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The Question of Development in Schleiermacher's Theology

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THE GENERAL PURPOSE of this paper is to determine whether there is any significant change of basic position in Schleiermacher's work during his life. To do this in complete fashion would necessitate a book rather than a paper. As a working compromise I have chosen to compare the Schleiermacher of 1799-1800, in so far as this period is capable of determination, with the Schleiermacher of 1830. It will be noticed that I have defined my task as the determination of "any significant change of basic position." It is within this limited scope that I shall work.¹

I

Any attempt to answer even this question, however, is plagued by several problems, the effects of which will be manifest in this article. There are at least three such hampering problems.

The first and, perhaps, most serious is the lack of available materials in English. Only a small portion of the thirty-one volumes which comprise Schleiermacher's collected works have been translated into English and, with the exception of the first edition of the *Reden* and the second edition of the *Glaubenslehre*, the German is archaic and most difficult to use.

Second, there seems to have been an actual dread on Schleiermacher's part of admitting that he had changed his view on any given matter. Again and again I have come across passages where he attempted either to deny any change whatsoever or to explain it away or, if all else failed, to minimize it. His letters contain numerous lines like the one which explained that his gift of a copy of the *Reden* of 1822 "would show that I have remained the same more than people want to believe."²

A third problem arises from what can only be described as a radical

1. This article is a reaction to the publication of Kenneth Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963). What disturbed me was Mr. Hamilton's easy identification of Tillich with Schleiermacher. Perhaps their conclusions are in the final analysis similar, but their programmes differ. It is towards a fuller appreciation of Schleiermacher's programme in its own right that this article is written. This is not to attack Mr. Hamilton's conclusions about Tillich, with which I agree.

2. Quoted by Rudolph Otto in his introduction to Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, tr. John Oman (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. xx. (This is the Harper Torchbook edition. The introduction by Rudolph Otto is a translation of part of his introduction to the first edition of the *Reden*, which he edited.)

diversity of secondary interpretation in answering the question which comprises this paper. With great conviction it is affirmed both that Schleiermacher changed his basic position and that he did not change it. Wilhelm Dilthey, Hermann Süsskind, and Richard Brandt represent the first point of view. On the other hand, those who support the second alternative disagree about the nature of the consistency. Some, like Rudolf Otto and Emil Brunner, declare it to be one of subjectivity, that is, a formal consistency. Others, for example, Eugene Huber, Heinrich Scholz, Johannes Wendland, and Karl Barth and his students, see a material consistency. Where Georg Wobbermin stands on this question is unclear.³

These, then, are the problems which confront anyone who attempts to compare the work of different periods in Schleiermacher's life.

II

As I begin this inquiry into Schleiermacher's consistency or inconsistency I find it necessary to acknowledge one basic assumption. Rightly or wrongly I have chosen to agree with those interpreters, beginning with Huber, who see no disparity between the conception of the *foundation* of religion, *per se*, in the *Reden* and in the *Glaubenslehre*. Thus, Huber's observation, "The mysterious moment of the first edition of the *Reden* and the feeling of absolute dependence of the second edition of the *Glaubenslehre* are, generally speaking, identical,"⁴ marks my starting point and not my conclusion. I have chosen to assume that present research on Schleiermacher has established this point beyond any reasonable doubt. My inquiry, however, is still in harmony with the goal laid down at the beginning of this paper, for what I propose to investigate, ultimately, is the role of Christology. There can be very little, for the *Christian* theologian, that is more basic than this.

