 1918,” trans. Frederica Maclean Rowan, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), 2:283. Jacobi maintained the personhood of God in order to avoid deterministic Spinozism, which he thought included a denial of human free will (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 114). As Schleiermacher holds that one may coherently both believe in the closed nature-system and affirm relative freedom of the human will, Jacobi should not have understood Schleiermacher’s denial of divine personhood as tantamount to affirming Spinozism. Moreover, it should be noted that Jacobi’s reason for affirming a personal cause of the world is not the only or the most plausible one. A concern for freedom need not underlie the whole procedure. Rather, as I will argue in chapters four and five, Christ’s personhood may ground an affirmation of God’s personhood.

doctrines such that they avoid anthropomorphism, it should be clear why he rejects personhood as an appropriate divine attribute.<sup>114</sup>

It is worth reiterating at this point, however, that for Schleiermacher even if God is not personal, neither is God impersonal. For, as divine omniscience emphasizes, a “dead force” would not be something that one could stand in relation to. Rather, it is more precise to say that for Schleiermacher God is neither personal, nor impersonal, but non-personal. Put positively again, the non-personal divine essence is Living Spirit.<sup>115</sup> “Living,” here, is meant to highlight free causality, which is the ability to move oneself and other things from oneself. Schleiermacher explains,

Let us now attribute to ourselves free causality along with absolute dependence, and causality also to every living being as assuredly as we hold it to have being for itself; and let us see complete absence of freedom only where a thing does not move itself and moves other things only in so far as it is moved; in that case we should be able to regard the causality of living beings as simply a diminished freedom, and we should have to say that true causality only exists where there is life and the complete absence of freedom is also a complete absence of causality, since the impulse which sets the lifeless thing in motion so that it moves other things always comes itself from what is living.<sup>116</sup>

In this passage, Schleiermacher links livingness to freedom and causality. Where there is no free life, there can be no true causality. Here, “life” or “living” has to do with moving,

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<sup>114</sup> Even so, Schleiermacher did not disdain attributing personhood to God in liturgical settings. Albert Blackwell explains that from his 1821 revision to the *Speeches to the Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher’s approach was consistent with regard to divine personhood: “First, never to speak with disdain of belief in a personal God, but rather to honor expressions of such belief in their proper spheres of hymnody, worship, and immediate religious experience. “Have I indeed spoken with contempt of...belief in a personal God?” Schleiermacher writes to Sack: ‘Never, certainly. I have only said that religion does not depend upon whether or not in abstract thought a person attributes to the infinite, supersensual Cause of the world the predicate of personality. Second, Schleiermacher’s defense was to insist that in the sphere of theological discourse we more properly speak of God as living than as personal” (Albert Blackwell, “The Antagonistic Correspondence between Sack and his Protégé Schleiermacher,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 74/1 (1981), 110-11).

<sup>115</sup> See Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher’s Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State, 1996).

<sup>116</sup> *CF*, 191. My emphasis.

developing, or acting from within oneself rather than being moved by external forces.

Life is energy from within or spontaneous movement.

Yet such “spontaneous” movement is not random. Rather, “Living Spirit” brings to the forefront the character of the divine essence as motivated, that is, intentional or purposive. “Indeed,” as Schleiermacher explains, “an omnipotence, the *aim and motive* force of which I do not know, an omniscience, the structure and value of its contents I do not know, and an omnipresence, of which I do not know what it emits from itself and attracts to itself, are merely vague and barely living ideas.”<sup>117</sup> What is “living” here, includes the divine intention and purpose. God is living insofar as the divine activity is intentional, purposing and wisely planning to be in and with neighbor. To say that God is living, then, is to emphasize the free and gracious divine causality, which unconditionally engages with the world as love. Once again, an apophatic notion, namely, non-personhood, is complemented by a series of kataphatic claims, here regarding Living Spirit.

My concern in this chapter has been to show that Schleiermacher has a kataphatic edge to his thinking, even when he details the apophatic aspects of his doctrine of God wherein at points he can sound thoroughly apophatic. As instances of the latter, Schleiermacher states that God is timeless and conditions time itself, and that God is not externally extended and conditions space itself. Moreover, the divine causality is unconditioned and is not personal. God does not have a consciousness like human consciousness. In sum, God is not within the realm of opposition, antithesis, contrast,

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<sup>117</sup> *OG*, 57. My emphasis.

finitude, reciprocity, interdependence, partiality, time or space: God is not creaturely. All this sounds thoroughly negative. Yet as I have shown, these negations correspond to positive statements. God is, for Schleiermacher, the pure activity of living, vital Spirit, understood as simple and single elective decree. God is intentional and purposive, determining everything in the universe. The effects of God's activity are everywhere. God is the sovereign Creator-Redeemer, whose power produces and conforms the world to Godself. In short, when the *Glaubenslehre* is read backwards, it becomes clear that negative claims regarding the divine being and activity serve to deepen and nuance Schleiermacher's positive theological claims. In addition, his apophaticism anticipates his kataphaticism.

Despite Schleiermacher's careful and purposeful use of apophaticism in the service of his kataphaticism, however, in the next chapter I argue that by denying the personhood of God he has overstepped the requirements of his limited apophaticism. This is largely due to his understanding of personhood, which is too anthropocentrically conceived. Although Schleiermacher wants to avoid anthropomorphism in his doctrine of God, he has not likewise attempted to avoid anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism in his understanding of personhood. Given the importance of that term for Christology and Trinity, this is a misfortune. In the next chapter, I will develop a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of personhood, which may be used appropriately of God. Doing so, I will argue in chapter five, is a significant correction of some contemporary feminist theologies.

## **Part II**

In chapters one through three, I have primarily made a series of interpretive arguments. First, I have argued that despite Schleiermacher's rocky reception in Anglophone scholarship, he is beneficially read as a genuinely Reformed and reforming theologian who offers a theocentric and Christomorphic doctrine of God. Second, I have argued that reading the *Glaubenslehre* backwards offers a different perspective on Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, one that allows his readers to see his Christomorphic theocentrism while recognizing the extent to which his theology faithfully renders Christian faith anew within and for his particular context. Third, I have argued that although there is a *prima facie* tension between the first and second parts of the *Glaubenslehre*, the first emphasizing apophatic aspects of the doctrine of God and the second highlighting kataphatic aspects thereof, careful exposition of the doctrine of God contained in the first part of *Glaubenslehre* reveals Schleiermacher's purposeful and limited use of apophasis. Apophasis, I have argued, is used to deepen and anticipate the kataphasis that is clearly exhibited in the second part.

In the next two chapters, I move from a primarily interpretive posture to a primarily constructive one, grounded in Schleiermacher's texts along with feminist theory and theology. My aim in these chapters is threefold. First, I aim to show that although Schleiermacher denies that God is personal, he retains at least four aspects of human persons in his description of God, namely, activity, intentionality, relationality, and ineffability. By doing so, Schleiermacher opens a space for questioning whether, in his denial of divine personhood, his apophatic strictures might be too restrictive. Further,

we may ask whether we have at our disposal resources for constructing a notion of personhood that avoids the inappropriate anthropomorphism Schleiermacher was keen to avoid, thus allowing an appropriate naming of God as personal. I will argue for an affirmative response to the latter, developing just such a notion of personhood on the basis of Schleiermacher's Christology and recent feminist thought. My motivation for doing so is the conviction that understanding God as personal contributes to feminist aims. First, it provides a correction of the current turn to radical apophysis in feminist thought, keeping apophysis and kataphasis in a beneficially coherent and balanced relationship with one another. Second, conceiving of God as personal aids in facilitating the achievement of feminist practices like creating inclusive ecclesial communities. I will substantiate these claims regarding feminism in chapter five.

#### **Chapter Four: Human Personhood and Non-Anthropocentric, Non-Anthropomorphic Personhood**

As I have shown in chapter three, Schleiermacher uses the language of Living Spirit for the divine, eschewing the notion of divine personhood. Personhood is, for him, inextricably anthropomorphic. Specifically, persons are essentially related to physical bodies and limited psychic forces and possess finite reason and will, capacities that are temporally sequential and distinct from one another. In contrast, God is eternal, simple activity. Thus, Schleiermacher does not conceive of God as personal. The divine is better described, for him, as the absolutely active and intentional power of creation-redemption, or Living Spirit. Similar to the way that other apophatic aspects of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God function in the text, Schleiermacher's denial of divine personhood leads to a deepened affirmation of the Absolute, Living Spirituality of God.

Yet I will argue that the quiddity (or what-ness) of God as Living Spirit, as Schleiermacher describes it, retains at least four characteristics commonly attributed to human persons: activity or free causality, intentionality or purposiveness, relationality, and ineffability. Further, Schleiermacher's tentative uses of analogy in the *Glaubenslehre* are strikingly personal. Moreover, I will argue that Schleiermacher's understanding of personhood, though laudably integrative of the human body, is too anthropomorphically conceived. The irony here is palpable; Schleiermacher wants to avoid anthropomorphism, but his work has the effect of halting a non-anthropomorphic view of personhood. By recasting Schleiermacher's understanding of personhood in a less anthropomorphic way, I will argue that his readers could overcome his apophatic strictures with regard to the non-personal quiddity of God. In order to re-describe personhood in less



anthropomorphic ways, such that the notion may be used appropriately to describe the quiddity of God, I appropriate the work of a number of prominent feminist thinkers.

Doing so is important because, as I will argue in chapter five, it could facilitate the advancement of feminist theology and its practical aims. In addition, developing a non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of personhood further develops a valuable dialectic between apophasis and kataphasis in the doctrine of God set forth in the *Glaubenslehre*. That is, it allows the Christian to make positive and intelligible claims about what God is while at the same time recognizing the limits of what one can know and say about the divine.

A word of circumspection: From debates about abortion, to feminist religious ethics, to the advancement of social Trinitarianism, to the philosophical breakdown of the illusory ego or the subjective self, personhood has been variously described, deconstructed, and re-considered from the nineteenth century to the present day. In this chapter I do not untangle or seek to solve the many philosophical and theological webs of thought and problems associated with personhood. Neither do I define or describe personhood exhaustively. Indeed, since I take personhood to be marked by a degree of ineffability, and since I am sensitive to feminist and womanist arguments against homogenization and essentialism, an exhaustive definition is excluded at the outset.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I show the way that a particular understanding of personhood may provide an opening for more productive theological thought and discussion under the conditions of

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<sup>1</sup> I will explain what I mean by “ineffable” below. For now, suffice it to say that my discourse here is not influenced by the continental tradition’s emphases on singularity or uniqueness. That is, I will not define personhood primarily by singularity (absolute or relative).

modernity and post-modernity. Thus, what follows is not intended as a definitive statement to close the rich conversation that has been occurring recently in philosophical and theological circles, but as a tentative hypothesis that, as I argue in chapter five, would allow us to use the notion of personhood in a potentially fruitful way for advancing feminist doctrines of God.

In addition, let me state very clearly at the outset that I recognize that what follows could very well trouble moral theologians, since the term “person” has a fraught history in moral argumentation. Arguably, describing the term “personhood” in the way I am about to outline may create a number of moral problems. Although I recognize the legitimacy of these concerns, I am not here making a moral argument. In other words, I do not ascribe more or less value to entities solely on the basis of their personhood. Neither do I think moral decisions should be enacted with exclusive reference to an entity’s personhood.

The fact that the use of the term “personhood” requires these caveats might suggest I should look elsewhere for a less fraught term.<sup>2</sup> Yet I persist in using the term “personhood” because it has a rich history in Christian thought, from the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the early Church to feminist theological anthropology and ecclesiology. My hope is that by developing a description of personhood in the context of Schleiermacher’s work, I might shed new light on the main foci of Christian theology and assist in making it more systematically coherent. In addition, as I will show in this and

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<sup>2</sup> For a sustained discussion of why theologians ought to abandon “person,” used in particular ways he specifies, see David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, Vol. I (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 357-378.

the next chapter, for many feminist theologians, personhood—especially of women—is of particular interest. Thus, if a description of personhood could be developed in a relatively non-anthropocentric and non-anthropomorphic way, then it could speak to a firmer coherence in feminist thought between Trinitarian thought, Christology, theological anthropology, and thereby ecclesiology.

The current chapter seeks first to identify passages in the *Glaubenslehre* where Schleiermacher uses personal analogies for God. These, along with the personal characteristics Schleiermacher attributes to God as Living Spirit, will serve as warrant for exploring personhood with reference to his doctrine of God. Second, I will develop a description of human personhood with reference to Schleiermacher's Christology, and feminist, womanist, and philosophical texts. The idea is that if I am able to develop a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of human personhood, then it will be much easier to construct an even more circumspect but still intelligible and beneficial description of divine personhood. Chapter five will take up the latter task in conversation with recent feminist theologies.

## **I. Schleiermacher and Human Personhood**

In the previous chapter, I have shown that for Schleiermacher, human personhood requires a material psychical constitution, that is, a physical organism, and two of human persons' defining features *qua* persons are finite reason and will. As he says, "this activity of the God-consciousness occurs in us only in connexion with our physical and

bodily organism.”<sup>3</sup> Further, he asks, “If you form to yourself a living conception of a person, must not this person of necessity be finite? Can an infinite reason and an infinite will really be anything more than empty words...?”<sup>4</sup> Schleiermacher’s insistence that human personhood, including finite reason and will, requires a material body is to his credit. Although Schleiermacher should be applauded for integrating the body into his understanding of human persons, however, he conceives of personhood too narrowly, that is, too anthropocentrically. By that I mean that he tethers his view of personhood to human persons, whereas it is possible to look at personhood more expansively. I intend to modify Schleiermacher’s understanding of personhood on the basis of contemporary thinkers’ work on that topic in a way that coheres with his claim that God’s quiddity is characterized by intentional, relational, limitedly ineffable, activity. As such, I will argue that attributing personhood to God is a way forward, both in advancing Schleiermacher’s thought and feminist doctrines of God.

### **A. Personal Analogies in Schleiermacher’s Doctrine of God**

Before I turn directly to a constructive description of personhood, however, I want to lay some groundwork for the argument that if Schleiermacher’s understanding of personhood is modified in the ways I will describe below, his system of doctrine would be amenable to its inclusion. I do so by considering four of the instances in which he tentatively develops analogies to describe God in the *Glaubenslehre*. In these passages,

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<sup>3</sup> *CF*, 252.

<sup>4</sup> “Schleiermacher to Jacobi, 30 March 1818,” *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols., trans. Frederica Rowan (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), 2:283.

the analogies point toward personhood. These analogies are important because Schleiermacher uses them to explain such significant notions as divine eternity, activity, knowledge, and the guidance or rule of the Spirit. By taking stock of these analogies, I will show that even though Schleiermacher explicitly renounces the use of “personhood” for the divine quiddity, on occasion he deploys the idea to illustrate key aspects of his doctrine of God. I will take each one of the analogies in turn.

### ***1. Das Ich and Divine Eternity***

The first developed analogy Schleiermacher uses in the *Glaubenslehre* when considering the doctrine of God is between the human “I” and divine eternity. Just as the “I” persists in its identity despite the changing character of its will, so does God persist in God's identity despite the temporal character of the fulfillment of the divine will. Schleiermacher explains,

But in so far as finite being produces time-series with their content, thus remaining the same and identical with itself (as, e.g., the Ego, [*das Ich*] as the enduring ground of all changing spiritual states, especially of resolves [*Entschlüsse*], each of which again as a moment of the Ego produces a concrete time-series), then, as the enduring causal ground relatively to the changing caused, it [divine activity] is posited as timeless. And with some such kind of analogy [*mit einem solchen analogischen*] we must rest content.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the personal “I,” which persists as the unity of self-consciousness despite changes in a person's will, is analogous to the timeless divine activity, which persists as the causal ground of divine activity despite changes in that which is caused. We must be content with this analogy presumably because it indicates the edge of understanding

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<sup>5</sup> *CF*, 206.

divine eternity beyond which we cannot tread non-speculatively.

## ***2. The Artist and Divine Activity***

A second analogy is between a human artist and divine activity. Schleiermacher finds this standard Romantic trope useful because to his mind both the human artist and the divine are beyond the antithesis of the free and the necessary, of possibility and actuality. The following passage is situated within a discussion of God's alleged middle knowledge. Middle knowledge, recall, is knowledge of counterfactuals, that is, "what would have resulted had something happened which did not happen."<sup>6</sup> Such middle or mediate knowledge "rests altogether upon the assumption of a possible outside the real, which we have already put aside."<sup>7</sup> That is to say, not only is the distinction between possibility and actuality rejected on the basis of God's pure activity, which can admit of no potentiality, it is also rejected because if it were accepted then "there is in God eternally and imperishably a mass of rejected thoughts."<sup>8</sup> Such rejected thoughts presuppose deliberation in God, "a view which from of old every form of teaching in any degree consistent has repudiated."<sup>9</sup> "Hence," Schleiermacher continues, "it would have been far safer, if one does start from what is human, to transfer to God, illimited and perfect, the certainty of the perfect artist [*Künstlers*], who in a state of inspired discovery thinks of nothing else, to whom nothing else offers itself, save what he actually

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<sup>6</sup> CF, 224.

<sup>7</sup> CF, 224-5.

<sup>8</sup> CF, 225.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Schleiermacher cites John of Damascus.

produces.”<sup>10</sup> Here God is like the artist who creates with singleness of mind, freely creating what she must create on account of who she is as an artist. The creative act is free because it is done in accord with her character. Yet it is necessary because she could not have had it, nor would she have wanted to have it, any other way. Thus, there is no possible creation for the artist that is not actual. Although this is, surely, an odd view of the perfect artist, only the actual creation that the artist has made was possible, according to Schleiermacher. In a similar fashion, God wills what is in accord with the divine character and operates with such singleness of mind, so to speak, that divine deliberation followed by a choice of one possibility among others is theologically unthinkable. Notice here that the distinction between reason and will, which Schleiermacher argues is necessarily bound up with a description of human personhood in his letter to Jacobi cited above, is overcome here even with reference to a human person—the perfect artist.<sup>11</sup> This is one fissure in Schleiermacher’s thinking that might suggest that even he, at points, can overcome his apophatic strictures regarding the personhood of God. That is, he might be able to loosen his grasp on human personhood in order to conceive of personhood more capaciously.

### ***3. The Human Knower and Divine Foreknowledge***

Third, Schleiermacher uses human foreknowledge, which one person might have in an intimate relationship either with oneself or another person, to explain the

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<sup>10</sup> *CF*, 225.

<sup>11</sup> “Schleiermacher to Jacobi, 30 March 1918,” *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols., trans. Frederica Rowan (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), 2:283.

coexistence of human freedom and divine foreknowledge. As he puts it,

We deem those people least free who cannot in general know their actions beforehand, i.e., those who are not conscious of any definite course of action....In the same way we estimate the intimacy of relationship between two persons by the foreknowledge one has of the actions of the other, without supposing that in either case the one or the other's freedom has thereby been endangered. So even divine foreknowledge cannot endanger freedom.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, for Schleiermacher divine foreknowledge coexists with human freedom just as human foreknowledge coexists with human freedom. As persons seem freer the more foreknowledge of their own actions they possess, and as human freedom does not seem to be compromised on account of others' foreknowledge of a person's future choices, just so does divine knowledge of human action coexist with human and divine freedom.

#### ***4. Human Discernment and Divine Spirit***

Finally, Schleiermacher offers a fourth analogy, this time between human discernment and the divine Spirit. He uses this analogy to explain how the canonical books have become normative through the activity of God's Spirit. He says, "in discriminating, therefore, we can hardly use any analogy but this, that we should conceive of the Spirit as ruling and guiding in the thought-world of the whole Christian body just as each individual does in his own."<sup>13</sup> More specifically,

Every man knows how to distinguish his own noteworthy thoughts, and how so to preserve them that he can count on bringing them up later in his mind: the rest he puts aside partly for later elaboration; others he simply disregards and leaves it a matter merely of accident whether they ever again present themselves to his mind

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<sup>12</sup> *CF*, 228.

<sup>13</sup> *CF*, 602.



or not. Indeed, he may occasionally reject some of his ideas entirely, either just when they occur or later. Similarly, the faithful preservation of the apostolic writings is the work of the Spirit of God acknowledging His own products; He distinguishes what is to remain unchangeable from what has in many respects undergone transformation in the later development of Christian doctrine.<sup>14</sup>

Here the Spirit of God is conceived as analogous to the discerning human person who distinguishes, regulates, and preserves her own thoughts. While God does not have God's own "rejected ideas," as we have seen in Schleiermacher's discussion of Molinism or middle knowledge, here the analogy is meant to show that God regulates the essential (unchanging) from the accidental (changing) features of Christian doctrine.

To sum up: Schleiermacher employs four analogies for various aspects of the divine activity in the *Glaubenslehre*. Divine eternity is analogous to a human "I." Divine activity finds its analogy with a perfect human artist. Divine knowledge is analogous to a human knower. Finally, the divine Spirit is analogous to a person who wisely discerns, regulates, and preserves her thoughts. If it be acknowledged that human personhood is usually associated with the "I," one's character, knowing, and discerning, then it may likewise be acknowledged that these analogies point toward human personhood as a legitimate way to think about the divine—on Schleiermacher's own word. In these four cases, Schleiermacher uses analogies that point toward human personhood to explain his understanding of God.

These passages, along with the personal characteristics Schleiermacher attributes to God as seen in the last chapter, lay the groundwork for considering the possibility that if a less anthropocentric and anthropomorphic understanding of personhood were

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<sup>14</sup> CF, 602.

conceived, Schleiermacher's system may be favorably disposed to using such an understanding to describe the quiddity of God. I turn now to the work of constructing a relatively non-anthropocentric and non-anthropomorphic description of personhood, and I begin with human personhood. Though that prospect at this point no doubt sounds quite paradoxical, I will make myself clear by the end of this chapter. In short, I will argue that Schleiermacher considers personhood in an inappropriately limited way. That is, he takes the following cluster of terms to be synonymous: "human being," "human person," "human," and "person," along with the various synonyms Schleiermacher uses for person, previously considered (i.e. individual, subject, ego). I will argue, on the contrary, that personhood may be conceived in a relatively non-anthropocentric and non-anthropomorphic way by distinguishing between these terms, such that "person" and "human person" are not interchangeable with the terms "human" and "human being," respectively. If these distinctions are made, and personhood is uncoupled from its other synonyms in Schleiermacher's usage, then personhood may be relatively unlinked from its essential connection to humanity. As such, it may then be appropriate to name the divine quiddity as personal without committing oneself to undue anthropomorphism.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Barth makes a similar move when he distinguishes the three "persons" from "personalities." As he says, "'Person' as used in the Church doctrine of the Trinity bears no direct relation to personality. The meaning of the doctrine is not, then, that there are three personalities in God. This would be the worst and most extreme expression of tritheism, against which we must be on guard at this stage. The doctrine of the personality of God is, of course, connected with that of the Trinity to the extent that, in a way yet to be shown, the Trinitarian repetitions of the knowledge of the lordship of God radically prevent the divine He, or rather Thou, from becoming in any respect an It. But in it we are speaking not of three divine I's, but thrice of the one divine I" (Karl Barth, *CD I/1*, 351).

It is important to note that some degree of anthropomorphization is part of the nature of theology. That is, one cannot say anything about God apart from human categories, concepts, and language. Schleiermacher, too, recognized this fact. As Gerrish explains, "Unfortunately, right down to the present day one will find it said of him, without qualification, that he wanted to eliminate anthropomorphism, that is, speaking as though God were the 'Somebody Up There.' In actual fact, he admitted to Sack, without

## **B. Re-describing Human Personhood in Light of Christ**

To begin, I will consider four marks of human personhood in light of Schleiermacher's Christology. Specifically, I will describe human personhood with consistent reference to Schleiermacher's criterion for including or excluding particular statements about Christ in a distinctively Christian system of doctrine. That criterion, recall, is that Christian claims must conceptually allow Christ to be the Redeemer of humanity. Schleiermacher identifies four heresies that the Christian theologian ought to avoid, namely, the Nazarean, Manichean, Pelagian, and Docetic. According to these four heresies as Schleiermacher describes them, "either human nature will be so defined that a redemption in the strict sense cannot be accomplished, or the Redeemer will be defined in such a way that He cannot accomplish redemption."<sup>16</sup> Although linking Schleiermacher's limits for Christological discourse to human personhood is admittedly an indirect way to proceed, it is appropriate for at least two reasons. First, Schleiermacher takes Christ's person to be definitive for human persons in general, as I have shown with frequent reference to the Christomorphism of the single divine decree in chapter two. Second, setting a limited and distinctively Christian context for considering theological anthropology demonstrates and allows for theological intelligibility.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, by using Schleiermacher's description of the person of Christ to set the context for considering

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some anthropomorphism nothing in religion could ever be put into words" (B.A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001 (originally published by Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 63).

<sup>16</sup> *CF*, 98.

