

# **AN EQUILIBRIUM: SCHLEIERMACHER'S INSIGHTS INTO THE CONFSSIONAL SUBSCRIPTION IN ITS HISTORICAL SETTING**

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"So bestimmt die Idee der Welt auch die Grenze unseres Wissens.

Wir sind an die Erde gebunden.

Alle Operationen des Denkens,

auch das ganze System unserer Begriffsbildung,

muss darin gegründet sein."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Dialektik," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. III/4/2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1839), 333 [Beilage A, XXIV-XXVII]. Cf. Kant's "limit concept" (conceptus terminatus, Grenzbegriff).

## **I. Schleiermacher's Via Media as Delineated in his "Christian Faith"**

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher was not only considered a theologian of via media by his contemporaries but also designed his own theological enterprise as the way between the rationalism and the supernaturalism as well as between Kant's philosophy of religion and Hegel's system.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, composing his momentous dogmatics, Schleiermacher contributed theologically to the project of the Prussian union.<sup>3</sup>

Although Schleiermacher identified himself as the Reformed theologian, his insights into the topic of the confessional subscription appeared to be relevant to all streams of the Protestantism which to a different degree were faced with a query about the status of their confessions of faith including the ecumenical creeds inherited from the ancient church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Über seine Glaubenslehre an Dr. Lücke," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1836), 576-653. This however does not exclude other formative factors. Cf. Christof Ellsiepen, *Anschauung des Universums und Scientia Intuitiva: Die spinozistischen Grundlagen von Schleiermachers früher Religionstheorie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006); Julia A. Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Jacqueline Marina, "Schleiermacher between Kant and Leibniz: Predication and Ontology," in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 73-92.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Schleiermacher lecturing on the common ground of the Wittenberg and the Swiss Reformation in celebration of the jubilee of Luther's theses in 1817. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Oratio in solemnibus ecclesiae per Lutherum emendatae saecularibus tertiis in Universitate litterarum Berolinensi III. Nov. 1817 habita," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/5 (Berlin: Reimer, 1846), 309-25.

<sup>4</sup> George Cross, "An Estimate," in *The Theology of Schleiermacher: A Condensed Presentation of his Chief Work, The Christian Faith* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1911), 297-334.

Schleiermacher commented upon the confessional subscription on various occasions.<sup>5</sup> Primarily, he prepared tracts devoted to the aforementioned theme provoked by the jubilee of Luther's theses (1817)<sup>6</sup> and of the Augsburg Confession (1830).<sup>7</sup> On account of the anniversary of 1817 Schleiermacher was engaged in Harms-Ammon debate,<sup>8</sup> whereas on account of the anniversary of 1830 he entered into a discussion with Breslau theologians Daniel Coelln and David Schulz.<sup>9</sup>

Besides, Schleiermacher deliberated upon the status of the confessions of faith in his other writings, lectures<sup>10</sup> and sermons.<sup>11</sup> To encompass his analyses, it is necessary to highlight the innovative tenets of his theological system<sup>12</sup> because ultimately the former are ramifications of the latter. The literature on Schleiermacher is

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Lücke, "Reminiscences of Schleiermacher," in Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology, Drawn up to Serve as the Basis of Introductory Lectures*, trans. William Farrer (Edinburgh: Clark, 1850), 65-74.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Über den eigentümlichen Wert und das bindende Ansehen symbolischer Bücher (Reformations-Almanach auf das Jahr 1819)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/5, 423-54.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Vorrede zu den Predigten in Bezug auf die Feier der Übergabe der augsburgischen Konfession (1831)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/5, 703-25.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "An Herrn Oberhofprediger Dr. Ammon über seine Prüfung der Harmsischen Sätze: Mit einer Zugabe (1818)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/5, 327-422.

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "An die Herren D. D. D. von Cölln and D. Schulz: Ein Sendschreiben (1831)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/5, 667-702.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Die praktische Theologie nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/13 (Berlin: Reimer, 1850), 622-62 [II, I, 2, I, 4].

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Von dem Verdammten Andersgläubiger in unserem Bekenntnis (Lukas 6,37)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. II/2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1834), 710-24.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt (1821-1822)*, vol. 1-2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1821-1822); Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, "Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt (1830-1831)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/3-4 (Berlin: Reimer, 1836-1842).

immense<sup>13</sup> and it embraces multi-faceted contemporary studies<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gernot U. Gabel, *Schleiermacher: Ein Verzeichnis westeuropäischer und nordamerikanischer Hochschulschriften 1880-1980* (Cologne: Edition Gemini, 1986); Edwina Lawler, Jeffrey Kinlaw and Ruth Drucilla Richardson, eds., *The State of Schleiermacher Scholarship Today: Selected Essays* (Lewiston: Mellen, 2006); Jacqueline Mariña, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Terrence N. Tice, *Schleiermacher Bibliography (1784-1984): Updating and Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> Ulrich Barth, *Christentum und Selbstbewusstsein: Versuch einer rationalen Rekonstruktion des systematischen Zusammenhanges von Schleiermachers subjektivitätstheoretischer Deutung der christlichen Religion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Richard B. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); Thomas H. Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1994); Johannes Michael Dittmer, *Schleiermachers Wissenschaftslehre als Entwurf einer prozessualen Metaphysik in semiotischer Perspektive: Triadizität im Werden* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2001); Peter Grove, *Deutungen des Subjekts: Schleiermachers Philosophie der Religion* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004); Ingolf Hübner, *Wissenschaftsbegriff und Theologieverständnis: Eine Untersuchung zu Schleiermachers Dialektik* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1997); Friedrich Jacob, *Geschichte und Welt in Schleiermachers Theologie* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1967); Theodor Holzdepppe Jørgensen, *Das religionsphilosophische Offenbarungsverständnis des späteren Schleiermacher* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977); Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Das Urbild des Gottesbewusstseins: Zur Entwicklung der Religionstheorie und Christologie Schleiermachers von der ersten zur zweiten Auflage der Glaubenslehre* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1990); Marlin E. Miller, *Der Übergang: Schleiermachers Theologie des Reiches Gottes im Zusammenhang seines Gesamt Denkens* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970); Juliane Müller, *Wiedergeburt und Heiligung: Die Bedeutung der Struktur von Zeit für Schleiermachers Rechtfertigungslehre* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005); Thomas Nonte, *Selbstbewusstsein als Topos der Theologie: Zur anthropologisch vermittelten transzendentalen Christologie in der Glaubenslehre F. D. E. Schleiermachers* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 2000); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Schleiermachers Schwierigkeiten mit dem Schöpfungsgedanken* (München: Beck, 1996); Wolfgang H. Pleger, *Schleiermachers Philosophie* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1988); Martin Rössler, *Schleiermachers Programm der philosophischen Theologie* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1994); Susanne Schaefer, *Gottes Sein zur Welt: Schleiermachers Subjektanalyse in ihrer Prinzipienfunktion für Glaubenslehre und Dialektik* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2002); Sarah Schmidt, *Die Konstruktion des Endlichen: Schleiermachers Philosophie der Wechselwirkung* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2005); Gunter Scholtz, *Die Philosophie Schleiermachers* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984); Erich Schrofner, *Theologie als positive Wissenschaft: Prinzipien und Methoden der Dogmatik bei Schleiermacher* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1980); Gerhard E. Spiegler, *The Eternal Covenant: Schleiermacher's Experiment in Cultural Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Robert Stalder, *Grundlinien der Theologie Schleiermachers*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969); Thandeka, *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); John E. Thiel, *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre: Criticism and the Methodology of*

including those particularly devoted to the issue of the confessional subscription.<sup>15</sup> The present paper is not focused on Schleiermacher's use of the confessions but rather on his view on their status and function within the parameters of his innovative system. Therefore, the research is predominantly based on primary sources and it is embedded in the historical context.

It is evident that Schleiermacher laboured to situate the ecumenical creeds and the confessions arising from the Age of the Reformation against the critical and progressive paradigm prevailing in the Protestant theology since the Enlightenment. It could be argued that although the tenets of Schleiermacher's system appear to be radical as compared with the doctrinal mainstream of the ancient church and of the 16th-century Reformation, his attitude to the creeds and his advice on how to handle them (cf. the issue of confessional subscription) in a completely different theological and philosophical environment seem to be balanced and therefore they were denominated in the present paper as an equilibrium. Nevertheless, to capture Schleiermacher's approach as "a middle way" (*via media*) between Protestant orthodoxy of old and theological breakthrough made by his contemporaries, to wit, by Kant and Hegel, it is necessary to penetrate the historical context which defined the parameters of his reflexion.

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*Dogmatics* (Bern and Las Vegas: Lang, 1981); Michael Trowitzsch, *Zeit zur Ewigkeit: Beiträge zum Zeitverständnis in der Glaubenslehre Schleiermachers* (München: Kaiser, 1976); Robert Lee Vance, *Sin and Self-Consciousness in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Lewiston: Mellen Press, 1994); Martin Weeber, *Schleiermachers Eschatologie: Eine Untersuchung zum theologischen Spätwerk* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 2000); Volker Weymann, *Glaube als Lebensvollzug und der Lebensbezug des Denkens: Eine Untersuchung zur Glaubenslehre Friedrich Schleiermachers* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

<sup>15</sup> Klaus Martin Beckmann, *Der Begriff der Häresie bei Schleiermacher* (München: Kaiser, 1959); Georg Lämmlein, *Individualität und Verständigung: Das Kirchenverständnis nach Schleiermachers Glaubenslehre* (Aachen: Shaker, 1998); Martin Ohst, *Schleiermacher und die Bekenntnisschriften: Eine Untersuchung zu seiner Reformations- und Protestantismusdeutung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989); Martin Stiewe, *Das Unionsverständnis Friedrich Schleiermachers: Der Protestantismus als Konfession in der Glaubenslehre* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1969); Walther E. Wyman, "The Role of the Protestant Confessions in Schleiermacher's 'The Christian Faith,'" *Journal of Religion* 87:3 (2007).