Quite obviously, there are certain changes of opinion in Schleiermacher's work as he matured. Less obvious, but held just as firmly, is the conviction that most of these changes are either of minor importance or else represent slight modifications rather than basic changes of position. I shall give three

3. For brevity's sake, the work done in comparing these writers has been omitted from this article. Their principal relevant works are: Wilhelm Dilthey, *Leben Schleiermachers*, ed. Hermann Mulert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1922); Hermann Süsskind, *Der Einfluss Schellings auf die Entwicklung von Schleiermachers System* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1909); Richard Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941); Rudolf Otto, *Religious Essays: A Supplement to "The Idea of the Holy,"* tr. Brian Lunn (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), pp. 68-77; *Mysticism East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), esp. pp. 233-243; Emil Brunner, *Die Mystik und das Wort*, 2nd rev. ed. (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1928); Eugen Huber, *Die Entwicklung des Religionsbegriffs bei Schleiermacher* (Leipzig: Dietrichsche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1901); Heinrich Scholz, *Christentum und Wissenschaft in Schleiermachers Glaubenslehre* (Berlin: Arthur Glaue Verlag, 1909); Johannes Wendland, *Die Religiöse Entwicklung Schleiermachers* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1915); Karl Barth, *Theology and Church*, tr. L. P. Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 136-199; Georg Wobbermin, *The Nature of Religion*, tr. T. Menzel and D. S. Robinson (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1933).

4. Eugen Huber, *Die Entwicklung des Religionsbegriffs bei Schleiermacher*, p. 313. My translation.

examples of changes which fall into this category. Others could be given as well.

In the fourth speech Schleiermacher, in the process of talking about the nature of the "true church," feels compelled to exclude most or all of the laity from it. The priests, as members of the true church, act as teaching missionaries to those who are less fortunate than themselves. Thus, in order to preserve the integrity of the clergy as members of this true church, Schleiermacher observes: "Away too with all that has even a semblance to rigid union of priest and laity, whether among themselves or with each other!"⁵ Later, probably as a result of further pastoral experience, he felt constrained to make one of the few retractions I have encountered. He wrote:

In part I have abandoned the presupposition. By observation and joyful experience I have reached the conviction that truly believing and pious persons exist in adequate number in our congregations, and that it is good to strengthen as much as possible their influence on the rest. . . . But according to my view the sole warrant for such closer combinations is that the participators are members of the true church, in which the distinction between priests and laity is only to serve the occasion and cannot be permanent.⁶

But what has changed here is neither the nature of religion nor the nature of the church nor the nature of propagating the fellowship of the church. The only change is that later in life he recognized more Christians than he did earlier.

A second example of modification rather than change is to be seen in Schleiermacher's view of the relationship between God and the world. In the *Reden* Schleiermacher finds it most difficult to distinguish between God and the world. In defending himself against the charge of proposing religion without any reference to God he is led to ask several questions which are rhetorical rather than problematical. He inquires: "Is not God the highest, the only unity? Is it not God alone before whom and in whom all particular things disappear? And if you see the world as a Whole, a Universe, can you do it otherwise than in God?"⁷ God is the "One" and the "All."⁸ This particular section is concluded by saying: "The usual conception of God as one single being outside of the world and behind the world is not the beginning and the end of religion. It is only one manner of expressing God. . . ."⁹ Still later, God is "the One in the All."¹⁰ At another place, "the aim of all religion is to love the World-Spirit and joyfully to regard his working. . . ."¹¹

In contrast to this tendency to mention God and the world in the same

5. Schleiermacher, *On Religion* . . . , p. 174.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 206. This is from the "explanations" of the fourth speech.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 94. Speech two.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 101. Speech two.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 137. Speech three.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 65. Speech two.

breath, paragraph 4 of the *Glaubenslehre* is much more distinguishing. In 4:4 Schleiermacher says, in part,

As regards the identification of absolute dependence with "relation to God" in our proposition: this is to be understood in the sense that the Whence of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word "God," and that this is for us the really original signification of that word. . . . this "Whence" is not the world, in the sense of the totality of temporal existence, and still less is it any single part of the world.¹²

Any possibility of God being in any way *given* is entirely excluded, because anything that is outwardly given must be given as an object exposed to our counter-influence, however slight this may be.¹³

