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Schleiermacher on Eschatology and Resurrection

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Eschatological scepticism abounds. The German New Testament scholar Gerd Lüdemann (just to name an extreme example) found it ridiculous to assume that one day all people who have ever lived on earth will be gathered on a renewed earth; it will be a bit overcrowded and narrow then, he concluded ironically. One might find it ridiculous as well that an academic theologian dares describe the Christian hope in that simplistic way. On the contrary, a well-reflected Christian piety and theology did and does not show such a naive realism.

There has always been an awareness that in eschatology we face the hermeneutical and epistemological problems of theology in a particularly dense and intensive form. In eschatology, we not only have to deal with the regular hermeneutical problems of religious language that result from the categorical distinction between Creator and creature, but we also have to take into consideration the difference between the present state of the world and a future state of complete fulfillment. This complete fulfillment may not be conceived as an immanent, entelechical development of the world itself but rather as a work of God. Nevertheless, it has to be conceived as the realization of the essential destination of the world.

Continuity and Discontinuity

How can such a state of perfection be imagined? There must be elements of *continuity* between this and that state of the world, but an elementary *disconti-*

nuit must be maintained as well.¹ In the theological tradition, either continuity could be stressed by using a evolutionary concept of perfection, or an emphasis could be put on discontinuity by using a concept of new creation. But a state of perfection cannot be conceived without a *specific difference* from the unfinished or “preperfect” states, nor can a new creation be conceived without reference to the old one (the *new* creation is still a *new creation*). It is difficult to distinguish the elements that endure from the elements destined to vanish in eternal life (which aspects of biography, for example, belong essentially to the *personality* whose identity has to be maintained provided that the individual’s hope of eternal life implies an eschatological self-consciousness?).² Therefore, it is difficult to give a clear picture of this kind of perfection.

Moreover, every attempt to give such a picture risks being regarded as an illusionary or even ideological idealization of reality without a basis in matter. To avoid that risk, eschatological conceptions often restrict themselves to reflecting only on the destiny of the individual self without respect to the destiny of the transitory world. This results in a kind of “slim eschatology” of the self’s eternal conservation in God. This conception seems to avoid the danger of colliding with modern scientific cosmologies. But, obviously, it misses humans’ elementary self-understanding as essentially “being in the world” (*In-der-Welt-Sein*).

So eschatology has to find its way between the Scylla of a quasi-scientific, quasi-realistic description of a future world and the Charybdis of the abstract evocation of the individual’s eternal existence “in God.”

Interpreting Schleiermacher

Friedrich Schleiermacher is regarded as one of the greatest demythologizers of Christian eschatology. He is known for asserting that “the same value cannot be ascribed” to the eschatological doctrines of the church as to the other doctrines.³ And he distinguished the eschatological parts of the *Glaubenslehre*

1. Cf. Ernst Conradie (this volume). For the transformed bodiliness of the risen Christ in continuity with and discontinuity from his earthly body cf. Bernd Oberdorfer, “Was sucht ihr den Lebendigen bei den Toten? Überlegungen zur Realität der Auferstehung in Auseinandersetzung mit Gerd Lüdemann,” *Kerygma und Dogma* 46 (2000): 225-40.

2. Cf. Nancy Murphy (this volume).

3. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2d ed. 1830/1831, 7th ed. 1960), §159 Leitsatz; cf. §159,2. In the following, I will partly refer to the English translation: *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928).

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from its regular parts by characterizing them as “prophetical doctrines (*prophetische Lehrstücke*)” (§159,3) which are the result of an “insufficiently supported presentiment”⁴ (*ibid.*). But when scrutinized (particularly as Eilert Herms did in a remarkable paper in 1990⁵), Schleiermacher’s reflections reveal an extraordinarily subtle hermeneutics of eschatological claims. Quite contrary to his image as an anthropocentric and individualistic theologian of intrinsic feeling, he also emphasizes the cosmological and the social dimensions of eschatology. This is particularly interesting because he develops his eschatology within a theological framework that is supposed to avoid conflict between theology and the worldview of the natural sciences.

In the following, I would therefore like to interpret Schleiermacher’s eschatology as a hermeneutically considered and nonreductionist eschatology that reflects on the different approaches of theology and science. It does not evade dialogue. First I will outline Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics of eschatological claims. Second, I will discuss Schleiermacher’s reflections on the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. In my presentation of Schleiermacher’s eschatology, I will refer only to the eschatological parts of the second edition of the *Glaubenslehre* (1830/31) as being the most elaborated and structured form of his theology.

