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THE ASSESSMENT OF CHARLES HODGE CONCERNING THE DOCTRINE AND CHARACTER OF FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER: A LIBERAL THEOLOGY AND A BELIEVING HEART

MARK J. LARSON

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was one of the most prominent theologians in the history of the church. Karl Barth asserted that Schleiermacher ‘did not found a school, but an era.’¹ He added, ‘The nineteenth century in the theological field’ was ‘his century.’² It has been properly noted that he was ‘the pioneer of liberal Protestant theology.’³ Ritschl, Herrman, Troeltsch, Tillich, and many other theologians were impacted by him.⁴ His influence was also felt in the pulpits and pews of the churches, especially in the United States. Ronald Nash put it this way: ‘He came to be regarded as the fountainhead of one dominant form of liberalism, namely, the view that it doesn’t matter what a person believes, it is what he *feels* that is important.’ Nash described his effect in colourful language: ‘Liberals who shared this view and regarded Schleiermacher as its proximate source, descended on the pulpits of many established churches in America like a plague of locusts.’⁵

The scholarly literature frequently notes that neo-orthodox theologians, such as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, attacked Schleiermacher’s lib-

¹ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), p. 425.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ Brian A. Gerrish, ‘Theology within the Limits of Piety Alone: Schleiermacher and Calvin’s Doctrine of God’, in *Reformatio Perennis*, ed by Brian A. Gerrish (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1981), p. 67.

⁴ Richard B. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 307; Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism: Studies in Early Nineteenth Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 55; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. xxxii; Michael Root, ‘Schleiermacher As Innovator and Inheritor: God, Dependence, and Election’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 43 (1990), 87.

⁵ Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 31.

eral theology.⁶ Barth, for example, made this statement: 'I can see no way from Schleiermacher [...] to the chroniclers, prophets, and wise ones of Israel, to those who narrate the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to the words of the apostles—no way to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Father of Jesus Christ.'⁷

THE POLEMICAL RESPONSE OF CHARLES HODGE

Although significant attention has been given to the anti-Schleiermacher discourse of Barth and Brunner, the polemical activity of Charles Hodge, the renowned theologian at Princeton Theological Seminary, has been largely ignored.⁸ There is much to be gained, however, by considering the fundamental elements of Schleiermacher's theology and the way in which Hodge interacted with his positions. For one thing, unlike the neo-orthodox theologians of the twentieth century, Charles Hodge (1797–1878) was a contemporary of Schleiermacher. Furthermore, Hodge actually knew him—meeting him for the first time on April 18, 1827, at the University of Halle.⁹ Then, four months later, on October 14, Hodge heard Schleiermacher preach. At the time, Hodge was two months short of his thirtieth birthday, while Schleiermacher was one month short of his fifty-ninth birthday. Hodge recorded his impressions in his journal: 'I went to hear Schleiermacher, not knowing of any more evangelical preacher who had service in the morning.' 'The sermon was peculiar,' wrote Hodge. 'The words were Biblical,' he observed, 'but the whole tenor so general, the ideas so vague and indefinite, that it was impossible for me to understand

⁶ Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 63; Brian A. Gerrish, *Tradition and the Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 13–48; Van A. Harvey, 'A Word in Defense of Schleiermacher's Theological Method', *The Journal of Religion*, 42 no. 3 (1962), 151; Dawn DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 4.

⁷ Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), p. 271.

⁸ Annette G. Aubert, 'Old Princeton and Reformed Orthodoxy', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 74 (2012), 151.

⁹ Archibald Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), p. 128. Schleiermacher had come from Berlin for the celebration of what Hodge called 'the Jubilee of Niemeyer, the Chancellor of the University, who has now completed the fiftieth years of his academic life' (Ibid.).

exactly what he meant.¹⁰ Even more than hearing one sermon, Hodge made the point that he 'often attended Schleiermacher's church.'¹¹

Long before Barth and Brunner were born, Hodge had worked extensively with Schleiermacher's theology, offering an analysis in which he severely criticized its perceived weaknesses from the perspective of the traditional teaching of the Reformed faith.¹² Hodge, as we shall see, firmly rejected the Christian character of Schleiermacher's theology. Nevertheless, in a somewhat surprising turn, Hodge came to believe at a later point in his career that Schleiermacher the man was truly a Christian. How shall we understand Hodge's thinking from the standpoint of the classical Reformed doctrine that he embraced?