Without a doubt, the latter position represents an effort to clarify the former and to exclude any crude form of pantheism from the system. But lest it seem to constitute a radical departure from the position of the *Reden*, it must be recalled that there are modifying statements in both the *Reden* and the *Glaubenslehre*. In the *Reden* we are reminded that this love of the World-Spirit and joyful regard of his working is neither naive enjoyment of the beauty of nature¹⁴ nor is it awe, "exhaustion of the imagination,"¹⁵ before "corporeal nature in its material boundlessness, the enormous masses which are scattered over illimitable space and which circulate in measureless orbits."¹⁶ Rather, says Schleiermacher, he refers to the realization of the general unity of nature and of our own unity with it.¹⁷ From the other side, we cannot ignore paragraphs 46 and 47 of the *Glaubenslehre* which discuss preservation. Schleiermacher asserts that

it has been always acknowledged by the strictest dogmatians that divine preservation, as the absolute dependence of all events and changes on God, and natural causation, as the complete determination of all events by the universal nexus, are one and the same thing simply from different points of view, the one being neither separated from the other nor limited by it.¹⁸

In the face of these sections it would seem that whatever clarification the *Glaubenslehre* may or may not have given to the position in the *Reden*, it did not materially change it. Thus, while there is greater distinction between God and the world in the *Glaubenslehre*, most particularly paragraph 4, it is, at best, only a *relatively* greater distinction. Again it is a slight modification rather than a basic shift of opinion.

The third example of such a modification is much more significant but is only a modification nevertheless. In the *Glaubenslehre*, Christianity, as one positive religion *vis-à-vis* other positive religions, is relatively more superior than it is in the *Reden*.

12. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, eds. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, trans. H. R. Mackintosh *et al.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 16.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

14. Schleiermacher, *On Religion . . .*, pp. 65-66.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

16. *Ibid.*, The statement of this general point is on pp. 66-67.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

18. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 174.

That there exists some difference of opinion in determining the position of Christianity in the *Reden*, much less its position in the *Glaubenslehre*, can hardly be denied. I must admit, however, that the position of the *Reden* seems fairly clear and consistent to me. Therefore, I disagree with Dr. H. R. Mackintosh when he declares that "it is impossible to derive from the *Addresses* any one consistent view of the place occupied by Christianity among the religions of the world."¹⁹ I suspect that what Dr. Mackintosh really means is that it is impossible to find a consistent position which he himself would care to support. Schleiermacher, certainly, seemed quite clear in his own mind. Before any evidence is presented, Schleiermacher's position might be described much in the following terms: "All religions take their rise from some notion which they embody and around which they are built. To this extent, the only true religion is a positive religion; so-called natural religions are really meaningless hybrids which are better ignored. But among the various positive religions, all of which are built upon some partially valid perception of the world, Christianity has, for some unexplained reason, gotten closer to the centre of reality than any of the others. Thus, it is the highest and most valid of all the presently existing positive religions. While it may be surpassed at some future point in the development of the race, it is, at present and for the foreseeable future, the best we have." Heinrich Scholz agrees with this estimation of the position of the *Reden*. He writes:

Christianity is the *most perfect* religion. Already the *Reden* of 1799, which one certainly cannot term narrow-minded, quite exclusively explains that religion is nowhere so completely idealized as in Christianity, and whoever has Christianity actually has the "religion of religions."²⁰

Mackintosh also admits that this is probably the position which Schleiermacher supported.²¹

I think the *Reden* supports this evaluation. In the fifth speech, where this whole problem is treated, Schleiermacher attempts to differentiate between Judaism and Christianity by phenomenologizing the two religions. What constitutes Christianity, he says, is that it has delved deeper into the very nature of religion and perceived its essence. Religion is here described in the idealistic terms of a philosophy of identity very much akin to that of Schelling:

The original intuition of Christianity is more glorious, more sublime, more worthy of adult humanity, penetrates deeper into the spirit of systematic religion and extends itself further over the whole Universe. It is just the intuition of the Universal resistance of finite things to the unity of the Whole, and of the way the Deity treats this resistance. Christianity sees how He reconciles the hostility to Himself, and sets bounds to the ever-increasing alienation by scattering points here and there over the whole that are at once finite and infinite, human and divine. Corruption and redemption, hostility and

19. Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 57.

