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# **SCHLEIERMACHER'S THEOLOGY OF SIN AND NATURE**

**AGENCY, VALUE, AND MODERN THEOLOGY**

Daniel J. Pedersen



ROUTLEDGE



# Schleiermacher's Theology of Sin and Nature

"I have long been convinced that Friedrich Schleiermacher's account of original sin – its origin and its transmission – is superior to all others, including those constructed subsequently. To demonstrate the truth of this conviction, however, requires a specialist's knowledge of Schleiermacher combined with close knowledge of the history of philosophy and natural science. Daniel Pedersen has the needed expertise in all three areas and has brought them together to write a stunning book. Not only is it the finest book on Schleiermacher's doctrine of sin available in the English-language; it is, for me, the most significant constructive contribution to the Christian doctrine of sin in years."

– **Bruce McCormack**, Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary

"An excellent and sorely needed contribution to discussion about the origins of sin. Pedersen (re-) confronts readers with Schleiermacher's claim that God is the author of sin and the cause of evil, in ways that open new questions of agency, normativity and tradition. That Pedersen is able to shed light on classical and modern accounts, examine Schleiermacher's position, and explicate implications across a range of doctrines is testimony to the high calibre of his scholarship. In Pedersen's feisty reading, Schleiermacher continues to disrupt familiar conceptions of God and human experience."

– **Esther D. Reed**, Professor of Theological Ethics, University of Exeter

"In this clearly written, accessible, and erudite book Daniel Pedersen provides a new interpretation of Schleiermacher's theology of sin and nature. The book shows how Schleiermacher was firmly committed to traditional theological notions, such as the priority of the good over bad, but that he relied on these notions to reach radical and unconventional conclusions. Notably, he denied that a historical Fall from paradise ever took place. Pedersen shows how Schleiermacher's account is ambitious both in its theological scope and in its engagement with the sciences of the time, including pre-Darwinian evolutionary theories."

– **Helen De Cruz**, Danforth Chair in the Humanities, St. Louis University

"One of the most strikingly modern features of Friedrich Schleiermacher's systematic theology (or Glaubenslehre), *The Christian Faith*, written almost two hundred years

ago, is the treatment of the concept of sin, which lies close to the center of it. We are easily persuaded by Schleiermacher's scathing critique of traditional ideas of a "fall" of our first human ancestors, as I have found over the years in teaching. However, Daniel Pedersen's new book *Schleiermacher on Sin and Nature* identifies a much deeper and more positive line of thought motivating the critique. It is a conception of human history as completely governed by such laws of nature as we learn empirically, but with a salvific purpose of God behind the laws. In that conception there is no "fall" but there is progress, in different degrees in different individuals at different times, toward a religious consciousness of grace. And ultimately, as Pedersen reads Schleiermacher (rightly I think), there is salvation for all, after death – though that is a subject on which Schleiermacher is more reticent. In explaining Schleiermacher's thinking on these topics, Pedersen brings out how it was influenced by engagement with ancient and medieval as well as modern thinkers, notably including Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Spinoza, and Leibniz. I strongly recommend Pedersen's book to anyone interested in engaging with Schleiermacher's thought on these topics. I consider it a major contribution to the history of theology, and also to systematic theology and philosophical theology."

– **Robert Merrihew Adams**, Clark Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, Yale University

"*Schleiermacher's Theology of Sin and Nature* presents an elegant, meticulous, and persuasive account of sin that is compatible with modern natural sciences on the one hand and with ancient notions of value, nature, and agency on the other. By these lights, this father of modern theology begins to look less Kantian, yet still distinctively modern and decidedly ancient. This project thus calls for a reconsideration of the prevailing historiography of modern theology. So too, it exemplifies the potential for fruitful conversations between theology and the natural sciences today. Like Pedersen's first book, *The Eternal Covenant*, this text will enlighten the novice and veteran reader of Schleiermacher and garner the interest of systematic, historical, and moral theologians broadly."

