

## Christ before the Incarnation<sup>7</sup>

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### A. Christ's Preexistence in Non-Christian Religions

#### Christ's Reconciling Activity in Mythological Religion

Christ, before his appearance *as* Christ, was active in the Mythological religions. Indeed, Schelling sees "Paganism" (the non-Christian religions) as the vast background for Christianity, and refers to the pre-Christian Christ as "the pagan Light", "the true potency of Paganism", "the eternal Mediator and Reconciler", "present in all states of human consciousness without himself being sullied by them" (VI:466ff). To be sure,

the mediating personality operates in Paganism only as a natural potency, but since the *true* Son, the authentic Christ, is also in this potency, it follows that Christ was already in Mythology, though not *as* Christ (VI:466, cf. 470).

Hence the Pagans were *χωρις κριστου* (Eph 2:12), separated from Christ, i.e., from Christ as such, and yet the same natural potency that was to die in Christ was the one by which they were illumined and which alone took care of them. For the Father, who made himself inaccessible to the extra-divine being, withdrew *externally* into the consciousness of

a small, inconspicuous people ... Christ, on the other hand, was the Pagan Light - although in his purely natural activity. He was the proper (*eigentliche*) potency of Paganism (VI:466f).

When Christ entered the tension, he became a natural cosmic potency - as such he operates in Paganism against the blind principle which is hostile to God and man. In his death, he died as this cosmic potency. The divine aspect of the Reconciler broke through the natural aspect and consumed it, so to speak, in the death. Therewith was ... completely removed the *whole tension* posited in human consciousness, and the *whole* divine unity restored (VI:473f).

He has experienced all suffering and temptations to which the human consciousness was subjected in Paganism (Cf. Heb 4:15). At that time, he was already the suffering Messiah - as the Old Testament represents him - suffering precisely because he was not exercising his will (VI:468).

By his appearance in manhood, by his life and his death *as man*, Christ has simply *completed* the mediation, but he is the *eternal* Mediator, the Mediator between God and man from the beginning of the world-time - hence also already the mediator in Paganism. It is not *in* this activity by which Paganism arose that he is Christ; rather is he *already* Christ when he exercises this activity, since this activity (this power over Fallen being) is given to him only insofar as he is already Christ, i.e., the anointed of God, the one appointed by God as Lord and Heir ... (VI:468).

The Pagans knew nothing of Christ, and yet he was close to them by virtue of his activity (Cf. Acts 17:27). Without him human consciousness would have been given up to an inevitable destruction (VI:469).

[In his death] only the natural potency died; the divine himself negated his extra-divine being (VI:471).

In Paganism, then, Christ "prepared the soil which one day should receive the seed of Christianity, a purpose for which Judaism was much too limited. Paganism and Judaism were two separate economies which were to flow together only in Christianity." Indeed, "during the whole time of Paganism, Christ was in a continuous

advent, although he *actually* came only when the time was fulfilled" (VI:467). As Psalm 94 says, it is the Lord who instructs and chastises the heathen nations.

### Christianity is the Fulfilment and Final Truth of Paganism

Christianity, then, is not "a mere negation of Paganism", but its fulfilment and truth. If Christianity had "nothing positive in common with Paganism", then "history breaks into two halves", mutually exclusive, and with no point of contact between them. All historical continuity and coherence is broken, and "Christianity appears not as the eternal thing that it is", but as "something which exists only from a certain time on." This view belittles Christianity!

The content of all true religion is an eternal content ... A religion which is not from (the foundation of) the world and through *all* times, cannot be the true religion. Hence Christianity must have been in Paganism, and the latter must have had the same *substantial* content. (This agrees with our earlier statement that Christ was in Paganism - but not *as* Christ, which means merely *substantially*, not in his truth) ... It is inconceivable that mankind could have survived through millennia without *any* reference to those principles in which alone salvation lies (VI:469).

Paganism - precisely because Christianity is not its absolute negation but its truth - also possesses in itself a relative truth. When we view the whole great pagan movement as the background for Christianity, then Christianity has a far greater and more powerful basis for its reality than the usual sophistical proofs of its truth are capable of giving it. Christianity did not one-sidedly emerge out of Judaism; it also has Paganism as its premise. Only thus is its formation the great world-historical phenomenon for which it has been taken from time immemorial (VI:470).

The objectionable features of Paganism (e.g., human sacrifice) are not an argument against this view - they are present also in the Old Testament, e.g., Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son - for they are due to the *anti-divine* principle, not to the mediating potency (Christ). Thus:

... in Paganism, it is *not* the reconciling potency which entices to

human sacrifice, but the principle inimical to human life, the principle which man had aroused again and which, once set free, naturally had a grievance against man as the one to whom it was supposed to be subject. It was rather the *higher* potency which, in the more genial time, first prevented *Teknothisie*, indeed, human sacrifice in general (VI:468).

