

## Introduction

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was an eminent classicist, philosopher, and theologian. He is most famous for his contributions to theology, for which he is known as “the father of modern theology.” He is without doubt one of the greatest Christian theologians of all time, standing in the same rank as Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin.<sup>1</sup> His theological work had, and continues to have, an enormous influence, even when this influence has not always been recognized as his. It is well known that he introduced many of the ideas at the forefront of nineteenth-century German liberal Protestant theology. His influence has not been limited to liberal theology, however. Many of his insights decisively changed the understanding of the way in which the areas of theology are related to one another. For instance, the basic thrust of his argument regarding the “four natural heresies of Christianity,” has been widely accepted, as has his claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is the *result* of reflection on the fundamental experience of redemption in Christ and the common Spirit of the church that flows from it. Moreover, Schleiermacher’s discussion of the relation of Christology to soteriology, that is, his argument that the doctrines of the person and work of Christ are inherently related (so that the “activity” of Christ cannot be separated from his “dignity”) has had an enormous impact. Whereas before Schleiermacher dogmatic textbooks tended to discuss the two topics in isolation, after him the topics were generally discussed together.

While Schleiermacher is best known for his contributions to theology, his contributions to philosophy have been notably significant as well, in particular in the areas of philosophy of religion, hermeneutics, and classical philosophy; his contributions to ethics are now just beginning to achieve the recognition they deserve in the English-speaking world.<sup>2</sup> It is well known that Schleiermacher’s *On Religion* is a foundational text in the theory of religion, providing a theoretical basis for the comparative study of religion and for religious pluralism.<sup>3</sup> Not only has Schleiermacher been

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recognized as a pioneer of philosophical hermeneutics, but the work of Manfred Frank in Germany and Andrew Bowie in England has shown the continued relevance of his contributions to the field today. As Julia Lamm notes in her chapter in this volume, Schleiermacher's translations of Plato were a momentous event in the philosophical, philological, and literary world of his day, so much so that his translations are still in use today and continue to carry significant authority; his interpretation of Plato changed the entire course of Plato studies.

Schleiermacher was born the son of a Prussian army chaplain in Breslau in lower Silesia in 1768. His early education was provided by the Moravian Brethren (Herrnhuter), a strict pietist community that strove to be true to the reformist aims of P. J. Spener's *Pia Desideria* (1675). At Niesky (1783) Schleiermacher was exposed to an enlightened humanistic curriculum. His talents were recognized, and he was advanced to the seminary at Barby (1785). There he formed a secret club in which he and his classmates read Kant, Goethe, and other contemporary German writers. As a result of this exposure, as well as of the narrow theological pedagogy of that school, he began to have doubts about certain Christian doctrines. In 1787 he transferred to the more liberal University of Halle, where he continued in theology, with philosophy and classical philology as minor fields. Nevertheless, Schleiermacher never renounced his early religious training. In a letter to George Reimer in 1802 he wrote, "I have become a Herrnhuter again, only of a higher order."<sup>4</sup>

An extremely brief outline of Schleiermacher's appointments follows. In 1790 he passed his academic theological examinations at Berlin. From 1790 to 1793 he served as a private tutor for the aristocratic Dohna family at Schlobitten in East Prussia, and then was pastor in Landsberg from 1794 to 1796. In 1796 he became chaplain to a hospital in Berlin. He spent 1802–4 in Stolpe because of scandal and unhappiness in Berlin, but by 1804 he was teaching at Halle. As a result of the French occupation he left Halle in 1806–7 and moved to Berlin. By 1810 he was appointed professor of theology at the University of Berlin and in 1811 became a member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. He remained at the University of Berlin, where he was professor and four-time dean of the theological faculty, lecturing on various topics until his death in 1834.

Throughout his life Schleiermacher was extraordinarily prolific, writing in such areas as theology, New Testament studies, philosophy of religion, ethics, psychology, and hermeneutics. Given the extent of his influence in so many areas, this volume will be divided into three parts. The first part of the volume is devoted to Schleiermacher's philosophy and philosophy of

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religion; the second to his theology, and the third to issues in culture, society, and religion.