– **Emily Dumler-Winckler**, Professor of Constructive Theology, St. Louis University

"How should Christians think about the origin of sin and evil, in light of evolutionary history? *Schleiermacher's Theology of Sin and Nature* presents a compelling defence of Schleiermacher's theology, as both deeply engaged with ancient and medieval Christianity and as providing unique, constructive resources for today. Pedersen proves a trustworthy and helpful guide through complex theological debates, and his clear and fluid prose makes for an enjoyable read. I thoroughly recommend this volume to both students and researchers in historical and systematic theology."

– **Joanna Leidenhag**, Lecturer in Science-Engaged Theology, University of St. Andrews

"In this provocative work, Daniel Pedersen compels the reader to consider again the rather neglected doctrine of sin in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher. With forensic care and rare insight, he expositis the contours, presuppositions, and implications of Schleiermacher's innovative treatment of hamartiology. But far more than this, Pedersen demonstrates Schleiermacher's account of human agency and failure to lie in unanticipated proximity to traditional Christian accounts and in

remarkable sympathy with ancient philosophical ethics, yet to be radically removed from typical Kantian positions. The result is a work which requires the reader not only to reconsider their evaluation of Schleiermacher's work on sin, but also to rethink the very historiography of modern theology."

– Paul T. Nimmo, King's Chair of Systematic Theology, University of Aberdeen

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), often considered the father of modern theology, is known for his attempt to reconcile traditional Christian doctrines with philosophical criticisms and scientific discoveries. Despite the influence of his work on significant figures like Karl Barth, he has been largely ignored by contemporary theologians. Focusing on Schleiermacher's doctrine of sin, this book demonstrates how Schleiermacher has been not only misinterpreted but also underestimated, and deserves a critical re-examination.

The book approaches Schleiermacher on sin with respect to three themes: one, its power to transcend an intractable metaethical dilemma at the heart of modern debates over sin; two, its intended compatibility with natural science; and three, a re-evaluation of its place, and so Schleiermacher's place, in the history of theology. It solves and dissolves problems arising simultaneously from natural science, confessional theology, ethics, and metaphysics in a single, integrated account using Schleiermacher's understudied thought from his dogmatics *The Christian Faith*. In contrast to the account sometimes given of modern theology as marked by a break with "Greek metaphysics," Schleiermacher's account is shown to stand in stark contrast by retrieving, not excising, ancient thought in service of an account of sin adequate to natural science.

This is a vital rediscovery of a foundational voice in theology. As such, it will greatly appeal to scholars of modern theology, theological ethics, and the history of modern Christianity.

**Daniel J. Pedersen** is Research Fellow in Systematic Theology at the University of Aberdeen, UK. His work focuses on modern theology, especially the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher, and issues in natural science, especially evolution. He is the author of *The Eternal Covenant: Schleiermacher on God and Natural Science* (2017).

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# Schleiermacher's Theology of Sin and Nature

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Daniel J. Pedersen

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**For my parents**





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# Abbreviations

*GL* Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*. Second edition. Edited by Rolf Schäfer. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.



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# 1 Introduction

## Schleiermacher's theology of sin and nature

*Protarchus:* Offer up a prayer, then, and think.

*Socrates:* I am thinking, Protarchus, and I believe that some God has befriended us.

– Plato, *Philebus*

It is often assumed that sin can be unnaturally bad only if it is impossible to give a causally complete account of its beginnings: for to attempt to give such an account is to treat what is bad as good by treating nothingness as being, and so to offer an explanation of vice which is itself vicious.

Almost all traditional Christian accounts of sin share this assumption.<sup>1</sup> And to decline it we are required, it is thought, to deny one or more of its most basic premises: that being as being is good, that good cannot corrupt good, and that, therefore, sin cannot have a natural origin, even in the will.<sup>2</sup> Distinctly modern accounts of sin are typically thought to stand in contrast to these traditional premises. Instead, to be modern means to hold to the contrary: that to be and to be good are not necessarily the same, that value is not ultimately natural and nature not analytically valuable, and that, in the end, the will might even sin of natural necessity.<sup>3</sup>

These competing assumptions define debates over sin in the theology of the last two centuries. Indeed, theology in modernity is marked by the disjunction. A choice must be made between positivism about value and skepticism about nature's relation to the good on the one hand versus the convertibility of the transcendentals and the deficiency of sin's determining causes – often packaged with a burdensome natural history – on the other hand.