<sup>17</sup> By theological intelligibility, I mean to indicate that there is a discernible reason or set of guidelines for making the theological claims to follow.

human personhood, I seek to mitigate the argument that all analogies that proceed from the human to the divine should not be used on account of the divine ineffability. By beginning with the person of Christ, I begin with divine revelation, that is, the image of God. As such, my argument for an analogy between human and divine persons is grounded in divine self-revelation rather than human speculation. I will return to this important point below.<sup>18</sup>

Let me begin my discussion of a re-description of human personhood in light of Christology by saying a word about “heresy” as Schleiermacher uses the term, since it is a troubling word for many. Schleiermacher indicates that the word “heretical,” in the realm of Christian doctrine, is the name “for that which he [i.e., an individual] cannot explain from his idea of the distinctive essence of Christianity, and cannot conceive as accordant therewith, but which nevertheless gives itself out as Christian and seeks to be regarded as such by others.”<sup>19</sup> Because people have different understandings of the essence of Christianity, what counts as “heretical” will be various for different thinkers. Schleiermacher explains, “This makes the determination of what is heretical, and must therefore be excluded from the system of doctrine, appear a very uncertain thing, and people will all fix it differently who start from different formulae of the distinctive

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<sup>18</sup> In other words, I affirm with the later Barth: “We do not need to engage in a free-ranging investigation to seek out and construct who and what God truly is, and who and what man truly is, but only to read the truth about both where it resides, namely, in the fullness of their togetherness, their covenant which proclaims itself in Jesus Christ” (Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960], 47). The same move can also be seen in the passage from Kathryn Tanner, below. Thus, the following charge is not appropriately aimed at my work: “They invariably turn attention away from the concrete reality of Jesus as the true *imago dei* by focusing on some conceptual abstraction that can be subject to theological analysis without any necessary reference to the particular features of Jesus’ life as it was lived ‘under Pontius Pilate’” (Ian McFarland, *The Divine Image: Envisioning the Invisible God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 60).

<sup>19</sup> *CF*, 96.

essence of Christianity.”<sup>20</sup> As such, in the course of the development of Christian doctrine, he continues, “many things have been too hastily declared heretical,” within which “the religious affections themselves are not diseased, and only misunderstanding or false method produces an appearance of heresy.”<sup>21</sup> Because of such hasty declarations of heresy, Schleiermacher approaches what counts as “heresy” anew. He states,

We cannot hold by the antithesis of Catholic and heretical as it presented itself in history down to a certain point, especially as subsequent revindications of this or that heresy have not been unheard-of. We must rather start from the essence of Christianity, and seek to construe the heretical in its manifold forms by asking how many different ways the essence of Christianity can be contradicted and the appearance of Christianity yet remain.<sup>22</sup>

This passage indicates that Schleiermacher does not begin from historical judgments regarding the heretical or ecclesial nature of a theological statement. Rather, he begins from his criterion for inclusion in a system of doctrine, which is based on his understanding of the essence of Christianity, namely, “that in it all religious emotions [*alle frommen Erregungen*] are related to the redemption wrought by Jesus of Nazareth.”<sup>23</sup> When Schleiermacher speaks of the Nazarean, Docetic, Manichean and Pelagian heresies, then, he uses the terms as useful identifiers insofar as they indicate something that contradicts what he understands to be the essence of Christianity while maintaining the appearance of Christianity. This being his *modus operandi*, it may well turn out that, for instance, “Pelagius himself should not be a Pelagian in our sense.”<sup>24</sup> As such, the four heresies to follow are meant not to identify historical people or arguments

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *CF*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> *CF*, 97.

<sup>23</sup> *CF*, 98.

<sup>24</sup> *CF*, 97.

presented in historical texts, but are “universal forms” that are intended to remind Schleiermacher’s readers of the essence of Christianity and derivations from it.<sup>25</sup>

The redemption of human persons by Christ is the dogmatic criterion embedded in the essence of Christianity. As such, the first step of my argument in this chapter is to describe four characteristics of human personhood, which are conditions for the possibility of human persons’ redemption by Christ: 1) causal activity grounded in *eros*, which arises out of a disposition of receptivity, 2) materiality, 3) differentiated relationality, and 4) limitedly ineffable, discerning attention. Taken together, these characteristics do not constitute an exhaustive definition of human personhood. Rather, I am considering them as important markers, among others, of human personhood. In this way, I am following Judith Butler’s understanding of the constitution of universal concepts. She describes that formation as an open-ended process of constitution and reconstitution. In treating concepts this way, here specifically human personhood, I retain and hold out the opportunity for those who have been excluded by previous understandings of the concept to reconstitute it more inclusively. As such, though re-describing human personhood is an important task, my discussion is intended to leave room for “unknowingness”: “unknowingness about what [the universal] is and what it might include in a future not fully determined in advance.”<sup>26</sup> All this is to say that I am not in the following discussion attempting to pin down human personhood or tidy it up. Rather, I intend to describe human personhood in light of Schleiermacher’s criterion for dogmatic theology, while leaving room for development and correction. The second step

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 191.

of the argument in this chapter is to distinguish human personhood from personhood considered more capaciously. This step is needed in order to provide a description of personhood that is relatively non-anthropocentric and non-anthropomorphic.

Given the constraints of this chapter, I will not attempt to offer a full-blown argument aimed at entirely convincing readers of my understanding of human personhood or personhood considered more capaciously. The figures I draw on in this chapter have written book- and/or article-length essays, and I entreat the reader to follow up with these authors' own works for convincing arguments regarding the aspects of their theological anthropology that I draw upon. What I do here is draw together some of their insights such that a significant account of human personhood may be entertained within the space of this chapter. I do this for the purpose of evaluating and suggesting a correction of Schleiermacher's construal of God as non-personal in the *Glaubenslehre*. I begin with Schleiermacher's Christological framework and then draw upon feminist authors to develop each mark of human personhood.

### ***1. Causal Activity Grounded in Eros and a Receptive Disposition***

According to Schleiermacher, the Nazarean or Ebionite heresy is that in which "the likeness of the Redeemer to those who are to be redeemed is made so unlimited that no room is left for a distinctive superiority as a constituent of His being."<sup>27</sup> This unlimited likeness would lead to positing in Christ "a need of redemption, however

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<sup>27</sup> CF, 99.

absolutely small, and the fundamental relationship is likewise essentially annulled.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, the Nazarean understands Christ as unconditionally the same as all other human beings with regard to their human nature. If Christ and humanity are absolutely the same with regard to their human nature, however, since redemption includes an effect on human nature, then Christ could not redeem humanity but would stand in need of redemption along with the rest of humanity.

Recall that for Schleiermacher the dissimilarity between Christ and other human persons is the perfection of his God-consciousness. As I explained in chapter two, the Redeemer “is like all men in virtue of the identity of human nature, but distinguished from them all by the constant potency of His God-consciousness [*die stetige Kräftigkeit seines Gottesbewußtseins*], which was a veritable existence of God in Him [*ein eigentliches Sein Gottes in ihm*].”<sup>29</sup> The existence of God in Christ allows him specially to reveal, or communicate, the divine activity and identity. In Christ, we have the perfection of human nature and the communication of the divine identity. The difference between Christ and other human beings is, therefore, Christ’s perfect God-consciousness and other humans’ inconsistent God-consciousness. In other words, while both Christ and other humans share the same human nature, Christ’s human nature is complete while the rest of humanity’s nature remains incomplete. For Schleiermacher, Christ retains this distinctive superiority as a constituent of his being. However, after human persons have come under the influence of and been transformed by Christ into new persons, the difference between them and Christ, with reference to their human personhood, is one of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> *CF*, 385.



degree. Christ's distinction thereafter is that he is the "first-born of many" children of God, and it is Christ's and no other Spirit that is at work in the Christian community.<sup>30</sup>

Setting my discussion of human personhood in the context of the Nazarean heresy serves to highlight the openness of human personhood to divine creative activity—both the openness of Christ to God's activity and the openness of human persons to God's activity in Christ's activity. In this way, a disposition of receptivity to the loving other is, I am claiming, a mark of human personhood. To put it in more specific terms, in order to receive the redemption wrought by God in Christ by the transformation of human nature, human persons must be open to receiving the communication of Christ's person. That is, they must listen to Christ's self-proclamation and have the capacity for personal transformation. In these ways, it is a condition of the possibility for redemption through Christ that human persons have a disposition of receptivity to the loving other.

Such a disposition of receptivity involves a basic orientation toward the good. That is, at the heart of human persons' disposition of receptivity, there is a desire to be with another, who in her existence is fundamentally good. The human person's desire to be with another, that is, her orientation to the good, is a reiteration of the divine evaluation of creation. Thus, human persons act on the basis of their receptive orientation to, that is, their desire to be with, others. The disposition of receptivity I am describing here applies both to the human person's desire to be with other creatures and to be with God. Kathryn Tanner explains it this way, drawing out the relation with God:

Certain human qualities or capacities that make up the created nature of humans and that therefore image God in the weakest sense must provide the opening for

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 8:29.

the divine image to become their own, present within them, in a way that reforms their humanity according to and in strong imitation of itself. Gregory of Nyssa makes the general point well: 'If...man comes to his birth upon these conditions, namely to be a partaker of the good things of God, necessarily he is framed of such a kind as to be adapted to the participation of such a good.' ...human nature must be characterized by an expansive openness that allows for the presence of God within it.<sup>31</sup>

I want to draw the reader's attention to two things in this passage. First, Tanner is here performing a kind of transcendental deduction like the one I am espousing, whereby theologians identify conditions for the possibility of human persons' redemption, that is, conditions for redemptively being conformed to the image of Christ. Second, Tanner is arguing with Gregory of Nyssa that human beings, and I would specify by saying "human persons," are characterized by openness to the divine activity. Janet Martin Soskice likewise emphasizes such an openness and directedness to the good: "Orientation to the good is not an optional aspect of human being that may be engaged in or abstained from at will, but a condition of our being 'selves with an identity.' All of us are directed by our loves and desires."<sup>32</sup> Eros, the desire to be with another, directs the activity of human persons. Such activity and the "loves and desires" of the human person must be examined, to be sure. What I want to highlight here is that these "loves and desires" that are established on the basis of an orientation to the good, or a disposition of receptivity to the loving other, are together a mark of human persons. That is, a disposition of receptivity in concert with eros is part of what marks human persons as human persons.

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<sup>31</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37.

<sup>32</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 7-8.

Desires, in turn, motivate intentional causal activity. Specifically, intentionality connects desire with causal activity, which attempts to apprehend an object. Soskice offers the following example: “The dog leaps at the piece of meat both because it desires meat and because it sees the object before it as meat. The Aristotelian account with its focus on desire restores the importance of intentionality.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, one engages in intentional causal activity on the basis of desire. Indeed, the eros that lies at the root of a disposition of receptivity propels one outward in intentional causal activity. One’s activity is directed toward the other. In this way, intentional causal activity not only arises out of a disposition of receptivity in relation to the other, but may also be an intentional activity of love toward the other. As Grace Jantzen describes Hannah Arendt’s formulation, the love of the world is a “deliberate choice: in Arendt’s terms, ‘*Amo: Volo ut sis*—I love you: I will that you be’ (Arendt).”<sup>34</sup> Thus, as I am construing a first mark of human persons, intentional causal activities will that another exist in relation to oneself. In addition, these activities are grounded in eros, which arise out of a disposition of receptivity.

To summarize: I am arguing here that human persons are marked by a disposition of receptivity, which includes orientation to the good, both the good that others are in their created existence and the good one wishes for and enacts on behalf of and with others. Causal activity is grounded in eros as both a receptive disposition and active intentionality directed toward the other.

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<sup>33</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 28.

<sup>34</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 152.

This mark of personhood, as I have described it, identifies a cluster of similarities between human persons and the person of Christ, but it does not make the “likeness of the Redeemer to those who are to be redeemed...so unlimited that no room is left for a distinctive superiority as a constituent of His being.”<sup>35</sup> For although both the Redeemer and the redeemed share an orientation to the good through a disposition of receptivity, which motivates human activities in the world, the Redeemer perfectly apprehends and communicates divine love. As I have shown in chapters two and three, God wills and acts almighty love because of a desire for the abundant existence of the other in relation to Godself. Although the redeemed are consistently being transformed into the image of Christ who perfectly communicates divine love, Christ alone retains his superiority as distinct from all those who have not yet come into the sphere of his influence, and as the first-born among many.<sup>36</sup>

## ***2. Materiality***

Schleiermacher defines Manicheanism as supposing “an Evil-in-itself as being original and opposed to God, and think[ing] of human nature as suffering from that inability by reason of a dominion which this original Evil exercises over it.”<sup>37</sup>

Manicheanism is, on this account, a fundamentally dualistic perspective wherein pure

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<sup>35</sup> *CF*, 99.

<sup>36</sup> Schleiermacher inspires this account insofar as I have used his conception of love, emphasis on receptivity, and attention to desire, in its construction. Indeed, I think he could without hesitation accept this formulation. Yet I do not go further because I am also using contemporary resources that he did not have the benefit of using, and because I am doing so in a context with which he was not familiar. To avoid anachronism, then, I claim only Schleiermacherian inspiration. Schleiermacher’s account of Nazareanism highlights, for me, the importance of human persons’ receptivity to, desire for, intentionality toward, and activity with or on behalf of others.

<sup>37</sup> *CF*, 98.

evil exists in opposition to God. This pure evil, furthermore, has dominion over some portion of humanity, which accounts for that portion of humanity's inability to receive and be transformed by Christ's redeeming person and work. That is, the dominion of evil-in-itself rules out humanity's redemption by Christ. As such, Schleiermacher rejects Manicheanism. Yet because he is only concerned with the essential idea of Manicheanism rather than its historical forms, he rejects Manicheanism without discussing the specific source of, or the manifestation of, evil-in-itself within human nature.

On one understanding of Christianity, however, which has historical roots in some forms of Christian thought, human materiality is the cause of the dominion that evil exerts over human persons. Schleiermacher himself, much to his credit, does not conflate the duality of pure evil and God, on the one hand, with the duality of the human body and soul or spirit, on the other. Yet I wish to highlight the link between these two dualities that exists in many people's minds in order to explicitly oppose that conflation. In contrast to Schleiermacher's stated method for treating the heresies, then, I want to highlight the historical manifestations of the Manichean heresy for two reasons. First, the historical form has been influential in some understandings of Christianity, and second, doing so allows me to build on my account of human personhood described in the section above, exploring here the conditions for the possibility of human persons' eros-driven causal activity. For these reasons, then, I entreat the reader to indulge my movement beyond Schleiermacher's account of Manicheanism.

Manicheanism, as we now know it, has come down to us primarily from Augustine of Hippo's arguments against it. He argues against the view that evil is correlated with human materiality. In his anti-Manichean writings, he makes a number of key claims: God is good, God only creates good substances, God is the only god, and only gods can create substances. Thus, everything that exists has been created by God and is good insofar as it exists. As Augustine states, "The highest good, than which there is none higher, is God," and "from nothing God made all things very good."<sup>38</sup> Further, "there is no life of any sort that does not belong—by the very fact that it is life and insofar as it is life at all—to the highest source and principle of life. And we can confess that this is nothing other than the sovereign, one, and true God."<sup>39</sup> Augustine repeats this refrain over and over again in his anti-Manichean writings: "God is the highest good, and the things that he made are all good, though they are not as good as he who made them is."<sup>40</sup> And again, he states, "every nature is good insofar as it is a nature."<sup>41</sup> By repeating this refrain, Augustine is writing against the Manichean dualistic doctrine that there are two kinds of substances, namely, good (spirit) and evil (body). According to the Manichees, God has only created the spirit. An evil force has created the body. Augustine explains, the Manichees "are disturbed by the wickedness of the spirit and the mortality of the body and, for this reason, try to introduce another nature of the evil spirit and the mortal body, which God has not made."<sup>42</sup> That is just to say, the Manichees associate the

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<sup>38</sup> Augustine, "The Nature of the Good," in *The Manichean Debate I/19*, ed., Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2006), 325. Augustine, "Answer to Secundinus, a Manichean," *ibid.*, 366.

<sup>39</sup> "The Two Souls," *ibid.*, 117.

<sup>40</sup> "The Catholic Way of Life and the Manichaean Way of Life," *ibid.*, 71.

<sup>41</sup> "Answer to the Letter of Mani Known as The Foundation," *ibid.*, 260.

<sup>42</sup> "The Nature of the Good," *ibid.*, 325.

physical, mortal body with evil. According to Augustine, on the other hand, materiality is not the source of evil in the world but is itself good. Furthermore, I might add, materiality is the condition for the possibility of good actions being carried out in the world by human persons. As Jantzen puts it, “the freedom of natality [being born of a woman] is not the putative freedom of a disembodied mind, a mind made as free as possible from bodily shackles, as Plato would have it, but rather a freedom that emerges from and takes place within bodily existence.”<sup>43</sup> Apart from their material bodies, human persons cannot exist or act in the world.

Despite Augustine’s arguments against Manicheanism, however, many throughout the history of Christianity have continued to advance a version of it within the Church through their vilification of human materiality. In the course of doing so, in order to uphold the goodness of human beings, they have identified the human person with an immaterial soul rather than the material body. As Sarah Coakley explains, according to writers from *The Cloud of Unknowing* to the later Descartes, “the self is the soul, and not the body.”<sup>44</sup> By claiming that the human person, or self, is the immaterial soul and not the material body, these authors claim that human persons are or can be good while at the same time blaming the human body (and those associated with the body) for human faults. In this way, they retain the appearance of Christianity, we might say, while advancing its contradiction.

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<sup>43</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 145.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 81.

In contrast, a number of theologians and philosophers, including Schleiermacher, have been keen to argue that human personhood is integrally linked and intertwined with material human bodies. As Schleiermacher put it, with regard to the God-consciousness of human persons, the “activity of the God-consciousness occurs in us only in connexion with our physical and bodily organism.”<sup>45</sup> That is to say, a human person cannot be the locus of the activity of the God-consciousness if she does not have a physical body. Even further, I would argue that where there exists a human person, the person and the human organism are ontologically identical.<sup>46</sup> In other words, when one points at a human person, one does not point at two things—the person, and the person’s human body—but only one thing, namely, the human bodily person. As Trenton Merricks puts it,

I think that when you look in a mirror, or down at your hands, you can actually see yourself. And when you hold your child, you do exactly that—hold the child himself or herself—and not some stand-in. These claims imply that we are not souls of the sort imagined by substance dualists. For, obviously enough, souls could be neither seen nor held. These claims also imply that human persons are neither mental states nor akin to software.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, “you,” the person or self that you are, do not stand in ontological distinction to your human brain or your material body considered more generally. Rather, human persons are always ontologically identical to human bodies. That is to say, human persons are not ontologically separate or separable things from human bodies. Wherever human persons exist, they exist as material beings.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *CF*, 252.

<sup>46</sup> I am using “ontological” to mean “being-wise” or “considered with regard to a thing’s being.”

<sup>47</sup> Trenton Merricks, *Objects and Persons* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 85. For a similar view in a theological register, see David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, vol.1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 378-385.

<sup>48</sup> The claim that one may conceive of a non-corporeal person does not prove that human persons are beings of such a nature. Rather, it shows that non-corporeal persons are logically possible. For that matter, a 50-



Note carefully that this is not to say that wherever human beings exist, they are human persons. I will discuss my denial of that claim in detail in the section below on personhood as a phase-sortal. Here, I am only claiming that if a human person exists, she exists as a material being. Thus, at the same time as I would argue for the ontological identity of human persons with human bodies, I would argue against the view that human persons are conceptually identical with human bodies. Indeed, the very fact that it is intelligible to say that “human persons are ontologically identical with human bodies,” means that a conceptual distinction between them is possible. This is not a very complicated or unusual thing to do. We often conceptually consider one ontological entity in many ways. For example, we consider an apple as a fruit or a colored object or an orb or an organic substance. Considering the apple in these various ways, however, does not make the apple four different things, ontologically speaking. The apple is one thing and it is considered in multiple ways. Likewise, I am claiming that a human person may be considered in multiple ways. For example, she may be considered as a self-conscious subject, as a body, as a learner, as a family member, and so on. Yet such multiple considerations do not change the ontological oneness of the thing. As Jantzen puts it, “A person transcends her body not because there is a ‘part’ of her that is not bodily (and which could perhaps survive bodily death), but because more things can rightly be said of her than are reducible to statements about her physical composition.”<sup>49</sup>

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foot tall woman, flying unicorns, and talking dinosaurs are also logically possible. The fact that a thing is logically possible does not mean that we have good reason for thinking it is actually possible or actual. In my view, affirming the ontological identity of a human person and a human body coheres with the significance of the resurrection of the body and the goodness of finite created beings. A full defense of my view is outside the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>49</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana

That is just to say, we can consider human persons in multiple ways, which cannot all be reduced to claims about matter. Nonetheless, as Tanner explains, “Human materiality is essential, moreover, to the image of God so as to take the whole of existence, irrespective of any division between spirit and matter, to God.”<sup>50</sup> That is, if God is the creator, redeemer, and perfecter of all things, from whom all things begin and with respect to whom all things have their end, then human persons, made in God’s image as revealed in Christ, are essentially material beings.

This excursus into a denial of Manicheanism, as transmitted by Augustine’s arguments against it, has admittedly taken a course Schleiermacher does not take in his *Glaubenslehre*. Yet it is congruent with his understanding that materiality does not stand in the way of redemption but is its very means in Christ and in the Church that was established by him. As he says, “self-communicating piety is as old as the self-propagating human race.”<sup>51</sup> Materiality is the medium in which redemption occurs, where redemption is both material and yet not reducible to matter. In this way, matter is not a prison or impediment from which human persons must be freed in salvation, but is an integral part of the actualization of the divine creative-redemptive decree.

So far, I have shown that in opposition to the Nazarean heresy, Schleiermacher affirms an essential difference between Christ and other human persons. Christ has a “distinctive superiority as a constituent of His being,” namely, the constant potency of his God-consciousness.<sup>52</sup> Yet this affirmation does not annul the communication of Christ’s

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University, 1999), 271.

<sup>50</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (New York: Cambridge, 2010), 52.

<sup>51</sup> *CF*, 252.

<sup>52</sup> *CF*, 99.

person to other persons. Rather, just as Christ is perfectly open to and communicative of the divine, human persons can also receive redemption through Christ because of their disposition of receptivity to others. Human persons are oriented outward to the other, and this outward orientation and eros grounds their intentional loving causal activity. Second, in opposition to the Manichean heresy, Schleiermacher denies the existence of an evil-in-itself that stands in opposition to God and dominates human nature. In contrast to Augustine's account of Manicheanism and views that link evil with matter, I have described human persons as always material. With Schleiermacher, I view the materiality of human persons as that in and through which creation-redemption occurs. Materiality is a condition for the possibility of human persons' existence and receptivity to Christ.

### ***3. Differentiated Relationality***

Whereas in Manicheanism humanity cannot receive redemption because it is under the dominion of an Evil-in-itself, in Pelagianism humanity is so open to receiving redemption that it is not in need of one Redeemer but can glean its redemption from different sources along the way of life. As Schleiermacher explains, Pelagians assume "the ability to receive redemption...so absolutely" that

any hindrance to the entry of the God-consciousness becomes so utterly infinitesimal, that at each particular moment in each individual it can be satisfactorily counterbalanced by an infinitesimal overweight. Then the need of redemption is reduced to zero, at least in the sense that it is no longer the need of one single Redeemer.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *CF*, 98.

In other words, for the Pelagian as Schleiermacher describes her, hindrances to the development of piety are of no real consequence. Human persons who live within the manifold of existence may absorb redemptive activities from any number of those they encounter. Indeed, human persons do not need one single Redeemer, but are like sponges soaking up redemption all along the way of human existence and relationality.

Schleiermacher rejects the Pelagian view, arguing instead that one person is the locus of God's redemption of humanity—Jesus of Nazareth. He makes this claim because only on the condition of one redeemer may the unified feeling of absolute dependence exist as it does in Christians. This is something of a tautology, since the Christian feeling of absolute dependence just is the feeling of absolute dependence upon God in the Redeemer. For Schleiermacher the decisive point is that actual Christians have the sense that they and the universe as a whole are absolutely dependent upon the one God who is decisively en-fleshed in Jesus of Nazareth. Because the Redeemer is at the center of the Christian feeling of absolute dependence, then, all three descriptions tend toward oneness: one redeemer, one feeling of absolute dependence, one God. Schleiermacher denies Pelagianism, as he understands it, because it does not require a single redeemer, thereby fragmenting the Christian's sense of the unified divine activity in creation-redemption. In other words, he rejects Pelagianism because it contradicts the essence of Christianity: that every religious affection be related to redemption through Jesus of Nazareth. That is to say, for Schleiermacher, the essence of Christianity has been identified on the basis of the faith of actual Christian communities, not strictly on the basis of a penchant for oneness. To say that the feeling of absolute dependence steers

Schleiermacher toward oneness is to say that he is faithful to the essence of Christianity as he finds it on the ground, so to speak. There is but one person who shapes the feeling of absolute dependence considered in relation to the individual, the Christian community, the universe, and God: Christ Jesus.