20. Scholz, *Christentum und Wissenschaft* . . . , p. 187.

21. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology* . . . , pp. 57-58.

mediation, are the two indivisibly united, fundamental elements of this type of feeling, and by them the whole form of Christianity and the cast of all the religious matter contained in it are determined.²²

Having established that Christianity is, at present, the best of the religions because it best intuits this basic fact of religion, Schleiermacher proceeds to demonstrate that we dare not elevate the religion to a place of everlasting primacy because its founder, the original perceiver of this insight, made no such claim for himself. Speaking of Christ, he says:

Yet He never maintained He was the only mediator, the only one in whom His idea actualized itself. All who attach themselves to Him and form His Church should also be mediators with Him and through Him. And He never made His school equivalent to His religion, as if His idea were to be accepted on account of His Person, and not His person on account of His idea. Nay, He would even suffer His mediatorship to be undecided, if only the spirit, the principle from which His religion developed in Himself and others were not blasphemed.²³

Just as its founder disavowed any claims of ultimate superiority, even so does the faith. Even as he admitted other possible mediators, so Christianity would admit that other insights could become the central pole of other religions. Schleiermacher is led to ask:

Is Christianity, therefore, to be universal and, as the sole type of religion, to rule alone in humanity? It scorns this autocracy. Every one of its elements it honours enough to be willing to see it the centre of a whole of its own. Not only would it produce in itself variety to infinity, but would willingly see even outside all that it cannot produce from itself. . . . The religion of religions cannot collect material enough for its pure interest in all things human. As nothing is more irreligious than to demand general uniformity in mankind, so nothing is more unchristian than to seek uniformity in religion.

In all ways the Deity is to be contemplated and worshipped. . . . But however it be, and however long such a moment may still linger, new developments of religion, whether under Christianity or alongside of it, must come and that soon, even though for a long time they are only discernible in isolated and fleeting manifestations.²⁴

While it might conceivably be argued that Schleiermacher's statement that Christianity has embodied the very essence of religion, on the one hand, and, on the other, his rather clear declaration that Christianity cannot expect to claim everlasting absoluteness are contradictory, or, at least, difficult to reconcile, I think nobody can escape the conclusion that Schleiermacher envisioned further religious development beyond Christianity. Further, these new developments are not to be presumed, because of their novelty, degenerations.²⁵

22. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 241.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-53.

25. Another account of this whole position is contained in Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie*, Vierter Band (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1960), pp. 529-538. Hirsch's discussion of the problem of the absoluteness of Christianity in Schleiermacher's later writings, especially in the *Weinachtsfeier* and the sermons, is on pp. 565-575.

Accepting this as the position of the *Reden*, I move on to the *Glaubenslehre*. Scholz seems to think that Schleiermacher now views Christianity as quite absolute. Moreover, this position is not far, by implication, at least, from that of the *Reden*. He writes: "Christianity is the most perfect religion. From this firm basis Schleiermacher boldly essays the step to the *absoluteness* of Christianity."²⁶ But in view of paragraphs 7, 8, and 10, this seems rather difficult to maintain. To be sure, Schleiermacher, in later parts of the *Glaubenslehre* (which constitute a problem to which I shall return), solemnly declares that Christ is the final revelation and, by implication, that there shall be no further mediator and, perhaps, that Christianity is, therefore, ultimate. But these conclusions seem to be ground out of the dialectical machinery only with great effort.²⁷ If the early paragraphs mentioned above mean anything, it seems clear that Schleiermacher can, finally, claim no ultimate superiority for Christianity. Rather, his repeated assertions of its absoluteness are to be taken as the protestations of one who "doth protest too much." After the smoke of these assertions has been cleared away there remains the curious fact that "to his congregation at Trinity Church he felt himself driven to expound again and again, from the most diverse points of view, the problem which he had apparently settled in certain forceful passages in *The Christian Faith*—the problem of the absoluteness or the non-absoluteness of Christianity."²⁸ At another place Barth declares:

There is no doubt that Schleiermacher sought to assert something like the absoluteness of Christianity, and continually asserted it. Strangely enough it was in the pulpit particularly that the problem again and again crossed his path. . . . The answer consists in the constantly repeated protestation that everything we have of higher life we have from [Christ].

