

Schleiermacher & Romans

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The question of the relationship between Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and the letter to the Romans is little explored. Known primarily for his genius and formative influence in redefining Protestant theology in Germany at the beginning of the 19th Century¹, Schleiermacher most notable contributions were in his early modern apologetical work, *Speeches on Religion*² and his dogmatics, *The Christian Faith*³. His work in hermeneutics was decisive for what the discipline would become as a general philosophy of interpretation. The focus of this paper will be to trace aspects of Schleiermacher's reasoning in the *Speeches*, the *Hermeneutics*⁴ and finally *The Christian Faith* as they pertain to elements in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. With some anticipation of something like the a Romans hermeneutic of Reformation and post-Reformation theologies, i.e., reading the letter according to Paul's arguments on justification by faith, and then everything in New Testament Christology accordingly, Schleiermacher adds his own emphases through the lens of his pietism, Romanticism and anti-Enlightenment naturalism.⁵ This approach will translate into an anthropological starting point in his

¹ Cf., Catherine L. Kelsey. *Thinking about Christ with Schleiermacher*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

² *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. Edited and Translated by Richard Crouter from the 1st German edition (1799). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

³ *The Christian Faith*. Edited and translated by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart from the 2nd German edition (1830). Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928.

⁴ *Hermeneutics and Criticism*. 1838. Translated by Andrew Bowie. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

⁵ Of the more important works on situating Schleiermacher within the Protestant stream, "Luther's *Erfahrungstheologie* and Calvin's *practica notitia* have become in Schleiermacher something very close to what Troeltsch calls 'the historical psychological method': that is, a strongly immanent reinterpretation of Evangelical faith which, while not intending to be reductive, nonetheless tries to understand faith as a natural phenomenon of historical existence, collective and individual;" Brian Gerrish. *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982, p. 194. The question of what should be meant by "natural", since Schleiermacher early on puts such great emphasis upon "supernatural" and later upon "divine grace" as over against the term according to naturalism. Also, Terrence N. Tice. *Schleiermacher*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006; Juliane Müller. *Wiedergeburt und Heiligung: die Bedeutung der Struktur von Zeit für Schleiermachers Rechtfertigungslehre*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005; Jacqueline Mariña, ed. *The Cambridge companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Karsten Lehmkuhler. *Inhabitatio: die Einwohnung Gottes im Menschen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004; Dorette Seibert. *Glaube, Erfahrung und Gemeinschaft : der junge Schleiermacher und Herrnhut*.

theology, the other alternative Calvin acknowledged at the beginning of his own theology. Instead of beginning with the God the creator and redeemer of the human, Schleiermacher would begin with the human as the created and redeemed by God. This would have fundamental consequences for redrawing the lines of theology on psychological, experiential formats, but also along more scriptural modes of Paul's autobiographical material embedded within his NT writings, and most specifically, those of Romans.

This paper will present salient features of Schleiermacher's *Speeches* which attempt to redefine religion according to a kind of natural supernaturalism and as an all encompassing reality of human existence expresses through consciousness and subjective experience, is suggestive for understanding Christianity within this framework. In the final form of this paper, a brief discussion of the *Hermeneutics* will serve as a bridge for discussing the formative changes in Schleiermacher's thinking with respect to scripture and tradition. These changes become explicit in *The Christian Faith* where subjectivity and consciousness are still fundamental categories while their reinterpreted content has been oriented to classic scriptural and traditional themes in theology. To the extent that Romans – through its Protestant soteriological reading forming a kind of hermeneutic

Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003; Kurt Nowak. *Schleiermacher: Leben, Werk, und Wirkung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002; Albrecht Beutel, et. al. *Über die Religion : Schleiermacher und Luther*. Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 2000; Gunther Wenz. *Ergriffen von Gott: Zinzendorf, Schleiermacher und Tholuck*. München: H. Utz Verlag-Wissenschaft, 2000; Ilka Werner. *Calvin und Schleiermacher im Gespräch mit der Weltweisheit: das Verhältnis von christlichem Wahrheitsanspruch und allgemeinem Wahrheitsbewusstsein*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999; Dorothee Schlenke. "Geist und Gemeinschaft": die systematische Bedeutung der Pneumatologie für Friedrich Schleiermachers Theorie der christlichen Frömmigkeit. Berlin /New York: W. de Gruyter, 1999; Ulrich Bogun. *Darstellendes und wirksames Handeln bei Schleiermacher: zur Rezeption seines Predigtverständnisses bei F. Niebergall und W. Jetter*. Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1998; Christiane Braungart. *Mitteilung durch Darstellung: Schleiermachers Verständnis der Heilungsvermittlung*. Marburg : Elwert, 1998; Paul E. Capetz. *Christian faith as religion: a study in the theologies of Calvin and Schleiermacher*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998; Dawn DeVries. *Jesus Christ in the preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996; Christine Axt-Piscalar. *Ohnmächtige Freiheit : Studien zum Verhältnis von Subjektivität und Sünde bei August Tholuck, Julius Müller, Sören Kierkegaard und Friedrich Schleiermacher*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996; Markus Schröder. *Die kritische Identität des neuzeitlichen Christentums : Schleiermachers Wesensbestimmung der christlichen Religion*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996; Harald Schnur. *Schleiermachers Hermeneutik und ihre Vorgeschichte im 18. Jahrhundert : Studien zur Bibelauslegung, zu Hamann, Herder und F. Schlegel*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1994; Emilio Brito. *Pneumatologie de Schleiermacher*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994; Martin Ohst. *Schleiermacher und die Bekenntnisschriften: eine Untersuchung zu seiner Reformations- und Protestantismusdeutung*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989; Franz Christ. *Menschlich von Gott reden: das Problem des Anthropomorphismus bei Schleiermacher*. Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1982.

lens for interpreting scripture and tradition – is a source text for Schleiermacher's thinking, we see him gravitate to one of the most autobiographical and subjectivity-laden sections in chapter 7. The underlying argument of this paper is that while Paul's dialectical experience of sin and grace in Christ and Christ in him by the Spirit become definitive for Schleiermacher through his reading of Romans, scripture comes to exercise a level of normative control in his theology that his earlier work did not display.

Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers

Schleiermacher opens his *Speeches* acknowledging with the words of Luther: “*Der Glaube ist nicht jedermanns Ding*” (a loose translation from 2 Th 3:2) “For not all have faith.” The apologetical take of this work must be acknowledged. He is weary of the Enlightenment reductions of religion to natural causes and expresses “you are agreed that nothing new and nothing convincing can be said anymore about this matter”⁶ He is, however, “a member of this order” to which his audience belongs and speaks in a way that expresses their skepticism with regard to institutionalized religion. What counts however is a kind of apologetic resting upon the language and spirit of Romans, as the autobiographical Paul will eventually make his appearance in Schleiermacher's theological reasoning. Here, however, those who hold themselves aloof from religion are “without excuse” as they do not accord religion and most of all religious feeling the place of primacy in human nature.

In spite of reflecting some of the prejudices of the Enlightenment according to a progressive view of culture – so that Judaism for instance is outmoded⁷ - Schleiermacher extols his religious upbringing as that which had maintained him as an integrated whole personality and “through which I learned friendship and love.”⁸ Beyond all else is the requirement of personal experience and its incontrovertibility; of what he will term “holy awe and true adoration...the sense for the holy...”⁹ What Otto will later expound is truly expressed first here a century earlier. His deepest reaction is against the contempt for

⁶ S p. 78.

⁷ S Ibid.

⁸ S, p. 84.

⁹ S, p. 86.

religion and in defending it, he will focus upon the personal dimension. Much later, Barth, reacting to him, will retain the personal dimension while isolating revelation in scripture, in the NT story. In addition, we have the first anti-metaphysics critique of Christian theology as not germane to the faith that true religion would unfold in contrast to some kind of “religiousness”.¹⁰ Methodologically, Schleiermacher declares, even as he writes this apology: “I have, after all, already rejected systems, commentaries, and apologies...”¹¹ And of course there is the famous: “Religion’s essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling...” in opposition to metaphysics (speculation) and morals (praxis) so that religion “maintains its own sphere.”¹² Most of all, the Schleiermacher is enamored with a model of the unity of intuition and feeling as the uniqueness of religious experience.¹³

As Schleiermacher unfolds his argument for intuitional religion, he cites the necessity of the interpersonal in terms of the Genesis 2 narrative. The solitary human “did not understand...did not answer...”¹⁴ the voice of divine address until a second revealed the human to the human and in turn the world itself. Through relationality came the newly acquired capacity to hear and answer “the voice of the deity” and for “the most sacrilegious transgression” of divine laws. Schleiermacher goes on to point out the salutary nature of relationship maintained the human being in “association with the eternal being.”¹⁵ Indeed, he exclaims through the famous phrase: “All our history is contained in this holy saga.”¹⁶ This is the moment that the argument turns on anthropology most definitively, by emphasizing the interpersonal experience of love and its commitments. In one of the few direct citations of Romans, he can rather contradict the Pauline argument: “It is irreligious to hold that humanity’s genius prepares vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor...”(Ro 9:21-2). He rather extols what he reads from the varied conditions of human life as a great work of art, some aspects “sublime” and others “grotesque products of the most original and fleeting mode of a virtuoso.” While

¹⁰ S., pp. 98ff.

¹¹ S., p. 100.

¹² S., p. 102.

¹³ S., p. 110.

¹⁴ S. p, 119.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ S. p. 120.

Schleiermacher is intent to isolate death as the enemy in Pauline terms, the overcoming of this enemy is not resurrection but humanity's cultural progress toward an "elevated life" through "the great, ever-continuous redemptive work of eternal love."¹⁷

Although Genesis 3 does not appear in the Speeches following upon 2, he can speak of "the retribution that strikes everything that tries to resist the spirit of the whole..."¹⁸ Religion is the perception of everything in human activity and not merely an ethical standpoint. The latter is "dominated by ethical life or legality" who "irretrievably ruin their mortality" and are a kind of "divine Nemesis."¹⁹ Religiousness intuited from the experience of the universe, inspiring deepest gratitude with its power, guidance, provision, even protection, stands in complete contrast with "those who know nothing of this dependence."²⁰ Schleiermacher contrasts those who are preoccupied with "many external deeds" or those that are indifferent to humility and the natural desire "to be reconciled to the deity." Religion in its own unique place for humanity is its "unexceptionable advocate and intermediary."²¹ The notion is far from Christological, but Schleiermacher is thinking along natural lines arguing for religion's autonomy. Schleiermacher uses references to classical Roman religion, particularly Cicero's argument for piety rather than superstition, or a yieldedness to fate in none at all.²² While he can, like an aesthetic classicist appeal to the imagery of the Greek pantheon, revelatory experience – "[e]very original and new intuition of the universe" and its Hebraic measure according to "outcome,"²³ are his main orientation. Religiousness is feeling "now and again" with "vivid conviction that a divine spirit is driving him and that he speaks and acts out of holy inspiration..."²⁴ This what the "kingdom" of religion is all about in the immediacy of experience and not the imitation of others or even recourse to "holy writing" which is

¹⁷ S, pp. 126-127.

