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## Table of Contents

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<b>Justification: Jesus vs. Paul</b> David P. Scaer .....	195
<b>The Doctrine of Justification in the 19th Century: A Look at Schleiermacher's <i>Der christliche Glaube</i></b> Naomichi Masaki .....	213
<b>Evangelicals and Lutherans on Justification: Similarities and Differences</b> Scott R. Murray .....	231
<b>The Finnish School of Luther Interpretation: Responses and Trajectories</b> Gordon L. Isaac .....	251
<b>Gerhard Forde's Theology of Atonement and Justification: A Confessional Lutheran Response</b> Jack Kilcrease .....	269
<b>The Ministry in the Early Church</b> Joel C. Elowsky .....	295
<b>Walther and AC V</b> Roland Ziegler .....	313
<b>Research Notes</b> .....	335
<i>The Gospel of Jesus' Wife: A Modern Forgery?</i>	

<b>Theological Observer</b> .....	338
Notes on the NIV	
The Digital 17th Century	
Preparing the First English Edition of Johann Gerhard's <i>Theological Commonplaces</i>	
Can There Be Peace? Violence in the Name of Religion	
<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	359
<b>Books Received</b> .....	380
<b>Indices for Volume 76 (2012)</b> .....	382

### **Justification and the Office of the Holy Ministry**

The first five articles in this issue were originally papers presented at the 35th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions held in Fort Wayne on January 18–20, 2012 under the theme “Justification in a Contemporary Context.” The final two articles, by Joel Elowsky and Roland Ziegler, were first delivered as the plenary papers of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Theology Professors Conference that met at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, on May 29 to June 1, 2012, under the theme “To Obtain Such Faith . . . The Ministry of Teaching the Gospel” (AC V). It has been the practice of the two seminary journals to alternate in publishing plenary papers from this bi-annual conference in order that these studies may be shared with the wider church.

*The Editors*

## The Doctrine of Justification in the 19th Century: A Look at Schleiermacher's *Der christliche Glaube*

Naomichi Masaki

For Lutherans, the 19th century was the time of confessional revival and liturgical renewal. The vitality of the gospel was once again confessed and lived out, and what had been restored moved from Germany to the Nordic countries, North and Latin America, Australia, and other parts of the world. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is an heir of this remarkable confessional revival, shaped to a greater or lesser degree by some of the leaders of that movement, including C.F.W. Walther (1811–1887), Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872), and Theodor Kliefoth (1810–1895).

In the wider ecclesiastical and academic context, the importance of 19th-century theology is enormous. It seems that all the theological trends that went beforehand were merged by some of the key theologians of the 19th century. In turn, the various forms and expressions which developed afterward sprang out of them.<sup>1</sup> At the center of the intellectual landscape of the century were three academic giants, all German: Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831), and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Whether agreeing with them or not, theologians of the 19th century could not escape interacting with them. Arguably, the most influential among them for the life of the church was Schleiermacher. He dominated the theological scene for at least the first third of the century.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Helmut Thielicke observes, “[W]e have to confess that the whole tree of the 19th and 20th centuries is present in seed-form in him [Schleiermacher] so far as the link between theological and intellectual history is concerned.” Helmut Thielicke, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Modern Faith and Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Welch divided the 19th century into three segments: 1799–1835, 1835–1870, and 1870–1914. He observes that Schleiermacher dominated the first period as the major theologian, as Albrecht Ritschl did during the third. The second third of the century, when the confessional revival and liturgical renewal took place among the Lutherans, is designated simply as the time “between Schleiermacher and Ritschl.” Politically, the first period is characterized by the French Revolution followed by the Napoleonic wars and the Restoration, the second by the era of revolution, and the third by growing industrialism and urbanization. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, vol. 1, 1799–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1–8.

Karl Barth, in his famous *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, maintained that only Schleiermacher may be said to have given birth to an epoch.<sup>3</sup> Werner Elert entitled his major work on the 19th-century theology, *Der Kampf um das Christentum . . . seit Schleiermacher*.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of examining the doctrine of justification in the entire 19th century, I will, for several reasons, engage mainly Schleiermacher's doctrine. First, the entire century is simply too expansive. I seriously considered presenting at least two prominent men, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, but, as the saying goes, "if you run after two hares, you will catch neither." Second, since Schleiermacher is usually called "the father of modern theology," knowledge of this theological giant will help us understand the whole stream of the 19th century in terms of direction and connection. We know that Francis Pieper labeled him "the worst heretic" of the 19th century and passionately complained that even some of the confessional Lutherans had followed his footsteps.<sup>5</sup> By such remarks, he fostered a common opinion within our circles that Schleiermacher is a bad influence. But, as it is often the case, such labeling is dangerous and unscholarly. Before adopting the view of Pieper or of any other secondary source on Schleiermacher, we should actually read him.<sup>6</sup> Third, while Schleiermacher has been known in our dogmatic tradition for years, he is a late comer in the English speaking world and in its scholarly interests. According to Terrence N. Tice in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, the "Schleiermacher renaissance" took place in America as late as in 1964 through Richard R. Niebuhr's book *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion*.<sup>7</sup> In the 1980s, significant international dialogue and research on Schleiermacher began.<sup>8</sup> Today, we witness a growing stream of translations and a

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, New Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 640.