Recently, the Tübingen scholar Martin Weeber, in his book *Schleiermachers Eschatologie*,⁶ argued that in the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher did not describe his own eschatological theory but rather critically discussed the eschatological traditions of the church. And, according to Weeber, Schleiermacher, when emphasizing the cosmological focus of traditional eschatological claims, did not aim at defending them but rather at showing their inconsistency. Weeber sees Schleiermacher’s own eschatology being displayed in some of his later sermons: a radically existential eschatology of the present moment that has eliminated any cosmological implications. But although Schleiermacher did not understand his *Glaubenslehre* simply as an expression of his personal faith but as a coherent exposition of the doctrines of the Protestant church, it does not seem very plausible to assume that he wrote the eschatological parts in a kind of *reservatio mentalis*. Actually, he pointed out that we cannot produce a coherent picture of eschatological fulfillment. As I will show, however, this is caused by the categorical and epistemological difference be-

4. “Versuche eines nicht hinreichend unterstützten Ahnungsvermögens.”

5. Eilert Herms, “Schleiermachers Eschatologie,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 46 (1990): 97-123.

6. Martin Weeber, *Schleiermachers Eschatologie: Eine Untersuchung zum theologischen Spätwerk* (Gütersloh: Christian Kaiser, 2000).

tween the present state of the world and the state of its fulfillment, which makes it difficult to imagine that fulfillment; but it does not imply that this fulfillment is not supposed to be real. Even if Schleiermacher had developed an acosmic type of eschatology beside the cosmological eschatology of the *Glaubenslehre*, we would have to ask whether this alternative is convincing.

Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics of Eschatological Propositions

To understand why Schleiermacher did not count the eschatological reflections among the regular doctrines, we have to consider first how he defines Christian doctrines. According to §15 of the *Glaubenslehre*, "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affection set forth in speech." They are expressions of the immediate self-consciousness, the feeling of absolute dependency that in Christianity is essentially related to the redemption realized through Christ.

Schleiermacher says that "All religious emotions . . . as soon as they have reached a certain stage and a certain definiteness . . . manifest themselves outwardly," at first by mimicry and gesture, at a higher stage primarily in speech (§15,1). "The whole work of the Redeemer Himself was conditioned by the communicability of His self-consciousness by means of speech, and similarly Christianity has always and everywhere spread itself solely by preaching" (§15,2). Religion, thus, is a matter of inwardness, but it does not come from the depths of the inward life. Rather, it must be evoked and shaped by communication (it "cannot, any more than anything else which is human, be conceived entirely separated from all communication"; *ibid.*).

In its history, Christian preaching "very soon split up into three different types of speech, which provided as many different forms of doctrine: the poetic, the rhetorical . . . and finally the descriptively didactic" (§15,2). They differ not so much with respect "to the degree or level of piety as rather to the character of the communion or fellowship and its ripeness for reflection and contemplation" (*ibid.*). So, as much as this communication is "something different from the piety itself," so much "the doctrines in all their forms have their ultimate ground so exclusively in the emotions of the religious self-consciousness, that where these do not exist the doctrine cannot arise" (*ibid.*). "Dogmatic propositions," now, "are doctrines of the descriptively didactic type, in which the highest possible degree of definiteness is aimed at" (§16). Unlike the poetic and the rhetorical type, the descriptively didactic type cannot tolerate contradictions and inconsistencies. Dogmatic theology, therefore, has to produce a coherent and consistent theory. The object of the-

ology is piety as it is expressed in speech. Dogmatics, then, is a second-order language system because it examines critically and systematizes first-order expressions of piety.

The criterion of this examination is first whether these expressions can be understood as being expressions of an immediate self-consciousness formed by the impression of Christ's perfect consciousness of God, and second whether they can be integrated into a consistent description of the Christian faith. Due to two arguments, Schleiermacher conceives dogmatics as a coherent description of the *present* doctrine of a certain *church*: first of all, he understands Christ as the principle and beginning of a new "*Gesamtleben*," a new totality of life that is being realized throughout history in the community of the church, and, secondly, people participate in that *Gesamtleben* through getting involved in the community of the church that communicates the content and the meaning of the *Gesamtleben*.

The object of dogmatic propositions, according to Schleiermacher, is the genesis and the shape of subjective Christian piety as described in the doctrine of the church. Church doctrines have to be evaluated as to whether and to what extent they can be regarded as expressions of Christian faith. This determines the elementary structure of the *Glaubenslehre*: it has two parts, of which the second one has two sections. The crucial part is the second section of the second part. It unfolds the renewed existence in the new *Gesamtleben* (pneumatology and ecclesiology) and the foundation of this *Gesamtleben* by Christ (Christology). The first section of the second part reflects on humankind's existence under the conditions of sin. That means, as Eilert Herms rightly put it, that it tackles the *temporal* premises of redemption. The first part entails the doctrine of creation. That means, in Schleiermacher's system, that it entails propositions that are valid independently from the opposition of sin and grace and thus are valid in the state of sin as well as in the state of grace. According to Herms, this part reflects on the *logical* premises of redemption. In each of these parts, three aspects of meaning have to be taken into consideration: the meaning for the understanding of the self (which is basic), of the world, and of God.

