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GOOD WILL HUNTING: ADOLF SCHLATTER ON ORGANIC VOLITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

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Swiss theologian Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938) was not satisfied with how the Reformers and their successors interpreted the NT account of sanctification.[1] One of Schlatter's declared goals was therefore, in the light of the biblical data, to identify and correct what he called "shortcomings" (*Verkürzungen*) in traditional Reformation and contemporary Pietist views of sanctification. I believe that it is worth listening to Schlatter's voice from the past, in particular with a view to the practical implications of the doctrine both for the individual Christian and for the church. Before we turn to Schlatter's proposal, it might be helpful to briefly mention a few facts about his life and theology as a background for our reflections. Adolf Schlatter is one of the most neglected[2] and yet at the same time most prolific[3] and influential theologians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[4] Lecturing for a hundred consecutive semesters in Bern (1881–88), Greifswald (1888–93), Berlin (1893–98), and Tübingen (1898–1930), Schlatter influenced several generations of pastors and theologians. A short list of some of his students reads like a who's who of twentieth-century German Protestant theology: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Erich Seeberg, Paul Althaus, Paul Tillich, Ernst Käsemann, and Otto Michel, to name but a few. Schlatter was born in 1852 in St. Gallen into a family with a strong Reformed heritage.[5]

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[1] The present contribution is the modified version of a paper originally presented at the 14th Edinburgh Conference in Christian Dogmatics, New College, University of Edinburgh, August 31, 2011.

[2] Markus Bockmuehl called Schlatter "brilliant but widely ignored." *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 218, n. 1. For some reasons for this neglect see Mark Noll's "Foreword" to *Adolf Schlatter: A Biography of Germany's Premier Biblical Theologian* by Werner Neuer (trans. Robert W. Yarbrough; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 7–8; and Ernst Käsemann, "Neutestamentliche Fragen von heute," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen, II* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964) 11–31.

[3] Schlatter published more than 400 works in a wide variety of disciplines. His literary output covers linguistic studies, church history, dogmatics, ethics, philosophy, NT commentaries, and devotional works.

[4] For a short introduction to Schlatter's life and theology, see Peter Stuhlmacher's essay in Martin Greschat, ed., *Theologen des Protestantismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert II* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978) chap. 1, 219–40. Robert Yarbrough has translated Werner Neuer's short biography, *Adolf Schlatter: A Biography of Germany's Premier Biblical Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995). Werner Neuer's extensive Schlatter biography is unfortunately still untranslated: *Adolf Schlatter: Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1996).

[5] His parents, though both devout Christians, were confessionally divided. While his mother was loyal to the Reformed state church (*Landeskirche*), his father was disillusioned

Growing up in the context of the Swiss revival movement,[6] Schlatter encountered an alternative movement in school and at university. The aftermath of the *Aufklärung* and German Idealism had left its mark in the classroom as well as in the lecture hall. Throughout his studies and his theological career, Schlatter would find himself in the line of fire between the opposing camps of conservative Pietism and liberal Rationalism, without clearly belonging to either of these groups.[7] In the course of his life, Schlatter remained confessionally open and theologically independent, showing no reservations towards representatives of any theological *couleur*. Schlatter challenged his contemporaries by formulating a fresh theological design. He developed an empirical-realist approach to theology (*Wahrnehmungstheologie*, *Theologie der Tatsachen*), in which he moves from exegetical observation (*Sehakt*; NT studies) to dogmatic elaboration (*Denkakt*; Systematic Theology) and existential assimilation (*Lebensakt*; ethics). In doing so, he aimed to provide a comprehensive approach to theology. Schlatter aspired to view all reality as an integrated whole, thereby pursuing a holistic trajectory, what he called the *Richtung auf das Ganze*.[8] He felt compelled to employ this holistic and irenic theological approach because the Reformers, as he perceived it, had left a legacy of dualisms. Though clearly a son of the Reformation, Schlatter complained that the Reformers did not go far enough, leaving many crucial issues unresolved, such as the question of sanctification.[9] We shall, first, address

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with the liberal tendencies in the Swiss *Landeskirche* and consequently broke with it, joining an evangelical free church. The parental division clearly left a mark on Schlatter, who, for the rest of his life, took an ecumenical perspective, emphasizing the unifying elements of the Christian tradition.

[6] Under the term revival movement (*Erweckungsbewegung*), we subsume the religiously inspired efforts of restoration and renewal in Protestant European and North American territories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. See Ulrich Gäbler, "Erweckungsbewegung," in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon. Internationale Enzyklopädie* (vol. 1; 3d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) 1081–88. Cf. Erich Beyreuther, "Erweckungsbewegung," in *RGG* II (3d ed.) 621–29; and Kurt Dietrich Schmidt, *Kirchengeschichte* (9th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990) 459–69.

[7] Having studied in Bern and in Tübingen, where he particularly profited from Johann Tobias Beck's (1804–1878) teaching, Schlatter took up his academic career in Bern as a private lecturer in 1880. Eight years later, Schlatter received a call to Greifswald, where he became one of the main proponents of the positive Greifswald school that aimed to counter the influence of Ritschlian theology in the German Protestant faculties. See Eckard Lessing, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen evangelischen Theologie von Albrecht Ritschl bis zur Gegenwart,* Band 1: *1870 bis 1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000) 43–49, 116–21. In 1893, Schlatter was called to a systematic theology chair at the University of Berlin in order to counterbalance the predominantly liberal faculty, represented by the influential Adolf von Harnack, as a result of the so-called *Apostolikumsstreit*, initiated by von Harnack's critical publication in the *Christliche Welt* (see Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter* 292–93). A few years later, in 1898, Schlatter accepted the call to the University of Tübingen, where he would live and teach for the rest of his life for nearly four decades until his death in 1938.

[8] *Das christliche Dogma* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1911) 13; 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1923) 19.

[9] See *Rückblick auf meine Lebensarbeit* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977) 174–75; "Adolf Schlatter: Selbstdarstellungen," in *Die Religionswissenschaft in Selbstdarstellungen* (ed. Erich Stange; Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1925) 165–67; *Das christliche Dogma* 339, 370; 423–25, 577, 593–94; 599–600.

Schlatter's critique of the traditional approaches which will then, second, lead us to Schlatter's own proposal of "organic volitional sanctification."