<sup>4</sup> Werner Elert, *Der Kampf um das Christentum: Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen dem evangelischen Christentum in Deutschland und dem allgemeinen Denken seit Schleiermacher und Hegel* (München: C. H. Beck, 1921).

<sup>5</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950–53) 1: 114, 120, 128; 2: 117, 364.

<sup>6</sup> David P. Scaer, for example, has demonstrated such a scholarly engagement with Schleiermacher in many of his writings, including his latest book, *Infant Baptism in Nineteenth Century Lutheran Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 35–51.

<sup>7</sup> Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964).

<sup>8</sup> The International Congress was held in Berlin on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Schleiermacher's death in 1984, and the International Schleiermacher Society was also organized around that time.

huge body of articles and essays on Schleiermacher.<sup>9</sup> This continuing growth in Schleiermacher scholarship indicates that many find his theology to be helpful and relevant in church and academia. Here, I will first introduce Schleiermacher and his time, and then examine his *opus magnum*, *Der christliche Glaube* (*The Christian Faith*) of 1830/31 (the revised edition).<sup>10</sup>

### I. Schleiermacher's Roots

Schleiermacher's loyalty to Prussia as a state seems to be related to the fact that, in his youth, he directly witnessed the power unleashed by the French revolution. It is not hard to imagine that he wanted to see the German people united and German culture preserved.<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher is known as a translator of Plato, hermeneutics theorist, philosopher of religion, political activist, religious and cultural leader of Germany, a founding member of the University of Berlin faculty, and one of the greatest preachers of the day. When he was asked why his church, *Dreifaltigkeitskirche* in Berlin where he preached from 1808 to 1834, was always full, he said, "It is mainly students, young ladies, and military officers who come. The students come because I am a member of the examining board, the young ladies come because of the students, and the officers come in order to see the girls."<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this was a show of his modesty.

Schleiermacher came from a devout Reformed pastor's family and grew up under the influence of a lively Herrnhut pietism. As a young man, Schleiermacher already began to doubt some of the most fundamental doctrines, such as the vicarious atonement of Christ, his two natures, and

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<sup>9</sup> Terrence N. Tice, "Schleiermacher yesterday, today, and tomorrow," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Marina (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 307–317.

<sup>10</sup> In this essay, the following texts are used: Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche*, 2nd edition of 1830 (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1861); *The Christian Faith*, tr. from 2nd edition, H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989). Richard Crouter discusses the difference between the first and the second editions of *Der christliche Glaube* (1822–1822 and 1830–1831) in his *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 226–47.

<sup>11</sup> Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, 15, 83. Schleiermacher briefly taught at the University of Halle until the city was invaded by Napoleon and the University closed by force.

<sup>12</sup> "Es sind vor allem Studenten, junge Damen und Offiziere, die zu mir kommen. Die Studenten kommen, weil ich zur Prüfungskommission gehöre, die Damen kommen wegen der Studenten und die Offiziere wegen der Damen." I am indebted to Cornelia Schulz for providing this quote. Cf. *Der Korrespondent* 7 (May 1900): 120. This is a well-known anecdote in Germany.

the Trinity. Against the wishes of his father, he proceeded to the University of Halle, which had already abandoned the old pietism and had turned to rationalism in the spirit of Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Johann Semler (1725–1791). There he fell in love with Plato and Kant.

In his first major theological work, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799),<sup>13</sup> we hear what would later become foundational in his *opus magnum*, *Der christliche Glaube*. In the Second Speech, he considers religion not from the theoretical point of view as a certain mode of *thinking* or from the practical point of view as a certain mode of *acting*.<sup>14</sup> Rather, religion is primarily a *feeling* (*ein Gefühl*), a sentiment, an intuition. It is to be sought neither in books nor traditions, neither in the ceremonies nor dogmatic systems, but in the human heart. Religion is not concerned about what is true or false, or about who is right or wrong. All religious feeling is true, and the necessity of toleration is inherent in religion. Quarrels and persecutions do not come from religion, but from the spirit or system with which men have confounded it. By explaining religion in this way, Schleiermacher urged his audience not to despise religion, but to descend into the inmost sanctuary of their hearts.<sup>15</sup>

It is obvious that Schleiermacher had the metaphysics of Kant and Hegel in mind. Schleiermacher had not totally abandoned his pietistic upbringing which, by then, had been blended together with romantic influence. However, his point of departure was not the words of Christ but the human heart, so that whatever did not fit with the feeling of the heart was cut off from consideration. This may explain why Schleiermacher's view of religion is still favorably received in today's churches. The internalization of religion, religious tolerance, freedom from doctrine, and the direct encounter with the divine in one's heart—all of which Schleiermacher promoted—are still valued by people in these post-modern times.

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<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: Johann Friedrich Unger, 1799); translated by Richard Crouter as, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> If religion has to do with knowing, then it becomes all about an investigation of the relationships among the finite objects. If religion is concerned about morality, it will need to investigate the relations of various actions.

<sup>15</sup> Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 27–84; *On Religion*, 96–140.

