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**From the Infinite, through the (In)finite and to the Infinite:
Friedrich Schleiermacher's Theological Thoughts on the
Divine All-Sovereignty**

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Introduction

... humanity is not everything to me ... my religion strives for a universe which humanity, with all that belongs to it, is only an infinitely small part, only one

particular transient form. Can a God, who would be merely the genius of humanity thus be the highest being of my religion?¹

This is an essential and leading question in understanding not only Schleiermacher as a theologian, but his own existential strive to answer his deepest and widest questions as a human being facing existence, one that, however, is not made alone, but conscious of his belonging in a tradition much wider than his own person, his historical situation and geographical context, and, at the same time, bound to his own person, his historical situation and geographical context. Working between these two poles that he defines as the orthodox and the heterodox, tradition and innovation, his reflection is a construction from the dialogical foundations of human understanding as an intra and interpersonal relation of an individual and a community, using this to approach religion in a whole new manner, defending it, from his contemporary despisers of religion, but also trying to renew it, as a form of surpassing ecclesiastical and theological reclusion.

The first moment of this article will be dedicated to examining his life and thought until c. 1811, highlighting how the two are intertwined and how this reflects on his publications. At this moment there will also be an exposition of the main elements of his first publication, *On Religion*, of his dialectics (his philosophical fundament) and of his notion of the study of theology, exposed on *A Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*. After this, his dogmatic work, *The Christian Faith*, will be seen. At first approaching some presuppositions in the work's Introduction, this will be followed by a deepening of some matters developed on his dogmatic body, placing God, the world, humanity and Christianity inside his system, with an initial allusion to the way of Christ's redemption of Creation. On a third and final point, divine sovereignty will be approached directly, dealing with themes like the divine attributes of Creation and Preservation, original perfection, election (predestination), eternal blessedness and damnation.

¹ Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* [1799] (Trans. Richard Crouter; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 136.

One of the main intents in this work is to have an overview of Schleiermacher's life and thought that will be in relation to his specific developments on divine sovereignty. This way, there will not be so much of a comparative analysis between distinct perspectives of divine sovereignty, but it will be restricted to Schleiermacher's construction of his own view in relation to others.² Some themes in Schleiermacher will only be alluded to, signaling also to where this can be deepened, for example, with the respectful paragraphs or works. Nonetheless, there will be an exposition of the main topics found necessary for an understanding of his system in final relation to divine sovereignty.

A. Between Tradition and Innovation

Born in the city of Breslau in 1768, Friedrich Schleiermacher comes from two generations of reformed pastors: Gottlieb Schleiermacher, his father, a military chaplain, and Timotheus Stubenrauch, his grandfather by his mother's side, a royal chaplain in the Prussian court. Despite this, his life was permeated by an ecumenical upbringing and formation. His father, in 1778, had a spiritual experience with a Moravian pietist group, and from then on joined movement – which Schleiermacher's grandfather on his father's side, Daniel Schleiermacher, was already a member of. This relation was specifically with the Moravian Brethren pietistic line, originated with the *Herrnhut* ("God's shelter") community founded in 1722 by Count Nicolaus von Zinzendorf (1700-1760). In 1783, Schleiermacher, his sister Charlotte and brother Carl went to study in Niesky, in a pietist boarding school, and from where, in 1785, Schleiermacher left to go to the seminary in Barby. The pietist spiritual sphere can be seen as a decisive factor in Schleiermacher's own religious life, especially when the distinction between the

² For a deepening of the historical-systematic discussion with his contemporaries and the previous theological tradition, see Anette Hagan's *Eternal Blessedness for All? A Historical-systematic Examination of Schleiermacher's Understanding of Predestination* (Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Oregon: Pickwick, 2013). For a comparative study of Schleiermacher's thoughts on election with Karl Barth's, see Matthias Gockel's *Barth & Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election* (Norfolk: Oxford University, 2006).

Moravian pietist movement and the Halle one is taken into account.³ As Schleiermacher's own words can express in a letter to a friend in 1802, from his sister's house on a visit:

Here [in the community of Gnadenfrei] it was for me the first time I awoke to the consciousness of the relations of man to a higher world ... Here it was that that mystic tendency developed itself, which has been of so much importance to me, and has supported and carried me through all the storms of skepticism. Then it was only germinating, now it has attained its full development, and I may say, that after all that I have passed through, I have become a Herrnhuter again, only of a higher order.⁴

Despite this later recognition of the importance of this time, going back to his formative years, after being severely admonished by his father for his theological questionings of Christ's death as expiation and persecuted by the seminary leaders for reading, with a circle of close friends, the works of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Johann W. Goethe (1749-1832), Schleiermacher, in 1787, chose to leave the Moravian seminary and head for a more academically open institution, the University of Halle. It was here, with his uncle Samuel Stubenrauch (1738-1807), and especially under Johann A. Eberhard (1739-1809), his philosophy teacher, that he had the opportunity to deepen his knowledge on the new views of the world and of humanity that was rising in the modern world of then. Even though he had read Kant's *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics* in the seminary, in Halle he worked (critically, for Eberhard was a wolffian rationalist philosopher) with the *Critique of pure reason*, and in 1788, on his second year in Halle, witnessed the publication of the *Critique of*

³ It is important to see that while Zinzendorf's pietist movement, known as the Moravians, had an emphasis on personal and communal experience (even emotional ones) with Christ and with the Christian community, the older pietism developed in the city of Halle, where the movement was founded by Philipp Spener (1635-1705), but specially under August Francke (1663-1727), sought a strict moral development. Later in life Schleiermacher recognized this great distinction of emphasis, which led him to, while enjoying the academic freedom of Halle, miss the warmth of his brethren. Halle's pietism also influenced several institutions around Prussia, one of which was the *Friedrichskollegium*, in Königsberg, where Immanuel Kant studied for eight years, and where, as seen by Höffe, Reale and Antiseri, he possibly got his ethical understanding of religion, so fundamental even later on with his *Critique of Practical Reason*. Otfried Höffe's *Immanuel Kant* (Trans. C. V. Hamm; V. Rohden. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2005), 4-6; Giovanni Reale and Dario Antiseri's *História da Filosofia: de Espinosa a Kant*, V. 4 (Trans. Ivo Storniolo. São Paulo: Paulus, 2005), 348.

⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in his Autobiography and Letter*. V.I. (Trans. Frederica Roan; London: Smith, Elder and CO, 1860), 283-284.

practical reason. It was also here that he started a contact with another philosopher that, along with Kant, would be a partner of dialogical construction, using him to re-read Kant, and Kant to re-new him: Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677).⁵

Schleiermacher's first great publication came out in 1799, nine years after his graduation (period when some important works on Kant and Spinoza can be seen), and four after he moved to Berlin. In this city, where he was a chaplain in the main hospital, the *Charité*, he came into contact with a circle of young thinkers that, even though raised in the enlightened critique of tradition and worship of reason, had also seen the downside of this through Goethe's publications and the *Sturm und Drang* movement.⁶ This Berlin group, which gathered in the *salons* of the city, composed of the Schlegel brothers, Friedrich (with whom Schleiermacher shared an apartment in 1797) and August, the von Humboldt brothers, Wilhelm and Alexander, and others, worked with the "*Athenaeum*" journal, contributing to the rise of the Romantic movement and its incisive critiques of the enlightenment's rationalistic reduction of the human being. Inside this circle, conscious of their points, but also with his own perspectives, Schleiermacher develops his work against the enlightened (or not) despisers of religion, also aiming, nevertheless, at anyone who did not comprehend the importance of the historical constitution of religion, but sought to annihilate religious structures and establish a universal natural (idealistic) religion. Consciously inserted into a Christian