I. TOWARD A COMPLETION OF SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is a recurrent theme in Schlatter's publications, lectures and speeches.[10] From an early lexicon entry in 1885[11] to major journal articles,[12] the subject pervades his NT works,[13] his *Dogma*,[14] and his ethics.[15] As Schlatter summarized his views in three major essays, some years ago reprinted in a collection by Schlatter scholar Werner Neuer,[16] we will focus on these while also including relevant material from other sources when necessary. Reading Schlatter's works, one hears consistently his call for a completion of the Reformation, a *Vollendung der Reformation*,[17] in particular in respect of its treatment of sanctification. At this point, one must admit that Schlatter was, unfortunately, somewhat unspecific and sometimes even unfair in his critique of the Reformers.[18] While, for example, Schlatter, in the collection *Der Dienst des Christen*, mentions Quenstedt, Calvin, Luther, Zwingli, and many others, he does so in a relatively unsystematic way and engages with them only in broad terms. One would certainly have wished for more detailed interaction. In my opinion, Schlatter left his critique intentionally a bit obscure because he did not want to take a clear stand for either Calvin or Luther. Schlatter once wrote, "I did not waste one minute of my life for the continuation of the struggle [*Zank*] between Lutherans and Calvinists."[19] Schlatter often

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[10] See, e.g., *Das Gott wohlgefällige Opfer. Vier Reden von Prof. D. Ad. Schlatter in Tübingen* (Velbert: Freizeiten-Verlag, n.d., probably 1928); "Die Dienstpflicht des Christen in der apostolischen Gemeinde" (Referat auf der Tagung der Südwestdeutschen Konferenz für Innere Mission, Tübingen, 7/10/1929; Stuttgart: Quell-Verlag der Ev. Gesellschaft, 1929).

[11] "Wille, Wollen." *Calwer Bibellexikon* (1885) 1011–12.

[12] Sanctification is the theme of the first issue of the newly founded theological journal, *Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie* (1897), "Der Dienst des Christen in der älteren Dogmatik," *BFChTh* 1/1 (1897).

[13] *The Theology of the Apostles*: *The Development of New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 248–50.

[14] *Das christliche Dogma* 464–74.

[15] *Die christliche Ethik* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1914; 3d ed. Stuttgart: Calwer, 1929) 45–54, 64–135, 249–52, 321–23, 374–80.

[16] *Der Dienst des Christen: Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Liebe* (ed. Werner Neuer; Giessen/Basel: Brunnen, 1991). This collection contains the following material: "Der Dienst des Christen in der älteren Dogmatik," *BFChTh* 1/1 (1897); "Noch ein Wort über den christlichen Dienst," *BFChTh* 9/6 (1905) 47–83; "Die Dienstpflicht des Christen in der apostolischen Gemeinde." Throughout this essay we will refer to both sets of page numbers.

[17] "Selbstdarstellungen" 150, 165–67.

[18] Particularly with regards to Luther, as Paul Althaus observed, "Adolf Schlatters Gabe an die systematische Theologie," in *Adolf Schlatter: Gedächtnisheft der Deutschen Theologie* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938) 32–33; see also by the same author, "Adolf Schlatters Verhältnis zur Theologie Luthers," *ZSTh* 22/3 (1953) 245–56. Cf. Hans-Martin Rieger, "'Vollendung der Reformation': Adolf Schlatters Lutherkritik im Kontext seiner Gesamtperspektive," *KD* 46/4 (2000) 318–36.

[19] *Erlebtes*: *Erzählt von D. Adolf Schlatter* (Berlin, 1924; 5th ed Berlin: Furche, 1929) 50.

refers to the Reformers and the mindset of their successors generally as "the ancients" (*die Alten*) which makes it obviously difficult to determine who he had in mind. It seems to me that Schlatter's main problem with the Reformers' take on the doctrine of sanctification was not so much its basic doctrinal composition but its lack of pragmatic ethical ramifications. Thus, Schlatter agrees with Calvin's *duplex gratia deus*, no justification without holiness, and he agrees with Luther's *sola fide* and the notion that the faith alone that justifies never remains alone. Yet, the Reformers, says Schlatter, failed to break down what the concrete ethical implications were for both the individual Christian and the Christian church. This, according to Schlatter, led inevitably to a reduced, imbalanced, and passive interpretation of the doctrine by their successors, such as the Pietists.

In what follows we shall, first, briefly consider Schlatter's critique, which will lead us, second, to the illustration of his pragmatic, organic-volitional approach to sanctification. Let us then, first, consider three main points of critique, namely, (1) an imbalanced understanding of the relation between justification and sanctification; (2) Schlatter's rejection of any reduced versions of sanctification; and (3) his opposition to a merely passive, quietistic-Pietistic interpretation of the doctrine.

1. One grace fits all: The balance of justification and sanctification. Schlatter clearly appreciates Martin Luther's emphasis on justification by faith alone. While he agrees with Luther's *sola fide* and asserts that the faith that justifies is never alone, he regrets that the Reformer had not sufficiently emphasized this latter aspect of sanctification.[20] According to Schlatter, this led to an unfortunate post-Reformation meandering of dualisms between justification and sanctification, faith and works, Paul and James, dogmatics and ethics, which Schlatter aimed to channel into a harmonious and holistic riverbed. Schlatter observed in contemporary Pietistic circles the tendency to overemphasize (and sometimes romanticize) justification at the expense of sanctification.[21] Schlatter laments that post-Reformation orthodoxy had turned justification into an abstraction which resulted in what he calls "dull piety" (*träge Frömmigkeit*)[22] and what Schlatter's student Dietrich Bonhoeffer would later call "cheap grace" (*billige Gnade*).[23] "Anybody who considers the gospel exclusively as the offer of justification," argues Schlatter, "entices us to that dull piety that cannot think, that cannot love, that does not care to act, but merely wants to be

[20] "What sanctification was," Schlatter complains, "remained vague [*unbestimmter*]." "Dienst des Christen" 36 [*Dienst des Christen* 51]. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. Cf. Otto Weber's similar observations in his *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, Vol. 2 (3d ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1977) 355–70.

[21] *Das christliche Dogma* 468.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM, 1959) 3.

blessed through faith while it at the same time loses [faith] thereby."[24] While emphasizing the active character of sanctification, Schlatter does not make the mistake of playing sanctification against justification.[25] He thus resisted claims, in particular from the holiness movement, to superordinate sanctification over justification by calling for a second experience, a subsequent baptism in the Spirit and the like.[26] In contrast to these tendencies, Schlatter clearly argues for a balanced, holistic approach, dismissing any artificial and abstract fragmentations of God's grace into several isolated parts.[27] Schlatter would most likely have disagreed with Reformed theologians such as Louis Berkhof or John Murray, who, to his mind, (over)emphasized the distinctiveness and separateness of justification and sanctification,[28] while he would have at the same time agreed with his student Karl Barth, who, in a similar way, points to the unifying aspects of the doctrines.[29] Over against what he regarded as imbalanced approaches, Schlatter posits his own holistic proposal pointing to the common root of justification and sanctification, namely divine grace. While the processes must not be confused or conflated, they are clearly related,[30] rooted in the one, single grace of God.[31] Schlatter firmly believes that sanctification is *not* a second-hand, "lesser" grace, which "as so happens" follows on justification. Neither is sanctification the great second experience of grace that could trump justification. Justification *and* sanctification, gospel *and* obedience, love *and*

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[24] *Das christliche Dogma*, 468-469. Cf. Stephen F. Dintaman's comments in *Creative Grace: Faith and History in the Theology of Adolf Schlatter* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) 152.

