



Homemade Mission, Universal Civilization: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Theology of Mission

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Abstract

Though it is generally acknowledged that Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1836) was the first to put mission studies in the curriculum of theology, the contents of his theology of mission are not very well known. This article offers a careful reconstruction of his mission theology based on a gender-critical and postcolonial reading of the main sources, in particular *Christian Ethics*. Schleiermacher made a case for a family-based type of mission, closely linking mission activity to religious education. He favored an organic and grassroots approach to mission. By highlighting his upbringing in the Moravian mission-oriented community and by analyzing his reluctance to morally justify modern foreign missions, the author replies to recently voiced criticisms that Schleiermacher's theology takes a colonialist stance and contributes to the export of a "cult of female domesticity". His views on the superiority of Christian religion can be counterbalanced and modified by his actual theology of the missional encounter. The article proposes to retrospectively regard Schleiermacher as one of the first theologians who convincingly expressed the notion of a missional church which is as inclusive as possible.

Keywords

Schleiermacher, mission theology, colonialism, family, women, Moravians, Christian ethics, ecclesiology

In the writings of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1836) we find the beginning of a systematic theory of mission. In a pioneering mood he seeks to define the concept, the goal, the direction, the method, the organization,

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and the theological justification of mission as an activity of the church.¹ It is curious, then, that Schleiermacher's theory of mission has gained relatively little attention in theological research, either from the side of Schleiermacher scholarship or from that of specialists in mission studies. Although it is acknowledged throughout the literature that Schleiermacher was the first to put mission studies in the curriculum of theology (Jongeneel 2002a:15), almost nothing has been written about the contents of Schleiermacher's theory of mission.

In my view Schleiermacher's theory of mission deserves renewed consideration today, not least from a feminist point of view. What is most fascinating is the way he links the activity of mission to the activity of religious education (*Erziehung*) and formation (*Bildung*), sometimes even equating them. The family is seen as the primary agent in religious education, with a prominent role for women. Obviously there are important implications for the family, and for women in their role as "moral owners" (*sittlichen Besitzerinnen*) of the family (*Brouillon zur Ethik*:60), when mission and religious education become so closely connected.

Also fascinating is that Schleiermacher, despite his roots in Moravian mission-oriented piety and practice, did not champion the nineteenth-century modern enterprise of foreign missions. He approached newly established mission societies (e.g., the *Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* in 1824), which were sending out missionaries to overseas colonies, with overt ambivalence. What were his reasons?

In this article, I will attempt to address these issues by means of a gender-critical and postcolonial reading of Schleiermacher's theology of mission. First, I will recapitulate the state of the research on Schleiermacher and mission, from the first accounts to the current postcolonial critique of his theology. Second, I will portray how Schleiermacher was personally affected by the spirit of Moravian (Herrnhut) missions, and how this influence shaped his theory of mission, including the role of the family and the agency of women. In the third section, I will attempt a reconstruction of his theology of mission as he developed it in different disciplines, with special focus on *Christian Ethics*. Finally,

¹ His most significant texts on mission are the lectures on Christian ethics, edited posthumously by his student Ludwig Jonas under the title *Die Christliche Sitte nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt von Dr. Friedrich Schleiermacher*, in: *Friedrich Schleiermacher's sämtliche Werke*, Abt. I, Bd. 12, Berlin: G. Reimer, 1843 (hereafter CS). In 2011, a new text critical edition of the lectures appeared, edited and introduced by Hermann Peiter: F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Christliche Sittenlehre (Vorlesung im Wintersemester 1826/27)*, nach größtenteils unveröffentlichten Hörernachschriften und nach teilweisen unveröffentlichten Manuskripten Schleiermachers herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Hermann Peiter (Berlin/Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011) (hereafter CS/Peiter).

I will evaluate his mission theology by addressing the following basic questions: To what extent does it take a colonialist stance? How far does it serve potentially to enhance women's agency in the church? And what can we conclude about Schleiermacher's view on the pitfalls and possibilities of the role of the church with regard to (building) civilization? Does he support a European- and male-centered concept of civilization, or are there indications that he pushes beyond the boundaries of such a concept? To what extent could Schleiermacher's work be a resource for contemporary debates on Christian faith and civilization?

1. State of the Research on Schleiermacher and Mission

Schleiermacher was the first to put mission studies as a discipline in the curriculum of theology. He called it the "theory of mission" (*Theorie des Missionswesens*) and connected it with catechetics as a part of practical theology (KD: §§291–298).² Tentatively, he writes in the *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*:

the theory of missions might also find a point of connection here; a theory which, up to the present time, is as good as altogether wanting (KD:430; Jongeneel 2002a:15).³

After Schleiermacher, most theological encyclopedias and handbooks contain a section on mission, under the names "theory of mission", "doctrine of mission" (*Missionslehre*), or "practical theology of mission" (*praktische Missions-theologie*). Over the course of the nineteenth century, the term "theology of mission(s)" replaced the older term "theory of mission(s)".

Despite what he writes in the *Brief Outline*, Schleiermacher does not confine the study of mission to the discipline of practical theology (PT:422–428, 333–334). Actually, he discusses the principles and practice of mission more extensively in his lectures on *Christian Ethics* (*Christliche Sittenlehre*, 1809–1831), as part of the discipline of historical theology. He also reviews mission in the discipline of philosophical ethics (*Brouillon zur Ethik*, 1805/1806). In light of the relative prominence he gives to the topic throughout his corpus, it is surprising that little research has been done on Schleiermacher's theory of mission. The first and only monographic studies appeared in the 1920s by the German

² For an excellent overview of the history of the discipline and its names, see Jongeneel 2002a:15–70.

³ Translation by Jan A.B. Jongeneel.

scholars Wilhelm Kunze (1927), Ernst zur Nieden (1928) and Otto Kübler (1929). They feature Schleiermacher as the founding father of the “individual or personal theology of mission,” based on the vital role that individuals and their religious experience play in his theory of mission.⁴

Although the discipline of mission studies was booming in the second half of the twentieth century, the topic of mission in Schleiermacher’s works did not draw particular attention. Olav G. Myklebust pays his respect to Schleiermacher in the survey *The Study of Missions in Theological Education* (1955–1957), and Hans-Joachim Birkner (1964) presents a groundbreaking interpretation of *Christian Ethics* within the larger scientific system of Schleiermacher, thus providing avenues for further exploration of his mission theology.