Hodge recognized that Schleiermacher did not have *fides generalis*, a faith that believes 'all that God in the Bible declares to be true.'¹³ He acknowledged that 'all Christians are bound to believe, and that all do believe everything taught in the Word of God, so far as the contents of the Scriptures are known to them.'¹⁴ How is it then that Hodge expressed his confidence that Schleiermacher was a saved man, even though he did not accept the divine authority of Scripture?

The thesis of this essay is that Hodge in the case of Schleiermacher was applying the position of Protestant Scholastic theology regarding *fides specialis*. Special faith or saving faith, insisted Hodge, was what was 'necessary to salvation.' The object of a faith that saves is Christ: 'The special definite act of faith which secures our salvation is the act of receiving and resting on Him as He is offered to us in the Gospel.'¹⁵ 'Receiving Christ' is 'the specific act required of us in order to salvation.'¹⁶ Hodge at this point was essentially reiterating the teaching of Francis Turretin who wrote about the soul receiving Christ and adhering to him: 'This is the formal and principal act of justifying faith, usually termed "reception."¹⁷

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 152.

¹¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1975), II, 440.

¹² Schleiermacher acknowledged the revolutionary nature of his ideas and that they were not in continuity with historic Protestantism. He said, 'I fully deny my profession in all that I say to you.' He admitted that when he 'began to examine the ancestral faith,' he had to 'purify' his 'heart of the rubble of primitive times' (*On Religion*, p. 4).

¹³ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, III, 96.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁷ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994), pp. 562–63.

Since Hodge was convinced that Schleiermacher had received Christ, he believed that he should be regarded as a saved man. Hodge in the case of Schleiermacher was willing to see an exception to the general rule as to how saving faith functioned in relationship to the Bible.

NOTHING MORE THAN A PHILOSOPHICAL THEORY

We need not guess as to what Hodge's initial impression of Schleiermacher's theology actually was. One month before he met Schleiermacher for the first time, Hodge recorded an interesting statement in his journal, dated March 14, 1827. He made reference here to August Tholuck, a professor of theology who began his teaching career at Halle in the previous year.¹⁸ 'Tholuck read several passages for me from Schleiermacher's *Dogmatik*, but they seemed to me to darken counsel by words without wisdom.'¹⁹ This, indeed, was Hodge's complaint regarding modern German theology in general. It was characterized by ambiguity and vagueness, while Hodge believed in clarity and precision in theological expression.²⁰ Hodge maintained that 'dogmatic statements' should be 'clear and explicit.' 'Definitions and distinctions,' he insisted, 'should be precise and above danger of mistake.' 'The whole tendency of German theology' has been just the opposite, he claimed. 'Dimness and generality have succeeded to precision and unequivocal enunciation.'²¹

Ambiguity and imprecision were not the only problems raised by Hodge. He gave this assessment of Schleiermacher's theological system: 'It is a philosophical theory and nothing more.'²² His theology according

W. Andrew Hodge, *Charles Hodge: The Pride of Princeton* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2011), p. 314, notes that Hodge used Turretin's theology as a text in his teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary; Mark Rogers, 'Charles Hodge and the Doctrine of Accommodation', *Trinity Journal*, 31 no. 2 (2010), 231.

¹⁸ Hodge, *Charles Hodge*, p. 88, describes Tholuck as 'young, gifted, and, perhaps most significant, orthodox in his theology and pious in his manner of life'; W. Andrew Hodge, 'The Devotional Life of Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield', *Westminster Theological Journal*, 42 (1979), 116–124.

¹⁹ Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge*, p. 123.

²⁰ *The Princeton Theology: 1812–1921*, ed. by Mark A. Noll (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1983), p. 14.

²¹ Charles Hodge, 'The Virtues of Seventeenth-Century Theologians', in *The Princeton Theology: 1812–1921*, ed. by Mark A. Noll (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1983), p. 115.

²² Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 444.

to Hodge was merely a reflection of contemporary German philosophy.²³ 'His system,' contended Hodge, 'is a matter of speculation from beginning to end.' He added, 'It could never have existed except as a product of a mind imbued with the principles of German philosophy. It has no coherence, no force, and indeed no meaning.'²⁴ Because Schleiermacher's theology was nothing but a 'philosophical theory,' Hodge could describe it as 'wood, hay, and stubble.'²⁵

These then are the problems, in general, which Hodge discerned in Schleiermacher's teaching. It lacked precision and clarity, and it was merely speculative philosophy. How did Hodge, though, respond to some of Schleiermacher's specific philosophical ideas and methodological procedures? This essay will examine Schleiermacher's teaching on revelation and inspiration, along with the polemical response of Charles Hodge, even while recognizing that Hodge came to the view that Schleiermacher may well have been a saved man, a true believer in Jesus Christ.

REVELATION: INTUITING THE THINGS OF GOD

Schleiermacher's position on revelation first appeared in *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799). Later, it developed further in *The Christian Faith* (1831). Both works have essentially the same doctrine of revelation.²⁶ Because his teaching on revelation is directly related to his conception of the nature of religion, we must first consider his thinking regarding religion.

²³ Gerrish, *Tradition and the Modern World*, pp. 46–47, points out that Schleiermacher himself acknowledged that 'the prevailing philosophical system' of a particular period of church history ought to provide the 'conceptual framework,' or 'the form of doctrinal expression.'

²⁴ Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 55, sees Schleiermacher as being an exponent of Romantic philosophy. Reardon's analysis is certainly correct, but we need to keep in mind the philosophical influence of the Enlightenment in his work. Schleiermacher was, after all, committed to biblical higher criticism: Henry A. Kennedy, 'The Eschatology of Friedrich Schleiermacher', *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 36 no. 2 (1994), 22; Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), p. 116.

²⁵ Charles Hodge, 'Religious State of Germany', *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 18 (October 1846), 530.

²⁶ Martin H. Prozesky, 'The Young Schleiermacher: Advocating Religion to an Age of Critical Reason (1768–1807)', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 37 (December 1981), 69; Reardon, *Religion in the Age of Romanticism*, p. 31; Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher*, p. 25.

It was Schleiermacher's announced intention in his treatise *On Religion* to 'bear witness to' the nature of religion.²⁷ Religion in his view must not be confused with doctrine or with morality. According to Schleiermacher, 'the nature of the gods and their will' are 'only the extraneous parts' of religion.²⁸ 'Religion's essence' is 'intuition and feeling,' he contended. Intuition, in particular, is 'immediate perception.'²⁹ Intuition occurs 'when a religious view has become clear' to a person.³⁰ Intuition is 'the power and knack of absorbing everywhere the original light of the universe into our senses.'³¹ The object of our intuition is the universe.³² Intuition can take place when there are opportunities for 'quiet, submissive contemplation.'³³ Priests, in particular, should 'seek the universe and search out its expression.'³⁴

The contrast between *On Religion* and *The Christian Faith* is, at this point, quite interesting. In the 1799 treatise, the emphasis is upon the communication of the universe. 'The universe,' he said, 'reveals itself to us every moment.'³⁵ In 1831, Schleiermacher was more ready to speak about a revelation coming from God. Revelation, he stated, 'presupposes a divine communication.'³⁶ There are, though, very few references to God in *On Religion*. Schleiermacher, in fact, made some startling statements. He asserted, for example, 'God is not everything in religion, but one, and the universe is more.'³⁷ He did speak, though, about 'everything visible' being 'formed and permeated by divinity.'³⁸ He referred to 'the divine life and activity of the universe.'³⁹ Hodge took the position that Schleiermacher embraced pantheism.⁴⁰ 'The system is essentially pantheistic,' he wrote. 'He denied any proper dualism between God and the world, and between

²⁷ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 9.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

³¹ Ibid., p. 57.

³² Ibid., p. 49.

³³ Ibid., p. 60.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 92.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁶ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), p. 50.

³⁷ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 54.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁰ It may be more accurate to view Schleiermacher as being a panentheist; Hugh R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet and Company, 1937), p. 52.