[25] Karl Barth hints at this active notion of sanctification when he defines it as the overcoming of human *Trägheit* (*KD* IV/1, 113) and as *tätiges Sein* (ibid. 160).

[26] *Das christliche Dogma* 469.

[27] Schlatter underlines that, in light of the apostle Paul's writings, one must neither separate nor isolate justification from sanctification. See *Das christliche Dogma* 460. Cf. Hans-Martin Rieger, *Adolf Schlatters Rechtfertigungslehre und die Möglichkeit ökumenischer Verständigung* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 2000) 150–62. Thus, Schlatter does not find the classic notion of an *ordo salutis* particularly helpful, as Dane Ortlund correctly argues. See Ortlund, "The Longing of Love: Faith and Obedience in the Thought of Adolf Schlatter," *Them* 33/2 (2008) 40. For a similar critique see Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, Vol. 2, 379 and Karl Barth, *KD* IV/2, 568–69, 574.

[28] Dane Ortlund rightly points to this in his essay, "The Longing of Love: Faith and Obedience in the Thought of Adolf Schlatter" 40. Ortlund refers to Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) 79–80; and Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) 536–37. See also Berkhof's *Manual of Reformed Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1933) 256–57; and Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966) 520.

[29] With a view to the relation between justification and sanctification, Barth notes that "our knowledge can and may and must be a knowledge of the one totality of the reconciling action of God, of the one whole and undivided Jesus Christ, and of His one grace." *CD* IV/2, 502 (compare the German original in *KD* IV/2, 568).

[30] *Das christliche Dogma* 468.

[31] Ibid.

morals, faith *and* works are two dimensions of the one single gift of grace.[32] Schlatter contends that

> Paul's juxtaposition of justification and reconciliation with God's sanctifying work does not suggest that he conceived of the divine gift as divided in parts, such as that justification made help possible without actually granting it, so that it required sanctification as the second exercise of divine grace in order to make that grace effective. Paul sees in God's justifying verdict that divine will that removes everything that separates us from God and grants as our aim everything that is assigned to us . . . . A holy person is not more than a righteous person, because there are no righteous persons whom God rejects and fails to include in his love.[33]

Schlatter is convinced that God's single gift of justification *and* sanctification is as such "perfect grace" (*vollkommene Gnade*)[34] and thereby, because it is *divine* grace, it is by definition also efficacious grace which achieves its divine purpose. "The piety Jesus gave to his disciples," notes Schlatter, "did not merely consist of receiving or of working but of both and this in such a way that one was conditioned by the other. Only by what the disciple received was he able to do his work, and only by doing his work did he possess what he received."[35] Schlatter basically argues that the reception of grace in salvation coincides with an organic volitional activation of the Christian, what Schlatter calls *Dienst* (service), or *Gottesdienst* (service to God, worship). The performance of *Gottesdienst* is therefore not only an indication of the possession of grace, as classic Reformed dogmatics describes it, but is *de facto* possession of grace.

> Those functions that I summarized under "service" [*Dienst*], do not come after, as I see it, the reception of salvation . . . rather in its activation actually consists the bestowal of salvation and in its consummation consists its possession. That I am enabled and free to serve, is, what Christ has bought for me; that I love and act, is, what the Holy Spirit presents to me . . . . All these are not employments . . . of a commodity already present in me . . . thereby not an addition to salvation, but in itself salvation, not an appendix to God's gift, but in itself God's gift.[36]

Having underlined the indissoluble connection between justification and sanctification we move on to Schlatter's investigation of what he considers two further shortcomings in the classic approach to sanctification.

2. *Sanctification redux? Restoration and re-volition.* While Schlatter agrees with the Reformed tradition that emphasizes sanctification as mortification of sin,[37] this does not go far enough for his taste.[38] To

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[32] "Noch ein Wort" 52 [*Dienst des Christen* 98].

[33] *Theology of the Apostles* 248. See also *Das christliche Dogma* 469.

[34] *Das christliche Dogma* 472.

[35] *The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 238.

[36] "Noch ein Wort" 51–52 [*Dienst des Christen* 97–98].

[37] Ibid. 70 [ibid. 112].

describe sanctification as a continuous mortification of sin (*Abwehr von Sünde*), says Schlatter, is a negative definition of a positive subject, which means that one approaches sanctification from the wrong end.

> Sanctification has thereby merely a defensive denotation . . . that is why the concept of sanctification as treated by the ancients [*die Alten*, i.e., Reformers] retains a tendency to negative formulae: how does one sanctify oneself? By not sinning; Holiness is sinlessness, and, as Calvin and after him the Heidelberg Catechism has simply put it, repentance is sanctification. [39]

Schlatter wishes to correct this. Yes, mortification of and freedom from sin are essential. However, what the Reformers and their Puritan-Pietistic posterity overlooked, argues Schlatter, is that we are being freed from the sinful will only through the good will that is implanted in us. In other words, the extinction of sinful volition and action works only through the establishment of godly volition and action.

> [W]e are being freed from the evil will only through the good will. With the mandate of "not sinning" we are not sufficiently instructed. We can only stop sinning by doing what is right. This is what the sanctifying grace of God consists in: it grants us the vocation [*Beruf*], shows us the duty [*Pflicht*] and to this end gives us the will and the ability.[40]

The negation of sin, as Schlatter put it concisely, is possible only from the position in grace.[41] Echoing the Pauline formula, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21 NIV), Schlatter maintains that "only with the correct Yes do we have the correct No, only with the right volition the right non-volition."[42] On a similar note, Schlatter criticizes that the tradition is backward oriented,[43] by focusing, negatively, on the avoidance of sin and the extinction of bad behavior in order to arrive—merely—at a kind of homoeostasis, a restoration of the individual. This is not enough for Schlatter. The recovery of the sinful patient is not sufficient. God's grace wants and does much more. In the more limited understanding, writes Schlatter,

> Sanctification is thereby comparable with the recovery of a patient who is being restored to his previous condition. In this case, the

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[38] "Selbstdarstellungen" 166–67.

[39] "Dienst des Christen" 44–45 [*Dienst des Christen* 59].

[40] *Das christliche Dogma* 470.

[41] Schlatter writes, "We achieve both in thinking and willing the negation only through the position. I can destroy a bad thought only by a true thought, leave an evil will only by a good will, eliminate an evil action only by good acts. In order to seal myself off against sin, I must come to God; in order to withdraw from it, I must give myself to God, in order to become free there, I must become bound here. There is no freedom from sin other than through bondage to righteousness and to God. That is exactly why, to my mind, repentance and faith, and, repentance and love, are intricately connected." "Noch ein Wort" 72 [*Dienst des Christen* 113].

[42] "Dienst des Christen" 29 [*Dienst des Christen* 45].

[43] Ibid. 45 [ibid. 60].

> abundance of divine grace is reduced [*verkürzt*]. It does not call us to look backwards, but forwards and gives us before and above us a goal to which we move with powerful activity.[44]

Schlatter does not advocate a mere restoration but, what one could call "re-volition," a re-calibration of our human will. The goal should be human activity through divine enablement rather than lethargy through human attempts at avoiding sin.