⁵ Two of Schleiermacher's main presuppositions of construction are Kant and Spinoza. From the first one, he recognizes the limits of knowledge (based on the two roots of human understanding, experience and synthesis), and, along with this, the dangers of metaphysics in Theology (Schleiermacher's critique towards Kant are made in philosophy and in theology). From the second one he retains the search to overcome an ontological dualism, uniting the material (*res extensa*) and the immaterial (*res cogitans*) on an ontological fundament, and from where consequences can be seen to a critique of an anthropomorphic notion of God. Several other elements can be detected in his dialogue between these two thinkers, however, they cannot be deepened here. For continual dialogue see Richard Brandt's *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941) and Julia Lamm's "Schleiermacher's Post-Kantian Spinozism: the Early Essays on Spinoza, 1793-1794," *The Journey of Religion* (Chicago, USA, Vol. 74, n. 4, p. 476-505, 1994). Retrieved from: www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Schleiermacher's%20Post-Kantian%20Spinozism.pdf.

⁶ This movement questioned the enlightenment's emphasis on reason and sought to give light to human existence through an emphasis on feelings and emotion, as Goethe's *Werther* attests: "All the knowledge I possess everyone else can acquire, but my heart is exclusively my own." J. W. Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Retrieved from www.Gutenberg.org/files/2527/2527-h/2527-h.htm.

tradition, unique self-identification in relation to all the major romanticists, he also makes remarks on internal matters. This way, *On religion: speeches to its cultured despisers*, inserted Schleiermacher's name on the philosophical and theological intellectual sphere of then with profound multiple critiques, but also with a revolutionary new form of dealing with religion.

According to Rudolf Otto:

It provoked Schelling first to objection and then to imitation. It played an important role in Fichte's religious conversion; a distinct echo of the *Speeches* may be heard in Fichte's *Guide to the Blessed Life* (1806) and in his *Speeches to the German Nation* (1808).⁷

And, according to Friedrich Schelling himself, in a letter to August Schlegel in 1800:

I must tell you that I have become a very ardent admirer of the *Discourses on Religion*. You know how it was with me before because of unpardonable neglect or laziness in the matter. I now revere the author as a spirit whom one can regard only as on equal level with the very first original philosophers. Without this originality, it were impossible so to have penetrated to the inmost speculation without leaving a trace of the stages through which one had to go. The work, as it is, seems to be sprung out of itself... but nevertheless, anyone who wants to produce anything of that sort must have made the deepest philosophical studies, or else have written with blind divine inspiration.⁸

Despite this philosophical appraisal of the work (in no way shared by other contemporary thinkers, most of all his later fellow in Berlin, Georg W. Hegel [1770-1831]), guaranteed by its revolutionary form of understanding religion, criticizing Kant's ethical and Fichte's abstracted ideological reductions of it, it must mainly be understood as a theological one, at least, in a new comprehension of theological doing.

The fundament for his positive construction of the notion of religion is in intimate relation to his critique of claims of metaphysical deduction (or illumination) and doctrinal structuration of ahistorical revelations. Overcoming the main forms of dualistic tendencies, be it

⁷ Rudolf Otto. "Introduction," in Friedrich Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* [1821] (Trans. John Oman; New York: Harper & Row, 1958), x.

⁸ Schelling and Brandt, 1941, 149.

spiritual or rational, he seeks to understand the human living as a whole, amongst themselves and with the totality of creation, as can be attested with the quote that initiates this article. For Schleiermacher, religion plays an essential role in this new understanding of being human, placing it as the “innermost depths”⁹ of the mind, being “neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling”¹⁰ of this Whole. However, the essence of religion becomes historical and linguistic as soon as it awakens as consciousness, binding it to the anthropological condition of being human, even though it relates to a Whole that antecedes and goes beyond it,¹¹ and, precisely because of this external reality, even though anthropological, his development cannot be understood as starting or ending with humanity, as an egological¹² one.

Schleiermacher’s later thoughts on religion are focused on the theological field, and not so much on what can be understood, as he himself also understood, as Philosophy of Religion. Nonetheless, much of the philosophical presuppositions that led him to develop his first work are still present after, but now, with another focus and a

⁹ Schleiermacher, 1993 [1799], 87.

¹⁰ Schleiermacher, 1993 [1799], p. 102. Here it is also important to note that in the second edition of 1806 Schleiermacher already made an important reformulation, giving the priority to feeling, to accentuate the pre-reflexive moment, and removing much usage of the intuition, even though it is still present (but always associated to feeling). This development will culminate with *The Christian Faith*’s assertion of the “feeling of absolute dependence” as the essence of religion, emphasizing the ontological anteriority of it, therefore, related to an exterior reality, and not an inner-mental development.

¹¹ Schleiermacher needs to be seen in his relation with Spinoza, which led him to develop an ontology that precedes epistemology, from whence he can understand “the whole [*Umfang*] of the organic world” (Lamm, 1994, p. 497) prior to its actual individual existing (*Inbegriff*). This is a very distinct posture from that of transcendental idealism which understood the whole as a projected sum (*Zusammen*). For this reason, “Schleiermacher is more of a philosophical realist than either Kant or Fichte in seeing that the realms of human selfhood (spirit, freedom) and the world (nature) cry out for reconciliation, not just intellectually ... but at the level of human existence”. Richard Crouter, “Introduction,” in Schleiermacher, 1993 [1799], p. 31.

¹² Here we use of Walter Mignolo’s decolonial thought and his critique of the egological theological and philosophical developments of modernity (Walter Mignolo. *Desobediencia epistémica: retórica de la modernidad, lógica de la colonialidad y gramática de la descolonialidad*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo, 2010. p. 38), which, read with Edgardo Lander and Charles Taylor’s critique of ontologically dualistic based epistemologies (Edgardo Lander, *Ciencias sociales: saberes coloniales y eurocéntrico*. In: _____. (Org.). *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000. p. 5), can be used to see Kant’s and Fichte’s theological (and philosophical) developments as ego-based (either deduced from or resumed to the *ego*, the *Ich*, the *I*) anthropocentric ones which reduce religion (and existence) to either ethical or intellectual life.

much more solid philosophical grounding, which he developed in his Dialectic Theory. A first lecture on this field of knowledge was made in 1811, a year after the inauguration of the University of Berlin, of which Schleiermacher had a key role in structuring.¹³ Still, already while teaching Ethics in the University of Halle (1804-1806) he developed what he understood as a fundament of the sciences, for it was a fundament of human knowing. For him, knowing is precisely this, a verb, a dialogical action, a continual dynamic process, expressed by his choosing of *wissen* (“knowing”), in opposition to Kant’s usage of the substantive *Erkenntnis* (“knowledge”).¹⁴ This dialogical intra and interpersonal construction makes philosophy essentially a “philosophizing”, *zu philosophiren*, and an individual, but communal, construction of knowledge:

To do philosophy is to bring about some knowledge, united with the clear consciousness of its being brought about. Thus, it falls within the category of art and its product is therefore also a work of art, for a work of art is something individual within which what is general is directly presented and something infinite is contained.¹⁵

Based on this refined notion of the construction of knowing, Schleiermacher also develops a notion of theology that consciously needs to comprehend this dialogical condition of human intra and interpersonal relations, therefore an intrinsic historical condition of the theological doing. He develops this in his work of 1811, with a revision in 1830, *A Brief outline of the theological study*. Theologizing is how his methodological construction of theology can be defined, for, in an analogous manner to his notion of philosophizing, also this form of knowing (for it is a reflective, constructive and systematic form of thinking religion) needs to be a continual process. This dynamicity lies on the necessity of the

¹³ Thomas A. Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (New York, USA: Oxford University, 2006).