## II. Schleiermacher's Context: From the Thirty Years' War to Albrecht Ritschl

A series of military conflicts culminating in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) had devastated Europe in the early part of the 17th century. Because rival confessions were associated with the war, there was a widespread questioning of the legitimacy of doctrinal disputes. The period of theological orthodoxy was over. Pietism and rationalism both contributed to doctrinal indifference that fed a broad-minded ecumenism and religious tolerance.<sup>16</sup> In pietism, the focus of attention shifted away from the *externum verbum*, from the *pro nobis* to the *in nobis*. Although the approach varied among the Enlightenment thinkers on the continent and in England, they all wanted to be convinced that what they believed was reasonable.<sup>17</sup>

Critiques of rationalism came from within in the latter part of the 18th century. David Hume (1711–1776), for example, showed that reason was not as “reasonable” as the Deists and other empiricists like John Locke (1632–1704) had believed. By explaining that all we know are perceptions, and that only through a habit of the mind we can imagine a certain relation between cause and effect—a relation that we do not actually exper-

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<sup>16</sup> Walter H. Conser, Jr., *Church and Confession: Conservative Theologians in Germany, England, and America 1815–1866* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 3–10. We may observe that while in England Methodism followed the period dominated by rationalism, in Germany, by contrast, rationalism followed the rise of pietism.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Spener (1635–1705), on the one hand, did not criticize the church's dogma as such. By emphasizing conversion and the life of sanctification, however, the vitality of doctrine receded behind a pious attitude of living faith. The focus of attention shifted from *externum verbum* and *pro me* to *in nobis*. According to Luther, all heresy is an assertion of Christ and *something more*: See *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press: St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1986), 26:52, *Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Schriften], 65 vols. (Wiemar: H. Böhlau, 1883–1993), 40:112,26–28; AE 34: 208 (WA 50:267,17–18). In pietism, that “something more” was added under the guise of sincerity of heart and the transformation of the whole person. We may trace a similar trend in August Francke (1663–1727), Nicolaus von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), John Wesley (1703–1791), Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824), and Jonathan Edwards (1803–1858). In Enlightenment theology, on the other hand, the way in which doctrine was downplayed or rejected for the sake of ethics and morality was very different. The new methodologies of René Descartes (1596–1650) in philosophy and Galileo (1564–1642) in science were applied to theology. Although the approach varied among the Enlightenment thinkers in the Continent and in England, they equally wanted to be convinced that what they believed was reasonable. The religion of reason was set forth to replace the religion of divine revelation. As in pietism, so also in rationalism, life was upheld over against doctrine.

ience—Hume stimulated people toward skepticism, if not toward a total abandonment of the religion of reason.

Hume awakened Immanuel Kant from his own “dogmatic slumber.” Kant proposed a hypothesis that the mind is active in the knowing process. Over against empiricism, which viewed knowledge as coming from sense experience alone to a passive mind, he argued that the senses merely supply the raw data, and that the mind organizes these data by using certain categories already present in the mind. In this way, Kant limited what *pure reason* can do and left a more secure place for religion in *practical reason*. Basic to Kant was his conviction that man is a moral being and that human moral experience is universal. This universal human moral experience is controlled by a sense of “ought,” his famous “categorical imperative,” which focuses less on specific actions and more on the motivation behind them. There must be a god who rewards man with a future for his moral living. Christianity is considered good because there is one historical exemplar of the ideal of morally perfect humankind, Jesus.

While Kant sought to overcome the Enlightenment by shifting the focus of religion from *pure reason* to *practical reason*, Hegel attempted to do the same by elevating Christianity as *the* revealed religion. For Hegel, truth was the reasoning process itself.<sup>18</sup> Through the ongoing dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, history reveals the gradual unfolding of the truth. Hegel was concerned about the self-actualization of God that he found in the historical process of God in himself, creation, and reconciliation. For Hegel, because of his presupposition that the goal of religion was the unity of God and man, the incarnation of Jesus was the most significant event of “reconciliation.” Hegel was critical of Schleiermacher’s approach. He maintained that if religion is defined as the feeling of absolute dependence, “a dog would be the best Christian for it possesses this in the highest degree and lives mainly in this feeling.”<sup>19</sup> Despite Hegel’s critique, Schleiermacher did not lose his influence. His students emphasized either human experience or evaluative thinking.<sup>20</sup> Although the direction was

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<sup>18</sup> Like Kant, Hegel denied that sense experience was the only basis for knowledge. In its place, he proposed a complex understanding of reality that is not static and complete, but active and developing.

<sup>19</sup> *Beyond Epistemology: New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. F.G. Weiss, tr. A.V. Miller (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 238, as quoted by Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, 4, 91. Though Schleiermacher voted to call Hegel to the Berlin professorship, he was motivated by the desire to block another candidate. Crouter, 70–97.