There can be no doubt about the personal sincerity of this assertion. But it is just this which is in question—whether this assertion can be considered as objectively valid, whether the strength of this assertion can be some other strength beside that of the asserting believer himself or of the composite life of the community of the Christian Church, from out of whose heritage the preaching believer speaks.²⁹

Accepting the fact, then, that Schleiermacher certainly wished to maintain something like the superiority of the Christian religion and that this position was most strongly asserted in his sermons, what scientific basis does he have to support his obvious personal preference? In short, does the *Glaubenslehre* support any change from the answer which had been given in the *Reden* or does it also give the same answer, viz., that Christianity is relatively superior to the other positive religions but cannot claim any absolute and lasting superiority? A quick survey of the above-mentioned paragraphs will provide an answer.

26. Scholz, *Christentum und Wissenschaft* . . . , p. 189.

27. An outstanding example of this occurs in paragraphs 103, 104, and 105.

28. Barth, *Theology and Church*, p. 190.

29. Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl*, tr. Brian Cozens (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1959), pp. 351-52.

The key appears already in the statement of paragraph 7 where Schleiermacher speaks of various pious communities which have appeared in history as constituting "different stages of development"³⁰ (*verschiedene Entwicklungsstufen*).³¹ "Development" and "movement" often enter the discussion. He specifically points out that "all differences are not to be thus regarded as distinct stages or levels."³² Instead of representing distinct stages, a common religious spirit flows through all. Then, fearful lest this position should seem to weaken the position of the Christian theologian too much, Schleiermacher adds: "But this does not contradict the conviction, which we assume every Christian to possess, of the exclusive superiority of Christianity."³³ Almost immediately, as though he realizes that this statement, if unexplained and unmodified, cannot possibly be reconciled with the rest of the paragraph, he explains that this means that Christianity "may yet be more perfect than any of them."³⁴ Christianity should not "adopt towards at least most other forms of piety the attitude of the true towards the false."³⁵ Even in polytheism one "finds an obscure presentiment of the true God."³⁶ The conclusion of paragraph 8 declares that "this comparison of Christianity with other similar religions is in itself a sufficient warrant for saying that Christianity is, *in fact*, the most perfect of the most highly developed forms of religion."³⁷ The first postscript to this paragraph also reiterates the same general position:

The above account is at variance with the view which sees no real piety at all, but only superstition, in the religions of the lower levels, mainly because they are supposed to have had their source simply in fear. But the honour of Christianity does not at all demand such an assertion. . . . Moreover . . . if we should set out to discover for them a quite different origin from that of true religion, it would be difficult to show what sort of tendency this is in the human soul, and what its inner aim is, which engenders idol-worship, and which must again be lost when the latter gives place to Religion. The truth is, rather, that we must never deny the homogeneity of all these products of the human spirit, but must acknowledge the same root even for the lower powers.³⁸

Paragraph 10 continues the exposition by relating these rather general observations to Christianity and its origin in particular, but adds nothing unexpected to the whole exposition. Thus, the position of the *Glaubenslehre* seems to be that while Christianity is definitely superior, that is, more fully developed in some cases and more perceptive of true religion in others, to other positive religions, it cannot claim any sort of absolute or unconditional superiority. It is, in fact, superior, but the facts might change with history.

30. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 31.

31. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, Erster Band, Siebente Auflage, ed. Martin Redeker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1960), p. 47.

32. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 32.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 38. The italics are mine.

38. *Ibid.*

Therefore, I cannot see how the position of the *Reden* is any different than that of the *Glaubenslehre*. Both assert the brotherhood of all positive religions and the factual superiority of Christianity (although the *Glaubenslehre* provides the better scientific basis for this latter assertion with its analysis of the stages of religion), but both also leave open the door for other religions which possess the truth to some degree or another. And as long as some other religion might theoretically possess more truth than Christianity, it cannot be said that Christianity has ultimate superiority. Therefore, I take Schleiermacher's answer to this question to be consistently the same. This is, then, one more example of modification rather than basic change.