¹⁴ Terrence Tice calls attention to this distinction in his comments on Schleiermacher’s Dialectics: “Note, too, that whereas Kant uses ‘knowledge’ here, Schleiermacher regularly uses *Wissen*, which in its form as a verbal noun refers to a process, one that enables one or more persons to say ‘I (we) know,’ ‘am (are) knowing’”. Terrence Tice. Ed. Commentary, in Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *Dialectic or, The Art of Doing Philosophy*: a study edition of the 1811 notes (Trans. and Org. Terrence Tice. Georgia: Scholars Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁵ Schleiermacher, 1996, [1811], p. 4.

interrelation between the two fundamental poles of a double historicity of the theological doing, the orthodox, as a relation with the past, which is “every element of doctrine which is construed in the intention of holding fast to what is already generally acknowledge”,¹⁶ and the heterodox, as a conscious living in the present, which is “every element construed in the inclination to keep doctrine mobile and to make room for still other modes of apprehension”.¹⁷ The second pole of theology’s double historicity, heterodox, can be seen as a double form of innovating tradition: for the individual that constructs his own theology (for Schleiermacher is conscious of the ultimate subjectivity of the theological reflection) and the community to which it is intended.¹⁸

B. Creation’s Redemption in Christ

1. Feeling of Absolute Dependence on the *Whence*

His doctrinal work, *The Christian Faith*, published in 1820-21, and revised in 1831-2, is where he develops much of the main elements of the traditional dogmatic¹⁹ *loci*, even though he also

¹⁶ Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *A Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* [1830]. Translation Terrence Tice. Virginia: John Knox, 1966. p. 74.

¹⁷ Schleiermacher, 1966 [1830], p. 74.

¹⁸ This can be attested throughout this work where in each section of the study of theology—Philosophical, Historical and Practical—he emphasizes the need for each theologian to develop his own reflection, based on each own individuality and relation to a particular tradition (for theology is seen by him as a technical study, a *positive wissenschaft*, with practical means, such as medicine and law): “It is to be required of every evangelical student of theology [from every evangelical theologian, in the first edition] that he [*er*, masculine personal pronoun] be engaged in forming a personal conviction regarding every proper locus of doctrine”, and this refers to “that inward receptivity to new investigations essential to the spirit of our Church: either to changes in the treatment of the canon, or to the opening up of new sources for dogmatic terminology”. SCHLEIERMACHER, 1966 [1830], p. 78. It is relevant to see that this pedagogical thinking (even though done with a masculine presupposition of the student of theology) is strictly against what could be understood as that which the Brazilian pedagogue of liberation Paulo Freire also criticizes, a “banking education”, *educação bancária*, which is the general deposit of information, and not an individual construction of an existentially relevant form of knowing: “This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits” (FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translation Myra B. Ramos. New York: Continuum, 2005. p. 72). However, based on the developments of the Theology of Liberation, we also see how on Freire education is much more a critical social-political construction, and not only an existentially signifying one.

¹⁹ In his 1811 work, Dogmatics is part of the wider field of Historical Theology, also consisted of Exegetic Theology, Church History and Church Statistics. On the second edition of his doctrinal work, of 1831, it is on §19 where he defines Dogmatics: “*Dogmatic Theology is the science which systematizes* [Footnote continued on next page ...]

revolutionized the form of presentation itself. This work needs to be seen in relation to all of the presuppositions presented until now,²⁰ and, as he himself acknowledges on the work, it cannot be taken as a doctrine dogmatic, for, the same way “the text-books of the seventeenth century can no longer serve the same purpose as they did then [...] the same fate will one day befall the present ones too”.²¹ Therefore, in this work, Schleiermacher has the intent of systematizing (even though conscious of the dangers of a “systematic theology”²²) the Christian doctrines of and for his time, dialogically integrating tradition with innovation, the orthodox and the heterodox.

His departure (and fundamental point where he receives the critiques²³) is the human being, for, as seen above, he is conscious that it is under the condition of being human that the theological reflection arises, and, even though “*all propositions which the system of Christian doctrine has to establish can be regarded either as descriptions of human states, or as conceptions of divine attributes and modes of action, or as utterances regarding the constitution of the world*”²⁴ (§30), he subsequently develops that “we must declare the description of human states of mind to be the fundamental dogmatic form; while propositions of the second and third forms are

the doctrine prevalent in a Christian Church at a time”. SCHLEIERMACHER, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. v. I [1830]. Translation H. R. Mckintosh; J. S. Stewart. New York: Harper & Row, 1963. p. 88.

²⁰ Even though Schleiermacher’s thoughts throughout the years needs to be seen in an interrelation, there are important modifications in his works that show a continual development, such as between the first and subsequent edition of *On Religion*, where he changes the emphases from intuition and feeling to feeling (and only sometimes still intuition). Another important change was on the dogmatic work itself, but, albeit a polemic subject, as Crouter analyses, “the chief aim of revision would be to make the introduction more independent and to delineate it more sharply from the main body of the work” (CROUTER, Richard. *Friedrich Schleiermacher: between Enlightenment and Romanticism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. p. 233).

²¹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 89.

²² For Schleiermacher, even though “the designation ‘systematic theology’ [...] rightly stresses that doctrine is not to be presented as a mere aggregate of propositions, whose coherent interrelation is not clearly shown. It nevertheless conceals, to the detriment of the subject, not only the historical character of the discipline, but also its aim in relation to Church leadership; and numerous misinterpretations are bound to arise as a result”. Schleiermacher, 1966 [1830], p. 48.

²³ The critiques made in this direction occur as much in his time as in later times, however, the XXth century was defined by Reihold Niebuhr as one bound to a “barthian captivity [which] severely restricts the freedom of serious study of Schleiermacher” (NIEBUHR, Richard R. *Schleiermacher: on Christ and Religion*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1964. p. 12), already inaugurated with Karl Barth’s 1919 publication, “The Epistle to the Romans”.

²⁴ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 125.

permissible only in so far as they can be developed out of propositions of the first form”.²⁵ Why? Because the fundamental starting point of talking about God or the world in relation to God and the human beings is piety, along with its historical individual and communal construction. Nonetheless, for Schleiermacher there is a “*common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety [...] the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God*”²⁶ (§4). This “consciousness [or feeling, for it precedes reflective thought] of absolute dependence” is referred to the “*Whence* of our receptive and active existence, as implied by this self-consciousness, [which] is to be designated by the word ‘God’, and that this is for us the really original signification of that word”²⁷ (§4.4).

This *Whence*, as Schleiermacher defines the “original signification” of the word God, relates to what he developed in the dialectical theory as the transcendent/transcendental ground. With this conception, God, as well as that which can be determined as its sovereignty, in theological, and, specifically, dogmatic reflection, has an intimate relation with the world and the human beings, but two things remain fundamental here.