For Schleiermacher, theology was the study of religion which he defined as the immediate self-consciousness (das unmittelbare Selbstbewusstsein). In his opinion, religion as the feeling of the direct dependence (Abhängigkeitsgefühl) on the Absolute is exempt from the rational or empirical vindication. Consequently, every theological reflexion is rooted in a church construed as a piety-based association because every religious thinking is an inference from a certain, irreducible and irrefutable religious experience which builds the religious community. Therefore, Schleiermacher's opus magnum was titled "The Christian Faith Presented Coherently according to the Tenets of the Protestant Church" (Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt). In his view, all theology originates solely from the experience given only within the boundaries of a specific religious community in a specific time and in a specific place.

Schleiermacher objected to the interpretation of the self-consciousness that limited it to the self-representation of the subject, arguing that the self-consciousness is the genuine feeling wrought by an unique external factor, to wit, by the religious experience.<sup>16</sup> He claimed that in the same way as the concept of the world-consciousness (Weltbewusstsein) denotes that man is aware of the world as external to himself, the concept of the Absolute-consciousness (Gottesbewusstsein) means that man is conscious of the Absolute not only as internal to him but also as transcending human being. Thus, the Absolute-consciousness is human self-consciousness in the sense that the religious experience is inalienable to the nature of man and as innate it is uncontested. For Schleiermacher, the existence of the religious experience is the sufficient evidence of the existence of the Absolute which automatically dismisses all objections and dispels all doubts.

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<sup>16</sup> Schleiermacher, "Über seine Glaubenslehre an Dr. Lücke," 594 [Erstes Sendschreiben].

Schleiermacher noticed that although the religious experience as an insight (*Anschauung*) into the Infinite (*das Unendliche*) is always the same, various spectators perceive it diversely, so the plurality and diversity of religions must supervene in the world. For him, the Unfathomable (*das Unermessliche*) cannot be exhausted or appropriated by the finite human being. Further, the religious differentiation is caused not by the object of the religious experience but rather by the subject thereof, and it is an inevitable consequence of human diversity. On that account, the revelation is not a codex of definite propositional truths unfolded from outside human being<sup>17</sup> but rather an individual insight into the universe which due to its individuality cannot be imposed upon other people. Thus, every religious experience is individual, unique and transient. Therefore, no religious experience can be considered universal or representative. In his opinion, a trace of the divinity can be found in all religions, which differently mirror and epitomise the religious experience, because every single religion consists in the fact that man is conscious of (i.e. feels) his dependence on the Absolute. Consequently, the essence of revelation common to all religions is that in the religious experience human dependence on the Infinite comes to light.

According to Schleiermacher, the universal foundation of all religions, that is the religious experience unveiling to man his dependence on the universe, does not rule out their specific features. For him, the distinctive characteristic of the Christianity construed as the given Christian community (or communities - to be exact) is the reference to the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, granted that

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<sup>17</sup> To think of the revelation as a set of propositional truths, it contradicts not only an inevitable historical and linguistic context of every phenomenon but also the self-identification of the Scripture which does not present itself as Euclid's *Elements* or Aristotle's *Analytics*, and which was not perceived this way by the religious communities in which the sacred texts (termed as the Old Testament and the New Testament) emerged and were recognised and transmitted as authoritative. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), *passim*.

the historical credibility of accounts of his person is debatable and with the provision that the interpretation of his work is equivocal. Consequently, Jesus' actual existence and religious impact upon his contemporaries as reflected in the New Testament books constitute the identity of the Christian community in all its branches.

In Schleiermacher's opinion, Jesus' person and work must not necessarily be viewed as supernatural or super rational because even the interpretation of his emergence as the appearance of God's Son could be explained as a display of the perennial truth that human inner (i.e. incorporeal) nature is organically capable of absorbing the divinity into itself. Thus, Schleiermacher recognised man's openness to the Absolute as natural (i.e. inborn) and rational.

He argued that the distinguished position of Jesus in the Christianity should be explicated not in ontological terms but solely in terms of Jesus' consciousness of his own dependence on the Infinite which he himself attained. In other words, the patristic concept of Jesus' divinity communicates that he was permanently and staunchly conscious of his own dependence on the Absolute. On that account, Jesus could be construed as the archetype of the perfect religious self-consciousness which came true in his historical person. Consequently, his work of salvation means that mankind can reach exactly the same perfect religious self-consciousness under his influence.

Since for Schleiermacher the religious experience in itself eludes any conceptualisation or solidification, sacred texts only testify imperfectly to what a specific subject experiences in terms of religion. Accordingly, sacred texts externalise how the religion is felt by the individual but cannot be normative in the sense, in which the religious experience is normative to those who are immersed therein, because potentially every religious experience might be perpetuated as a sacred writing. In his system a sacred text does not enjoy the same privileges as the religious experience and is liable to the rational or empirical verification.



Schleiermacher defined theology neither as the study of the Scripture nor as the historical enquiry into a certain complex of ideas pertinent to the Christianity but rather as the verbalisation, conceptualisation and systematisation of the pious frame of mind (*Gemütszustände*) within the Christian community in a specific place and in a specific time. Moreover, the said frame of mind as derivative from the religious experience must be ever-provisional and ever-evolving from its fountainhead.

Thus, Schleiermacher distanced himself both from the supernaturalistic paradigm (cf. the *sola Scriptura* principle) and from the rationalistic paradigm (cf. merely historical analysis of sheer propositions), yet did not subordinate theology to church authorities. He insisted, however, that since every theological reflexion stems from the religious experience accessible only within the boundaries of the religious community, a theologian has to be a part thereof. Thence, the progressive character of his theology did not prevent him from denying the possibility of *theologia irrogenitorum* (i.e. theology practised by unbelievers) which was defended both by the Protestant orthodoxy and by the rationalism though for different reasons.

Schleiermacher's concept of religion was constructed to evade Kant's meticulous criticism of rational (in the sense of the pure reason), empirical and revealed theology. Thus, Schleiermacher either did not realise or did not admit that even the religious experience designated by him as the source of religion must be classified as the phenomenon in the Kantian epistemology. Therefore, Kant's refutation of the empirical arguments in favour of religion was still applicable to Schleiermacher's methodology. Moreover, Kant and Schleiermacher did not share the same understanding of the consciousness. What man can be conscious of according to Schleiermacher does not satisfy the requirements for the empirical or rational knowledge in the Kantianism but rather appears to be highly speculative or even delusional from the Kantian perspective.

Certainly, Schleiermacher utilised the Kantian view on the condition of the world and of mankind as well as the threads of the Kantian theodicy.<sup>18</sup> According to Schleiermacher, the world and man as a part thereof are potentially perfect in the sense that they are initially destined to realise and to advance their integral perfection. Therefore, to propose the world's fall (i.e. the transition from the perfect state to the state of corruption) and the world's restoration (namely the transition from the state of corruption to the regenerated state), it is inadmissible. For Schleiermacher, the germinal perfection of man is consummated predominantly by means of experience. Concerning the theodicy, he maintained that evil (*Übel*) denotes all hindrances to life (*Lebenshemmungen*) and ultimately it can be conceived of as a deficiency in the development of the intrinsic perfection of the world and of mankind. Consequently, sin is viewed as evil in terms of religion, to wit, as all obstacles to the self-consciousness of human dependence on the Infinite.

As Kant evaluated all claims of the Scripture from the purely ethical perspective, Schleiermacher assessed them in terms of the religious self-consciousness. Thus, the supernatural propositions concerning Jesus' life and works (such as his virgin birth, resurrection, ascension and second coming) were simply recognised as irrelevant either to the moral edification (cf. Kant) or to the religious experience (cf. Schleiermacher). Although Kant's and Schleiermacher's criteria of rationality differed, they both attempted to reinterpret all supernatural elements in the Bible according to their axioms, presuming that what the Scripture presents cannot be accepted as it stands.

Schleiermacher's emphasis on the Absolute transcending human being was a reaction against Kant's philosophy of religion. Already

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<sup>18</sup> Besides, it transpires that both Kant and Schleiermacher were delving into the Socinian theology which anticipated certain anthropological theses typical of the German idealism.

in *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* (1770), Kant concurred that the idea of God is the conceptualised (theorised) moral perfection of man as the phenomenon and declined to accept any "supernatural reference" (*citatio supernaturalium*) which in his view would plunge mankind into an unrelieved gloom destitute of the light given off both by the experience and by the bare reason. Schleiermacher too distrusted supernatural events including the miracles reported in the Bible but presupposed that no discrepancy between the laws of nature and the religious experience could ever occur because both are encompassed by the same Infinity.

