

Israel at the hands of the Assyrians. Throughout the book, it seems clear that Jeremiah relies upon his own (or his tradents') reading of the Isaian tradition. It is upon this basis that Jeremiah charges many of his contemporaries as false prophets.

Truth in prophecy lies therefore not simply in the question of whether or not it will be fulfilled, but when and how. Indeed, even the prophets disagree among themselves concerning the veracity of their colleagues' prophecies and their respective understandings of divine intent. In this sense, the truth of earlier prophetic tradition is relative to the circumstances and means by which it is interpreted and by which it might ultimately be realized. And yet in the end, biblical theology must always reckon with the possibility that the canonically-recognized prophets might just be false, despite the presumption that each somehow represents the truth of the divine. In this respect, truth must be recognized as a debated or contingent category, both within the Bible itself and among its interpreters.

## SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: BEAUTIFULLY TRUE<sup>1</sup>

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The current thicket of esoteric philosophical debate on truth has, in some respects, left theology behind. Concentrating for the most part on isolated theories of truth, only rarely considering mixtures of types, and locating the discussion in the realism/anti-realism debate, philosophers are engaged in a discussion in which few theologians can find common ground if follow at all.<sup>2</sup> Such difficulties are not only related to philosophy's divorce from theology in the wake of Kant's "Conflict of the Faculties."<sup>3</sup> A second reason has to do with some theologians' abdication of the responsibility for theorizing about truth. Since the Enlightenment, some theologians have retreated—or have allowed themselves to retreat—from the discourse on truth to talk of certainty. Construed as the certainty of faith, truth has subsequently withdrawn from the controversy characterizing the academic pursuit of truth in the form of knowledge. For apologetic purposes, and Schleiermacher can be used tentatively as an example here, theology has located its truth in the "inner power of Christianity"<sup>4</sup>—that is, in a pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic realm untouchable by scientific erosion and historical falsification. This move is, in and of itself, unproblematic as it upholds a particular aspect of truth that is idiosyncratic to faith. At this level, immediate certainty does not conflict with scientific-theological truth mediated through reflection. Truth as certainty only

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<sup>2</sup> Kirkham's introduction to truth sets the parameters for discussing this issue in the context of the realism/anti-realism debate. See Richard L. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1997). For an anthology of truth theories, see Michael P. Lynch, ed., *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2001). For truth in a realist paradigm, see William P. Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1996). Conversely, for an anti-realist position on truth, see Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7:21-7:25 (250-52).

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, "The Second Letter to Lücke," in *On the Glaubenslehre*, trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza, AAR Texts and Translations Series 3 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1988), 66.

becomes a problem when it is conflated with a particular manifestation of discursive truth, thereby compromising the rational search for truth which marks all scientific pursuits of knowledge—theology included.<sup>5</sup> Recent examples of this theological view of truth have surfaced; most notably in Bruce Marshall's work, *Trinity and Truth*,<sup>6</sup> as well as in Milbank and Pickstock's work, *Truth in Aquinas*,<sup>7</sup> which is more about truth in radical orthodoxy than the thirteenth-century *doctor angelicus* would perhaps confirm. Although the two proposals argue for different truth theories, respectively coherence and correspondence, both reflect a position that elevates the claim of faith's certainty to an ultimate truth claim, ultimate not only for theology, but for all other sciences as well.

This theological grandeur, appearing in an age in which theology is the Cinderella rather than the queen of the sciences, does an injustice to theology as a science on two counts. First, the relation between philosophy and theology is misconstrued as a competition for an ultimate truth claim, and theology must inevitably emerge as the winner.<sup>8</sup> Second, the relation between language and truth is misconstrued by conflating a particular theologically orthodox discourse with an ultimate scientific-theological truth claim. Rather than viewing language as the bearer of

<sup>5</sup> A book, highly discussed in Germany, which does not conflate truth as certainty with the rational search for truth is Christof Landmesser, *Wahrheit als Grundbegriff neutestamentlicher Wissenschaft*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 113 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also the following three articles by Marshall on the related topic: Bruce Marshall, "Aquinas as Postliberal Theologian," *The Thomist* 53 (1989): 353-402; "Faith and Reason Reconsidered: Aquinas and Luther on Deciding What is True," *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 1-49; "We shall Bear the Image of the Man of Heaven": Theology and the Concept of Truth," in *Rethinking Metaphysics*, ed. L. G. Jones and S. E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 93-117. Related to Marshall's work on truth is the following essay: George Hunsinger, "Truth as Self-Involving: Barth and Lindbeck on the Cognitive and Performative Aspects of Truth in Theological Discourse," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61 (1993): 41-55.

<sup>7</sup> John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, Radical Orthodoxy Series (New York: Routledge, 2001). See also Christine Helmer's review of this work in *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 5/1 (2003): 93-95.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall argues that a distinctly theological account of truth must show how a person can be a bearer of truth: "We need an explanation as to why the content of the concept of truth as characterized by Tarski and Davidson should be regarded as incomplete, and how it may be expanded theologically without losing an intelligible tie to the characterization Tarski and Davidson give." Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, 245. Pickstock argues that her theological account of the Eucharist "outwit[s] th[e] difficult dichotomy of presence and absence" associated with Derrida. Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 92. For a detailed treatment of truth in philosophy and theology, see Armin Kreiner, *Ende der Wahrheit? Zum Wahrheitsverständnis in Philosophie und Theologie* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1992).

revelation<sup>9</sup> in history, it is deemed to be constitutive of eternal truths acknowledged as such by those initiated into the inner circle.