<sup>20</sup> Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810–1877), F.H.R. von Frank (1827–1894), and others picked up on Schleiermacher’s emphasis on human experience. David Strauss (1808–1874), Albrecht Ritschl, and company advanced Schleiermacher’s critical



different, they all shared one thing in common: the point of departure was man instead of Jesus and his words.<sup>21</sup>

In Albrecht Ritschl, we find the anthropocentric understanding of the doctrine of justification. He revived the Kantian emphasis on practical reason and moral judgment when the Hegelian speculative idealism declined during the second half of the century.<sup>22</sup> Ritschl was a theological positivist. Like Kant, he secured the place of religious knowledge, which involved a value judgment of how things ought to be, by separating it from scientific knowledge, which speaks of the way things are. Also, in working with the history of dogma, he attempted to show how speculative metaphysics had encroached upon Christianity from the middle of the second century onward. The original religion of Jesus and Paul was replaced by medieval Roman Catholicism, with its legalistic approach to sin, its authoritarianism, and its monastic enmity to the world.<sup>23</sup> The “original line” of Luther was better, too, which he found in the reformer prior to his struggles against Rome and the enthusiasts. For Ritschl, the discovery of the gospel meant freedom for Christians in terms of free spontaneous activity by the community of believers for the kingdom of God. Ritschl defined sin as selfishness. Justification removes sin, so that collectively believers may make a value judgment (*Werturteil*) about Jesus, as the ethical teacher and moral example, and about the kingdom of God, which was progressively realized in human history. In Ritschl’s theology, we observe a certain influence of Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel.<sup>24</sup> Norman Nagel observes that when Lutherans lose the gospel they slip back to where they were before. In Ritschl, we find the

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and evaluative thinking. Cf. Carl Fr. Wisløff, *Short History of Modern Theology* (Tokyo: Word of Life, 1975), 23–32.

<sup>21</sup> Thielicke considered Schleiermacher’s fundamental question to be, “How do I make Christian faith my own?” Thielicke, *Modern Faith and Thought*, 162. Theologians who were influenced by Schleiermacher seemed to have inherited that point of inquiry.

<sup>22</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und der Versöhnung*, 3 vols (1870–1874). See the English translation of volume 1: *A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, tr. John S. Black (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872) and volume 3: *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, tr. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1966).

<sup>23</sup> James M. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour: German Evangelical Theological Factions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917–1933* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 3–17.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 25.

Augustinian tradition with justification embraced—and thus taken over—by sanctification.<sup>25</sup>

### III. Schleiermacher's *Der christliche Glaube*

Schleiermacher's *Der christliche Glaube* is composed of 172 propositions (*die christliche Glaubenssätze*) and their explanations. Rather than treating his doctrine of justification in isolation, I will attempt to explain it in its broader context. The structure of the book appears as follows (I have added the bold for emphasis):

Introduction—The Definition and Method of Dogmatics

Part I: The Religious Self-Consciousness That is Presupposed

A. The Religious Self-Consciousness

a. **Creation**

b. Preservation

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<sup>25</sup> Ritschl's anthropocentric doctrine of justification was not left unchallenged. Theodosius Harnack (1816/7-1889) criticized Ritschl for having overlooked some of the key teaching of Luther, such as the doctrine of the wrath of God, the proper distinction between law and gospel, and the question of the hiddenness of God. See Theodosius Harnack, *Luthers Theologie mit besonderer Beziehung auf seine Versöhnungs- und Erlösungslehre*, 2 vols. (Erlangen: Theodor Blaesing, 1862, 1886). According to Harnack's assessment, Ritschl simply did not understand either Luther or the doctrine of justification. Werner Elert observes that Ritschl "wanted to banish this concept [the wrath of God] entirely from Christian dogmatics." Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, vol 1: *Theologie und Weltanschauung des Luthertums hauptsächlich im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1931), 37; cf. *The Structure of Lutheranism: The Theology and Philosophy of Life of Lutheranism, especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 42. Paul Althaus comments that Harnack's *Luthers Theologie* "remains the best presentation of Luther's doctrine of the wrath of God." Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 169. Ironically, a generation later, Theodosius' own son, Adolf (1851-1930), sided with Ritschl instead of his father and radicalized Ritschl's project. Karl Holl (1866-1926), in his attempt to harmonize Ritschl and Theodosius Harnack on the doctrine of justification, also favored Ritschl's position. Holl interpreted Luther's doctrine of justification to teach both a declaration and a transformation; it was Melancthon who narrowed justification to a mere forensic declaration. Holl maintained that the righteousness that we possess is the reason God declares us justified. There were many Lutheran theologians who did not accept Holl's reading of Luther. They republished Theodosius Harnack's *Luthers Theologie* in 1927 to confess forensic justification over against the views of Ritschl and Holl. At the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Helsinki in 1963, Holl's views on justification were pitted against those of Theodosius Harnack, see Carl E. Braaten, *Justification: The Article by Which the Church Stands or Falls* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 10-15.

- B. The Divine Attributes That are Related to the Religious Self-Consciousness—God as Eternal, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient
- C. The World
  - c. Original Perfection of the World
  - d. Original Perfection of Man

Part II: The Religious Self-Consciousness That is Determined by Pleasure and Pain

- B. The Consciousness of Sin
  - a. **Sin** (Original and Actual)
  - b. The World in Relation to Sin
  - c. The Divine Attributes That are Related to the Consciousness of Sin—God as Holy and Just
- C. The Consciousness of Grace
  - a. The State of Christian
    - i. **Christ** (Person and Work)
    - ii. Fellowship with the Redeemer
      - 1. Regeneration—Conversion and **Justification**
      - 2. **Sanctification**—Sins and Good Works of the Regenerate
  - b. The World in Relation to Redemption
    - i. The Origin of **the Church**
      - 1. Election
      - 2. The Communication of the Holy Spirit
    - ii. The Substance of the Church
      - 1. The Essential Features of the Church
        - a) **Holy Scripture**
        - b) **The Ministry of the Word**
        - c) **Baptism**
        - d) **The Lord's Supper**
        - e) **The Office of the Keys**
        - f) **Prayer** in the Name of Jesus
      - 2. The Mutable Element of the Church—Church as **Visible and Invisible**
    - iii. **The Consummation** of the Church
      - 1. The Return of Christ
      - 2. The Resurrection of the Flesh
      - 3. The Last Judgment
      - 4. Eternal Blessedness
  - c. The Divine Attributes That Related to Redemption—God as Love and Wisdom
  - d. Conclusion—**Trinity**