The first is that the reality of this external existence is attested by Schleiermacher with the option of defining the ground level of self-consciousness and the highest level of self-consciousness, the essence of piety, with the term “dependence”, which indicates exactly this, an organic dependent relation with an exterior, and, whilst the first one is the “feeling of dependence”,²⁸ the latter is the immediate consciousness of being absolutely dependent on an outer fundament, that is, organically and ideologically. Even though the essence of piety, the feeling of absolute dependence, is the third and highest level

²⁵ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 126.

²⁶ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 12.

²⁷ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 16.

²⁸ The “feeling of dependence” is the first moment of self-consciousness, but it plays a dialectical relation with the “feeling of freedom”, which is the spontaneous intellectual function, and this composes the second level of self-consciousness. One of the major aims in this development is to stand against any idealistic construction: “our whole existence does not present itself to our consciousness as having proceeded from our own spontaneous activity” (SCHLEIERMACHER, 1963 [1830], p. 16).

of self-consciousness, it does not occur in an ahistorical or pure form, but always in relation to the dialectics of the second level of consciousness (feelings of dependence and freedom). Therefore, the religious consciousness which arises from the immediate self-consciousness of being absolutely dependent, “related as a constituent factor to a given moment of consciousness [...] it thereby becomes a particular religious emotion, and being in another moment related to a different datum, it becomes a different religious emotion”²⁹ (§5.4).

And the second important thing to keep in perspective is that, although having an existence outside of the human mind, this *Whence* cannot also be simply identified with the material external existence, for “this ‘Whence’ is not the world, in the sense of the totality of temporal existence, and still less is it any single part of the world”³⁰ (§4.4). The reason why God cannot be equaled to the material world is because human beings are in a complementary relation to the world, influencing it, and, therefore, taking away any sovereign character. For this, “in the first instance God signifies for us simply that which is the co-determinant in this feeling and to which we trace our being in such a state”.³¹

Two other fundamental points that can be understood as attempts by Schleiermacher to ensure a total sovereignty of God are:

[first] The transference of the idea of God to any perceptible object, unless one is all the time conscious that it is a piece of pure arbitrary symbolism, is always a corruption, whether it be a temporary transference, *i.e.* a theophany, or a constitutive transference, in which God is represented as permanently a particular perceptible existence.³²

[and second] Any proclamation of God which is to be operative upon and within us can only express God in His relation to us; and this is not an infra-human ignorance concerning God, but the essence of human limitedness in relation to him.³³ [§10 *postscript*]

²⁹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 22.

³⁰ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 16.

³¹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 17.

³² Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 18.

³³ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 52.

Parting from this notion of God, and of the utter human limitedness, what could be defined as revelation or revealed? Not a cognitive operation, therefore, not a doctrine in itself, but “the *originality* of the fact which lies at the foundation of a religious communion”,³⁴ that is, the point of uniqueness of a religious perspective on God’s relation with humanity and the world and its consequences. Even though, as he attests, revelation is not something solely of Christianity, it is at this point that he starts his presentation to this religion’s peculiarity, that is, what is the originality of Christianity in its revelation of God’s relational existence.

2. Totality of Redemption

For Schleiermacher, Christianity’s essential revelation to which all emotions raised relate to, from the first followers of Christ to today, and which can be seen as common to all forms of Christian communions, is the notion of “*the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth*”³⁵ (§11). To understand this, however, there is also the view of the need for redemption, where he uses the concepts of sin, worked as “*Godlessness*, or, better, *God-forgetfulness*”³⁶ (§11.2) and redemption, “*God-consciousness*”. This way, a first fundamental point in Christianity’s revelation is the notion of the sinful structural nature of human reality itself. Formulating an interpretation of the Pauline notion of “*carnal*” and “*spiritual*”, Schleiermacher develops a threefold notion of sin: a developmental (human existence itself as historical and material experiences without reference to God), an intellectual (an uneven development between introspection and strength of will) and a social (sin is not only an individual situation, but a corporate historical structure where the individual is thrown into). Based on this perspective, sin ultimately “[...] *is present in an individual prior to any action of his own, and has its ground outside his own being*”³⁷ (§70).

Jesus, for Schleiermacher, had a perfect God-consciousness, and this is what he communicated to his first followers, but it is also what

³⁴ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 50.

³⁵ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 52.

³⁶ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 54.

³⁷ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 282.

differentiates his own self with the others of human beings, that is, his “*sinless perfection*”³⁸ (§88). In relation to this, as Schleiermacher’s notion of the relation of Christianity to other religions is a complementary one, he affirms that “he alone is destined gradually to quicken the whole human race into higher life”³⁹ (§13.1) that is, deepen the process of humanity’s God-consciousness. Presupposed in this perspective is also the view that “as certainly as Christ was a man, there must reside in human nature the possibility of taking up the divine into himself, just as did happen in Christ”.⁴⁰ The notion of Christ as redeemer is what he will deepen throughout his dogmatic work, along with the attempt to show the true extent of his work: “redemption is posited as a thing which has been universally and completely accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth”⁴¹ (§11.3).

Along with the perspective of sin as a corporate structure that creates evil, redemption is the Redeemer’s incorporation of “*believers into the power of his God-consciousness*”⁴² (§100), which is “*a new divinely-effected corporate life, which works in opposition to the corporate life of sin and the misery which develops in it*”⁴³ (§87). Revelation, therefore, has to do as much with the conscience of the reality of the structural sin as with Christ’s communication and initiation into the consciousness of the divine grace. Analogous Schleiermacher’s view of continual creation, as will be seen after, in a perspective critical to the fall/redemption mode of interpretation, it is through Christ, and this new level of God-consciousness that the creation of the human nature is fulfilled (§89). Taking that the Spirit in common shared by the followers of Christ is his real presence through his Word (§106.2), Schleiermacher develops the doctrine of the Trinity as “the doctrine of the union of the Divine Essence with human nature, both in the personality of Christ and in the common Spirit of the Church”⁴⁴ (§170).

³⁸ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 361.

³⁹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 63.

⁴⁰ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 64.

⁴¹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 56.

⁴² Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 425.

⁴³ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 358.

⁴⁴ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 738.

Therefore, it is only through a great overview of Christianity from its first decisive moments and emotions raised through the proclamation of Jesus, but especially based on an “*exclusive dignity of the Redeemer*” (§92), his own full God-consciousness, that the Christian revelation of God’s being in relation to us can be understood. The doctrine of the Trinity, the conclusion of the work, although “*not an immediate utterance concerning the Christian self-consciousness, but only a combination of several such utterances*”⁴⁵ (§170), is an exclusively Christian revelation, and is the last aspect to be worked by Schleiermacher in his dogmatic reflection, revolutionizing dogmatic structuring itself, placing at the end what in Peter Lombard’s *Libri Quattuor Sententiaruum* is the first *locus* and in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* the second (coming after the *locus* on God). On this last point, on the last paragraph of the work, §172, after discoursing on his comprehension of the Trinity, he also exposes that, for its seldom treatment, we “*have the less reason to regard this doctrine as finally settled*”,⁴⁶ and leaves open the question as to “if not purely exegetical in origin”, but “by purely exegetical proof”⁴⁷ (analyzing Christ’s words) the Sabellian view it not at least on par with the Athanasian hypothesis.

C. Predestined Integration of the Whole

1. Election of the Human Race

Even though his mature dogmatic labor was published in 1821-2, the first moment where Schleiermacher directly works with the doctrine of election (and where he subsequently deals with the extent of divine sovereignty) was in an essay elaborated for a theological journal developed by his students Wilhelm de Wette and Friedrich Lücke in 1819, the *Theologische Zeitschrift*. This essay, *On the Doctrine of Election*, became his focus for a few months, taking some time off the work on his *The Christian Faith*, which was already being composed.