However, it would not be until the twenty-first century, when the study of James M. Brandt on Schleiermacher’s *Christian Ethics* (2001) was published, that more serious concern was paid to the theological relevance and critical potential of Schleiermacher’s mission theory. Brandt highlights Schleiermacher as a theologian who champions the reform of church and society. In the basic orientation of *Christian Ethics*, Brandt discerns strong affinities with H. Richard Niebuhr’s model “Christ transforming culture” (Brandt 2001:116–117). For example, Schleiermacher employs the language of transformation (*umbilden*) in relation to the broadening (expansive) action of the church. The Christian spirit, in Schleiermacher’s view, inspires cultural and social communities and humanizes them from within. Brandt comments, “Aligned with the purposes of God in a unique way, it [the kingdom of God] grows by the most ordinary and natural of means – people sharing common life together” (2001:100). Brandt concludes that *Christian Ethics* is “an exemplar of ethics in a Reformed key” (:146).

In contrast, there is vehement post-colonial critique of Schleiermacher, as voiced by outstanding scholars such as Jan A.B. Jongeneel, Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan. Jongeneel, who overall respects Schleiermacher’s role as the founding father of mission studies, regards Schleiermacher’s “subordination” of mission to Christian ethics as a critical mistake. For this transforms mission into a vehicle of the civilization process. Eventually, Jongeneel argues, it will lead to the elimination of mission, already evident in the ethical theology of Richard Rothe (1799–1867), who was a student of Schleiermacher at Berlin.

⁴ The concept of an ‘individual theology of mission’ here is to be distinguished from the concepts of an ‘ecclesiastical theology of mission’ and a ‘corporate theology of mission’ in which the institutional church and mission corporations respectively played the main role. See Jongeneel 2002a:162–163.

Jongeneel concludes: “So mission is reduced to the duty of both individual Christians and churches to teach the Christian virtues of ‘the civilized West’ to the ‘non-civilized peoples’ outside the Christian world” (Jongeneel 2002b:115).

Rieger and Kwok criticize Schleiermacher for his developmental (evolutionary) view of religion. Schleiermacher suggests that only Christianity would be worthy of “adult humanity,” showing in its idealized form its superiority over “rude and undeveloped” wisdom traditions of remote people, as well as over “childlike” Judaism and the passionate character and sensuous content of Islam (Kwok 2005:192; Rieger 2007:206–208). As a result, these authors hold that Schleiermacher displays racial biases against non-Europeans. His theology is not only to be understood as reflecting the interests of the rising bourgeoisie in Europe but also as affirming and strengthening the colonial self. In analyzing Schleiermacher’s Christology, Rieger detects a colonialist mindset at work beneath the surface. In Schleiermacher’s description of the three offices of Christ (i.e., prophet, priest and king), Rieger sees a reproduction of power differentials shaped by the hierarchical relation between colonizer and colonized. However, Schleiermacher introduces a “soft” form of colonialism:

Schleiermacher’s Christ cannot be called a brutal colonialist. He does not rule through coercion but through attraction and love. Coercion cannot produce civilization and undermines the expansion of the Christian faith in other parts of the world (Rieger 2007:213).

If the colonizers are superior in relation to the colonized, and if they are representatives of the “attractive power” that is a trait of those higher up, the latter have no choice but to “gladly submit” to the former (Rieger 2007:206).

Despite this assessment of Schleiermacher’s theology as structured by a colonialist mindset, Rieger is sensitive to the “countercolonial impulses” or “moments of resistance” (2007:209) in the former’s work as well, which makes his analysis very interesting. He points to ambivalences or a “surplus” in Schleiermacher’s thinking that transcends the colonial status quo. He discovers such elements especially in *Christian Ethics*. Although the threefold structure of *Christian Ethics* parallels the three offices of Christ, the *purifying*, *broadening*, and *representational* actions of the church simultaneously disclose aspects of a critique of colonial empire. In each of these actions, basic notions such as the equality of human beings (including absolute rejection of the system of slavery), the freedom of judgment and expression, and the participatory role of every individual within the church are recognized, which broadens the power base across more democratic lines and takes into account the prospective value of the contributions of “others”, those who are still outsiders to the

Christian church. These notions permeate Schleiermacher's thought on mission as well. Rieger writes:

When those in whom the Spirit is at work are at a point where they can be considered 'of age' religiously, they, too, earn the right to contribute to the progress of the church (Rieger 2007:222).

From his postcolonial perspective, Rieger also praises the fact that "diversity of experience" is singled out by Schleiermacher as a category, among others, that qualifies for authority of teaching in the church (223).⁵

The post-colonial critique of Kwok focuses on Schleiermacher's "gender-inflected and class- and race-conscious definition of religion" (2005:193). As for the gender-critique, she follows Katherine M. Faull's interpretation, stating that Schleiermacher prioritizes the male subject in his definition of religion (Faull 1992). This reading of Schleiermacher's theory of religion has already been profoundly contested by other feminist scholars (Richardson 1991; Guenther Gleason 1997; Zorgdrager 2003). More challenging is Kwok's view that a "cult of female domesticity" was exported by nineteenth-century colonialist mission, which might apply to Schleiermacher's theology of mission as well.

I want to take up the discussion with Jongeneel, Rieger and Kwok. How colonialist is Schleiermacher actually in his approach to mission? And, as for the gender dimension, how shall we evaluate the primordial place of the family in the church and its implications for men's and women's roles in the task of mission? In other words, I will elaborate on what Rieger has called the "surplus" in Schleiermacher's thinking, and focus on gender as a new element in exploring Schleiermacher's theology of mission. Feminist scholars have highlighted the remarkable role of women in Schleiermacher's thought on education and cultural formation (e.g., Hall 2009) but they have not yet expanded it to the topic of women's agency in Christian mission. I hope to demonstrate that there are obvious and fascinating connections.

2. Affected by the Spirit of Moravian Mission

Raised and educated in the pious and humble spirit of the Herrnhut Brethren, or Moravian Church, Friedrich Schleiermacher became intimately familiar with Christian mission (Gensichen 1998).

⁵ Rieger refers to CS:396.

The Moravian Church is generally regarded as the first Protestant missionary church.⁶ Under the inspiring leadership of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1769), cross-cultural mission became an integral part of the identity of the church. Zinzendorf's love for mission was awakened by an encounter with two Christian Inuits from Greenland and Anton Ulrich, a former slave from St. Thomas (a part of the present-day Virgin Islands), at the coronation of King Christian VI of Denmark, in 1732. They were all converts of the *Dänisch-Hallesche Mission*, a Danish government-sponsored mission society. The three new Christians were invited to Herrnhut and the former slave's story touched the community so much that the first missionaries were soon sent out from Herrnhut to St. Thomas. They went to share the life of the slaves, cutting sugar cane and preaching by example the sacrificial love of Christ.