Interestingly enough, eschatology does not form its own part within the *Glaubenslehre*. Instead, it concludes the second half of the second section of the second part: it deals with the "consummation of the church." While the first part describes the structures of existence, which are independent from the opposition of sin and grace, the second part describes existence under the conditions of this opposition, or, more exactly, it describes existence under the conditions of sin and its transformation into existence under the conditions of grace. The old *Gesamtleben* of sin is in the state of being transformed

into the new *Gesamtleben* of grace. This new *Gesamtleben* has come within the world of sin in the person of Christ (that is the topic of the first section of the second part, which entails the doctrine of Christ's person and redeeming work).

In Christ's person, creation was in a state of perfection. He was, in other words, the perfection, the consummation of creation. But it was still a perfection in opposition.

And that is still the case, although the new *Gesamtleben* is growing throughout history (the growing of the new *Gesamtleben* is the topic of the second section of the second part, tackling ecclesiology). The church in history is an *ecclesia militans*, a *fighting* church (cf. §157,1), struggling against the decreasing but still effective power of evil. Christians in history still have to be aware of the remaining power of sin within themselves and in their environment. In the future this opposition will be overcome. There will be a state of consummation without any opposition of grace and sin (*ecclesia triumphans*; cf. §157,1). Eschatology reflects on the realization and the shape of that state of perfection.

Although the position of eschatology within ecclesiology marks an essential continuity of history with the *eschaton*, there is also a radical discontinuity that is decisive for the epistemological status of eschatological propositions. Propositions, according to Schleiermacher, are dogmatic if they refer to modes of the present religious self-consciousness that in Christianity is formed by its reference to the redemption in Christ. Every present mode of religious self-consciousness, however, is involved in an opposition of sin and grace still virulent in our contemporary world. If eschatological propositions, by definition, refer to a state of the world beyond that opposition, they cannot be dogmatic propositions in the same sense as others are. That is the reason why Schleiermacher calls them "prophetic doctrines." If Schleiermacher states that "the same value (*Wert*) cannot be ascribed" to these doctrines as to the others, then he does not intend to diminish their worth but only emphasizes the epistemological difference.

So we have to reckon with a twofold difference. It is difficult to imagine the state of consummation not only due to our restricted capability of knowledge, but also due to the different state of reality itself. However, these difficulties do not give reason to deny the reality of a final fulfillment and eliminate eschatological propositions. On the contrary, this fulfillment is necessarily implied in the person of the Redeemer, who is the perfection of creation. But only in him. He is the only warrant of eschatological reality. The expectation of the world's consummation is not to be based in a natural tendency of the world itself, but can be promised only as an implication of the appearance of Christ.

In the introductory paragraphs of his eschatology (§§157-59), Schleiermacher demonstrates the hermeneutical problems with reference to the two elementary aspects of eschatological reality: the existence of the church beyond its opposition to evil, and the persistence of human personality after death.

The Church beyond Sin and the Soul beyond Death

Why is it so difficult to imagine a state of the church without continuous opposition to the *Gesamtleben* of sin? First, this must be a state in which “Christianity has spread over the whole world, in the sense that no other religion survives as an organized fellowship” (§157,1). Yet, the main problem is that in that state a new emergence of sin must be impossible. Then, according to Schleiermacher, there can no longer be physical reproduction, because “sin develops anew in each generation” (*ibid.*). This implies that the consummation of the church cannot take place within history.

If this is true, however, we have to locate that consummation in a “future on which (since it lies altogether beyond human experience) our action can exert no influence whatever” and of which “in the absence of all analogy we could hardly understand the picture aright or retain it securely” (§157,2). Propositions about the consummation of the church, therefore, “must contain no reference to anything in our present state due to the influences of the world” (*ibid.*).⁷ “That these influences may be restrained, in a higher degree than the mere co-operation of individuals could secure, is the constant object of our prayers; and the consummated Church is accordingly the sphere where such prayer is answered in full measure” (*ibid.*). Hence, the idea of the consummation of the church, far from being formable to a consistent picture, is rooted only “in our Christian consciousness as representing the unbroken fellowship of human nature with Christ under conditions wholly unknown and only faintly imaginable” (*ibid.*). So it is the *unio hypostatica*, which gives reason to expect that the new *Gesamtleben* will come to a state of perfection.