> The Pauline phrase: "I can do all things" ranks higher; because it talks about a positive ability, an empowerment that sets goals for the actor, not only of unconstraint [*Ungebundenheit*], but mobility, not only about the removal of the arrestive chain, but of the right and courage towards the deed, not only of the security from the foreign attack, but of the ability to intervene in the course of events.[45]

Thus, Schlatter highlights the intrinsic positive effects of God's sanctifying grace such as the formation of a good volition that puts the saints in action. With this, we have touched upon our next point, namely, Schlatter's critique of, what he calls, "Pietistic Quietism."

3. *Pietistic quietism? The dialectic of reception and action.* In his publications and speeches, Schlatter repeatedly underlines that a distorted understanding of sanctification leads to a "listless passivity" (*unbewegliche Ruhe*),[46] to a passive believer and a passive church.[47] Schlatter caricatures the passive "pious quietist" as one who regards the Christian life as "a journey of tears until we reach a blessed death."[48] In contrast, the energetic Swiss theologian focuses on the active human being who has a positive calling (*positiven Beruf*)[49] and actively performs the *Gottesdienst* to the glory of God. Schlatter complains that the Reformers focused primarily on God as the giver of grace while the object and recipient of this grace remained a passive, fuzzy figure on the stage of the 'theatre of God.'[50] "The divine action," complains Schlatter, "is presented as the annihilation of the human action."[51] "God does everything by himself and the glory of his revelation is supposed to consist in the fact that the human being dissolves through it to nothing."[52] Schlatter thus embraces a dialectic of passivity *and* activity in the believer, who not only receives passively but also acts vigorously according to the grace given to him.

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[44] *Das christliche Dogma* 470.

[45] "Dienst des Christen" 61 [*Dienst des Christen* 74–75].

[46] "Noch ein Wort" 68 [*Dienst des Christen* 110].

[47] Ibid. 69 [ibid.].

[48] Quoted in Stephen F. Dintaman, *Creative Grace* 163, n. 5. In that respect, Karl Barth uses a similar language when he speaks of a "lazy quietism" (*faulen Quietismus*). *KD* IV/2, 571.

[49] "Noch ein Wort" 68 [*Dienst des Christen* 110].

[50] He laments that "their gaze is fixed on God as the giver of grace, on Christ, on God, on what he does for us; the picture of the recipient remains rather obscure." "Dienst des Christen" 5 [*Dienst des Christen* 22].

[51] "Dienst des Christen" 64 [*Dienst des Christen* 78].

[52] Ibid. 65 [ibid. 78].

> The gaze to God and his grace works in our volition both calming and moving, appeasing, satisfying our quest, as in God's grace, gift and deed lies everything that we need and as we know that all this is effective for us through faith, yet, at the same time also moving, arousing our aspiration, because God's grace, gift and deed grants our will the goal and the power . . . and enables us to [do] the deed. In that faith works both in equal measure calming and moving . . . lies the health of our Christian life. [53]

Schlatter thereby supplements the Reformation emphasis on passive, quietistic grace[54] with his emphasis on activating, efficacious divine grace. The individual is neither only passive nor only active, but lives in the simultaneity of passivity in the reception and activity of the consummation of divine sanctifying grace.[55] With this balanced dialectic of passivity and activity, Schlatter aims to resolve the latent dualism between passive faith and active works, passive dogmatics and active ethics, that weakened, as he thought, contemporary theology and church.[56] Corresponding to the endeavor to attribute justification and sanctification to the one root of God's grace, Schlatter argues that God's sanctifying grace is efficient, in that it both evokes faith and simultaneously moves human beings into action.[57] Both reception and action are rooted in the divine creative grace. "That is why all true faith is God's gift and work in us," notes Schlatter. "We do not think until God has spoken to us, we want only after God has wanted, and we act only then, when God has acted in us."[58] The Christian therefore lives in the dialectic and duality—not dualism!—of *Rezeption* through faith[59] and *Aktion* through the performance of the concrete volitional act, thus being an active instrument of God's sanctifying grace.[60]

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[53] Ibid., 4 [ibid. 21].

[54] "Dienst des Christen" 65 [*Dienst des Christen* 78].

[55] Schlatter notes that "[g]race seeks and creates the recipient and thereby puts us into passivity; yet, it makes us seriously recipients, so that it holds us, endues us und moves us into vitality. There is therefore no reception of the divine gift when this gift has not previously caused its activity within us, nor is there an activity that has not before itself, as its foundation, and behind itself, as its fruit and its goal, the reception of the divine gift. "Noch ein Wort" 54 [*Dienst des Christen* 100].

[56] Schlatter opposed any dualistic attempts that could lead to a "separation of the gospel into 'dogmatics' and 'ethics.'" "Dienst des Christen" 56 [*Dienst des Christen* 70].

[57] The central question therefore is, "does the word of God only approach us or does it pervade us?" "Dienst des Christen" 56 [*Dienst des Christen* 70].

[58] "Noch ein Wort" 58 [*Dienst des Christen* 102].

[59] The notion of "faith" is central for Schlatter's theology. See, for instance, his first major publication on "Faith in the New Testament," *Der Glaube im Neuen Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1885). Schlatter is convinced that while faith is "an act of the subject," it is clearly, as a gift from God, a receptive act ("Noch ein Wort" 57; *Dienst des Christen* 102). Faith is therefore not such much an act of our human will but a decision upon our will, notes Schlatter ("Noch ein Wort" 60; *Dienst des Christen* 104).

[60] Schlatter stresses that it is "therefore impossible that one could regard oneself only as the recipient of grace but not at the same time as its instrument." "Dienst des Christen" 58–59 [*Dienst des Christen* 72].

Faith and works are therefore not at odds but two sides of the same coin.[61]

> The New Testament . . . does not know a recipient of grace who is not at the same time its instrument; it does not know any participation in Christ and through him in the Spirit and in God that is not also participation in his works. Now, the New Testament does not know a resting, merely existing [*nur seienden*] Christ; its Christ is the performer of the divine work. It therefore does not know any reception of the image of Christ that would consist in any other thing than participation in his salvific work.[62]

This last quote is significant insofar as it reveals how close Schlatter envisages the relationship to be between Christology and sanctification. This is noteworthy as Schlatter attributes the Reformers' neglect of the active aspect of sanctification to an insufficient Christology. He identifies a poor understanding of Christ's humanity as the root of the Reformation's shortcomings. "Jesus' humanity remained in passivity," remarks Schlatter.

> What is added to the divinity [of Christ] with its incarnation [*Menschwerdung*] . . . is its ability to suffer. In suffering lies the whole purpose of Christ's human existence. Any positive gift and grace remains in contrast to that exclusively the deed of the Godhead in him.[63]

This distorted Christological picture led, according to Schlatter, to the selectively passive depiction of the believer still prevalent in contemporary Pietism. In contrast, Schlatter argues that Jesus Christ's humanity is in fact essential for a right understanding of human sanctification, because only through Jesus' incarnation does worship (*Gottesdienst*) become for him (and for us) possible.