In Zinzendorf's view, the main objective of mission was "to win souls for the Lamb". The goal was not to convert the masses, but to attract individuals among those whom the Holy Spirit had prepared as the "first fruits" of their people (cf. Rev 14:4, 10). Missionaries should avoid all forms of coercion and colonialism, and respect the cultural particularities of the indigenous population. He considered the missionaries' own conduct and example, which should focus on Christ as the incarnate and crucified Savior, to be the most effective method of mission.

A basic ecumenical vision may be regarded as the heartbeat of Moravian mission. All people of all nations are united in Christ the Savior. The missionary strategy consisted of several rules. Only church members and only volunteers could be sent into mission. Craftsmen were preferred because missionaries had to work for their daily bread. They were examined by the church council and often had to wait a discouragingly long period for the final decision. They were prepared with lessons in language, geography, and medicines. Once in the mission field, they had regularly to write letters to inform and inspire the community back home. At the age of fifteen, during the evening gatherings (*Abendstunden*) at Niesky boarding school,⁷ young Friedrich

⁶ For this section, see A.J. Lewis (1962), Hartmut Beck (1981), Peter Vogt (2010), and Robert L. Gallagher (2005).

⁷ Niesky – the Slavonic name means 'low', 'humble' – was a kind of 'pietistic mini-state', see for this characterization E.R. Meyer, *Schleiermachers und C.G. von Brinkmanns Gang durch die Brüdergemeine* (Leipzig, 1905), 19. The whole town was built on the basis of the community principles of the Moravians, with the members living in so called 'choirs' divided according to gender, age and marital status (younger boys and younger girls, teenage boys, teenage girls, single men, single women, marrieds, widowers, widows), and the church-building as the center of community life. See Peter Sebald, *Geschichte von Niesky 1742–1992. Band I. Die Verwaltung durch die Brüdergemeine 1742–1892* (Stadtverwaltung Niesky, 1998).

Schleiermacher must have listened with sheer fascination to the letters and reports of the Brethren overseas, who had dedicated their lives to mission in far away and remote places such as Greenland, the West Indies or among the natives in North America.⁸ Likewise, during the daily singing hours (*Singstunden*), missionary hymns from the Moravian Hymnbook – most of them written by Zinzendorf’s wife Erdmuth Dorothea (1700–1756) – may have filled his sensitive soul with a love and zeal for mission (Lewis 1962:162–169).

Zinzendorf believed in a “partnership of obedience” between the home church and the native Christians overseas. Wherever possible, the missionaries should install native people as evangelists, teachers and fellow-workers. Zinzendorf instructed the missionaries, “Tell them all about the Lamb of God till you can tell them no more”.

Women played an important role in the practice of Moravian mission. The most significant organized mission work by women in the early colonial period was undertaken by the Moravians (Robert 2006:835). They sent women as missionaries, either as assistants to their husbands or in groups such as the unmarried women’s “choirs”. They served as nurses, teachers and farmers, and taught the indigenous women new crafts and skills. The Moravians had a unique practice of sending family groupings. For instance, groups were sent from Germany to live among Native Americans in Georgia and Pennsylvania (from 1735 onwards). Moravians believed in the missionary wife’s role as promoter of Christian family values in the foreign culture. Again, the family was to set an example with their own conduct. By the time Zinzendorf died in 1760, about one third of the Moravian missionaries were female (seventeen women and forty-nine men). The numbers would rapidly grow over the following decades. In general, women were more “teachers” than “preachers”. Their teaching would especially address the indigenous women and children.

Humility was a characteristic feature of Moravian mission. The missionaries lived among the poor and exploited. In the West Indies, the mission stations were located on plantations worked by slaves. Moravian missionaries were dedicated to approaching indigenous cultures and languages with respect.

⁸ Erwin H.U. Quapp, *Christus im Leben Schleiermachers. Vom Herrnhuter zum Spinozisten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 36 describes the daily schedule of life at the ‘Pädagogium.’ Every evening from 19.00 till 19.30 the pupils gathered for a common hour of Bible reading. Additionally, for edifying purposes, they listened to readings from Spangenberg’s *Idea fidei fratrum* and from the *Nachrichten aus der Brüdergemeine* [Reports from the Brethren Community]. The latter contained religious speeches, reports on the work of the Moravian Church at home and abroad, reports from missionaries all over the world, and religious biographies of deceased brethren and sisters.

This was demonstrated by a tolerant attitude towards polygamous relations among the indigenous people, by approval of racially mixed marriages, and by the first examples of mission “from the south to the south” (e.g., the indigenous missionaries from the Caribbean sent to Western Africa). Throughout his life, Schleiermacher would continuously refer to the Moravian missions as a shining example. At the end of his career, he announced his verdict, “The Moravian missions are the true missions of our times” (CS:181).⁹ We shall see how his mission theology makes it clear that he had indeed become a Herrnhuter of a “higher order”.¹⁰

3. Reconstruction of Schleiermacher’s Theology of Mission

3.1. *Mission in Philosophical Ethics*

Philosophical Ethics, for Schleiermacher, is a philosophy of culture that describes the formation of social and cultural communities (e.g., family, state, church, academy, the domain of free sociability). In *Brouillon zur Ethik 1805/06*, the first concise draft of his philosophical ethics, he analyzes how the church extends itself, on the one hand, by engaging in activities aimed at educating the youth (*Erziehung*) and the masses (*Volksbildung*), and, on the other, by carrying out mission “in the proper sense” (*Brouillon*:117–119). Religious and moral education of the youth should be a shared responsibility of the family and the church. Schleiermacher regards the education of the masses as a form of diaconal ministry with religious contents and with a religious aim. It works mainly through the communication and affection of religious feeling, not through mere imposition of knowledge (*Brouillon*:119). To be distinguished from this type of *Bildung* of the youth and the masses is the activity of mission “in the proper sense”. Schleiermacher divides missionary activity into mission among foreign nations and proselytism. Both forms aim to reach those individuals who are not yet organically shaped by the Christian religious community. Schleiermacher stresses that the individual principle predominates in missionary communication. Mission is based on personal interaction. It is entrusted to the family and the church. The family, Schleiermacher proposes, is the original model of the church (and the core of all social communities), and should act as an organ of the church. The church grows from heterogeneous

⁹ CS/Jonas, Beilage D, 181, note.

¹⁰ Letter from April 5, 1783, in *Aus Schleiermacher’s Leben in Briefen*, Bd I, 294.

family connections (*Brouillon*:114–117). He favors, so to speak, a grassroots approach to mission.