The choice between these two alternatives is of such concern because it is of such consequence. In this one topic we find value and goodness, agency and freedom, nature and grace so tightly entwined with one another that even to begin to give a doctrine of sin commits the theologian to far-reaching entailments. The doctrine of sin is, therefore, both fraught and freighted. Its weight and its burden go hand in hand. And the starkness of the choice between characteristically modern accounts and their traditional discontents is a consequence of the genuine insight that so much depends on claims and commitments made here.

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In truth, however, neither kind of account is necessary and neither is sufficient. And it is Friedrich Schleiermacher's theology of sin which shows this to be so. He demonstrates how to transcend this stalemate by giving an account of sin and its origins which is, in principle, causally complete *together with* its relation to the natural world and to the good, including that blessed communion with God to which human nature is divinely ordered – an alternative which requires none of the naivety of the unqualified affirmation of the tradition, or the folly of its flat denial.

This work is about Schleiermacher's theology of sin and its relation to nature and the natural. In it I offer an interpretation and defense of Schleiermacher's incorporation of the best of what is ancient and what is modern to solve or dissolve problems arising simultaneously from natural science, confessional theology, agency, and metaphysics in a single, integrated account. In so doing, Schleiermacher shows us how to rise above some of the most vexing puzzles and problems facing both traditional and modern theological accounts of sin.

### Tradition and modernity, value and nature

Having outlined the problem and Schleiermacher's promise to address it in broad terms, in this section we reexamine the problem more closely. I argue that the fundamentally different conclusions of traditional and modern accounts of sin are, somewhat counterintuitively, the consequence of an important shared assumption. Schleiermacher's refusal of this assumption, and how his declination plays out, is a running theme of this work.

Disagreement about sin and sin's origins appears intractable. On the one hand are theological traditionalists: roughly those subscribing to ancient, medieval, and Reformation-era accounts of sin and sin's origins, broadly in agreement with readings provided by any number of church fathers, though especially the well-developed account given by Augustine of Hippo. On the other hand are theological moderns: those theologians who, since roughly the turn of the nineteenth century, have abandoned the story of the fall of Adam and Eve from paradise as what Augustine called "an account of what actually happened."<sup>4</sup> These include the giants of Christian dogmatics like Barth and Tillich, to those such as theology-and-science specialists, seeking specific coherence between natural history and Christian theology. These categories are not, of course, neat. They are broad characterizations. But each camp agrees that, in general, its opposite is not only in error but also committed to some deeper, abiding conceptual fault.

The greatest of these disagreements is over how to conceive of and relate notions of *value* to notions of *nature*. This axiological and metaphysical dispute connects to sin first through questions of sin's origins and God's good creation, and second through questions of what it means for sin to be *bad*. Which is to say, sin relates nature to value both through origins and through ends. Here is how.

Traditional Christian accounts of the origins of sin hold that all inherit their sin, or tendency to sin, from the original humans, who were themselves sinners by no will but their own. Evil is explained by sin; and sin, in turn, is explained by fault. Such accounts provide enormously powerful explanations of the relation of nature to value.

On such accounts, natures norm. Things are most valuable when they exhibit the power and beauty intrinsic to their kind. That is, *what* things *are* determine what it means to be an excellent individual of a kind *x* – and hence what it means to be a vicious member of the same.<sup>5</sup> The very notion of the species in question implies its proper ends, the ends in reference to which all its activities are well or ill.<sup>6</sup> On such accounts what is natural is, by definition, what is in accordance with a determining terminal good or goods. Therefore, the determinate ends that constitute natures are the good which is logically prior to any privation or deficiency, and descriptions of facts *are always already* value laden. And, so, descriptions of nature and value are, as the medievals put it, *convertible*.<sup>7</sup> Nature and value are, at bottom, one and the same.

This philosophical commitment has theological consequences. In traditional Christian accounts of sin, it is intimately connected with a theological commitment to the goodness of creation: *in the beginning* the world was very good. The convertibility of nature and value results in the logical and chronological priority of the goodness of human nature such that the good deprived must have existed as natural before its privation.<sup>8</sup> Traditional accounts of sin, therefore, require a subscription not only to the priority of the good but also to the stronger claim that logical goodness and chronological goodness parallel one another precisely: what I will call the *principle of parallel priority*.