### The Structure

Schleiermacher's outline looks different from what Lutherans are accustomed to in Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*. It does not begin with the Holy Scripture. The Trinity as such is included in the conclusion and as an appendix. All the major portions of his presentation are systematically divided into three divisions of (1) man, (2) God, and (3) the world (§30).<sup>26</sup> The doctrine of justification is found under the category of fellowship with the Redeemer, which indicates that, for Schleiermacher, justification is not about forgiveness of sins but about fellowship with Christ. Schleiermacher uses the language of "the ministry of the word" and avoids the expression of the office (*Predigtamt, Gnadenmittelamt*). Finally, the church is described as "visible and invisible."

### Introduction

Schleiermacher's introduction is not without significance. First, as in his earlier book, *On Religion*, he maintains that piety (*die Frömmigkeit*) is neither a *knowing* (*ein Wissen*) nor a *doing* (*ein Thun*) but a *feeling* (*ein Gefühl*), which he also now defines as immediate self-consciousness (*ein unmittelbares Selbstbewußtsein*) (§3). None of the three major thinkers in the 19th century begin their presentation of Christianity with Scripture, but with something universal in man. Kant found this universal in the categorical imperative. Hegel runs with a progression of man toward the unity with God. For Schleiermacher, it was the consciousness of absolute dependence on God (§4).

Second, the reader of Schleiermacher must be aware that, while he retains the familiar dogmatic language of the church, he revises the meaning of almost every term. For example, when he states that the only way of obtaining participation in the Christian community is through faith in Jesus Christ (§14), "faith" here does not mean a saving faith that receives the forgiveness of sins, but it is the certainty concerning the feeling of absolute dependence that does not have prior knowledge of God (§4.4). Another example is his use of the term "doctrine." For us, doctrine is the Lord's; when it is sound, it delivers his gifts. Doctrine itself is a gift from the Lord. Not so with Schleiermacher. For him, doctrine is a description of Christian piety in the heart, an account of Christian religious feeling (§15).

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<sup>26</sup> Rather than referencing *Der christliche Glaube* by page numbers in the original German or in English translations, the pertinent propositions in the book are noted in parentheses in this paper. For the sake of consistency and ease of reference, I have used the symbol § to stand for "proposition."

Third, we must not forget that Schleiermacher wrote this book for the United Evangelical Church of Prussia.<sup>27</sup> He appeals to the evangelical confessional documents (*die evangelischen Bekenntnisschriften*) to prove his points (§27), but he cites not only from the Lutheran Confessions but also from the Reformed. When the Lutheran and Reformed are opposed to each other, he accepts “only that part of the confessional documents in which they all agree” (§27.2). This means that he dismisses what is not held in common as non-essential. A good example is his view of the Lord’s Supper, as we will see later.

### *Creation and the Devil*

Schleiermacher’s understanding of the Creator comes from the absolute dependence on God that all human beings have in common. There has to be an originator of the world (§40). Since Schleiermacher speaks of creation from man’s point of view, he says nothing about *creatio ex nihilo* or a cohesive relationship between creation and justification, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>28</sup> The angels are not particularly helpful or harmful to the consciousness (§42). When it comes to the devil, Schleiermacher denies his existence, because belief in the devil robs man of joyful consciousness (§44–45). Schleiermacher does not address the reality of *tentatio/Anfechtung*.<sup>29</sup>

### *Sin*

Schleiermacher’s division of pain (*Unlust*) and pleasure (*Lust*) in the major portion of his book resembles the distinction between law and gospel. But, again, his interest stays in human experiences. Sin is defined as the consciousness of having turned away from God (*die Abwendung von Gott*). Grace, in contrast, is the consciousness of being in fellowship with Him (*die Gemeinschaft mit Gott*) (§63).<sup>30</sup> This is different from Luther’s confession of the chief office of the law as killing and the chief office of the gospel as justifying, because Schleiermacher operates with Platonic and Augustinian concepts of distance and unity. As man must move between

<sup>27</sup> Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, 231.

<sup>28</sup> Where the point of departure in theology is something in man, one cannot move from creation to the forgiveness of sins. Luther in his *Lectures on Jonah* observed that natural man knows that a god must exist and he is powerful, but he does not know who this god is and whether or not he is willing to help and save, AE 19:54–55; WA 19,206. 7–207. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Schleiermacher does not understand biblical references to the devil literally but symbolically, claiming that Christ and the apostles were merely borrowing the popular notion of the day when they spoke of the devil.