Since Schleiermacher's metaphysical views are foundational for his philosophy of religion, the [first chapter](#) is devoted to Schleiermacher's metaphysics. In that chapter, "Metaphysical foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*," Manfred Frank provides an insightful analysis of Schleiermacher's understanding of the highest transcendent ground that is the basis for both ethics and metaphysics. This ground is discovered through dialectic, a science of knowledge transcending the opposition between knowing and doing. Instead of tracing Schleiermacher's thought to Kant, Professor Frank pursues a new line of thought that follows Schleiermacher's Spinozist and Leibnizian inheritance as mediated by Eberhard in order to interpret Schleiermacher's views on judgment and concept formation. In light of Schleiermacher's Leibnizian inheritance, he makes sense of Schleiermacher's famous theory of a continuous "transition" between sense and understanding in light of the "numerical identity" of the foundational power. Professor Frank then provides a careful analysis of Schleiermacher's identity theory of judgment and its implications. He then explores Schleiermacher's four formulas of the unconditioned, transcendent ground, and provides an in-depth analysis of how the transcendent ground is accessed in the immediate self-consciousness.

In his chapter, "Faith and religious knowledge," Robert Merrihew Adams provides a critical analysis of Schleiermacher's epistemology of religion and its theological implications. In showing how the feeling of absolute dependence has an implicit reference to a being much greater than ourselves, he deals with the question of how the *immediate* self-consciousness can have an intentional object. In answer to this he points to the fact that while the feeling of absolute dependence is a characteristic of ourselves, it is a *relational* characteristic, and as such has implications that move beyond the nature of the immediate self-consciousness taken by itself. This is because for Schleiermacher causal relations are part of the implicit content of forms of immediate self-consciousness, although what we are aware of is only our own pole of the causal relation. Hence the immediate self-consciousness contains an implicit reference to that upon which we are dependent. Given this analysis, Professor Adams then asks whether for Schleiermacher faith is conceptually structured or not, reflecting on the implications of Schleiermacher's claim that the same religious consciousness can express itself in quite different propositions. Finally he discusses the question of the theological interpretation of the religious consciousness in the light of two test cases, Schleiermacher's eschatology and Christology.

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Frederick C. Beiser tackles Schleiermacher's philosophical ethics in chapter three, "Schleiermacher's ethics." He distinguishes five stages in the development of Schleiermacher's ethics. (1) From 1789 to 1796 Schleiermacher is preoccupied with Kant and questions regarding the compatibility of determinism and moral responsibility; he is also concerned with the question of the highest good, and begins to defend an ethic of self-realization. (2) From 1796 to 1802 Schleiermacher is influenced by the romantic circle in Berlin and becomes critical of the tradition of the *Aufklärung*, questioning its view of religion and morality. He develops the themes of individuality, sociality, and love, which will continue to play a role in his ethical thought. (3) From 1802 to 1804 he prepared for his later system with his criticisms of past ethical systems; and (4) in Halle and Berlin begins a period of system building (1806–16). (5) From 1819 to 1832 Schleiermacher partially consolidates his ethical views and relates them to his metaphysics. Ethics is one of the two fundamental sciences of the infinite or absolute, and as such it is intrinsically related to religion. Schleiermacher adopts a vitalistic metaphysics departing significantly from Spinoza, and this foundation has significant consequences for his ethical theory. The world is a living organism that develops through differentiation and externalization whereby the subjective becomes objective – and a movement of assimilation and internalization – whereby the objective becomes subjective.

In his chapter, "The philosophical significance of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics," Andrew Bowie discusses the continuing philosophical relevance of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. He notes that there are two diametrically opposed positions regarding how it is possible to interpret a text or utterance. According to the structuralist position, the meaning of an utterance is determined by the publicly available meanings of the words that constitute it. On the other hand, the intentionalist position holds that the meaning of an utterance lies in the intention of the speaker. The history and inner life of the speaker is of decisive importance in determining its significance. Schleiermacher calls these the "grammatical" and "psychological" poles of language, respectively. Professor Bowie argues that if understood in the context of his *Dialectic*, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics can help us move beyond this impasse. Schleiermacher holds that we cannot strictly separate receptivity and spontaneity because both share a single underlying root. This plays a crucial role at several levels, the first being how we move from sense-data to the ordinary world of tables and chairs. How the sense-data is organized will depend on the interpretive work of language: there is no bedrock given in receptivity. Wittgenstein's famous "duck-rabbit" is a useful example of this. Similarly, just as sense-data provide no bedrock

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“given,” neither do the publicly available meanings of words. While language users begin from there, their own mental activity is important in shaping and sometimes even recasting those publicly available meanings. The level of the subject’s activity in shaping these meanings will vary from activity to activity, from quite high in aesthetic endeavors to low in scientific ones. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics is “the art of understanding . . . the . . . discourse of another person correctly.” Both grammatical and psychological elements are vital to this task.