⁴⁵ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 738.

⁴⁶ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 747.

⁴⁷ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 750.

One of the main characteristics of this essay, and also seen later in his dogmatic work, is the effort to unite what is universal and particular in God: “in the divine knowledge what is universal and what is particular must be completely merged”.⁴⁸ Based on this, he overcomes a dualistic pre/postlapsarian reading of the human nature that presupposes an absolute freedom. This supralapsarian perspective of God’s sovereignty is not a complete annulment of individual human beings, but a perspective that tries to see a merge between the universal and the particular in divine knowledge: “it is indeed only because of the imperfection of our knowledge that for us the oneness of what is universal is different from the totality of what is particular”.⁴⁹ This way, Schleiermacher’s view, as stated in the beginning of the introduction, is to see everything that is human and partakes to humanity in a wider perspective, from whence he can develop his importance on humanity not individualistically, but as communal, as the whole. This wider perspective of human individuals as humanity, and humanity as part of creation, is attested when he says that:

It was indeed God’s good pleasure from the beginning not to create individual being and life but to create a world, and this is also the way in which the Spirit of God is active, as a world-forming power, and through the Spirit of God there arises not the disorder of individual spiritual life, but the spiritual world.

Reading the particular in relation to the whole and the whole as the main intent in God’s continual creation (a position maintained and emphasized in his dogmatics), he dialogues with the two traditions that, since 1817, had partaken in the forming of the Prussian Union of Churches, under king Friedrich Wilhelm III (1770-1840): the Lutheran and the Reformed. Even though this union was made, Schleiermacher had some critical concerns, which included the imposition of a unified liturgy. Despite this, Schleiermacher saw in this union an important intra-Christian reconnection, and, although the wish of the king was to unify in structure, liturgy and doctrine, Schleiermacher’s dogmatics, even though dialoguing with both traditions, did not emphasize any specific doctrinal developments, but

⁴⁸ Schleiermacher, apud HAGAN, 2013, p. 108.

⁴⁹ Schleiermacher, apud HAGAN, 2013, p. 107-8.

gave the primacy to the experience of a living (and, to an extent, relative) Christianity. Along with this, it is fundamental to see that his transition between these two tradition was not something imposed as a duty, but was made since childhood, where, all the while remaining in the reformed tradition (as seen that before the Union he was a reformed pastor), his surroundings where in Lutheran pietistic traditions. This double influence—as his personal life and the ecclesiastical environment of the time could be called—was reflected not only in his dogmatics, but already on this essay.

Schleiermacher’s position in the essay can be understood as a dialogue between the Lutheran orthodox view (where, while God’s will for salvation is universal, this is not the outcome, for it ultimately lays on the individual’s faith) and the Calvinist one (where God’s will for salvation is particular, as well as his will for damnation, and the outcome is based on this double decreed sovereignty). Albeit their distinctions, a unity lay as much in the Christological centrality as in the rejection of universal redemption, therefore, defending a particularity of salvation. For Schleiermacher, the emphasis underlies on the universal need for redemption, not only of all (or some) of humanity, but of Creation itself. This way, following the Lutheran perspective, there is a single divine unconditional decree, God’s will for salvation, but, also based on a cosmological perspective already exposed in *On Religion*, he expands this out of the Lutheran anthropocentrism, turning God’s will for the salvation/redemption of the whole creation, which includes the whole of humanity. As a complement to this, and overcoming Lutheran dualism of divine will/action, he follows the Calvinist perspective of absolute/unconditional divine sovereignty, and, due to this, the one final overall redemption is the actual outcome. Therefore, in Schleiermacher, as Hagan points, there is a “single, universal, all-encompassing decree for the entire human race”.⁵⁰

When dealing with this ultimate outcome, he also takes into account those that traditionally fall under the perdition, or, as Schleiermacher calls, the “mass of perdition” (*massa perditionis*), following a formula used by Augustine and Calvin. For this, he

⁵⁰ Hagan, 2013, p. 108.

sought to unite what he saw divided in tradition, God's love and sovereignty, a division that for him subsequently flowed into a split between those worthy of love, the elect, and those worthy of justice, the condemned. Even though he recognizes the universal reality of sin, a form of dealing with this issue is parting from the historicity of the human existence, from whence he can ask, criticizing the uneven duality between finite sins and infinite torment, if:

Is the difference between the guilt of one who [for a historical possibility and individual situation] has become a person of faith [...] and the guilt of one who [also for a historical possibility and individual situation] has continued not to be a person of faith so great that the infinite difference between blessedness and damnation for all eternity could be justified thereby?⁵¹

From this, he also takes into account those that did not have the historical situational possibility of this in life, and where, “the difference at the point of death, then, between the person of faith and the person not of faith is simply the difference between being taken up into the reign of Christ earlier and later”.⁵² Based on this perspective, “whereby through divine power, yet in a natural way, the human race is to be transformed into the spiritual body of Christ”.⁵³

2. Regeneration for Eternal Blessedness

Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* can be seen as work that constructs upon much that has been previously shown. However, it is also fundamental to note that he does not present this as the sole possible interpretation or doctrinaire construction made of the Bible, but as a development that, based on his theological methodology, seeks to take into account the questionings risen on the surrounding circumstances (cultural, social, philosophical, scientific etc.⁵⁴) where

⁵¹ Schleiermacher, apud Hagan, 2013, p. 116.

⁵² Schleiermacher, apud Hagan, 2013, p. 117.

⁵³ Schleiermacher, apud Hagan, 2013, p. 112.

⁵⁴ On this point can be seen many of the post-colonial critiques of Schleiermacher's labor. That is, how his works were modeled with a nationalistic and ethnocentric notion of religion that was akin to Hegel's development of the “German [Absolute] Spirit” (Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2005; 193). Taking in consideration several problematic elements throughout his works, however, a reading of Schleiermacher (and any author) also needs to see his relation to the context seeking to understand how he was specified as an individual, crucial to see, on his case, that there is a very interesting notion of the importance of the anthropological (that is, historical, material, social, contextual, communal and individual) development of religion and [Footnote continued on next page ...]

the theological reflection is made.⁵⁵ In this work, some fundamental themes dealing with divine sovereignty are exposed in the “First Part of the System of Doctrine”, where, under the overall arching aspect of “that religious self-consciousness which is always both presupposed by and contained in every Christian Religious Affection”,⁵⁶ he works with themes like creation and preservation, divine attributes, and the original perfection. Other elements on divine sovereignty are in the “Second Part of the System of Doctrine”, where he specifies the “explication of the facts of the religious self-consciousness, as they are determined by the antithesis [of sin and grace]”.⁵⁷ Some of the important points with which he deals here are redemption, election, predestination and the consummation of the Church (where there is the appendix “on eternal damnation”).

Even though these themes above are worked in what he calls the body of the dogmatic reflection itself (§§32-172), in the Introduction there is an affirmation already presented here that, even though orthodoxly unquestionable, through Schleiermacher’s perspective of continual creation, surpassing an anthropocentric view, there lies the possibility of developing an all-ranging notion of God’s sovereign Grace: “Redemption is posited as a thing which has been universally and completely accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth”⁵⁸ (§11.3).

religious traditions, very different than what was seen in Kant’s, Fichte’s and Hegel’s great developments of abstracted, idealized and moralistic natural religions. Possibly based on different forms of dealing with religion we could also understand why “Schleiermacher and Herder were the rare exceptions for [Hannah] Arendt” (Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*. Indianapolis: Indiana University, 2006; 98) on the matter of true political emancipation and, therefore, empowerment, of the Jews.