God and man.’ ‘He did not admit the existence of a personal, extramundane God.’⁴¹

When intuition occurs—a religious view thus becoming clear to the one who intuits—the phenomenon which has taken place is revelation. Schleiermacher identified ‘every original and new intuition of the universe’ as ‘revelation.’⁴² The ultimate basis of such revelation is that ‘the universe [...] reveals itself to us every moment.’⁴³ The word *revelation* ‘presupposes a divine communication and declaration.’ Thus, when a religious view becomes clear to an individual, the ultimate cause of such a phenomenon must be traced back to an action of the universe itself: ‘All intuition proceeds from an influence of the intuited on the one who intuits, from an original and independent action of the former, which is then grasped, apprehended, and conceived by the latter according to one’s nature.’⁴⁴

For Schleiermacher, revelation does not consist in the disclosure of doctrines or propositions. He was unwilling to accept the position, as he explained it, that revelation ‘operates upon man as a cognitive being.’ ‘For that would make the revelation,’ he said, ‘to be originally and essentially doctrine; and I do not believe that we can adopt that position.’⁴⁵ Revelation is far from being the revelation of doctrine according to Schleiermacher. Instead, revelation has to do with new and original ideas about God arising in the soul of the person who intuits: ‘It becomes difficult to avoid a widened application of the idea, to the effect that every original ideal which arises in the soul, whether for an action or for a work of art, and which can neither be understood as an imitation nor satisfactorily explained by means of external stimuli and preceding mental states, may be regarded as revelation.’⁴⁶

Hodge provided a brief summary of Schleiermacher’s doctrine of revelation along with an assessment of it. He explained that for Schleiermacher ‘revelation is not the communication of new truth to the understanding.’⁴⁷ ‘According to this theory, revelation is merely the providential ordering of circumstances which awaken and exalt the religious feelings, and which thus enable the mind intuitively to apprehend the things of God.’⁴⁸ Hodge opposed Schleiermacher at this point not by finding fallacies or incon-

⁴¹ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 444.

⁴² Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴⁷ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 66.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

sistencies within his system, but by simply appealing to the biblical teaching which asserts that revelation entails objective doctrines. 'This theory,' stated Hodge, 'is inconsistent with the Scriptural doctrine of revelation.' He continued, 'According to the Bible, God presents truth objectively to the mind, whether by audible words, by visions, or by the immediate operations of his Spirit.'⁴⁹

As we shall note shortly in our consideration of Schleiermacher's doctrine of inspiration, Schleiermacher did not accede to the divine authority of Scripture. Thus, such an appeal on the part of Hodge would be meaningless to Schleiermacher. Hodge, of course, recognized that this was the case. He, nevertheless, appealed to the Scripture as being authoritative, for this was the historical position of the Christian church. By rejecting biblical authority, it was Schleiermacher who was out of step with the universal practice of historic Christianity. Hodge wrote, 'To us the scriptures are the work of God, which we do not judge, but by which we are judged, whence we derive all our religious knowledge. They are at once the source and the rule of our faith.' Hodge then drew attention to the contrary view advocated by Schleiermacher: 'The authority which we, in common with the whole Christian church, ascribe to the word of God, he ascribed to "the Christian consciousness," "to the inward experience, which everyone formed for himself on what he found in Christianity."⁵⁰

Hodge penetrated in these statements to the essence of the distinction between historic Christianity and that of Schleiermacher. Historically, the Christian church regarded scriptural revelation as being authoritative. For Schleiermacher, one's own personal experience of intuition—and the clear religious view which accompanies it—is the real authority. It has been well said that with Schleiermacher, 'theology undergoes a radical transformation in its notion of theological authority.' 'For Schleiermacher the real locus of authority does lie in the religious experience.' 'All external [...] authorities are finally of no account.'⁵¹

INSPIRATION: ACTING OUT OF RELIGIOUS FEELING

Religion in the view of Schleiermacher only included intuition and feeling, but it nevertheless would inevitably express itself in terms of actions on the part of the religious person.⁵² Schleiermacher said of himself that it

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Hodge, 'Religious State of Germany', 532.

⁵¹ James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1971), p. 110.

⁵² Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, pp. 26, 29–30.

was religion that 'guided' him 'into the active life.'⁵³ For Schleiermacher, inspiration had to do with the deeds and actions of the religious person—the individual who intuited the universe and who had deep religious feelings.