## **II. An Inception of Corpora Doctrinae in the Lutheran and Reformed Tradition**

The first collections of the Protestant confessions (*corpora doctrinae*) revolved around the Augsburg Confession (1530) which became a point of reference for most theologians affiliated both to the Wittenberg Reformation and to the Swiss Reformation. Already in the second half of the 16th century the constitutions (*Kirchenordnungen*) of German Protestant churches were commonly appealing to *Confessio Augustana* regardless of their theological preferences.<sup>19</sup> Although in the said constitutions the status of the Augsburg Confession was usually highlighted, it was listed along with other writings of Melancthon (primarily the *Apology*, *Loci* and *Examen ordinandorum*) and often in connexion with Luther's *Catechisms* or *Smalcald Articles*.

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<sup>19</sup> Aemilius Ludwig Richter, ed., *Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts: Urkunden und Regesten zur Geschichte des Rechts und der Verfassung der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, vol. 2 (Weimar: Verlag des Landes-Industrie-comptoirs, 1846), *passim*.

Particularly, the German Reformed theology perceived the Augsburg Confession as consistent with its tenets and considered it to be the confession common to the Protestant movement, thus marginalising the Radical Reformation. Generally speaking, the aforementioned church constitutions presented the confessional documents (including three ecumenical creeds) as an accurate and useful exposition (Erklärung) of the main biblical doctrines, stressing that the Scripture is the only source and norm (*norma iudicii*) of all theology. Further, the confessions were viewed as a symbol (σύμβολον, *symbolum*) of faith namely as a token of doctrinal identity. Consequently, the first groups of the Protestant confessions recognised as more or less representative emerged spontaneously even prior to the publication of the monumental *Corpus Philippicum* in 1560.

In 1540 Melanchthon significantly emended the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana Variata*), especially the article on the Lord's Supper, which caused controversies and accusations alluded to in the preface to the Book of Concord (1580). However, they were not detrimental to the relevance of the Augsburg Confession and proved to be exaggerated and unwarranted because the German emended version retained the original wording of the disputed article<sup>20</sup> and the Latin text found in *Corpus Philippicum* offered the original and emended versions thereof.<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly, Melanchthon's emendation facilitated the recognition of the Augsburg Confession by some

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<sup>20</sup> Philipp Melanchthon, "Confessio germanica variata," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia (Corpus Reformatorum)*, vol. 26, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1858), 730 [I, X]. The same is true of the German Augsburg Confession contained in *Corpus Philippicum*. Cf. Philipp Melanchthon, "Confessio Augustana," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae das ist ganze Summa der rechten wahren christlichen Lehre des heiligen Evangeliums* (Frankfurt am Main: Zöpffeln et al., 1560), 3 [I, X].

<sup>21</sup> Philipp Melanchthon, "Confessio Augustana," in *Corpus doctrinae christianae quae est summa orthodoxi et catholici dogmatis, complectens doctrinam puram et veram Evangelii Jesu Christi* (Leipzig: Voegelin, 1561), 8 [I, X].

Reformed theologians which Calvin himself admitted.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the illustrious Reformed Collection of the Reformation Confessions, which contained not only *Confessio Augustana* but also *Confessio Saxonica* and *Confessio Wirtembergica* (both distinctive of the Wittenberg Reformation), reprinted the article on the Lord's Supper in its original and emended form.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the Reformed Declaration of Thorn (1645) acceded to *Confessio Augustana* irrespective of its version (*sive invariata, sive repetita aut emendata*).<sup>24</sup> Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the Reformed Admission for the Augsburg Confession was conditioned merely by Melanchthon's emendation. In addition, *Confessio Saxonica* (1551) authored by Melanchthon abides by the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as laid down in the original version of *Confessio Augustana* (*Invariata*) or even amplifies the original phrasing.<sup>25</sup>

In 1560 *Corpus Philippicum*, the first Protestant corpus doctrinae in the strict sense of the term, was released both in Latin and in German. It was prefaced by Melanchthon and composed of the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, *Confessio Saxonica* (1551), *Loci* (the final version), *Examen Ordinandorum* and the Response to the

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<sup>22</sup> Jean Calvin, "Schallingio (Genevae, 8. Aprilis 1557)," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia (Corpus Reformatorum)*, vol. 44, ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz and Eduardus Reuss (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1877), 430 [No. 2607]: "Nec vero Augustanam confessionem repudio, cui pridem volens ac libens subscripsi, sicuti eam autor ipse interpretatus est".

<sup>23</sup> Philipp Melanchthon, "Confessio Augustana," in *Corpus et syntagma confessionum fidei quae in diversis regnis et nationibus, ecclesiarum nomine fuerunt authentice editae, in celeberrimis conventibus exhibitae, publicae auctoritae comprobatae* (Geneva: Chouët, 1612), 14 [I, X].

<sup>24</sup> "Declaratio Thoruniensis," in *Collectio confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis publicatarum*, ed. Hermann Agathon Niemeyer (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1840), 670 [Generalis Professio].

<sup>25</sup> Compare "vere adsint" (*Confessio Augustana Invariata* [i.e. of 1530]) to "vere et substantialiter adesse" (*Confessio Saxonica* [1551]). Besides, the Frankfurter Rezzess of 1558, which Melanchthon supported, stated: "wahrhaftig, lebendig, wesentlich und gegenwärtig sei."

Articles of the Bavarian Inquisition.<sup>26</sup> According to Melanchthon's preface, *Corpus Philippicum* endeavoured to summarise the doctrine enshrined in the Scripture and thus to build the Protestant theological consensus exclusive of the Radical Reformation. In the preface to the final version of *Loci* and in *Confessio Saxonica*, which was styled as the repetition of the Augsburg Confession (*Repetitio Confessionis Augustanae sive Confessio Doctrinae Saxonicarum Ecclesiarum*),<sup>27</sup> Melanchthon elaborated upon the *sola Scriptura* principle combined with the status of three ecumenical creeds. In his opinion, these creeds aptly express the chief doctrines revealed solely in the Bible. Thus, the said symbols duly recapitulate what the Scripture as the only, unique, incomparable, uncontested and self-sufficient theological norm conveys. Consequently, the dignity of the ecclesiastical creeds completely relies on their service to the message of the Bible in light of which they must be examined and evaluated. This attitude was shared by the Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th century too.<sup>28</sup>

Between the emergence of *Corpus Philippicum* in 1560 and the composition of the Book of Concord in 1580 various local corpora doctrinae consisting of Melanchthon's and Luther's writings came to

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<sup>26</sup> Philipp Melanchthon, *Responsiones ad impios articulos Bavaricae inquisitionis*, ed. Ernst Sartorius (Marburg: Krieger, 1824).

<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the confession of Naumburg (1561) and the confession of Anhalt (1581) were termed as the repetition of the Augsburg Confession (*Die Naumburger Repetitio*; *Repetitio Anhaltina*). Both documents highlighted that *Confessio Augustana* was acknowledged as derivative of the biblical doctrine and therefore acclaimed. The same thought appeared earlier in the so called *Frankfurter Rezess* (1558) and later in the preface to the Book of Concord (1580).

<sup>28</sup> Heinrich Hepp, ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirchen Deutschlands* (Elberfeld: Friderichs, 1860), *passim*; Niemeyer, ed., *Collectio confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis publicatarum*, *passim*. Idem, ed., *Collectionis confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis publicatarum appendix, qua continentur puritanorum libri symbolici* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1840), *passim*; Johann Christian Wilhelm Augusti, ed., *Corpus librorum symbolicorum qui in Ecclesia Reformatum auctoritatem publicam obtinuerunt* (Elberfeld: Büschler, 1827), *passim*; Hendrik Egbert Vinke, ed., *Libri symbolici ecclesiae reformatae nederlandicae* (Utrecht: Terveen, 1846), *passim*.

life in Germany. Even the Book of Concord was never enacted fully as the sole authoritative collection of the confessions characteristic of the Wittenberg Reformation because certain local churches did not accept it for various reasons.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, *Corpus Philippicum* was ultimately superseded by the Book of Concord which from then on had been propagated as the exclusive collection.

Despite the fact that the Book of Concord contained *Confessio Augustana*, the exclusivistic theological paradigm, which evinced in the preface to the Book of Concord and in the Formula of Concord (1577), shattered the hopes for the broad-based Protestant consensus<sup>30</sup> which could be reached by means of *Corpus Philippicum* granted that the Augsburg Confession was extolled by most German Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th century<sup>31</sup> and by some Swiss confessions as well.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the Geneva collection of the Protestant confessions<sup>33</sup> adopting *Confessio Augustana* (*Invariata* and *Variata*), *Confessio Saxonica* and *Confessio Wirtembergica* as the genuine creeds of the undivided Reformation was not objected to by the Reformed theologians and in 1653 it was approved by the University of Marburg as its confessional standards.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> For instance, in Denmark only Luther's Small Catechism and Melanchthon's Augsburg Confession of 1530 (*Invariata*) along with three ecumenical creeds were officially recognised as the ecclesiastical confessions (*libri symbolici*). Cf. Jacob Christian Lindberg, ed., *Libri ecclesiae Danicae symbolici: In memoriam confessionis Augustanae ante haec tria secula invictissimo imperatori Carolo V. die XXV Junii MDXXX traditae* (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1830).