In her chapter, “The art of interpreting Plato,” Julia Lamm notes that Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical theory was developed as he interpreted Plato. Schleiermacher’s groundbreaking Plato translations and interpretations made extensive use of the historical-critical method; they required both an extensive understanding of the historical context in which a text was written as well as close attention to the text itself. Unlike interpreters like Tenneman, Schleiermacher insisted that we need to pay close attention to Plato’s dialogues themselves instead of positing an esoteric Platonic teaching. In focusing on Plato’s artistic genius, the unity of Plato’s works could be discovered. Professor Lamm points out three principles that Schleiermacher used in understanding the artistry, and thereby the unity in Plato’s works. First, a work must be understood as an organic whole with essential natural connections; second, the collection of what appears scattered must be collected and the work must be divided into its natural parts; and third, the importance of the dialogue form must be recognized. Armed with these interpretive principles, Schleiermacher hoped to find not only the unity lying behind the Platonic corpus, but also to provide a chronology of Plato’s work. Both tasks were interdependent. Finally, Professor Lamm calls attention to the fact that for Schleiermacher understanding is an art; the interpreter must not only dissect a work, but he must be able to put the pieces back together again, that is, to understand a literary corpus as a living whole. Interpretation is therefore itself an artistic process.

Richard Crouter’s essay, “Shaping an academic discipline: the *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*,” begins part two of the book on Schleiermacher’s theology and sets the context for the following chapters. In his chapter Professor Crouter takes a look at Schleiermacher’s theological method, noting that Schleiermacher balances the need for a rational perspective in theological method with a grasp of the significance of the contingent character of historical existence. Philosophical theology is the “root” of theology insofar as it identifies the essence of Christianity “in its givenness,” relates it to other religions (apologetics), and picks out its own aberrations (polemics). Nevertheless, this original essence of Christianity

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must manifest itself in history. As such, historical theology, which reaches from the age of the apostles through contemporary dogmatics, is thereby assigned the task of confirming the results of philosophical theology by examining how the essence of Christianity has appeared in history. Moreover, historical theology lays the foundation for practical theology, which Schleiermacher considered the “crown” of theology. The three main subfields of historical theology, exegetical theology, church history, and dogmatics, have tight internal correlations. So too, the three main divisions of theology, philosophical theology, historical theology, and practical theology are inherently related, presupposing and informing each other dialectically. Professor Crouter discusses the merits of Schleiermacher’s anchoring of dogmatics in history, and why such anchoring need not compromise doctrinal statements. Lastly, he explores Schleiermacher’s understanding of practical theology as the crown of theology.

In his chapter, “Sin and redemption,” Walter E. Wyman notes that sin and grace are at the heart of Schleiermacher’s understanding of Christianity; the principle problem Schleiermacher confronts is how to give an account of these concepts after the Enlightenment. Schleiermacher thus sets out to rethink these ideas and to show how his revisionist understanding was consistent with the earlier credal statements. As Professor Wyman notes, Schleiermacher’s methodological innovation is a theology of consciousness. Both sin and redemption are located in consciousness, and this means that an exploration of both involves an exploration of the nature of consciousness. At the same time, Schleiermacher remains in dialogue with the tradition, in particular the confessions of the sixteenth century. After exploring Schleiermacher’s developmental account of sin, his account of it in terms of intellect and will, and his social account, Professor Wyman turns his attention to Schleiermacher’s account of redemption. He provides an analysis of Schleiermacher’s understanding of the means of redemption and reconciliation, as well as of Schleiermacher’s understanding of the phenomenology of grace, namely regeneration and sanctification. Finally Professor Wyman discusses the resources that Schleiermacher’s theology has for theology today and identifies possible limitations in Schleiermacher’s theology.