Accordingly, as much of the tradition has it, not only is sin unnatural but also *no* sin or sinner can have any natural *origin*. For every nature is created, and every created thing traces back to the *divine* nature. Sin, according to the tradition, cannot be so linked. All humans are sinners voluntarily, whether they be the first humans, who were so by no will but their own, or all others, who have inherited their disordered loves.<sup>9</sup> Sin is wholly unnatural, both with respect to our origins and with respect to our ends. It is perversity and nothingness and God has no part in its genesis.<sup>10</sup> The relation of God to sin must be *causally incomplete*. In other words, it must not be possible, in principle, for sin to be traced through any created nature to God. Therefore, supplying any created cause of sin threatens to disrupt this elegant, powerful, but delicate account which secures the normativity of natures and the priority of the good.

A range of findings in natural science propose to supply just such causes of sin and, consequently, threaten this very disruption. Traditional theologians must, on their own grounds, explain the unnaturalness of sin and do so in such a way that is true to the facts of natural history. But what we know from history and the natural sciences counts against any change in human



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nature from an Edenic state – *of any kind*.<sup>11</sup> Thus, theologians are forced to explain sin deprived of the resources that are needed to do the explaining well. Being determined to maintain the priority of the good and the normativity of natures, traditional accounts of sin must struggle to tell a story of a historical fall, or fall-like events (whether individual or social<sup>12</sup>), all because of their commitment to the principle of parallel priority: that, because the chronological and logical priority of the good *must* parallel one another precisely, the priority of the good and normativity of natures can be maintained only if there was, in fact, a sinless human past.

Enter *modern* accounts. In opposition to traditional accounts, they are characterized by theories of sin without recourse to a change in human nature.<sup>13</sup> Two broad sub-strategies emerge. First, there are those accounts which make sin ontologically basic to human beings as created. Reasoning from the premise that what is chronologically prior is natural, they conclude that sin must be natural in the sense that it is *constitutive* of what it means to be a human.<sup>14</sup> Second, there are those accounts which refuse the priority of the good and the normativity of natures altogether. Reasoning in the opposite direction, moderns instead conclude that, because there never was a prior time in which humans were without sin, there is no logically prior norming nature. Often the relation between origins and ends is left unclear. We are sometimes thrown back to freedom (typically conceived in libertarian terms<sup>15</sup>) or, worse, to straightforwardly positivist accounts of the relation of facts to values, which is to say, to the belief that there is no necessary relation.<sup>16</sup> Lost is a robust connection between human nature and human ends. And with that connection lost, many accounts of sin which cohere with natural history, or which offer causally complete accounts of sin's origins, struggle to articulate the relation of nature to the good, or else they neglect the task altogether.

The result is a dilemma. Theologians must either secure an adequate account of value at the expense of a sufficient account of sin's origins (often through dubious claims of natural and/or historical fact), or forfeit an adequate account of value in exchange for a causally complete account of sin. Criticism and defense of these alternatives are the hallmark of disagreement over sin in the last two centuries.

Let us, however, pause for a moment and take notice of something rarely, if ever, recognized. Upon inspection, what we find is that a striking accord lies behind this dilemma. Both kinds of accounts share an assumption about how nature must relate to value – if it is to relate at all. Namely, traditional *and* modern accounts of sin (and their variants) implicitly agree that the normativity of natures and the priority of the good can be sustained only on the further assumption of the *principle of parallel priority*: that the *logical* priority of the good requires the parallel *chronological* priority of the good. That is, both kinds of accounts agree that the unnaturalness of sin must apply equally to both sin's ends *and* its origins, and that, without unnatural origins, appeal cannot be made to the normativity of natures and

the priority of the good. Traditional accounts thus strive to sustain a story of sin's origins which authorizes these further commitments, while modern accounts, declining a change in human nature, also feel obliged (or at least encouraged) to decline traditional axiological commitments. It is thus one and the same assumption that causes the defects of *both* traditional and modern accounts. If this assumption could be abandoned or emended, the debate in its current form could not exist. And if this principle and its alternatives could be made explicit, a way would lie open for two centuries of disagreement to be transcended.