¹⁸ S, p. 127.

¹⁹ S., p. 128.

²⁰ S, p. 129; the one reference to *Abhängigkeit* in the Speeches that will form the fundamental basis of religious knowledge in *The Christian Faith*.

²¹ S, p. 130.

²² Ibid; the latter's *De natura deorum*, *De divinatione*.

²³ S., p. 133.

²⁴ S., p. 134.

...merely a mausoleum of religion, a monument that a great spirit was there that no longer exists; for if it still lived and were active, why would it attach such great importance to the dead letter [2 Cor 3:6] that can only be a weak reproduction of it? It is not the person who believes in a holy writing who has religion, but only the one who needs none and probably could make one for himself.²⁵

He goes on to make the correlation between religion and the highest of human aspirations for a “self-effected union.”²⁶ What counts is revelation through the imagination directed toward the universe and its divineness: “a free being cannot wish to affect another free being except by making itself known to the other...”²⁷ This is all connected with concern for immortality, but the words of Jesus are emphasized about losing life for his sake in order to find it (Matt 10:39, par.). The extraordinary reflection here: “the hopes death gives to us and concerning the infinity to which we unerringly soar through it[...]”²⁸ conveys Schleiermacher’s full height of poetic religious reasoning. Realizing through self-cultivation (*Bildung*) connections between eternity and momentary experience, God and the rest of the universe is Schleiermacher’s essence of religion.

Schleiermacher is never far from the creation context and from natural born capacities for religious intuition. He credits the failure of intuition here the result of something like Paul’s “suppression of the truth in unrighteousness” (Ro 1). Everyone “is born with the religious capacity as with every other.” To be sure, the suppression can be self-caused by “indolence and laziness” but always in the context of the greater evil of “prudent and practical” people who begin with the young to “mistreat human beings and suppress their striving for something higher.”²⁹ This is part of Schleiermacher’s extensive critique of bourgeois existence; not that he is exempt from it, but that it must not be allowed in their “goodness and prudence” to obscure the religious sensibility of intuitive experience. But it is where Schleiermacher wants to confront the despisers “who are accustomed to regarding religion merely as a disease of the mind...an evil that is easier to

²⁵ S., pp. 134-135.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ S., pp. 138-139.

²⁸ S., p. 139.

²⁹ S., p. 146.

tolerate...perhaps to subdue, so long as only isolated individuals here and there are afflicted”³⁰ that his apologetical side in the Fourth Speech is revealed.

Here he is dealing with the language of “inflammation,” the “contagious,” “poison,” “feverish delirium;” particularly in view of “social institutions of religion.”³¹ Basing his argument on human sociability in religious experience, Schleiermacher extols a “practiced sense of community” where individuals with a sense for the universe congregate in churches.³² However, the motivation is not in institutional offices but a common experience of “the free stirring of the spirit.” The things which are symbolized and taught as “holy mysteries...are natural intimations of a definite consciousness and definite feelings...”³³ intimating the entire discussion of doctrine in his later great work. Defending what he describes as “[e]ach person is a priest” and “each is a layperson” he is in agreement against aristocracies of the spirit.³⁴ Schleiermacher does assert that non-necessity of conversion wherever religion is already present³⁵ – something not at all Pauline. At the same time, wherever there is a lack in religiousness, then the truly religious are missionary, priestly among the barbarians who lack sense and this special sensitivity.³⁶

Schleiermacher insists that he is not intoning about a church that should exist but one that does, and that to fail to recognize this as the “true church...and if you do not see it, the blame is actually your own...the church triumphant...that has already overcome everything that was opposed to it and has established itself.”³⁷ Is this Paul’s triumphalism as he appeals to a “true church”? His burden becomes clearer when he defends any kind of what we might call “authenticity” in religion, whether ancient polytheism, or the greater monotheism:

³⁰ S., p. 162.

³¹ Ibid.

³² S., p. 165.

³³ S., p. 166.

³⁴ Ibid; “*Ein priesterliches Volk ist diese Gesellschaft, eine vollkommne Republik...*”

³⁵ S. . 168.

³⁶ S., p. 169.

³⁷ S. pp. 169-173.

I grant that there is more support in this society for understanding or belief and for action and observance of customs than for intuition and feeling and that, therefore, however enlightened its doctrine may be, this society always verges on superstition and clings to some kind of mythology; but you will admit that it is so much the more removed from true religion.³⁸

Schleiermacher's formulations now hinge upon a relation between "true religion" and the "true church" and whatever pilgrimage of spirit that would be necessary to find both. His text is full of ready admissions on the scandals of the visible church. Schleiermacher settles in with "my indictment" against state controlled religion, which intrudes upon even the holiest dimensions "and defiles them" – "everything is full of moral and political references, everything is diverted from its original purpose and concept."³⁹ We have moved from personal to collective experience.

In Speech Five, Schleiermacher begins with a Johannine phrase "to the God who has become flesh" by which he actually means "the plurality of religions and their most distinct diversity..."⁴⁰ All of them, as it turns out, participate in the "essence of religion."⁴¹ Even though each of the particular or "positive" religions "perhaps long since degenerated into a code of empty customs and a system of abstract concepts and theories,"⁴² Schleiermacher calls his cultured audience to consider the yet perceivable essence of religion in them. They remain manifestations of the eternal, each with its own unique "intuition of the universe in its elementary multiplicity" rather than instantiations in the Humean (anti-supernatural) sense of an innocuous "natural religion."⁴³ The truly religious in every religion, beginning with something of a new birth to religious experience, Schleiermacher claims as the objects of his study on par with the his audience's study of the "curiosities of nature."⁴⁴ He expresses hope that through their study, actually, they would discover the deity "almightily" manifesting itself "through the

³⁸ S., p. 174.