<sup>30</sup> Such a consensus based on the Augsburg Confession came true in Eastern Europe (cf. *Consensus Sendomiriensis* of 1570). Niemeyer, ed., *Collectio confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis publicarum*, 551-91 [*Consensus Poloniae*].

<sup>31</sup> Heppe, ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirchen Deutschlands*, passim.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. the First Confession of Basel.

<sup>33</sup> *Corpus et syntagma confessionum fidei quae in diversis regnis et nationibus, ecclesiarum nomine fuerunt authentice editae, in celeberrimis conventibus exhibitae, publicaque auctoritae comprobatae*.

<sup>34</sup> Heinrich Heppe, "Einleitung," in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirchen Deutschlands*, xvii.

The Reformed theology did not work out a single, authoritative collection of confessions but rather allowed of a certain latitude because there were many respected local confessions of faith which differently explained the concept of the Lord's Supper or of the eternal election. Thus, the Reformed tradition proved to be less homogeneous than the Wittenberg Reformation shaped by the Book of Concord. For that very reason, within the boundaries of the Reformed theology the Zwinglianism, Philippism and Calvinism could coexist relatively serenely.

In the Anglicanism the only corpus doctrinae namely the Book of Common Prayer was focused on the liturgy which is mirrored in its full title.<sup>35</sup> Due to the Elizabethan religious settlement the Book of Common Prayer embraced two strictly theological documents, to wit, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and the Catechism (revised subsequently) which both accorded with the doctrinal legacy of Corpus Philippicum.<sup>36</sup> Such a theological paradigm could indeed be depicted as via media between the Wittenberg Reformation and the broad Reformed tradition.

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<sup>35</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Use of the United Church of England and Ireland Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David Pointed As They Are To Be Sung or Said in Churches* (Cambridge: Smith, 1816).

<sup>36</sup> Except the idea of sureties' faith as replacing lack of faith (defined as human performance) in the baptised infants to which the Anglican Catechism resorted in order to legitimise the infant baptism. On the contrary, Luther (cf. Large Catechism, IV, Von der Kindertaufe) and Melancthon (cf. Loci [the ultimate version], De baptismo infantium) asserted that the Holy Spirit creates faith in the baptised infants at the very moment of their baptism, and contended that through this God-given faith the baptised infants do acquire all benefits of the sacrament (i.e. the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, salvation and life eternal) exactly as the baptism is dispensed.



### **III. The Status of the Confessional Subscription in the Protestantism**

All mature Protestant confessions of the 16th and 17th century except the initial one (i.e. *Confessio Augustana*) expounded the *Sola Scriptura* principle and discussed the status of the ecumenical creeds. Additionally, some of them commented upon the function of the most cherished Protestant confessions. Basically, all creeds both of the ancient church and of the age of the Reformation were viewed as the compendia of the essential points of the biblical message and they were accepted by the Protestant theologians only "because" (*quod*) the said creeds were recognised by them as the accurate exposition of and testimony to what the Scripture communicates.

The Reformation confessions acknowledged the Bible as the sole norm, rule and judge both of faith and of life, and did not allow to equalise it with or compare it to any other texts regardless of their historical or ecclesiastical value. Consequently, every theological thesis was supposed to be examined in light of the Scripture which was believed to interpret and elucidate itself. Therefore, the Protestant assent to the ecumenical creeds as well as to the reputable Reformation creeds was conditioned by the fact that they were affirmed as consistent with the Bible.

The prolegomena to the Formula of Concord attempted to describe the difference between the ecumenical creeds and the Reformation confessions. Accordingly, the former expressed the doctrinal consensus of the ancient church against the views labelled as heterodox, whereas the latter — the doctrinal consensus among those who rejected the authority of the papacy. From the contemporary point of view, such an approach appears to be simplistic because the only symbol promulgated by the imperial church was the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian

Creed lacked the sanction of the ecumenical council.<sup>37</sup> Further, although *Confessio Augustana* was appreciated by the German Reformed theologians, the statement about the Protestant doctrinal consensus at that time transpires to be far-fetched unless it is confined to the Lutherans.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the aforementioned prolegomena overemphasised the negative (i.e. polemical) rationale behind the Apostles' Creed and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The former as a whole and the latter except the synodical refinements (namely the phrase ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ and the extended section on the Holy Spirit and its operation) were the product of baptismal instruction for adults in the Western and Eastern churches respectively. Thus, originally these creeds were predominantly aimed at building and preserving the doctrinal basis of the ancient Christian community.<sup>39</sup>

Contrary to a common misapprehension, the Formula of Concord never styled itself a norm or rule of faith but rather declared the Scripture to be the principle (forma), foundation, norm and rule of any doctrine (cf. the Formula's prolegomena). Moreover, the complete title<sup>40</sup> of the Book of Concord depicted the Bible as the unique norm and rule of truth to which its disquisitions must be subject. In the

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<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the Eastern Orthodox churches perceive the Apostles' Creed as a regional creed of the Western churches and repudiate the Athanasian Creed which advocates the doctrine of Filioque.

<sup>38</sup> A similar claim was made in the preface to the Book of Concord. In fact, the collection of the confessional documents, on which the broad-based Protestant consensus could be founded, was *Corpus Philippicum* marginalised by both the Formula of Concord and the Book of Concord. Heinrich Heppe, *Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus im sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Gotha: Perthes, 1857), passim.

<sup>39</sup> The positive and negative aim of creeds was embodied in the subtitle of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Cf. "[...] ad tollendam opinionum dissensionem et ad consensum in vera religione firmandum".

<sup>40</sup> *Concordia: Pia et unanimi consensu repetita confessio fidei et doctrinae Electorum, Principum, et Ordinum Imperii, atque eorundem theologorum, qui Augustanam Confessionem amplectuntur, et nomina sua huic libro subscripserunt, cui ex sacra Scriptura unica illa veritatis norma et regula, quorundam articulorum, qui post Doctoris Martini Lutheri felicem ex hac vita exitum, in controversiam venerunt, solida accessit declaratio* (Leipzig: Steinman, 1580).

preface to the Book of Concord it is indeed stated that the norm of the sound teaching is manifested in the said book which however does not contradict the axiom that the value of the confessional documents contained therein, among which the dignity of *Confessio Augustana* was considered pre-eminent, stems entirely from the assumption that they are grounded on God's Word and that they correctly explicate and exhibit the content thereof.

Nevertheless, in the conclusion of the said preface there is an ambiguous phrase "ad hanc veram normam et declarationem purioris doctrinae examinaturi" in which "vera norma" plausibly denotes the Scripture mentioned in the preceding paragraph and "declaratio" refers to the Book of Concord (*Concordia*) from the preceding sentence. Since the compilers of the Book of Concord maintained that the content of the said book conforms to the Bible, they postulated to examine all theological controversies in light of the Scripture as the unique norm and with reference to the Book of Concord as the genuine exposition and declaration of the main biblical doctrines. Given that the Book of Concord was supposed to agree with the Bible in terms of the ultimate doctrinal formulations, the contradiction with the Book of Concord was said to entail the contradiction with the Scripture.

Simultaneously, the preface to the Book of Concord as well as the prolegomena to the Formula of Concord noticed that since the Reformation confessions (as typified by *Confessio Augustana*) emerged at a certain moment, they were embedded in their historical context. Thus, they demonstrate how their authors interpreted the Scripture at the inception of the Reformation.

In the period of the Protestant orthodoxy the status of the Reformation creeds became complex. The Reformed orthodoxy upheld the *Sola Scriptura* principle without demur,<sup>41</sup> while the Lutheran

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<sup>41</sup> Johannes Wolleb, *Compendium theologiae Christianae* (London: Woodfall, 1760), 1-8 [*Praecognita christianae theologiae*]; Heinrich Heppe, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* (Elberfeld: Friderichs, 1861), *passim*.

orthodoxy vacillated, (over)reacting against Calixtus' syncretism and enforcing the Book of Concord as the only legitimate collection of confessional documents pertinent to the Wittenberg Reformation.<sup>42</sup> In the Reformed orthodoxy the Reformation confessions were referred to as the profound declarations and expositions of the chief scriptural doctrines, and were treated neither as the norm of the doctrine nor as the criterion of the biblical interpretation. Such an attitude was also necessitated by the plurality and diversity of the Reformed creeds. The Anglican tradition abode by the Melanchthonian theological programme enshrined both in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and in the Catechism contained in the Book of Common Prayer which duly expressed the *Sola Scriptura* principle.<sup>43</sup>

On the contrary, within the boundaries of the Lutheran orthodoxy it happened that the Book of Concord was termed as the secondary norm (*norma normata*, *norma secundaria*) of theology in contrast to the Bible depicted as the primary norm thereof (*norma normans*, *norma primaria*) albeit such a claim contravened what Luther<sup>44</sup> and Melanchthon<sup>45</sup> explicitly taught. Besides, some theologians of this paradigm dreamed that the authors of the Book of Concord could be inspired by the Holy Spirit or could at least experience a mediate divine illumination.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Julius August Ludwig Wegscheider, *Institutiones theologiae christianae dogmaticae* (Halle: Gebauer, 1819), 47-50 [§ 21]; Karl August Hase, *Hutterus redivivus oder Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: Ein dogmatisches Repertorium für Studierende* (Leipzig: Leich, 1833), 130-35 [§ 47-48].