<sup>30</sup> Everything that hinders the development of God-consciousness in man is considered sin (§66.1).

two kinds of consciousness, redemption means a process in which man's consciousness is drawn ever closer to God. This happens when man receives and appropriates the influence of the absolute perfection of Jesus (§81.2, §70.2).<sup>31</sup>

Schleiermacher's concept of sin has additional features that will be helpful for our understanding of his view of justification. First of all, he takes original sin to be originating sin, so that after the appearance of actual sins, original sin ceases to exist (§71.1). Second, Adam and Eve had original sin even before the Fall, so that there was no change in human nature before and after. This does not contradict the original perfection of man for Schleiermacher, because for him sin exists only in so far as there is a consciousness of it (§68.2). Third, since original sin is a common possession of all men, man is a sinner not because he sins but because he belongs to the corporate community of sinners (§71.2, §72). Schleiermacher also dismisses the idea of the penalties for sin (§71.4). Fourth, man does not gain his knowledge of sin from the law, because the law is insufficient, but from the absolute sinlessness and perfection of Jesus (§68.3). And fifth, God is the author of sin, because unless man attains the consciousness of sin he will not realize the need for redemption (§71.1).<sup>32</sup>

### *Christ*

What controls Schleiermacher's Christology is the work of Jesus (*seine Wirksamkeit*) in redemption and reconciliation (§91, §92.3). Once again, readers of Schleiermacher must not be deceived by the familiar language he uses. By redemption, Schleiermacher means that Jesus takes believers into the power of his God-consciousness (§100), and by reconciliation he means that believers gain the corporate feeling of blessedness in their hearts (§101, §86, §88.4). These works of Jesus are explained by a generic term, "influence" (§87, §88). Jesus influences people only in the community

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<sup>31</sup> It is true that Schleiermacher does not consider sin at the levels of knowing or doing. However, since for him doctrine is descriptive of human experiences, even though he talks about the pain of consciousness, he is not able to confess the *bottomlessness* of our sinful nature as Luther expounds on it in the Smalcald Articles (SA III II 4). According to Luther, we are never able to know how sinful we really are before God in our lifetime, and our degree of self-knowledge is proportional only to the revelation of the Scripture that is believed (SA III I 3). It is impossible to ask that much from Schleiermacher when his point of departure is not God's word but the human heart.

<sup>32</sup> Strangely, Schleiermacher appeals to AC XIX, where the expression "as soon as God withdraws His hand" appears in the German edition, to justify his understanding (§81.3). Schleiermacher does not pay attention to the fact that the main point of this article was to dismiss the very idea that God is a cause of sin.

which he founded (§87, §88, §92). In his work of redemption, he first enters into the corporate life of sin in order to begin influencing people with his God-consciousness. In his work of reconciliation, Jesus lives at the center of the believers' life in order to effect both the feeling of the disappearance of the old Adam and the feeling of union with Christ. Both redemption and reconciliation take place only gradually in a movement of growing likeness to the redeemer (§100). It is a process of formation. For this reason, Schleiermacher criticizes the notion of vicarious atonement and forgiveness-talk, because there the work of Christ comes to man only from the outside (*extra nos*).

Schleiermacher's departure from the historic understanding of the work of Christ is matched by his revision of both the doctrine of the person of Christ (*seine Würde*) and his three-fold office. The central point of his understanding of Christ's person is that Jesus possesses absolute sinlessness and perfect blessedness in his consciousness.<sup>33</sup> Schleiermacher sees this as necessary for his ability to influence the God-consciousness in believers (§92, §96). Without it, Jesus cannot draw people away from the corporate life of sin (§92).

Schleiermacher relates preaching about Jesus' perfect God-consciousness and absolute sinlessness to his prophetic office and his inward way of controlling the church to his royal office (§103, §105). But most unique, perhaps, is his presentation of the high-priestly office of Jesus. Just as the high priest serves in the divine service of the temple and never departs from it, so Jesus remains constantly with God and does the will of God. This is Schleiermacher's notion of the active obedience of Christ (§104.2-3). The passive obedience is not about his atoning sacrifice but his self-denying love (§101.3, §104.4). In both cases, Schleiermacher dismisses the notion of vicariousness. Rather than putting believers in a passive mode, Schleiermacher wants them to be partners in Christ's obedience.

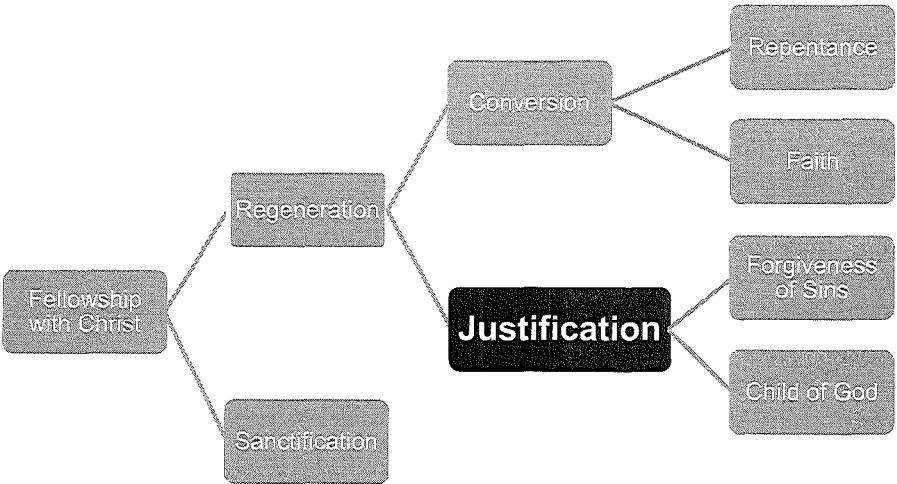
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<sup>33</sup> Schleiermacher dismisses the virgin birth, Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and second coming as unimportant details. These questions, he argues, belong to the doctrine of the Scripture and have nothing to do with the doctrine of Christ (§97.2, §99.2). Schleiermacher rationalizes that the supernatural conception of Jesus can be believed without having to talk about a non-Joseph influence in the Scripture or even a non-Mary influence in the later medieval development. Likewise, he thinks that Jesus' spiritual presence does not have to be mediated by the intermediate steps of his resurrection and ascension (§97.2, §99.1). In these topics, Schleiermacher attempted to find a mediating position between the orthodox dogma and the Enlightenment religion. Theologically, he has moved away from the Lutheran Confessions where, for example, the ascension of our Lord is the key for his ongoing ministry on earth to distribute his forgiveness by using the apostolic ministry. Schleiermacher does not see this. In terms of Jesus' two natures, he again revises it (§96).