If Cinderella is to be arrayed in beautiful garments suitable for dancing with others at the castle ball, then she must redefine her understanding of truth. It is the aim of this paper to propose theology as a search for truth, funded by a complex of inter-related aspects.<sup>10</sup> I will explore two of the many factors playing into the theological theory of truth propounded by systematic theology in view of its inherent systematicity at the ontological level. This discussion is informed by a non-competitive construal of the relation between philosophy and theology. Philosophy searches for the rules governing all academic pursuits of truth and attempts to show how these rules are grounded ontologically. Theology is required to play by these rules, as are all scientific fields, yet theology is invited to carve out her own province of truth by uplifting the content particular to her search alone. According to this construal, philosophy does not compete with theology which will inevitably trump philosophy's finite limited perspective. Rather, philosophy is seen as the prince fit for the princess, deferring to her graceful beauty, yet leading her in the dance. Furthermore, my theological theory of systematic theological truth distinguishes between non-discursive certainty and the discursive search for truth in terms of the distinction between the ontological level and the epistemological level. By distinguishing these two levels, truth emerges as a complex concept, guaranteed at an ontological level, yet accepting at the epistemological level the "irrationality" of language,<sup>11</sup> its historical

<sup>9</sup> Walter Benjamin writes that the Hebrew language is the bearer of revelation in "Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen," in *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), II/1:140-57.

<sup>10</sup> Aquinas's theory of truth is a complex of inter-related dimensions to truth. For Aquinas, truth is in the intellect, in things and ultimately in God. In *Summa Theologica* I, q. 16, Aquinas outlines three levels of truth that are epistemologically and ontologically interrelated. (1) Truth resides in the intellect; (2) Truth is analogically assigned to things; (3) Truth in the most perfect sense is identified with God. For an excellent discussion of Aquinas on truth see John F. Wippel, "Truth in Thomas Aquinas, Part I," *The Review of Metaphysics* 43 (1989): 295-326 and "Truth in Aquinas, Part II," *The Review of Metaphysics* 43 (1990): 543-67.

<sup>11</sup> Schleiermacher refers to the irrationality of language in the *Brief Outline* §126. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study (1811/1830)*, trans. Terrence N. Tice, Schleiermacher Studies and Translations 1 (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 67. (Hereafter referred to as BO. References to the BO are taken from the second edition of 1830. Page numbers are indicated in parentheses.) By "irrationality," Schleiermacher means the basic untranslatableability of terms from one language to another because of their location in language-specific semantic fields. For Schleiermacher, language is also "infinite because each element is determinable in a

incarnation and the cultural embeddedness of all inquiries into truth. Cinderella is not permitted to prematurely gloat over her step-sisters, but must be humble enough to acknowledge the one-sidedness, error, and falsity characterizing all pursuits of finite reason, even her own.

In addition to distinguishing between the tasks of philosophy and theology, while also relating them in a non-competitive complementary way, I will argue that two requirements for a systematic theological theory of truth shape its inherent systematicity. In the first section of the paper, I will discuss ontological truth according to a philosophical determination in order to show that truth as coherence<sup>12</sup> grounds the formal structure of presenting the relations between self, world, and God. This requirement can be explained philosophically through Schleiermacher's theory of subjectivity, particularly his notion of immediate self-consciousness. In the second section, I will recapitulate the philosophical discussion in terms of the theological specification of the facts of Christian self-consciousness. Here I will show that, at the ontological level, coherence is materially determined from the Christian perspective as a narrative suspended between God and world, accessed through the self. In the third section, I will address the specific theological requirement for truth in view of its aesthetic dimension. If theological truth is to correspond to its claims regarding the trinitarian work of creating the beautiful, then it must involve both a regulative and a constitutive dimension to its systematicity.

## I. Philosophical Dimension

In his *Dialektik*, or his science on the science of knowing, Schleiermacher prescribes one of two conditions for knowledge. The verification of correspondence within a dialogical situation and the constant comparison of one's convictions with others has as its goal the "entire complex inter-relations of all of knowledge."<sup>13</sup> When the inter-relatedness of all really

particular manner via the rest of the elements." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, trans. Andrew Bowie, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), §9 (11). (Hereafter referred to as *Hermeneutics*. Page numbers are indicated in parentheses.)

<sup>12</sup> This is a variation of David Griffin's formulation "truth as correspondence." Griffin prefers this term over "theory of correspondence." See David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 320-43.

<sup>13</sup> "'Wissen' wird also nicht einfach direkt (durch Vergleich mit derselben Wirklichkeit) gerechtfertigt, sondern zunächst im durchgängigen Vergleich unserer

existing things is conceptualized as one analytic proposition, complete knowledge of the world has been attained. Coherence functions as a criterion of truth that ensures that the emerging concept of the world takes into account partial knowledge of the parts within the whole.<sup>14</sup> All knowledge is piecemeal, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:9. Yet knowledge requires that the pieces be allocated their necessary sites within the totality of reality. However, to detail the way in which coherence together with correspondence and consensus function in Schleiermacher's theory of knowledge is beyond the scope of this essay. Rather, I want to show how coherence is ontologically justified in philosophical terms. This will lay the groundwork for my argument concerning the ontological level of coherence in systematic theology.

If the coherence requirement for knowledge is not to be a random selection at the level of thinking, then its ontological justification must be found. The transcendental portion of the *Dialektik* represents Schleiermacher's attempt to arrive at the place in which the ontological ground for coherence comes to view. As regards the capacity of thinking to reach its transcendent ground, however, the transcendental part of the *Dialektik* is a failure. When thinking is extended to its limits in an effort to expose the condition for its possibility, it succeeds only in arriving at the antitheses characterizing finite thought. Four formulas capture the limits of the two forms of thinking, concept formation and judgment formation, which upon closer examination turn out to be inadequate representations of the transcendent ground.<sup>15</sup> In the attempt to conceive of its own limits, thought cannot reach a formula corresponding in reality to an unconditioned; neither God nor the world. For Schleiermacher, the ideas of God and the world must ultimately capture the ontological condition of thinking in order to justify the temporal process of thinking that reaches

Überzeugungen mit allen anderen. „Ein einzelner Gedanke“, sagt Schleiermacher, ist kein Kandidat für „vollkommenes Wissen“, nicht eher jedenfalls, als „bis wir den Zusammenhang des ganzen Wissens haben.“ Manfred Frank, Introduction to *Schleiermacher: Dialektik*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1529 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2001), 1:64. The citation from Schleiermacher is taken from Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Dialektik*, ed. Rudolf Odebrecht (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 317. (Hereafter referred to as DialO.)

<sup>14</sup> Frank, Introduction to *Schleiermacher: Dialektik*, 1:64.