<sup>43</sup> Edward Welchman, ed., *XXXIX Articuli Ecclesiae Anglicanae textibus e sacra Scriptura de promptis confirmati brevibusque notis illustrati* (Oxford: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1738).

<sup>44</sup> Martin Luther, "Von den Konziliis und Kirchen (1539)," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 50 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1914), 509-653; Martin Luther, "Contra XXXII articulos Lovaniensium theologistarum (1545)," in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1928), 425 [I-IV].

<sup>45</sup> Melanchthon, *Responsiones ad impios articulos Bavaricae inquisitionis*, 17-19 [IV]; *Ibidem*, 22-27 [VII].

<sup>46</sup> Heinrich Schmid, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt* (Erlangen: Heyder, 1843), 69-70 [§ 13, 9]. David Hollaz, who mentioned

However, the Lutheran theology of the post-Reformation did not surrender completely the original principle of the Scripture as the only, unique norm and rule of theology to the elevation of the Book of Concord (Symbololatria). Even Leonhard Hutter, who once had a flirtation with the concept of the inspiration of the Book of Concord,<sup>47</sup> reiterated the Sola Scriptura principle laid down in the prolegomena to the Formula of Concord and observed that the public recognition of the said book was less solemn than that of the ecumenical creeds because the Book of Concord was accepted only within the Lutheran circles.<sup>48</sup> According to Hutter's *Compendium*, the Book of Concord should be conceived of as sheer testimony how the biblical doctrine was interpreted in the age of the Reformation.

Pursuant to the findings of Robert Preus,<sup>49</sup> the representative theologians of the Lutheran orthodoxy cleaved to the Book of Concord in the sense that they scrutinised to what degree (quatenus) the said book conforms to the Scripture and on account of (quia) that scrutiny they subscribed to it as to the accurate profession of the main points of the biblical doctrine. Consequently, those theologians presumed that the personal exegesis should concur with the explicit doctrinal propositions of the Book of Concord. In their view, such a concurrence amounted to the confessional subscription.

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such ideas, did not seem to support them personally. Cf. the diverse comprehension of the status of the Book of Concord in the Lutheran orthodoxy: Johann Benedict Carpzov, *Isagoge in libros ecclesiarum lutheranarum symbolicos* (Leipzig: Wittigau, 1675), passim.

<sup>47</sup> Leonhard Hutter, *Libri christianae concordiae* (Wittenberg: Schurer, 1610), 1-2 [Prolegomena in Librum christianae concordiae, I].

<sup>48</sup> Leonhard Hutter, *Compendium locorum theologicorum*, ed. August Twesten (Berlin: Hertz, 1855), 1-5 [I, 1-17]. Cf. Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *Theologia didactico-polemica sive systema theologicum* (Leipzig: Fritsch, 1715), 30-32 [I, II, III-IV].

<sup>49</sup> Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena*, vol. 1 (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 35-39 [I, Important Characteristics, 3]; Ibidem, 258-61 [III, 2].

There were the pristine Lutheran orthodox theologians who never compromised the absolute primacy of the Scripture and who never bound the biblical exegesis to any other criterion (e.g. Baier,<sup>50</sup> Buddeus,<sup>51</sup> Morus,<sup>52</sup> Bruhn<sup>53</sup>). Besides, the East Prussian orthodox liturgical agenda of 1780 demanded of the ministers that they pledge allegiance to the pure proclamation of the Scripture as comprised of the Law and the Gospel, and that they promise to administer both the baptism and the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution as attested in the Bible.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, not all Lutheran theologians of the post-Reformation used the concept of the confessional subscription to the detriment of the sola Scriptura principle.

#### **IV. Schleiermacher's Explicit Comments upon the Confessional Subscription**

In his opus magnum Schleiermacher did not question that in the Protestant churches a doctrinal thesis might be evaluated in view of their confessions of faith or in light of the New Testament<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Johann Wilhelm Baier, *Compendium theologiae positivae* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1750), passim.

<sup>51</sup> Johann Franz Buddeus, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae* (Leipzig: Fritsch, 1724), passim.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Friedrich Nathanael Morus, *Epitome theologiae christianae* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1820), 36-37 [Prolegomena, 4, 30].

<sup>53</sup> Anders Bruhn, *Compendium theologiae dogmaticae in usum juventutis adornatum* (Gothenburg: Typis Norbergianis, 1837), passim.

<sup>54</sup> "Erstes Formular: Bei der Ordination," in *Preussische Kirchenagenda* (Königsberg: Hartung, 1780), 6. The same strategy was adopted in the Reformed agendas. Cf. "Bestätigung und Ordination der Prediger," in *Kirchenagenda oder Formulare bei den Evangelisch-Reformierten üblich* (Solingen: Schmitz, 1770), 93-117; cf. "Form Einen zum Predigtamt zu ordinieren," in *Kirchenagenda, das ist, Gebet und andere Formulen, welche bei denen Evangelisch-Reformierten Gemeinden in seiner königlichen Majestät in Preussen Königreich und anderen Landen gebraucht werden* (Berlin: Schlechtiger, 1717), 106-16.

<sup>55</sup> Similarly to Socinus and Kant, Schleiermacher had a low opinion both of the Old Testament and of the Judaism.

if the confessions are silent on the matter.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, he approached both the New Testament and the ecclesiastical creeds as the verbalisation of the religious experience. Thus, the former testifies how the first disciples felt about Jesus, while the latter record how the religious communities were influenced by Jesus' person and work over the centuries. Such an approach could be recognised as the experimental reinterpretation of the purely academic proposal by Johann Philipp Gabler who in 1787 postulated to amplify the distinction between the biblical theology and the systematic theology.<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, the former was defined as the historical enquiry (e genere historico) into what the biblical authors thought of the divine matters (de rebus divinis senserint), whereas the latter was construed as the didactic study (e genere didactico) of what various theologians philosophised concerning the divine matters (super rebus divinis philosophetur).

Schleiermacher advised to consult the Bible only if the ecclesiastical creeds could not answer the question because the confessions of faith were more recent testimonies to the current religious consciousness of a particular church than the Scripture of old. The existence of creeds was obvious to Schleiermacher who did not confine the revelation to any sacred text but rather asserted that every religious community continually creates its own revelation, experiencing its own dependence on the Absolute. Such a dynamic and processual apprehension of revelation, however, suggested that in order to carry out their task, which is descriptive, not normative, the creeds ought to be up to date.

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<sup>56</sup> Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt* (1821-1822), vol. 1, 127-29 [§ 24]; Ibidem, 144-53 [§ 30]; Schleiermacher, "Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt (1830-1831)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/3, 122-24 [§ 21]; Ibidem, 144-51 [§ 27].

<sup>57</sup> Johann Philipp Gabler, *De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus oratio* (Altdorf: Monath, 1787), 8.

The above conclusion challenged Schleiermacher as the Protestant theologian and moved him to reappraise the issue of the confessional subscription which already in the second half of the 18th century was freely and openly discussed.<sup>58</sup> From then on, the theologians espousing the tenets of the German Enlightenment<sup>59</sup> posited that every consent to the confessions is possible only "so far as" (*quatenus*) they conform to the Bible, human reason and the moral law, which is to be determined privately by the individual.<sup>60</sup> Such a mental reservation (*reservatio mentalis*) was just taken for granted and allowed to disregard the claims of the creeds at one's discretion. Therefore, the said theologians could yield smoothly to the confessional subscription if demanded by the government<sup>61</sup> or the church authorities and could even appreciate the official status of the Reformation confessions as a sort of curb on pietistic or revivalistic movements to which they were averse.

Preaching on Luke 6:37, Schleiermacher criticised the condemning formulae in the Protestant confessions of the 16th century.<sup>62</sup> It seems that he alluded particularly to the Augsburg

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<sup>58</sup> Gottlob Wilhelm Meyer, *Commentatio librorum symbolicorum ecclesiae nostrae utilitatem et historiam subscriptionis eorundum exponens* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1796), *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> Christian Wilhelm Flügel, *Versuch einer historisch-kritischen Darstellung des bisherigen Einflusses der Kantischen Philosophie auf alle Zweige der wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Theologie*, vol. 1 (Hannover: Helwing, 1796), 327-31 [§ 11].

<sup>60</sup> Wegscheider, *Institutiones theologiae christianae dogmaticae*, 48 [§ 21]; Christoph Friedrich Ammon, *Inbegriff der evangelischen Glaubenslehre* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1805), 292-94 [§ 153]; Christoph Friedrich Ammon, *Ausführlicher Unterricht in der christlichen Glaubenslehre für Freunde der evangelischen Wahrheit nach Grundsätzen*, vol. 1/1-2 (Nürnberg and Altdorf: Monath and Kussler, 1807-1808), *passim*.

<sup>61</sup> In Prussia the swan song of the governmental enforcement of the Protestant orthodoxy was the religious edict issued by Frederick William II on the 9th July 1788 (called Woellner's edict). It was used to victimise Kant - the luminary of the Protestant world. "Religionsedikt (gegeben Potsdam, den 9. Juli 1788)," in Friedrich Weidemann, *Die Pietisten in Halle in ihrer tiefsten Erniedrigung* (Altenburg: Hofbuchdruckerei, 1831), 7-19.