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### *Justification*

Schleiermacher's exposition of the manner in which the believers experience fellowship with Christ in their consciousness is divided under two headings, regeneration and sanctification (§109.2). Regeneration is described as conversion, which consists of repentance and faith, and justification, which includes the forgiveness of sins and being a child of God.



Conversion marks the beginning of the new life in fellowship with Christ. As mentioned, it does not take place by the preaching of the law and the preaching of the gospel in Schleiermacher's church, but rather by the vision of Christ's perfection, which causes both repentance and faith. It is a gradual movement toward a living fellowship with Christ. But how can believers know whether they are within this fellowship or still outside?



What is justification for Schleiermacher? It is a changed relation to God (§107), which comes only through union with Christ (§107.1). God justifies the one who is converted (§109).<sup>35</sup> As Christ influences the believer, his consciousness of sin becomes the consciousness of the forgiveness of sin. When forgiveness of sin is felt, there emerges also a consciousness of being adopted as a child of God (§109.2).

Once a man is converted and justified, the fellowship with Christ in his heart must steadily grow. This is the state of sanctification (§110.1), in which fellowship with Christ always means fellowship with him in his mission to the world (§111.4). Though the believer still sins, he carries with him the forgiveness of sin and so does not lose his redemption. However, once he is in the state of sanctification, no new sin can develop (§111.1).

In his articulation of justification, Schleiermacher amazingly has no use for Christ's atoning death on the cross. He completely ignores the means of grace, together with the means of grace office (*Gnadenmittelamt*). Certainty of being justified is known only empirically in a quantitative way and by looking at one's own heart and work.

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the consciousness of regret because it is external and because it evokes regret only about particular things (§108.2, §112.5). Only the vision of the perfection of Christ brings about a consciousness of true conversion-regret. But since the same vision of Christ is at the same time his self-impartation of perfection, it is also recognized as the dawn of faith, which Schleiermacher defines as the appropriation of the perfection and blessedness of Christ. As we did not clearly hear from Schleiermacher how Christ communicates his perfection, which results in both regret and faith in the previous section on Christology, in this section on regeneration the reader of Schleiermacher stays uninformed. Schleiermacher repeats the language of "influence" of the Redeemer (§106.1, §109.3, etc.). He does not speak of preaching and the sacraments as the means through which Christ works. He is also opposed to the idea of having to designate a particular time and place of man's conversion (§108.3). How, then, can a believer know whether or not he is received into a living fellowship with Christ? As conversion and justification take place only gradually because they have to do with one's union with Christ, the only way to recognize one's progression is by seeing the fruits of conversion: a steady progress in sanctification, and active participation in the extension of Christ's kingdom (§108.2). Schleiermacher thinks it impossible that a man who is received into unity of life with Christ can go on in his living without actively providing himself as an instrument of Christ's redeeming activity.

<sup>35</sup> Since conversion consists of repentance and faith, justification comes after the beginning of faith (§109.4). Faith comes by being subject to Christ's influence. Such influence must be accepted by man, and the ability to accept it has not been lost by original sin for Schleiermacher. Repentance (in conversion) corresponds to forgiveness of sin (in justification), just as faith (in conversion) is related to being a child of God (in justification). Repentance and forgiveness have to do with the end of the old state as faith and being a child of God express the character of the new (§109.2).

## Church

Schleiermacher's proposition §115 summarizes his understanding of the church. He wrote: "The Christian church is formed when the reborn individuals come together for the purpose of working on each other and for working with each other in an orderly manner."<sup>36</sup> Such a definition of the church sounds strange to Lutheran ears because there is no mention of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. But in Schleiermacher's system this statement makes sense, because Schleiermacher is not confessing the church from the word of God but is giving his assertions about the life of the church from below. Believers are those who have been received into a living fellowship with Christ through his influence. By participating in Christ's mission to extend his kingdom, they will know that they are indeed brought into this fellowship.