3.2. *Mission in the Brief Outline of Theological Studies*

In the encyclopedia of theology, the *Brief Outline of Theological Studies* (1811/1830), the topic of mission finds its place in the discipline of practical theology. Mission activity is subsumed under catechetics, which again is considered as a type of pastoral care (*Seelsorge*) (*KD*:§§291–298). Schleiermacher distinguishes between pastoral care in a broad and a narrow sense; catechetics is defined as pastoral care in the broad sense. Catechetics aims at establishing a unity between the individual and the religious community where it did not exist before. Three stages are distinguished in the catechetical activity, according to the levels (fluid) of opposition between people who are predominantly productive or predominantly receptive in the religious communication. The first catechetical stage is addressed to children. They need religious education to become full members of the Christian community. The target group at the second stage consists of individuals who belong to a different religious community but wish to become a member of the Christian community. These are the converts, or the “religious strangers” who live in the area surrounding a Christian community and want to share in its pious life. These sections (§§296–297) refer to the increasing number of Jews who want to convert to Christian religion (Groot 1994:321).¹¹ The last catechetical stage, where the predominantly receptive mode among the target group is, so to speak, at its maximum, entails the activity of mission. The Christian religious principle among this group is yet underdeveloped. Schleiermacher argues (§298) that a theory of the *Missionswesen*¹² is required to reflect on the practice of religious education aimed at awakening an interest in Christian religion in foreign territories. Thus, foreign mission activity does not essentially differ from religious education for

¹¹ At the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century a public office in state service was, for Jewish persons in the German territories, only attainable if they were baptized and members of the church. Schleiermacher recognizes the danger that the services of the church are being misused for improper aims, and he warns against it. The pastor needs criteria to assess the motivation of the person. The theory of the treatment of the converts (*Theorie über die Behandlung der Convertenden*) should formulate such criteria. See *Theologische Enzyklopädie nach den Vorlesungen des Herrn Dr. Schleiermacher*. Wintersemester 1816/17. Nachschrift L. Jonas, Schleiermacher-Nachlass nr 547/1, in the transcription by Nicolaas Groot (1994), 321.

¹² *Missionswesen*: the comprehensive “organisation” or “system” of missions. See *Theologische Enzyklopädie*, Nachschrift Jonas 1816/17.

children or for “religious strangers” who live in the area surrounding a Christian community.

Schleiermacher defines mission in his lectures in the encyclopedia of theology 1816/1817 as the extension (*Erweiterung*) of the Christian church in new territories.

The Christian church has begun in a foreign area. It has not yet found its borders and will not find them because according to its nature the church is destined for all nations. This extension of the Christian church also continues throughout history. This must be included in the guidance of the church. It is not allowed to leave it to arbitrariness. (*Theologische Enzyklopädie* (henceforth *ThEJ*):§23.24).

Concerning the method of mission, he stresses in these lectures that the activity of mission and its supervision should be entrusted to the local, domestic congregation. The missionary, who is sent to foreign nations, should join the local congregation overseas, or if there is not such a local church, then he should (first) establish it (*ThEJ*:§23.24; *KD*:§298). Overall, Schleiermacher points to the need to reflect systematically on the methods of mission, a topic which so far “has only been approached empirically and by uneducated people” (*ThEJ*:§23.24).

3.3. *Mission in Christian Ethics*

Christian Ethics is a part of Schleiermacher’s dogmatic theology and, like the other part, *Christian Faith*, it applies the historical-empirical method. Christian ethics reflects on Christian piety as an incentive (*Antrieb*) for shaping the communal life and action of the church (*Der christliche Glaube* (henceforth *CG*):§112.5).¹³ According to Schleiermacher, “The propositions of Christian ethics are statements about the Christian consciousness as it manifests itself as a moral feeling”. The discipline seeks to critically analyze and describe the empirical Christian piety from the perspective of providing motives to action, in order to find general rules (*Formeln*) for ecclesial action. In short, Schleiermacher holds that Christian ethics is nothing more than the description of Christian life (*CS/Peiter*:20). That life is a communal life in which the new God-relation of Christ the Redeemer brings people together. *Christian Ethics* is fully

¹³ See for an outstanding introduction in the structure of *Christian Ethics*: Eilert Herms (2005). “Schleiermacher’s Christian Ethics”. In Jacqueline Mariña, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, 209–228.

an ecclesial ethics: an ethics of, for, and by the church. The action of the church in the present is the ongoing redemptive action of Christ (Brandt 2001:91).

The theme of mission is addressed in several course lectures between 1809 and 1831.¹⁴ From *Christian Faith* we know that Schleiermacher grounds his theology of mission in the doctrine of election (CG:§§117–120). According to this doctrine, all human beings are eventually ordained to blessedness in Christ. The Spirit, as the common spirit of the church (*Gemeingeist*), continuously transforms human life into its organ. Schleiermacher calls the completion of this process, arriving at the full reign of the God-consciousness, the “kingdom of God on earth”. This is the ultimate goal of mission and human civilization.

In Schleiermacher’s subsequent courses on *Christian Ethics* we can see a mission theology “under reconstruction”. Mission is addressed as an aspect of the “broadening action” of the church (*erweiterndes Handeln*). The broadening action is to be distinguished from the “purifying action” of the church (*wiederherstellendes Handeln*, e.g., discipline and reform) and the “representational action” (*darstellendes Handeln*, e.g., worship). In the broadening action of the church the focus is on extending the reign of the Spirit over the flesh (CS:368–376). The human spirit has to be elevated to the potential of the Spirit in the Christian sense and thus be deified (*vergöttlicht*) (!) (CS:371). The main goal is to build up community, by forming the right disposition (*Gesinnung*) and by forming the right talents (*Talent*). Mission involves the growth of the Christian disposition. Formation of the Christian disposition takes place in the community of the family and the church. Schleiermacher further distinguishes between “intensive” broadening (education or *Bildung*) and “extensive” broadening (mission work). The boundaries, however, are porous, as we shall see.

3.3.1. *Basic Principles*

Although aspects of Schleiermacher’s thought on mission are wavering and sometimes contradictory,¹⁵ the basics remain consistent. I will now present these basic principles.

¹⁴ They are transmitted through the dictates (*Nachschriften*) of his students. Ludwig Jonas selected them and chose the lectures of winter semester 1822/23 as the basis of his edition in 1843. Recently, Hermann Peiter edited a new critical scientific edition of the lectures of the winter semester 1826/27 (2011).

¹⁵ See note Jonas, CS:380.

