

**SCHLEIERMACHER:
A CRITICAL AND
HISTORICAL STUDY**

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Schleiermacher: a critical and historical study by W. B. Selbie

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INTRODUCTION

It is hardly necessary to offer any apology for the appearance of a new book on Schleiermacher in English. In a series which deals with the work of outstanding modern theologians the name of Schleiermacher naturally comes first. He marks a parting of the ways, and to his work most recent movements in philosophical, historical, and dogmatic theology owe both inspiration and direction. This has led in Germany to a great revival of interest in the man and his teaching, and the output of literature on the subject of recent years is bewildering in its variety. If at first his work was often misunderstood and insufficiently appreciated, time has had its revenge, and Schleiermacher may now be said to have come into his own. Among theologians of all schools the profound significance of his teaching is appreciated as never before. Their criticisms show the importance they attach to it, and if they criticize they are equally ready to sit at his feet. Both the followers of Ritschl and the men of the modern positive school, as well as many who are more orthodox in their standpoint, are accustomed to

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quarry in Schleiermacher for the materials for that theological reconstruction which is one of the pressing needs of our time.

In England and among English theologians it must be confessed that Schleiermacher has been too much neglected. His main work has never been translated, though an excellent analysis of it has recently been published in America by Professor G. Cross. The Bibliography attached to this volume shows how scanty are the materials for studying him in English, in spite of the fact that abundant reference has to be made to him in every book on historical and dogmatic theology.

The present work is but an attempt to supply the deficiency. It may be claimed for it that it introduces the man and his theology to English readers in a rather fuller form than has been attempted hitherto. Considerations of space have made it impossible to plan the work on anything like the large scale which Schleiermacher himself loved. But the aim throughout has been, by means of quotation and paraphrase, to let the man speak for himself, while at the same time giving some indication of the place and influence which he occupies in the general development of theology. It is the opinion of the writer that, if the work of theological reconstruction is to be well done, it must be rooted and grounded in history. For this purpose Schleiermacher is all-important. He

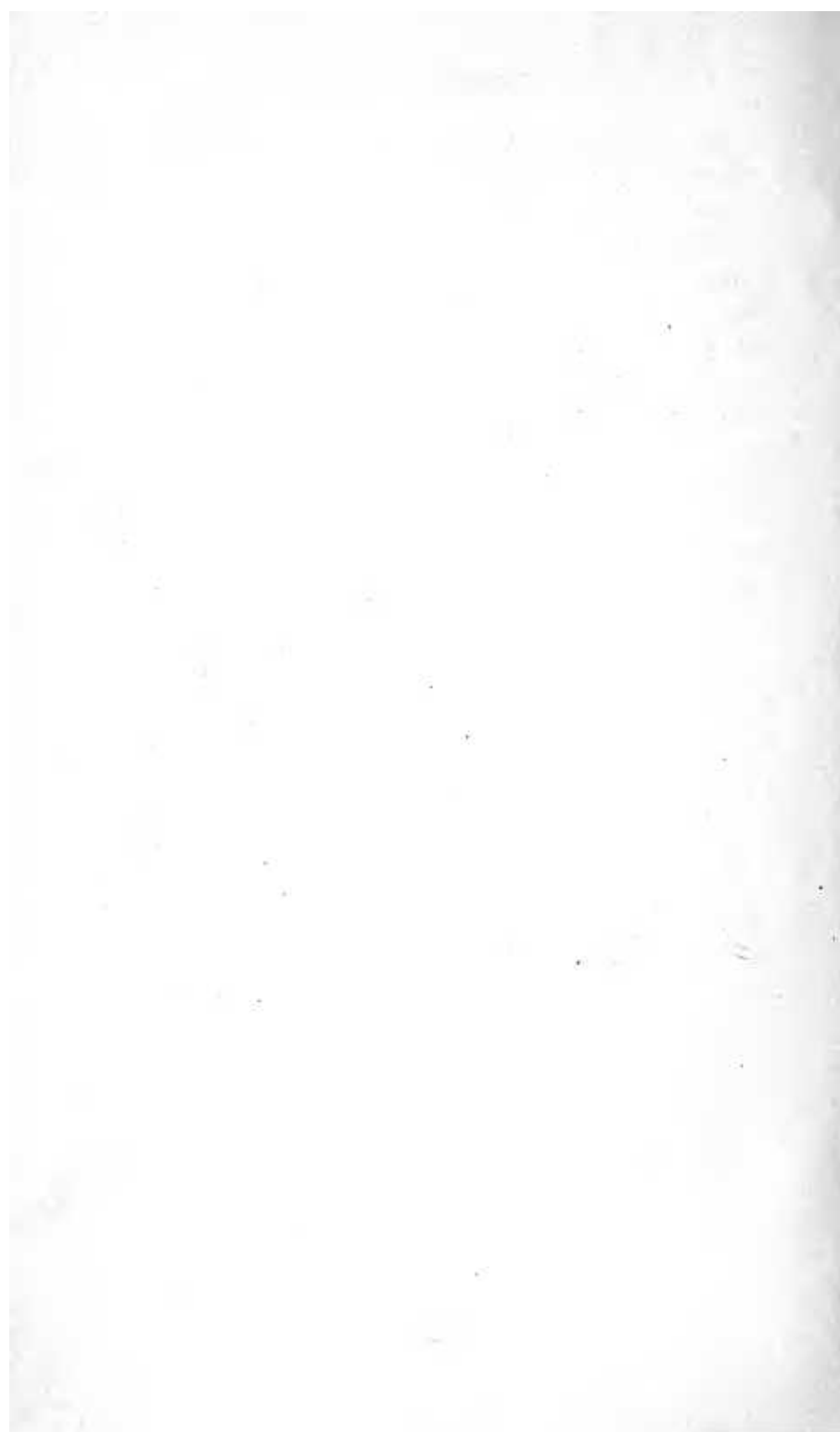
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represents the beginnings of the new method and the new spirit. At the present time doctrinal theology seems to have fallen into undeserved neglect. Criticism and history, indispensable as they are, cannot cover the whole field, and do not fulfil their function save as they lead to some constructive endeavour. In this respect Schleiermacher not only offers a splendid example, but even lays down many of the lines along which the new effort must proceed. It is in the hope that a fuller acquaintance with his work may help towards a better understanding of the present situation, and may give some impulse to the work of doctrinal reconstruction, that this book is issued.

The writer's obligations to many workers in the same field are recognized in the notes and references; but he would especially mention his indebtedness to the excellent translation of the *Speeches on Religion* by Professor Oman and to the summary of the *Glaubenslehre* by Professor Cross already alluded to. He would also thank his friend Principal Franks of Bristol for his kindness in reading the proofs, and for some valuable suggestions.

W. B. SELBIE.

Oxford: November 1912.



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