⁵⁵ On talking about creation and preservation, he says that “it is our duty to discover whether they [the creedal expressions as formulated in a specific situation] satisfy our present need and whether, perhaps, the further development of the evangelical spirit, and the many revolutions in the province of philosophy as well as of the natural sciences, do not necessitate other definitions; in which case we need have no scruples in completely abandoning the creedal expression” (§37.2). SCHLEIERMACHER, 1963 [1830], p. 145.

⁵⁶ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 131.

⁵⁷ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 259.

⁵⁸ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 56.

a. Absolute Vitality

God, the creator and sustainer of the world (§36),⁵⁹ is the Infinite on which the finite existence is unconditionally dependent upon, and this relation is such that “nothing, no point of space and no point of time, should be exempt from the Divine All-Sovereignty”⁶⁰ (§37.1). Even though a distinction is still needed, creation is seen as a continual process of preservation (Creation is absorbed in Preservation, but the concept of [continual] Creation also makes Preservation superfluous), for in the beginning of anything or in the effects caused by anything, there is always something new implied, “something which was not formerly contained in that particular thing”⁶¹ (§38.1). The “whole system of nature”, is created by an act of God that has not ceased (an act that does not resemble human activity and that in itself is not a temporal activity), and, for this, in the world there is “an alternation between a determination of the whole through God and a determination of all single individuals through each other”⁶² (§38.2), therefore, a continual activity of creation/preservation as an intrinsic inter-relation between God and existence as a whole and as individual, from the first moment through all states thereafter.⁶³ In the paragraph dealing with Creation (§40), Schleiermacher parts from Hebrews 11.3, more specifically, with the word “*ῥήματι (Θεοῦ)*”, “a word (of God)”. Based on this, and also excluding the usage of instruments or any means, “it is quite

⁵⁹ Here, something that he will do throughout his work, Schleiermacher calls upon other creeds that present the Trinity as Creator and Preserver (conscious of the great variations of relations between these two concepts): Gallican Confession, Augusburg Confession, *Quicumque vult* (Athanasian Creed). However, as he explains, “since the doctrine of the Trinity is neither presupposed in every Christian religious experience nor contained in it [but a construction of its consequences], these definitions do not belong to our present discussion”. Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 144.

⁶⁰ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 144. For biblical fundament of God as Creator and Preserver Schleiermacher uses Acts 17:24, Romans 1:19-20 and Hebrews 11:3.

⁶¹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 146.

⁶² Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 147.

⁶³ It is also important to note that for Schleiermacher the question of the origin of all finite beings is not primarily of piety, but of curiosity, and even though it should be sought through this last one (conscious that our perspective is bound to humanity’s own finite being, “for we only know ourselves in this manner” [§39.1]), there is “no answer to it which brings the religious man into contradiction with his fundamental feeling” (§39.1), such contradiction being even “not conceivable” (§40.3). Such position, however, can be seen as only possible when the essential in religion does not lie upon doctrinaire conceptual developments, but on the previous experiences and feelings, which subsequently can use different forms of definition and relation. SCHLEIERMACHER, 1963 [1830], p. 148-149; 151.

consistent with it and equally correct to say that the world itself, since it came into existence through the spoken word, is the word of God”⁶⁴ (§40.1). The essence of this doctrine for him as it is given in the immediate self-consciousness (and attested with this neotestamentary notion) is the identity of origination and continuance of the finite being *from, as* and *to* infinite.

For Schleiermacher, the “further elaboration of the doctrine of Creation in Dogmatics comes down to us from times when material even for natural science was taken from the Scriptures”,⁶⁵ and—based on a necessity of non-contradiction between the development of the religious self-consciousness with the desires and search for knowledge:

The complete separation of these two [natural science and theology⁶⁶] involves our handing over this subject [Creation] to natural science, which, carrying its researches backward into time, may lead us back to the forces and masses that formed the world, or even further.⁶⁷

On this interpretation of Creation and Preservation it’s possible to see the characteristic of Schleiermacher’s intent to give such an absolute sovereignty to God that its works cannot be fully understood by humanity in its intrinsically temporal and finite being, freeing the essence of the religious faith from doctrinaire constructions that try to frame God or that (because of this framed notion of theological revelation) arrives in contradiction with the human search to understand existence and being. Therefore, while acknowledging the possibility of human comprehension of itself and of the universe, Schleiermacher relativizes it to the condition of being human, position that also flows to an impossibility of knowing God as Creator and

⁶⁴ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 150.

⁶⁵ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 150.

⁶⁶ However, it is fundamental to keep in mind that this separation does not entail isolation. In this moment Schleiermacher also refers to the “Mosaic account” of creation, and even if the reformers took it as a genuinely historical narrative, as he observes, through other thinkers (such as Philon), “there always survived a somewhat obscure but healthy feeling that the old record must not be treated as historical in our sense of the word. [And, from this, and emphasizing a didactic use] We have therefore no reason to maintain a stricter historical interpretation than the Hebrews themselves did in their best days” (§40.2). Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 150.

⁶⁷ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 150.

Preserver, leaving the only possibility of experiencing it as Creator and Preserver and signifying this for human existence.

The divine attributes that for Schleiermacher can subsequently be developed, have their origin not in dogmatic treatments, but arise first in religious poetry (and this from the human being's inner life, it's emotional feelings⁶⁸), that is, in the experience of common life that "tries to vivify and establish the simple idea of the Supreme Being by the employment of expressions which we use about finite beings"⁶⁹ (§50.1). From this notion of the rising of religious language, Schleiermacher can affirm that all utterances do not indicate "*something special in God, but only something special in the manner in which the feeling of absolute dependence is to be related to Him*"⁷⁰ (§50).

The Absolute Causality, which is distinguished from the natural order (for this one is finite) but also equated in comprehension (as its sum-total), and can be understood by two main attributes: divine omnipotence (the sum-total of natural order, and where there is the omniscience) and divine eternity (as the opposite between the finite and natural, and where omnipresence is).⁷¹ Nonetheless, just as how Schleiermacher presented the "acts" of Creation and Preservation as intimately intertwined, to understand the totality of God's sovereignty, these two attributes also need to be seen in full inter-relational extent at all times, and not with anthropomorphic variations (or this would diminish both omnipotence and eternity): "Instead, therefore, of saying God is eternal and almighty, we should rather say He is almighty-eternal and eternal-almighty, or God is eternal

⁶⁸ Besides having made clear in the Introduction the sequence of religious experience, with its feelings and emotions rising from the immediate self-consciousness of absolute dependence, and the first externalizations of it in act, speech and poetry, and only thereafter in doctrine (§15.1), we can see on §51.2 another example of this popular rising of theology and usage of language, when dealing with the divine attributes: "With regard to the conception of omniscience, it perhaps arose in the first place in the sphere of popular, poetical, and religious teaching, to indicate the relationship between god and that which goes on in man's inner life". SCHLEIERMACHER, 1963 [1830], p. 202.

⁶⁹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 194.

⁷⁰ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 194.