'What is inspiration?' Schleiermacher asked. Inspiration, he answered, concerns 'every free action.'⁵⁴ He argued that the person who has the religious experience of intuition will necessarily have feelings which accompany it. Such 'feelings,' he maintained, 'are supposed to possess us.' When we are possessed by these religious feelings, 'we should express, maintain, and portray them.'⁵⁵ The suitable vehicle of such expression and portrayal is 'every free action,' which is inspiration.⁵⁶

Inspiration, for Schleiermacher, did not relate so much to Holy Scripture, but rather to the free actions of the person who is possessed by religious feelings. Rather than speaking about the 'God-inspired Bible,' Schleiermacher wanted to talk about 'God-inspired persons.'⁵⁷ Such persons are what Schleiermacher called *mediators*.⁵⁸ It may well be the case that Schleiermacher saw himself as being 'a divinely-sent mediator.'⁵⁹ A mediator, he maintained, is a person who possesses 'spiritual penetration drive, which strives for the infinite.'⁶⁰ Mediators are holy souls which are 'stirred by the universe.'⁶¹ They produce 'visions,' 'prophecies,' 'holy works of art,' 'inspired speeches,'⁶² 'new revelation,' and 'sublime thoughts.'⁶³ Their ministry is to the slumbering masses who are dead to religion: 'They bring deity closer to those who normally grasp only the finite and the trivial.'⁶⁴

Schleiermacher was willing to admonish his readers, 'Aim your attention only at [...] God-inspired persons.'⁶⁵ He was unwilling, however, to provide a similar exhortation with reference to adhering to the Bible. In fact, he looked down on those who tenaciously grasped the Scripture. He said to his friends in the Romantic movement, 'You are right to despise the

⁵³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁹ Prozesky, 'The Young Schleiermacher', 64.

⁶⁰ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶² Ibid., p. 7.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

paltry imitators' who 'cling to a dead document.'⁶⁶ In a statement which necessarily included the Scriptures of the Christian church, he declared, 'Every holy writing is merely a mausoleum of religion, a monument that a great spirit was there that no longer exists; for if it still lived and were active, why would it attach such great importance to the dead letter?'⁶⁷

The Bible according to Schleiermacher is not necessary. He asserted, 'It is not the person who believes in a holy writing who has religion, but only the one who needs none and probably could make one for himself.'⁶⁸ Such views were not merely the excesses of youth. Near the end of his life, he maintained that parts of the Old Testament were questionable as to whether or not they were Christian, and further that the Old Testament was not really needed anyway. 'Everyone must admit that if a doctrine had neither direct nor indirect attestation in the New Testament, but only in the Old,' wrote Schleiermacher, 'no one could have much confidence in regarding it as a genuinely Christian doctrine.' He then continued, 'Whereas if a doctrine is attested by the New Testament, no one will object to it, because there is nothing about it in the Old.' He then concluded, 'Hence the Old Testament appears simply a superfluous authority for Dogmatics.'⁶⁹

Charles Hodge recognized that Schleiermacher denied biblical infallibility and inerrancy. In Schleiermacher 'inspiration is not the divine influence which controls the mental operations and utterances of its subject, so as to render him infallible in the communication of the truth revealed.'⁷⁰ It is true that Schleiermacher asserted that the person who is possessed by religious feelings freely acts in producing 'prophecies' and 'inspired speeches.'⁷¹ But this is far from Hodge's doctrine that the Holy Spirit so guided 'the mental operations of a man so that he' would actually 'write without error and still be perfectly self-controlled and free.'⁷²

The perspective which Schleiermacher maintained with reference to the Bible was well-summarized by Hodge: 'The Bible,' for Schleiermacher, 'contains only the thoughts of holy men; the forms in which their understandings without supernatural aid, clothed the 'intuitions' due to their religious feelings.'⁷³ Because the Bible is merely a human book, and

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 115.

⁷⁰ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 66.

⁷¹ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 7.

⁷² Charles Hodge, 'Inspiration', in *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1921*, ed. by Mark A. Noll (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1983), p. 138.