It is on this point that the present work departs most from both romantic accounts of tradition and triumphal accounts of modernity. In fact, it does not support *any* existing meta-narrative of the relation of tradition to modernity because both traditional and modern accounts of sin and nature depend on precisely the same, shared, doubtful premise. It is this basic assumption about how nature, value, and sin *must* relate (if they are to relate) that generates the disagreement about sin and sin's origins that has come to appear not only characteristic of theology in the last two centuries but also a *necessary* characteristic. If it can be shown that this disagreement depends on this premise, and that this premise is dubious, then it can be shown that this disagreement is unnecessary. This is, perhaps strangely, good news to traditionalists and moderns alike. Far from rejecting either (or both), it can be shown that we are entitled to much of the best of the tradition *and* to much of the best of modernity – provided we rightly sort the wheat from the chaff.

This is exactly what Schleiermacher's account of sin and nature shows to be the case: that, in contrast to prevailing wisdom, the affirmation of the unnaturalness of sin with respect to human ends does not entail the denial of its natural origins. Which is to say that sin is a deficiency, but a specific deficiency, and a deficiency with causes sufficient to bring it about. Schleiermacher's account of sin and nature demonstrates just how to sustain this distinction in service of *both* an adequate account of nature *and* an adequate account of value. Hence, Schleiermacher's account of sin shows how to overcome intractable disagreement between traditional and modern accounts of sin by declining the premise which both traditional and modern accounts take to be necessary, the principle of parallel priority.

### Schleiermacher's alternative account

Schleiermacher's account of sin and nature is deliberately fit for this purpose. It is no coincidence that the "father of modern theology" was concerned to criticize and improve older accounts of sin. It is no coincidence that the champion of an "eternal covenant" between science (especially natural science) and the Christian faith was troubled to free the doctrine of sin from scientific inadequacy and to improve it with scientific knowledge. And it is no coincidence that the church theologian and esteemed Plato scholar

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sought to do so without compromising his first principles and the ultimate unity of ethics and physics.<sup>17</sup> Recent accounts of sin of many kinds have not been fully satisfactory because neither traditional nor modern accounts have gotten to the bottom of *both* internal and external challenges together and at once. Schleiermacher has. And he has succeeded because he *sought* to do so without falling into the traps that have plagued so many accounts of sin. His is an account tailored to show the coherence of key Christian claims about sin and nature without sacrificing adequate notions of power, agency, and value, which is to say, without failing to connect sin to nature in respect to both ends and origins. Substantiating and defending these claims is the subject of this work.

The reader, however, could be forgiven for some initial skepticism. Is not Schleiermacher the purveyor of a will undetermined by nature and the natural in a Kantian vein?<sup>18</sup> Further, is his not *the* ancestral account of all socially grounded accounts of sin and sin's origins?<sup>19</sup> And finally, is not his account of the Christian faith in general, and therefore sin in particular, instead meant to *avoid* questions of natural science, and, therefore, the natural origins of sin?<sup>20</sup> On all counts, the answer is no. I say much more about all three in the following chapters, but for now let me address them briefly, in reverse order.

In regard to questions of the relation of the Christian faith to natural science, this work both relies on and supports my interpretation in *The Eternal Covenant*. In that work, I argued that Schleiermacher ultimately intends his "eternal covenant" to unify, not segregate, the Christian faith and natural science, and that this consequence follows from Schleiermacher's first principles as revealed in the concrete particulars of his doctrine of God and his doctrine of creation. Much of my argument in the present work refers to and deepens, and, in some places, depends upon these arguments made in *The Eternal Covenant*.