Schleiermacher's treatment of Pelagianism offers a clue about human persons by highlighting two poles within human personhood with respect to relationality—that of openness and of boundedness. Openness to others is highlighted by the fact that Christians are attuned to God through the Redeemer within the Christian community and the world, which corresponds in its manifold diversity to the scope to the divine activity. Yet boundedness is also highlighted by the anti-Pelagian recognition that the Christian consciousness of the relation between God and the human person is shaped by the one Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth. Such openness and boundedness may contribute to a description of human persons in which they are intimately related to others and yet are not entirely fragmented, being pulled into so many directions that they lose a sense of themselves as distinct from others. Rather, human persons are unified to varying degrees and can distinguish themselves from others. Indeed, human persons' sense of being redeemed by the Redeemer requires that they at least be distinguished from the Redeemer. Thus, both openness and boundedness, or permeability and difference, need to be affirmed if one is to maintain an understanding of human personhood that is truly relational. For without maintaining difference or distinction, there can be no relation between two beings. In academic theology, striking a balance between openness and boundedness is a needful task. In particular, the latter especially needs affirming, since

many post-modern authors have worked to dismantle the unity of the subject, as a reaction to what is perhaps a caricatured Enlightenment conception of an autonomous individual ego, to such a degree that it is unclear whether a differentiated—that is, open and bounded—person may any longer exist.

Even so, I begin with differentiated relationality in its first pole, as openness to and interdependence on others. Judith Butler is one of many who have taken up the project of describing human persons in terms of relationality. In *Undoing Gender*, she argues that human personhood is an ecstatic (*ek-static*) experience. Being a human person is being constituted, formed and maintained by others. It is being “implicated in lives that are not our own.”<sup>54</sup> Both on very localized and ever wider communal levels, Butler explains, “we who are relational do not stand apart from those relations and cannot think of ourselves outside of the decentering effects that relationality entails.”<sup>55</sup> She focuses on conversation between persons as a way that they are done and undone. In short, “if saying is a form of doing, and part of what is getting done is the self, then conversation is a mode of doing something together and becoming otherwise; something will be accomplished in the course of this exchange, but no one will know what or who is being made until it is done.”<sup>56</sup> For Butler, then, human beings are constituted and re-constituted in somewhat unpredictable ways by those they encounter and with whom they interact.

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<sup>54</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 22.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

Janet Martin Soskice also highlights the relationality of human persons in terms of speech between them, and draws on Schleiermacher's work in his *Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers* to do so.<sup>57</sup> She says,

Schleiermacher never identifies the 'flesh of Adam's flesh' as woman. His point is not that man needs woman (a position that Karl Barth slips into), but that to be fully human, even to praise God, we need others who are different from ourselves. Were Adam alone in the garden, he would not only be unable to reproduce, he would not speak, for speech is pre-eminently social possession. And without speech there would be no praise, no prayer, no 'world.' We become ourselves through being with others. They conceive and give birth to us, teach us to speak and to write.<sup>58</sup>

In the course of Soskice's extended argument, she also cites Martin Buber, who says, "The essence of man is found neither in the individual nor in the collectivity, but only in the reality of mutual relations 'between man and man'."<sup>59</sup> Soskice joins Gilya Gerda Schmidt's estimation of Buber's relation to Schleiermacher when she says, "It seems to me likely that Barth, Bonhoeffer, and Martin Buber, who all discuss that reciprocity, the 'I' and the 'Thou', implied in the narrative, may all owe their analysis to Schleiermacher,

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<sup>57</sup> See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. R. Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), 119-20: "As long as the first man was alone with himself and nature, the deity did indeed rule over him; it addressed the man in various ways, but he did not understand it, for he did not answer it...the sense for the world did not open within him....Since the deity recognized that his world would be nothing so long as man was alone, it created for him a partner, and now, for the first time, the world rose before his eyes. In the flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone he discovered humanity, and inhumanity the world; from this moment on he became capable of hearing the voice of the deity and of answering it..."

<sup>58</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 50.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. Buber was, in fact, an admirer of Schleiermacher. Gerda Schmidt argues that what "lastingly attracted Buber to Schleiermacher was precisely the simple pietist who was weaned on Herrnhut humility" (Gilya Gerda Schmidt, "German Romanticism and Friedrich Schleiermacher in Relation to Martin Buber's Idea of Jewish Renewal," *Schleiermacher on Workings of the Knowing Mind: New Translations, Resources, and Understandings*, ed., Ruth Drucilla Richardson [New York: Edwin Mellen, 1998], 213). Indeed, "Schleiermacher himself was Buber's model of a human being who had descended to the depths of the mothers, who was not afraid to speak his mind to the cultured despisers of religion on the disparity between what was and what should be, and who took an active role in defining the personality ethics of his contemporaries. Buber saw himself as a Schleiermacher-type figure for the twentieth-century Jewry" (*ibid.*, 220).

an acknowledged influence on all three.”<sup>60</sup> Leaving aside this genealogy, however, the important point for my purposes is to note the significance of relationality in these authors’ texts for describing human persons. They are joined by Grace Jantzen, who puts it more concretely:

The idea that one could flourish by oneself alone can get no purchase. ... As we have seen in the discussion of natality, every child is brought into the world in relation to people, and it is only through nurturing and care that it can survive and thrive. It is within a nexus of relationships that we develop into personhood, learning to laugh and play and speak and think.<sup>61</sup>

Like Butler and Soskice, Jantzen argues that “instead of a fixed identity which the subject simply has/is, subjectivity is something that is achieved not once for all, but in fragile and fluctuating fragments.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, as Soskice explains, “It is by being at the disposal of another that we are characteristically drawn out of ourselves (*ecstasis*) and come to understand ourselves fully as selves.”<sup>63</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, who draws on John Zizioulas’s work, joins these figures in claiming, “A person is thus not an individual but an open and ecstatic reality, referred to others for his or her existence.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, human persons are drawn out by and achieved in relation to other persons.

Even so, those who claim that human persons are solely or exclusively constituted by relations or relationality go too far by not sufficiently recognizing the appropriate boundedness of human persons. As Coakley explains, accounts of human personhood as

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<sup>60</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 50, footnote 24.

<sup>61</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 164.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>63</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 25.

<sup>64</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper One, 1991), 260.



constituted only by relationality are “well meaning, but arguably finally incoherent.”<sup>65</sup>

She cites Harriet A. Harris, who “points out the oddity of this kind of appeal: ‘We cannot jump from recognizing the relationality involved in being a person to affirming that persons are [strictly] relational entities.’”<sup>66</sup> Within the context of interdependence upon others, then, it is important to recognize each human person’s limited autonomy and distinction or differentiation from others.

Butler calls this having oneself as one’s own, individuation, and self-persistence.<sup>67</sup> For, as she explains, “if my doing is dependent on what is done to me or, rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an ‘I’ depends upon my being able to do something with what is done to me.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, differentiation must always accompany interdependence in the forging of selves.<sup>69</sup> As Marilyn Friedman similarly argues,

Each [autonomous] competency must always be understood as presupposing some particular range of conditions under which an agent is able to exercise that competency. People can do things only so long as the necessary enabling conditions are present and the possible disabling conditions are absent. ... [Autonomous persons] are products of socialization by other selves into communities of interacting selves within which they are differentiated as distinct persons.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 123.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. Coakley cites Colin Gunton, Alistair McFadyen, and Elaine Graham as examples of this type of thinking. See Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 1991) 83-99. Alistair McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990). A response is given in Harriet A. Harris, “Should we Say that Personhood is Relational?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 (1998), 214-34.

<sup>67</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 20, 32.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>69</sup> For a sustained discussion of the ways in which dependence and dependency work ought to be recognized within society, see Eva Feder Kittay’s *Love’s Labor: Essays on Women, Equality and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>70</sup> Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 14-15.

Thus, coexistent with the recognition of the relationality inherent to human personhood, it is important to recognize that human persons are not solely constituted by relationality but are differentiated as well.

Schleiermacher would likely agree. In addition to the text from the *Reden* that Soskice quotes above, he says in the *Glaubenslehre*, “In self-consciousness there are only two elements: the one expresses the existence of the subject for itself, the other its co-existence with an Other. Now to these two elements, as they exist together in the temporal self-consciousness, correspond in the subject its Receptivity and its (spontaneous) Activity.”<sup>71</sup> Schleiermacher explains further:

The common element in all those determinations of self-consciousness which predominantly express a receptivity affected from some outside quarter is the feeling of Dependence. On the other hand, the common element in all those determinations which predominantly express spontaneous movement and activity is the feeling of Freedom.<sup>72</sup>

Our self-consciousness, as a consciousness of our existence in the world or of our co-existence with the world, is a series in which the feeling of freedom and the feeling of dependence are divided. But neither an absolute feeling of dependence, i.e., without any feeling of freedom in relation to the co-determinant, nor an absolute feeling of freedom, i.e., without any feeling of dependence in relation to the co-determinant, is to be found in this whole realm.<sup>73</sup>

In relation to the universe, then, human persons in their self-consciousness include both receptivity and activity, both dependence and freedom, and neither of these can be absolute. According to Katherine M. Faull, for Schleiermacher “the self is sure enough of its own boundaries to be able to give and take but at the same time not be obliterated.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *CF*, 13.

<sup>72</sup> *CF*, 13-14.

<sup>73</sup> *CF*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Katherine M. Faull, “Schleiermacher—A Feminist? Or, How to Read Gender Inflected Theology,” in

The human person, on my terminology, interacts with the world and is in many respects constituted by its relations with others. Yet at the same time, she retains her ability to determinately influence the world, and in this spontaneous activity she retains a sense of being free from exclusive determination or constitution by others. As Schleiermacher says, “when one has freedom one is also a person and vice versa.”<sup>75</sup> Personhood requires not only relationality in the sense of openness to others, but also differentiation, which allows genuine interaction with others.

Even in the wake of current postmodern critiques of Enlightenment understandings of the self, it is important to maintain human persons’ limited freedom, individuality, sense of being an “I,” and autonomy. In addition to avoiding the incoherency of the view that denies such limited autonomy, maintaining limited freedom upholds the proper boundaries between persons that many feminists have been working to maintain. Serene Jones in *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*, for example, argues for an understanding of the human person that includes proper boundedness of the self, which allows autonomy and becoming one’s self.

Explaining Luce Irigaray’s work in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Jones says,

[Irigaray] provocatively depicts ‘woman’ as needing to be enveloped in a structure of identity that enables autonomy and thereby contests the fragmenting relationality that Western discourse has imposed upon her. As she poetically describes it, ‘woman’ needs to ‘adorn’ herself in garments of her own desires

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*Schleiermacher and Feminism: Sources, Evaluations, and Responses*, ed. Iain G. Nichol. Schleiermacher Studies and Translations, Vol. 12 (Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 31.

<sup>75</sup> *DE*, 63. That is to say, “just as the life of any particular thing rests on its being involved in at least a material process of self-development, so too the personal existence or individual spiritual life, viewed as elevated above the non-conscious lower life of plants as well as above the already conscious higher life of animals, does not then rest on spiritual changes happening to the individual being but rather on the fact that these changes are emerging out of oneself and on the fact that one is involved in such a process of self-development” (*DE*, 62-63).

rather than wear the clothes of men's desires. She needs to 'become herself.' Irigaray also suggests that God plays a role in this adornment, as the one who authors the space of her becoming.<sup>76</sup>

Irigaray then adds an equally vivid account of woman's need to remain connected to the world. Rather than allow her to rest secure but isolated in her envelope, Irigaray sends woman on a journey toward 'the other'—much like an envelope traveling through the mail toward its destination. The purpose of woman's envelopment is not simply to enclose her in her own desires but to give her sufficient definition to meet and be met by 'others' in a play of 'wonder.' We experience wonder when we encounter someone truly different and differentiated from us, and we embrace this other with an openness that is made possible because of our adorned differences. This double ethic of envelopment and wonder becomes, for Irigaray, a normative description of 'essences' worthy of woman's embodiment. It describes the space in which she flourishes—a space of bounded openness.<sup>77</sup>

Jones goes on to use Irigaray's understanding of bounded openness to describe a vision of "essential personhood," that allows a woman to "feel empowered to move through the world with a coherent sense of herself as an embodied agent committed to living in just relation to others."<sup>78</sup> Jones summarizes her own text:

In short, this woman is both the destabilized subject of constructivism and the reconstituted agent of feminist essentialism. She is the woman whose identity feels the pull of two dramatic forces: she is continuously undone and remade, disarticulated and redeployed; she is radically relational yet centered and directed.<sup>79</sup>

Jones here demonstrates how the view of human personhood I am advancing is congruent with feminists' particular concern for women's flourishing.

Yet whereas Irigaray and Jones hold openness and boundedness together with regard to constructed and essential womanhood, I would argue for a thoroughly

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<sup>76</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 42-3.

<sup>77</sup> *CF*, 43.

<sup>78</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 60.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

constructivist understanding of gender and an essentialist understanding of human persons. That is, by maintaining both openness and boundedness in the context of Schleiermacher's anti-Pelagianism, we may describe human persons, on the one hand, as having a capacious receptivity to others within the universe. On the other hand, we may maintain that differentiation or boundedness is actualized, in part, by the gracious divine activity in the one Redeemer who determines and is determined by the single divine decree. In addition, boundedness is actualized in the faithful reception of the divine activity as is evidenced by the absolute feeling of dependence upon God in Christ.

To summarize once more: Schleiermacher's anti-Nazareanism may be used to highlight a human person's basic disposition of receptivity. His anti-Manicheanism allows a focus on the human person's material constitution, and his anti-Pelagianism admits an emphasis on her relational being and context. Schleiermacher's anti-Docetism, which I describe below, allows me to underline a mark of human personhood that is unique to human persons in contrast to other receptive, material, relational beings, namely, their discerning attention and circumscribed ineffability.

#### ***4. Discerning Attention and Circumscribed Ineffability***

As Schleiermacher describes it, Docetism makes "the difference between Christ and those who are in need of redemption...so unlimited that an essential likeness is incompatible with it," making redemption also "only an appearance."<sup>80</sup> In other words, Docetism posits that Christ and humans are essentially dissimilar, thus disallowing

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<sup>80</sup> *CF*, 99.

Christ's benefits to be communicated to humanity. As I have shown above, Schleiermacher understands such communication to occur through the self-proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth, which is witnessed to in and through the ecclesial community. Faith comes through hearing and encountering Christ in such Christian witnesses. Thus, the words and lived testimony of these witnesses allow "our God-consciousness" to be "derived from His."<sup>81</sup> Indeed, "Christians have their complete consciousness of God only as it is produced in them through Christ."<sup>82</sup> Yet this production depends upon the condition that Christ's consciousness of God is communicable, which depends, in turn, on his similarity with Christians as a human person. For if Christ were not a full human person, his benefits could not be communicated to and produced within Christians. The specific similarity Christ shares with other human persons that I want to highlight here—in addition to his causal activity arising out of a receptive disposition that orients him toward the good of others, his materiality, and his differentiated relationality—is a specific form of relational activity and receptivity, namely, his discerning attention and circumscribed ineffability.

By "discerning attention," I am referring to a whole range of cognitive or mental activities exhibited by human persons, including rationality, feeling, sensitivity, focus, intuition, discrimination, imagination, lateral and linear thinking.<sup>83</sup> Discerning attention, then, includes but is not limited to reason, as it has been traditionally understood. Rationality, as postmodern readers well know, has been criticized because of its

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> *OG*, 55.

<sup>83</sup> This list is adapted from the one Grace Jantzen supplies in the passage below.

articulation and prominence in Enlightenment thought, especially as portrayed in the so-called “Man of Reason.” Coakley describes the stereotype as “cogitating, lonely, individualist, despising the body, passions, women and indeed all sociality, he artificially abstracts from the very dependencies he takes for granted: the products of the earth, the comforts of family and friends, and – not least – the miraculous appearance of regular meals.”<sup>84</sup> Feminists have rightly put many of their energies to use in roundly criticizing the “Man of Reason.” Yet, as Jantzen explains, “Critical reason need not be replaced by a sardine can opener.”<sup>85</sup> She explains,

[Critical reason] could very beneficially be supplemented by (or indeed become a subsection of) a wider understanding of reason that includes sensitivity and attentiveness, well-trained intuition and discernment, creative imagination, and lateral as well as linear thinking.<sup>86</sup>

Here, Jantzen is describing an inclusive understanding of human persons’ discerning attentiveness, such that critical reason may be included within a large set of cognitive activities. Human persons exhibit various and plentiful kinds of discerning attention, many of which are not accurately described as abstract cogitation.

Conceiving of human persons as attentive and discerning beings whose variety and range of mental activities are deep and wide is a lasting contribution that Romantics and those influenced by them make to the contemporary discussion. Although Schleiermacher states that human persons are “conscious of one’s reason,” his emphasis on religion—which is associated with activities unique to human persons—as essentially

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<sup>84</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 89.

<sup>85</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 69.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

“feeling” (*Gefühl*) is a particularly poignant case in point.<sup>87</sup> For Schleiermacher, pious feeling is a conscious state that does not immediately include conceptual or analytic representation. Joy and sorrow are examples of genuine states of feeling, and are distinguished from conceptual representations of the self, which would, in this case, be self-approval and self-reproach.<sup>88</sup> Joy and sorrow, that is, are not bound up with self-representations. Rather, such feelings arise out of self-consciousness in relation to an other. Schleiermacher defines pious feeling in *On the Glaubenslehre* this way: “What I understand as pious feeling is not derived from a representation, but is the original expression of an immediate existential relationship.”<sup>89</sup> As Schleiermacher himself notes, his understanding of feeling is similar to his friend Henrich Steffens’s (1773-1845) account, which defines feeling as “the immediate presence of whole undivided Being.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, pious feeling performs mediating and stimulating functions within a human person with regard to epistemic mental activities and acts of will, that is, knowing and doing. Schleiermacher explains,

It is not in any wise meant...that piety is excluded from all connexion with Knowing and Doing. For, indeed, it is the case in general that the immediate self-consciousness is always the mediating link in the transition between moments in which Knowing predominates and those in which Doing predominates, so that a different Doing may proceed from the same Knowing in different people according as a different determination of self-consciousness enters in. And thus it will fall to piety to stimulate Knowing and Doing, and every moment in which piety has a predominant place will contain within itself one or both of these in germ...for were it otherwise the religious moments could not combine with the

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<sup>87</sup> *DE*, 76.

<sup>88</sup> *CF*, 7.

<sup>89</sup> *OG*, 40.

<sup>90</sup> *CF*, 7. Likewise, “Dilthey justifiably used Steffens’s philosophy of nature to fill out the gaps in his interpretation of Schleiermacher’s system; in this manner he demonstrated that Steffens’s philosophy of nature in fact exactly dovetails with Schleiermacher’s system” (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhauser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 79).



others to form a single life, but piety would be something isolated and without any influence upon the other mental functions of our lives.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, pious feeling is integrally connected to the many mental activities of human persons, in many cases instigating acts of knowing and motivating acts of doing. Moreover, feeling is never “pure,” but contains the beginnings of knowing and/or doing. This is not to say that piety is, for Schleiermacher, the combination of feeling, knowing and doing. Piety has its “peculiar province” in feeling.<sup>92</sup> Yet this feeling is connected with the other provinces in an integral way.<sup>93</sup> By recognizing the relationships between feeling, knowing, and doing, Schleiermacher is taking a step away from the stereotypically modern emphasis on the autonomous rational individual, where Reason is the characteristic *par excellence* of human personhood. By emphasizing feeling as “the original expression of an immediate existential relationship,” Schleiermacher restores a balance between extremes, recognizing human persons as individuals in relation, whose knowledge, actions, and feelings cannot be cleanly separated.<sup>94</sup> By including feeling in a description of human persons as attentively discerning, I recognize with Schleiermacher the need to appreciate the various conscious mental activities of human persons. These include rationality, and also aspects of discernment and attentiveness that are not transparently or primarily representational.

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<sup>91</sup> *CF*, 8-9.

<sup>92</sup> *CF*, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Wayne Proudfoot interprets Schleiermacher otherwise, claiming that for him religion is entirely independent of other provinces: “Schleiermacher’s program required that he show that religious experience is independent in the requisite sense. But concepts, beliefs, and practices are assumed by the descriptions he offers and the instructions he gives for identifying the religious moment in experience.... These are not simple inner states identifiable by acquaintance, as Schleiermacher and others suggest” (Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), xv. This critique of Schleiermacher’s work is founded upon inaccurate interpretation.

<sup>94</sup> *OG*, 40.

Returning to the fourth heresy: If Christ is to be fully human, such that redemption may take place in actuality and not simply in appearance, as the Docetist has it, then Christ must not only be a rational, intelligent being, but a human person with all the complexity of other human persons—including feeling, sensitivity, attention, intuition, discernment, imagination, lateral and linear thinking. “Christ” is not simply a human body possessed by divine Reason. Likewise, his benefits, in their communication and as a result of that communication, are not exclusively cognitive but are deeply felt and transform the entire human person in all her complexity.

An important implication of the complexity and constitution of human persons in their discerning attention, along with their materiality, relationality, and intentional causal activity arising out of a disposition of receptivity, is that human persons are to some extent opaque, ineffable, or incomprehensible. By this, I mean that human persons are not able clearly to grasp and completely understand themselves or others. Human persons are neither fully transparent to themselves nor to others. As Soskice puts it with reference to Augustine, “‘introspection’ leads to no autarchic self and no clear-lit chamber of subjectivity, but to the acknowledgment that we remain mysteries to ourselves, known by God.”<sup>95</sup> In short, “we do not know who or what we are—positively as well as negatively. ‘Know thyself’ is, after all, a pagan injunction and at least post-Freud, a strict impossibility.”<sup>96</sup> What this means in the context of my description of human persons is that human persons may not be exhaustively understood, defined or circumscribed by a

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<sup>95</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 180.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

set of concepts or a series of propositions. Even if human persons share some identifiable marks, like intentional causal activity, a disposition of receptivity and desire, materiality, relationality, and discerning attention, human persons are also to some degree ineffable. That ineffability “keeps the human being from ‘being finally dissected by reason’,” and pushes us to recognize and ethically appreciate each person’s individuality and otherness.<sup>97</sup> As Jantzen explains,

Indeed, if we were to approach another person simply as a concept, treat her as just an instance of a more general term, we would already be unethical, already violently subsuming that person’s individuality and otherness under a law of the Same.<sup>98</sup>

Recognizing each human person’s circumscribed ineffability safeguards her integrity as an other who ought to be encountered and with whom one ought to engage, rather than a thing with whom one must deal.

Human persons, then, are not entirely categorizable (via *katagoria*) but are surprising, changing, and full of potential. As Coakley puts it in a description of Butler’s *Bodies that Matter*, human persons have “an excess of possibility.”<sup>99</sup> Likewise, Soskice explains, “Christian anthropology understands our human nature in terms not only of what we are, but of what we might be. We have the potential to become what we are not yet, or are not fully.”<sup>100</sup> Similarly, following Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt in the context of ethical relations with others, Jantzen claims,

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<sup>97</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 62.

<sup>98</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 235.

<sup>99</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 160.

<sup>100</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York:

What we may want is to ‘know’ this person—but ‘knowledge’ here cannot mean just contemplating from a distance, nor can it mean devouring, if the relationship is to be ethical. Rather, the other person (Levinas often just writes ‘the Other’) is always unique, surprising, in excess of our expectations: to transpose this into Arendt’s terms, the Other is always doing what natals do, that is, making fresh, unexpected new beginnings.<sup>101</sup>

Human persons have by their very nature an excess of possibility; they are capable of surprising new beginnings; they cannot be fully or exclusively conceptually known.

This excess of possibility, this ineffability in the sense of plasticity and newness, is precisely one of those marks that Christ and other human persons’ share. In contrast to the Docetic view of the unlimited difference between human persons and the person of Christ, then, I want to suggest that ineffability is shared. It is not attributable exclusively to the person of Christ or to the being of God in Christ, as a mark that sets Christ infinitely apart from human persons. Rather, the person of Christ is other, as human persons are other. Otherness does not set a chasm between Christ and human persons, but is a shared mark of human personhood.

The four heresies Schleiermacher identifies in paragraph twenty-two have allowed me to highlight some key features of human personhood as the conditions for the possibility of redemption by Christ. Against Nazareanism, I have described human persons as marked by a basic disposition of receptivity, which is an orientation toward the good. An orientation toward the good gives rise to eros, the desire to be with the other. Such desire, in turn, motivates human persons’ causal activity. Against Manicheanism, I have described human persons as material beings who, in their

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Oxford, 2007), 36.