³⁹ S., pp. 179-180; too many of his readers miss S's sharpest critical attack against bourgeois religion.

⁴⁰ S., p. 190.

⁴¹ S., p. 191.

⁴² S., p. 194.

⁴³ S., p. 199; cf., p. 207: "The essence of natural religion actually consists wholly in the negation of everything positive and characteristic in religion and in the most violent polemic against it."

⁴⁴ S., p. 203.

inexhaustible manifoldness of forms in its entire richness”⁴⁵ – much like Paul’s God who actively discloses his invisible attributes through creation (cf., Ro 1:18-19).

Schleiermacher exhorts his audience to consider only the definitive religions in all their “mysterious darkness or wonderfully grotesque traits” because this is what God would have had to do under the fullness of incarnational requirements of revelation in the “form of a servant” (cf., Phil 2:7).⁴⁶ What is crucial, declares Schleiermacher, is to discover in each religion that “basic intuition” whereby one discerns “the infinite in the finite.”⁴⁷ All through this section, Schleiermacher uses the polite, pastoral language of “I beg you” to consider, not allowing themselves to be deceived, etc.

As Schleiermacher draws his apology for true religion to a close, his pleas for openness to its reality even for the most despising of religion is earnest:

Guard yourselves against both; you will find the spirit of a religion, not among rigid systematizers or superficial indifferentists, but among those who live in it as their element and move ever further in it without nurturing the illusion that they are able to embrace it completely.⁴⁸

Although the outward forms of religion even die – as Schleiermacher attributed to a Judaism that his liberal Jewish friends had persuaded him – he identifies in Christianity as supremely that finite striving to comprehend the infinite while exercising a unique critical skill for the advancement of religion.⁴⁹ The polemical element in Christianity, even to the point of destructiveness is such for the sake of some kind of “higher view of things.” It is based upon the Pauline agreement with Epimenides of knowing the God in whom the peoples “live, move, and have...being” and thereby must become self-critical.⁵⁰ The result is a particular mood in all Christian religious feeling: “...this holy sadness...accompanies every joy and every pain; every love and every fear

⁴⁵ S., p. 204.

⁴⁶ S., p. 208.

⁴⁷ S., pp. 209-210.

⁴⁸ S., p. 210.

⁴⁹ S., pp. 214-215.

⁵⁰ S., p. 216.

accompanies.” And this feeling is simply derived from that which is “wholly dominant in the founder of Christianity.”⁵¹

Schleiermacher proceeds to refer to Christ in the Christian on through the third person pronoun. In Jesus, one can perceive “the living intuition of the universe that filled his soul only as we find it developed to perfection in him.”⁵² Famously, Schleiermacher attributes to Christ that unique perfection in the “clarity with which the great idea he had come to exhibit was formed in his soul, the idea that everything finite requires higher mediation in order to be connected with the divine.”⁵³ Out of this, Christ mediated the reality of his office as mediator and his divinity; because of his faith in himself at the point at which he “without hesitation uttered that ‘yes’ that is the greatest word a mortal has every spoken.”⁵⁴ Schleiermacher hastens to claim that nothing in the life of Christ was intended to be sole mediator or even to create a particular religion. The persistence of Christianity and of the existence of Christians stands together with “its own sad history,” while “the best proof of its eternalness in its own corruptibility” de-centers it from attempting uniformity in religion while at the same time being the “religion of religions.”⁵⁵

Hermeneutics (skip this section)

Like the Speeches, Schleiermacher’s *Hermeneutics* pursue a general account of a fundamental human activity: interpretation.⁵⁶ But this activity is described in terms of his tasks as a biblical exegete. What he introduces will have direct effects upon how the likes of Bultmann does hermeneutics a century later.⁵⁷ *Hermeneutics* became the understanding of the interpreter. Of course the theological centrality of the self was first

⁵¹ S. p., 217; particularly the Johannine Christ.

⁵² S., p. 218; although in every other case, the particularity and humanity of religion excludes the possibility of perfection in religion.

⁵³ S, p. 218.

⁵⁴ S., p. 219; submitting at Gethsemane (Mt 26:63-75; par); one thinks also of the place of God’s “yes” that is Jesus Christ in the theology of Karl Barth.

⁵⁵ S, p. 222.

⁵⁶ Richard S. Briggs, “What Does Hermeneutics Have to do with Biblical Interpretation?” *Heythrop*, 47 (2006), pp. 55–74; p. 65.

⁵⁷ Cf., Bultmann’s works *Jesus and the Word* (1934) and *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1958).

highlighted by Calvin in his Institutes. Right at their beginning he states: ‘Our wisdom’, he claims, ‘in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.’ Doctrines are “transcripts of human experience, having only an indirect reference to God.”⁵⁸ As Karl Rahner so stated it: ‘Only someone who forgets that the essence of man . . . is to be unbounded . . . can suppose that it is impossible for there to be a man, who, precisely by being man in the fullest sense (which we never attain), is God’s existence into the world.’⁵⁹ Macquarrie connects Rahner so closely with Schleiermacher: Jesus Christ as the ‘completion of the creation of man.’