The same goes for the postmortal existence of the individual (cf. §158). “As the belief in the immutability of the union of the Divine Essence with human nature in the Person of Christ contains in itself also the belief in the persistence of human personality,” Schleiermacher writes, “this produces in the Christian the impulse to form a conception of the state that succeeds death”

7. “World” here means (in the sense in which it is used in the Gospel of John) the *Gesamtleben* of sin.

(§158, Thesis). Schleiermacher concedes that “belief in the continued existence of personality after death” (which, to his opinion, is equivalent to the term “immortality of the soul”) is not exclusively Christian and, seen in the perspective of cultural history, did not arise from the experience of the *unio hypostatica*: “traces of that belief exist everywhere, and especially in the times of Christ and the Apostles it was prevalent among the Jewish people” (§158,1). But “apart from this connexion” with the *unio hypostatica* it “could not have been given a place in our Christian Dogmatic” (ibid.).

Schleiermacher and Science

Schleiermacher’s argument in this regard is very subtle and touches the relation between theology and the natural sciences, and so it is worth a closer examination. Schleiermacher insists that “faith in the Redeemer . . . may develop out of a sense of sin calling for redemption, and that from it we might infer the communication of Christ’s blessedness at every moment of life, including the last moment of all, *even though we had no conception whatever of a life after death*” (§158,1; my emphasis). And Schleiermacher remarks, “the whole of the preceding argument has been set forth and proved without reference to that belief” (ibid.).⁸ “Thus the question naturally arises whether, and how, this belief would have come to be bound up with our religious consciousness, had not the Redeemer accepted and sanctioned it” (ibid.). Schleiermacher names two possible ways: “Either the survival of personality would have been ascertained as a truth through the activities of knowledge, that is by way of objective consciousness; or it might have been given us originally in our immediate self-consciousness” (ibid.).

In the first case, the “doctrine of immortality” would belong “to the higher natural science” (ibid.). But evidently, in natural science immortality “has always been attacked by some people as vehemently as it has been defended by others” (ibid.). No scientific consensus is available. Hence dog-

8. This obviously implies that, according to Schleiermacher, Christ’s resurrection is not an essential element of the doctrine of Christ’s person as being the principle of our redemption. Schleiermacher argues that as the disciples could recognize Christ as Redeemer before his crucifixion, his resurrection cannot be a necessary premise of belief in Christ. That does not mean, however, that Schleiermacher contests the reality of the resurrection. But he gives only an indirect reason: if the testimony of the disciples about their experiences with the risen Christ proved to be wrong, not only their own credibility would be destroyed, but (because of that) Christ himself would appear as not very prudent in choosing disciples whose witness could not be trusted.

matics, if it is willing “to make further use of the idea of immortality, is not entitled to adopt these proofs” (ibid.).

As to the second case, Schleiermacher argues, “there is an impious [namely, materialistic] denial of immortality.” Further, “there is also a surrender of the survival of personality . . . which, far from regarding spiritual activity as a mere phenomenon of matter, or making matter superior to spirit, strictly regards spirit as the power which produces living matter and conforms it to itself” (ibid.). Then it could be said “that while spirit is essentially immortal in such productivity, yet of such productivity the individual soul is only a transient act, and thus essentially perishable” (ibid.). “Between such a surrender of the survival of personality and the predominance of the God-consciousness . . . there would be no incongruity whatever” (ibid.). Still further, whereas “there certainly is a belief in personal survival which is in harmony with the general spirit of piety . . . there is also a belief which is impious,” namely, “if it merely issued from an interest in the sense-aspect of life” (ibid.). So, as Schleiermacher concludes, there is no necessary link between belief in the survival of personality and God-consciousness.

Nonetheless, this belief is profoundly based in our “faith in the Redeemer” (§158,2). Christ ascribes a survival of personality to himself when speaking about “His return or reunion with His people” (ibid.). Schleiermacher argues that Christ could “only say these things of Himself as a human person, because only as such could He have fellowship even with His disciples,” and thus the conclusion is “(s)elf-evident,” “that in virtue of the identity of human nature in Him and in us, the same must hold good of ourselves” (ibid.). Schleiermacher discusses the possibility that these “sayings of Christ are all figurative, and not to be interpreted strictly, and that He nowhere claims personal survival” (ibid.). He admits that “faith in Christ . . . would still be possible” then (ibid.). But “a complete transformation of Christianity would be the result were such a mode of interpretation to prevail within the Church and be made fundamental of the Christian faith” (ibid.). Schleiermacher adds, “this of itself implies that we cannot assume that such an interpretation could be put forward in good faith” (ibid.). This sentence is very significant to his theological program as a whole. He does not exclude the possibility of such a complete transformation in principle, but indirectly he reveals that he does not understand his own theology as such a complete transformation. And he confirms his conviction that Jesus actually believed in the survival of his personality.