Family as the Primary Missionary Community

For Schleiermacher, the family or *das Hauswesen* is the basic model for the church. The church consists of interconnected heterogeneous Christian families (CS:364; CS/Peiter:347). The family represents the original community between human beings in a truly organic sense. This community is built through the act of sexual union between man and woman, and its “results” are the children. Schleiermacher then surprisingly states that the cohabitation in marriage is the *original* form of the broadening action of the church (CS:338). Sexual intercourse is, so to speak, a missionary activity. He writes, “Thus this way of expansion of Christianity [through sexual intercourse] is completely parallel to the other, namely to communicate it through mission” (CS:347). An exciting approach to mission indeed!

The procreative act in marriage does not exclude the Christian disposition but, on the contrary, can become its vehicle. With this view Schleiermacher takes a stance against those who devalue human sexuality and try to separate it from spiritual life. In the Protestant view, sexual intercourse should be seen as permeated by the Christian spirit and therefore necessarily monogamous. Polygamy presupposes, in Schleiermacher’s view, the subordination of women. He argues, “All human souls are standing in one and the same relation to the divine work of redemption” (CS:342). Women share equally in the gifts of the Spirit; however, Schleiermacher proposes, they should be excluded from expressing them in public offices in church, school, and state. He writes that “according to the views of that time” Christ affected men “to form them into a school,” and addressed his efforts to women in order “to bring Christianity into the family through such receptive souls” and in this work of Christ we should already see the tendency to make the family the basis of the Christian church (CS/Peiter:302). The family is the germ of the Christian church (CS/Peiter:288).

Thus, Schleiermacher arrives at the following insights: (1) Procreation and upbringing (*Erzeugung und Erziehung*) belong intrinsically together, namely in the family, and (2) Christianity makes the act of procreation part of the expansion of the Christian faith. Schleiermacher even speaks of the “obligation” of every individual to take part in this organic form of mission (CS:354). We see here how Schleiermacher’s concept of mission is based on an organic, embodied, “natural” approach. This will shape his whole theology of mission. Furthermore, when we read from now on about the (local) church in his texts, we always have to keep in mind that he sees the church-community rooted in the family. And the family is defined by a gender-specific labor division concerning the task of spiritual formation of the children and the searching souls nearby.

Women are considered to be the “moral owners” of the family (*Brouillon*:58–59) and the task of familial religious education is entrusted to them (*Pädagogik*:92). Family and church work together in the activity of religious education. The church relies on the family for moral development; the family needs the church for the development of religious language and knowledge in catechesis.

For Schleiermacher, the family represents an individual character, and this is placed above specific details concerning gender and generation (*Brouillon*:58). Families and their members act as organs of the church. Through the family’s particular manifestation of the Christian disposition friends and others may feel attracted to the community of the church. This happens in the extended family atmosphere of the free social gathering (*freie Geselligkeit*). It bridges the private and the public domain, and serves well as the space where the family discloses itself to others (other families and unmarried people) to share in the Christian spirit (*CS*:395–400).

Religious Autonomy

Schleiermacher defines as the aim of religious education and mission to foster the religious autonomy (*Mündigkeit*) of individuals. All those who join the church are granted the right of freedom of religious expression and freedom of judgment in religious matters (*CS*:383). Every person should be able to engage in the culture of free religious interpretation and communication (Gräb 2011). Women play a major role in encouraging and cultivating religious maturity, in the family as well as in the free social gathering, as the narrative of *Christmas Eve* (1806) beautifully depicts.

3.3.2. *Issues Subject to Doubt and Discussion*

Which Method Comes First, Mission or Religious Education?

The first problem with which Schleiermacher struggles concerns the *method* by which the church extends its Christian disposition. The second problem regards the moral justification of the phenomenon of foreign missions. Let us address here the first. Schleiermacher distinguishes two methods of spreading the Christian disposition: transmission occurs according to the principle of *continuity* (*Continuität*) or according to the principle of *elective attraction* (*Wahlanziehung*) (*CS*:378). In more contemporary terminology, I would call them different types of religious communication. The principle of continuity is practiced in religious education (*Erziehungswesen*); the principle of elective attraction is identified as the basis and method of foreign missions (*Missionswesen*).

Let us take a closer look at both methods. The term *Wahlanziehung* was a very popular term in German Romantic circles. Goethe's novel *Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) had set the tone for depicting human relations using the metaphorical language of chemistry.¹⁶ Two individuals of a different kind produce a new unity, attracted by the spirit of love. Besides being inspired by Goethe, it is likely that Schleiermacher derived the principles of *Continuität* and *Wahlanziehung* directly from the philosophy of nature of F.W.J. Schelling.¹⁷ In Schelling's philosophy *Continuität* is the organic productivity of nature itself; *Wahlanziehung*, or crystallization, is the more contingent method of forming life. Schleiermacher applies both principles to analyze the process of religious communication and expansion.

The Christian disposition can set in motion both types of religious communication: the organic productivity as well as personal, elective attraction. Religious education (catechetics) employs the organic extension, and (foreign) mission exhibits the contingent extension, as it produces a new unity between people of different cultures in which the personal attraction by the missionary is decisive.

The question is how to define the relationship between these two principles. Which comes first, from both a historic perspective and a moral perspective? Can ethical theory construct both types of spreading the faith as a moral task (*Formel*) for Christians? When answering these questions we see Schleiermacher struggling. His position shifts throughout the years. Basically, he wrestles with a challenging issue in an increasingly colonialist era: Can the church find a theological justification for foreign missions?

1822/23: Mission as Only a Secondary Type of Religious Expansion

In 1822/23 he states that both types of religious expansion existed together in the apostolic era. Mission is the main type of expansion described in the New Testament. The apostles spread Christianity by seeking the kindred far away, according to the principle of "elective attraction". Schleiermacher argues, however, that in modern times the situation has fundamentally changed. Today it is the primary vocation of Christians to reproduce the faith in domestic circles,

¹⁶ *Wahlanziehung* (*attractio electiva*) refers to the chemical process of attraction and repulsion of two bodies of a different substance. They do not just combine at the points of contact, but they permeate each another completely. See: *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* (1854–1960). Website: <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/> (accessed on October 23, 2012).

¹⁷ F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft* (1797); *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803).

according to the principle of “organic continuity”. He states, “Expanding the Christian faith is such a common vocation, that actually no Christian can exclude himself from it” (CS:379). We cannot set foreign missionary activity as a general Christian moral obligation. To leave everything behind and start spreading Christianity in foreign regions requires a specific vocation. In other words, in a moral sense, as it is a generally valid *Formel* in Christian life, home-based religious education is prioritized by Schleiermacher.