<sup>62</sup> Schleiermacher, "Von dem Verdammen Andersgläubiger in unserem Bekenntnis (Lukas 6,37)," 710-24.



Confession (Invariata) and to the Formula of Concord, yet the Reformed creeds of the age of the Reformation were not completely free of them. Explaining the historical context of these formulae, Schleiermacher encouraged not to uphold them because according to his interpretation of Luke 6:37 condemning other people, we condemn ourselves. Therefore, instead of cursing one another those, who differ in the understanding of doctrine, shall coexist, which does not mean that they must necessarily agree on every point. Although Schleiermacher intended to address the Lutheran-Reformed tussle from the 16th century perpetuated in the confessions of the age of the Reformation, he offered advice on how to reinterpret the defamatory language occurring at times in the confessions of old.

On principle, Schleiermacher did not accept any coercion touching the religion. Consequently, he disapproved of imposing the confessions by virtue of the legal obligation.<sup>63</sup> The fact, that ministers and religious instructors in some places had to subscribe to certain confessions under compulsion of the state law, Schleiermacher deemed offensive and irreligious because by using the government to legitimise its teaching, a specific church demonstrates its unbelief in the power of the Spirit of community (Gemeingeist)<sup>64</sup> that is supposed to assimilate and to accommodate elements alien thereto. Further, Schleiermacher resorted to *reductio ad absurdum*, arguing that the those, who own up to the legacy of the Protestant orthodoxy, should also admit that God's Word, not the government, is endowed with the powers of persuasion

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<sup>63</sup> Schleiermacher, "Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern (1799, 1806, 1821, 1831)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/1 (Berlin: Reimer, 1843), 383 [Erläuterungen zur vierten Rede (n. 25, p. 349)].

<sup>64</sup> The above notion is peculiar to Schleiermacher's reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Accordingly, the Godhead (the Father) is represented in the perfect religious self-consciousness both of the historical individual symbolised by Jesus (the Son) and of the religious community (the Spirit). Thus, the Son is the actualisation of the divine presence in the individual sphere, whereas the Spirit is the actualisation of the same in the corporate dimension.

(auctoritas causativa) in the spiritual realm because thus taught the theologians of that paradigm. In his opinion, the governmental endorsement of the confessional subscription contradicted the very nature of faith which cannot be extorted by external means.

From the hermeneutical perspective Schleiermacher observed that the assertion, that the Scripture must be interpreted in accord with the ecclesiastical creeds, proves to be self-contradictory (*petitio principii*) because if the Bible is to be expounded pursuant to the confessions, the result of such an interpretation is predictable and must *eo ipso* corroborate the proposition that the confessions conform to the Scripture.<sup>65</sup> Thus, with the provision that the confessions are the norm of the biblical interpretation, they can never be validated by the Scripture.

In historical terms it cannot be said that in the whole Protestant orthodoxy the biblical exegesis was captivated by the ecclesiastical presuppositions albeit a specific method of the interpretation (so called the historical-grammatical method<sup>66</sup>) was posited. Nevertheless, every method including the historical-critical method<sup>67</sup> is based on certain hermeneutical presuppositions which while they cannot be eradicated, shall be divulged and discussed.

Schleiermacher pointed out that the request, that the Bible must be explicated in such a way to suit the confessions, even if it obviously deviates from the historical and literary context of the Scripture, undermines the very principle out of which the Reformation was born.

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<sup>65</sup> Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt* (1821-1822), vol. 1, 147-48 [§ 30, 1].

<sup>66</sup> Johann August Ernesti, *Institutio interpretis Novi Testamenti*, ed. Christoph Friedrich Ammon (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1809).

<sup>67</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "Ist voraussetzungslose Exegese möglich? (1957)," in *Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), 142-50.

Although Schleiermacher did not count himself among the adherents of the sola Scriptura principle, he realised that at the inception of the Reformation the creeds were not used as a means of enslaving the exposition of the Scripture but rather as the temporal and provisional declarations of the biblical message. In his own system, both the Scripture and the confessions were sheer testimonies to the religious experience of the past generations which ought to be reinterpreted in light of the most present religious experience in order to be of any avail.

In 1817, on the occasion of the anniversary of Luther's theses, Harms published his 95 theses, calling the Lutherans contemporary of his to reprimatinate the original theological paradigm of the Wittenberg Reformation according to his own circumscription.<sup>68</sup> He protested against the rationalism (Vernunftreligion) prevailing in the Protestant theology of his time and vehemently opposed to Kant's philosophy of religion which was the instigation thereof. In the 30th thesis Harms explicitly attacked the rationalistic axiom, that every proposition of the revelation (in this instance: of the Scripture) must be interpreted in such a way to conform to the standards of human reason, which was wholeheartedly advocated by Ammon.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, the latter did not hesitate to respond to Harms' theses.<sup>70</sup> Although Ammon's response was elegant, yet ironic, he only enhanced his rationalistic paradigm, on the one hand presenting

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<sup>68</sup> Claus Harms, *Das sind die 95 theses oder Streitsätze Dr. Luthers, teuren Andenkens: Zum besonderen Abdruck besorgt und mit anderen 95 Sätzen als mit einer Übersetzung aus Anno 1517 in 1817 begleitet* (Kiel: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1817), 19-35.

<sup>69</sup> Ammon, *Inbegriff der evangelischen Glaubenslehre*, 36-38 [§ 18]. Idem, *Ausführlicher Unterricht in der christlichen Glaubenslehre für Freunde der evangelischen Wahrheit nach Grundsätzen*, vol. 1/1-2, passim.

<sup>70</sup> Christoph Friedrich Ammon, *Bittere Arznei für die Glaubensschwäche der Zeit* (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1817). Cf. idem, *An Harms über die Abspannung und Überspannung der Vernunft in der Religion* (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1819).

the positive statements about human reason found in the writings of the church fathers and of the Reformers, on the other hand exposing the self-evident flaws in Harms' argumentation. Actually, in Harms' disquisitions there were plenty of verbal, historical, philosophical and cultural infelicities. Even from the viewpoint of the Lutheran orthodoxy he misconceived some alterations in the sphere of adiaphora as doctrinal redefinitions.

Despite Harms' arrogant and simplistic attitude to the Reformed theology, hostility to the venture of the Prussian union, and symptoms of clericalism, Schleiermacher attempted to mediate between him and Ammon, admitting that both of them represent divergent, yet legitimate, voices within the continuum of the Protestant theology.<sup>71</sup> It seems that although Ammon's theological programme to a degree utilised Schleiermacher's concept of the dependence on the Absolute,<sup>72</sup> the latter tried to be dispassionate about Harms - Ammon debate.

On the one hand, Schleiermacher denounced Harms' theses for the aforementioned fallacies and oversimplifications, providing the arguments for a deeper understanding of the historical development of the Protestant theology especially concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

On the other hand, Schleiermacher did not side with the attitude of Ammon who focused on the defence of the rationalism and derided what he considered to be "superstitious" controversies between the Lutheran and Reformed parties. Occasionally, Schleiermacher did not sense Ammon's irony and misattributed Harms' doctrinal propositions exaggerated by Ammon to the latter.

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<sup>71</sup> Schleiermacher, "An Herrn Oberhofprediger Dr. Ammon über seine Prüfung der Harmsischen Sätze: Mit einer Zugabe (1818)."

<sup>72</sup> Ammon, *Inbegriff der evangelischen Glaubenslehre*, 3-4 [§ 1].

Citing Ammon's statements about the symbolical books,<sup>73</sup> Schleiermacher demonstrated that Ammon denied Harms' call to repristination. On that account, Schleiermacher charged Ammon with sheer opportunism. Accordingly, the Enlightenment theology hedged the confessional subscription with so many unsaid prerequisite conditions that the Reformation confessions could easily be acceded to with no theological repercussions. For that reason, those theologians, who were actually dissenting not only from the Reformation confessions but also from the ecumenical creeds, seldom protested publicly against the legal or ecclesiastical imposition of them which was simply irrelevant to them as long as the mental reservation could be made.

Schleiermacher objected to Harms' tendency to limit the Wittenberg Reformation to Luther's person and work to the exclusion of Melancthon who initiated the Protestant systematic theology in 1521 when Luther's theological aptitude was still immature and partial.<sup>74</sup>

Since Schleiermacher privately espoused no governmental endorsement of any doctrine, he repugned Harms' claim that the Lutheranism construed as the blind allegiance to the Book of Concord is eo ipso entitled to be the official folk religion of certain parts of "Germany" (Landesevangelium). In his 88th thesis Harms misinterpreted the function of the symbolical books in the Peace of Augsburg (1555)<sup>75</sup> and in the Peace of Westphalia (1648),<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ammon, *Inbegriff der evangelischen Glaubenslehre*, passim. Ammon, *Ausführlicher Unterricht in der christlichen Glaubenslehre für Freunde der evangelischen Wahrheit nach Grundsätzen*, vol. 1/1-2, passim.

<sup>74</sup> Ammon too had Melancthonian sympathies. Ammon, *Ausführlicher Unterricht in der christlichen Glaubenslehre für Freunde der evangelischen Wahrheit nach Grundsätzen*, vol. 1/2, 423-33 [§ 50]; cf. Lowell Clark Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel: The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation* (Fallbrook: Verdict Publications, 1980), passim.