III

This discussion brings us very close to the basic problem of this study. After having made the above assertions in the introductory section of the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher feels compelled to introduce Christ into the dogmatic system. It is just here that the problem arises. In the *Reden* and in the introductory paragraphs (1-31) of the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher spoke of religion without any significant reference to Christ. To be sure, Christ is mentioned—in paragraph 10, for example—but it is a concept of religion, *per se*, and not one of Christology, which dominates these works. Yet, in the exposition proper of Christian dogma (paragraphs 32-172 of the *Glaubenslehre*), Christology seems to play a much more important role. Without giving any premature judgment on the role of Christology for the theological system, I think it is safe to say that Schleiermacher intended to convey this impression. He opposed "natural religion" at every turn and was convinced that a Christianity denuded of any reference to Christ would cease to be Christianity and become just such a natural religion.³⁹ But having said this, I have said nothing about the scientific construction of paragraphs 32-172.

This, then, is the problem for study. By a process of elimination I am forced to conclude that if there was any change in Schleiermacher's thinking between his early work and his latest work, the only place where it could occur is in the role that Christology plays in these respective works. In the course of giving quotations from the *Reden* to support my judgment that in it Christianity is only relatively superior to other positive religions, I could not help at the same time demonstrating the role that Christology plays in that work. The *Reden* is an apology for religion, *per se*, and its motivating principle is the defence of the thesis that religion, *per se*, is a valid part of life and that it is concretized in the various positive religions. Religion, not Christianity, is the hero of this tale. Thus, by the very nature of the subject, Christ plays no significant role. Further, because Schleiermacher is intent upon proclaiming the relationship of Christianity to other religions he goes to great lengths to assure his readers that Christ is not the final revelation

39. See especially paragraphs 10 and 11.

or mediator and that other mediators are sure to follow and around some of them a new religion will grow. But the *Glaubenslehre* is intent upon expounding Christianity and not religion. Therefore, Christ enters the picture with much greater frequency. But the motivating principle, the scientific centre, of the *Glaubenslehre* is not so obvious as that of the *Reden* and, therefore, the methodological role of Christology is uncertain. Once the role of Christology has been established, the question of whether or not there is change in Schleiermacher will be answered.

There are, it would seem to me, three possible explanations or answers to this problem. (1) Christology is taken into the *Glaubenslehre* only as a mistake. Its inclusion is something which Schleiermacher never intended. Perhaps it is the remnant of his early training which he had not perfectly excised from his scientific thought. (2) Christology is a concession to minds of less maturity than Schleiermacher's own. While Schleiermacher could exegete the Christian self-consciousness without reference to any other principle, there were others who could not do this because of lack of critical insight or stubborn refusal to use it. Because Schleiermacher recognized this fact and wished, nevertheless, to communicate with these persons, he included Christology as a sort of illustration by means of which others could better understand his exegesis of the Christian self-consciousness. (3) Christology is an imperfectly integrated key to the whole work. Schleiermacher wanted Christology, and not some concept of religion, *per se*, to serve as the centre of this work. To be sure, this is a change from the *Reden*, but, then, Schleiermacher matured. The fact that this problem should arise at all indicates merely that Schleiermacher did not fully accomplish the changeover from the one centre to the other.⁴⁰

I shall now examine these three options.

The first alternative would declare that the inclusion of Christology as a part of the methodological framework of the latter paragraphs (32-172) of the *Glaubenslehre* was a mistake on Schleiermacher's part. Schleiermacher, according to this view, established his methodology early in life, probably in the romantic circles of Berlin and in reaction to Fichte, and meant to hold to it throughout all his life. Since this methodology, as it is developed in the *Reden*, assumes the equality of all positive religions in favour of the notion of religion, *per se*, Christianity could claim no dominance. Hence, Christ, as the distinctive feature of Christianity, could claim no uniqueness and, hence, Christology could not be the dominant feature of Christianity even though it was its distinctive and identifying mark. The driving force of Christianity was the disruption-reunion of an identity