Both perspectives are mutually reinforcing, the philological decisive which will retain the dogmatic, which is Christianity itself. Schleiermacher calls this “the analogy of belief” by which scripture passages are interpreted “via dogmatic consciousness.” But commitment to “the principles of the dogmatic perspective” will remain consistent with the authority of the philological. S declares that the analogy of belief emerges from correct explication of canon – “a truly hermeneutic canon” – and not from somewhere outside of it.⁶⁰

In speaking about the Pauline corpus: “in which rhetorical passages, particularly final passages of paragraphs, often occur, in which a certain fullness of language predominates and many words are almost tautological. Here is, therefore, the opposite of the emphatic. But we also find οξύμωρα [paradoxes] in Paul, and, which is related to this, a certain play with the meanings of the same expression. Such passages also have a certain rhythmic character, but that is subordinate, and the demand therefore arises to take the expressions seriously.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THEOLOGY* JOHN MACQUARRIE, HeyJ XXV (1984), pp.272-287; p. 275.

⁵⁹ K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, I (London 1961), p.184.

⁶⁰ S p. 52f.

⁶¹ SH, p. 84.

It is a major difficulty in this respect for the explication of the N.T. that historical criticism is not yet completed and still contains so much that is controversial.

In the didactic writings this is less significant. In general that have the same linguistic usage. It is less a question of the personal identity of the author and even the different of time has no great influence, as they are separated by a generation at most, in which no significant progress or changes can take place. Only Paul has his own domain, but here the amount of text is sufficient to find all the necessary analogies; the others form a whole without there being any particular hermeneutic significance in their differences. And their linguistic usage was under the influence of Paul, because he first of all educated Hellenic congregations, thus also fixed Greek usage in the doctrine. In doing so he held on so strongly to the mother congregation in Jerusalem that it thereby became possible for the other Apostles to accept his approach.⁶²

In the Letter to the Romans one can take it as acknowledged that psychological explication has not yet completed its work. There are still many passages whose context is disputed. If we have determined the total value of every expression and its differences by the collation of the main elements of the letter in all their occurrences, we can then decide whether, e.g., many of the difficult questions are posed by the Apostle himself or are alien to him.

Christian Faith and Romans

Schleiermacher's relationship with Paul in Romans is best detected through the deep embeddedness of the letter in *The Christian Faith* (1821-22; 1831). The decisively innovative reconstruction of dogmatics along the line of the consciousness of the divine being stems directly from the Speeches and their also decisive apologetics. From Schleiermacher, the whole question of a biblical theology that substantiates a culturally relevant Christian view of God and the world brings the scripture into a key intellectual and conspicuously Protestant and modern program. As seen in the Speeches, the apologetic strategy was an appeal to an incomparable depth of human consciousness and

⁶² SH, p. 87.

self-formation that is uniquely religious; vehemently rejecting naturalistic interpretation of religion as a pathological retention of primitive beliefs and superstitions. Self-consciousness and feeling in uniquely religious terms, becomes the modes of Schleiermacher's over-arching hermeneutic in both exegesis and theological reflection. Scripture comes under double treatment. Accepting the critical role of human judgment in all acts of knowing, Schleiermacher did not seek to immunize the theological approach to scripture as if it could any longer be read within infallible vision or as infallibly written. On the other hand, it is extolled, while being reinterpreted as the record of revelation – first order experiences of the divine – as in itself essential to the literary advancement of humankind. Its primacy lies in the fact that it contains incomparable religious biography and autobiography. In the special biography of religious experience, the exemplarity of persons profoundly given to the reality of the knowledge of God in action, and that, supremely, indeed, perfectly in Christ, makes the interpretation of scripture essential, but under a key presupposition motive. Like the great dilemma posed by Calvin at the beginning of his *Institutes*, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the human are inseparable, interpenetrating and mutually conditioning, Schleiermacher reverses the order of epistemic priority from God to the human in order to answer the questions of the knowledge of faith so dominant in the culture of his time. Since religion is an inescapable human phenomenon so the apology; since Christianity is a scripture based religion, scripture is the point of access for understanding the nature or essence of the Christian. The root identity of the Christian is the experience of redemption, having so united oneself to Christ for a reorientation of the will and a progress toward perfection in this union. Infallibility is apparent in the divinely initiated activities of simultaneous conversion and justification within the individual in communion with God and fellow believers – since “no error is possible to the Supreme Being.”⁶³ Famously stated:

...God consciousness is always...the feeling of absolute dependence...in our use of the idea...we have annulled every distinction between human freedom and subordinate forms of finite being...⁶⁴

⁶³ CF2, p. 479-480.

⁶⁴ CF2, p. 260.

At the same time, our sin as “unequal development of insight and will-power” leaves the reality of original human perfection but is a ‘derangement of [our] nature’ (*Störung der Natur*⁶⁵) “our immediate self-consciousness, which in fact forms the starting-point in every part of our exposition.” Schleiermacher’s discussion of sin in the human being is, according to him, the source of the self-consciousness of pain and the opposition of flesh against the spirit. The matter is defined within the sphere of piety: sin is a reality in terms of “God-consciousness” and as anything that “has arrested [its] free development.”⁶⁶ Sin becomes a state within the human being and Schleiermacher takes as his scriptural referent the key verse of Galatian (5:17 -) and especially the Romans 7 material (vv. 18-25) in terms of the simultaneous consciousness of sin and “the power of redemption.”