<sup>15</sup> For the complicated discussion of the limits of concept and judgment, see DialO, 218-275. The discussion precedes Schleiermacher's move to immediate self-consciousness, in which the "relative identity" of knowing and willing is located. The four formulas are: (1) *Natura naturans*; (2) Divinity in antithesis to matter; (3) The idea of fate or necessity; (4) The idea of predetermination or freedom." DialO, 265. (Translation by the author.)

towards knowing. As the *terminus a quo* of this process, the idea of God is the transcendent ground, grounding the possibility of the search for knowledge.<sup>16</sup> As the *terminus ad quem*, the idea of the world is the terminal point of this search. It is at this point in which the totality of reality has been conceptualized in one analytic judgment.<sup>17</sup> The inadequacy of thinking to represent both the transcendent ground and the world prompts Schleiermacher to investigate a motif that he uses to redirect the focus of both the early lectures on *Dialektik* and the first edition of *Der christliche Glaube* (1821). Beginning in 1822, immediate self-consciousness is the place in human subjectivity at which the ontological ground is presented.<sup>18</sup> Feeling, not thinking, brings the ground of thinking to the surface.

The fundamental key to Schleiermacher's systematicity is feeling or, in the more scientific jargon of psychology, immediate self-consciousness. Feeling is the dimension of the self that grounds the series of alternating temporal moments, mediating the transition from one to the other.<sup>19</sup> The discrete temporal moments of thinking and willing<sup>20</sup> are mediated by a pre-discursive core of the self that secures the I's identity through change in time's ebb and flow. Immediate self-consciousness is more than just the transcendental condition for the possibility of there being an experiencing self at all. In addition, it is the transcendent/transcendental dimension of the self, never manifested independently of temporal consciousness, yet serving as the ground of temporal continuity.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> On the *termini a quo* and *ad quem*, see DialO, 218-22.

<sup>17</sup> On this point, Schleiermacher seems to bear certain similarities to the thought of Leibniz. Recall that for Leibniz, the ultimate reason for all contingent and *a posteriori* states of affairs rests upon a necessary substance (God). As a consequence, any negation of this incomparable "matter of fact" must necessarily involve a contradiction and this, in turn, makes it impossible to deny (without contradiction) that all truths are logically necessary. Cf. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology: An Edition for Students*, ed. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), §§31-41 (113-44).

<sup>18</sup> The argument from immediate self-consciousness is in DialO (1822), not before (i.e. 1811).

<sup>19</sup> "For, indeed, it is the case in general that the immediate self-consciousness is always the mediating link in the transition between moments" of knowing and doing. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. D. M. Baillie et al., ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), §3, 4 (8). (Page numbers are given in parentheses. Hereafter referred to as CF.)

<sup>20</sup> Schleiermacher can refer to the transition between knowing and doing (Ibid.), as well as between thinking and willing. CF §3, 2 (7) and DialO, 265.

<sup>21</sup> The issue turns on Schleiermacher's use of "transcendent" and "transcendental." However, it remains unclear in the current scholarship whether or not Schleiermacher intended these terms to be used interchangeably. On Schleiermacher's rejection of both

The precise nature of feeling, however, is not to signal the grounding of the self as an act of the I's self-positing in Fichte's sense.<sup>22</sup> Rather, for Schleiermacher, feeling points to the self's fundamental essence as one that is purely passive. The I is fundamentally conceived of in terms of an ontological lack; its "lack of Being" is signaled by the unity missing in the I's temporally discrete moments.<sup>23</sup> In feeling, that missing unity is felt to be supplied by something not in the I's own possession. The feeling of pure passivity marks the I's ecstatic orientation to an ontological ground that transcends it.

On this view of the self's ontological participation, coherence is secured upon that which grounds it ecstatically. Coherence is secured in **this view of the self's ontological participation in that which grounds it ecstatically.** It is signaled in immediate self-consciousness according to the formal structure of three unities. Contrasted with the unifying function of Kant's *Vernunft*,<sup>24</sup> immediate self-consciousness according to Schleiermacher is structured by the three unities of self, world, and God that coalesce when distinct objects are perceived at the level of sensible self-consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Concerning the unity of the self, it is the self's participation in the transcendent ground that provides the unity that it itself lacks in its own being. Furthermore, the self feels this unity as a given—given together with all finite entities. Concerning the unity of the world, all finite reality surfaces as a unity making explicit the embeddedness of all beings together with the self in the transcendent ground. Concerning the Whence that constitutes and yet transcends the world's unity, the transcendent ground structures the coherent unity encompassing all of reality. In philosophical terms, the transcendent ground supplies the ontological foundation constituting finite reality while setting it

Kant's transcendental unity of apperception and on reflective self-consciousness as the constitutive dimension grounding the self, see CF §3, 2 (6-7).

<sup>22</sup> On the relation between Schleiermacher's and Fichte's understanding of the self, see David E. Klemm, "Dispute, Dialogue, and Individuality in Schleiermacher's *Dialektik*," in *New Athenaeum/Neues Athenaeum* 4 (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 81-104.

<sup>23</sup> The term "Mangel an Sein" is from Manfred Frank and is used by Christiane Kranich, "Selbstbewusstsein—Nähe zum und Mangel an Sein," in *Schleiermachers Dialektik: Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, ed. Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich and Birgit Rehme-Iffert (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 275-93.

<sup>24</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A99-114 / B132-148. (Hereafter referred to as CpR.)

<sup>25</sup> This discussion is based on CF §4, 2-3 (13-16).

free for individual explication; in theological terms, God is the Whence of the feeling of absolute dependence.<sup>26</sup>

According to its philosophical determination, truth as an ontological notion is detected in feeling, and not in thinking. Immediate self-consciousness detects the unity of the being that is structured in three unities, signaling coherence at three levels of reality not empirically given in their totality: self, world, and God. Connecting individuality to the whole of reality and ultimately to the ground of that reality, the truth of being does not compete with discursive truth, but gives certain forms to the discursive inquiry into truth. The ontological dimension sets thinking free for seeking truth by placing it within the limits of form. When discussed according to a formal determination independent of theological specification, the philosophical dimension of truth is entertained in its non-competition with theology. This independence is stressed in order to point to the basic insight that the deep mystery of truth can never be recapitulated by finite thinking, theology included. A sin would be committed by an isolated ripping of truth out from the matrix of communal embeddedness in the transcendent ground and claiming it for one's possession.<sup>27</sup> It is not by possession, but rather by participation, that the finite search for truth is made possible. The freedom of scientific thinking is grounded and guaranteed by its participation in the forms of truth structuring thinking in the first place.