> It remained more difficult for them [the Reformers], to appreciate Jesus' history also towards its human side in relation to us as a giving, effective deed. Still, what characterizes history is not what is proper to the Godhead, but what the human being does through God and for God, that creates history and that results in worship.[64]

Jesus' worship of God as incarnate, set in concrete history, thus has implications for humanity. With his own worship (*Jesu Gottesdienst*) on the cross, Jesus Christ paves the way for human worship of God, which, basically, is sanctification; as Schlatter explains, service/worship (*Dienst/Gottesdienst*) *is* the goal of sanctifying grace.[65] Sanctification is thus human worship of

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[61] Arguing for a holistic salvific perspective, Schlatter underlines that faith and works are inseparably connected; he speaks of the "indissoluble relation between reception and action, between faith and work." "Noch ein Wort" 57 [*Dienst des Christen* 101].

[62] "Dienstpflicht des Christen" 5–6 [*Dienst des Christen* 124].

[63] "Dienst des Christen" 67–68 [*Dienst des Christen* 81].

[64] "Dienst des Christen" 68 [ibid.].

[65] Ethics, that is, lived-out sanctification, is the goal of dogmatics. In that respect, Schlatter proves to be clearly influenced by the credo of his teacher Beck, "Go and do what you have heard." *Die christliche Liebeslehre. Erste Abtheilung* (Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1872) 8. As Schlatter recalls, Beck combined the conservation (*Bewahrung*) of the given word together

God through Jesus Christ.[66] We will return to the importance of Christology for sanctification, in particular with regards to Christ's divinity, in due course.

Our observations so far suggest that Schlatter wanted to achieve two things: taking the human element in sanctification, in particular, human volition, seriously without neglecting the divine element, the triune God as the giver of grace. As Schlatter sets these two aspects in relation to each other, he arrives at his organic, volitional model of sanctification. Let us, then, in this order examine Schlatter's approach in more detail by looking, first, at human volition; second, at trinitarian action; and third, at their interaction in organic volitional sanctification.

II. SCHLATTER ON ORGANIC VOLITIONAL SANCTIFICATION

1. Sanctification and anthropology: Renewal of human volition. Schlatter does theology with a clear anthropological reference point.[67] Pursuing an empirical-realist trajectory, he was convinced that one had to observe the given facts, that is, what it means to be human (anthropology), in order to be able to understand the intervening divine action (trinitarian theology), and as a result what is means to be a sanctified Christian (soteriology).[68] It was Schlatter's declared intention to correct what he observed to be a somewhat negative image of anthropology in theological history. He particularly felt that the theological tradition overemphasized the sinfulness of human nature while neglecting the fact that humanity still displays the glory of God as being created in his image.[69] Representing

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with the fulfillment of the ethical norm ("J. T. Becks theologische Arbeit," *BFChTh* 8/4 [1904] 38), which resulted in the "lived-out word of Scripture [*gelebtes Schriftwort*]" (ibid. 28). Beck indeed sees the "Christian teaching science as an organic union of dogmatics and ethics." *Einleitung in das System der Christlichen Lehre, oder, propädeutische Entwicklung der christlichen Lehr-Wissenschaft: ein Versuch* (Stuttgart: C. Belser, 1838) 45. Schlatter agrees with Beck that ethics is the goal of dogmatics: "Theology that has arrived at its goal is ethics." "Becks theologische Arbeit" 40.

[66] Schlatter even identifies sanctification with worship, with *Gottesdienst*. The relational, organic outworking of sanctification, both vertically, directed to God, and horizontally, directed to the neighbor, is thus *Gottesdienst*. "Therefore," writes Schlatter, "is Paul's ethic the doctrine of our service, of our service to God [*Dienst Gottes*] in which is included the service that we render to others." "Paulus und Griechentum," in *Gesunde Lehre. Reden und Aufsätze* (Velbert: Freizeiten-Verlag, 1929) 133.

[67] In his *Dogma*, Schlatter opens with anthropology before moving to Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. Schlatter himself explains the reasons for this unique approach in his *Briefe über das Christliche Dogma*, *BFChTh* 5/5 (1912) 40–42. For a helpful discussion of this approach, see Gerhard Maier's essay, "Der anthropologische Ansatz der Gotteslehre Adolf Schlatters," in *Wer ist das—Gott? Christliche Gotteserkenntnis in den Herausforderungen der Gegenwart* (ed. Helmut Burkhardt; Gießen: Brunnen, 1982) 142–55 and Paul Althaus's observations in "Adolf Schlatters Gabe an die systematische Theologie" 29–30. See also Dintaman, *Creative Grace* 127–50.

[68] See Stuhlmacher, "Adolf Schlatter" 236.

[69] See Paul Althaus's helpful comments in "Adolf Schlatters Gabe an die systematische Theologie" 30–31.

therefore what one could call a "high anthropology," Schlatter was convinced that the theologian had to get a clear picture of human existence so that one would be able to identify correctly how this existence is gripped and changed by the triune God in and through sanctification.[70] Schlatter asserts that

> Personhood [*Menschsein*], is the prerequisite for becoming a Christian [*Christwerden*] according to the old rule *fiunt, non nascuntur christiani.* We are being born as humans and through our encounter with Jesus we become Christians.[71]

The anthropological viewpoint, argues Schlatter, is particularly relevant to our task of understanding sanctification, as this doctrine is mainly concerned with a renewal of human volition. This is where Schlatter clearly moves beyond Luther and Calvin. While Calvin focuses, as it were, more on the essence of sanctification, that is, cleansing from pollution, the restoration of real purity,[72] integrity, blamelessness, and growth in holiness,[73] Schlatter intends to be more pragmatic by emphasizing the concrete volitional implications that come with these essential changes. That is, in order to perform the right, the godly action—which, as we have seen, is paramount for Schlatter—the human being needs, most of all, the right volition. Of course, Schlatter is obviously aware that we need more than "just" a sanctified *volition.* Throughout his works, the holistic theologian makes plain that the whole human being in its totality needs sanctification. We need not only a holy will but a holy perception, holy emotions, and holy thinking.[74] There are, as far as I can see, at least three reasons why Schlatter singles out the volitional aspect. First, the notion of volition, says Schlatter, was apparently neglected by theologians of the Reformation, who, still in the Greek tradition, were so preoccupied with the renewal of the human *ratio* that they forgot about the *voluntas*.[75] Whenever they were concerned about the human will, notes Schlatter, they focused, negatively,

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[70] Schlatter was probably not aware of the approach of his Scottish colleague and contemporary, professor of systematic theology at Edinburgh's New College, John Laidlaw (1832–1906), who published his *Cunningham Lectures* (1878) as *The Bible Doctrine of Man or The Anthropology and Psychology of Scripture* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895). Laidlaw moves, in a similar fashion to Schlatter, from anthropology to doctrinal theology with a clear emphasis on the psychological changes that occur through sanctification (ibid. 249–304).