Focusing on the autobiographical features of Paul’s discussion, it is because of “the development of the spirit...through ...moments of exceptional illumination and stimulation...we become conscious of our state as one of sin, since the actual experience of the moment the flesh overrides the effort of the spirit.”⁶⁷ More concretely, Schleiermacher identifies the failure of the self in “taking command of one’s self” where the decision-making that determines our every action do not correspond with one another. The Pauline phrase in view here (Ro 7:22): “For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self...” (sunhvdomai ga;r tw'/ novmw/ tou' qeou' kata; to;n e~sw a~nqrwpon) presents the juxtaposition of inward God-consciousness and the will to take command of oneself for the sake of God’s law. Through his Romanticization of Pietist readings of Paul, Schleiermacher is after a new expression of the kinds of self-control through spiritual exercises. Redemption for him means the application of the disciplines of Paul’s Romans message expressed both autobiographically and prescriptively.

In classic Pauline fashion, Schleiermacher criticizes the intellect when it falls under the influence of sin, as it tends to “palliate” the disturbed inner states of the soul. He calls

⁶⁵ CF1, p. 268.

⁶⁶ CF1, p. 271.

⁶⁷ CF1, pp. 274-275.

this “the most pernicious element of all.”⁶⁸ The intellect will create a false reconciliation with “God-consciousness” which is actually nothing more than this consciousness being “seized upon” by the flesh, “altered and disintegrated to such a degree that every state comes to be compatible with some aspect of it...” The great problem here religiously is that what had been newly created by the spirit and faith: “the moral antithesis,” is lost because of the intellect’s incapacity to resist the flesh. Schleiermacher is reading Romans synchronically and so traces the Pauline travail of chapter 7 to humanities yielding to a “survivals of idolatry” from chapter 1.⁶⁹ The consciousness of sin exists as a by-product of God-consciousness. This is what it means for Schleiermacher to have a conscience and is bound up with the collective history of faith through the Pauline biography. Of course, it is not only the theological exegesis of Paul that Schleiermacher is about but the extensive practical speculations of the apologist for pietism.

Schleiermacher is driven by a kind of methodological pietism. He believes, following Paul, that there is a way “to obviate entirely the active resistance of the flesh” based in an “assured belief in a development of power of the God-consciousness to a state of absolute strength.” This is a “certainty” concerning the reality of sin about which he has been definitive as derangement, and the greater power of redemption in the human being. Because Christ did not have consciousness of sin – as the human in perfection – this one alone can provide the necessary redemption (cf. Ro 7:24 – “thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ”; 8:2). Although Paul has declared that the Law provokes the consciousness of sin (7:7) “it is only from the absolute sinlessness and the perfect spiritual power of the Redeemer that we gain the full knowledge of sin.”⁷⁰ Although the sinlessness of Christ is not a Romans theme, the mediation that both reveals sin and justifies the believer is central.

The *locus classicus* of Romans 5:12-21 appears in exposition of the traditional doctrine of original sin. Schleiermacher however, advances the notion of universal sinfulness of humanity as an “inward and immediate” predisposition. While admitting that the text

⁶⁸ CF1, pp. 276-277.

⁶⁹ CF1, p. 277; he is reflecting upon, Ro 2:15; 1:18-25.

⁷⁰ CF1, pp. 278-279.

presents the history of sin as dependent upon its first occurrence – “originating original evil”⁷¹, he points out that the passage is actually about redemption in Christ. Schleiermacher is not so interested in contradicting the traditional doctrine, as highlighting the larger soteriological intention of the text. In a way quite reminiscent of modern biblical scholars using the text to dispense with speculative theories of human nature, Schleiermacher appeals to an exclusivity of meaning bound to the Pauline text.⁷² Resourcing the next chapter of Romans (6:18-22) also comes into the argument whereby the freedom of faith as over against bondage to sin bolsters the argument that the redemption looms so very much larger in the epistle, shaping the proper outlook on the Christian message overall.⁷³ Every aspect of doctrine is measured according to inwardness and personal volition, so that the capacities for recognition and response are all-important to Schleiermacher. Part of his reasoning along these lines, finally, is determined by the sense of divine initiative, both in terms of justice and always more so in divine grace. Here, Schleiermacher is quite beyond the comprehensive abilities of religious consciousness in the Speeches, the two sides of God-consciousness are possible only in relation to Christ. Religious consciousness can only become conscious of “God’s punitive justice” not God’s gracious reward. Indeed, right at the point where one might have expected him express a complete internalization of divine intention he leaves it out, not reducing divine action to the intention of faith.⁷⁴

The doctrine of sin and its overcoming through a Christologically grounded God-consciousness must first pass through a Christology of perfection in the second volume. The “supernatural origin” of Christ’s God-consciousness – that which constitutes him as the unique incarnation of God, entering “the existing historical order of human nature, in virtue of a creative divine causality.”⁷⁵ As such, he is the “Second Adam” according to Paul’s incarnational schema of Romans (and 1 Corinthians). The appearance of this individual, human being, is for the purpose of a simultaneous arousal of the

⁷¹ CF1, p. 320.

⁷² CF 1, p. 300-304.

⁷³ CF1, pp. 312-313; cf., 8:2.

⁷⁴ CF1, pp. 346-347; cf., Ro 4:4, 16; 8:28.