If Christ is immortal, then it would be docetic to deny that “all who are of the human race can look forward to survival too” (ibid.). Christ is “the mediator of immortality, only not exclusively for those who believe on Him here,

but for all, without exception” (ibid.). For “if personal immortality did not belong to human nature, no union of the Divine Essence with human nature to form such a personality of the Redeemer would have been possible; and, conversely, since God had determined to perfect and redeem human nature through such union, human individuals must all along have possessed the same immortality as the Redeemer was conscious of” (ibid.). In other words, the *unio hypostatica* is the only but the real base for belief in the immortality of human nature.

Although “this belief naturally is accompanied by a desire to form and keep clear ideas as to the condition of personality after death” (§158,3), it is impossible to fulfill this desire. The reason for this is that Christ did not unveil the concrete cosmological “conditions of existence after death” (ibid.). As much as all propositions about “times and seasons” “lie outside the range of those communications which the Redeemer had to make to us,” so much the same goes for the “purely cosmological question” of “space and spatialities” (ibid.). From Christ’s “figurative” or quite “indefinite” indications we can gather only the information that is indispensable to us to know if the conception of existence after death is not supposed to be “mere perdition” — and this is only “the persistent union of believers with the Redeemer” (ibid.).

Likewise, the apostles spoke on that subject only “by way of dim presentiment, and with the confession that definite knowledge is lacking” (ibid.). Therefore, Schleiermacher concludes, “we should not seek to determine our purposes by picturing to ourselves the form of our future life”⁹ (ibid.). He states that all respective “efforts . . . spring from the interest of our sensuous self-consciousness in the survival of personality” and thus “are always sensuous in character” (ibid.). He warns us not to allow them “an influence . . . which may only too easily injure Christian faith and life, and thereby spoil for us the present” (ibid.). So he is very cautious in developing a picture of the future fulfillment, and confines himself to “scrutiniz[ing] carefully the propositions put forward by others, as well as the opinions which have become dominant” (ibid.).

Despite this cautiousness, Herms rightly emphasizes that “according to Schleiermacher the continuous existence of human personality after death does not differ from its contemporary existence insofar as time and space vanish at all, but only insofar as they [namely, time and space] are qualified in a different way.”¹⁰ Our problem in imagining our after-death state is not a re-

9. “. . . so dürfen wir uns nicht darauf einrichten, unsere Zweckbegriffe irgend durch Vergegenwärtigung der künftigen Lebensform bestimmen zu wollen.”

10. Herms, *Schleiermachers Eschatologie*, 113 (my translation).

sult of the fact that this state is beyond time and space, but only of the fact that time and space will be different then. Evidently, as Herms adds, this implies “that space and time are not thought here as characteristic only of this world, but as characteristic of any possible world.”¹¹

The Consummate Church and the Resurrected Self

In the following §159, Schleiermacher declares that the ecclesiastical doctrines of “the Last Things” are an attempt to solve the two problems raised earlier, namely, “to represent the Church in its consummation and the state of souls in the future life” (§159, Thesis). Every eschatological doctrine refers to both of these problems. The one cannot be solved without reference to the other. For, on the one hand, “(i)f we tried to form a Christian idea of a state subsequent to this life, and it failed to agree with our idea of the consummation of the Church, we could not believe that it really expressed the absolutely final stage” because “we should have to suppose that there still remained a further development, in which the Church would be perfected” (§159,1). In other words, an individual after-death perfection would not be a real perfection without the consummation of the church as a whole. And, on the other hand, “if we viewed the consummation of the Church as arriving within the present course of human affairs, we should have to add something in thought for the state after death” (ibid.). It seems to be evident “that both elements should be thus conjoined.” Because we cannot regard the consummation of the church “as possible in this life” which is characterized by the opposition of sin and grace, we seem to have to place it “in that future life,” and, conversely, we have to fill out the idea of that future life — of which as such we have no concrete imagination — on the base of “fellowship with Christ” “with content from the perfected state of the Church” (ibid.).

The idea of regarding life after death and the consummation of the church as being complementary elements of a full eschatological picture becomes particularly tempting if we consider Herms’s insight that the reasons for our incapacity to imagine after-death life and the consummation of the church differ from each other: while there is a *continuity* between this life and life after death (namely, the personality) that is impossible to imagine only due to the different qualification of space and time, the consummation of the church lacks imagination because there is *no analogy* between the state of the fighting church and the state of the church when an opposition of sin against

11. Ibid. (my translation).

grace no longer exists. Thus, the life after death can be conceived as *continuation* of the “new life which has started here,” whereas the consummation of the church is to be conceived only as the *end* of the era of struggle.¹² If that is true, why then should the conception of the “survival of personality” not deliver to the conception of the consummated church a “place in space and time,” and, conversely, why should the conception of the consummated church not deliver to the individual’s continuous existence its specific eschatological character?