<sup>75</sup> *Abschied der römischen königlichen Majestät und gemeiner Stände auf dem Reichstag zu Augsburg Anno Domini MDLV aufgerichtet* (Mainz: Behem, 1555).

<sup>76</sup> Johann Rudolph Engau, ed., *Instrumentum Pacis Osnabrugensis* (Jena: Crocker, 1739), 47-49 [VII].

presuming that the Lutheran church was recognised in terms of international law on the basis of its confessions. In fact, both settlements used the appellation "of the Augsburg Confession"<sup>77</sup> descriptively, not normatively, in order to identify a non-Catholic party of the treaty. Subsequently, the Peace of Westphalia also included the Reformed party depicted as "reformati" (*qui inter illos reformati vocantur*). Furthermore, both settlements did not interfere in the teaching of the Protestant churches but rather secured the rights of the secular authorities to regulate the religious life within their territorial jurisdiction and deemed them inalienable and indelible.

In 1819 Schleiermacher decided to elaborate upon the status of the symbolical books, setting aside the political argumentation that they allegedly safeguard the international recognition of the Protestant states against the claims of the Catholic countries.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, such fears were justified in the 17th century but not since the second half of the 18th century.

Schleiermacher's mature approach to the confessional subscription can again be characterised by a simple term "equilibrium." On the one hand, Schleiermacher conceded that the Protestant theology of the early 19th century was more advanced than that of the 16th-century Reformation, and accepted that the Protestant immortals of the humanities (e.g. Kant) deviated from the literal sense of the doctrinal resolutions proffered by the symbolical books (implicitly by the Book of Concord). Further, Schleiermacher professed that in academic terms every creed is only the evidence of a specific interpretation of doctrine embedded in a particular historical context. He also objected to placing any limitations on the contemporary theology under the pretext of the

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<sup>77</sup> In light of the context "der Augsburgischen Confession" and "Augustanae Confessionis" are the descriptive genitive.

<sup>78</sup> Schleiermacher, "Über den eigentümlichen Wert und das bindende Ansehen symbolischer Bücher (Reformations-Almanach auf das Jahr 1819)."

subscription to the outdated confessions. In addition, Schleiermacher undercut the legal imposition of these confessions, arguing that if the allegiance to them must be extorted from the clergy, it implies that the churches are really indifferent to them. Although Schleiermacher did not cleave to the sola Scriptura principle, he realised that in light thereof no ecclesiastical creed could ever be elevated to the status of a "norm."

On the other hand, Schleiermacher did not deem the symbolical books otiose because in his view the core of their message could be reinterpreted and thus modernised. For him, the Reformation confessions were not deficient at their inception but are rendered tenuous if imposed presently without any accommodation to a new era. Simultaneously, Schleiermacher asserted that the ministers should be obliged to adhere to what he construed as the foundation of the Reformation theology. Accordingly, to be treated as a Protestant minister, one ought to declare:

[...] I recognise all, that our symbolical books teach against the errors and abuses of the Catholic church with a particular reference to the articles on the justification [CA I, IV], on the good works [CA I, XX], on the church [CA I, VII], on the order in the church [CA I, XIV], on the mass [CA II, XXIV], on the worship of the saints [CA I, XXI] and on the monastic vows [CA II, XXVII], is entirely consonant with the Scripture and the primitive teaching of the church [...].<sup>79</sup>

Schleiermacher assumed that it is advisable to reduce the scope of the confessional subscription because in his opinion no one could literally accept every proposition of 16th-century texts

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<sup>79</sup> Schleiermacher, "Über den eigentümlichen Wert und das bindende Ansehen symbolischer Bücher (Reformations-Almanach auf das Jahr 1819)," 451. Notice that Schleiermacher alluded to the respective articles of the Augsburg Confession (CA). Cf. the East Prussian orthodox liturgical agenda of 1780, "Erstes Formular: Bei der Ordination," 6.

unless mental reservations are made or unless the meaning of these texts is allegorised. Neither the unspoken mental reservation nor the allegorical interpretation of the creeds was Schleiermacher's preference because in his view the former is ethically dubious, while the latter violates the principle of the hermeneutical integrity according to which a confession of faith is not a poetry but rather a set of propositions.

Schleiermacher also pondered upon another solution, to wit, upon a possible composition of a new creed which would correspond to the theological knowledge of his age. Thinking of potential adversities and difficulties, Schleiermacher was ambivalent about that idea. Basically, he realised that the doctrinal consensus among the Protestant theologians of his time would be barely attainable and he doubted whether the theologians restrained by the confessional subscription could be creative enough in drawing a new confession.

In 1830 Daniel Coelln and David Schulz challenged Schleiermacher personally,<sup>80</sup> publishing their famous manifesto<sup>81</sup> in which they demanded that the bondage to the symbolical books curbing (at least formally) the academic freedom at the German faculties of the Protestant theology cease. Firstly, Coelln and Schulz remarked that the discrepancy between the doctrinal content of the Reformation confessions and the rationalistic theology of that age exemplified by Wegscheider was unmistakable. They maintained that the confessional subscription was not only a fiction but also an offence against the academic freedom brought to the fore by the German Enlightenment which they construed as the long-awaited completion of the initiative of the 16th-century Reformation.

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<sup>80</sup> By suggesting that as far as (lack of) the conformity to the Reformation confessions is concerned, there is no difference between Schleiermacher's system and the rationalistic paradigm personified by Wegscheider.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Coelln and David Schulz, *Über theologische Lehrfreiheit auf den evangelischen Universitäten und deren Beschränkung durch symbolische Bücher* (Breslau: Gosohorsky, 1830).



Secondly, Coelln and Schulz argued that if any creed is to be a guide (by no means a norm) for the theologians contemporary of theirs, it should be a new exposition of the modern (i.e. post-Enlightenment) Protestant theology by which the Spirit of community (Gemeingeist)<sup>82</sup> could be manifested at that very moment.

Thirdly, they disapproved of celebrating the jubilee of Confessio Augustana (1830) as the confession fundamental both to the Wittenberg Reformation and to the Reformed tradition.<sup>83</sup> In their view, only the revised version of the Augsburg Confession (Variata) was temporarily accepted by some Reformed churches in Germany out of sheer political necessity.<sup>84</sup> Thus, they neglected the sincere, unsolicited admiration of the Reformed theology for Melancthon's heritage.

In response to Coelln and Schulz,<sup>85</sup> Schleiermacher reiterated that there is no definitive answer to the question of the status of the creeds inherited by the modern Protestantism from the ancient church and from the age of the Reformation. On the one hand, Schleiermacher sided with the idea of granting the unrestricted academic freedom to the faculties of the Protestant theology and did not debar the rationalistic theologians (such as Wegscheider) from the continuum of the Protestant theology. On the other hand, Schleiermacher was dubious about creating a new confession of faith designed to supersede the old creeds, and preferred to retain the creeds of old, bereaving them of their binding and punitive force.

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<sup>82</sup> The Schleiermacherian term discussed previously.

<sup>83</sup> It is noticeable that not only the conservative Lutherans were uncomfortable about certain unifying commemorations decreed by the Prussian government in favour of the union.

<sup>84</sup> The provisions of the Peace of Augsburg were made for the Wittenberg Reformation only.

<sup>85</sup> Schleiermacher, "An die Herren D. D. D. von Cölln and D. Schulz: Ein Sendschreiben (1831)"; Schleiermacher, "Vorrede zu den Predigten in Bezug auf die Feier der Übergabe der augsburgischen Konfession (1831)."

In 1831 Schleiermacher commented upon his attitude to the Augsburg Confession and to the jubilee thereof (1830).<sup>86</sup> He noticed that the commemorations of Luther's theses in 1817 and of *Confessio Augustana* in 1830 were not meant to pay unconditional tribute to the doctrinal content of both documents but rather aimed at appreciating them as historical phenomena in view of their impact. Thus, through his theses Luther dared to question the authority of the papacy, while by means of the Augsburg Confession Melancthon offered the very first systematic presentation of a new theology.

Schleiermacher argued that the Reformed sympathy for *Confessio Augustana* could not be reduced to the political agenda, and admitted that by virtue of his Reformed ordination in the Brandenburg-Prussia he subscribed to *Confessio Sigismundi* (1614)<sup>87</sup> "so far as it agrees with the Scripture" which was, however, the spoken addendum, not an unspoken mental reservation. The aforementioned confession (called also *Confessio Marchica*) acknowledged the revised version of the Augsburg Confession (*Variata*) of which Schleiermacher did not feel ashamed. Therefore, he could not understand why the anniversary of *Confessio Augustana* as the initial systematic interpretation of the main biblical doctrines in the age of the Reformation was objected to. As Schleiermacher observed, the political benefits of the affiliation to the Augsburg Confession accrued from the Peace of Augsburg (1555), while the Peace of Westphalia (1648) equalised the international rights of the Lutheran states and the Reformed territories. It should be added that methodologically speaking, the theological discourse as the operation on certain abstract ideas cannot be equated with sheer political calculation.

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<sup>86</sup> Schleiermacher, "Vorrede zu den Predigten in Bezug auf die Feier der Übergabe der augsburgischen Konfession (1831)."

<sup>87</sup> "Confessio fidei Ioannis Sigismundi Electoris Brandenburgici," in *Collectio confessionum in Ecclesiis Reformatis publicatarum*, 642-52. This Reformed confession was more Calvinistic than the Heidelberg Catechism, yet appealed to *Confessio Augustana* (*Variata*) and frequently quoted Luther.