40. So far as I know, these three alternatives, in the form in which I have put them, are original with myself. Others, especially Karl Barth and his successors on the continent, have offered comments on one or more of them in some form or another, but I have found no other source which attempts specifically what I am here attempting. This much is said to account for the relative infrequency of footnotes in the remainder of this paper.

philosophy,⁴¹ and not the unique mediatorship of Christ. When Schleiermacher came to the *Glaubenslehre* he spoke of sin-grace instead of disruption-reunion, but this, in itself, would not have been a radical alteration. In fact, this is exactly what Schleiermacher intended, that is, sin-grace was merely another way of expressing disruption-reunion. Moreover, Christ could have been justifiably introduced into the system because he is the historical origin of this insight. Where Schleiermacher made his mistake was when he then proceeded to declare that Christ was to be viewed as final.⁴² On Schleiermacher's own principles, established in the *Reden* and the opening section of the *Glaubenslehre*, Christ may be a motivating force, relatively unique, or the best mediator known, but he may not be final or absolute.⁴³ Hence, some of the strong statements of paragraphs 103–105 and others are to be considered mistakes which Schleiermacher did not realize he had included in the system. Perhaps he had included them out of force of habit, but whatever the reason, they are at odds with both the intention of Schleiermacher and his scientific system.

Now if this alternative could be accepted, our problem would be solved. There would be no change in Schleiermacher from beginning to end. It seems to me, however, that there is one point which this argument overlooks. It assumes that a man of Schleiermacher's dialectical abilities could not identify a flaw in his own system. On the basis of this assumption alone I am forced to conclude that this answer is extremely naive. It is either this or the conclusion that more than a century of interpretation of Schleiermacher has been in error when it considered him a significant thinker. Therefore, I must reject this first alternative, not because it is either internally inconsistent or because it lacks any evidence—for it avoids both of these criticisms—but because it shows amazing naivety in supposing that Schleiermacher could not fathom his own system. This may be true of some thinkers, but I cannot imagine that it is true of Schleiermacher. Nevertheless, this alternative does remain a possibility if not a realistic one.

The second and third possibilities are much more realistic and deserve closer consideration. The second possible answer suggests that Christology is a conscious concession to minds of less maturity and capabilities than Schleiermacher's. The original motivation for suggesting this answer comes from an excerpt from the second open letter of Schleiermacher to Lücke. This letter was written on the occasion of the second edition of the *Glaubenslehre* in order to explain and defend that edition. In the *Glaubenslehre* itself Schleiermacher had distinguished three types of propositions which may be dogmatic.⁴⁴ They are (1) descriptions of human states, (2) conceptions of divine attributes and modes of action, and (3) utterances regarding the constitution of the world. Historically, said Schleiermacher,

41. Schleiermacher, *On Religion . . .*, p. 241.

42. I have in mind paragraphs 103–105 of the *Glaubenslehre*.

43. *Ibid.*, paragraph 94.

44. *Ibid.*, paragraph 30.

these three types of propositions had always subsisted alongside each other, but Schleiermacher considered the first to be by far the most important. In the dogmatics he declares, in part:

If we compare these three possible forms with each other, it is clear that descriptions of human states of mind with this content can only be taken from the realm of inner experience and that therefore in this form nothing alien can creep into the system of Christian doctrine; whereas, of course, utterances regarding the constitution of the world may belong to natural science, and conceptions of divine modes of action may be purely metaphysical. . . . Thus these two forms . . . do not in themselves afford any guarantee that all propositions so conceived are genuinely dogmatic. Hence we must declare the description of human states of mind to be the fundamental dogmatic form; while propositions of the second and third forms are permissible only in so far as they can be developed out of propositions of the first form; for only on this condition can they be really authenticated as expressions of religious emotions.