[71] *Briefe über das Christliche Dogma* 40.

[72] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.3.9.

[73] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.11.1.

[74] This constitutes Schlatter's important methodological triad of the acts of seeing (*Sehakt*), thinking (*Denkakt*), and life (*Lebensakt*). A correct observation and evaluation of the biblical data is the condition for an existential assimilation of truth that has an impact on the individual life—"In order for love to be able to act," notes Schlatter, "it must be able to see." *Das christliche Dogma* 471; see also "Dienst des Christen" 46–50 [*Dienst des Christen* 60–64].

[75] Schlatter notes, "The question of the ancients [*der Alten*] is always whether a thought is suitable to comfort our frightened conscience and lead us into God's peace, or, whether it disturbs or impedes serenity. Their view is not directed at the moving, thought-providing, will-creating, empowering side of the truth." "Dienst des Christen" 51 [*Dienst des Christen* 65].

on the freedom from "bondage of the will." In contrast, Schlatter accentuates the positive fruits of this freedom, namely, the new good will that is awakened in the Christian.[76] Thus Schlatter's central question was not only the Lutheran "How can I get a gracious God?" but equally "How can I get a gracious will?" Second, a sanctified will in a way already implies right thinking and does necessarily lead to right action.[77] Sanctified volition therefore includes by its very nature holy thinking which will lead to godly actions. Third, and most importantly, Schlatter sees a coherent volitional prominence in the NT, especially in the writings of the apostle Paul.[78] Schlatter is convinced that not rationality but concrete willing and acting lies at the heart of Pauline theology and anthropology.[79] Thus, to understand human volition and how it is transformed by God's creative grace is of vital importance for Schlatter.[80] Schlatter speaks of the "primacy of the will"[81] and argues that volition is "the highest function of our life."[82] In the *Calwer Bibellexikon*, Schlatter defines the will as follows:

> It is the crowning glory of our spiritual nature, the unsearchable, wonderful mystery of our life, a substantial part of our being created in the image of God [*Gottesebenbildlichkeit*] that allows us, in creaturely measure, to participate in the royal sovereignty and freedom of God.[83]

Hence, in sanctification, the human will is *united* with and not replaced by––this aspect is very important to Schlatter—God's will. It is about an organic, relational uniting of the human will with the divine will. This brings us, secondly, to Schlatter's account of trinitarian action in volitional sanctification.

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[76] "Dienst des Christen" 24 [*Dienst des Christen* 40]. "Not the extinction of our will," writes Schlatter, "but its creation arises through God's redeeming grace; not the absence of will [*Willenlosigkeit*], but a good will is its goal." *Das christliche Dogma* 456.

[77] For with our action, notes Schlatter, we illustrate our union with God (*Verbundenheit mit Gott*). *Das christliche Dogma* 467. See also *Die Gründe der christlichen Gewißheit, Das Gebet* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1927) 61.

[78] Schlatter argues that Paul is not interested in the "conceivability" (*Denkbarkeit*) of a subject, but in its reality ("Paulus und Griechentum" 133). Schlatter writes, "The theology of the Greeks consists of concepts and Paul's theology consists of history. The Greek is concerned with the question of the conceivability of a subject, while Paul is concerned with its reality" (ibid. 135).

[79] See ibid. 133. Schlatter's student Käsemann agrees with his teacher, "The notion that was fundamental for A.Schlatter's theology and anthropology, namely, that the human being is, according to the New Testament, not so much determined through its knowledge but through its will and work, prevailed only rarely." "Zur paulinischen Anthropologie," in *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1969) 30, n. 19.

[80] Schlatter's American Reformed colleague, Robert L. Dabney (1820–98), shares this emphasis when he notes that "in strictness of speech, the true seat of sanctification is the will." *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972) 662.

[81] *Rückblick* 93.

[82] See "Moral oder Evangelium" (in *Gesunde Lehre*) 98; *Rückblick* 172–73; see also *Die Gründe der christlichen Gewissheit, Das Gebet* 59 and his dictionary entry on "Wille, Wollen" in the *Calwer Bibellexikon*, 1011–12.

[83] "Wille, Wollen" 1011.

2. Trinitarian action and volitional sanctification. For Schlatter, the trinitarian perspective is essential as sanctification is rooted in the immanent and economic working relationship (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It involves the whole triune God who, through his creative and continuous grace,[84] brings our human volition into harmony with his divine will. In fact, God in his sovereignty unites our whole being with himself (*Verbundenheit mit Gott*).[85] "God in the creative power of his grace," writes Schlatter, "unites the believer with himself."[86] This communion (of will) with God, which Schlatter calls a *Willenseinigung*[87] and *Willensgemeinschaft*,[88] is thereby one of the greatest gifts that God gives.[89] Furthermore, Schlatter points to the Christocentric character of sanctification mentioned earlier. That is, volitional union with God is through Jesus Christ, on the basis of his words and works. Jesus Christ, says Schlatter, has come so that "we want what God wants."[90] Jesus, then, is the great mediator of a sanctified (*gottwohlgefällige*) human volition. To be more specific, Schlatter makes the case that Jesus Christ's volitional union with the Father is actually the basis for any human union of will with God. For Schlatter, the incarnate Christ was and is in an unbroken union of will with the Father (*ungebrochener Willenseinheit*).[91] Father and Son share a common will to save humanity, the "will to salvation" (*Heilandswille*) and the "will to the cross" (*Kreuzeswille*). Jesus' cross and glorification thus originate and flow "consistently and steadily from the will of the Father and the Son."[92] Schlatter highlights that the volitional union between Father and Son was established through the Son's perfect obedience.[93] "[W]hatever the Father wants! is his own will, determined in unshakable resolve,"[94] writes Schlatter. "He was obedient as he carried the cross. 'Your will be done!'—that is what Jesus' will to the

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[84] Sanctification, according to Schlatter, highlights the continuity (*Konstanz*) of God's grace (*Das christliche Dogma* 466).

[85] Ibid. 467.

[86] *Theology of the Apostles* 238. Karl Barth has a similar actualistic volitional perspective when he notes that "[s]anctification is the claiming of all human life and being and activity by the will of God for the active fulfillment of that will." *CD* IV/1, 101.

[87] *Die philosophische Arbeit seit Descartes: Ihr ethischer und religiöser Ertrag* (4th ed.; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1959) 95; see also "Moral oder Evangelium" 97–98; *Das christliche Dogma* 148–62; note Schlatter's continual references to the human union of will with God in *Die christliche Ethik* 22, 25, 29, 34, 35, 39, 49, 88.

[88] *Die christliche Ethik* 29.

[89] "There is no greater gift for us," says Schlatter, "than the one in which our will is united with God's will." "Die von der Bibel uns bereitete Not. Ein Vorwort," in *Hülfe in Bibelnot: Neues und Altes zur Schriftfrage* (Velbert, 1926; 3d ed. Gladbeck: Freizeiten-Verlag, 1953) 8. See also *Die christliche Ethik* 33–45.