From Schleiermacher's point of view, Coelln's and Schulz's opposition to the commemoration of the Augsburg Confession was caused by their literalistic and legalistic comprehension of the confessional subscription. For him, this subscription was a token of the historical loyalty to the Reformation confessions, not a legal obligation to accept their every doctrinal claim in the most literal sense.

Schleiermacher pointed out that if such a rigid criterion of the confessional subscription was applied, even the Apostles' Creed could not be validated in extenso because it contains at least two vague statements.<sup>88</sup> Firstly, the phrase "who was conceived by the Holy Spirit" (qui conceptus est de Spiritu sancto; τὸν συλληφθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου) might imply that Jesus was fathered by the Holy Spirit which would contradict the New Testament accounts as well as the patristic theology. Secondly, the phrase "descendit ad infera" (κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα) proved to be unintelligible even to the early church fathers (e.g. Rufinus of Aquileia).

Contrary to Schleiermacher, it appears that the Apostles' Creed distinguished between Jesus' conception and birth. Accordingly, Christ's conception was attributed to the Holy Spirit who was said to substitute miraculously the male activity. Simultaneously, Jesus was depicted as the one born of Mary. While his conception was said to be supernatural, his childbirth was said to be natural in medical terms (cf. Gal 4:4). Furthermore, the composite verb συλλαμβάνω in the passive voice must not necessarily denote "to be fathered / sired by", especially in view of the Lukan narrative (cf.

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<sup>88</sup> Schleiermacher, "Vorrede zu den Predigten in Bezug auf die Feier der Übergabe der augsburgischen Konfession (1831)," 721-25; Schleiermacher, "Die praktische Theologie nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhang dargestellt," 622-62 [II, I, 2, I, 4]; Schleiermacher, "Glückwünschungsschreiben an die hochwürdigen Mitglieder der von seiner Majestät dem König von Preussen zur Aufstellung neuer liturgischer Formen ernannten Kommission (1814)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. I/5, 173-74.

Luke 1:35). Since the Apostles' Creed originates from the baptismal creeds of the Western churches, it shall be expounded in the light of the baptismal creeds of the Eastern churches which solidified into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that reads as follows: "καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα" (and who became flesh both from the Holy Spirit and from Mary, the virgin, and who became man). Evidently, the eternal, divine generation by the Father (τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων) attributed to Christ is not to be confused with his temporal, human conception and birth. By virtue of the communication of the divinity Jesus was termed as uncreated, while by virtue of the communication of the humanity - as created.

Actually, it is not clear what was originally meant by the appellations *inferna* / τὰ κατώτατα (the lowest) or ᾗδης (Hades) which were said to refer to the place or the state which Jesus was supposed to enter after his crucifixion. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed never mentioned such an event or condition. Besides, the terms τὰ κατώτατα and ᾗδης are rich in meaning both in the Greek Scripture (namely in the Septuagint and in the New Testament) and in the Greek literature. Additionally, the Athanasian Creed automatically repeated the phrase in line with the Latin version of the Apostles' Creed and offered no further explanation. Rufinus of Aquileia admitted that the statement "descendit ad infera" (κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα) was missing in most versions of the Apostles' Creed (including the Roman one). In Rufinus' opinion, this statement was appositive to the previous one ("who was buried"), so "inferna" (τὰ κατώτατα) simply denoted the state of death. On that account, Jesus, figuratively speaking, descended into the state of death as he died and was buried. From the literary perspective, such an apposition could be plausible because it seems that in the third section of the Apostles' Creed the communion of saints (*sanctorum communionem*; ἁγίων κοινωνίαν) was appositive to the holy universal church (*sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*; ἁγίαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν). Nevertheless,

there was another way of interpreting the statement, that Jesus descended into inferna / τὰ κατώτατα, which invoked 1 Peter 3:18-22 (cf. the Formula of Concord, IX) and perhaps Ephesians 4:9 albeit the context of the latter might indicate merely his incarnation.

## V. Conclusion

Deliberating upon the status of the confessional subscription, Schleiermacher certainly looked after his own interests because the tenets of his theological system conformed neither to the patristic doctrine of the Trinity nor to the patristic christology which, as reflected in the ecumenical creeds, were reaffirmed by the Reformation confessions. However, Schleiermacher's concerns were deeper. He realised that the tension between the doctrine as interpreted in the age of the Reformation and the contemporary academic theology could not be surmounted but rather should be defused and lived out as a historical necessity.

His disquisitions on the modern reception of old creeds met with criticism not only from the conservative theologians. Surprisingly, criticising Schleiermacher's comments upon the confessional subscription, particularly, upon two statements from the Apostles' Creed ("qui conceptus est de Spiritu sancto" and "descendit ad infera"),<sup>89</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, the eminent Right Hegelian, expounded them in defiance of their plausible historical meaning but in accord with his peculiar interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Schleiermacher, "Vorrede zu den Predigten in Bezug auf die Feier der Übergabe der augsburgischen Konfession (1831)," 721-25; Schleiermacher, "Glückwünschungsschreiben an die hochwürdigen Mitglieder der von seiner Majestät dem König von Preussen zur Aufstellung neuer liturgischer Formen ernannten Kommission (1814)," 173-74.

<sup>90</sup> Karl Rosenkranz, *Kritik der Schleiermacherschen Glaubenslehre* (Königsberg: Unzer, 1836), 100-116.

The historical survey helps us understand that the process of the confessionalisation, which elevated the Book of Concord to the status of the sole normative collection of the Lutheran confessions, hindered the pan-Protestant consensus. Further, this process could be perceived as an attempt at marginalising<sup>91</sup> and discrediting<sup>92</sup> the legacy of Melanchthon who was indisputably the co-pillar of the Wittenberg Reformation and who due to his splendid contribution to the Protestant theology and to the European humanities was given a title of Praeceptor Germaniae et Scandinaviae (Teacher of Germany and of Scandinavia).

It would be presumptuous to assert that Schleiermacher was a proponent of the Melanchthonian vision of the Protestant consensus, yet he was willing to appreciate Melanchthon's relevance in the edifice of Protestant theology and he was cognisant of the ecumenical potential of Corpus Philippicum which was wasted.

In Schleiermacher's lifetime the Protestant theology stirred by the Kantianism widened its horizons, changing its focus from the metaphysical, theistic notions to the purely moral perspective, which

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<sup>91</sup> From the academic viewpoint it can be said that by the Book of Concord settlement the Wittenberg Reformation was transformed into the Lutheranism. The breakaway of the Lutheran orthodoxy from the Melanchthonian heritage proved to be concomitant with some fundamentalistic and clerical tendencies of the former, while the latter has unceasingly inspired the creative and open initiative of the Protestant theology (e.g. Georg Calixtus). Cf. Leonhard Hutter, *Concordia concors de origine et progressu Formulae Concordiae Ecclesiarum Confessionis Augustanae* (Wittenberg: Typis Meisnerianis, 1614), 89v-96r [XI].

<sup>92</sup> This was done under the pretext of Melanchthon's alleged synergism. Doubtlessly, after Luther's death Melanchthon reappraised certain doctrinal propositions including the issue of human will particularly in the conversion which he admitted in his epistle of 1548. The comparison of the ultimate version of Loci (*De humanis viribus seu de libero arbitrio*) and the Response to the Articles of the Bavarian Inquisition of 1559 (XXII) to his early writings justifies the conclusion that Melanchthon's concept of free will in the conversion evolved, yet not necessarily into the synergism. Philipp Melanchthon, "Christophoro a Carlowitz (Wittenberg, 28. April 1548)," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia (Corpus Reformatorum)*, vol. 6, ed. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle: Schwetschke, 1839), 879-85 [No. 4217]; cf. Hutter, *Concordia concors de origine et progressu Formulae Concordiae Ecclesiarum Confessionis Augustanae*, 95r-96r [XI].

was grasped so aptly by Fichte.<sup>93</sup> Later, the ontological speculation was revived by Hegel, yet as completely independent of the traditional Christian dogmatics. Within these paradigm shifts Schleiermacher hammered out his theological system as *via media*, ruminating about a stance on the confessions of the past which the Protestant Christians contemporary of his were to adopt.

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<sup>93</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung (1798)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Veit, 1845), 177-89.

## ABSTRACT

The present paper examines Schleiermacher's insights into the confessional subscription in its historical setting and explores his theological project as via media between the rationalism and the supernaturalism as well as between Kant's philosophy of religion and Hegel's system. It analyses the inception of corpora doctrinae in the Lutheran and Reformed tradition and describes the evolving status of the confessional subscription in the Protestantism. Finally, the article ventures to capture Schleiermacher's programme to reinterpret the function of the creeds in the post-Enlightenment theology.

## 撮 要

本文探討士來馬赫按着歷史背景對認信條文的見解，從他的神學規劃中，發掘出他在理性主義和超自然主義之間，並在康德的宗教哲學與黑格爾的哲學系統之間，所採取的中庸之道。文章分析了路德和改革宗傳統教義大全的源由，描述了新教教義的認信條文之發展狀況。最後，本文大膽嘗試捕捉士來馬赫怎樣在後啟蒙時期的神學中，重新解釋信經的作用。