. . . it would seem that Christian Dogmatics has only to carry through consistently that fundamental form in order to complete the analysis of Christian piety, while the other two forms might be entirely set aside as superfluous.⁴⁵

At the same place Schleiermacher goes on to explain that he could not do this because of the historical situation, but that this should be the goal for dogmatics. Then, lest the *Glaubenslehre* should be misunderstood, he wrote to Lücke:

I have seriously considered whether the time has not already come with the second edition of my book to revise its form so that the two forms of dogmatic propositions, those which express the qualities of God, and those which deal with the composition of the world, should only be called secondary forms. For, if it is true, that they express nothing, which is not already substantially contained in the propositions which bear the fundamental form, i.e., mere description of the feeling of dependence as such, those two subordinate forms could be omitted. *This is indeed my own personal conviction* with which another is closely bound up, namely, that our dogmatic teaching will sometime learn to do without these two.⁴⁶

Now if these statements are taken as definitive there is good reason to accept this suggested answer as the correct one. Moreover, the fact that the Trinity is a methodological postscript tends to reinforce the opinion that there is no genuine antithesis here as there is in reformation theology.⁴⁷ Instead of an antithesis, the explication of the human Christian self-consciousness serves as both the formal and the material principle of this theology. To be sure, Schleiermacher does speak of God and man, but the two tend to merge into one another instead of remaining distinct and antithetical.⁴⁸ All of this suggests that Schleiermacher held, from start to finish, to a system which was ultimately monistic in flavour and that he abandoned it in the *Glaubenslehre* neither in intention nor in fact.

45. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 126.

46. English translation quoted in Otto, *Mysticism East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 239. The italics are mine.

47. See Barth, *Protestant Thought*, pp. 338ff., for a full discussion of this point.

48. See especially paragraph 94 of the *Glaubenslehre*.

The third alternative would have us see the Christology of the *Glaubenslehre* as its central key. To be sure, Schleiermacher failed to integrate perfectly the *Glaubenslehre* around this key, but he did integrate it in part and he intended to do so completely. This is the position that Heinrich Scholz adopts to support his thesis that the *Glaubenslehre* proclaims the absoluteness of Christianity.⁴⁹ Within the *Glaubenslehre* itself, the opening pages of paragraph 93 and paragraphs 103–105 would support this view. And yet, these very paragraphs contain so many modifying clauses that it is almost impossible to derive any qualitative difference between Christ and the believer. Rather, there is a vast quantitative difference and even this is bound to diminish although it will never disappear.⁵⁰ Barth arrives at the same conclusion when he declares: "Schleiermacher's Christology has as its summit the indication of a quantitative superiority, dignity and significance in Christ as opposed to our own Christianity."⁵¹

If this is an accurate description of Schleiermacher's Christology, then this answer, viz., that the *Glaubenslehre* is centred around Christology, becomes inconsequential. It is still moot, but whatever judgment is finally given about its truth is irrelevant. If it is true, the *Glaubenslehre* is still not at odds with the position of the *Reden*. If it is false, that is, if the *Glaubenslehre* is centred about some other principle, e.g., anthropology, then also the *Glaubenslehre* is consistent with the *Reden*. In either case, a quantitatively superior Christ makes the *Glaubenslehre* no different than the *Reden* with its quantitatively superior Christ.

In the face of this I see no alternative but to conclude that the bald statement of great change in Schleiermacher is misleading if not false. To be sure, he modified certain statements as he matured, but what man does not do this? Much more significant, however, than what he modified (and this was usually only slightly) is what he did not modify. He did not modify his basic programme of basing theology upon anthropology. This is not to remove Schleiermacher from the province of Christian theologians. On the contrary, Schleiermacher's starting point may well be a legitimate starting point for a Christian theologian.⁵² But it is to say that Schleiermacher was consistent throughout his productive life. His basic orientation was the same from beginning to end. This fact far overshadows whatever slight modifications of various minor points there may have been.

49. Scholz, *Christentum und Wissenschaft*. . . .

50. See especially paragraph 93 of the *Glaubenslehre*.

51. Barth, *Protestant Thought*, p. 352.

52. Karl Barth also says this. See *Protestant Theology*, p. 340, and John D. Godsey, ed. *Karl Barth's Table Talk: Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 10* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 13.