[90] "Dienst des Christen" 25 [*Dienst des Christen* 41].

[91] *Jesu Gottheit und das Kreuz* (*BFChTh* 5/5 [1901]; 2d ed. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1913) 9.

[92] Ibid. 65.

[93] Ibid. 102.

[94] Ibid. 49.

cross (*Kreuzeswille*) looked like."[95] In a unique way, Schlatter now connects Christological divine volition with soteriology and thus human volition. That is, in the exceptional, unbroken communion of will between Father and Son, even in the darkness of the cross, lies the salvific potency, the enabling of sanctification. In his treatise on "Jesus' Divinity and the Cross" (*Jesu Gottheit und das Kreuz*), Schlatter develops this intriguing point. He argues that Jesus Christ revealed his divinity on the cross not primarily by defeating Satan, or by paying a ransom to God, or by being a moral example for us, but in that he remained throughout and in his God-forsakenness in communion of will with God, thereby establishing it and revealing his divinity.[96]

> With this God, who has the salvific will towards humanity [*Heilandswillen*], he [Jesus] remained one in death, not passing by God's *Heilandswillen*, but in such a way that it constitutes the mutuality between the Father and him, so that, wherein he is of one will with the Father . . . therefore and to this extent was the crucified divine and thereby he revealed his divinity.[97]

Thus, having in such a way demonstrated and vindicated his divinity, says Schlatter, Jesus is now able to grant volitional communion with God, something that only God can do.[98] In that respect, Schlatter identifies ontological/relational Christology as the basis for soteriology, for volitional sanctification. Yet, the picture would remain incomplete without the involvement of the Holy Spirit, at least at this point, Schlatter must acknowledge Calvin on his side. Schlatter underlines that the Holy Spirit illuminates our understanding of sanctification: "the New Testament directs our view to God's Spirit so that we would know God's gift and Christ's work, and thereby grasp what our union with God comprises and what determines our relation with him."[99] Moreover, the Holy Spirit is a vital, indispensable agent in the establishment of our communion of will with God. "[T]he dominion of Christ," writes Schlatter, "manifests itself in us as he grants us in a certain situation the good will. We thereby experience that we are surrounded by his presence and that *he makes his Spirit the foundation of our thinking and willing.*"[100] The Holy Spirit is not only the

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[95] Ibid. 98. In this respect, Schlatter makes clear that Jesus' will to the cross is not a form of self-destruction (*Selbstvernichtung*) but a free denial of his will (*Entselbstigung*), because he knows "to whom and why he gives himself" (ibid. 100). This will to the cross is not an empty will but a will with a "certain content," as Jesus is focused on the Father's righteousness and grace and his people, whom he is about to free from sin, death and judgment. In dying, Jesus possesses his *Heilandswillen* together with the *Kreuzeswillen* and is thereby obedient as the "performer of the *Gotteswillen*" (ibid.).

[96] *Jesu Gottheit und das Kreuz* 51–52.

[97] Ibid.

[98] In almost dialectic manner, Schlatter argues that not in spite of, but through his God-forsakenness was Jesus sustained in communion with God, not in spite of, but in that he was excluded from communion with God did he establish it (see *Jesu Gottheit und das Kreuz* 51–52).

[99] "Noch ein Wort" 49–50 [*Dienst des Christen* 96].

[100] *Das christliche Dogma* 467 (emphasis added).

concrete foundation in the life of the saint; he also works within the human being, activating us and moving us to action.

> When we really have been given the Spirit of God, it means possession, not merely poverty; this is power . . . freedom and life. . . . As God's Spirit is the founder and mover of our inner life, so there arises through him faith, but also love, assurance, and deed, happiness in God, but also duty and vocation.[101]

Therefore, by the help of the Holy Spirit, the sanctified individual is moved to fulfill the highest command, namely worshipping God through love, in thinking, willing and action.[102]

3. Organic volitional sanctification. The remaining question is this: "How does the divine volitional sanctifying action take place within the condition of our human state?" That is, "How, and in which ways, does the trinitarian action affect our anthropology?" As one can imagine by now, Schlatter rejects any dualist or exclusivist modes of sanctification where the triune action is everything and the human being, as he put it, disappears (*zergeht*).[103] "[T]his new 'life,'" laments Schlatter, is then simply "being 'planted in us' apart from our will."[104] Thus, God performs his good work in us almost in an artificial way, miraculously bypassing our human volition, which will necessarily lead to a 'life without a subject.'[105] This is, says Schlatter, not a correct display of the biblical data, as it does not take our natural condition of life seriously.[106] Consistent with his "high anthropology," Schlatter affirms the sanctification of our concrete human nature in such a way that God does not annihilate but rather sanctifies what he has created. That means God neither overpowers nor short-circuits or replaces the human will.[107] Sanctification does not happen automatically ("wie von selbst," "von selber"),[108] without or even against the human will. Schlatter is emphatic to note that sanctification is not about the passive acknowledgement of a foreign, divine will working

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[101] "Noch ein Wort" 49 [*Dienst des Christen* 95].

[102] According to Jesus' command, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30–31 NIV). Schlatter writes that "then does the following apply: every act is worked by the Spirit, who turns us with our consciousness and our volition towards God, and with this insight we walk on the same path as the Apostle, who described love as spiritual in the highest possible sense, precisely because with love, everything that is in us, thinking, willing, acting, receives its determination from God." "Noch ein Wort" 81 [*Dienst des Christen* 120].

[103] "Dienst des Christen" 65 [*Dienst des Christen* 78].

[104] "Noch ein Wort" 67 [*Dienst des Christen* 110].

[105] Ibid. [ibid. 109].

[106] Ibid. 80 [ibid. 120].

[107] Schlatter notes that "Paul does not conceive of the Spirit as a power that substitutes, overcomes, or, by force, makes the will of human beings superfluous. The Spirit does not push the individual." Rather, argues Schlatter, the Holy Spirit establishes our responsibility in making the conscious volitional decision possible. *Jesus und Paulus: Eine Vorlesung* (ed. Theodor Schlatter; Stuttgart/Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1940) 78–79.

[108] "Noch ein Wort" 64 [*Dienst des Christen* 107].

through us, but, on the contrary, about an existential affirmation, a "Yes of faith,"[109] an organic assimilation of God's will into ours. He argues that

> the purpose of grace is not fully recognized when its recipient remains insignificant in the shadow, as if grace would not elevate us into the individual, free vitality, as if it would not be wanted, elected, loved and grasped by us. Our volition is given to us in a manner such that it is *our* volition; this volition is therefore established in our consciousness as the one to be contemplated, to be elected, as the one with which we can, may and ought to unite ourselves, with our own being and possession.[110]

Thus, according to Schlatter, organic volitional sanctification does not nullify but preserves and sanctifies our human psychology.