⁷³ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 177.

not given by divine inspiration, it does not have binding authority upon Christians today. Hodge wrote, 'According to this theory the Bible has no normal authority as a rule of faith.'⁷⁴ Speaking about the issue of apostolic authority, Hodge asserted, 'He denies that the interpretation which they gave of their experience has normal authority for us, that is, he says that we are not bound to believe what the Apostle believed.'⁷⁵

The Bible for Schleiermacher was not inspired, and therefore it did not have authority 'as a rule of faith.'⁷⁶ Hodge, moreover, perceived that there is another implication flowing out of the conception that the Bible is not given by divine inspiration. A book created merely by human beings must necessarily have error in it. Hodge affirmed, 'The Bible was to him [...] by no means free from serious faults; the Old Testament being essentially on a level with the productions of heathenism; and the New, in its most important parts, mixed with fables (Myths), and even with errors in doctrine.'⁷⁷

For Schleiermacher, as summarized by Hodge, the Scripture lacked the classical attributes of inspiration, divine authority, and infallibility. Hodge recognized, though, that the Bible had some value in Schleiermacher's thinking: 'The Bible was to him a mere human book, of great authority indeed, because in it are to be found the original expressions of Christian feeling.'⁷⁸ Indeed, Schleiermacher had made this point in his book *On Religion*. In speaking about 'the sources and original documents of religion,' he admitted that religion in a sense it to be found in them, but one must know 'how to read between the lines.'⁷⁹ For Schleiermacher, as Hodge put it, 'the Scriptures' are 'of value only as a means of awakening in us the religious life experienced by the Apostles, and thus enabling us to attain intuitions of divine things.'⁸⁰

A HARMFUL THEOLOGY COMING FROM A BELIEVING HEART

We have seen in the previous discussion that Hodge had major problems with the 'philosophical theory' propounded by Schleiermacher.⁸¹ He regarded it as nothing more than 'wood, hay, and stubble.'⁸² His initial

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 443.

⁷⁶ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 66.

⁷⁷ Hodge, 'Religious State of Germany', 532.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, p. 22.

⁸⁰ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 66.

⁸¹ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 444.

⁸² Hodge, 'Religious State of Germany', 530.

impression of *The Christian Faith* was that it seemed 'to darken counsel by words without wisdom.'⁸³ This view appears to have remained constant throughout his life.⁸⁴

Hodge realized, however, that Schleiermacher's influence was enormous. He referred to Schleiermacher's theology in the context of a discussion about mysticism. 'If it consists in giving predominant authority to the feelings in matters of religion,' said Hodge, 'then Schleiermacher's system' is 'the most elaborate system of theology ever presented to the Church.'⁸⁵ Hodge further stated, 'Schleiermacher is regarded as the most interesting as well as the most influential theologian of modern times.'⁸⁶ He acknowledged that many people had nothing but 'grateful admiration' for Schleiermacher and that he had been 'held up' as the 'Church Father' of the nineteenth century. Hodge, though, took a very different position. 'Inexperienced young men,' he said, 'have been led to read his writings without suspicion and have thus been made skeptical or unbelieving as to many important doctrines.'⁸⁷

Hodge provided an interesting explanation as to why Schleiermacher attempted to build a theology upon religious experience, rather than the Bible. It was Hodge's position that Schleiermacher's own faith in the Bible as a divine revelation, which was authoritative and inerrant, had been undermined by the higher criticism of his time. Schleiermacher therefore sought a new foundation for Christian theology, the foundation of religious feeling which could never be undermined by the higher critics. Hodge asserted, 'He succumbed to the attacks which rationalistic criticism had made against faith in the Bible. He could not receive it as a supernatural revelation from God.' What then Schleiermacher proceed to do? 'Deprived of the ordinary historical basis for faith in Christ, he determined to construct' a 'whole system of Christian theology from within; to weave it out of the materials furnished by his own religious consciousness.' The end result in the thinking of Schleiermacher was that he thought that he had produced an unassailable theology: 'He said to the Rationalists that they might expunge what they pleased from the evangelical records; they might demolish the whole edifice of Church theology, he had a Christ and a Christianity in his own bosom.'⁸⁸

⁸³ Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge*, p. 123.

⁸⁴ Brian A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 17–19.

⁸⁵ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 65.