<sup>101</sup> Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1999), 234.

materiality, are very good. Against Schleiermacher's account of Pelagianism, I have described human persons as both open in their relatedness to others and bounded or retaining a unity of identity. Finally, against the Docetic heresy as Schleiermacher describes it, I have described human persons as marked by discerning attention and ineffability. I have, thus, used Schleiermacher's treatment of heresies in a somewhat indirect way to describe human persons, and I have especially drawn on the work of Grace Jantzen, Janet Martin Soskice, Sarah Coakley, and Judith Butler to do so. This framework has allowed me to receive inspiration from Schleiermacher's work without being bound by it. The method also ties theological anthropology to Christology, rendering the former theologically intelligible, that is, providing a discernible reason or set of guidelines for making such claims.

## **II. Relatively Non-anthropocentric and Non-anthropomorphic Personhood**

I turn now from human personhood in relation to Schleiermacher's Christology to personhood more expansively considered, yet also described in light of Schleiermacher's Christology. Doing so is important for my larger argument, namely, that if a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric understanding of personhood can be generated, Schleiermacher's doctrine of God can be corrected such that personhood is affirmed as the divine quiddity. This correction, I will argue in chapter five, is faithful both to the heart of Schleiermacher's understanding of God as Living Spirit and to his desire to regulate Christian doctrine so that anthropomorphic elements within it are rendered harmless. By modifying Schleiermacher's understanding of personhood in a less

anthropomorphic way than he was able to do in the *Glaubenslehre*, I will argue that those who read him sympathetically could find a way to further balance beneficially the tension between the kataphatic and apophatic in his system and that doing so is beneficial for feminist theologies.

Thus, the Christological anthropology that I have developed in the section above is the first step in an argument that will continue here and be developed in chapter five. The argument begins with Christ, to describe some features of human personhood. Next, I will place human personhood on a spectrum of personhood considered more expansively, both with regard to other entities and within the human realm. Relative non-anthropocentrism is achieved by considering personhood on a spectrum in concert with reflection on Schleiermacher's Christology, and non-anthropomorphism is generated through understanding personhood as a phase-sortal. Finally, I will identify marks of personhood that may be shared between humans and the divine, while emphasizing their differences as well.

## **1. The Spectrum of Personhood**

### ***a. Schleiermacher's High Christology***

I begin with reference to Schleiermacher's high Christology.<sup>102</sup> Proceeding in this way allows me to demonstrate how Christ instantiates the marks of human personhood I

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<sup>102</sup> See Kevin Hector's article by the same title: Kevin Hector, "Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 (July 2006): 307-322.

have described above, while anticipating the degree-quality that is inherent within Schleiermacher's understanding of Christ's person and human persons.

As I have shown in chapter two, for Schleiermacher, there is a "veritable existence of God" in the person of Christ. Christ's person is the locus of the incarnation, and in Christ human nature is completed, that is, perfected. In Christ, there is a coincidence of the historical and the ideal. Indeed, he says in paragraph ninety-three,

If the spontaneity of the new corporate life is original in the Redeemer and proceeds from Him alone, then as an historical individual he must have been at the same time ideal [*urbildlich*] (i.e., the ideal must have become completely historical in Him), and each historical moment of His experience must at the same time have borne within it the ideal.<sup>103</sup>

In this passage, Schleiermacher claims that Christ, "in the whole course of His life," is such that everyone who antedated or followed him is only "an approximation to that which exists in the Redeemer himself."<sup>104</sup> This does not mean that Christ is the actualization of the ideal in every aspect of his being and activity. For instance, he does

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<sup>103</sup> *CF*, 377. Schleiermacher was influenced by Kant in his treatment of the historical ideal. As Gerrish explains, "He was also a debtor to more positive attempts at reformulating the christological problem, among which Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) had been a penetrating and influential example. For Kant, the question was not: How could two whole natures, the one human and the other divine, have been united in the person of the incarnate Son? but rather: What is the religious idea (or ideal), and how was it related to the historical individual, Jesus of Nazareth?...Whatever he learned from others, however, Schleiermacher's approach to the problem was entirely his own...The christological assignment for *The Christian Faith*, then, is this: so to speak of Christ that we can account for his perceived effects on the consciousness of the Christian community. Only within this frame, we may say, can Kant's question be answered. And criticism of church dogma [has its role in conforming]...the trinitarian and christological formulas to the Christian self-consciousness, a task which the Protestant Reformers unfortunately neglected...In short, that 'the Word became flesh' (probably Schleiermacher's favorite text) means that in Christ the ideal became historical. For Kant, by contrast, who in this respect was a forerunner of the Hegelians, the ideal was always immanent in human reason as such, and the historical Jesus could at most have given it a public foothold; it is, besides, quite unlike the God-consciousness of the *Glaubenslehre*, a purely moral ideal." (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 164-5, 167).

<sup>104</sup> *CF*, 378. A similar phrase is used by Calvin, *ICR* II.xii.6: "Whatever excellence was engraved upon Adam, derived from the fact that he approached [or approximated] the glory of his Creator through the only-begotten Son."

not possess “all knowledge or all art and skill which have developed in human society.”<sup>105</sup> Rather, Christ is ideal with regard to “the capacity of the God-consciousness to give the impulse to all life’s experiences and to determine them.”<sup>106</sup> In Christ,

All powers, both the lower ones which were to be mastered and the controlling higher ones, emerged only in gradual development, so that the latter were able to dominate the former only in the measure of their development; and, secondly, that the domination itself was nevertheless at each moment complete in the sense that nothing was ever able to find a place in the sense-nature which did not instantly take its place as an instrument of the spirit, so that no impression was taken up merely sensuously into the innermost consciousness and elaborated apart from God-consciousness into an element of life, nor did any action, that can really be regarded as such, and as a real whole, ever proceed solely from the sense-nature and not from the God-consciousness.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, we can “represent the growth of His personality from earliest childhood on to the fullness of manhood as a continuous transition from the condition of purest innocence to one of purely spiritual fulness of power.”<sup>108</sup> Now if the constant potency of the God-consciousness in Christ was the means by which there was an existence of God in him, not produced by worldly elements but by God and thereafter was itself productive, and if God is, as we have seen, the pure activity of love which intends to be in and with the neighbor, then in Christ’s person we have someone who in every moment of life desired and intended to be with his neighbor in a way that was motivated by the reception of divine loving and wise activity. Because Christ’s God-consciousness was powerful and constant, the Christian faith “knows no other way to a pure conception of the ideal than an ever-deepening understanding of Christ.”<sup>109</sup> We must conclude, Schleiermacher says,

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<sup>105</sup> *CF*, 378.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *CF*, 383.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *CF*, 378.



“that ideality is the only appropriate expression for the exclusive personal dignity of Christ.”<sup>110</sup> Christ is ideal in the sense that he perfectly instantiates the God-consciousness as it motivates and determines all life’s experiences. Note the inherent degree- or spectrum-quality of this claim. Christ is the fullest expression of human personhood insofar as he—in and through his discerning, attentive, bodily life among others—receives, actualizes, and communicates the divine loving, intentional, causal activity.

Yet Christ’s vital receptivity was not only directed toward the divine activity, but also toward the created world. Christ was bodily, influenced by his environment, and developed in accord with the activities of other people around him. For, “he could develop only in a certain similarity with His surroundings, that is, in general after the manner of His people.”<sup>111</sup> Likewise, “so far as what is conditioned by race in His person is concerned, Christ could hardly be a complete man if His personality were not determined by this factor.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, even though Schleiermacher downplays Jesus’ Jewishness most of the time, he also says that Christ could not be a human person without being materially constituted, and it is in and through his Jewish body, religion, land, people, and culture that he receives the activity of the divine Spirit. Yet the particularities of Christ’s historical person, in his body and in his environment, do not circumscribe his understanding of God’s relation to humanity. That is, Christ’s ideality

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<sup>110</sup> *CF*, 379. Redemption is attributed entirely and exclusively in Christ. See *OG*, 46: “the presupposition that I have taken to be the basic presupposition of Christianity,” is “that this power [i.e., redemption] is to be attributed completely and exclusively to Christ and that no trace of a need for redemption exists in his person.”

<sup>111</sup> *CF*, 382.

<sup>112</sup> *CF*, 384.

requires that in his relation of absolute dependence upon God he recognizes the limits of his particularity and identifies with humanity as a whole. As Bruce Marshall explains it,

For Schleiermacher, the universality of Jesus' saving influence means, once again, that his unique status cannot be bound up with his determinate language and culture. Indeed, in order to be universal, Jesus' redemptive God-consciousness must be able to be expressed in any language and culture. Jesus' influence and exemplary significance 'would be something entirely impotent and completely empty, if we could not conceive Christ as acting in other situations, than those individual appearances which are actually given in his history.'<sup>113</sup>

In other words, Christ's activity is determined not only by his particular relation to his family, culture, religion, land, and people, but also by his relation to all peoples in their particularity. Only by recognizing the universality of Christ's saving influence can his particularity be affirmed appropriately.

Indeed, if Christ's ideality, that is, both his perfection and universality, is recognized, then the particularity of Christ's person with regard especially to his Jewishness is part and parcel of his ideality:

[His racial peculiarity] must have been united with the freest and most unclouded appreciation of everything human, and with the recognition of the identity of nature and also of spirit in all human forms; also it must have been without any effort to extend what in Him was racial beyond its appointed limits. And it is only when we have guarded ourselves thus that we can say that the racial too in Him is ideally determined, both in itself and in its relation to the whole of human nature.<sup>114</sup>

In other words, Schleiermacher affirms the expansiveness of Christ's loving activity, which appreciates everything human in its diversity of forms and which is significant for all of humanity. At the same time, he affirms that Christ's Jewish particularity—his

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<sup>113</sup> Bruce Marshall, "Hermeneutics and Dogmatics in Schleiermacher's Theology," *The Journal of Religion* 67/1 (1987), 26.

<sup>114</sup> *CF*, 384.

Jewish body and blood and the many forms of Jewish religious and cultural life he instantiated—is divinely determined as the historical instantiation of the ideal.

Moreover, following Schleiermacher's emphasis on the historical ideality of Christ, the same may be said for every particularity of Christ's person. Because God has determined the world in a Christomorphic way—that is, because everything is as it is because of who Christ is and vice versa—the Christ in his historical ideality includes his being born of Mary, being male, working as a carpenter, preaching itinerantly, and so on. Schleiermacher explains,

Therefore, if the question be ventured, why then for this union with human nature there was chosen precisely Jesus of Nazareth, or rather (since it was only through this union that He became what He was) why exactly this and no other person-creating act of human nature was chosen, at exactly this time—...we cannot answer in any other way than this: that time and place were chosen as the absolutely best, that is as yielding the maximum operative effect.<sup>115</sup>

There is no denying, for Schleiermacher, that Christ was the particular person he was because of the single divine decree of love carried out by divine wisdom.

Yet the ideality of Christ serves to guard against these historical particularities being considered the highest or most significant within him, or, for that matter, the highest within other human persons. For Christ could not “be represented as a universal example unless His relation to all original differences in individuals were uniform—for otherwise He would necessarily be more of an example for some than for others.”<sup>116</sup> Christ is the ideal, then, insofar as he is vitally receptive to and actualizes the divine activity, and the character of his God-consciousness is not essentially related to any

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<sup>115</sup> *CF*, 553. Cf. Galatians 4:4-5.

<sup>116</sup> *CF*, 384.

particular feature of Christ's body or context. Although he was the particular material being that he was, neither his maleness, nor Jewishness, nor dark-hairedness, nor carpenterishness, for example, were essential to his God-consciousness. Rather, Jesus' particularities of time, place, and physical features "were chosen...as yielding the maximum operative effect."<sup>117</sup> As such, his followers do not need to idealize (or idolize) his maleness, his fatherlessness, his hillside preaching, and so on. Rather, Christ was ideal with regard to his God-consciousness and its perfect actualization in his life. The fact that such ideality occurs in and through Christ's particularity is part of the good news of the universal scope of God's love for each particular human person.<sup>118</sup>

Using once again the language from the above section of this chapter, we can see that for Schleiermacher Christ was open to others—divine and human. He was deeply influenced by them. Likewise, he was bounded as a particular person by his ethnicity, sex, language, culture, and religion. Even so, in his plasticity and newness, his consciousness of his relation to God was not bound to his particularity in a way that would keep him from communicating his benefits to other human persons who do not share the same particularities.

Though many particularities of human persons differ, for Schleiermacher all human persons share a vital receptivity or, as I have been describing it, intentional causal

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<sup>117</sup> *CF*, 553.

<sup>118</sup> This is connected to Schleiermacher's understanding of the oneness of the universal and particular in God. As he explains with reference to divine knowledge, "It is indeed only because of the imperfection of our knowledge that for us the oneness of what is universal is different from the totality of what is particular and our knowledge is so much the more genuine and lively the more the two merge together. It is only when we can develop the range, quantity, and diversity of individual things belonging to one genus from the concept of interconnectedness with the whole genus, as known, only then does the universal concept emerge out of the abstract and lifeless calculated total to become a living intuition. Thus, how much more must we rather say that in the divine knowledge the two merge together? So, then we must say that in the divine knowledge what is universal and what is particular must be completely merged" (*DE*, 55).

activity arising out of a disposition of receptivity. The vitality he is referring to includes some measure of consciousness. As Schleiermacher puts it,

Only if the passive conditions are not purely passive, but mediated through vital receptivity, and this receptivity confronts the totality of finite existence...could we suppose an existence of God in it [i.e., any thing]. Hence this clearly does not hold of what is individualized as an unconscious thing.<sup>119</sup>

In other words, unconscious things cannot be redeemed in the sense of actively receiving divine activity by means of a potent God-consciousness. Furthermore, the God-consciousness cannot be received and active in anything that does not display some measure of what Schleiermacher calls intelligence, or what I have been calling discerning attention. He says, “But just as little and for the same reason can what is conscious but not intelligent represent them, so that it is only in the rational individual that an existence of God can be admitted.”<sup>120</sup> That is, beings that are conscious but not self-conscious cannot possess the God-consciousness, because God-consciousness is consciousness of one’s relation to God through Christ.

Schleiermacher identifies the Christomorphism of his thought in this regard when he explains,

But just as the unconscious forces of nature and non-rational life become a revelation of God to us only so far as we bring that conception with us, so also that darkened and imperfect God-consciousness by itself is not an existence of God in human nature, but only insofar as we bring Christ with us in thought and relate it to Him.<sup>121</sup>

In other words, the God-consciousness that may present itself in dull and imperfect forms within self-conscious life and the divine activity that occurs in both impersonal and

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<sup>119</sup> *CF*, 387.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

personal kinds of life are not revelations of God apart from Christ. Rather, Christ is the starting-point and mediator for all revelations of God. It is through the communication of the life of Christ in specific, therefore, that Christians may have Christian God-consciousness, i.e., consciousness of their absolute dependence upon God as the sovereign wise loving One who creates and redeems the world through Christ.<sup>122</sup>

Here, then, we see that for Schleiermacher the person of Christ is fully human in his openness and boundedness, that is, in his differentiated relationality as a material being. Further, he is not bound by his particularity but, as an ineffable person with an excess of possibility and plasticity and given the new implanting of the God-consciousness within him, his God-consciousness is not bound exclusively to his material or historical particularities. Finally, Christ's activity in receiving, actualizing, and communicating his person to others is the completion, perfection, and ideal of human persons.

### ***b. Personhood in Degrees***

In the discussion above, the degree- or spectrum-quality of personhood is apparent. While Christ is the historical ideal, others only "approximate" his personal activity. In Christ the God-consciousness is powerful and constant, whereas in other

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<sup>122</sup> Notice that in this aspect of his Christology, Schleiermacher is opposing Hegelian Christology. Redeker explains, "Schleiermacher insists that the final perfection of the God-consciousness, which he refers to as the archetype (*Urbild*), manifests itself in the individual concrete appearance of the historical Jesus. Normal idealist philosophy holds that it is impossible for the idea to enter fully into an individual appearance. Thus both David Friedrich Strauss and Ferdinand Christian Baur criticized Schleiermacher's Christology precisely on this point. Schleiermacher's biographer, Wilhelm Dilthey, also joined this criticism. According to the Hegelians the ray of divine light can only penetrate the world of appearances through refractions. Therefore the historical person, Jesus, cannot be assigned the prerogative of being the perfect revelation of the archetypal God-consciousness" (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 135).

human persons the God-consciousness is weak and inconstant. As Schleiermacher says in *On the Doctrine of Election*, “we also have to say that if the human race is to be complete, then for the sake of what is good, more and less receptive persons from all levels at all stages must exist side by side. This is necessary because that completeness in which alone the species actually consists emerges only out of the interconnection of all possible complex conditions of greater and lesser capacities and aptitudes and out of the availability of all possible stages of development and degrees of saturation.”<sup>123</sup> If the reader grants that the marks of personhood I have culled from Schleiermacher’s Christology and the analogies he uses are properly termed “personal,” then Schleiermacher’s manner of writing about the human personhood of Christ suggests that human personhood exists on a spectrum. That is to say, the aspects of human personhood described in this chapter are not exhibited in actual human persons in an all-or-nothing manner. Rather, human beings may exhibit personhood to one degree or another, in one fashion or another.

What this means, and here I am going further than Schleiermacher, is that human beings, in all of their multiplicity, might not be alone in existing on the spectrum of personhood. That is, human personhood may be a subset within the spectrum of personhood considered more generally, and different subsets of persons may overlap. Take the marks of personhood I have described in this chapter, for example. There are surely non-human creatures that exhibit some degree of intentional causal activity, materiality, differentiated relationality, and discerning attention. These creatures, I want

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<sup>123</sup> *DE*, 61.

to claim, are on the spectrum of personhood; they may not exhibit the fullness of intentional causal activity, discerning attention, or differentiated relationality that is possible for human persons, perhaps, but neither are they fully impersonal beings.

In making this claim, I am well aware that I am using human personhood as a benchmark for personhood considered more expansively. This is the reason I have described my understanding of personhood as relatively rather than wholly non-anthropocentric. Indeed, it is impossible to achieve total non-anthropocentrism. For if we want to use concepts and language to describe the world and God, that is, if we want to think or speak about such things at all, we must use our own—human—concepts and language. In that sense there is no talk, including theological speech and writing, that is not to some degree anthropocentric. Yet I have tried to mitigate such anthropocentrism in two ways. First, I have attempted to weaken such anthropocentrism by describing human personhood in response to the core of Schleiermacher's Christology, that is, the union of the divine essence with human nature in the person of Christ such that the redemption of humanity may occur through him. In other words, I have not attempted to begin with humanity considered "by itself" or "in general" and then to work my way to a consideration of the human personhood of Christ. Rather, I have begun with a description of the person of Christ, which includes a new implanting of the God-consciousness in him, and briefly described a Christological anthropology on that basis. Second, the Christological anthropology generated then allows a further outward movement from the particular to the general—from Christ's personhood to human personhood, and then from human personhood to creaturely personhood. Thus, although in my description of



personhood as existing on a spectrum I am not by any means escaping anthropocentrism altogether, I escape *undue* anthropocentrism. That is to say, if we must, by virtue of our limitedness, take the human experience of personhood as in some sense normative, then one way to weaken such anthropocentrism is to see some features of human personhood as actualizable in creatures other than human beings. By conceiving of personhood as coming in degrees within the context of creatureliness more expansively considered, I do just that.

To explain the spectrum of personhood a bit further: That spectrum, as I am describing it here, includes degrees of actualization within the human realm and within the creaturely realm considered more generally. With regard to the spectrum that includes only human beings, this means, for example, that some human persons exhibit more loving causal activity than others. Likewise, some human persons may exhibit more discerning attention than others. Further, some may be more differentiated in their relations with others. And so on. With regard to the spectrum of personhood that exists within the creaturely realm more broadly construed, we might say, for instance, that a chimpanzee may exhibit more highly developed intentional causal powers than a human infant. Or, an elephant may exhibit a similar level of discerning attention as a severely mentally disabled human being. On the spectrum of personhood, these creatures might be similarly located. The readiness of Schleiermacher's system of thought for this claim can be seen in the following passage: "It must likewise be possible to possess one's personal existence from the outset only in a partial way, as do children and those held in bondage,

who do not yet, as such, have an entirely personal existence but only a partial one.”<sup>124</sup>

Likewise, Schleiermacher distinguishes human persons from human embryos, saying, “from the totality of all human embryos, God quickens some and lets them become persons and others not, rather leaving them as they are in a state of non-personhood and death, really leading some into the light of day, but returning again to death others already in the womb or immediately at birth.”<sup>125</sup> In these passages, Schleiermacher exhibits again a penchant for thinking of personhood as coming in degrees.<sup>126</sup> As such, the claim I am making is that human beings are not unconditionally unique among creatures with regard to their personhood. Human persons may, in fact, be the highest actualization of creaturely personhood. But they are not necessarily the only creatures that exist on the spectrum of personhood.

This claim is important not only because it mitigates anthropocentrism, but also because it allows us to keep in mind the great web of interdependence and similar “kindness” that all creatures in the universe share on account of their being creatures. Some have more in common than others. Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*, of course, is focused on Christians’ pious reception of the divine activity. As such, it is not focused on the reception of the divine activity in the nature-system considered apart from the human

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<sup>124</sup> *DE*, 63.

<sup>125</sup> *DE*, 65.

<sup>126</sup> Such claims may make some people uneasy, even if they are made in the service of mitigating anthropocentrism. As such, I repeat my earlier insistence that I am not making here a moral argument. I do not believe that evaluations of and decisions regarding how to treat creatures ought to be made solely on the basis of whether they are called “persons.” My claim here is neither that chimpanzees, say, and Alzheimer’s patients in the later stages of degeneration (like my grandmother) ought to be treated the same way, nor that mentally disabled persons (like my uncle) ought to be valued similarly as dolphins or other intelligent non-human creatures, nor that hibernating bears and human beings in “vegetative” states (like those I have attended during my time as a hospital chaplain) ought to be understood or treated in the same way. I am not making any moral claims of these types.

condition of sin and grace. Yet it is important here at least to note that his emphasis on the interdependence of all created things within the universe is quite amenable to the kind of non-anthropocentric view of personhood I am advancing here. For if creatures are interdependent in a thoroughgoing way, and if they share their creatureliness in common, then it is not a leap to say that similarities between them—even with regard to personhood—can be identified.

## **2. Personhood as a Phase-Sortal**

In addition to claiming that personhood exists on a spectrum, I want to draw out the claim, implicit in the preceding description, that personhood is not a static substance that human or non-human creatures may or may not possess for the entirety of their existence. Rather, personhood is a phase-sortal.<sup>127</sup> That is, there may be periods of time, or phases, in a clearly human life in which a human being is not marked by personhood or in which a human being exhibits personhood to varying degrees. Human beings may also have phases of life in which they are not persons at all. As such, the phase-sortal quality of personhood requires a clear distinction—at least in the context of this theological argument—between being human and being a human person. Whereas being human is solely biological, on my thinking, being a human person is also social, political, relational, psychical, and spiritual, as the marks of human personhood I have described above suggest.

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<sup>127</sup> I'm drawing on the work of Eric T. Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology* (New York: Oxford, 1997). See especially chapters 2 (pp. 22-41) and five (pp. 94-123).

Let me draw out the relation between these two, with reference to my discussion of personhood and materiality. There, I said that human persons are always material beings. That is, human persons are ontologically identical with human bodies. Here, I want to make a claim about the reverse of that statement, highlighting its asymmetry: although human persons are always human beings, human beings are not always human persons. This is an important claim with regard to mitigating anthropomorphism. While expanding the spectrum of personhood to include non-human creatures may weaken the hold of anthropocentrism on an understanding of personhood, anthropomorphism can be diminished by claiming that human beings and human persons are not synonymous. That is, humanity is not synonymous with personhood. Distinguishing being a person from being human in this way may mitigate anthropomorphism.

Admittedly, the description of personhood offered above, both with regard to its existing on a spectrum and as a phase-sortal, has been constructed largely on the basis of familiarity with the person of Christ and human persons. Yet it has also been constructed with keen recognition of the creatureliness of human beings and human persons, especially with regard to their similarities with non-human creatures. As such, the description I have offered is *relatively* non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric.

In the next chapter, the significance of such a non-anthropocentric and non-anthropomorphic understanding of personhood will be drawn out even further. There I will suggest—for the sake of theological coherence, intelligibility, and feminist theological anthropologies and ecclesiologies—that the quiddity of God be affirmed as personal even as I recognize and uphold important differences between creaturely and

divine personhood. Before closing this chapter, however, I will conclude by revisiting the ineffable character of personhood, since divine ineffability may be the chief reason many theologians cite for denying claims regarding the what-ness of God.

### III. Ineffability, Critical Realism, and Scripture

In chapter three, I highlighted Schleiermacher's insistence on the ineffable character of God. Recall the following passage:

If the list of these attributes be regarded as a complete summary of definitions to be related to God Himself, then a complete knowledge of God must be derivable from conceptions, and an explanation in due theoretic form would take the place of that ineffability of the Divine Being which the Scriptures—so far as they mention divine attributes—recognize so clearly on every page that we need not quote passages.<sup>128</sup>

As this passage shows, Schleiermacher is keen to safeguard the divine being from being completely knowable by human beings. At the same time, I have also shown that even when Schleiermacher describes God in apophatic terms, he implicitly makes kataphatic claims. The *Glaubenslehre* is characterized by a tension, then, between the apophatic and the kataphatic. Schleiermacher recognizes the limits of human knowledge, especially with regard to God. Yet at the same time, he writes an 800-page tome on the Christian faith, not as a “disinterested” ethnographer or sociologist, but as a Reformed and reforming theologian. Moreover, his mature work ends with undeniably kataphatic, or positive, claims about the loving and wise union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ and the Church.