⁷⁵ CF2, p. 367; this is the basis for identifying Schleiermacher’s “high Christology,” cf., Kevin W. Hector, “Actualism and Incarnation: The High Christology of Friedrich Schleiermacher,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006), pp. 307-322.

consciousness of sin and then the greater reality of its removal by “assimilation to itself.” This is the story of a second creation, or the new birth through faith in Christ. Christ does this as the Redeemer through his “exemplary” (*vorbildliche*) role and in his “ideality” (*Urbildlichkeit*) appearing in a unique perfection of human nature.⁷⁶

Schleiermacher asserts that the redemptive identity of Christ and relation to humanity is redemptive in that it is the unique embodiment of God and manifestation of divine presence. The presence of God is all important, such that miracles, even the resurrection and ascension of Christ, can be seen, apart from their historical impossibility, as non-essential. Acknowledging that Paul brings the resurrection of Christ into the closest connection with human resurrection (Ro 4:24-25; 1 Co 15:13, 16) no connection in the text is made with the unique being of God.⁷⁷ Resurrection is the destiny of redeemed humanity, but it is not a demonstration of the reality of God in Christ that is itself human redemption. The incarnation of God is an “already” of redemptive action and corresponds with “the teleological character of Christian piety” – which is to receive the communication of Christ’s God-consciousness. The fulfillment of this communication is that God-consciousness will become inseparable from a newly awakened self-consciousness created by gracious divine initiative in the human being. Using the language of incarnation, Schleiermacher asserts that Christ’s unilaterally “assumes” humanity into “the fellowship of his activity and his life,” sustains this relation continuously for a “state of grace,” and does so within “the new corporate life” as its sphere.⁷⁸ This is accomplished by the sheer presence of God in Christ and as his life becomes the basis for redeemed life in the human, the consequent “putting off the old and putting on the new” (Ro 6:2, 6, 11), a corporate experience where Christ “sympathetically shares” the consciousness of sin as that which is being overcome.⁷⁹ This corporate sphere is essential for the reality and experience of redemption in Schleiermacher – and virtually all subsequent Protestant theology – since this sphere of activity is that which is “corresponding to the being of God in Christ, a corporate feeling

⁷⁶ CF2, p. 378.

⁷⁷ CF2, p. 418.

⁷⁸ CF2, p. 425.

⁷⁹ CF2, p. 426.

of blessedness.”⁸⁰ The corporate exists to furnish the means by which the individual experiences Christ’s person-forming influence in which the old is put off and the new is put on.

The new reality, reality in union with Christ is grounded in the reconciliation that is the forgiveness of sins (Ro 8:1). In this “unity of life with Christ all relation to the law ceases” since the entire movement of Christ in the believer is contrary to sin.⁸¹

Schleiermacher is aware of how “mystical” this proposition is in that he has constructed a consciousness-based interpretation of the Pauline gospel that “can only be proved in experience.” Nevertheless, he indicates that this is necessary in order to chart a proper course between magical and naturalistic interpretations of Christian faith.⁸² This mysticism while wholly Christological, is holistically so – the pietism in Schleiermacher’s reasoning is never partialist, never fetishistic, e.g., as in a fixation upon cross, blood, or even the experiences of suffering.

Now Christ’s sufferings can be thought of in this connection with his redemptive activity only when regarded as a whole and a unity; to separate out any particular element and ascribe to it peculiar reconciling value, is not merely trifling allegory if done in teach, and worthless sentimentality in poetry; probably it is also seldom free from a defiling admixture of superstition.⁸³

Christ’s death as sacrifice does not disappear from Schleiermacher’s account of Christian doctrine but it is interpreted strictly according to the classic model of the three offices (*munus triplex*) – prophet, priest, king – of Christ. As a faithful high priest, he makes offering and offers himself for us (Ro 5:11) as one of many activities by which believers are assumed into him.⁸⁴ What he performs as high priest he does out of “total obedience” (*dikaioma*; ; ; 5:18)⁸⁵ such that this is what unites the believer and the believing community to Christ.

⁸⁰ CF2, p. 433; note the connection between the ontic and the experiential.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² CF2, p. 434.

⁸³ CF2, p. 437.

⁸⁴ CF2, p. 439.

⁸⁵ CF2, p. 456-457.

Schleiermacher returns to the hopeful conclusiveness of Romans 8 repeatedly throughout the Christian Faith. The universalism of his prior apologetic for religious consciousness is here attributed entirely to that which is assumed by Christ. No human expression of spiritual or civil progress lies outside of the Kingdom of God in Christ (Ro 13:1,2).⁸⁶ As his argument unfolds, the Protestant concentration upon the work of God within the individual becomes apparent. In this dimension comes the discussion of justification and conversation. The matter of sin is ultimately addressed as that enmity between God and the human being that has been removed in Christ.⁸⁷ Conversion is not a corporate event, neither is its divinely objective reality in justification. In this regard he is completely unsympathetic to revelations of Christ the redeemer apart from scripture and its proclamation (Ro 10:17).⁸⁸ Schleiermacher is intent upon knowing the “mystic Christ” but who “was identical with the historic Christ.” He could not be more emphatic that “the Word” of its “sole place in conversion” since an entirely individual claim can never lead to the fellowship necessary; indeed, the preaching of Christ alone does all of the work of conversion take place. The hearing of the historic totality of the word preached is the continuous condition of the presence of God in the Person Christ.⁸⁹ Such formulations will become the interchangeable but inseparable Christological hermeneutic of later generations holding together the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

The simultaneity of justification and conversation in Schleiermacher’s soteriological Christology is important to him so that the consciousness of sin is undergoing transformation through the removal of guilt just as it as the believing is becoming truly aware of sin. The experience of the living Christ in this moves the believing to accept suffering together with Christ, whether social or natural evils (Ro 8:22, 35-39), as no longer punishment or fear of it but the conditions for the experience of forgiveness.⁹⁰ The abolition of fear is fundamental whereby the understanding of justification is its deepest psychological appropriation in conversion. Together, these two elements constituted what

⁸⁶ CF2., p. 470.

⁸⁷ CF2, p. 480.

⁸⁸ CF2, p. 492; they are manifestations of “fanaticism.”