Hermeneutics without Analogy

But, nevertheless, “we are not in a position to exhibit the confluence of the two factors” (§159,1). Why not? On the one hand, the perfect state of the church is without analogy to its contemporary state, and thus cannot deliver concreteness to the understanding of continuous existence after death. On the other hand, “if we seek to conceive the future life by analogy with the present, as an ascending development, we cannot but have doubts whether any such development is possible in the consummated Church” (*ibid.*). Schleiermacher concludes: “Thus the solution of one problem never seems exactly to fit the other” (*ibid.*).

So, neither the after-death life nor the consummation of the church nor the combination of the two can be unfolded to a full picture of eschatological reality. As I have shown, this does not imply the denial of that reality. The certainty of it is rather rooted and warranted in the appearance of the Redeemer. But we are unable to imagine clearly that state of fulfillment. Nor can we base our imagination on the authority of Holy Scripture and its testimonies of Christ’s words. For we “nowhere find in His teaching a connected and unambiguous treatment of these subjects obviously meant to convey definite instruction about them” (§159,2).

As to the form of eschatological claims, it follows from these reflections that “there is nothing for it but that we should bring up those thought-forms which early became prevalent in the Church and passed over into our Confessions without being submitted to a fresh scrutiny, and should adduce them, under the title of *prophetic doctrines*, merely as the efforts of an insufficiently equipped faculty of premonition [attempts of an insufficiently supported presentiment], adding reasons for and against” (*ibid.*). Schleiermacher does not categorically reject new forms of these doctrines being developed, but

12. Cf. *ibid.*, 113ff.

warns that by doing so “the fancy (for to it belongs everything alien to the scope of our present experience which is set forth as the object of a possible future experience), if it is to remain Christian, must place itself under the protection of exegesis, and only elaborate the material which exegesis supplies” (ibid.). In any case, these new forms would not escape the hermeneutical conditions of eschatological propositions.

Schleiermacher structures the eschatological doctrines in four prophetic doctrines and one appendix. He starts with the return of Christ (§160) as the basis of the following doctrines because to it “everything which belongs to the completion of His work must be related” (§159,3). Then he tackles the resurrection of the flesh (§161) as representing “the survival of personality, above all, as the abolition of death” (§159,3). The consummation of the church is referred to in a twofold manner. First of all, in the doctrine of the Last Judgment (§162), this consummation “as conditioned by the fact that no further influence upon the Church can now be exerted by those who form no part of the Church . . . is introduced in its character as the separation of believers from unbelievers” (§159,3). Second, in the doctrine of eternal blessedness (§163), the existence of the church is described positively “as excluding (in contrast to the Church militant) all the activities of sin and all imperfection in believers” (§159,3). The doctrine of eternal damnation of the unbelieving “cannot be given the form of a special doctrine” because “it is not an anticipation of any object of our future experience” (ibid.). This is evident with reference to the character of the *Glaubenslehre* as being an explication of the immediate self-consciousness of believers: to regard eternal damnation as an article of faith would be a contradiction in itself. Eternal damnation rather is “the shadow of blessedness or the darker side of judgment” (ibid.). It has to be reflected on only because “the survival of personality, and therefore also the resurrection of the flesh,” due to its being based on the *unio hypostatica*, “had to be taken as applying to the whole human race,” and so “some mode of existence had to be found for those separated from believers” (ibid.).

In the following, I will remark only on Schleiermacher’s understanding of the resurrection of the flesh.

Resurrection of the Flesh

At first, we have to consider whether or how Schleiermacher links the eschatological resurrection of the flesh to the resurrection of Christ. Does he understand Christ’s resurrection as a “guarantee of our own resurrection” (§99,1)? It is remarkable that in Schleiermacher’s Christology, Christ’s resur-

rection plays only “a marginal role.”¹³ At least, it does not belong to the “genuine elements of the doctrine of His person” (§99, Thesis). “For if Christ’s redeeming efficiency is based on God’s being in Him, and if the impression of that causes belief in Him” (§99,1), then it must be conceded that this impression could be evoked before and without the experience of his resurrection. “The disciples recognized Him as the son of God without foreseeing His resurrection and ascension” (ibid.), and the same goes for us. Relevant to us is only his promise of “his spiritual presence” and “his continuous influence,” which is expressed in the metaphor of Christ’s sitting on the righthand side of God, and what that metaphor means — namely, Christ’s “genuine and incomparable dignity which is lifted up beyond any conflict” (ibid.) — is conceivable without reference to Christ’s resurrection.