## II. Theological Dimension

In his philosophy, Schleiermacher shies away from making theological claims identifying the transcendent ground with a specification of the divine. He puts into practice his theological point that true freedom is guaranteed but can never be recovered by a specification in thinking of the Whence of true freedom. God liberates his world from a Christianity that attempts to flatten the search for the truth motivated by the genuine desire to know (*Wissenwollen*<sup>28</sup>) into a triumphalist imperative. Nevertheless, the task of theology is to specify the formal structures of thinking

<sup>26</sup> Schleiermacher's designation for God is the "Whence of our receptive and active existence..." CF §4, 4 (16). This formulation is, of course, a theological and not a philosophical one.

<sup>27</sup> This refers to the Reformation understanding of sin as the *incurvatus in se*.

<sup>28</sup> For Schleiermacher, the process of knowing is spurred by the desire to know. See DialO, 352.

delivered by philosophy. In Schleiermacher's case, this specification is achieved by the particular positivity of the Christian facts of consciousness.<sup>29</sup> I will now discuss the adaptation of Schleiermacher's philosophical dimension of truth as a primitive notion to theology in order to show how truth as coherence is integral to the systematic theological project of structuring reality in terms of self, world, and God.

The adaptation of philosophical forms to theological presentation is a delicate matter, given the often tenuous relations between the two disciplines in their dance together. If the model of adaptation is to reflect a relationship of complementary non-competition, then theology is free to borrow from her prince's formal determination of the structures of being and thinking, and to subsequently fill in these structures with the material claims concerning her distinctive object of study. It is this model that explains how Schleiermacher's philosophical justification for coherence can resurface formally in his dogmatic theology. In his theological texts (*The Christian Faith* and *Brief Outline*), Schleiermacher explicitly writes that coherence, that favorite child of systematic theology, is the requirement governing the systematic presentation of "the knowledge of the doctrines that now has currency in the evangelical Church."<sup>30</sup> Although he shifts dogmatic theology from a speculative to a historical discipline, Schleiermacher holds onto coherence as a key requirement for the systematic presentation of historical material.<sup>31</sup> As three criteria auxiliary to coherence, Schleiermacher names comprehensiveness as the criterion taking into account "everything relevant to its own Church community at the time,"<sup>32</sup> the assertory character of dogmatics as the "degree of surety in one's own view," and the divinatory character as the "degree of clarity with which one apprehends the whole existing state of doctrine."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> For Schleiermacher, theology is a positive science which has as its subject matter the essence of Christianity.

<sup>30</sup> BO §195 (97).

<sup>31</sup> "All points of doctrine that are developed through the dominant principle of the period must agree among themselves." BO §200 (101).

<sup>32</sup> BO §201 (102).

<sup>33</sup> BO §202 (102-103). The assertoric sentence is rationally accessible. "The assertoric proposition speaks of logical actuality or truth... and indicates that the proposition is already bound to the understanding according to its laws." Kant, CpR, B101. For Schleiermacher, divination is the aspect of interpretation which attempts to isolate the individuality of the author expressed in the text. Divination has as its task "to understand the utterance at first just as well and then better than its author. For because we have no immediate knowledge of what is in him, we must seek to bring much to consciousness that can remain unconscious to him, except to the extent to which he himself reflectively becomes his own reader." Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, §18, 3 (23).

Comprehensiveness refers to the extent of the data mass integrated into the system,<sup>34</sup> while assertion and divination inform the strength to which the “dominant principle of the present period”<sup>35</sup> selected as the principle of coherence has the conceptual force to integrate the parts into the whole, as well as to reveal the whole within each part. Schleiermacher’s own theological system, *The Christian Faith*, witnesses to the genius of his own systematizing capacity as well as to its heterodox divinatory flavor.<sup>36</sup> In his system, the principle of self-consciousness serves as the coherent force formally shaping the three dogmatic propositional types of self, world, and God as well as materially conjugating all the classic doctrinal loci informing systematic theology.

The philosophical criterion of coherence can be adapted to systematic theology by specifying the theory of subjectivity in terms of the positivity of Christian self-consciousness. Two steps must be reconstructed in order to explain the necessity of coherence as a requirement for systematic theology. Concerning the first and more formal adaptation, Schleiermacher himself reworks his philosophical theory of self-consciousness into his theory of religion in order to bring the object of dogmatic theology into view. It is in light of this reconfiguration that the introduction to *The Christian Faith* (§§1-31), especially the dense passages of §§3-4, must be read. A precise reading of the introduction demonstrates that Schleiermacher adapts philosophy to theology by determining immediate self-consciousness as piety. On the one hand, this move secures theology’s object as a necessary element of human *Geist*; *pace* the cultured despisers, religion is advocated as integral to human subjectivity. On the

<sup>34</sup> Here Schleiermacher presages Nicholas Rescher’s three aspects of coherence analysis: comprehensiveness, consistency, and cohesiveness. See Nicholas Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth* (1973; reprinted: Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 57. See also Landmesser’s use of Rescher’s coherence analysis in Christof Landmesser, “Truth in New Testament Science,” trans. Krista Duttonhaver in this volume.

<sup>35</sup> BO §198 (100) and §200 (101).