⁸⁶ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 440.

⁸⁷ Hodge, 'Religious State of Germany', 539.

⁸⁸ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 441.

What position did Hodge take regarding the spiritual standing of someone who denied the divine inspiration of the Bible? His general position was that true faith in Christ included a belief in the inspiration of Scripture.⁸⁹ Accepting the Scripture as the inspired Word of God was vitally important for Hodge: 'Faith therefore in Christ involves faith in the Scriptures as the word of God, and faith in the Scriptures as the word of God is faith in their plenary inspiration.' There will be 'the persuasion,' Hodge argued, 'that they are not the product of the fallible intellect of man but of the infallible intellect of God.' 'This faith' rested upon 'a supernatural illumination imparting spiritual discernment.'⁹⁰

What did Hodge think about the spiritual standing of Schleiermacher before God? Against this background of Hodge's negative evaluation of Schleiermacher's theology, it is fascinating, and somewhat surprising, to consider Hodge's assessment of Schleiermacher the man. Early on, Hodge spoke hopefully about Schleiermacher's eternal welfare; at a later stage in his career, Hodge expressed confidence about his salvation. In 1851, less than a generation after Schleiermacher died, Hodge wrote, 'He was educated as a Moravian, but became addicted to a Pantheistic form of philosophy.' 'Yet, he often relapsed into his former faith, and thought, felt, acted, and *it is hoped*, died as a Moravian.'⁹¹ In 1854, Hodge expressed more optimism concerning Schleiermacher's spiritual condition: 'We hope and believe that Schleiermacher became a theist and a Christian before his death.'⁹²

The aged Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, which appeared in 1872–1873, showed the most confidence regarding Schleiermacher's everlasting condition. He strongly suggested that he was a saved man. As Hodge recalled his student days in Germany, he said, 'When in Berlin the writer often attended Schleiermacher's church.' 'The hymns to be sung' were 'always evangelical and spiritual in an eminent degree, filled with praise and gratitude to our Redeemer.' Hodge then relayed the testimony of August Tholuck, professor of theology at Halle. 'Tholuck said that Schleiermacher, when sitting in the evening with his family, would often say, "Hush, children; let us sing a hymn of praise to Christ."' Hodge then raised this question: 'Can we doubt that he is singing those praises now? To whomsoever Christ is God, St. John assures us, Christ is a Saviour.'⁹³

⁸⁹ Hodge, 'Inspiration', 660.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 661.

⁹¹ Charles Hodge, 'Professor Park and the Princeton Review', *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 23 (October 1851), 692.

⁹² Charles Hodge, 'Dr. Schaff's Apostolic Church', *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 26 (January 1854), 170.

⁹³ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II, 440.

He concluded, 'Whatever may be true of his mere speculative system, he unquestionably in his heart regarded Christ as infinitely exalted above other men, and as the proper object of adoration and trust.'⁹⁴

How can it be that Hodge had such a positive view of Schleiermacher *the man*, while at the same time he continually called attention to the danger of Schleiermacher *the theologian*? Is there not a continuity between the inward condition of the heart and the outward confession of faith? Does not a problem in one area entail a problem in the other? Hodge took the position that generally speaking there is continuity between the heart and the mind, the inward spiritual state and the outward expression of faith. 'As a general rule,' stated Hodge, 'a man's faith is the expression of his inward life.'⁹⁵ Schleiermacher, though, in Hodge's view reflected dissonance between his theological reflections and his inward life, making him 'an exceptionable case.'⁹⁶

There was an explanation according to Hodge for the uniqueness of Schleiermacher. He had been forever impacted by his early education and his exposure to the gospel and the pietism of the Moravian brethren. Furthermore, Hodge cautioned about drawing inordinate conclusions about the heart of a man on the basis of his theological assertions. Hodge explained it this way: 'It should be remembered' that 'the inward life of a theologian may not be determined by his speculative doctrines.' He continued, 'This does not render error objectionable or less dangerous. It is nevertheless a fact, and enables us to condemn a system without wounding our charity for its author.'⁹⁷

If Hodge is correct in his total assessment, then Schleiermacher illustrates the phenomenon of a liberal theology and a believing heart.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 452.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 443.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 443.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 442-43.