Three such claims advanced in that work have special relevance here. First, I showed that Schleiermacher gives an account of the God-world distinction where a thing is either part of the mutually determined and mutually determining causal nexus that is the world, or not; and that there is only one thing that is not: God.<sup>21</sup> This entails, according to Schleiermacher, that nothing but God satisfies the criterion of ultimate responsibility central to so many libertarian accounts of free will.<sup>22</sup> Second, I show that Schleiermacher's account of *divine* freedom is even more radical: that God only ever acts of *absolute necessity*, and that this kind of necessity accordingly redounds to all created things and their acts.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, there is never a genuine possibility which is not actualized; and *that*, in turn, implies that Schleiermacher cannot even have conceived of freedom as requiring the principle of alternate possibilities.<sup>24</sup> He cannot have done so because, according to him, *there are no unactualized possibilities*.<sup>25</sup> Finally, I argue that these strong claims are in service of a vision of the unity of ethics and physics, an account where value and power are each necessary conditions of a complete account of reality.<sup>26</sup> These claims serve to support the thesis advanced in the present

work that Schleiermacher gives a causally complete account of sin's origins. And my interpretation of Schleiermacher on sin serves to support the claims of my former work in turn.

Other claims in this present work are purely internally supported. One is that Schleiermacher does not, in fact, offer a socially *grounded* account of sin.<sup>27</sup> I also argue, contrary to some, that it is a virtue of his account that he does not.<sup>28</sup> What makes this position particularly important is that many of the arguments Schleiermacher offers against a fall (either Satanic or Adamic – see Chapters 2 and 3, respectively) rely on premises which are as incompatible with the idea that sin *began* from the wills of large groups of sinners as they are with the idea that sin began from the wills of only one or two. Such arguments therefore also serve to eliminate socially *grounded* (as distinct from socially perpetuated and exacerbated) accounts of sin as adequate substitutes.

I argue, instead, that all sin is, for Schleiermacher, not only of ultimately natural origin but also naturally determined.<sup>29</sup> On the matter of freedom and its compatibility with determination, this work joins a running interpretive dispute in Schleiermacher scholarship. I disagree with one well-established interpretive tradition of reading Schleiermacher *principally* as a kind of Kantian, in particular with respect to matters of freedom, agency, normativity, and value.<sup>30</sup> Since it is a central point of my overall thesis that Schleiermacher's account is superior to others in part because he offers what is in many respects a more traditional (i.e., ancient, not Kantian) account of these matters, sustaining my interpretation is key to my normative claims. Throughout this work I refer to great past thinkers and some of their contemporary adherents whose thought is more recognizably echoed than Kant's, especially the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, and, of course, Plato.

In order to support my claims, this work, like *The Eternal Covenant*, proceeds on the principle that use reveals meaning. That is, when we examine the specific content of Schleiermacher's doctrines and how he takes his arguments to work, and look to what uses he puts them, we come to understand more perfectly what he means by the explicit claims he makes and the underlying assumptions upon which he tacitly depends. This procedure best reveals and coordinates principles and content. Specifically, Schleiermacher's theology of sin, more than any other doctrinal *locus*, reveals his true commitments regarding agency and freedom, and is likewise crucial in understanding his overall account of nature, the natural, normativity, and the value of which sin is privative.

Having defended an interpretation of Schleiermacher's theology of sin through an examination of his first principles and their coherence with his contentful claims and their consequences, I also, where appropriate, defend the adequacy of Schleiermacher's account against objections, real and imagined, and advertise its virtues. This, perhaps more than anything, distinguishes this work from the weight of scholarship on the topic.<sup>31</sup> I aim to

show that Schleiermacher's account is, at least on the whole, superior to other accounts in light of the probable truth of the matter: that sin is as old as human being. And my interpretation of the specifics of Schleiermacher's theology of sin and nature both supports and is supported by this evaluation. What I propose is an account of the relation of sin to nature and the natural as an organic whole: of *Schleiermacher's* means and ends, content and form. If so, this account is able to explain how sin is natural with respect to human origins, yet unnatural with respect to human ends, how a sufficient account of value can be sustained in light of what is an in-principle causally complete account. Since meaning and use are mutually informing, the sufficiency of Schleiermacher's account is evidence of his intent.

The result is an interpretation and defense of Schleiermacher's theology of sin and nature with consequences which go far beyond Schleiermacher scholarship. Schleiermacher, I argue, gives us a satisfactory account of the natural origins of sin while sustaining sin's unnaturalness with respect to human ends by offering an account of the sufficient causes of the deficiency that is sin as part of a teleologically directed providential order. In order to do so, Schleiermacher deploys sophisticated notions of agency, normativity, and value too often ignored or omitted from recent work on sin, especially sin in relation to nature. On these points Schleiermacher's account of sin and nature also provides superior options in dogmatics and theological ethics.