But there is another question that can be asked: Has not Christ himself commissioned his disciples for mission (Matt 28:19)? In Schleiermacher’s explanation, Christ does not do this because he preferred that method; he just did not mention the more domestic form because it was so obvious. Schleiermacher then makes the bold claim that in modern times the church could do without foreign missions because Christian elements have been disseminated all over the earth (CS:380). Christian missions could easily affiliate themselves with these “mission posts of civilization” (*Civilisationsmissionspunkte*) in the colonies, and then work from those places where the Christian spirit is most vital (CS:380), while practicing the method of continuous education. This sounds very much like colonialist ideology, as if spreading Christianity and spreading (European) civilization were one and the same. However, the crucial issue for Schleiermacher is more self-critical: Should the Christian community in Europe continue sending missionaries to foreign regions, or could the task of sharing the Gospel better be entrusted to local churches in the colonies themselves? From the principles of the ethical system he opts for the second strategy, for it is possible to establish religious education as a general rule (*Formel*) for all individuals, but not mission. The missionary activity depends on “the incentive of the Spirit and the power of the conviction”, and is a matter of personal conscience (CS:381). Thus, mission cannot be deduced as a general responsibility and is viewed as a secondary method. Mission is not abolished but at least begins to float in Schleiermacher’s *Christian Ethics*.

1824/25: Mission as an Emergency Measure

In 1824/25, we see him radicalizing this line of thought. Schleiermacher has changed his opinion on the New Testament and now argues that there has never been any historical evidence of mission in the apostolic era. The apostles were already spreading Christianity according to the principle of continuity. The movement of Christian faith emerged organically from the synagogues and from there it reached out to the Jews and gentiles. Even the apostle Paul,

although he left his natural place for the sake of mission, was not entirely following a supernatural impulse. For already in Jerusalem, he communicated with people from distant regions, and therefore, to a certain extent, his missionary activity can be understood from the natural side. The usual reference to the apostle Thomas as a missionary in India lacks, according to Schleiermacher, historical confirmation and cannot serve as legitimation for mission today (CS:381).

From the moral point of view, the method of religious education (catechetics) would suffice for the expansion of the church, whereas the method of “elective attraction” would never suffice because it does not guarantee that all people will be reached (CS:380). The expansion of Christianity by the method of mission is therefore arbitrary (*Willkür*). The church, therefore, can do without it. If the church everywhere had a genuine zeal for religious *Bildung*, then the non-Christian nations would gradually convert to Christianity.

Yet, Schleiermacher acknowledges that mission remains necessary in his times, but solely as a kind of emergency measure. He observes with sadness that the churches in the colonies only care about the people from their own nation and that the settlers are more driven by commercial interests than by truly Christian interests. If they would reach out, according to the principle of continuity, to the natives, then foreign missions would become superfluous. We only need foreign missions, he writes, because the colonists do not do anything to spread Christianity. Schleiermacher's tone is sharp and critical as he takes a radical stance against those who forsake their Christian calling. He stresses the responsibility of the domestic church and of all individual Christians to participate in the organic expansion of Christianity. Every Christian can awaken the Christian disposition in others through the living expression of his or her God-consciousness (CS:382).

Furthermore, he makes some remarks about how mission as an emergency option could be best organized. He would assign the task of selecting missionaries and assessing their calling, which is sometimes “merely adventurous”, to the local congregation. For Schleiermacher, as we have seen, the Moravian Brethren present a shining example of a church community that is fully structured to support mission. Since the Evangelical Church of Prussia lacks such a structure, the whole organization of foreign missions is left to private associations (*Partikulargesellschaften*) (CS:382–383). Schleiermacher writes this in the year of establishment of the Berlin Mission Society (1824). A few years later he will critically comment on the phenomenon of mission societies.

Schleiermacher's Stance Towards Mission Societies

Schleiermacher's next set of transcribed lectures date from 1822/27. In 1824, ten men, mainly aristocrats, high civil servants, and professors who practiced a patriotic-romantic Christianity, met in Berlin to draw up a statute for what would become the Berlin Mission Society (Richter 1924; Neill *et al.* 1975; Lehmann 1974; Van der Heyden *et al.* 2002). Schleiermacher's close colleague at the University of Berlin, August Neander (1789–1850),¹⁸ was actively engaged in the process of starting up the society. Neander wrote a passionate appeal for the financial support of “evangelical missions to the heathens” (Richter 1924:8)¹⁹ and served one year as a member of the Committee of the Berlin Mission Society.

The Berlin Mission Society's goal was to support the education of missionaries (at the *Jänickesche Missionsschule* in Berlin) and to send missionaries overseas. The sending of the missionaries was delegated to the London Mission Society and the Rotterdam Mission Society because the German lands did not possess any colonies themselves. At the university there was an active student Mission Association; most of the students were enrolled in the Faculty of Theology (Richter 1924:16). Thus, from different sides Schleiermacher was challenged by the new spirit and type of foreign missions. He had to take a stance and reflected upon the matter in his lectures on *Christian Ethics* in 1826/27.

He frames the following question: Can we find an ethical justification for the mission societies and the Bible associations²⁰ which are rapidly increasing in our times? It might be telling that the famous theologian and pastor of the *Dreifaltigkeitskirche* kept his distance from the Berlin Mission Society,²¹ even while some of his friends and colleagues were actively involved. Besides August Neander, these included August Tholuck (1799–1877) and Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802–1869). Through these men, Schleiermacher's theology would gain influence in the Berlin Mission Society (Richter 1924:61; Poewe *et al.* 1999:28–29). Its leading theology has been described as a type of (Lutheran) Romanticism, filtered through Brethren Pietism (Richter 1924:127, 159; Poewe *et al.* 1999:26–27).

¹⁸ August Neander (1789–1850), born as David Mendel, came as a student in Halle under the influence of Schleiermacher. He worked closely with him as professor of Church History at the University of Berlin.

¹⁹ Quoted in Richter, *Geschichte der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft*, 8.

²⁰ “Anstalten für Mission zur Verbreitung der heiligen Schrift”, see CS:427–429.

²¹ However, it is an interesting fact that the annual celebration (*Jahresfeiertag*) of the Berlin Mission Society, from its beginning in 1830 until 1854, took place in the *Dreifaltigkeitskirche*. See Richter 1924: 51.

