

Foreword

ONE OF THE MOST significant theologians of modernity, Friedrich Schleiermacher continues to generate intense scholarly activity. Often judged to be revisionist, liberal, and romantic in its orientation, his thought has for long been interpreted through a reading of the *Speeches* and the opening sections of the *Glaubenslehre*.

More recently, however, the breadth and complexity of Schleiermacher's work have become more evident. This has coincided with the range of his writings being accorded closer study, more of these now appearing in English translation. Schleiermacher wrote extensively on hermeneutics, literature, and Reformed dogmatics, specialisms that are not often comprehended in a single system of thought. In addition, he preached regularly throughout most of his life, his sermons being an integral element of his theological output. He has to be understood, therefore, as a theologian of the German Protestant Church and as someone who sought the unity of its Reformed and Lutheran strands in the early nineteenth century.

Anette Hagan's volume pays close attention to Schleiermacher's intensive engagement with the doctrine of predestination. This is a topic that he discusses not only in the *Glaubenslehre* but in a key essay that reveals his interaction with the Lutheran tradition. Predestination has been a neuralgic theme in the Reformed tradition for several centuries, many of the most divisive disputes in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries being generated by revisions to its most controversial aspects. Historically, it was also one of several contested issues that deeply divided the Reformed and Lutheran traditions after the Reformation.

In recent times, many Reformed theologians have tended to circumnavigate these waters as if the effort of steering a safe passage through them is either too hazardous or not worth expending the effort. Schleiermacher, however, faced the problems head-on, arguing that much of what

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the seventeenth-century Reformed tradition had to say about predestination was correct. This is a somewhat surprising verdict and confirms those contemporary readings of his work that cast him as a multi-faceted and novel thinker. Yet while siding with the determinist leanings of the Reformed tradition, Schleiermacher reworks it in a more explicitly universalist direction. The separation between belief and unbelief is divinely ordained but only as temporary. It is destined to fade through time as the Christian faith spreads across space. Ultimately God's good intention is a universal restoration that must inevitably be accomplished; hence the division of human beings into two groups is not final or eschatological, but one that is destined to vanish.

By working through Schleiermacher's original writings on this theme and his impressive engagement with the Reformed and Lutheran theologians of his own day, Dr. Hagan is able to display the importance of his work as a theologian of the church who is at once both Reformed and ecumenical. What emerges is a valuable study of one of the most significant renderings of the doctrine of election since the Reformation.

David Fergusson