<sup>36</sup> Near the end of his first letter to Friedrich Lücke, Schleiermacher reflects on his own system. “If that treatment is really Church doctrine then mine must assuredly be heterodox after all; but I am strongly convinced that it is a divinatory heterodoxy, which in due time will become orthodox, if not at all directly through my book and if not until long after my death.” Citation translated by Terrence N. Tice and found in BO §107, n. 159. For the original see: Friedrich Schleiermacher, “Über die Glaubenslehre: Zwei Sendschreiben an Lücke,” in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), I/10: 334, lines 22-27. Schleiermacher defines heterodox as “every element construed in the inclination to keep the conception of doctrine mobile and to make room for still other modes of apprehension is ‘heterodox.’” BO §203 (103).

other hand, Schleiermacher relates philosophy to theology as form to content, while distinctly prohibiting any overlap in content. Rather than compete to determine content, philosophy offers theology the form of *Bildung* surfacing at a particular period in history. Without philosophy, theological *Anschauung* would be reduced to mystical silence, rather than rendered communicable in speech.

The theological specification of piety brings coherence to bear on the structure of immediate self-consciousness itself. The adaptation of immediate self-consciousness to its religious construal occurs by minimally specifying the material constituents of immediate self-consciousness in terms of freedom and dependence. According to Schleiermacher’s famous definition, piety is a modification of immediate self-consciousness, determined by two *relata* of feeling, relative freedom and relative dependence, as well as by the single *relata* of the denial of absolute freedom that is the affirmation of absolute dependence.<sup>37</sup> By this move, Schleiermacher is not grounding theology in philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Rather, Schleiermacher is making a minimal doctrinal commitment, although at quite a formal level, to an ontology of freedom that he then plays out in the doctrines of creation and redemption. An ontology of freedom makes the claim concerning God’s creation of a world out of freedom, that is then necessarily constituted as a whole by relative freedom and relative dependence. The theological insight ontologizing Luther’s “freedom of a Christian” locates Schleiermacher’s thought within the Reformation trajectory, and remains, unfortunately I should add, the caricatured criterion by which the Protestant open-ended system is distinguished from the Roman Catholic closed system.<sup>39</sup> In spite of the ecumenical

<sup>37</sup> “But the self-consciousness which accompanies all our activity, and therefore, since that is never zero, accompanies our whole existence, and negatives absolute freedom, is itself precisely a consciousness of absolute dependence.” CF §3, 3 (16).

<sup>38</sup> Barth’s colorful criticism against Schleiermacher on this point is “Oder handelt es sich bei ihm (2) primär, esoterisch, eigentlich um eine Aristoteles, Kant und Fichte abgewendet, dafür in der Nähe von Plato, Spinoza und Schelling errichtete, zwischen Logos und Ethos vermittelnde und ästhetisch beide überhöhende, christlich indifferente Philosophie, die sich nur zufällig, exoterisch, uneigentlich in das Gewand einer, der christlichen Theologie gehüllt hätte?” Karl Barth, “Nachwort,” in *Schleiermacher-Auswahl*, ed. Heinz Bolli (Munich/Hamburg: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968), 307.

<sup>39</sup> For Schleiermacher’s understanding of the antithesis between Protestantism and Catholicism, see CF §24 (103): “The former [Protestantism] makes the individual’s relation to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ, while the latter [Catholicism] contrariwise makes the individual’s relation to Christ dependent on his relation to the Church.” The difference between the Churches is also correlated with a difference in method. The “Protestant” method is one of infinite approximation, whereas the Catholic search for knowledge is limited by church decision. See, for example, Schleiermacher’s distinction

shortsightedness,<sup>40</sup> this move accomplishes the grounding of coherence in the *relata* of freedom and dependence which structure the unities of self, world, and God. According to the freedom/dependence scheme, the unities are felt as supplied from outside the self. The self's unity is given with its grounding in relative freedom and relative dependence as well as with the grounding of the world in the Whence of the feeling of absolute dependence. In good Kantian fashion, these felt unities make no claims to correspondence with distinct metaphysical entities. Rather, they provide the ontological justification for the coherent systematicity of systematic theology.

Overlaid onto the first formal determination of coherence is a second theological element playing into the material constituents of individuality. For Schleiermacher, it is not enough that a dogmatic theologian adhere to rules governing scientific procedure. In order for a dogmatic theologian to be a theologian, she must be imbued with an "ecclesial spirit."<sup>41</sup> The "inner certainty"<sup>42</sup> determines the degree of commitment to the theological subject matter, which is the theological construal of the essence of Christianity for the purpose of promoting the church's health and, conversely, for eliminating its illnesses. Without this conviction, it seems that the viability of a theological system of church leadership is in jeopardy.

In immediate self-consciousness, the ecclesial spirit of conviction is necessarily related to thinking compelled by a theological spirit. It is here that a link between the coherence of the self and the coherence of systematic presentation can be detected. According to Schleiermacher, conviction is faith in Christ,<sup>43</sup> elicited in feeling as a response to the influence of Christ's perfect God-consciousness. Christ's redeeming influence is one that refashions individuality at the level of its integrity. The person-forming influence of Christ redeems the person by reordering the two constitutive

between a Protestant "open-ended" canon and a Roman Catholic "closed" canon in BO §122 (66). On Kant's regulative idea as the basis for the Protestant "infinite approximation," see Manfred Frank, *'Unendliche Annäherung': Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1328 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> Schleiermacher does admit that the antithesis between the Churches is "destined some day and somehow to disappear." CF §23, 2 (102).

<sup>41</sup> See the famous definition of the "prince of the church" (*Kirchenfürst*) in BO §9 (5). According to Schleiermacher's minimum/maximum ontology, the prince of the church is the regulative idea equally divided between an ecclesial and a scientific spirit.

<sup>42</sup> "We entirely renounce all attempt to prove the truth or necessity of Christianity; and we presuppose, . . . that every Christian, . . . has already the inward certainty that his religion cannot take any other form than this." CF §11, 5 (60); cf. "personal conviction" in BO §196 (99).

<sup>43</sup> CF §14, 1 (68).

elements of self-consciousness in right relation.<sup>44</sup> Redemption is a process of re-creating the "new person" by increasing the intensity of the God-consciousness as it is manifest in temporal moments of thinking and doing. Redemption supplies coherence to the self at its point of integrity in immediate self-consciousness. Addressed by Schleiermacher's theory of redemption, the coherent structure to the self can explain the curious comment in the *Brief Outline* §196.<sup>45</sup> The theologian's piety does not promote intellectual complacency. Rather her conviction of truth enhances the intellectual search for truth by grounding the coherence of her thinking.