In Neander's approach to mission, *Bildung* and inculturation were key topics. Christianity in the modern age will create the germ of all human *Bildung* not by imposing on people a finished product from outside but by allowing it to emerge fresh from within, accommodating to the peculiarities of a people (Poewe *et al.* 1999:33). This contextual awareness was likely to result in the missionary's respect for the local culture, language and traditions; support for processes of indigenization of Christianity; and a portrayal of indigenous religions that was free of contempt.²² Moreover, it would imply a policy to educate local helpers for the tasks of catechetical teachers and (assistant) pastors.

Although this mirrors to a great extent how Schleiermacher himself would describe mission at its best, the pastor and university professor nevertheless retained his skeptical attitude towards foreign mission and mission societies. The reason is that he strongly holds the view that the most natural way to extend Christianity is from the local, domestic congregation, as this is the natural place for every Christian. The broadening action of the church has to be embedded in the day-to-day lives of Christians, and not be organized from Europe to overseas regions (CS:420–423). It is Schleiermacher's expectation that in modern times the form of mission will gradually diminish (CS:433), not least because relations and communication between people from different regions in the world are getting more intense, primarily driven by commercial interests. In the end (may we say, in a globalized world?) the process of the extension of Christianity will be quite naturally interwoven into all human relations (CS:423).

Nevertheless, Schleiermacher arrives at the conclusion that, conditionally and temporarily, foreign missions can be morally justified. That is, as long as there are areas which do not border upon Christian nations or as long as there are colonizers who are not really concerned about sharing Christianity (CS:433). Mission societies fill in a gap because churches overseas often forsake their vocation. The mission societies and Bible associations consist, as particular associations (*Specialverbindungen*), of members of different churches. Schleiermacher praises them as pioneers of ecumenism (CS:427). The individuals act as organs of their church. The church community should acknowledge these

²² A nice example of this is the missionary Johannes Winter (1847–1921). He was the son-in-law of the director of the Berlin Mission, Hermann Theodor Wangemann (1818–1894), and missionary in Transvaal as well as rector of the first national helpers' seminary. Affected by Schleiermacher's theory of religion, he approached the magic rituals of the Bapedi people without denigration: he understood them as a manifestation of the feeling of absolute dependence on higher powers that Schleiermacher had regarded as the root of all religion. See Poewe *et al.*, 37.

private initiatives as part of the common task of sharing the faith. For the members of the mission societies, expansion of the church community starts with themselves; in a natural way, by practical cooperation, they grow closer together. Schleiermacher regards the mission work as subordinate to this growth of ecumenical community. In this way, given the circumstances, Schleiermacher morally justifies the work of mission societies and Bible associations.

Inclusive and Hospitable Congregations as the Core of Mission

From the last known lectures (1826/27 and 1831) we can derive Schleiermacher's ideal conception of mission. In 1831, he struggles again with the topic of methods of education and mission, and introduces the new terms "steady and salutatory expansion" (*stätige und sprungweise Verbreitung*), as synonyms for the methods of continuity and elective attraction (*CS Beilage D:175–183*). Steady expansion is the task of every Christian; salutatory expansion is solely for those "who can make themselves mobile". As for the latter, he reflects on the following moral questions: Under what conditions is it justified to break with one's natural life relations in order to become a missionary, and where should the missionary go? He also asks how the national churches could organize themselves better for mission.

The author exerts great effort in analyzing and answering these questions, but one senses that the answers he finds are not truly satisfying. In the end, he suddenly concludes that the Moravians are the best example for how mission should be properly conducted. Indeed, no mission is as morally pure and effective as that of the Moravian Brethren: "The Moravian missions are the true missions of our times" (*CS Beilage D:181*). First, they are not bound to a national church but dispersed in many congregations and can reach out from everywhere in the proper way. Second, they do not need a special educational institution for their missionaries because the entire congregation organically fulfills this task. Schleiermacher calls such a missionary congregation the "true foundation for blessed missions" (*CS Beilage D:181*).

In *Practical Theology* he elaborates this idea of a missionary congregation. He favors the Moravian model of sending missionaries in family groupings (*eine Art Colonie*) to the overseas regions. They establish over there a church community which affects the "neighbors at the borders" in a natural way (*PT:427*). The natural form of mission is to awaken the desire of the "neighbors at the borders" by displaying the healthy, vital and powerful community life of the local congregation (*PT:423*). The beauty of the community life is first and foremost expressed in the joy of the worship. Therefore, the representational

action of the church (which is for Schleiermacher without any intention, like art) is considered to be the base of the broadening action (*CS/Peiter*:353–354). Mission only needs to strengthen the first impression that is gained by contemplation (*Anschauung*) of the worshipping community (*PT*:423).

Because of the importance of this communal aspect, Schleiermacher insists that missionaries be married before moving abroad, so that mission will be an activity of husband and wife together (*CS/Peiter*:327). The cooperation of husband and wife is required not only because of their love “that can bear all things” in the hardships of mission but also because the agency of women is indispensable in the formation and cultivation of religious character (*CS/Peiter*:319). This applies both to the domain of the family and to its extended domain: the free religious social gathering, the church life. Both the representational and broadening actions (worship and religious cultivation of others) find their beginning in the family as an organ of the church community. Schleiermacher argues that worship and religious cultivation under the form of free religious gathering could never be properly conducted without the intertwined and complementary participation of both sexes (*CS/Peiter*:319). Men and women should work side by side for the full spiritual formation of others.

4. Conclusion

Schleiermacher has greatly contributed to mission studies by proposing, in the age of colonialism, a home-based (domestic) type of mission that delegates all responsibilities at the grassroots level. The local church and its organs, families as well as individuals, are the agents of mission in their own context. He encourages a rapid indigenization of new churches in the colonies. In stating that the aim of mission is to foster the religious autonomy of individuals and that religious communication is a reciprocal endeavor in which the other party can always “talk back”, he lays the foundation for making intercultural and inter-religious dialogue necessary components of the missionary encounter.

Nevertheless, I agree with Rieger and Kwok that Schleiermacher’s evolutionary model of the religions, which places Christianity at the top (*CG*:§7–10), is unjust and insulting to other religions and wisdom traditions. In this model, he displays a way of thinking that is typical of the Eurocentric Enlightenment discourse. At the same time, however, his theory of religious communication weakens and subverts the idea of an untouchable superiority of Christianity. It assumes that there is genuine God-consciousness in all human beings regardless

of their culture or religious affiliation. In ongoing religious communication both partners are active as well as receptive, to different degrees (CS/Peiter:249–250). This communication opens the door for a missionary encounter in which both sides may ultimately experience transformation.