Schleiermacher, however, does not conceal that Paul “seems to ascribe to Christ’s resurrection as well as to His death a relevance to our redemption” (ibid.). But according to Schleiermacher, the way in which Paul refers to Christ’s resurrection as being the “guarantee of our own resurrection” in 1 Corinthians 15 shows “that he does not understand it in an exclusive connexion with the genuine being of God in Christ” (ibid.). This argument is not entirely clear. Its sense presumably is: since Paul uses Christ’s resurrection as the “guarantee” of our own future resurrection, resurrection does not belong exclusively to the doctrine of the person of the Redeemer and is not singularly characteristic of the Redeemer as the Redeemer.

But although Schleiermacher states “that we can expect of anyone who is familiar with dogmatic propositions to realize that a true impression of Christ can appear and actually has appeared without a knowledge” of his resurrection, he nevertheless maintains an “indirect connection” (§99,2) of Christ’s resurrection to the doctrine of his person. Because the belief in Christ’s resurrection cannot be deduced from the basic insight in God’s being in Christ, this belief can arise only from the testimony of Holy Scripture. So we are dependent on the credibility of the witnesses of the resurrection, who are the disciples. If their evidence of resurrection were illusionary and they were unable to distinguish mental phenomena from objective events, we would not only lose our trust in their testimonies of Christ in any respect, but rather Christ himself would appear as not having been very prudent when choosing his disciples. So we have to trust the disciples’ evidence of having met Christ after his death. But Schleiermacher does not give any further ex-

13. Markus Schröder, *Die kritische Identität des neuzeitlichen Christentums: Schleiermachers Wesensbestimmung der christlichen Religion* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1996), 199 n. 43.

planation of the character of these meetings. If we take into consideration that Schleiermacher tended to interpret Christ's death as only an apparent death, it is quite likely that he understood the "resurrection" as a kind of reanimation. But anyway, he did not give any theological relevance to that aspect of Christ's appearance.¹⁴

It is significant that Schleiermacher, when summarizing the "essential content" of the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, does not refer to Christ's resurrection but rather to the "ascension of the risen Redeemer," and that means: to his sitting on God's righthand side. The doctrine essentially entails "that the ascension of the risen Redeemer was possible only if all other human individuals too can look forward to a renovation of organic life which has links of attachment to our present state"¹⁵ (§161,3). This renovation must be thought, on the one hand, to be "dependent on Christ's divine power" (*ibid.*); it is not the result of natural development.¹⁶ On the other hand, nevertheless, it must be conceived "as a cosmic event for which arrangements have been made in the universal divine world-order" (*ibid.*). But whereas the dependency on Christ's divine power "is certified as implied in the faith," the idea of this "cosmic event" "hovers before the mind as indicating a problem we can never completely solve" (*ibid.*).

Why will we never succeed in developing a concrete picture of final resurrection? Schleiermacher discusses this question with reference to the problem of continuity and discontinuity that is linked to the problem of the compatibility of the idea of individual postmortal existence and the idea of the consummation of the church. He starts his argument by stating "that we really cannot form the idea of a finite spiritual life apart from a bodily organism" (§161,1). Therefore, "it is impossible to speak of the soul's immortality in the strict sense apart from bodily life" (*ibid.*). So, "(s)ince the activity of the spirit as a definite soul ceases at death simultaneously with the bodily life, it is only with bodily life that it can recommence" (*ibid.*).

Moreover, the idea of resurrection also implies "such an identity of life that life after resurrection and life before death constitute one and the same personality" (*ibid.*). The idea of the soul as persisting individual entity re-

14. Markus Schröder speaks of a "solution which appears ghostly (*gespenstisch*)" but defends (with reference to Emanuel Hirsch) Schleiermacher's "*intention* to put the origin of the [Christian] congregation in the days of resurrection, ascension and the pouring out of the Spirit directly down to the person of Jesus of Nazareth" (*ibid.*).

15. ". . . sofern auch allen menschlichen Einzelwesen eine an den gegenwärtigen Zustand anknüpfende Erneuerung organischen Lebens bevorsteht."

16. Cf. §161, Thesis: Christ "in His utterances ascribed this awakening from death to His own agency."

quires “the continuity of consciousness, which again appears to us as conditioned by memory” (ibid.). Memory,¹⁷ now, “in its turn is as much bound up with bodily states as any other mental activity” (ibid.). From that it follows that “such a unifying memory” can hardly work “under absolutely different bodily conditions” (ibid.). Thus, if the state of the after-death existence were totally different from our present state, we would lack that memory and therefore lose the “continuity of consciousness.” So it seems to be evident “that the more the soul in itself remains the same, the more must the future life be a simple, easily attachable prolongation of the present” (ibid.).