The ontological justification for coherence at the level of thinking is given in immediate self-consciousness. Both the formal unities of self, world, and God, and the coherence of the self effected by the redemptive influence of Jesus provide the ontological grounding presupposed by discursive truth as coherence. When these structures are filled in with material determinants through sensible self-consciousness, then the uniformity of specifically Christian systematic theology becomes apparent. From dogmatic formulations of the Creed to Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, the organization for systematic theology remains remarkably uniform. Theological systems are ordered along a narrative progression, beginning with either the speculative doctrine of the Trinity in medieval systems or creation/providence in modern construals and ending with eschatology. In systematic theology, the two *termini* presented by the formal structure of immediate self-consciousness, God as the *terminus a quo* and the world as *terminus ad quem*, are suspended narratively as the two end-points of the system, and individual doctrinal loci are allocated sites in this narrative. Whether the system proposes to interpret the Creed—as in Augustine's *Enchiridion*<sup>46</sup> or Calvin's *Institutes*<sup>47</sup>—or proposes to comment theologically on Paul's Letter to the Romans—as in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*<sup>48</sup> or Philip Melancthon's *Loci Communes*<sup>49</sup>—the Christian

<sup>44</sup> CF §11 2 (55); §14, 1 (68); §100 (425-31).

<sup>45</sup> "for the person who is not convinced of this doctrine . . . cannot establish the truth of this structure through the disposition one makes of it. Yet it is only this latter factor that makes the treatment dogmatic. The other is merely a historical treatment of the sort that a person who knew enough could give similarly of all systems." BO §196 (99).

<sup>46</sup> St. Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. J. F. Shaw (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1961).

<sup>47</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, The Library of Christian Classics Series 20-21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

<sup>48</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* (Rome: Collegium S. Bonaventura, 1971).

<sup>49</sup> Philipp Melancthon, *Loci Communes 1521*, trans. Horst Georg Pöhlmann, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1997).



systems of theology uniformly order their subject matter to the meta-canonical narrative from Genesis to Apocalypse. Furthermore, each narratively organized system is impressed by the individual stamp of the theologian creating the system. In Christian soteriological terms, individuality is fashioned by redemptive influence, that is then related to the individual's selection of a "dominant principle of the age" which constitutes the unifying principle of the system. The unifying principle is materially determined with a force capturing the whole to be determined in all the parts.<sup>50</sup> It is the result of the attachment of immediate self-consciousness to sensible self-consciousness, the product of individuality achieved by redemption and individual personality. In other words, psychology is the epistemological principle of theology. Soteriology awards access to the theological construction of reality from the beginning to the end at which all creation is re-fashioned in light of the divine glory.

### III. Aesthetic Dimension

If a theological theory of truth includes coherence as one significant factor, then systematic theological presentation as well as its claims concerning reality point to an aesthetic aspect to truth. It is a theological thematization of the aesthetic dimension to truth that has been relatively absent in exclusively theological discussions.<sup>51</sup> Although a philosophical discipline<sup>52</sup> since A. G. Baumgarten first published his *Aesthetica* in 1750,<sup>53</sup> aesthetics has tended to be limited to philosophical circles, discussed in particular by the German Idealists Hegel and Schelling,<sup>54</sup> the

<sup>50</sup> In *Die christliche Sitte*, Schleiermacher writes that a system is "eine Darstellung... welche das mannigfaltige nicht als Aggregat betrachtet, sondern es auf seine Einheit zurückführt und in seinem Zusammenhange darstellt." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche dargestellt*, ed. Wolfgang Erich Müller, *Theologische Studien-Texte 7.1-7.2* (Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner, 1999), 1:9. (Hereafter referred to as ChS.) Cf. CF §28, 2 (120-21); ChS 30.

<sup>51</sup> For an introduction to a theological aesthetic theory, along with the relevant bibliography, see Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; reprint: London: SCM Press, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> For an overview of aesthetic theory, along with a detailed bibliography, see Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, *Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 132-3. See also Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot/Burlington/Singapore/Sydney: Ashgate, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> Written in 1742.

<sup>54</sup> Both Hegel and Schelling wrote on aesthetics, as did Schleiermacher.

Romantics, notably Schiller, and most recently Gadamer.<sup>55</sup> Although the relationship between art and religion is still to be investigated in all its complexity, I will show in this section how a theological theory of truth includes the aesthetic dimension at the ontological level of truth. Systematic theology has as its task to present the beauty-making activity of the triune God in terms of an ontology capturing individual beauty as well as an eschatological beauty of plurality.

The ontological level of trinitarian activity is accessed by the redemptive refashioning of the individual. As the person-forming influence of Christ, redemption in its discrete manifestation is the recreating of personality as the "immediate presence of whole undivided Being" to use a phrase Schleiermacher borrows from his Schellingian colleague Heinrich Steffens.<sup>56</sup> The individual is lifted out from the fragmentation, scattering, and conflict marking tragic sinful existence, and concentrated into a coherent whole that is forgiven and healed.<sup>57</sup> It is this beauty-making activity that is concentrated in the sacraments when the beauty of the individual is spoken in the promise of wholeness. According to this view of redemption, the Pauline theme of the "new person" is understood in light of the coherence manifested in Christ's own historical existence. For Schleiermacher, Christ is the historical actualization of the prototypical person.<sup>58</sup> He is the culmination of creation, actualizing the possible predicates of sinless perfection and potent God-consciousness.<sup>59</sup> The divine omnipresence<sup>60</sup> to Jesus' soul is manifest by the perfect harmony achieved between his God-consciousness and his sensible self-consciousness. Although his self-consciousness develops according to the rules of human nature, there is never a conflict in his soul that would indicate a revolt by sensible self-consciousness or one arising from wounding. As the example of creation perfected by beauty, Jesus is also the *sacramentum* from whom redemptive influence issues in making beautiful those persons who are marred by sin, harmed by tragedy, and wounded by life.

<sup>55</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. and rev. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Continuum, 1999).

<sup>56</sup> CF §3, 2 (7). This is Steffens' understanding of feeling.