> We think, feel and want formally in the same manner as in every other aspect of life. Through the working of the Holy Spirit does not arise a special psychology, but with the same cognitive and volitional capacities do we now think and will another content; now, we think of God and desire not egoistical, but love him.[111]

As we are united with God's will in sanctification God does not add new qualitative features to our humanity (*Menschsein*) but transforms us as his own creatures.[112] "Jesus," argues Schlatter, "addresses the human being, he mobilizes the capacities that are available to him; it is with human thought we ought to think God's will, it is with the human will we ought to obey; we do not arrive at a supranatural religion, but at a religion that puts the human being into God's service [*Dienst Gottes*]."[113] This brings us back to the ultimate goal of organic volitional sanctification, namely, service to God (*Gottes-Dienst*).[114] By actively loving God and neighbor, the sanctified person fulfils the highest command and lives to the glory of God, performing true *Gottesdienst*. This is not a "dull piety" but an energetic volitional activity. Sanctification according to Schlatter is thus worship of God through the organic union of will between believer and God,

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[109] This faith, argues Schlatter, is an efficacious gift from God which leads, as the believer acts on it, that is, looks to Jesus Christ, to a conformity of will with God and thereby also to the concrete deed. See *Jesus und Paulus* 44 and "Noch ein Wort" 55–57 [*Dienst des Christen* 100–101].

[110] "Dienst des Christen" 28 [*Dienst des Christen* 43–44] (emphasis original).

[111] "Noch ein Wort" 80 [*Dienst des Christen* 120]. See also *Jesus und Paulus* 78 and "Dienst des Christen" 27–28 [*Dienst des Christen* 43].

[112] Schlatter elucidates that "what Jesus grants us" in sanctification "causes the unity which is implanted as a law in our personal life-act to persist and overcome all strife with which we dismember ourselves, causes us to rejoice in the creator that nature shows us . . . causes us to become obedient to the divine regiment that forms us through history and moves us . . . causes the certainty of God [*Gewißheit Gottes*] without which our whole thinking dies off to illumine and organize the content of our consciousness. . . . What Jesus grants us is not an addition to our being human [*menschlichen Wesen*] and does not lie alongside our human capacity and calling. *Briefe über das Christliche Dogma* 41–42.

[113] *Jesus und Paulus* 76.

[114] "Dienst des Christen" 3 [*Dienst des Christen* 21].

through God's grace, on the basis of Jesus Christ's *Willenseinigung* with the Father and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. CONCLUSION

Was Schlatter successful? Does his approach of organic volitional sanctification indeed remedy the shortcomings of the Reformation—provided there were any in the first place? If so, in which ways may Schlatter's perspective on sanctification be relevant for us today? Taken together, I think, Schlatter is closer to the Reformers, in particular to Calvin, than he was probably willing to admit. Both Luther and Calvin would have presumably agreed with Schlatter's critique of what the passive Pietists have made out of "their Reformation." Looking more closely, though, one notices that Schlatter without doubt moves beyond the Reformers as he presents a highly creative amendment to the traditional doctrine of sanctification in that he organically relates volitional anthropology with Trinitarian theology. In a holistic way, Schlatter emphasizes the sovereign, triune action in sanctification while also taking seriously the human recipient in his anthropological idiosyncrasy, in the dialectic of receptive passivity and volitional activity. Through his organic volitional union with God, the believer is enabled to worship and glorify God, which is at the same time the ultimate goal of sanctification. "Our role," says Schlatter, "is the service of God [*Unsere Funktion ist Dienst Gottes*]."[115] Sanctification then, in the end, means to give to God what he has given to us.[116] As sanctified people we worship God, says Schlatter, "in that we are what he [God] makes us to be [*indem wir das sind, wozu er uns macht*]."[117] And this happens organically, Schlatter is eager to add, with our own sanctified will, in the concrete history and in the concrete situations and relations in which we find ourselves. He speaks of "the glory of divine grace that makes us an instrument of God with a free movement of our knowledge and love at the place that is assigned to us."[118] All in all, Adolf Schlatter's perspective on sanctification is then a blueprint for an active, relational Christian ethics of love to God, and of love to neighbor.[119] "This is why God's work has only then happened in us,"

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[115] *Die christliche Ethik* 124; see also *Das christliche Dogma* 519.

[116] Schlatter explains this in more detail in *Das Gott wohlgefällige Opfer*.

[117] *Das christliche Dogma* 33 (emphasis mine); see also *Briefe über das Christliche Dogma* 47.

[118] *Erlebtes* 117–18; see also *Ethik* 87.

[119] Schlatter points out that the problem of the traditional model of sanctification was its individualistic, isolated, introspective, and almost psychoanalytic treatment of the doctrine. The "saint is being led away from his human relations and becomes a hermit." In contrast to this, Schlatter puts forward a situational/relational perspective, "God's grace sustains us at our place in history and gives us not any wishful perfections, but the ability, to perform, at the place where we are, what is now good and right before God." *Das christliche Dogma* 473–74; see also ibid. 471. "Ascetics," notes Schlatter, "who, on behalf of their sinlessness separate themselves from the others, despise their sanctification" (ibid. 474).

writes Schlatter, "when we are moved to perform the deed, God's love has not reached its goal until we are enabled to love."[120] With his own life, a life dedicated to theology, the society, and the church, Adolf Schlatter exemplified how this doctrine of organic, volitional sanctification can indeed, by God's grace, be realized in one's life.[121] So, taken together, I would argue, yes, Schlatter was successful, and, yes, Schlatter's reform is relevant for us today. Today, our problem is probably neither the predominance of a German pietistic quietism or a British puritan ascetism. What we observe is rather a global postmodern individualism that challenges the fabric of the church. In times of declining church membership, Schlatter's passionate plea for volitional sanctification is a wakeup call for theology and the church. Schlatter once said that "[t]he church is being assessed, by those who do not attend it, not on the basis of what the church *says*, but according to what it *does*."[122] If Schlatter were alive today, I think he would say: "What your church needs is not more passive pious pew potatoes but sanctified, intrinsically motivated Christians that possess a holy *Willensakt*, a volition which leads to godly action in this world. You need a reformation, not only a restoration, but the re-volition of church members who are equipped with the good will from above, willing and able and active, to help the poor, to pray with the sick, to go and preach the good news, basically to go and act, making disciples of all nations." If we were to take this call seriously today, Schlatter would indeed have succeeded in making a viable contribution toward a completion of the Reformation.[123]

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[120] "Dienst des Christen" 56 [*Dienst des Christen* 69].

[121] Sanctification thus was never only of academic interest to Schlatter—rather, it was of intrinsic, existential importance to him, having bearings on his concrete existence. Schlatter was, for instance, closely connected with the Christian relief organization 'Bethel,' which was founded by his close friend Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, offering care for socially disadvantaged people. Bodelschwingh's son, Friedrich Jr., praised Schlatter's energetic support for the "Betheler Anstalten" in his moving speech at Schlatter's funeral. See Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter* 819–20.

[122] "Dienstpflicht des Christen" 11 [*Dienst des Christen* 128] (emphasis added).

[123] I am grateful to Paul T. Nimmo, Donald Macleod, and John Scoales for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.