This consequence depends on my reading, which, as noted earlier, promises to join lively debates in Schleiermacher interpretation on matters of agency, freedom, and determination. But on sin specifically, the conversation is remarkably quiet. Only two book-length works on Schleiermacher's doctrine of sin have ever been written.<sup>32</sup> Relatively few articles have joined them.<sup>33</sup> Book sections are brief.<sup>34</sup> My interpretation does not wholly disagree with any one of these accounts, but disagrees in part with nearly all of them, and offers a more complete account than any. Describing Schleiermacher's account of sin well promises to inform our views of his theology as a whole.

This leads to a final aim of this work: an intervention in the historiography of modern theology. Many textbook accounts make mention of Schleiermacher's place at (or near) the head of something called modern theology, a purported movement which stands in contradistinction to the ancient and medieval theology informed largely by Greek natural philosophy and first principles.<sup>35</sup> The advent of modern theology, it is noted, is at least partly due to the authority of the new natural science, but it is also marked by its relation to the thought of Immanuel Kant, whose thought displaces older beliefs and categories.<sup>36</sup> Though both marks can distinguish modern theology, they do not always do so, or do so in the same way. For instance, in relation to natural science, modern theologians might be taken to recoil from questions of science, or they might seek to embrace them. Likewise, modern theologians might be seen as marked by their adoption of Kant, or merely their reaction to him. That nearly all theology after Kant was at least in some respect in response to him is not in dispute, but the degree to which Kant was

affirmed is not consistent. And yet, many of the most important accounts of modern theology at least suggest that, as theological epoch-maker, Schleiermacher stands to Kant largely as enthusiastic adopter. By implication, modern theology is itself largely marked by the embrace of Kantian categories and commitments. And so, accounts of modern theology often begin with Schleiermacher and end with Ritschl – literally or proverbially.<sup>37</sup>

The interpretation I offer stands against this trajectory of historiographical tradition. This work showcases Schleiermacher's *arguments*. Schleiermacher's arguments are evidence of his commitments. His commitments locate his position in the pantheon of theologians. This location shows that much historiography is stereotyped and that Schleiermacher's place in the history of doctrine is often seen in error in two respects.

In the first respect, I show that Schleiermacher does not, and indeed cannot, subscribe to a libertarian account of the will, so characteristic of Kant and his later followers. This must be the case, I show, given Schleiermacher's criticism of traditional accounts of the fall of the Devil and the fall of Adam – criticism that relies on his own account of agents always and ever acting voluntarily *for antecedent sufficient reasons*. I combine this with Schleiermacher's explicit claims on the matter to demonstrate that, in fact, Schleiermacher does not hold any distinctly Kantian notion of freedom and agency, but rather follows that tradition of thinking about the will traced through thinkers like Spinoza, Leibniz, and Aquinas to Aristotle and Plato.

In the second respect, I show that Schleiermacher's account of sin is distinct from purely ontologically basic accounts. By ontologically basic accounts I mean those which appeal to fundamental conditions of creatureliness or finitude (or the like) as the cause of sin. Though often different in detail, these accounts all hold in common the implication that, because sin is inevitable, it is also *naturally necessary*. And such accounts face objections regarding the naturalness of sin which are at least as dire as the objections to any account of sin which depends on an indeterminate will (though, ultimately, the two kinds of accounts merge: the will simply becomes another ontological basis of sin). I demonstrate the contrast with Schleiermacher's account by emphasizing the deficient or privative account of sin he explicitly describes and necessarily implies. Sin is not natural, but is instead an inhibited, hindered, or arrested condition of humans' proper ends. By distinguishing Schleiermacher's account from ontologically basic accounts, I show that Schleiermacher also cannot be located in what is often taken to be the main alternative to the tradition of the indeterminate will as the ultimate origin of sin.

In response to both types of misreading of Schleiermacher, I argue that Schleiermacher does not belong clearly or straightforwardly to *any* existing story of modern theology, and that his account of sin and nature makes this evident. This is above all because Schleiermacher's way of being modern, though doubtlessly in light of Kant in some ways, and importantly formed