In my chapter, “Christology and anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher,” I discuss Schleiermacher’s understanding of both the person and work of Christ. Schleiermacher’s dialogue with the orthodox Christological tradition preceding him, as well as his understanding of the work of Christ, is founded on a critical analysis of the fundamental person-forming experience of being in relation to Christ and the community

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founded by him. I provide an analysis of Schleiermacher's discussion of the difficulties surrounding the use of the word "nature" in relation to Jesus' humanity and divinity, and then move to discuss how Schleiermacher understands both the humanity and divinity of Jesus, as well as how the two stand in relation to one another. In the original divine decree Jesus Christ is ordained as the person through which the whole human race is to be completed and perfected, and the essence of perfect human nature is to express the divine. This is the essence of Schleiermacher's solution to the Christological problem, that is, of how the divine and the human can converge in one person. I then move to discuss Schleiermacher's understanding of the work of Christ as involving two interrelated moments. The first is the awakening of the God-consciousness. The second involves the self-expression of this God-consciousness in the form of Christian love in the community of believers. As such, the principle work of Christ is the founding of the kingdom of God.

Francis Schüssler Fiorenza provides a penetrating analysis of Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Trinity in his chapter, "Schleiermacher's understanding of God as triune." He replies to numerous objections to Schleiermacher's exposition of the Trinity, from the charge that Schleiermacher marginalizes the doctrine to the more extreme charge by Robert Jenson (echoing that of Johann Adam Möhler) that Schleiermacher is an Arian who has simply dropped the inherited Trinitarian position. On this interpretation, for Schleiermacher God is one eternally unknown monad behind diverse manifestations. Against these misunderstandings, Professor Fiorenza points out that for Schleiermacher the love and wisdom of God are not mere attributes but also expressions of the very essence of God, and as such are not the revealed manifestations of a hidden unknown monad. God is known as love and wisdom through the Christian experience of redemption in Christ and the common Spirit in the church that flows from it; the doctrine of the Trinity is a result of reflection on this fundamental experience. As Professor Fiorenza notes, this theological move proved to be extremely influential, but what remained in question was whether this biblical affirmation of the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit necessitated a speculative doctrine about inner differentiation within God. While Schleiermacher stressed that knowledge of the divine essence was possible, he denied that the Christian experience of redemption implied the original and eternal existence of distinctions within the divine essence. Schleiermacher's understanding of the divine causality as well as his epistemological modesty led him to shy away from speculations about the interior relations of the Trinitarian persons. Given this analysis, Professor Fiorenza concludes that

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Schleiermacher's conception of the Trinity should not be equated with an Arian or a Sabellian view.

In their chapter, "Providence and grace: Schleiermacher on justification and election," Dawn DeVries and B. A. Gerrish discuss the interrelations of the concepts of providence, justification, and election, paying particular attention to the theological location in which these doctrines are placed. They argue that what Schleiermacher thought about both justification and election was partly formed by his discussion of God's providence in part one of the *Christian Faith*; the doctrine of providence, in particular Schleiermacher's thoughts on the relation of divine to natural causality, regulates what can be said about the divine operations of grace in justifying the sinner and election. God's relations to the world are all functions of a single divine decree, which is oriented towards a single goal, that of the establishment of the kingdom of God. As such, statements about providence, justification, and election must be understood from the perspective of this single divine decree, which is directed to the realization of the final *telos* of the world as a whole.

In his chapter, "Schleiermacher's *Christian Ethics*," Eilert Herms situates Schleiermacher's Christian ethics in the larger context of his thought as a whole. After discussing the relation between ethics and faith, the relation of historical theology to philosophical theology, and theology's place in the theory of human knowledge as a whole, he provides a painstaking analysis of the content of the *Christian Ethics*. Christian piety is characterized by a double motive, grounding both a desire for knowledge and the desire to act. While the content of the *Christian Faith* is concerned with the former, Christian ethics is concerned with the latter. Christian ethics answers the question, how must the religious self-consciousness develop itself, and what must come of it? In answering this question, Schleiermacher provides an analysis of the conditions under which the immediate self-consciousness, as determined by Christ's redemptive activity, becomes an incentive to action. Since all action presupposes a lack and serves to overcome it, these are incentives that take place in the *emerging* blessedness of the Christian. Professor Herms explores the character of the three kinds of incentives to Christian action identified by Schleiermacher: the incentive to actions that *re-establish* the flesh as the organ of the spirit, the incentive to *expansive* actions extending the dominion of spirit over those areas not yet grasped by it; and *representing* or *expressive* actions that express what it is to be in the community of the redeemed. Finally, the nature of these actions in both the family and the civil state is discussed.