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<sup>128</sup> *CF*, 196.

Schleiermacher's navigation of the tension between apophasis and kataphasis may not have been as successful as he imagined, given responses to his work that see him as an Idealist or experiential expressivist, on the one hand, or a pantheist, on the other. Indeed, part of my work is to elucidate how Schleiermacher holds the two in tension and to correct his apophatic strictures where they are not required. Even if Schleiermacher was not entirely successful in making himself clear, however, his theological approach seems to be an instance of "critical realism." Generally, by that term I mean that theological claims are understood as approximate descriptions of the divine identity, even as theologians avoid overreach by a constant awareness of their claims' limits.<sup>129</sup> That is, Schleiermacher is critical insofar as he does not hold a naïve form of realism under which one might believe that the world *is* always and exactly the way it appears to us. At the same time, he is a realist insofar as he believes that the world and God exist apart from the thought-life of human subjects.

In *Metaphor and Religious Language*, Soskice explains that many have avoided critical realism on the basis of a theological intuition and philosophical embarrassment:

The theological intuition is an intuition that the creature cannot claim to describe the Creator as he is in himself; the utter transcendence of God is an embarrassment to apologists who have wished to discover parallels between models in scientific and religious thought. The philosophical embarrassment is that if we admit that Christians handle their models as though they are

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<sup>129</sup> See Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (New York: Oxford, 1995). There he defines critical realism as follows: The word 'critical' is meant to suggest that Barth never simply abandoned his idealistic inheritance. Idealism would prove to be a valuable ally in establishing the limits of human knowing... The 'given' (or what we customarily think of as the 'real') is the product of the knowing activity of the human subject. The word 'realism' is meant to suggest, however, that after the break Barth would always insist that the divine being was real, whole, and complete in itself apart from the knowing activity of the human subject; indeed, the reality of God precedes all human knowing" (67). See also chapter five of Kevin Hector's *Theology Without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (New York: Cambridge, 2011).

explanatory, we seem obliged to provide an explanation of how the terms of our model refer, and, in view of the precarious and tentative nature of anything we say about God, this problem of reference seems great indeed.<sup>130</sup>

Despite this formidable intuition and embarrassment, Soskice endorses critical realism. In her explanation for taking such an approach, she says, “descriptions associated with a term do not determine what it is to be of a kind; what it is to be of a kind is determined by the essential properties of things, *whatever these might be*.”<sup>131</sup> In other words, “one can refer to some one or some thing without providing an exhaustive or unrevisable definition of that person or thing.”<sup>132</sup> This is another, admittedly more sophisticated, way of saying what I have said in this chapter with regard to personhood: that although I am not espousing or attempting to construct an exhaustive definition of personhood, it is still meaningful to name persons as such. Moreover, we might even point to marks of personhood, without thereby committing ourselves to an “exhaustive or unrevisable definition.” My suggestion, then, is that we can—and it is helpful to—use a term like “personhood,” “prior to any certain or unrevisable knowledge of its essential properties and yet claim that, when we use the term, we are referring to the kind as constituted by those properties, whatever they may be.”<sup>133</sup>

Critical realism of this kind is important for Christology and Christological anthropology. Likewise, it is crucial for the doctrine of God and theological language in general. Soskice explains,

The agnosticism of our formulations preserves us from this presumption, for we do not claim to describe God but to point through His effects, and beyond His

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<sup>130</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 1985), 116-17.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

effects, to Him. It is, hence, of the utmost importance to keep in mind the distinction, never remote in the writings of Anselm or of Aquinas, between referring to God and defining Him. This is the fine edge at which negative theology and positive theology meet, for the apophatic insight that we say nothing of God, but only point towards Him, is the basis for the tentative and avowedly inadequate stammerings by which we attempt to speak of God and His acts.<sup>134</sup>

I want to affirm Soskice's insight here with regard to critical realism, while either making her text more precise or challenging her to become a bit more kataphatic—I am not sure which, as her text gives itself to either interpretation. Given the significance and adequacy of the revelation of God in Christ, it is neither that we “do not claim to describe God,” nor that we “say nothing of God.” Rather, we refer to, describe, and point to God without defining God. We speak of God with all due tentativeness and recognition of our inadequate stammerings. Yet we do, indeed, describe God, refer to God, point toward God, and speak of God—on the basis of the divine revelation of God in the person of Christ.

Although the topic deserves lengthier treatment, in the space of this conclusion let me simply note that by referring to God as personal, Schleiermacher might respond to one of the constant critiques of his work, namely, that it does not attend to scripture explicitly or extendedly enough. Part of the power of scripture is its use of anthropomorphic language for God. Indeed, as Soskice has it, “It seems that the biblical writers were pressed to use anthropomorphism to do justice to a God whose acts they wished to chronicle.”<sup>135</sup> Now, although I will argue in chapter five for a relatively non-anthropocentric and non-anthropomorphic understanding of divine personhood on the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1.



basis of the groundwork laid in the present chapter, I have repeatedly recognized that using personal language for God is—just as all of our theological language is—anthropomorphic to some degree. The point is, there does not seem to be a good reason to halt anthropomorphism precisely when it comes to referring to God as personal, yet use anthropomorphic language in other cases. In fact, it seems particularly difficult to engage in theological language that connects with the biblical text and non-academic and non-“liberal” Christians without doing so. Richard R. Niebuhr, too, claims that Schleiermacher’s “fear of anthropomorphism is misplaced” at this juncture:

A man of Schleiermacher’s intellectual gifts ought to have seen that anthropomorphism is inevitable in any case and is not necessarily a blemish in Christian theological thinking. The question is what kind of anthropomorphism one chooses to permit and how one controls it. To vacillate, as Schleiermacher did, by allowing the attributes of love and wisdom to stand as the two properties that represent the essence of the Godhead but by refusing to speak of God as personal is a worse error than to take the risk of personalism and attempt to govern it.<sup>136</sup>

Since governing anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism in order to render these aspects of Christian doctrine “harmless” is one of Schleiermacher’s goals in doing theology, I turn in my final chapter to a description of divine personhood that attempts to do just that in relation to the advancement of contemporary constructive feminist theology.

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<sup>136</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1964), 16.

## **Chapter Five: Divine Personhood and the Advancement of a Feminist Doctrine of God**

In this final chapter, I build on the interpretive and constructive lines of argument detailed in each of the four previous chapters and bring feminist theology into the foreground as a motivation for critiquing, correcting, and embracing Schleiermacher's doctrine of God. In chapter one, I argued against an experiential expressivist interpretation of Schleiermacher's work, showing that his navigation through the modern waters of theological epistemology is—not withstanding his use of Romantic tropes and modern language—essentially faithful to the Reformed tradition with regard to its theocentrism and Christomorphism. In the present chapter, I consider another contemporary interpretation of Schleiermacher offered by Wendy Farley, which shares some features with an experiential expressivist view. I discuss Farley here as a way of revisiting the arguments presented in previous chapters while pressing forward the feminist use of Schleiermacher's work. I will argue against her interpretation of Schleiermacher by attending to the distinctively kataphatic character of his theology. I will also develop the argument of chapter four by proposing that feminist theologians who are sympathetic to Schleiermacher's doctrine of God ought to ascribe relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric personhood to the divine. Doing so, I will argue, would bolster the coherence of their theological claims and advance feminist ecclesial practices. The current chapter, therefore, both draws upon and furthers the arguments made in each of the previous chapters, while providing a feminist motivation for reconsidering, correcting, and appropriating Schleiermacher's doctrine of God.

## I. Feminist Theologies and Apophasis

Many contemporary feminist theologians consider the employment of the *via negativa* as a chief theological way to promote the flourishing of all human beings, including women, people of color, and those within the LGBTQI community.<sup>1</sup> These attempts may be part of the current “‘apophatic rage’ (as one scholar has termed the current post-Heideggerian turn in continental philosophy and theology).”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Sarah Coakley argues that one motivation for pursuing the apophatic (in Pseudo-Dionysius, in particular) is that it has been seen as a “means of an end-run around Kant’s ban on speculative metaphysics.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, it provides a way to deal with the problem of what can and cannot be said about God in a way that may both accord with recent continental thought and have roots much earlier in Christian history. A further reason for pursuing the apophatic, particular to feminist theologians, is that by denying knowledge of God, or primarily affirming what God is not, their hope is that the resultant theological “unknowing” will be less available for use as a tool of oppression and more likely to avoid the kind of idolatry that occurs on the basis of understanding theological claims too literally. A good example of this is in Farley’s recent book, *Gathering Those Driven*

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of some of these feminists since the 1980s, see Sigridur Gudmarsdottir, “Feminist Theology and the Sensible Unsayings of Mysticism,” in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality* (New York: Fordham, 2010), 273-285. Examples include, to varying degrees, Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1985); Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* (New York: Cambridge, 1995); Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002); Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (New York, Cambridge: 2010), and Kathryn Tanner, “In the Image of the Invisible,” in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality* (New York: Fordham, 2010), 117-134.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Coakley, “Introduction: Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite,” in *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

*Away*. Therein, she explains that “divine transcendence cautions us against all of the idolatries we carry around in our heads and in our churches: ideas about God that displace the desire for the Good beyond even our best thoughts.”<sup>4</sup> Most Christian theologians, of course, recognize that human beings cannot grasp the inexhaustible richness of the divine identity and activity. That is not, to my mind, a matter for debate. Yet some, like Farley, go further; they offer a radicalized form of apophaticism that often undermines *all* positive claims about God. It is this tendency that I will argue we need to halt, and we need to do so on the basis of articulable feminist convictions. Put a bit differently, I will argue that although some apophaticism is a necessary part of any Christian theology worth its salt, such apophaticism must be carefully described and circumscribed within the context of the kataphatic revelation of God in Jesus Christ. A corrected form of Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God may assist in doing just that.

Before turning to the argument itself, let me set out a few definitions, returning to a similar discussion in chapter three. I identify theologians as “primarily” apophatic in two ways. First, they may be identified as such with regard to the sheer volume of their negative descriptions of God, where perhaps Pseudo-Dionysius would be the best example.<sup>5</sup> For these authors, God is most often described in terms of what God is not, mystery, otherness, or ineffability. Second, primarily apophatic theologians may be identified in terms of the thoroughgoingness of the ineffability they attribute to God. That

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<sup>4</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 11.

<sup>5</sup> For a treatment of Pseudo-Dionysius’s emphasis on divine transcendence in the *Divine Names* and the *Mystical Theology* as it relates to the apostle Paul’s letters, see Charles Stang, “To an Unknown God,” in *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: “No Longer I”* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 118-153.

is, a theologian may make mostly kataphatic statements about God while at the same time affirming a form of radical apophaticism. In that case, a description of the radical otherness of God may take the space of only one chapter in a larger book. Yet because of the radicality of the apophasis involved, the larger quantity of kataphatic claims does not outweigh the extent to which the theology is apophatic.

Within Roman Catholic feminist theology, Elizabeth Johnson's *She Who Is* may serve as an example of both kinds of "unknowing."<sup>6</sup> Johnson uses a circumscribed form of apophasis in order to emphasize neglected kataphatic "sayings" about God. That is, she, like Mary Daly before her, for example, emphasizes that God is not exclusively to be referred to by male or masculine terms.<sup>7</sup> Rather, she brings neglected kataphatic names for God, like Sophia, to the fore. This is a kind of limited apophaticism in which traditional patriarchal terms used for God are denied the right to exclusivity in order to make room for other divine names that are justified as well.

Yet Johnson also utilizes thoroughgoing, or radical, apophaticism. As she constructs a Rahnerian-inflected Thomistic feminism, she draws on the classical tradition's affirmation of divine incomprehensibility:

In essence, God's unlikeness to the corporal and spiritual finite world is *total*. Hence human beings simply cannot understand God. No human concept, word, or image, all of which originate in experience of created reality, can circumscribe divine reality, nor can any human construct express *with any measure of adequacy the mystery of God who is ineffable*. ... It is proper to God as God to transcend *all similarity* to creatures, and thus never to be known comprehensively or essentially as God. In Augustine's unforgettable echo of the insight of earlier

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Boston: Beacon, 1985).

Greek theologians, *Si comprehendis, non est Deus*: if you have understood, then what you have understood is not God.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, God is unknowable, incomprehensible, and unspeakable with any measure of adequacy because God is wholly other than the finite world. While Johnson takes this statement of the infinite qualitative difference between God and the world as a safeguard against sexist idolatry in Christian doctrine, in my view it creates an apophatic lacuna that, as Coakley warns in a statement regarding false apophaticism, “may leap to the place of ‘unknowing’, leaving curiously intact the sexual stereotypes it claims to overcome.”<sup>9</sup> That is to say, if feminist theologians embrace radical apophasis, then they will not be able to effect feminist transformation at the level of liturgical and personal imagination.

My train of thought here can be summarized in the following way. Johnson says that Christians cannot know God in any adequate way. As such, she argues for a title for God that is informed by feminist convictions, namely, “She Who Is,” as a counter-part to the title “He Who Is,” or other masculine titles. This title is meant to break the hold “He” has on the Christian imagination, allowing the Christian to understand that God is neither male nor masculine. On Johnson’s view, Christians may call God “She Who Is,” rather than “He Who Is,” because they have said the latter too many times and now believe that it is literally true. In order to break that false understanding of God, it is preferable to promote an alternative naming: “She Who Is.”

Yet because radical apophasis undergirds Johnson’s work, she cannot say that

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 105. My emphasis.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 68.

“She Who Is” expresses—with any degree of accuracy—the truth about God. If she cannot say that, however, then the divine title she espouses may simply mask the continued use of millennia-old patriarchal conceptions of God she is trying to avoid. For in the past and the present, despite many theologians’ claims to the contrary, theological notions and titles are used because those who espouse them think they are true to some adequate degree. Many who call God “He” believe on a deep level that this is a true appellation, despite any additional claims about the unknowability or transcendence of God.<sup>10</sup> If feminist theologians simply offer kataphatic alternatives to patriarchal ways of thinking about God as a way to break idols while further espousing radical apophysis, then they have not said anything about the truth of God other than “God is unknowable,” and “It is idolatrous to think of God as male.” Yet because of the hold that “He” has on the Christian’s understanding of God as it relates to truth, the employment of any number of feminist namings of God will not dislodge the patriarchal imagination. That is because, given the sexist context of Christian theology throughout the ages, it is easy to say “She” while always remembering that this name does not adequately describe God, while it is much harder to remember the same while saying “He.”

What I am challenging here is the claim that espousing the radical unknowability of God will undermine sexist theologies and practices. Espousing radical apophysis does,

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<sup>10</sup> See Robert Jenson, “The Father, He...” *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 95-109. For instance, he says, “That Jesus addressed God as ‘Father’ was in the same way a matter of using the term of filial address that would in fact pick out the God upon whom he intended to call. Of the possible individuating terms of filial address, ‘father’ rather than ‘mother’ was required, because Jesus’ God was the God of Israel. Israel could not, for reasons given in every step of its history with God *and still as compelling for Israel as ever*, address the Lord as ‘mother,’ this being the appropriated address to the principal deity alternative, *then as now*, to the Lord: the god/ess of fertility religion” (ibid., 104; my emphasis).

indeed, open up space for attributing many names to God. Yet it does not get to the root of the problem because it does not truly offer a kataphatic alternative to the kataphatic naming of God as male and masculine. Now, it is not my intention to claim that God is “female,” in the sense that God is most adequately described by analogy to the female sex and/or feminine gender. Rather, I will argue that personhood—which is instantiated in both males and females, though not exclusively therein—might be a kataphatic alternative that could help to break the hold of the sexist imagination in Christian theology and practice. In addition, because personhood includes a limited kind of apophasis, it might avoid fatal criticisms regarding undue anthropomorphism (i.e., idolatry) that theologians are keen to avoid. In other words, I wonder why Johnson and others claim that God is *infinitely* qualitatively other than creation. Although scripture makes claims about the otherness of God, these claims need not be interpreted in a thoroughly radical way. Indeed, the revelation of God in Christ ought to stack the deck in a kataphatic direction. Apophaticism that is not used within a primarily kataphatic approach, I will argue, does not achieve the aims feminists are working toward.

Ultimately, contemporary feminist theologians could better achieve their theological and ecclesial aims through a dialectic between apophaticism and kataphaticism in the doctrine of God, the latter pole including a firm affirmation of the personal quiddity of God. Building on the interpretation and analysis of previous chapters, I will argue that Schleiermacher’s work in the *Glaubenslehre* may benefit feminist theologies—once corrected by the kataphatic claim that God is personal, a claim based on the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. This is not a negation of



apophaticism, for apophaticism is useful as a way of keeping theologians from hyper-literalism about theological claims and allowing space for critique of those claims. My worry, rather, is with a totalizing form of apophaticism that would reduce all theological claims to “unknowing.” In contrast, I recommend that feminist theologians, following Schleiermacher, adopt a critically realistic kataphaticism to complement their apophatic commitments. It seems to me that, based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, offering a positive account of the quiddity of God as personal could better actualize Christian feminist aims than “going radically apophatic.”<sup>11</sup>

To argue for a wider embrace of this particular sort of kataphasis among feminist theologians, I will consider Farley’s recent work not only with reference to her employment of apophasis as it relates to her feminist agenda, but also with reference to the resources she uses to do so, which include Schleiermacher. Farley claims that “Pseudo-Dionysius, Schleiermacher, and Mechthild of Magdeburg are among those lovers whose writings dwell in the liminal space where we know only that we do not know.”<sup>12</sup> Using her interpretation of Schleiermacher’s theology along with other theologically marginalized voices, Farley constructs a doctrine of the incarnation as the basis for her claim that those the Church has marginalized “are a vital part of the body of Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

I want to be clear at the outset that I stand with Farley in her aim of including

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<sup>11</sup> I end up arguing for something like the second type of apophasis described in chapter three, that which is derived from the verb *apophaino*, such that the inexhaustible richness of the divine identity and activity is affirmed not despite but because of divine revelation.

<sup>12</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 68.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

those who traditionally have been driven away from the church, and I agree that Schleiermacher's theology holds rich resources for doing so. A key point of promise is the fact that, granted Schleiermacher identifies certain "heresies," his theology allows plenty of room for doctrinal development and difference within varying historical contexts. As Schleiermacher says,

In contrast to the contending parties, who attempt from their own perspectives to restrict the area of orthodoxy more and more so that the real danger arises of dividing the church, I am interested in extending it. My intention was to demonstrate in as much detail as possible at every key point how much distance there is between the theses of the church and those of heresy and that within this open area how much friendly agreement is still possible on points common to both heterodox and orthodox.<sup>14</sup>

As such, those who have been driven away from the church by traditional theology may find in Schleiermacher's work a capacious, though distinctively Christian, arena within which to develop inclusive doctrines. Farley recognizes this strength of Schleiermacher's work. Yet in taking him primarily as a negative theologian, she neither fully accounts for the kataphatic center and import of his theology, nor fully considers how that kataphasis relates to his purposeful use of apophasis. Indeed, and granted Farley's strong sense of the *unio cum Christo*, I would suggest that a mistaken inflation of Schleiermacher's apophaticism actually undermines a concern to attend to marginalized voices by making that concern an *ad hoc* addition to the rest of the system of doctrine she is beginning to construct. In this way, she exhibits a common deficiency in apophatic feminist approaches, namely, a failure to integrate feminist aims into the system of doctrine itself. That is, by espousing radical apophaticism, Farley struggles to write particular feminist

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<sup>14</sup> OG, 68.

aims into her theology. She may say that God is unknowable and that a constant and exclusive insistence on male and heterosexual language for God damages the Christian's sense of God's unknowability. Yet she cannot claim, for instance, that God is particularly concerned to bring about the flourishing of women, women of color, and LGBTQI persons. I want to strengthen her argument by offering a correction of her reading of Schleiermacher and her use of radical apophysis.

In this chapter, I will proceed in three steps. First, I will describe Farley's interpretation of Schleiermacher's work and contrast it with my own. Doing so will again bring to the foreground my understanding of how to read Schleiermacher as a Reformed and reforming theologian. Second, I will highlight the tension present in both Schleiermacher and Farley's work between an apophatic and kataphatic understanding of the quiddity of God, reminding the reader of my description of the *Glaubenslehre* in chapter three. Further, I will suggest a kataphatic clarification of the doctrine of God for both thinkers, namely, divine personhood. Finally, I will show how adopting that kataphatic clarification could advance feminist theological aims, rendering Schleiermacher's theology even more beneficial for feminist work.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Many have commented on the benefits of Schleiermacher's work for feminist reflection by investigating his use of gender in his texts, along with his political and personal activity in Berlin. See Ruth Richardson, *The Role of Women in the Life and Thought of the Early Schleiermacher (1768-1806): An Historical Overview* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellon, 1991). Patricia Ellen Guenther-Gleason, "Schleiermacher's Feminist Impulses in the Context of his Later Work," in *Schleiermacher and Feminism: Sources, Evaluations, and Responses*, ed. Iain G. Nicol (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellon, 1992), 95-127. Patricia Ellen Guenther-Gleason, *On Schleiermacher and Gender Politics* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997). Dawn DeVries, "Schleiermacher's 'Christmas Eve Dialogue': Bourgeois Ideology or Feminist Theology?" *The Journal of Religion* 69/2 (Apr., 1989): 169-183. For a contrasting view, see Marilyn Chapin Massey, *Feminine Soul: The Fate of an Ideal* (Boston: Beacon, 1985).

## II. Schleiermacher as Kataphatic Theologian

I turn first to Farley's interpretation of Schleiermacher. Recall that for her, Schleiermacher's writings "dwell in the liminal space where we know only that we do not know." The particular way Schleiermacher achieves such unknowing, according to Farley, is by questioning

the logic of causality itself, which had provided Dionysius the leverage for the practice of negation. He [i.e., Schleiermacher] engages in a proto-phenomenology, examining the deep structure of consciousness to expose a dimension of mind that is itself nondualistic. This opens an area in which not only causality but the difference between self and other dissolves. Where there is no self and no other, no soul and no (personal) God, there is no cause and effect.<sup>16</sup>

For Farley, Schleiermacher examines the structure of consciousness and finds a dimension of mind that is nondualistic, in terms of subject-object and cause-effect distinctions.<sup>17</sup> Farley explains that this is the self-consciousness, a mental structure that "connects sense data, memories, emotions, thoughts, and decisions together and gives us the experience of existing as a particular person."<sup>18</sup> Farley then further identifies her understanding of the immediate self-consciousness with Schleiermacher's God-consciousness.<sup>19</sup> As she puts it, "God-consciousness is part of our primordial psychic

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<sup>16</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 68.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> This is the crucial, and inaccurate, move. As LeRon Shults explains, the last pair [of terms] in the chart [i.e., highest self-consciousness and the self-identical element in pious self-consciousness] are terms that describe only the 'pious' self-consciousness (which is a modification of the immediate self-consciousness). This pair is therefore described in the System of Doctrine proper, while the others are outlined in the early paragraphs of the Introduction. Prior to regeneration, the sensible self-consciousness dominates the feeling of absolute dependence. After Christ's redemptive assumption of the individual into the fellowship of grace, the feeling of absolute dependence dominates the sensible self-consciousness. The immediate self-consciousness is then modified or determined as 'pious' self-consciousness. This modification does not negate the relationality between the two potencies; it simply removes the 'constraint' from the already present God-consciousness so that it dominates the relational unity" (F. LeRon Shults, "Schleiermacher's

makeup. God-consciousness is this nonduality that underlies ordinary awareness.”<sup>20</sup> What we have here is an interpretation of Schleiermacher that understands the God-consciousness as that which allows people to have both continuity of self-identity as a particular person and identification with everything that is, in everyday awareness, considered other than the self, for example, other creatures and God.

There are at least two interpretive issues at stake here: first, whether Schleiermacher’s discourse about the pious immediate self-consciousness, or God-consciousness, is a discussion of humanity’s psychic makeup in general, denoting a distinct structure or area of the human mind; and second, whether the God-consciousness

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‘Reciprocal Relationality’: The Underlying Regulative Principle of his Theological Method,” *Schleiermacher on Workings of the Knowing Mind: New Translations, Resources, and Understandings*, ed. Ruth Drucilla Richardson [New York: Edwin Mellen, 1998], 180-1).