<sup>57</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, "Even the beautiful must die"—Beauty in the Light of Truth: Theological Observations on the Aesthetic Relation," in *Theological Essays II*, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and J. B. Webster, ed. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 64-66.

<sup>58</sup> CF §93 (377-85).

<sup>59</sup> CF §98 (413-17).

<sup>60</sup> CF §94, 1 (387).



It is Luther who explicitly defines this redemptive activity in aesthetic terms. In thesis 28 of the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther distinguishes between human love and divine love. "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it."<sup>61</sup> God's love transforms "sinners, evil persons, fools and weaklings," making them "righteous, good, wise and strong... Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive."<sup>62</sup> That which is non-beautiful is transformed by the divine love into the beautiful. It is love that covers a multitude of sins, and thus promotes beauty in creation.

Individual redemption gains entry to the economic trinitarian beautiful-making activity. From the middle of creation, the human enters into the garden of Eden. It is precisely this sight of creation that is granted when one follows Luther's explanation to the Creed in its reverse order.<sup>63</sup> Beginning with the Spirit, and moving through the article of redemption, the entry into the first article of the Creed opens eyes to the garden of creation cultivated by the Father's hand.<sup>64</sup> From this perspective, one views the creation of existence at its ontological level. Self and entities promoting life are seen as objects of divine fashioning, placed with love in the world-garden. Although evil lurks at the edges, Luther's focus is on the beauty of this realm fashioned in the image of the divine attributes of righteousness, light, and life. Although God is engaged in the continued struggle to rescue creation from the abyss of nothingness, the focus of Luther's explanation is on the protological statement declared from the middle of creation. "And God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:3, 6). In his commentary on this passage, Luther specifically appropriates the phrase to the Holy Spirit who is responsible for giving created entities their form and making them beautiful.<sup>65</sup> Life is enhanced when individuality is both set free from the chaos through its own form and set free for relations with

<sup>61</sup> Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation (1518)," in *Luther's Works: American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis/Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955), 31:57.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* (explanation to thesis 23).

<sup>63</sup> Martin Luther, "Explanation to the Creed in the Large Catechism (1529)," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles Arand et al., ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 432-33.

<sup>64</sup> See Christine Helmer, "Luther's Theology of Glory," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 42 (2000): 244.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Luther, "Sermons on the First Book of Moses (1523/24)," in *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J. F. K. Knaake et al. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883ff.), 14:101, lines 6-11 (Rörer version).

others. Even risking the occasion that forms are free to assert their surplus of subjectivity and are, accordingly, free to become tools of triumphalism, the Holy Spirit continues to set individuals free for thinking and doing. Even risking the occasion that individuals rise against the condition that makes their existence possible, the Spirit continues to fashion objects of beauty. In the garden of divine delight, the unity of the triune work of love underlies the plurality of the created work of beauty.

The intriguing question arises as to how systematic theology can represent creation from the perspective of its triune beautifying work while still cognizant of the raw, jagged, and evil dimensions to reality. The perennial criticism directed against systematic theology is launched from those concerned with patiently holding open the wounds of experience. Systematicians have been criticized for prematurely cutting off reflection on life and scurrying on towards the eschatological happy end. The issue however cannot be resolved by dismissing system and promoting other genres of theology, such as commentary on first-order religious discourse or poetological theology.<sup>66</sup> Rather, the theological issue of systematicity must be reworked in view of the openness to life on the one hand, while on the other hand still maintaining the visionary glimpse of creation in light of divine love. The dialogue on Plato's system between Schlegel and Schleiermacher in 1804 illustrates precisely the difference between closed encyclopedic systematicity and a Romantic idea of system kept open by Socratic irony.<sup>67</sup> The issue turns on the reception in Romanticism of Kant's regulative idea.<sup>68</sup> For Schlegel, the figure of the regulative idea makes it possible to conceive of system as open-ended. The idea lures a search which is emotionally propelled by the longing for home, epistemologically guided by a definite set of parameters, and characterized by infinite approximation.

The open-ended system nicely makes way for the ontological narrative structure funding systematic theology. It is also attractive because it remains open to a plurality of systems schematizing in different ways the

<sup>66</sup> The term is coined by Bayer. See Oswald Bayer, *Gott als Autor: Zu einer poetologischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

<sup>67</sup> See Arndt's introduction to Friedrich Schleiermacher in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Philosophie Platons*, ed. Peter M. Steiner, Philosophische Bibliothek 486 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), vii-xxii. On Schlegel's unknowability of the Absolute, see Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 862. For a detailed study of Schleiermacher's own introduction to the Plato translation and on the historical development of this translation, see Julia Lamm, "Schleiermacher as Plato Scholar," *Journal of Religion* 80/2 (2000): 206-39.

<sup>68</sup> Kant, CpR, B383-386.

experience of trinitarian narrativity. In his own *Brief Outline*, Schleiermacher admits the possibility of a plurality of systems,<sup>69</sup> co-existing either synchronically at an assigned period in history or diachronically in the development of doctrine through history. He remains relatively undisturbed by this possibility that differs from his view in the *Dialektik*. The *Dialektik* explicitly sees individuality as a factor disturbing the uniform production of knowledge from the organic pole.<sup>70</sup> Individuality is seen as sin, the unethical "surplus of subjectivity" introducing falsity into a developing series.<sup>71</sup> Conversely in the *Hermeneutik*, Schleiermacher appreciates individuality which for theological purposes discloses an individual's apprehension of Jesus.<sup>72</sup> Rather than seeing an irreconcilable tension between the *Dialektik* and the *Hermeneutik*, an interpretation of individuality from religious experience can point to a distinct theological way of considering both individuality and the requirements for science.