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Christine Helmer examines Schleiermacher's exegetical works in the larger context of Schleiermacher's theological and philosophical thought in her chapter, "Schleiermacher's exegetical theology and the New Testament." First, she shows that in affirming the priority of the experience of Christ over Scripture, Schleiermacher was able to engage in a scientific investigation of the New Testament canon that did not pose a threat to the ecclesial use of the Bible. Second, she provides an analysis of Schleiermacher's understanding of the goal of exegetical theology as the fixing of the canon, namely the determination of the original apprehensions of Christ. Third, she examines how Schleiermacher's exegetical methodology was informed by the critical disciplines of hermeneutics and dialectic, and lastly, she explores the relationship between dogmatic and exegetical theology in Schleiermacher's thought.

The last part of the book begins with David Klemm's chapter, "Culture, arts, and religion," in which he provides an analysis of Schleiermacher's understanding of how religion should relate to culture. The cultured despisers of religion are aware of the conditioned character of positive religions, while the true believers in positive religion often ascribe absolute truth to their beliefs and are unaware of their culturally conditioned character. While all religions are positive and as such are historically and culturally conditioned, Schleiermacher attempts to identify elements common to all religions. The strength of positive religion is that it proceeds from a living intuition of the universe. Professor Klemm reads Schleiermacher as advocating an appreciation of this moment of living vitality in positive religion while at the same time recognizing the limited and conditioned character of all human apprehensions of the infinite. This is the task of philosophical theology, which is a self-conscious and reflexive way of thinking about and experiencing religion in its truth. Professor Klemm next discusses the extent to which Schleiermacher's understanding of Christian revelation played a role in his contribution to comparative religion, and concludes that there is no necessary connection between Christianity and Schleiermacher's philosophical theology. Finally, Professor Klemm discusses the role of the arts in fostering spirituality as Schleiermacher understands it.

In his chapter, "Schleiermacher and the state," Theodore Vial shows that, contra the Enlightenment view of the state as an artificial machine designed only to protect the individual in his or her personal activities against external threats, Schleiermacher viewed the state as a vital organism necessary for human progress to occur. Through the state individuals can bring their energies together, harmonize them, and through their common efforts achieve great things. Moreover, in its institutions the state expresses

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the spirit of people. As such, the state represents the completion of human life. In light of his discussion of Schleiermacher's theoretical commitments regarding the nature of the state, Vial examines Schleiermacher's activity as citizen, including his participation in intrigues against Napoleon, the preaching of sermons with political content, his editorship of a political newspaper, and his efforts for the reunification of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia.

In her essay, "Schleiermacher, feminism, and liberation theologies: a key," Thandeka notes the contradictory conclusions that scholars have reached concerning Schleiermacher and feminism. While some find him sympathetic to contemporary feminist issues, others find him hostile, pointing to his stance against the political, educational, and social liberation of women. Thandeka proposes to move beyond this impasse through an exploration of Schleiermacher's "doctrine of the soul," containing an analysis of how human feeling is organized and the effect of this organization on human consciousness. In his "doctrine of human affections" Schleiermacher used a set of gender images that transcended the restrictive gender biases of his own time. According to Schleiermacher there is a proto-gender, an original state of the self that precedes gender. Schleiermacher named this gender "artist." It is the original state of the soul before it is split into male and female genders. Thandeka provides an analysis of the roots of this idea in Schleiermacher's theorizing upon the experience of music and how music evokes different affective states in the listener. Her analysis reveals both the resources Schleiermacher's theory has to offer for contemporary feminism, as well as its limitations.

Finally, in his chapter, "Schleiermacher yesterday, today, and tomorrow," Terrence N. Tice provides a summary of Schleiermacher's identity and achievement, discusses the history of his reception in the English-speaking world as well as the recent growth of Schleiermacher scholarship, and makes note of areas in Schleiermacher scholarship that still need to be explored.

Schleiermacher was such a polymath, and his thought so rich that no single volume can do justice to his work. Yet the seventeen authors contributing to this volume are among the top Schleiermacher scholars in the world, and their chapters provide thought-provoking introductions and analyses of the thought of this great thinker. It is my hope, and theirs as well, that this volume will stimulate many others to continue to investigate his work and the relevance of his insightful legacy to the world today.

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