<sup>20</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 81. Before I challenge the content of Farley’s interpretation, let me say a word about her method. Throughout her book, she uses both the early and late Schleiermacher, citing the *Speeches* and the *Glaubenslehre* intermittently. Since my concern is with her use of the mature Schleiermacher, I have restricted my description of her interpretation to those citations that refer to the *Glaubenslehre*. It is important to note that insofar as she cites the *Glaubenslehre*, she refers almost exclusively to paragraph five. As part of the introduction to the work, paragraph five is not part of the dogmatics proper. Rather, it is part of the Conception of the Church, described through propositions borrowed from ethics. Ethics, in turn, is defined as a “speculative presentation of reason, in the whole range of its activity, which runs parallel to natural science” (CF, 5). As such, Farley’s nearly exclusive use of paragraph five to describe Schleiermacher’s presentation of the Christian faith as a whole raises my suspicions that she has not imbibed the full richness of his Christian system of doctrine. It is also important to note, as I have indicated in chapter one, that Farley is not the first to do this sort of thing—many interpreters can appear never to have read further than the introduction. Still, although paragraph five does not have a strictly dogmatic character, the terms introduced there are used throughout the *Glaubenslehre*. As such, after reading the *Glaubenslehre* through, and I would argue *only* after a thorough reading of the work in its entirety, it is important for clarity’s sake to offer an interpretation of paragraph five and those surrounding it. For a treatment of Schleiermacher’s “mysticism” in his early works, see Christine Helmer, “Mysticism and Metaphysics: Schleiermacher and a Historical-Theological Trajectory,” *The Journal of Religion* 83/4 [2003], 517-538). There, she concludes, “Mysticism is neither solipsistic interiority nor the immediacy of the infinite, but the universe mediated by external means through which the universe has chosen to disclose itself. ‘The ‘mystic,’ as Gerrish notes, ‘turns out to be, in his own way, historically minded.’ Yet mediation is more than a bland historical shaping of religious feeling. Historicity is rendered most concrete in an interpersonal encounter of love between two individuals in which individuality is not dissolved but intensified in celebration. Schleiermacher will deepen this early insight into the communal nature of the historical mediation of religion in his later understanding of Christian mysticism in terms of the relation between the individual believer and Jesus Christ that is contextualized in the community of faith” (ibid., 531).

is non-dualistic in terms of subject-object and cause-effect distinctions. Let us take the first issue first. Certainly, in the introduction to the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher sometimes writes as if he is describing a feeling that he thinks may be found, to a greater or lesser degree, in every human being, regardless of the particulars of their religious tradition.<sup>21</sup> Yet it is important to remember that in those pages he is trying to get “clear as to the conception of the Christian Church.”<sup>22</sup> Schleiermacher discusses the immediate self-consciousness because he believes a particular modification of it is “the piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions,” at least on a Protestant Christian conception of the Church.<sup>23</sup> Thus even if at points within these pages Schleiermacher seems to be talking about a general form of human consciousness, he is doing so within a circumscribed discourse regarding the Christian Church.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For instance, he says in paragraph six, “If the feeling of absolute dependence, expressing itself as consciousness of God, is the highest grade of immediate self-consciousness, it is also an essential element of human nature” (CF, 26). This statement and those like it are not naïve notions based on ignorance of the many who do not declare faith in God. Rather, they are based on Schleiermacher’s faith that God is actively creating and perfecting human nature through Christ and Christ’s Spirit in the Church. As he says, “This cannot be controverted on the ground that there is for every individual man a time when that consciousness does not yet exist. For this is the period when life is incomplete.... Nor can it be objected that there are always communities of men in which this feeling has not yet awakened; for these likewise only exhibit on a large scale that undeveloped state of human nature...” (CF, 26). Schleiermacher is not, then, making a claim about a general conception of human nature, but a very Christian one, even if many would now shy away from it because of its colonial and modern impulses. In addition, it is important to note that Schleiermacher makes this claim in an effort to show that the religious self-consciousness “leads necessarily in its development to fellowship or communion” (CF, 26). In other words, he claims that the God-consciousness is an essential element in human nature because of “the truth that every essential element of human nature becomes the basis of a fellowship or communion,” and he is writing about piety within the ecclesiastical communions (CF, 27).

<sup>22</sup> CF, 3.

<sup>23</sup> CF, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Thus, Gerrish explains, “one critic charged Schleiermacher in his own day with trying to absorb what is distinctively Christian into a universal religious knowledge, and he replied that any such knowledge could only be an *abstraction from* what is Christian. It was not his theology but rationalism’s that would have surrendered the particularity of Christian faith to a common religion of humanity, which he considered no religion at all but a Teutonic mishmash of morals and metaphysics” (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 210). Or, as Harvey explains, “There is no such thing as religion, there are only religions. There is no feeling of

If we modify the question accordingly, then, we may ask whether the God-consciousness refers to a distinct structure or area of the Christian human mind that underlies ordinary human awareness. I think not. For Schleiermacher states that “the common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety...is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, the God-consciousness is a person’s consciousness of being in a particular relation with God, namely, a relation of absolute dependence. The relation of absolute dependence is not general. It is—as is everything in dogmatics proper—related to the redemption accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. This is rather different than a “principle,” “layer,” “area,” or “region” of the Christian mind. The God-consciousness, for Schleiermacher, is much more particular.<sup>26</sup>

This leads me to the second interpretive issue, namely, whether the God-consciousness eradicates subject-object and cause-effect distinctions. Schleiermacher says in paragraph four,

As regards the identification of absolute dependence with ‘relation to God’ in our proposition: this is to be understood in the sense that the Whence of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word ‘God,’ and that this is for us the really original signification of that word.<sup>27</sup>

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absolute dependence as such existing by itself; there are only concrete religious affections given their peculiar form by the union of the sensible and the religious self-consciousness” (Van A. Harvey, “A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher’s Theological Method,” *The Journal of Religion*, 42/3 [1962], 156).

<sup>25</sup> *CF*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> As Claude Welch explains, “the living religious self-consciousness is actually bound to, dependent on, an occurrence in the past, that is, an event really in man’s history” (Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 1, 1799-1870* [New Haven: Yale University, 1972], 83).

<sup>27</sup> *CF*, 16.

With this text, Schleiermacher writes both cause and effect and the difference between subject and object directly into the definition of the God-consciousness. God-consciousness is a person's feeling of absolute dependence upon God, who is the Whence, that is, the cause and the creative subject, of all created things.

There is, however, a kind of nonduality that is bound up with, though not identical to, God-consciousness. Indeed, the God-consciousness is reciprocally related to a certain kind of nonduality. In this nonduality, consciousness of oneself as an individual recedes and consciousness of oneself as a part of the realm of antithesis, that is, the created world as a whole, comes to the foreground. As Gerrish explains,

A little introspection, Schleiermacher holds, can catch the original polar structure (*Duplizität*) of self-consciousness as a consciousness of self and other together. It is a consciousness, as he puts it, of the 'being of the subject for itself' and 'its coexistence with an other,' which in its totality is 'the world.'<sup>28</sup>

Schleiermacher's notion of nonduality is, then, to do with the union of all creatures *qua* created beings. But that is as far as this kind of nonduality goes in Schleiermacher's thought.<sup>29</sup>

For as created beings, human persons possess dual, or—better language when interpreting Schleiermacher—*distinct* feelings of partial freedom and partial dependence. These distinct feelings are, in pious Christians, united with another still different feeling, namely, absolute dependence upon God. Indeed, Schleiermacher insists that the

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<sup>28</sup> Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 159.

<sup>29</sup> Schleiermacher is a nondual thinker in the sense that he is trying to get rid of binaries emphasized in Enlightenment thought and some traditional theology. His love for Spinoza might be adduced as evidence for such nonduality. Yet here I am speaking only of nonduality in the terms Farley has introduced. To indicate the difference, I refer to "duality" in the rest of the chapter with terms like "distinction" and "difference."



immediate self-consciousness is always joined with the sensible self-consciousness, that is, consciousness of one's social, moral, and self-regarding feelings as a person within the world. The conjoining of the God-consciousness, which is consciousness of one's absolute dependence upon God, and sensible self-consciousness means,

a co-existence of the two in the same moment, which, of course, unless the Ego is to be split up, involves a reciprocal relation of the two. It is impossible for anyone to be in some moments exclusively conscious of his relations within the realm of antithesis, and in other moments of his absolute dependence in itself and in a general way; for it is as a person determined for this moment in a particular manner within the realm of antithesis that he is conscious of his absolute dependence.<sup>30</sup>

This means that it is rather difficult, on the basis of Schleiermacher's work, to generate either a generic anthropology regarding God-consciousness, or an understanding of the God-consciousness that is conceived in a general way. Gerrish explains,

Our language about God does not simply assert that self-consciousness points to a 'whence' of the feeling of absolute dependence. Rather it is about the ways in which this fundamental feeling coexists with what Schleiermacher calls the 'sensible self-consciousness'—that is, with our experience of nature and of other selves (Gl., §5.3; cf. Gl., §5.1). The feeling of absolute dependence never fills a moment of consciousness but accompanies our entire existence as the consciousness that all of our 'self-activity' comes from somewhere else (Gl., §4.3).<sup>31</sup>

As such, it is inaccurate to say, as Farley does, that on Schleiermacher's understanding of God-consciousness, it "is not consciousness of a particular thing, an idea, a momentary experience or emotion. It is a more or less stable integration of nondualistic awareness into everyday awareness."<sup>32</sup> Here Farley has clearly parted ways with Schleiermacher.

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<sup>30</sup> *CF*, 21. My emphasis.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 161.

<sup>32</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 81.

For not only has Schleiermacher circumscribed his discourse about God-consciousness within the Christian Church, he also understands the God-consciousness as essentially describable with reference to the notion of divine causality and the difference between God and human selves, considered both individually and as part of the whole universe.

God-consciousness is a conscious, definite and vivid awareness of one's absolute dependence upon God in a particular moment in a particular manner, and it manifests itself as "an uninterrupted sequence of religious emotions."<sup>33</sup> The pious Christian thus retains an awareness of the distinction between herself and the divine on whom she absolutely depends, in the same moment that she is aware of the difference between her partial freedom within and partial dependence upon the universe as a whole.<sup>34</sup> In short, for Schleiermacher, Christians do not need to dissolve, as Farley suggests, "our attachment to concepts so that we can move more directly to relationship with the way of 'unknowing.'"<sup>35</sup> Rather, because the God-consciousness is always in reciprocal relation

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<sup>33</sup> *CF*, 22, 24. Given the reciprocal relation between the God-consciousness and the sensible self-consciousness, then, Schleiermacher explains that the God-consciousness "becomes a particular religious emotion, and being in another moment related to a different datum, it becomes a different religious emotion; yet so that the essential element, namely, the feeling of absolute dependence, is the same in both, and thus throughout the whole series, and the difference arises simply from the fact that it becomes a different moment when it goes along with a different determination of the sensible self-consciousness" (*CF*, 22-23).

<sup>34</sup> Schleiermacher describes the reciprocal relation between the sensible self-consciousness and God-consciousness from below and from above. From below, the relation is described as follows: "The more the subject, in each moment of sensible self-consciousness, with his partial freedom and partial dependence, takes at the same time the attitude of absolute dependence, the more religious is he." From above, Schleiermacher describes it like this: "The more it [i.e., the feeling of absolute dependence] contributes to every moment of sensibly determined self-consciousness without the omission of any, so that the man, while he always feels himself partially free and partially dependent in relation to other finite existence, feels himself at the same time to be also (along with everything towards which he had that former feeling) absolutely dependent – the more religious is he." (*CF*, 22). Thus, the feeling of absolute dependence is "a constituent factor to a given moment of consciousness which consists of a partial feeling of freedom and a partial feeling of dependence," that is, a sensible self-consciousness. (*CF*, 22).

<sup>35</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 83. In direct contrast to Farley's statement here, when discussing the conceptual problems

with the sensible self-consciousness, it is always sustained on the basis of the economic activity of God mediated to Christians by Christ and the Church. As he says in paragraph six, “As regards the feeling of absolute dependence in particular, everyone will know that it was first awakened in him in the same way, by the communicative and stimulative power of expression or utterance.”<sup>36</sup> Such expression or utterance may stimulate a person’s feelings, but it also communicates a truth. “Tell me,” Schleiermacher asks, “is it really not sufficiently clear that, when I speak of the consciousness of sin, the need for redemption, and the contentment that we find in Christ, I am referring to actually experienced facts and not to facts of consciousness prior to experience?”<sup>37</sup> Clearly the question is rhetorical.

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involved in the Trinity, Schleiermacher claims, “we really are not in a position to form any definite ideas on the subject, and hence can have no interest in it” (*CF*, 744-5).

<sup>36</sup> *CF*, 27. Schleiermacher was keen, then, to use concepts expressed within language to talk about the Christian faith. As Richard R. Niebuhr explains, “The key to the author’s theological concern for language and its employment lies in his conviction that the entire content of the Christian religious self-consciousness is intrinsically related to and determined by the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whose whole work ‘... was conditioned by the communicability of his self-consciousness by means of speech, and similarly Christianity has always and everywhere spread itself solely by preaching’” (Richard R. Niebuhr, “Schleiermacher: Theology as Human Reflection,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 55/1 [1962], 28). But this is not to say that Christianity is the communication of ideas. Rather, “Preaching is the expression of Jesus of Nazareth’s identity before God and the vehicle of his communication of his own life. Therefore, so little is the preaching that constitutes the essence of Christianity merely externally related to the person of Christ that it is in reality the presence of Christ himself in the church, and the presupposition of *The Christian Faith* as a whole is that the church lives in and through the kerygma of Christ alone. Thus Schleiermacher’s christological principles reflect clearly and pointedly his firm conviction that word and life are inseparable, and that if the former may be apprehended and understood and appropriated only through participation in the latter, nevertheless, the latter (i.e., life) without the means of implanting itself humanly in the hearer (i.e., as a communication) is impotent” (ibid., 29).

<sup>37</sup> *OG*, 45. Schleiermacher’s “mystical” theology is, therefore, quite different from other versions of mysticism. Redeker explains in the context of Schleiermacher’s Christology, “He calls his own Christology mystical. However, it is difficult to understand why so many Schleiermacher interpreters have failed to see that the concept ‘mystical’ as used by Schleiermacher does not correspond to the present concept in religious studies... The new life and the relation between Christ and the faithful is called mystical because ‘it cannot be demonstrated [to those] who are not touched by it; rather its truth resides wholly in the experience itself.’ ... The activity of this Redeemer... takes place through the word and by Christ’s spiritual-personal self-manifestation in his historical appearance” (Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, trans. John Wallhausser [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973], 138).

Yet there can be no doubt that Schleiermacher has concerns about the conjoining of the feeling of absolute dependence with the sensible self-consciousness. That conjoining is, indeed, for Schleiermacher, “the source of all those anthropomorphic elements which are inevitable in this realm of utterances about God.”<sup>38</sup> For that reason, Schleiermacher highlights the feeling of absolute dependence only while framing it in light of a particular configuration of piety, rather than beginning with analogical inferences from creatures to God, for example. Methodologically, Christian theologians are to ask themselves what claims must be made about God in order to uphold and explain the feeling of unconditional receptivity in relation to God, who lovingly and wisely completes the creation of human nature through the person and work of Christ and by Christ’s continuing influence through the Holy Spirit. By using this method he hopes to keep anthropomorphism to a minimum. Yet Schleiermacher claims that religious people know that describing the pious feeling of absolute dependence upon God as it actually exists, that is, as it is conjoined with the sensible self-consciousness, is worth the risk of anthropomorphism since the pious always remember that God is not exhaustively identified with human representations of the divine.

I understand Schleiermacher’s comments regarding the God-consciousness in the introduction of the *Glaubenslehre*, then, as a mere gateway to the richness of the linguistic, conceptual, traditioned, particular expressions of the Christian’s self-conscious feeling of absolute dependence upon God in particular Christian communities, on the basis of the activity of God in Christ and the Church. As he puts it, “the Introduction has

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<sup>38</sup> *CF*, 26.

been regarded as the main subject and core of the book, although it was intended only as a preliminary orientation which, strictly speaking, lies outside of the discipline of dogmatics itself.”<sup>39</sup> Schleiermacher continues, “I had stated clearly enough that the first part, though truly a part of the structure itself, was only a portal and entrance hall and the propositions there, insofar as they could be set forth in an Introduction, could be no more than outlines that would be filled in with their true content from the ensuing discussion.”<sup>40</sup> The fullness of Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God becomes clear only after reading the whole *Glaubenslehre*, where the divine activity is progressively described. What is clear from the introduction alone is that Schleiermacher is attempting to circumscribe piety and dogmatics within and for the Christian Church in such a way that first, the advancement of piety is the “essential business of the Church,” second, that piety does not become something isolated within a person’s life, and third, so that dogmatics upholds the priesthood of all believers.<sup>41</sup> What Schleiermacher offers in the introduction, then, is not the apophatic center of his theology but a beginning step toward the kataphatic character of the dogmatics to follow.

Thus, granted Schleiermacher’s initial remarks about feeling, and granted that the kataphatic dimensions of Schleiermacher’s theology only come to full realization at the end of his mature work, a kataphatic approach defines Schleiermacher’s theology as a whole. For, as Schleiermacher puts it, “an omnipotence, the aim and motive force of

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<sup>39</sup> *OG*, 56.

<sup>40</sup> *OG*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> *CF*, 6, 9. As Schleiermacher explains in *On the Glaubenslehre*, if Christians must first have an idea of God before having true piety, “there would then emerge a hierarchy of intellectual cultured, a priesthood of speculation, which I for my part cannot find to be very Protestant and which, whenever I had the fate to encounter it, has never appeared without a certain popish tinge” (*OG*, 41).

which I do not know, an omniscience, the structure and value of its contents I do not know, and an omnipresence, of which I do not know what it emits from itself and attracts to itself, are merely vague and barely living ideas.”<sup>42</sup> Or, more positively, he says, “We are clearly quite wrong if we allege, as a general experience, that the incomprehensible as such is more conducive to the awakening of the religious feeling than that which is understood.”<sup>43</sup> Likewise, in his discussion of the doctrine of election as it is explicated in Augustine and his interpreters, Schleiermacher shows a clear preference for positive claims:

The form taken by the doctrine that replaced it did not appear to me to be satisfactory either, because, on the one hand, it seemed to me to tend to lead one around in circles, and on the other hand, to the extent that one can confidently, unwaveringly focus one’s attention on it, instead of offering a definite and clear notion, it presented only negations and restrictions instead.<sup>44</sup>

Schleiermacher uses apophasis in a limited way in order to temper his primarily kataphatic theology. These passages ought to give further pause to those interpreters who read Schleiermacher primarily as a negative theologian.

For Schleiermacher, the intimacy between God and human persons that occurs in the encounter with the person of Christ requires critically realistic kataphasis. The requirement is met through the feeling (*Gefühl*) of absolute dependence on God in Christ and the Spirit. It is real to the extent that God, Christ, and the Spirit are external to the

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<sup>42</sup> *OG*, 57.

<sup>43</sup> *CF*, 171. This passage appears in a section on God’s creative work, which he views as uninterrupted by special “creative” acts that are commonly understood as miraculous. The passage is apropos to my point here because it shows that Schleiermacher’s conviction regarding the feeling of absolute dependence is evoked by “the very regularity of nature,” not by an unknown, negative, or mystical orientation (Brian Gerrish, *Continuing the Reformation: Essays in Modern Religious Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993], 205).

<sup>44</sup> *DE*, 23.

Christian, and it is critical insofar as Schleiermacher recognizes the limits of human understanding in relation to God. As Julia Lamm says, Schleiermacher “describes his post-Kantian realism in terms of *Gefühl*,” which is “precisely defined and consistently applied.”<sup>45</sup> Moving through the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher offers an increasingly fuller kataphatic description of the divine essence *ad extra*, as I have shown in chapters two and three. He understands God as Living Spirit, One whose activity is characterized by love and wisdom in the whole compass of God’s creating, redeeming and perfecting activity. The warrant for Schleiermacher’s description of God is a particular Christian community’s receptivity to God’s activity in the world, effected by God in Christ and by the expansive activity of Christ’s Spirit.

### III. Correcting Schleiermacher: Divine Personhood

Farley’s construal of Schleiermacher’s theology as primarily negative helpfully directs our awareness to the tension between the apophatic and kataphatic elements within his system of doctrine. One could say, in fact, that Schleiermacher is a kataphatic theologian with a particularly strong aversion to anthropomorphism and that basic aversion drives him to make numerous apophatic statements along the way regarding the quiddity of God. So it is that Farley finds grist for the apophatic mill in the *Glaubenslehre* and correctly states that for Schleiermacher God is not conceived as a person. In a text focused exclusively on Schleiermacher’s work and its relation to Spinoza, Lamm supports this view, compellingly showing that for Schleiermacher God is not impersonal

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<sup>45</sup> Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State, 1996), 186.

but non-personal. As I have noted above, God is not a dead mechanical force, but neither is God's quiddity adequately analogous to that of a human person. As Lamm says, Schleiermacher has instincts that "prohibit the possibility of God being assigned the characteristics of a human personality."<sup>46</sup>

As I have indicated in chapters three and four, the tension between Schleiermacher's apophatic strictures regarding the quiddity of God and the primarily kataphatic character of his system as a whole comes to a head at the end and climax of the *Glaubenslehre*.<sup>47</sup> There, he claims that the essence of God, as it is represented to us, is love attended by wisdom, which is defined in terms of God's activity and intentionality *pro nobis*. Thus, although Schleiermacher denies that God is personal, it is possible to say that he retains at least four characteristics of persons in his description of the essence of God, namely, causal activity, intentionality, relationality, and ineffability. These descriptions are at the heart of his doctrine of God, with its focus on divine causality, wisdom, and love. Yet Schleiermacher denies that God is personal because he conceives of personhood as inextricably involving anthropomorphic elements. For him, personhood is always and only "in connexion with our physical and bodily organism," and it involves separate, limited faculties of reason and will.<sup>48</sup> On that basis, Schleiermacher believes that, given the rest of the doctrine of God, attributing personhood to God would simply

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<sup>46</sup> Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State, 1996), 216. Note that for Lamm it seems there is no distinction between personhood and personality. In this lack of distinction, she is following Schleiermacher.

<sup>47</sup> Harvey argues that this tension is a result of Schleiermacher not consistently applying his own method. See Van A. Harvey, "A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher's Theological Method," *The Journal of Religion*, 42/3 (1962), 151-170.

<sup>48</sup> *CF*, 252-3.



render the word meaningless.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Farley understands human personhood as “embodied, formed by emotions, physical experiences of pain and pleasure, hormonal and chemical fluctuations.”<sup>50</sup> She therefore rejects divine personhood as well and denies it even more forcefully than Schleiermacher, saying, “The idea of God as a person, a being, with omnipotent powers is essential to the logic of domination by which some are saved and others damned, some orthodox and others heretics, and by which women and sexual minorities, the afflicted and the rebellious, remain perennial outsiders.”<sup>51</sup> For Farley, a personal understanding of God, given its use in conservative theologies and its maintenance of distinction (in her terms, duality), is inextricably linked to domination and oppression.

Now if one understands personhood the way Schleiermacher and Farley do, then I agree that one ought not attribute personhood to God. However, as I have argued in the previous chapter, we have resources at our disposal to construct an understanding of personhood that is not unduly anthropocentric and anthropomorphic. Moreover, I would suggest that a personal understanding of God is not only inessential to the logic of domination but actually facilitates the survival and quality of life of oppressed and marginalized peoples. Thus, although I am sympathetic to Schleiermacher and committed to avoiding anthropomorphism and to conceiving of human personhood as inextricably bound to the human body, by denying the personhood of God Schleiermacher has moved beyond the requirements of his own apophatic strictures.

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<sup>49</sup> “Schleiermacher to Jacobi, 30 March 1918,” *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in His Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols., trans. Frederica Rowan (London: Smith, Elder, 1860), 2:283.

<sup>50</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

I argue that on the basis of the Christian reception of redemption through Christ, which Schleiermacher so elegantly describes and regulates in the *Glaubenslehre*, it is possible to claim that it is “as a person of this kind,” a person in whom “the God-consciousness in His [i.e., Christ’s] self-consciousness as continually and exclusively determining every moment,” that there is a “perfect indwelling of the Supreme Being as His peculiar being and His inmost self.”<sup>52</sup> On the basis of the incarnation of God in the person of Christ, then, the marks of human and creaturely personhood that I have described in the foregoing chapter may find their analogues in divine personhood—assuming, of course, at every point that God is distinct from creation as its Whence and Redeemer.