His statement that believers work "on each other" and "with each other" in the church comes from his conviction that Jesus no longer has any direct influence on the church (§116.3). Christ is no longer present, because Schleiermacher does not hold the biblical teaching on the ascension, the means of grace, and the office that serves them as instituted by Christ. But Schleiermacher does not take the fact of Christ's absence negatively. In fact, he even rejoices about it, because he observes in the New Testament that, so long as Christ was there with his disciples they depended on him. Only when Jesus departed did they begin to influence each other actively and spontaneously rather than remaining mere receivers (§122.2-3). Here, Schleiermacher speaks of the Holy Spirit as the common spirit of the community. In the absence of Christ, Schleiermacher still wants to keep "something divine" in the church (§116.3). That is the Holy Spirit as the common spirit who keeps the believers in unity (§121.2).

Did not Schleiermacher say, however, that *Christ* was the one who redeems and reconciles men? Was it not by *his* work that men are taken into the living fellowship with himself? How, then, are we to understand his assertion that it is the common spirit who influences believers in the church? The answer lies in his conviction that there is no *Gnadenmittelamt* in the church (§122.3). When the office is denied, believers are left with no certainty as to how the crucified and risen Lord might still come to forgive and enliven his people. So, in the absence of any office through which Christ bestows his gifts, Schleiermacher establishes a wonderful system in

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<sup>36</sup> The German original is as follows: "Die christliche Kirche bildet sich durch das Zusammentreten der einzelnen Wiedergeborenen zu einem geordneten Aufeinanderwirken und Miteinanderwirken."

which believers reciprocally influence each other (§121.1, 3). Mutual influence takes the place of an external means of grace office.

### *The "Marks of the Church"*

Lastly, we should briefly mention Schleiermacher's version of the "marks of the church" because of their relation to his concept of justification. He identifies six marks: (1) Holy Scripture, (2) the ministry of the Word, (3) baptism, (4) the Lord's Supper, (5) the office of the keys, and (6) prayer in the name of Christ. The first two are for the witness to Christ (the prophetic activity of Christ), the third and fourth are for the formation and maintenance of living fellowship with Christ (the high-priestly activity of Christ), and the last two are for the reciprocal influence among the believers (the royal activity of Christ). Schleiermacher also considers the first three (Holy Scripture, the ministry of the Word, baptism) to be Christ's redemptive activity, and the last three (the Lord's Supper, the office of the keys, prayer in the name of Jesus) to be Christ's reconciling activity. His desire to systematize doctrine is manifest here again.

In this part of *Der christliche Glaube*, Schleiermacher repeatedly claims that our Christianity should be the same as that of the Apostles (§127.2), and that the grounds of faith must be the same for us as they were for the first Christians (§128.2). What this means for Schleiermacher's concept of justification is that, just as Jesus was making his disciples in his earthly ministry by dwelling among them in fellowship, so also Jesus makes his disciples in our day through the common spirit working within the community of believers. In Schleiermacher's system there is no place for proclamation, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

What about these "marks of the church"? For Schleiermacher, the New Testament is a record of the piety of the first Christians (§129.1). The ministry of the Word is possessed by every Christian. Schleiermacher still recognizes the pastoral work as public ministry, but the authority of the pastor is an authority derived from the church by way of transfer (§134. 1-2). When a pastor absolves a congregation, he does so by the authority of the church (§145.2). One of the rationales behind this assertion is his understanding that when Christ commissioned his apostles to make disciples, the commission was chiefly directed to those outside the church. Within the church, believers are to teach and care for each other.

When it comes to Baptism, Schleiermacher again reveals his neo-Platonic tendency to divide what is external from what is internal. Baptism is still viewed as the channel of God's justifying action (§137.3). However, since Baptism itself gives nothing because it is external, he speaks of the effects of Baptism with reference only to that which had been effected

internally prior to Baptism. The most important point of Baptism is the intention of the church to baptize (§137.1). Once welcomed into the fellowship, the church starts to influence the newly baptized so that he or she may receive forgiveness of sins.

For Schleiermacher, the Lord's Supper consists of bodily participation (bread and wine) and the spiritual effect (strengthening of the spiritual life) (§140). Again, the Lord's Supper gives nothing because it is external. But just as confirmation exists as the consummation of baptism, so the Lord's Supper exists as the assurance of the forgiveness of sins announced earlier in the communion service. On the other hand, Schleiermacher does not completely divest the Lord's Supper of all meaning. It is actually quite important for him, and he considers it to be the highest point of worship (§139.2), because in this particular "action" believers receive in their consciousness the confirmation of their fellowship with Christ as well as their union with each other (§141.1).

#### IV. Conclusion

Schleiermacher proposed a very different view not only of justification but also of all parts of theology, both in terms of methodology and content. He spoke a foreign language that has attracted many to adopt his new views. Though he emphasized a religion of the heart, consciousness, and experience, he was really a theologian of reason, having Zwingli before him and Ritschl after him.

For confessional Lutherans, theological enquiry must ever confess only what the Lord has given us to confess, because any correction or addition that we might wish to make would only weaken the doctrine. This kind of faithfulness does not mean that we must isolate ourselves from those whose theology is foreign to us. We should listen carefully and engage with them fruitfully, but we must never stop confessing. Justification is all about Jesus who *bears* our sin. It is the joyous proclamation that our sins are now located on our Savior Jesus. Justification is essentially all about our sins having been answered for by Jesus, who continues with his Spirit to deliver the forgiveness of our sins through Baptism, absolution, and the Lord's Supper. As our excursion into the theology of Schleiermacher has reminded us, when you visit a foreign country, you appreciate your homeland anew.