⁸⁹ Ibid; one sees here the direct line to Martin Kaehler’s and Wilhelm Herrmann’s theologies at the end of the century.

⁹⁰ CF2, p. 499.

Schleiermacher means by regeneration. The level at which Schleiermacher has re-appropriated classic pietist sensibility in reading scripture is evident, even the point uniting the entire outlook of his discussion of soteriology in terms of notion of the “passivity of faith” in “adoption” – participation in the Son’s relation to the Father. While he can acknowledge that extensive speculative reflection upon the metaphors of divine human relations in the Pauline text is perhaps too “poetic” he nevertheless is quite actualist in referring to the “Father’s drawing men to the Son.”⁹¹

Schleiermacher has a robust vision of the divine government of the world in this work. In classic Reformed fashion he uses this notion to explain the “absence of uniformity” in humanity between those who are a part (through election) of the “propagation of the Church from one generation to another” and those that are not. Although he rejects the notion of holy nation on account of a national church, but can comment that “whole peoples have accepted Christianity,” “while the great majority of the Jewish people remain[ed] outside.”⁹² That this is the case is to be accorded with Paul’s arguments in Romans 10-11. He is certainly not a universalist at this point and avers that knowledge of God’s definitive will in this matter requires acceptance “as consciously as possible and without inward dissent.”⁹³ He is disturbed by his own exclusivism⁹⁴, goes on to argue against double-predestination and for ultimate restoration. In trying to deal with where his closer attention to tradition and scripture have led him on the matter of religious experience, he has reduced its significance in view of Christian faith, to very nearly an “idiosyncrasy” or “merely accidental more or less.”⁹⁵ But he provides something of a solution for himself by asserting that everyone will eventually have the opportunity to acquire “the divine operations of grace” in order to join in its fellowship. To move in this direction is to place a focus upon human faith in response to proclamation (Ro 10-11)

⁹¹ CF2, p. 501.

⁹² CF2, p. 538.

⁹³ CF2, p. 539.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, and recommends his readers to refer to his earlier treatise on election; cf., Matthias Gockel, “New Perspectives on an Old Debate: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Essay on Election,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. 6 (2004) 301–318.

⁹⁵ CF2, p. 540.

and then God's electing grace effecting this faith.⁹⁶ He struggles, as any interpreter of Paul and the tradition, to hold together divine love and power. Much of what he formulates here as well provided a model for future generations of theological exegetes.

When Schleiermacher turns to the nature of Christian community as a unity of the Spirit, he lays fundamental stress upon the "presence of the Spirit" as the "condition of anyone's sharing in the common life" (Ro 8:9).⁹⁷ The experience of regeneration is the basis for a kind of polity based upon a common feeling among its members. Schleiermacher describes this experience as not of "the general constitution of human nature (which would make Christ superfluous) nor from any other divine arrangement."⁹⁸ The Spirit is also something not of some "higher essence" of the human or in any way to be understood according to the "rejected...representations of Christ with an Arian bias." Believers exist in unity with this Spirit, not merely a reality from outside them (*extra nos*) but also united to human nature (Ro 8:9, 11).⁹⁹ The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the basis for faith and action in and by this community for every movement of regeneration, sanctification and proclamation animated and led by this common Spirit (Ro 8:14).¹⁰⁰ This is not to say that for Schleiermacher the church and its members are to somehow achieve a kind of perfection of in their historical faith and life. He will finally return to the great dialectical text of Romans 7 (17-19) to conclude his great work.¹⁰¹ That which is visible is ever mutable, marked as much by the plurality of churches as by anything. The global spread of Christian faith by the influence of the Holy Spirit (Ro 11:25, 26) in the unity of faith was to him incomparable among the world's religions and evidence of Christ's truth. The famous, or infamous "postscript" to the Trinity finds its way at the end not so much to abstract and discard this doctrine of from the rest of Christian theology, but to acknowledge that its clarification comes long after the canonical texts were written and as a composite of its testimonies. Indeed, Schleiermacher is convinced that its

⁹⁶ CF2, pp. 553-554; one readily sees the origin of Karl Barth's reorientation of election of humanity through the "election" of Christ in the incarnation. Schleiermacher sums up his position: "no individual becomes anything whatever for himself, alone and apart from his place in the whole...everything...is the perfect manifestation at once of the divine good-pleasure and of the divine omnipotence"(p. 558).

⁹⁷ CF2, p. 563.

⁹⁸ CF2, p. 571.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ CF2, p. 575.

¹⁰¹ CF2, p. 676.

definitions had much more development to undergo under the influence of the Holy Spirit in the church.¹⁰² Indeed, because of its composite nature and that the knowledge of God in unity and trinity is entirely a matter of historical revelation that is scripture, Schleiermacher placed his self-admittedly preliminary discussion of the doctrine at the end of his work to indicate that every other doctrine should be discussed first before tackling this one.¹⁰³

By way of a conclusion, the role of Romans in *The Christian Faith* – and Schleiermacher's legacy, is one that combines a normative Protestant reading together with reinterpretations formulated early in his career and modified along the way. While God-consciousness has become consciousness of the living presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit in community and most importantly for Schleiermacher the simultaneous consciousness of sin and redemption in Christ, the result for theology is a more scripture orientated exposition. A Protestant Romans hermeneutic is very evident, but now it has been refocused away from the divine act of justification, to the divine presence and shared subjectivity of the One who justifies, or, according to his preferred term, regenerates and sanctifies.

¹⁰² CF2, pp. 747-748.

¹⁰³ CF2, p. 749.