In what follows, I take each characteristic of personhood described in chapter four in turn, adding the relevant caveats and conditions that Schleiermacher would deem appropriate for the divine based on his theological method as discussed in chapter three. I will highlight four marks of divine personhood: eros in causal activity, a self-grounded relation to matter, economic triune relationality, and intentional decree and ineffability. These marks of divine personhood each elaborate two key Schleiermacherian claims: first, God is distinct, that is, other or different, from creation as its Whence, and second, God is intentionally, wisely, causally active in relation to creatures, and is essentially loving. In what follows, I will not only argue that Schleiermacher could accept this construal of God as personal, despite his apophatic claims to the contrary, which are meant to shield the divine from undue anthropomorphism. I will also argue that those

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<sup>52</sup> *CF*, 388.

who are inspired by Schleiermacher and feminism ought to do so.<sup>53</sup>

### **A. Causal Activity Grounded in the Divine Good-Pleasure**

In the previous chapter I argued for a re-description of human personhood as including, over against Schleiermacher's description of Nazareanism, loving causal activity grounded in and springing from a disposition of receptivity. Something similar may be said of divine personhood, with a number of exceptions. First among them is that God does not possess a disposition of receptivity. For Schleiermacher, God is pure activity and therefore does not act in response to creation but determines and conditions it. Nonetheless, motivated by the desire to be in and with neighbor, God is oriented toward the other. That is, God wills that the other exist in relation to Godself and wills that the other live in abundant relations to Godself and others. Divine causal activity, then, is grounded in eros, the desire for the other to be. Schleiermacher puts it in a Christomorphic way, saying,

Christ therefore was determined as He was, only because, and in so far as, everything as a whole was determined in a certain way; and conversely, everything as a whole was only so determined, because, and in so far as, Christ was determined in a certain way. To say this is obviously to take our stand upon the divine good-pleasure, and to say that the determination in both cases is what it is simply through the divine good-pleasure. Indeed, whenever we form an inclusive idea of natural causality as a self-enclosed whole and go back to its basis

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<sup>53</sup> Incidentally, this is also quite similar to the move Barth makes when he says, "The statement that God is One in three ways of being, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, means, therefore, that the one God, i.e. the one Lord, the one personal God, is what He is not just in one mode but—we appeal in support simply to the result of our analysis of the biblical concept of revelation—in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, and in the mode of the Holy Ghost" (Karl Barth, *CD* I/1, 359). In this claim, Barth is describing the One God as personal, and the three distinctions within the divine essence as alternative ways or modes of the divine being.

in the divine causality [i.e., creation of the world], we can reach no ground of determination for the latter except the divine good-pleasure.<sup>54</sup>

He summarizes:

It has been well-pleasing to God that human nature should show itself in this determined multiplicity of thus determined individual beings; and no other ground for it can be given... Similarly it has been His good-pleasure to make the dispensation of human affairs perfect through Christ... For the religious there is no path of escape from this circle of necessities, each leading back to and conditioned by the others, except by way of this one all-inclusive divine good-pleasure.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, God desires to create and orders the world in the way God desires. It pleases God that the world and all of its inhabitants are diverse and that humanity be perfected through Christ. Divine good-pleasure is, then, another way of saying that God wills that the neighbor exist, and God wills to be with the neighbor.

The activity and scope of divine love is clearly different than that of creaturely persons, for God's loving activity is the Whence of all creation. That is, God not only desires that the other exist and flourish; God originates the other. In addition, whereas for God, desire for the neighbor is taken in the widest sense of the term, including the universe as a whole, for human persons, neighbor-love is often taken in a more limited sense.<sup>56</sup> Yet if human persons accept and share in the divine good-pleasure, divine desire can rehabilitate human desire. As Schleiermacher explains,

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<sup>54</sup> *CF*, 555.

<sup>55</sup> *CF*, 556.

<sup>56</sup> Compare, for instance, the approach taken by Søren Kierkegaard, "You Shall Love *the Neighbor*," in *Works of Love* eds., Hong and Hong (Princeton: Princeton University, 1995), 44-60, with the approach taken by Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Whereas Kierkegaard urges his readers to love the neighbor, universally understood, Kittay asks, "What are my responsibilities to others with whom I stand in specific relations and what are the responsibilities of others to me, so that I can be well cared for and have my needs addressed even as I care for and respond to the needs of those who depend on me?" (Ibid., 28).

Faith in Christ is itself nothing else than sharing in this divine good-pleasure which abides on Christ and the salvation grounded in Him; and the consciousness of divine grace, or the peace of God in the redeemed heart, is nothing else than just this quiet acceptance of the divine good-pleasure in respect of the arrangement of events which led to oneself being taken up into the sphere of redemption. Just as in the world in general we meet with the most manifold gradation of life...and cannot doubt but that this very multiplicity is the richest fulfillment, in time and space, of the divine good-pleasure; and as such gradations also occur within the sphere of human nature: so within the sphere of spiritual life resulting from redemption we shall readily expect all that lies between the greatest and the least, and find peace in regarding all this abundance, linked up in living fellowship, as the object of the divine good-pleasure.<sup>57</sup>

In other words, faith in Christ means accepting and celebrating God's desire for the good of humanity through divine redemption in Christ, which is manifested in abundant variety and diversity.

Thus, to say that God is personal with respect to loving, desiring, causal activity is to highlight God's desire that diverse others exist and exist well, and to insist that God's original activity brings creation about. By recognizing the personhood of God in this regard, Christians may come to rest in God's good-pleasure even as they increase their own loving, desiring activity in relation to others on the basis of the person-forming influence of God in the fellowship of Christ. In this way, the personhood of God may facilitate and encourage the development of Christian, human persons.

## **B. Absolute Spirit's Relation to Created Materiality**

A second mark of the divine quiddity as personal draws out an emphasis on God's relation to the material world: God, who is absolute Spirit, is related to the created world through the person of Christ. As opposed to human persons, who are, I have argued,

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<sup>57</sup> *CF*, 556-7.

ontologically identical with human bodies wherever human persons occur, the divine person is not ontologically identical with the created world. Rather, God, who is absolute Spirit, freely relates Godself to the created material universe as its creator-redeemer in the person of Jesus Christ. In other words, the relation between God and the world is grounded exclusively in the divine, Christomorphic good-pleasure. God creates the world out of love, out of abundance, out of God's generous desire that another exist.

Some feminists claim that even if God is clearly related to created matter, conceiving of God as absolute spirit encourages human persons to prize disembodiment and disparage the body.<sup>58</sup> While I recognize the danger here, it seems to me that human praise of divine absolute spirituality is not the real problem. The problem is twofold: first, actually embodied people pretending that they are disembodied, that is, forgetting their particularity and neglecting and oppressing those whose labor allows them to engage in such fantasy; and second, not foregrounding forthrightly the distinction between God and creatures and not following the divine good-pleasure in deeming the distinction, and all that comes with it, good. Human persons, as I have described them in chapter four, are always embodied creatures, and that is very good.

For those feminists who are sympathetic to Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, divine absolute spirituality should be upheld as integral to that doctrine and its relation to the rest of Schleiermacher's dogmatic theology. The absolute spirituality of God in Godself follows from Schleiermacher's claim that God is the Whence of creation. If God is the Whence on whom creation is absolutely dependent and by whom it is determined,

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<sup>58</sup> See, for example, chapter eleven of Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University, 1999).

then God cannot be part of that creation itself. God can neither be self-created nor emergent from creation. Further, if God is not created, then God is not bound by space or time but conditions space and time itself; that is, God is eternal. Thus, whereas creaturely persons have limited (i.e. conditioned) spirituality that is always essentially integrated with creaturely bodies, God is absolute (i.e. unconditioned) spirituality and is related to created materiality solely because of the divine good-pleasure. Specifically, God is related to creation through the person of Christ: in the preparation for the union of the divine essence with human nature in Christ, during the life of Jesus Christ himself, and through the continuing Spirit of Christ in the Church.

Recall once again why personhood is legitimately applied to God, given Schleiermacher's theological claims. For Schleiermacher, the person of Christ is constituted by his causal activity, grounded in a receptive disposition that is always open to the divine activity; his human body within the material universe; his differentiated relationships with others; and his discerning attention and circumscribed ineffability. Given this constitution, the person of Christ is the revelation and self-communication of God, who is Absolute Spirit, insofar as Christ's causal activity reproduces the divine activity; Christ's relation to the universe is universal in scope; Christ's redemptive activity is not determined or undermined by other human persons; and his God-consciousness, which is his consciousness of the relation between God and himself within the world, is strong and constant within the limits of human consciousness and thinking. The "insofar as" above serves to highlight the ways in which both divine and human persons are spirit—that is, they are irreducible to matter. While in human persons,

that which is irreducible to matter is organically and integrally related to and intertwined with the human body, in divine personhood that which is irreducible to matter is related to the universe by dint of the divine good-pleasure. Even though there is this difference in the scope and the ground of the relation of the spirit to the body, both human creatures and the divine may be called persons. Moreover, “personhood” is preferable to “spirit” because it highlights the relation between that which is irreducible to matter and matter itself, both in humankind and the divine. More specifically, the person of Christ grounds the relation between divine and human persons.

### **C. Economically Triune Relationality**

In chapter two, I detailed Schleiermacher’s understanding of God as economically Triune in relation to humanity. For Schleiermacher, the Trinity is the perfect summary of God’s relation to the world. It indicates that God eternally decrees to be in and with God’s neighbor by uniting the divine essence with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ and the Church, and by wisely preparing for that loving union. God is Triunely related to God’s creation insofar as there are three modes of God’s activity in relation to the world: preparation for union, union, and perfection of the union.

Yet as I have argued in chapter four, just as human persons are differentiated in their relations with others, constituted by openness to others but not annihilated through total identification with them, so too God is both *pro nobis* and remains distinct from the world, and God relates to the world in different ways. Johnson eloquently describes just such divine differentiated relationality:



Holy Wisdom whose very being is relational dwells not in isolation from the world nor in ontological opposition to it but in reciprocal relation, sustaining its life, continuously resisting destructive powers of nonbeing, appearing in the myriad shapes of the historical praxis of freedom, approaching from the future to attract it toward shalom. Reflecting its Creator, the universe has relationship as its fundamental code. Hence Sophia-God and the historical world exist in mutual, if asymmetrical, relation. Insofar as each is directed toward the other with reciprocal interest and intimacy, the relation is mutual. Insofar as the world is dependent on God in a way that God is not dependent on the world, the relation is not strictly symmetrical.<sup>59</sup>

God is, in other words, both intimately and yet asymmetrically related to the world.

Embracing divine personhood, it seems to me, can go a long way toward maintaining the distinction between God and creatures while recognizing their relationality, insofar as personhood points toward interestedness, intimacy, relationship, dependence, and differentiation. More than an appeal to the usefulness of the concept or experience of personhood, however, I am making a stronger claim: If Christians deny the personhood of God as the “how” and the “what” of God in relation to the world, I fear that by so doing they would be disregarding the distinctive revelation of God to which Christians trace their redemption: the person of Jesus Christ. Indeed, they risk losing the thread that holds the entire system of doctrine together: the personally Triune God, the incarnation of God in the person of Christ, and the person-forming work of the Spirit in the Church. By attending to the differentiated person of Christ, as I have done in chapter four, divine personhood here comes to the foreground as both related to and distinct in relation to the other.

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<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2005), 228.

#### **D. Divine Decree and Ineffability**

Finally, I turn to the divine decree and ineffability as it relates to the fourth mark of human personhood, namely, discerning attention. In chapter four, I described human persons' discerning attention as a complex of mental functions that include rationality, sensitivity, intuition, linear and lateral thinking, attunement, feeling, and so on. Because of the complexity and limits of human persons' discerning attention, I described human persons as incapable of knowing themselves and others fully and as marked by an excess of possibility. She has the potential for growth, change, and dynamic developments within herself and in relation to others. In contrast, Godself, human persons, and creation are transparent to God. That is to say, God knows Godself fully; God is not a mystery to Godself. Thus, divine knowledge here is perhaps better designated as divine decree. In the decree, God does not know discrete facts or think discursively. Neither does God know something after the fact, by external acquaintance with it. Rather, God's knowledge is determinative of existence. The divine decree highlights these differences between human and divine knowledge. In addition, as I have discussed in chapter two, for Schleiermacher the divine decree indicates God's being as oriented toward the other; God foreordains the other to blessedness. Divine decree means that God is purely active in relation to creation, being unconditioned and unconstrained in God's Christomorphic determination of the world. In short, God is eternal love and wisdom.

Because God knows Godself and the world fully in the divine decree, the ineffability that attends divine personhood is, first, a description of the limits of human understanding with regard to God as God is revealed to humanity. God reveals Godself in

the person of Christ. In so doing, Christians are invited to relate to God as a person rather than as an It, or as something that can be reduced to a series of propositions, or as a mechanistic force of the universe. Whereas the divine decree highlights the eternality of the divine love and wisdom, divine ineffability shores up the claim that God is not *reducible* to decree, concepts, or powers. Rather, to know God is always to be in relationship with a person who exceeds human expectations, concepts, and expressions, and who is making all things new.

Second, the ineffability of God means that there is no getting around the revelation of God in the person of Christ. That is, for Christians there has been no other way to gain, no other vantage point from which to see, no “God’s eye view,” of the divine essence. God is known only in and through the person of Christ. As such, God is ineffable even as God is revealed. Yet this is by no means an affirmation of the *infinite* qualitative difference between God and humanity. Rather, the revelation of God in the person of Christ grounds the claim that God and humanity are, as Soskice puts it, “kin.”<sup>60</sup> There are differences between God and human persons—monumental differences. Even so, the ineffability of God need not mean that God is “*wholly other*.”<sup>61</sup> Ironically, given

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<sup>60</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007). Here I’m taking Soskice further than she wants to go explicitly.

<sup>61</sup> The early Karl Barth most notably used this term and phrases like it. See, for instance, Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Oxford, 1968), 28, 36: “The Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men. Salvation comes to them from Him, because they are, as men, incapable of knowing Him, and because they have no right to claim anything from Him....God is the unknown God, and, precisely because He is unknown, He bestows life and breath and all things.” See also “The Humanity of God,” *The Humanity of God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 37-65, wherein Barth reflects on his early view: “What began forcibly to press itself upon us about forty years ago was not so much the humanity of God as His deity—a God absolutely unique in His relation to man and the world, overpoweringly lofty and distant, strange, yes even wholly other” (ibid., 37). In this essay, Barth admits that his early emphasis on God as wholly other, and “the not less famous ‘infinite qualitative distinction’” went too far. Indeed, he says, “All this, however well it may have been meant and however much it may

the fact that theologians say God is wholly other in part in an effort to recognize humanity's epistemic and ontological boundaries, saying that "God is wholly other" itself goes beyond human limitations. How might one know that God is *infinitely* qualitatively different than human persons, given the fact that God is revealed in and through the person of Christ? Indeed, it seems to me the incarnation requires our thought to move in the opposite direction.

An affirmation of God's otherness and ineffability without thereby affirming *infinite* otherness and *radical* ineffability is especially important for Christian women. As Beverly Harrison describes it,

Many men, I now believe, do not really experience the complete spiritual emptiness of God's 'radical transcendence' because their ongoing recital of the stories of scripture and liturgical tradition continually reiterates images for God that invoke analogies to male identity and men's experience. This 'wholly other' God is, for them, still Father, Lord, King, all concrete terms of male agency. He remains, always, whatever else they aver of God, a male image. Men can insist on the complete disconnectedness of God and 'man' yet not have to cope with what it means theologically to create a total gulf between human experience and God...For many of us women, by contrast, this abstract 'otherness' language,

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have mattered, was nevertheless said somewhat severely and brutally, and moreover—at least according to the other side—in part heretically" (ibid., 43). More specifically, Barth admits, "We viewed this 'wholly other' in isolation, abstracted and absolutized, and set it over against man, this miserable wretch—not to say boxed his ears with it—in such fashion that it continually showed greater similarity to the deity of the God of the philosophers than to the deity of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (ibid., 45). Barth continues—and it is worth quoting him at length given his dominance in some theological circles—"But did it not appear to escape us by quite a distance that the deity of the living God—and we certainly wanted to deal with Him—found its meaning and its power only in the context of His history and of His dialogue with man, and thus in His togetherness with man? Indeed—and this is the point back of which we cannot go—it is a matter of God's sovereign togetherness with man, a togetherness grounded in Him and determined, delimited, and ordered through Him alone. Only in this way and in this context can it take place and be recognized. It is a matter, however, of God's togetherness with man. Who God is and what He is in His deity He proves and reveals not in a vacuum as a divine being-for-Himself, but precisely and authentically in the fact that He exists, speaks, and acts as the partner of man, though of course the absolutely superior partner. He who does that is the living God....It is precisely God's deity which, rightly understood, includes his humanity. How do we come to know that? What permits and requires this statement? It is a Christological statement, or rather one grounded in and to be unfolded from Christology" (ibid., 45-6). The argument of this dissertation is, in many ways, a critique of the earlier Barth and affirmation that Schleiermacher and Barth hold quite similar views on this matter.

taken together with imagery derived so exclusively from concrete historical male experience, combines to obliterate all divine-human connection.<sup>62</sup>

So long as scripture remains central to the Christian traditions, as it ought to in my view, such male imagery will not fall out of use. Further, even if the female imagery within the Bible is brought to the foreground and supplemented with additional sources of female imagery, because of the long history of sexism and patriarchy within which humanity still lives, the impact of that female imagery on the Christian imagination is not likely to be vast. Christian feminists must do more than introduce a variety of theological images for God. Feminist theologians must change the system of doctrine within which such imagery is generated and on the basis of which it is interpreted.

By affirming ineffability as a feature of divine personhood, then, I am claiming that human persons cannot circumscribe God with a set of propositions, for example, and cannot know God fully. At the same time, however, by denying that God is radically other, I avoid obliterating the divine-human connection that is the life-blood of Christian piety and the basis for such central Christian affirmations as the divine economic Trinity and Incarnation.<sup>63</sup> In this way, divine ineffability does not eradicate but enhances the

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<sup>62</sup> Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*, ed. Carol Robb (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 228.

<sup>63</sup> A preservation of divine ineffability located within divine personhood may be the answer to the problem Bruce Marshall identifies with regard to Jesus' person and words: "On Schleiermacher's account, the language of Jesus and his contemporaries, like all language, is expressive of states of consciousness that are at least potentially present among its users. So, for example, if a specific combination of words present in the language and the self-ascription of those words by Jesus are taken to constitute the uniqueness of Jesus' expressions, it remains the case that both the combinations and their self-ascription by someone are logical possibilities within the language itself. If all language is at root expressive, this logical possibility is merely the outer side of a state of consciousness already present (although perhaps only in latent form) in everyone who uses the language. This is precisely what Schleiermacher's dogmatic assumption of Jesus' "unique dignity," understood specifically in terms of a unique "God-consciousness," cannot allow. Thus it seems impossible for Schleiermacher to say both that Jesus' language adequately expresses his unique God-consciousness, and so can serve as the hermeneutical clue by which the gap between outer and inner may

human-divine relationship established in Christ. As Catherine Mowry LaCugna puts it, “The heart of *theologia*, as also of *oikonomia*, is therefore relationship, personhood, communion. The mysteries of human personhood and communion have their origin and destiny in God’s personal existence.”<sup>64</sup> The mystery of God is preserved in divine personhood without rendering that mystery total.

To summarize; the four marks of divine personhood I have described here include loving causal activity by which God wills on the basis of God’s desire, or good-pleasure, that an other exist and flourish. Second, God is related to creation by God’s own self-grounded determination. God wills to be incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and to relate to the rest of the created world in and through Christ. Third, the personhood of God includes God’s economic triune relationality. Differentiated relationality is the “how” of God’s quiddity. Finally, though God is fully known to Godself and knowable by human persons through God’s revelation of Godself in the person of Jesus Christ, because of the limits of human knowledge Christians cannot know God fully even in and through the person of Christ. Throughout my description of the four marks of divine personhood,

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be crossed, and that this same language is incapable of bringing that very inner constitution “into consciousness,” and so is not a threat to Jesus’ exclusive redemptive “dignity.” In the final analysis, Schleiermacher appears to have no way of effecting by hermeneutical means the transition upon which his Christology depends, namely, that between the outward speech and action of Jesus of Nazareth and a universally redemptive God-consciousness, presumed to be present exclusively in him. When Schleiermacher’s reading of the Gospels repeatedly moves from Jesus’ language to the putative state of Jesus’ self-consciousness, he is in fact claiming to cross a bridge that he previously had to demolish” (Bruce Marshall, “Hermeneutics and Dogmatics in Schleiermacher’s Theology,” *The Journal of Religion* 67/1 [1987], 32). It seems to me the problem can be solved by affirming the relative adequacy of language to describe a person while denying that persons can be circumscribed completely by propositional content. By affirming this understanding of the ineffability of persons, we can both affirm that Jesus’ God-consciousness is his exclusive dignity, that we know Christ’s person in and through the New Testament, and also that Jesus’ person is not reducible to his language and concepts, that is, propositions he uttered or that can be uttered about him.

<sup>64</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper One, 1991), 246.

I have argued that personhood is what grounds the divine-human connection that is actualized in God's activity of love and wisdom in the Incarnation and economic Triunity. These marks of divine personhood, as I have sketched them, fundamentally agree with, and in many cases draw upon, Schleiermacher's emphases on divine intentionality, relationality, activity, and ineffability.

In these ways, I have attempted to offer an understanding of divine personhood that is grounded on the revelation of God in the human person Jesus Christ. As such, some anthropomorphism is unavoidable. However, as Soskice explains, "Anthropomorphism is unavoidable in a religion whose God is a God of calling and address. It is people who speak, and a 'speaking God' will be spoken of personally... The kinship of God and humankind is both compelled and resisted by the Hebrew scriptures—compelled for reasons of intimacy and resisted for fear of idolatry."<sup>65</sup> What I have offered in my conception of personhood is a way forward in speaking of God as a person while "rendering harmless," in Schleiermacher's words, the anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism connected with such a statement.

#### **IV. Feminist Theologies and Divine Personhood**

I have already described why I think a primarily apophatic approach to the doctrine of God is not faithful to Schleiermacher's thought. Now I want to go even further, claiming that such an approach limits the feminist gains that could be made here. I will argue that a critically realistic kataphatic account of the divine identity and action

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<sup>65</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 78.

as personal is helpful for both contemporary feminists in general and Farley in particular. Up to this point, I have argued that doing so is faithful to the spirit, though not the letter, of Schleiermacher's work in the *Glaubenslehre* and foregrounds biblical accounts of divine-human relationships. In what follows, by bringing into focus once again Wendy Farley's doctrine of God, I will argue that a radically apophatic approach limits feminist gains primarily in two ways: first, it creates a certain incoherence between the apophatic and kataphatic claims made within a systematic theological account, and second, this approach does not entail attention to and celebration of the concrete particularities of those within the Christian communion and on the margins of society. A kataphatic approach, in contrast, celebrates difference in a particularistic way, which can fuel inclusive ecclesiologies like the one Farley intends to offer.

To see the tension that radical apophasis generates, consider the following two quotations from *Gathering Those Driven Away*. On the one hand, Farley claims, "ultimate reality cannot be or be like anything in creation."<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, she says, "'like knows like,' as Plotinus puts it. The incarnation is possible because humanity, created in the divine image, shares nonduality with its divine source."<sup>67</sup> The tension between these two claims illustrates the trouble radical apophasis can generate. Farley attempts to hold both together by prioritizing the claim of nonduality. As she states, "It is useful and appropriate to experience the world as centered in a duality between self and world...But dualistic awareness does not work as well when it is directed toward

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<sup>66</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 10.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



something that is not an object in the world.”<sup>68</sup> Rather, she explains, “the method or technique of the negative way focuses on the structures of mind to break the domination of dualistic thinking.”<sup>69</sup> When the domination of dualistic thinking has been overcome, we see that “the mental act of attribution is an imperfect way of orienting the heart toward the Divine.”<sup>70</sup> Instead of naming or negating God, then, according to Farley we ought simply to love God, and the *via negativa* allows “the living love of Divinity to flow more unrestrainedly.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, she goes on to say that for Schleiermacher, “God-consciousness is not awareness of God but awareness through God.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, “through contemplation, ineffability is not an infinite qualitative difference but a flame that connects Beloved and lover. Desire is a medium through which nonduality and duality dwell together.”<sup>73</sup> In short, for Farley, “the Abyss of Divinity beyond all names and negations is disclosed to us as love.”<sup>74</sup>

I agree with Farley that God is disclosed to us as loving, as well as wise, active, and in intimate relation with humanity in the world. Yet I am not sure that theologians ought to attempt to avoid idolatry and the attendant oppression of marginalized people by claiming that through contemplation individuals may overcome the infinite qualitative difference between God and creatures. Doing so opens a large lacuna through which idolatry, and the oppression that often accompanies it, may run rampant under the guise of love. For if individuals unite with the divine in a way that overcomes the distinction

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 205.

between them, they may very easily come to understand God in their own image and then use their religious experience to attempt to conform others to that image, construed as divine. Instead of taking this approach, I would suggest an affirmation that God and humanity are—always, but not infinitely—qualitatively different, and that Christians have communion with God on the basis of the divine redeeming activity in the world and human persons’ pious reception and recognition of that activity in Christ and the Spirit.