The aesthetic dimension to religion can contribute decisively to theology as a science in view of individual schematization. Individual beautification as entry into the whole grasps the whole in its own way. As the part that stands for the whole (*pars pro toto*), individuality is capable of sustaining difference by virtue of maximal diversity embedded in the ontological ground. The early Schleiermacher's Romantic eschatology is such a vision of the infinite intuition of humanity in which individuality is suspended in a plurality of mutual receptivity and spontaneity.<sup>73</sup> By incorporating the aesthetic dimension into theological truth, oneness is differentiated into a plurality of infinite number. Although the hallmark of truth in the *Dialektik* is uniformity, in theology, aesthetic truth is related to individual comprehension. A lively grasp of the subject matter is the nerve of a systematic theology that pulses through the scientific coherence of literary presentation. Systematicity requires individuality and as such, incorporates it into claims to knowledge and truth.

<sup>69</sup> BO §196 (99).

<sup>70</sup> Frank, Introduction to *Schleiermacher: Dialektik*, 1:44.

<sup>71</sup> DialO, 335. Cf. Peirce's remark on "individualism and falsity are one and the same," in Charles S. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," from *Popular Science Monthly* (Jan. 1878), reprinted in *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974-1980), 5 §3 (5:403).

<sup>72</sup> The psychological interpretation aims to isolate complete knowledge of the individual. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, §9 (11).

<sup>73</sup> "Now let us climb still higher to the point where all conflict is again united, where the universe manifests itself as totality, as unity in multiplicity, as system and thus for the first time serves its name." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 52 (speech 2).

Just as system is held open by individuality for plural expression, so too does system leave open the raw data of experience for divine beauty-making activity. Standing outside of coherence is the correspondence between propositions of beauty and tangible reality. If systematic theology offers to the world merely a system regulated by vision with no corresponding reality, then it must be dismissed as unscientific fantasy. In order for systematic theology to take into account the outstanding gap between system and reality, the relation between the regulative idea and the constitutive idea requires an adjustment in light of the peculiar theological subject matter. Systematic theology is guided by the ontological view of reality accessed by the individual experience of redemption. In articulating that experience according to a narrative structure, it retains its own perspective while making claims of knowledge concerning the origin and the goal of trinitarian work. An open-ended system permits this vision on the basis of the regulative idea because of the inherent openness to greater degrees of comprehensiveness, coupled with new divinatory insights into the constitution of the whole. In making penultimate claims regulated by the idea of the whole, however, systematic theology is also making constitutive claims concerning the trinitarian work of beauty-making. Claims are constitutive in the aesthetic sense insofar as they represent the whole in the part. Their constitutive dimension is justified by the particular perspective onto the working of God that compels the vision in the first place. Furthermore, claims are constitutive for those aspects of reality in need of redemption. What the aesthetic dimension of truth offers to the systematicity of systematic theology is the connection between the regulative and the constitutive. The "miserable love of system" decried by Schleiermacher in his earlier years is replaced with the love of knowledge that is systematic in its representation of coherence as well as regulative in its vision, but also assertoric in claims of correspondence to a world that God will make beautiful. It is this vision that supports systematic theology in its endeavor to be beautifully true.

#### IV. Conclusion

In order for truth to be conceived as a search in thinking, a justification of truth as a primitive notion must be undertaken. Truth as a search requires an ontological justification for epistemological procedure in order to show that it is in fact a search oriented towards truth. If episte-

mological truth is conceived in procedural terms, then a variety of truth dimensions can be unearthed from their ontological ground.

In this paper, I have explored two dimensions to ontological truth as coherence and as aesthetic. Rather than limit truth entirely to the theological discipline, I found it necessary to first relate a philosophical concept of truth as a primitive notion to a distinctly theological notion. In this way a theological arrogance could be combated by construing the relation between theology and philosophy in a non-competitive complementary way. Although both disciplines foray into similar objects of self, world, and God, as well as define truth as coherence in a univocal way, each field contributes a distinct perspective for the other. The task of philosophy is to define the formal structures of thinking, and to query into the transcendent ground. The task of theology is to determine the formal structures of unities and thinking by the living predicates of experience. What theology can contribute to the plurality of material determinations is a perspective into the unities of God and world in a narrative frame as seen through the lens of individually experienced redemption. God and the world are related through the trinitarian work of love that creates individual objects of beauty. When configuring this experience in thinking, systematic theology obeys the noetic requirements for coherence as stipulated by her philosophical friend. Yet by filling in this notion of truth with content, she includes an aesthetic dimension that guides the system-building as a regulative idea, and that grounds her claims on its eschatological constitution. As an open-ended system, theology longs for the day in which reality will surpass even her truth claims. Then systematic theology will no longer need to make regulative claims that are beautifully true; she will be wholly constituted by that beautiful truth.

## TRUTH IN NEW TESTAMENT SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

Christof LANDMESSER

New Testament science essentially asks the question concerning the truth of New Testament texts. Indeed, each science or discipline inquires in some way after truth. Even in the larger context, beyond scientific boundaries, the question of truth cannot be fundamentally abstracted from intersubjective communication. We rely on the search for truth to make decisions, to act, to communicate meaningfully with one another, and even to live at all. Discussion, accord, controversy, and opposition, all means of communication, without which human coexistence would be unthinkable, connect in some manner to the question of truth. With every sentence we speak and with each opinion that we express, we make a linguistically articulated interpretation of the world that claims truth and validity. Such claims may have a provisional, limited character, and are perhaps not redeemable, but they are nonetheless always recognizable.

Truth is, for human communication and thus for every science, New Testament science included, a fundamental concept. Without considering this concept, neither our colloquial communication nor our scientific-theological discourse can succeed. I fully comprehend that in the humanities, and therefore, of course, in theology, my understanding of the self-evident relevance of truth is controversial, particularly among those who consider themselves to be modern or post-modern thinkers. That such a rejection of the meaning and the function of truth is itself presented on occasion as an apodictic truth claim can only be mentioned here as an aside.<sup>2</sup> The abandonment of truth questions in New Testament science did not make its first appearance in the twentieth century. In the first part of this paper, I will retrace how, during the development of New Testament science in connection with the Enlightenment, the question of truth was itself questioned. In the second part, I will briefly sketch what

<sup>1</sup> I thank Krista Duttenhaver for her translation of this paper. I would also like to thank the faculty at the Claremont School of Theology for inviting me to deliver the Gordon Michalson lecture in March 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Every negation of the possibility of meaningful truth claims is a contradiction because the negation is itself a truth claim.