

tolerant relations that they developed with local elites, Protestant as well as Catholic. Finally, the precariousness of the Jesuit position in these communities on the North Sea is apparent throughout as the Fathers were in constant fear that they would have to leave their houses and leave their Catholic converts behind.

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The veiled God. Friedrich Schleiermacher's theology of finitude. By Ruth Jackson Ravenscroft. (Studies in Systematic Theology, 19.) Pp. xviii + 293. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2019. €59 (paper). 978 90 04 39781 1; 1876 1518
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The title of this helpful monograph is a play on Schleiermacher's surname, which means 'veil-maker.' Jackson Ravenscroft argues that the image of a veil is apposite: Schleiermacher's work reflects a strong belief that humans, 'as finite and particular beings, ... do not have the capacity to know the brilliant reality of God in Godself'. As St Paul almost said, we are forced to behold God through a veil, dimly.

Whereas Barth criticised Schleiermacher for trying to speak of God 'by speaking of man ... in a loud voice', Jackson Ravenscroft detects the opposite concern. Schleiermacher does not focus on human experience and community because he exalts humanity, but because he recognises human limitations. As finite beings, we find ourselves in a particular time and place; we cannot know God apart from his being 'in us and things'. Yet God does not remain hidden: he reveals himself to us in our finitude, and faith perceives him as 'the Infinite Whence of all being'.

This theological insight shapes Schleiermacher's philosophical thought. For although God transcends human nature and language, they find their ultimate fulfilment in him. Philosophically-minded scholars and editors are wrong to secularise Schleiermacher's ethical and hermeneutical writings; both assume a theological framework. Likewise, theologians are wrong to neglect Schleiermacher's contributions to these other fields. After all, the most famous passage of *The Christian faith* is arguably the opening section of the introduction, which Schleiermacher subtitled 'propositions borrowed from ethics'.

Jackson Ravenscroft first develops these themes and arguments in the preface and introduction, where she also positions herself in relation to recent scholarship. She sides with those (including Lamm, Helmer, Dole, Dumbreck, Vial) who have sought to defend Schleiermacher against accusations of subjectivism and inwardness. She is more sympathetic to those who reproach him for forcing multiple faiths into a hierarchy of religions, with Protestant Christianity at the pinnacle (see Batnitzky, Vial). Ultimately, she argues that his emphasis on finitude is the best counterbalance to his 'universalising tendency', and that the provisional quality of his writing ensures that it is relevant today.

The main body of the text is divided into three parts, with part 1 addressing his earliest ethical texts (1789–93). After a chapter which situates these in relation to better known theological works, she considers three such texts in greater detail. The first, an unfinished epistolary novella entitled *To Cecillie*, is remarkable for its exploration of religious doubt and the interplay between religion, rationality

and culture. It also reflects Schleiermacher's willingness to embrace different literary forms. The second text (the unpublished and unfinished essay, *On freedom*) is best understood if we refer to a third (his notes on Kant's *Critique of practical reason*). In these youthful writings, he rejects any notion of freedom as the absence of constraint, instead arguing that 'a person's actions are anchored in their character, as this emerges through time'. The human being must be understood as a whole, and in relation to others: identity is 'temporal, placed, and socially conditioned'.

The three chapters of part II are dedicated to the *Soliloquies*, a better-known text that appeared in 1800, the year after the anonymous publication of *On religion*. Here we find the same concerns with freedom and the relationship between individual and community, but Schleiermacher has distanced himself further from Kant, questioning the idea of a universal moral law. Instead he presents 'a cosmic vision of human purposiveness', which sees a particular vocation for each individual within society. Jackson Ravenscroft builds her case through close examination of the *Soliloquies*, bringing in some of his lectures to support her interpretation. She also offers an extended discussion of Schleiermacher's understanding of human formation (*Bildung*), referencing his social circle, political interests and his contributions to the Schlegel brothers' journal, the *Athenaeum*. She argues that he did not always practise what he preached, his emphasis on unique vocation clashing with his generalisations about women and other cultures.

The final part of the book deals with theological texts: Schleiermacher's *Christmas dialogue* and *On religion*, and Barth's critique of the *Christmas dialogue* in the lectures published as *The theology of Schleiermacher*. Jackson Ravenscroft contends that the themes found in Schleiermacher's ethical writings are also evident when he turns to religion, which is not private or internal but 'an inherently social phenomenon, incarnated in discrete historical communities'. Yet again his treatment of non-Christian communities, especially Judaism, is found wanting. Once celebrated as the 'Father of modern liberal theology', not all Schleiermacher's pronouncements stand up to twenty-first century scrutiny.

This book developed out of the author's doctoral thesis. It does not set out to provide an easy introduction to Schleiermacher's thought, and it will appeal more to the specialist than to the general reader. However, it offers an important corrective to those who study Schleiermacher's theology to the exclusion of his philosophy, or *vice-versa*. Just as Schleiermacher transcended the disciplinary boundaries that he sometimes helped to create, Schleiermacher scholarship will be enriched if others follow Jackson Ravenscroft's lead by doing the same.

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Fictions of certitude. Science, faith, and the search for meaning, 1840–1920. By John S. Haller Jr. Pp. xii + 305. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2020. \$54.95. 978 0 8173 2053 9
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Many accounts of the relationship between faith and the sciences in the nineteenth century adopt an approach that concentrates on the cosmological and ontological