⁷¹ Two biblical verses that Schleiermacher uses as scriptural support for his developments are Romans 1:20 and Psalm 90:2. Other forms of expressing the relation of humanity and creation with God's eternity/omnipotence can be seen in Job 36:26 and 2 Peter 3:8.

omnipotence or almighty eternity”⁷² (§51.2). On the search to overcome anthropomorphic views, Schleiermacher is also aware of the danger of, on the other side, falling into a notion of God as “dead forces”, and, trying also to overcome this deistic perspective, he sees as fundamental the complement of omniscience for omnipotence and omnipresence for eternity, conceptualizing this vivid relation and interrelation of the Absolute Causality with the whole as the “Absolute Vitality” (§51.2).

b. Regeneration and the Overcoming of Evil

For Schleiermacher, the original perfection of creation, the world and humanity, needs to be seen in relation to God, and not as a quality in itself (which could be possessed or lost). Within this, the religious self-consciousness, the God-consciousness that turns humanity into the “image of God”, is the highest possible form of human consciousness, and this is the original perfection of humanity (and the world). Taking into account the historical condition of the human development,⁷³ he attests that our perspective is bound to the sphere of procreation and the influence of tradition passed down, “that is to say, self-communicating piety [and its diversity] is as old as the self-propagating human race”⁷⁴ (§61.4).

The world’s original perfection needs to be seen in relation to humanity with the natural development and continuation of its God-consciousness: “*perfection* of the world [...] namely, [is] that the totality of finite existence [...] works together in such a way as to make possible the continuity of the religious self-consciousness”⁷⁵ (§57.1). The relation between the world and humanity, therefore, is not only ontological, but a divinely oriented natural structuring,

⁷² Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 202.

⁷³ It’s important to see that, as already seen in other moments, Schleiermacher’s perspective seeks to encompass the scientific developments into his dogmatic labor (this being essentially what also defines the dogmatic character for him). And, on the matter of the religious self-consciousness, it is not different, acknowledging that “matters of fact in the development of man [which includes the conditions, the course of development and how the God-consciousness became operative, along with the themes of speech and the determined consciousness] are never questions of faith, but of history, and statements concerning matters of fact [...] are not proposition of faith but historical statements [...] unless we are prepared to alter completely the usage of the word and, say, call history which is mingled with uncertainties, ‘faith’” (§ 61.1). Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 248.

⁷⁴ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 252.

⁷⁵ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 233.

conscious, however, that “the divine causality [...] is completely present in the totality of finite being”.⁷⁶ The *telos* of this development would be the self-realization of the God-consciousness in humanity, which needs the world to stimuli it, but also to express it:

The world offers to the human spirit⁷⁷ an abundance of stimuli to develop those conditions in which the God-consciousness can realize itself, and at the same time that in manifold degrees the world lends itself to being used by the human spirit as an instrument and means of expression.⁷⁸ (§59)

Despite this perfect notion of creation, it is all also in a provisional state. The notion of sin comes from the religious (especially Christian) self-consciousness of a condition “*partly as having its source in ourselves, partly as having its source outside our own being*”⁷⁹ (§69). This condition of sin (which is structural and individual) has actual evil consequences for the world and creation, which includes humanity itself and its social life (§76). Therefore, the ground of sin cannot be seen as outside humanity, but internal to its imperfect condition. With this, evil (not only natural, as death and pain, but especially social) becomes a consequence of sin. Following this, he develops his perspective of Christ as the Redeemer, the “second Adam”, in a sense of a decisive moment in the continual perfectness of (human) condition. However, a particular nature of Christ is also needed for this perfection to take place, namely, the absolute God-consciousness that drove his activity of “*sinless*

⁷⁶ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 211.

⁷⁷ It is fundamental to understand here that the human “spirit” does not mean, as Schleiermacher says, the Augustinian opinion of “an original contradiction between the spirit in man and that which is necessary for his animal life” (§61.5), but, we could say, the immaterial portion that composes each person, the active self-consciousness, the self-active being, risen with the body through receptivity, and which turns this into a living and individual experience “so that the same influence is not the same thing for all” (§59.2). “So, then, the two together are one: the knowability of existence is the ideal side of the original perfection of the world [being the active self-consciousness a result of it], and the natural subsistence of the human organism is the real side of the same perfection as directly related to human receptivity” (§59.1). Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 239.

⁷⁸ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 238.

⁷⁹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1830], p. 279.

perfection”⁸⁰ (§88), and which could be seen as a “*veritable existence of God in Him*”⁸¹ (§94).

Nonetheless, this cannot be seen as the beginning of a split between old creation and a (already) new perfected one, but, dealing especially with the human beings, it needs to be understood as a universal (already, but not yet) redemption of all of humanity, from whence there are two manners of fellowship with the Redeemer. The first one is an inner one, for those that live in the state of sanctification, that is, conscious fellowship with Christ (and the Church), and which leads to a path of overcoming sin and its evil consequences. And an outer one, for those “on whom preparatory grace is at work”⁸² (§113), but, because of the extent of Christ’s work, are already inserted into a new perfected creation. On this point, he follows the main threads woven on his earlier reflection on divine sovereignty, that is, redemption is for the human kind, and not only individuals, “for the incarnation of Christ means for human nature in general [the whole human race considered as a unity] what regeneration [that is, the initial moment of a living fellowship with Christ] is for the individual”.⁸³

The paragraphs dealing with election (§§117-120) are in accordance with this reflection. First he presents perspectives of an original equality or inequality between human beings, where a division of divine justice and love can be seen, one directed towards one portion of humanity and the other the others, antithesis that is peaked when the “assumption prevailing throughout the Christian Church of personal survival after death”⁸⁴ is taken into account. Before continuing to the “theorems”, he cautions of the separation between justice and mercy (as such with Creation and Preservation, Omnipotence and Eternity), and how this influences a double manner of divine action. Based on this analysis, as also seen in his previous work, the regeneration of an individual needs to be understood as

⁸⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, v. II [1831] (Trans. H. R. Mckintosh; J. S. Stewart. New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 361.

⁸¹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 385.

⁸² Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 525.

⁸³ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 528.

⁸⁴ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 544.

bound to his or her historical situation, as much inner (the person) as outer (the community), but also this to divine sovereignty. What is generally understood as a “passing over” the unregenerated mass by God, as a group of non-elected, becomes merely the developments of inner and outer preparations of grace, and, in case of death before this regeneration is fulfilled, this does not mean that a different fore-ordination is executed, “rather, the state in which he dies is only an intermediate state”, for:

Such is the faith in Christ which ascribes to Him a claim and power over the whole human race, without at the same time needing to admit any blind divine preference, and in which there is encountered no contradiction between the end in view in the divine plan of salvation and the result accomplished by the divine government of the world.⁸⁵

Schleiermacher defines penalties in future life as a widely diffused pre-Christian idea of which nothing can be said from our self-consciousness. However, there is a distinctively Christian manner to understand this (§84), which can be seen at the last division of the section where he deals with his ecclesiology, and where he works the prophetic doctrines, namely, return of Christ, resurrection of the flesh, Last Judgment and Eternal Blessedness, with an appendix (important to notice this), on eternal damnation. Summing his anthropological perspective and his notion of Christ’s relation to human nature and the consummation of the Church, he says that “human nature cannot be so inseparably restricted to a particular planet as to be involved in that planet’s destruction as resulting from cosmic laws”.⁸⁶ On this point there is an attempt to take into account a notion of a personally conscious state after death, and, as he presents it, this is not an intermediate one between death and the final resurrection before the Final Judgment, but a new form of regenerated life. Here, he does not attempt to say how this new form would be, except that (and contesting a form of a-corporal personal consciousness), since the spirit as a development of soul in a bodily organism [therefore, an individual construction in relation with consciousness, memory, mental activity and bodily states–§161] is the constitution of a

⁸⁵ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 549.