In contrast to Farley’s view, then, I would argue, in a way inspired by Schleiermacher, that God is similar to human persons insofar as they are both marked by causal, intentional, relational, and ineffable activity. However, God is qualitatively different from human persons in at least the following ways. Regarding causal and intentional activity, God is the Whence of creation in all of its temporal determinations, and God always acts out of abundance and generosity. With regard to relationality, God is related to matter not necessarily but on the basis of God’s self-grounded determination and is eternally related to the entire scope of the created world through the person of Christ. At the same time, God is ineffable to humanity insofar as God exceeds human concepts and finite possibilities, even as God Godself, human persons, and creation as a whole are transparent to God, given that their existence and preservation depends upon the eternal and single divine decree.

By making these claims about the differences and similarities between God and human persons, we can coherently both avoid idolatry by avoiding undue anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism and offer an explanation for the possibility of incarnation in the person of Christ. Thus, whereas Farley claims that the “incarnation is

possible because humanity...shares nonduality with its divine source,”<sup>75</sup> I claim that the incarnation is possible on the basis of the divine and human union in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>76</sup> Yet my argument does not put God on the same spectrum of being as creatures, rendering God simply quantitatively rather than qualitatively different than created human persons. Rather, because of the significant qualitative differences I have just mentioned, we must maintain that God is understood analogically, where analogy is understood here in a way inspired by Barth.<sup>77</sup> God is both similar to and different from human persons in significant and nameable ways. Making this claim allows Christian systematic theology to avoid the incoherency that attends claims about the infinite qualitative difference between God and humanity and its radical erasure in apophatic contemplation.<sup>78</sup>

I turn now to the second aspect of my argument and critique of Farley’s, this time with a view toward contributing to inclusive ecclesiologies. My contention is that an

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>76</sup> In Schleiermacher’s words, “The sublime propositions it advances, that the divine and human natures are not at all separate, that the divine nature is the truth of human nature and that human nature is the reality of the divine, are related to the fundamentals of the Ebionitic view as philosophical profundity is to the proverbial cleverness of ordinary life. When I read that this unity of God with man is manifest and real as an actuality in the person of Jesus, I think that it can be a beautiful and true expression of our faith. But when I read that the certitude of this truth is vested in the concept of the idea of God and man, or in knowledge, then, with all due respect to the profundity of this speculation, I must reiterate that I cannot acknowledge that this truth grounds the certainty of my faith” (*OG*, 62-3).

<sup>77</sup> A Barthian understanding of analogy maintains that we know about God on the basis of God’s application of analogy. As Kevin Hector puts it in *Theology Without Metaphysics: God, Language, and the Spirit of Recognition* (New York: Cambridge, 2011): “This leads Barth to claim, first, that the meaning of the doctrine of analogy ‘is already here before our eyes in the doctrine of the justification of the sinner solely through faith,’ since if there is an analogy between God and the human person, ‘how can it be otherwise than that which is posited and created through the work and action of God, which is actual of God and only of God, and thus in faith and only in faith?’ One’s concepts can indeed apply to God, but this application depends wholly upon God’s gracious initiative, from which it follows that one’s application of these concepts must be a matter of faith in, and obedience to, God’s prior act” (ibid., 140-141).

<sup>78</sup> When Barth used the phrase “infinite qualitative difference,” he did so as a negative move, given the need to contest the continuity of God with culture.

understanding of God as wholly other, on the one hand, and completely sharing a nondual root with humanity, on the other, might be able to achieve abstract inclusivity on the basis of love achieved in contemplation, but not inclusivity of particular concrete persons *as* particular concrete persons, rather than despite their concrete particularities. On Farley's view, traditionally marginalized human persons would be included in the Christian community because the contemplative has inculcated the feeling and practices of love in general. Mirroring her doctrine of God and incarnation, marginalized people would then be accepted in Christian communities because they are similar to God insofar as they are "other," as God is other, and they may be welcomed because they are similar to all human beings and God with regard to their nondual root. But if Farley can only achieve abstract inclusivity, then the particular affirmation of LGBTQ or I persons, among other concrete forms of difference, becomes an *ad hoc* addition to the doctrinal system she is beginning to construct. The effect of Farley's apophatic move within the doctrine of God and the doctrine of incarnation is, then—quite contrary to her intention—to downplay rather than celebrate concrete particular differences within Christian community.

Put another way, rather than celebrate persons' inclusion within ecclesiastical communities on the basis of a general structural feature of the human mind and the divine mystery, the key suggestion here is to do so on the basis of the particular person of Jesus of Nazareth. In the person of Christ, we have what Soskice calls "the kinship of God and humankind."<sup>79</sup> In the kinship of Christ's person, there are three simultaneous affirmations

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<sup>79</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (New York:

of, first, the priority of the economic divine activity, second, the ineffability of human persons, which cautions us, as Buber would, against treating one another as Its rather than Thous, and third, the always particular character of human persons in their various concrete multiplicities. When these three claims are affirmed on the basis of the person of Christ, theologians can facilitate the gathering of those traditionally driven away from the church by attending to and celebrating concrete differences, rather than by radical erasure of difference.

One argument against my description of human and divine personhood, specifically in light of my feminist aim of including the marginalized within the Church, might run as follows. The notion of personhood presented in chapter four seems to be in tension with the feminist claims in the present chapter because if every human being is not a person at all times or to the same degree, then some human beings are included—that is, made in the image of God—and some are not. But this seems contrary to the goal of “gathering those driven away.”

This line of reasoning is compelling if one begins with the goal of inclusivity, looks for a way to say that all are made in the image of God, and then states that because everyone is made in the divine image, all are included. Let me say a preliminary word about “inclusion” here. It is not clear to me, on this argument, what people are to be included within. Yet it seems likely that “inclusion” here means being valued as a part of the world and being valued in a particular way—that is, as a human being. If this is what “inclusion” means, then given the high value I have placed on materiality and

creatureliness in chapter four, it should be clear that on my view all are “included” on the basis of their being or existence. Moreover, all are valued as the creatures they are—whether they are human persons or not. That is to say, God created the world (and humanity within it) and it is good. Just by being part of the world, one is valued as the creature one is. In this way, my argument draws on Augustine’s anti-Manichean claims.

Beyond valuing creatureliness, it should be clear that I also value human personhood. It is good to be a human person and I admire the qualities I have identified as marks of human personhood. Yet affirming the goodness of human personhood does not mean that I want to make moral judgments based solely on human personhood. That is, I would not want to treat an Alzheimer’s patient, for instance, with less respect or dignity than I would treat a current Pulitzer Prize winner, on the basis that I value purposive activity and discerning attention. Rather, it seems to me that deciding how to treat various human beings in particular circumstances is not something that may be done with regard to only one criterion. In fact, it might be that a criterion- or principle-based approach, though helpful for critically thinking through ethical issues, glosses over many complexities involved in ethical situations. Indeed, such an approach may not sufficiently take into account or bring to the foreground precisely the complexities that make human persons and their relations with one another ineffable to a significant degree. That is not to say by any means that ethicists ought to resign themselves to the mysteries of human persons and relations. Rather, it is to say that valuing particular aspects of creatures is not at all equivalent to saying that those particular aspects are the only criteria for making ethical decisions.

Turning to the counter-argument directly: The train of thought is that feminists want everyone, especially women and others who have been marginalized, to be included (i.e., valued equally). One way to achieve that goal is to say that everyone is made in the image of God. Notice that I have not proceeded in this fashion. Rather, I begin with the person of Christ. In the person of Christ, the divine essence and human nature are united. Here is the site of divine self-communication and impartation. Thus, along with Barth I would claim that Christ and Christ alone is the image of God. All people are not made in the image of God except insofar as God determines the world and human beings always with regard to Christ. There is no generic image of God in human beings. Thus, the marks of personhood I have described are not the starting points by which we may then discover who is made in the image of God and who is not. Rather, I begin with the person of Christ—who is the only image of God. I then identify marks of Christ’s human personhood that are conditions for the possibility of humanity’s redemption by God through Christ. These marks also indicate something about who God is on the basis of God’s activity and self-impartation in Christ, namely that God is the One who wisely and actively loves God’s neighbor. I then show the ways in which those marks of personhood may be fostered and progressively completed in human beings through a relation to God in Christ—who is not simply active, relational, ineffable, and discerning *without content*, but who is the One who Wisely and Actively Loves God’s neighbor. Further particularity in that regard comes by the self-communication of Christ in scripture and the interpretation thereof in preaching and various ecclesial historical witnesses.

I affirm divine personhood not because I want to include or value the marginalized. Rather, I affirm divine personhood because of the revelation of God in the person of Christ. Happily, Christ values marginalized human beings and includes them within his family. Further, he does so not despite their particularity, on the basis of a generic set of attributes they possess, but in, with, and through their particularity, on the basis of God's identity and activity within Christ's own person. I focus on human personhood because it highlights the "kindness of God" in relation to humanity, the Christomorphism of the universe and humanity in relation to God, and the way in which redemption occurs. God redeems humanity in and through the person of Christ, whose activity is person-forming.

Christ's person is person-forming not with regard to individuals alone but always with regard to individuals in community. In this way, even those who do not or cannot display a robust range of activities associated with human personhood are included in the body of Christ. By being included in the Church—that is, in the life and activity of the community of believers—individual human beings who do not exhibit the full range of human personhood are part of what Schleiermacher calls the "moral Person" of the Church. They are included in the being and activity of the Church. Furthermore, insofar as the Church, through Christ and Christ's Spirit, is God's redemptive agent in the world, they are included in the divinely determined and temporal actualization of the redemption of the world.

I hope this shows that adopting a critically realistic understanding of Schleiermacher's account of the doctrine of God would bolster the coherence of Farley's



theological work, integrating her doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. Consider, for instance, Farley's use of Schleiermacher's emphasis on the person-forming character of the encounter with the living Christ. Through the passion of Christ, in particular, she says, "self-identity is reformed and arises as a new way of experiencing one's personhood. ... [Forgiveness] is the re-creation of the living principle of personhood ... It is the vocation of the church to mediate this power to its community."<sup>80</sup> The link Farley makes between the passion of Christ and the Church's vocation is person-centered. If one does not likewise allow for a critically realistic analogical understanding of God, a gap opens up between the doctrines of incarnation and church, on the one hand, and the doctrine of God, on the other. Avoiding a radically apophatic approach, then, renders all three intertwined doctrines more efficacious. I am using Farley here simply as an example. The same could be said as well for Schleiermacher's own system of doctrine as it stands. In its corrected form, his work may become even more coherent.

To conclude, I have argued that understanding Schleiermacher as a kataphatic theologian and affirming a critically realistic understanding of God is both faithful to the heart of Schleiermacher's system of doctrine and could usefully correct and bolster Farley's inclusive feminist ecclesiology, strengthening the common feminist claim that all persons, with, in and through their particular differences, may be joyful recipients of the outpouring of the Spirit. I have also argued that a kataphatic approach, by halting a totalizing form of apophaticism, may both curb idolatry and facilitate the gathering of those traditionally driven away from the church.

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<sup>80</sup> Wendy Farley, *Gathering Those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 163.

### Conclusion

This dissertation has been motivated by two primary questions. First, what are we to make of Schleiermacher's mature theology and methodology in the context of modern and contemporary theology? In other words, what is its status and place in the history of Christian thought? Second, how might the current impulse toward radical apophysis in feminist theology be arrested and corrected? That is, how might a beneficial dialectic between apophysis and kataphasis be established in a way that will further feminist aims? I responded to these two questions by analyzing, critiquing, and correcting Schleiermacher's doctrine of God and by bringing the corrected form, itself inspired by feminist work, into conversation with contemporary feminist theologies.

I set the discussion in motion by considering Schleiermacher's interpretive reception. He was charged with Spinozism, Idealism, Psychological Subjectivism or Experiential Expressivism, and sexism. Though his critics were not altogether mistaken, their charges have been consistently overstated. Building on the work of Brian Gerrish, Bruce McCormack, Kevin Hector, Matthias Gockel, and others, I offered an interpretive lens by which to view Schleiermacher as Reformed and reforming. I highlighted the theocentric and Christomorphic features of his mature work and rejected the hermeneutic tradition of reading the *Glaubenslehre* through the *Reden*. Instead, I read the *Glaubenslehre* from back to front, starting with Schleiermacher's discussion of the Trinity, moving from the kataphatic to the apophatic aspects of his doctrine of God, and offering little remark on the nature of *Gefühl* (feeling) until the end of the dissertation. Proceeding in this way, I have shown that the often-repeated interpretation of

Schleiermacher that understands him as an experiential expressivist, concerned with the subject in relative isolation and preoccupied with private states, dramatically misinterprets his mature work. I have endeavored to show that Schleiermacher is a primarily kataphatic theologian who uses apophasis in a circumscribed and purposeful way.

Though, as a post-Kantian theologian, Schleiermacher is concerned not to speak of God *in se*, I have argued that his treatment of the “essential Trinity” goes some way toward acknowledging real distinctions within the divine being. Moreover, despite his worry about using the name “person” for God, his mature work nonetheless employs a number of personal analogies for the divine being and includes a number of marks of personhood, including intentionality, activity, relationality, and ineffability. Grounding my constructive suggestion in Schleiermacher’s own Christology and contemporary feminist theology, I then offered a relatively non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropocentric description of personhood that, I have suggested, may allow Schleiermacher’s theology to be rendered more systematically coherent. In addition, it may be adopted by feminist theologians who are concerned to avoid anthropomorphism and, at the same time, to highlight the divine essence as love and wisdom *pro nobis*. I have offered a critique and correction of Wendy Farley’s interpretation and use of Schleiermacher and radical apophasis as an example of how interpreting Schleiermacher as a primarily kataphatic theologian and adopting divine personhood might advance inclusive ecclesiologies that attend to and embrace particularity. In short, I have offered an interpretive framework and method for reading Schleiermacher’s mature work, I have

called for a halt in the current trend toward radical apophysis in feminist theology, and I have suggested a way forward in feminist theology by drawing on a corrected form of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God.

## **I. Schleiermacher and Feminism**

At the beginning of the dissertation, without having set forth the contents of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, I was not able to offer a full account of my motivation for offering feminist theologians a corrected form of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God. After all, other doctrines of God might just as well espouse a personal God, which could halt the trend toward radical apophysis. Now that I have set out Schleiermacher's doctrine, I may turn to the question directly: why focus specifically on Schleiermacher? Although there are many, I will offer three reasons.

### **A. Absolute Dependence**

While a primary focus in feminist theory has been women's empowerment through their own assertion, achievement, and activity, feminist theologians should not neglect the fundamental and absolute dependency that is at the root of humanity's relation to God. That is, while women need to work toward their own empowerment through achievement and activity among other creatures, they also need to recognize—with the rest of creation—that they are utterly dependent on God. As Sarah Coakley explains,

[There is a] profound paradox of an inalienable surrender ('submission') to God that – as I argue – must remain the secret ground of even feminist 'empowerment.

...If our fundamental and practiced dependency is on God, there is the fulcrum from which our (often necessary) dependencies on others may be assessed with critical discernment, and the assumed binary gender-associations of such dependencies called into question.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, when it comes to women’s empowerment, as with all things, we should always keep in mind the distinction between the relation to God and to other creatures. Women should bow to no one but the One God and on God alone they should—indeed, must—absolutely depend. Because Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God is characterized by a heightened attention to the asymmetrical relation of dependence between God and creatures, it can provide substance for feminist reflection and engagement with doctrines and practices of dependence upon God. This God is one “who neither shouts nor forces, let alone ‘obliterates.’”<sup>2</sup> As such, the One who loves wisely may offer the Christian a firm footing in discerning appropriate relations of dependence among creatures. With Coakley and with Schleiermacher, I affirm: “at the heart of any Christian doctrine of creaturehood must surely lie...the notion of a radical, and qualitatively distinct, dependence of the creature on God.”<sup>3</sup> However one may assess Schleiermacher’s overall theological program, then, on this count Schleiermacher’s mature work is uniquely suited as a theological resource for feminist theology.

## **B. Non-competitive Relations**

A second reason for drawing on Schleiermacher’s work in advancing feminist theology is that it understands God and the world in a non-competitive relationship. That

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), x, xx.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 55.

is, Schleiermacher understands human freedom and action, on the one hand, and divine providence on the other, as fully compatible with one another. The divine causality does not compete with human causalities because of the qualitative difference between God and creatures. This non-competitiveness, itself an implication of the asymmetrical relationship of humanity to God, coheres with recent feminist theology. As Kathryn Tanner explains, drawing out the connection between absolute dependence, concursus, and divine transcendence,

This non-competitive relation between creatures and God is possible, it seems, only if God is the fecund provider of all that the creature is in itself... This relationship of total giver to total gift is possible, in turn, only if God and creatures are, so to speak, on different levels of being, and different planes of causality—something that God's transcendence implies.<sup>4</sup>

In chapters two and three I have shown that while Schleiermacher balances divine immanence and transcendence, or kataphasis and apophasis, his doctrine of God has a decidedly kataphatic edge. Yet the primarily kataphatic approach he takes is not to the detriment of a clear recognition of the ineffability, eternity, and otherness of God. By understanding the divine causality as a different kind than creaturely causality, his work may be a resource for feminist theologians who aim at undermining a competitive understanding of God and creatures. As Coakley explains, further drawing out the connection with distinctively feminist concerns,

If it could be argued that an incompatibilist vision of freedom is unconsciously motivated by rejection of the mother (and everything she symbolizes: dependency, relationship, affectivity, bodiliness, emergent sexuality), then it is hardly surprising that it can also be resistant, in a theological context, to a notion

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<sup>4</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 3.

of God as matrix – as sustaining conditioner of all that we are and do (even of acts of compatibilist freedom).<sup>5</sup>

Schleiermacher's vision is anything but incompatibilist. Indeed, his doctrine of God is essentially in line with the feminist suggestion that God be conceived as the sustaining conditioner of every creature and creaturely action. Moreover, he provides what Coakley sees as missing from some current analytic discussions of God, namely, "a sustained or positive reflection on the nurturing and all-encompassing dimensions of divine love."<sup>6</sup> By reflecting on these gendered terms in a theological context, Schleiermacher's doctrine of God could provide fodder for the feminist agenda to raise Christian theology out of a predominantly masculinized discourse.

### **C. Eco-Feminism and Feminist Economies**

Third, because of Schleiermacher's emphases on the historical reality of the divine activity in Christ and the common Spirit of the Church, the eternal covenant between faith and science, and the interdependence of all creatures, his doctrine of God could provide a theological ground for some projects within the burgeoning fields of eco-feminism and feminist Christian economies.<sup>7</sup> The feminists within these fields take as essential to their projects the economic divine activity, the value and compatibility of religion and ecological ways of living, and the need to recognize the interrelations and dependencies of creatures upon one another. These theological matters are at the heart of

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 100.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>7</sup> On the latter, see, for example, Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 31-85. In this discussion, Tanner builds on the non-competitive relation between God and creatures, and the asymmetrical absolute dependence of the creature upon God.

feminist theological proposals for sustainable planetary living and economic practices.

Take, for instance, Sallie McFague's call for a doctrine of God that is different than that implied by the neo-classical economic model:

Broadly speaking, the differences can be suggested as a movement toward the earth: from heaven to earth; from the otherworldly to this worldly; from above to below; from a distant, external God to a near, immanent God; from time and history to space and land; from soul to body; from individualism to community; from mechanistic to organic thinking; from spiritual salvation to holistic well-being; from anthropocentrism to cosmocentrism....The ecological model...claims that God is radically present in the world, as close as the breath, the joy, and the suffering of every creature. The two views of God and the world, then, are very different: in the one God's power is evident in God's distant control of the world; in the other, God's glory is manifest in God's total self-giving to the world.<sup>8</sup>

While McFague's description and assessment of the God-world relation lacks the subtlety of Schleiermacher's work, she points to the importance in eco-feminism and Christian economies for emphasizing the kataphatic God who—though always qualitatively distinct from the world as its eternal Whence—wisely loves the world and self-communicates Godself in the entire scope of the created universe. Because of these features of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God, his mature work could bolster feminist attempts to highlight creaturely interdependence, the self-giving of God under the conditions of time and space, and the importance of viewing faith and the hypotheses of natural science as congruent.

These are just three reasons for bringing Schleiermacher's doctrine of God as set forth in the *Glaubenslehre* into conversation with contemporary feminist theologies.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sallie McFague, "God's Household: Christianity, Economics and Planetary Living" in *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2002), 134.

<sup>9</sup> Notice that I have not offered reasons relating to Schleiermacher's Romantic understandings of gender fluidity, his wistfulness for womanhood, or his personal relationships with women. Others have taken this route, and it is useful as far as it goes. However, it does not go far enough. One's view of women is



With regard to the creature's absolute dependence on God, a compatibilist understanding of human agency and divine providence, and a kataphatic emphasis, Schleiermacher's doctrine of God is uniquely suited to address itself to a number of trends in current feminist theology. By offering these reasons for bringing Schleiermacher's mature work into conversation with feminist theology, however, I intend to highlight my recognition that simply calling God "personal" will not suffice to achieve the aims of feminist theologians. Worshiping a personal God clearly will not, for instance, create inclusive ecclesial communities. What I am arguing, however, is that if Schleiermacher's doctrine of God is modified in the way I have suggested, this might aid in constructing a robust feminist systematic theology that does not work at cross-purposes with itself. I have suggested that a Schleiermacherian approach is, in this way, particularly suited for and could advance feminist theology.

## II. Continuing Questions

This is not to say that I am an uncritical espouser of Schleiermacher's every word in the *Glaubenslehre*. My critique and correction of his doctrine of God should be evidence of that. Thus, although my sympathy for many of the aspects of his doctrine should be clear as well, a number of questions remain for me, which have been brought to light by my work here. I will mention only my two most pressing concerns. The first regards, perhaps not unsurprisingly, Schleiermacher's treatment of the Trinity. I am

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integrally related to one's view of God, the world, and the self. If a distinctive concern about women is not to become merely an *ad hoc* addition to a theological work, feminist theologians need to focus on systemic thought-patterns, conceptual depth, and—to use Schleiermacher's language—the interrelatedness of knowing, doing, and feeling.

convinced that he holds a distinctively Christian understanding of God. His “essential Trinitarianism” firmly recognizes the three ways in which the one God is and relates to the world. Moreover, perhaps despite himself, Schleiermacher’s focus on divine love, wisdom, and activity reiterate three distinct and *perichoretic* marks of God’s being. And yet, because he retains these three distinct marks of the divine being, and because of the efforts of Trinitarian theologians who have come after him, his arguments against naming eternal distinctions in the divine being lack fullness in their force of argument. Might we recognize the legitimacy of Schleiermacher’s concerns about the widely used historical formulations of the Trinity, while also affirming that the self-communication of God in Christ allows the theologian to speak—always with the recognition that she speaks only on that basis—of the eternal God as Activity, Love, and Wisdom? Further, how might that formulation satisfy (or not) those who are keen to retain the eternal distinctions in terms of Begetter, Begotten, and Spiration, or Revealer, Revealed, and Revelation, not to mention Father, Son, and Spirit? Schleiermacher’s treatment of the Trinity, which he himself recognizes is not finished but only a start at thinking it through again, is successful at least in the sense that he pushes us to ask these sorts of questions.

A second question concerns Schleiermacher’s use of the term *Gefühl* for the encounter with the living God in Christ and the common Spirit of the Church. It seems to me much confusion regarding his doctrine of God could be avoided by replacing the “feeling of absolute dependence” with “trust in God as encountered in the person of Christ,” where emphasis is clearly placed with the prevenient divine activity. I do not think this formulation is substantially different from Schleiermacher’s own view, though

it certainly casts his theological methodology and doctrine of God in a different light. The question for me is, how can the substance of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God and methodology be reiterated in a way that expresses both a post-Kantian recognition of the limits of human knowledge and that recognizes that the ground of Christian faith is an encounter with the living God as revealed in Christ? It is my hope that this dissertation goes some way toward answering this question.<sup>10</sup>

### III. Schleiermacher Scholarship

The past few decades have witnessed a resurgence of interest in Schleiermacher's work. In "Schleiermacher Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," Terrence Tice offers an overview of the stages of Schleiermacher reception in Anglophone literature.<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher's lasting contributions, according to Tice, include his hermeneutical methodology, philosophical-mindedness, inclusion of scientific and ecclesial functions in the three parts of theology he identifies, his focus on theology's purpose as supporting church leadership, and his historical emphasis in theological thinking. Whereas these contributions are methodological or abstracted from the details of Schleiermacher's theology, I have highlighted the significant doctrinal contributions Schleiermacher has made—in terms of content. I join a new vanguard of Schleiermacher scholars in doing so,

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<sup>10</sup> Thus, if I were to expand the project that has begun here, I would be keen to examine further Schleiermacher's Trinitarian suggestions in conversation with the work of feminist theologians. In addition, I would investigate alternate language and concepts for use with regard to the living encounter with God in Christ.

<sup>11</sup> Terrence N. Tice, "Schleiermacher Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed., Jacqueline Marina (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 307-318.

and look forward to the next phases in the reception of his work as it is put to use in contemporary theologies.

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