That, however, is contrary to the idea of the consummation of the church because that consummation implies a fundamental *discontinuity*, namely, the end of any efficiency of sin. Because of that, “the similarity between the future organism and the present” has to be limited, which, according to Schleiermacher, is the intention of the “description of the resurrection body as immortal and without sex” (ibid.). Both fit very well with the idea of the consummation of the church. Immortality removes the “interest in bodily self-preservation” that is “so fruitful a seed of strife between flesh and spirit” (ibid.). The end of sexual intercourse prevents “new souls from being called into being through procreation,” which is always the source of new sin.

Yet, immortality and the lack of sexual intercourse mark such a huge difference from our present conditions of life that these qualities “are inimical to the identity of the soul and the continuity of consciousness” (ibid.). Schleiermacher therefore concludes that both continuity and discontinuity have to be considered “but that the two really represent different interests” (ibid.). “Hence the different items cannot be combined in an idea capable of clear representation” (ibid.).¹⁸

17. Cf. Dirk Evers (this volume), esp. section 5.

18. In the following, Schleiermacher demonstrates that incompatibility reflecting on the question of an “intermediate state” between death and resurrection (§161,2), and with reference to the problem that, if there are “utterly different states” of the saved and the unsaved resulting from resurrection (which is implied in the doctrine of eternal damnation), then apparently “the new bodies which they receive” must also be “utterly different” because the “organism must be adapted to the conditions which are impending” (ibid.), and the question emerges whether the individuals already rise in their respective bodily state (which would mean that resurrection and the Last Judgment coincide) or all of them rise in an identical bodily shape that is being differentiated only after the Last Judgment (§161,3).

Summarizing Remarks

Unlike Martin Weeber, I do not think that in the eschatological parts of the *Glaubenslehre* Schleiermacher describes and discusses church doctrines only to show their aporetic character in order to make them dispensable to the Christian consciousness. I rather agree with Eilert Herms's emphasis that, according to Schleiermacher, eschatology, particularly in its cosmological dimensions, is a necessary element of the Christian consciousness even though there are epistemological and hermeneutical problems limiting our knowledge of the definite future and determining the specific character of eschatological propositions. Schleiermacher's reflections on eschatology are exemplary in several respects, of which I name only three:

First, Schleiermacher continuously takes into consideration the *theological* character of eschatological propositions in contrast to *scientific* theories, without, however, neglecting the cosmological implications of eschatological reality. He consistently bases eschatology on the appearance of Christ and particularly on Christ's assumption of human nature (*unio hypostatica*), from which all certainty of persistence and perfection of humankind derives.

Second, he draws our attention to the crucial problem of eschatological imagination: the question of continuity and discontinuity between our present state and the state of fulfillment. In a very subtle way, he links that question to the two fundamental aspects of eschatological reality, the persistence of individual existence after death and the consummation of the new social life (*neues Gesamtleben*), and thus forms a complex pattern to examine and interpret traditional eschatological doctrines. We will hardly find a discussion of the intrinsic rationality of eschatological propositions that is as sophisticated as Schleiermacher's.

Third, Schleiermacher combines an emphasis on the body-bound character of the human soul with reflections on the conditions of existence in any given world. Although we cannot portray a concrete picture of eschatological existence, we are entitled to assume that this existence will have a worldly shape, taking place not beyond time and space but in a different form of time and space. Herms rightly states that Schleiermacher maintains the expectation of "a new heaven and a new earth." So it remains indispensable to insist on the bodily character of eschatological existence. However, we will never escape the dilemma that an emphasis on the *continuity* between the present and the future state will diminish the impression of perfection, whereas an emphasis on the *discontinuity* will damage the impression of personal identity.

Obviously, there might arise critical questions with reference to many details of Schleiermacher's expositions. In the end of my chapter, I will not

deal with that but rather only mark a problem that is fundamental to Schleiermacher's program as such: according to Schleiermacher, Christ's resurrection is not essential to his redemptive work. We share subjectively in redemption by participating in his consciousness of God, which was accessible before his resurrection and is still accessible independently of it. Schleiermacher thus represents a type of soteriology that focuses on the teaching of the historical Jesus rather than on his work in resurrection. But is it really true that Christ's resurrection has no relevance to our understanding of him and his redemptive work? To ask that, however, does not necessarily imply doubting the relevance and significance of Schleiermacher's eschatological thoughts as such, but anyway demands that we reflect anew on the soteriological meaning of Christ's resurrection and its impact on our understanding of eschatological reality.