⁸⁶ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 708.

personal conscience, the continual of a personal conscience must have certain analogy in a renovated organic life, which depends on “Christ’s divine power” and a cosmic event in “the universal divine world-order”.⁸⁷

Even though Schleiermacher polemicizes more than gives positive constructions on the notion of the Last Judgment, for him, the questioning of the idea of an utter separation between believing and unbelieving, needs to take into account that all human beings are still under sin and evil in life, and also that at the resurrection all are supposed to be regenerated. This way, the eternal blessedness, as he has developed previously, cannot be seen in a Manichean contrast to an eternal damnation, as if after the consummation and regeneration of the whole creation, there would still exist a portion of “excluded” creation under an eternal divine judgment based on historical circumstances and situations. Besides, the definite victory presenting the absolute divine sovereignty takes place on the overcoming of death itself (1 Co 15.25-26, 55), therefore, on the resurrection of all, where the new regenerated creation takes place, and where “evil will have been completely overcome”:⁸⁸

Hence we ought at least to admit the equal rights of the milder view, of which likewise there are traces in Scripture; the view, namely, that through the power of redemption there will one day be a universal restoration of all souls.⁸⁹

Conclusion

The intent here was not of exposing what is Divine Sovereignty, but, as Schleiermacher himself acknowledged, what we could think it is. In this sense, a view of Schleiermacher’s life is fundamental to see his search for elaborating a living theological doing, which culminated in a dogmatic work that tried to intermedate between Scripture, Creedal tradition, and the developments made throughout philosophy, the natural sciences and everything human then. The consequent positions established from this wide perspective possibly have the pinnacle in his notion of Divine All-Sovereignty. As Hagan

⁸⁷ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 713.

⁸⁸ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 720.

⁸⁹ Schleiermacher, 1963 [1831], p. 722.

emphasizes, his position is very distinct from Lutherans and Calvinists, but also very much from the mainstream Western Christian tradition (on another tradition we can see this position with Origen [184/185-253/254]). Nevertheless, at the same time, it is with this tradition that he dialogues and constructs his thought, for, as Hagan also point, “Schleiermacher did not develop his doctrine of universal salvation, which entails the abolition of eternal perdition, as a reaction against the Calvinist doctrine; rather, he developed it from that position”.⁹⁰

Schleiermacher’s theological work of divine sovereignty on *The Christian Faith*, his final theological *exposé*, can be seen as an attempt to dialogue with his perspectives already presented on many major works, such as *On Religion* and *A Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*. Besides other modifications between his works, some that can be signaled as important are cosmological and anthropological ones that led him to see the whole of creation in relation to redemption and a final regeneration of it. Therefore, while on his first work he presents an anthropological notion that might even question a personal immortality (as a life of blessedness after death⁹¹), seeing humanity as an “infinitely small part” of the universe (a cosmology that surpasses human existence), on his dogmatics there is a cosmological twist that binds it to humanity through the perfection of creation (which ultimately is the human God-consciousness) and the redemptive works of Christ, even though this must englobe humanity as a whole along with all of creation. Despite this modification, on his search to develop a perspective of a living Divine All-Sovereignty as “Absolute Vitality”, Schleiermacher has fundamental consequences for the whole of Creation, from where it is possible to assert that, as Richard Baukham affirms, he was “the first great theologian of modernity to teach universalism”.⁹²

⁹⁰ Hagan, 2013, p. 239.

⁹¹ “But concerning immortality, I cannot conceal that the way in which most people take it and their longing after it is completely irreligious ... In search of immortality, which is none, and over which they are not masters, they lose the immortality that they could have.... To be one with the infinite in the midst of the finite and to be eternal in a moment, that is the immortality of religion.” Schleiermacher, 1993 [1799], p. 139-140.

⁹² Baukham, apud Hagan, 2013, p. 231.

Schleiermacher's development, even though made in a situation very different than our own today, has characteristics that need to be seen as positive contributions for the (self)critical construction of theology. His labor was done, or sought to be done, founded on the experience of being human,⁹³ an internal condition as much of the writers of the Scriptures and developers of confessional creeds, as of the ones who study theology and partake in a community of tradition today. Therefore, even though he does not make all the critiques that would be (anachronically) expected of one that thinks theology today conscious of its post-colonial, patriarchal, racist and capitalist context, he does turn the theological game upside down when he takes into account the dynamic and relative process of being an individual human inserted into a community of people all bound to language, history, context and culture. His work, when read in this manner, is a stimulating example of an intra-Christian critique that aims for a public constructive insertion based on the intent of relativizing theological doctrines (and, therefore, ecclesiastical power) that for a long time were the fundament for social and political disputes that flowed to the dominion of religion and religiousness by a few, but which also culminated in the exclusion, oppression and deaths of

⁹³ Schleiermacher's notion of religious experience, even though with pre-emotion and pre-reflexive roots, still is intimately related to an interior emotion and reflexive consciousness. This binds religious experience with outer experiences and structures (community, language, culture etc.). This same posture is perceptible, for example, in Ivone Gebara's presupposition on her development of a religious anthropology where feeling (*sentimento*) and emotion (*emoção*) are ontological characteristics of the religious human being, aspects prior to any religious (linguistic or not) development, position that, for her, is essential for a notion of theological doing that takes into account the everyday life (*cotidiano*) of men and women, from whence she can develop a critical feminist theology that arises from women's experience (external and internal) of oppression (Ivone Gebara, *Antropologia Religiosa: lenguaje y mitos*. Buenos Aires: CDD, [n.d.]; Ivone Gebara, *O que é cristianismo?* São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2008; p. 39-59). Therefore, even though having an intimate relation with feeling and emotion, a notion of experience cannot be strictly tied to interior of the human beings, and, despite Schleiermacher sometimes point to other directions, his emphasis remains on the interior experience, even though this arises only with external interaction. An important critique directed to individualistic abstracted manners of dealing with religious experience, which can affect theology's duty of social critical construction, but also the self-critical construction of theology, is made by the liberation theologian Juan Luis Segundo in reference to Rudolf Bultmann and Edward Schillebeeckx, but with clear application to some of Schleiermacher's developments (Juan L. Segundo, *El hombre de hoy ante Jesus de Nazaret*. v. II/1. Madrid: Crisandad, 1982. p. 61-61; Segundo, *El hombre de hoy ante Jesus de Nazaret*. v. II/2. Madrid: Crisandad, 1982. p. 721-722; Segundo, *Liberacion de la Teologia*. Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1975. p. 66-67).

many.⁹⁴ Taking his labor further, with a much wider and deeper conscience of the immaterial and material structures that dominate and exclude, the evil consequences of sin, today we can understand that a diversity of (religious) life, individually and communally, is fundamental for a theological dialogical inclusion and construction of a liberating existence, a plurality that also needs to be understood as part of the diversity of Creation itself. A Creation that, as Schleiermacher presents, comes from God, lives through God and is meant for God.

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⁹⁴ See, for example, the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the social persecution of the Jewish religion, and the exclusion of women from the public environment. All concrete realities that Schleiermacher tries to take into account in his theological doing.

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