How could Schleiermacher be a helpful resource for current postcolonial debates on Christian faith and civilization? At first sight, the outcome is rather negative. Symptomatic of his Eurocentric thinking, Schleiermacher designates peoples in the mission regions as “uncivilized peoples” (*ungebildete Völkern*) (CS/Peiter:474).²³ Indeed, he shared some common colonial mentalities of his era. Yet, this is not the whole story. In addition to the “countercolonial impulses” that Rieger has already identified, I would argue that many more can be found in Schleiermacher’s self-critical discourse on European civilization and point to the increasing sharpness of his judgment of colonial practices. In his view, Christian mission furthers the greater civilization process, which is understood as the advance towards the full reign of the God-consciousness in humankind. Humankind shall be made into an organism of the Spirit, so that in the end we can say that there is no activity left that cannot be explained from the Divine principle (CS/Peiter:352). This conception of civilization, as all-encompassing *Bildung*, however, does not match the empirical reality of colonialist European civilization but, as I see it, rather functions as a critical compass. When Schleiermacher speaks of the colonizers’ settlements as “*Civilisationsmissionspunkte*” in the colonies (CS:381), he criticizes them for not manifesting the true Christian spirit towards the local population and calls for transformation from a “higher” perspective.

I would suggest that Schleiermacher’s concept of civilization rather mirrors the early patristic notion of deification (*theosis*), which is understood as the process of perfection and completion of humankind and the entire creation through full permeation by the Divine spirit.²⁴ The sections on the broadening

²³ It was Rieger who drew my attention to an early, unpublished text fragment of Schleiermacher on the history of colonization of New Holland (Australia) in which he portrays, on the basis of travelogues of British governors, the indigenous people as “auf der niedrigsten Stufe der menschlichen Bildung” [on the lowest level of human civilization] and in which he does not shy away from racist judgments (Rieger 2007:201–205). We should realize, however, that from the unpublished manuscript only a fragment has remained, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the basis of this material. See “Materialien” (1799–1800) and “Zur Siedlungsgeschichte Neuhollands (Australiens)” (1800), in *KGA* Abt. 1, Bd. 3, 249–279.

²⁴ For an excellent study on the notion of deification and its development in patristic tradition, see Norman Russell (2004). Wendy Farley was perhaps the first to suggest that Schleiermacher’s theology is “fundamentally shaped by the ancient ideal of divinization”. See Farley (2011:78).

action of the church in *Christian Ethics* could very well be read as a modern description of the progressive journey of *theosis*.²⁵ The civilizing/divinizing process takes place internally with the formation of Christian piety characterized by the Spirit of community, and externally with the formation of the right talents in society and state.

As for Schleiermacher's ideal of civilization, he does not aim to annihilate diversity. From a Christian perspective, differences shaped by natural conditions (such as ethnicities, languages, traditions, races) and the principle of absolute communality are not necessarily contradictory (CS:453–54). As a moral rule, such organic differences may never become a hindrance to the moral idea and the task of absolute communality of humankind. Individuals are free to cross the cultural and natural borders and to build new communities (CS:454). First and foremost, the church is called to embody all natural, cultural and social differences of human beings (CS:566–569).

In search of a strategy for a transformative intervention in Western civilization, Schleiermacher begins with the family as a basic community and with women in their roles as religious educators and nurturers. What are the pitfalls and potentials of this choice? Kwok brought forward the critique of a “cult of female domesticity” and its colonialist reproduction. In response, I would like to point first to Schleiermacher's notion of the *extended* family unit as the central social arena for moral and religious formation. His shaping in theory and practice of such a domain of free social gathering is to be understood as an implicit critique of the nineteenth-century movement to centralize and isolate *Bildung* within the institutions of academy, state, and within the institution of a formalized church (Hall 2009:246). By highlighting the role of the family as an open and productive community of spiritual formation, Schleiermacher shifts the competence to ordinary women and men, making them participatory agents in defining and transmitting the Christian faith. This is a revolutionary move and is far from “banning the spirituality of women to hearth and home” (Massey 1985:136–146).

Second, I admit that Schleiermacher's complementary gender ideology is rather problematic, as many feminist scholars have observed (De Vries 1989; Richardson 1991; Guenther-Gleason 1997; Zorgdrager 2003; Hartlieb 2006; Hall 2009). It is part of the structural polarity of his thinking and cannot be easily removed. Women may have an advantage in the (extended) family but are barred from participation in the academy and the state. This imbalance distorts

²⁵ Obviously, the purifying action and representational action can also be seen as aspects of the deification process.

the full formation of women. Fortunately, however, his ecclesiology is inconsistent; it contains both views of a gendered labor division²⁶ and theological insights that undermine such a labor division. I refer in particular to his insistence on the freedom of individual religious imagination that produces a polyphonic interpretation of the Christ event, as well as to his description of the Spirit of community and ongoing communication (*Gemeingeist*) that kindles the religious imagination. It is hardly conceivable that this would stand still and retain gender barriers in the church.

Third, we can say that Schleiermacher, at the very least, elevates women from *passive* essentialist roles to *active* essentialist roles (Hall 2009:242). He becomes an eminent promoter of the idea of the “Christian home” as a cornerstone for missionary practice. While there is undeniably the tendency toward idealization, feminist missiologist Dana L. Robert does not believe that this has been detrimental to the position of women (Robert 2008:134–165; 2009:125–128). In many cases, the idea of the “Christian home” provided a basis for women’s participation in multiple aspects of mission work, including homemaking, hospitality, teaching, nursing, evangelism, and larger social reforms as well. For indigenous women, dependent on the context, such activities could become new sources of self-esteem and self-reliability. Schleiermacher would definitely support Robert’s proposal to include homemaking, hospitality, nursing, and the instruction of women and children as thus far neglected but relevant women-centered models of mission in the handbooks of mission studies.

Finally, as a response to Jongeneel, who criticized Schleiermacher for his supposed “subordination” of mission to Western Christian ethics, I would like to emphasize that Schleiermacher has not made mission the instrument of some colonialist moral program. Schleiermacher does not sacrifice mission to Christian ethics but, on the contrary, gives a missionary twist to the ethical discourse on the church. He is one of the first theologians to express convincingly the notion of a missional church. The local congregation is the primary missionary body which advances the purpose of God. Mission is inseparably bound up with the nature of the church. The missionary character becomes manifest in worship and a community life that is as inclusive as possible. This full recognition of the missional nature of the church makes Schleiermacher’s ecclesiology and mission theology productive, powerful, and exciting even today.

²⁶ Women would have the charisma for diaconal tasks, whereas men would have the charisma for the proclamation of the Word. See CG §134, 313.

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