Other examples of the way in which Paganism - and also Judaism - are fulfilled by Christianity are discussed. For example, in Paganism the Holy Spirit was always only future. Because, in Mythology, the second potency "negated the tension only externally (*actu*) and not inwardly, the third potency does not become *present*." The Spirit is *in* Paganism but never possessed *as such*, and "Paganism ends with a prophecy which, indeed, can be called a prophecy of Christianity, for only through Christ as such shall the third person become present" (VI:478).

Furthermore, in both Judaism and Paganism the idea of reconciliation, of expiatory sacrifice, was an essential one. But these religions offered "only precursive signs of the great sacrifice offered once for eternal reconciliation" by Christ. *In them*, sacrifices must be offered perpetually since they negate only the external effect of the hostile principle. The sacrifice of Christ, however, was offered once for all, since the principle was negated in its very ground (VI:471 cf. 446-450).

### A Recapitulation

Of Schelling's continuing recapitulations of the fundamental meaning, motif and cause of all Revelation, we shall present the following, which includes a statement of the different senses in which Christ is present in Paganism, the Old Testament, and Christianity.

The *true Son*, the *personality* which is hidden in the purely natural potency, the one who from the beginning - in agreement with the Father - had the *will* to bring back the being which was fallen away from God - this (true Son) is precisely the cause of all Revelation, just as the same (Son) is, as merely natural potency, the cause of all Mythology ...

The intention to bring back through the Son the world which he, the Father, could not receive in himself, was already formed before the

foundation of the world, for only with an eye to this mediation could he originally will a world. Hence there was ... the time of mere intention, and the time of actual deed, whence it follows that before the time of actual deed, he who was to become man was already the principle of Revelation, but one which was still veiled, speaking only through signs and prophecies as in the Old Testament.

The distinction between Revelation and Natural Religion (as I call it) is not the substantial (aspect) but only the active (agent). What is active in the one is the purely natural potency, in the other the personality itself. But since the personality is not to be separated from the natural potency, it follows that Christ is *implicitly* already in Paganism, although not *as* Christ. In the Old Testament, Christ is already present *as* Christ, but still understood merely as *coming* (*im Kommen begriffen*). In the New Testament, Christ is revealed as Christ. Previously he was there ... but in Paganism hidden by a double veil, in Judaism by a single veil.

As the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem had a double forecourt, the outermost being that of the Pagans, and then a holy one, but then also a holy of holies into which only the high priests might enter ... - so Paganism, Old Testament and New Testament are arranged over against one another (VI:480).

## B. Christ's Preexistence according to the New Testament

Schelling now presents Scriptural evidence for his view of Christ as an extra-divine divine Personality prior to his Incarnation, his preexistence *extra patrem*. This New Testament support is of the highest importance to Schelling: "God forbid that I should deduce as Christian doctrine that which is not Christian doctrine at all!" He believes he is simply making explicit the "system" hidden in the New Testament. The Pauline passage will be found to describe the preexistent *status* of Christ, while in the Johannine Prolog Schelling finds a "history of God."

### Exposition of the Pauline Kenotic Christology (VI:431-437)

The really classical passage is Philippians 2:6-8. This magnificent passage, which opens up the deepest mystery, goes thus: 'Let this mind be in each of you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in

the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be snatched at, but divested himself and took the form of a servant, and became like as another man, and was found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.'

The usual explanation recognizes only two states: (i) the Son's pure divinity - his oneness with the Father - before the Incarnation, and (ii) his earthly state of "humiliation". But if Christ, *before* his Incarnation, is still "in unity with the Father and therefore himself truly God, how can it be said of him: 'he did not think to snatch at equality with God?' For one does not need to snatch to oneself what one already possesses." Hence there must be a *third* state, an in-between state, in which the preexistent Christ is not pure deity and not yet man but an extra-divine personality - sovereign over the Fallen world (hence divine, for sovereignty is the outward mark of divinity), but independent of the Father (hence extra-divine). The Son's status as an extra-divine divinity prior to the Incarnation is presupposed by St. Paul.

"In an author like Paul, the rule of hermeneutic must always be to take him with the utmost literalness" (VI:433). Note therefore his careful and precise choice of words in this passage:

Notice first that Paul's use of *morphe* (Christ was *en morphe theou*, in the *form* of God) is not consistent with the common view that Christ was consubstantial with the Father until the moment of the Incarnation. *Morphe*, and its derivatives, are never used to indicate "essence". Quite the opposite. See, for example, 2 Tim 3:5 which speaks of "men who have the *form* (*morphois*) of godliness, i.e., the external form, but who lack the essence."<sup>8</sup> The Philippians passage goes on to say, "he took the *form* of a servant", where the *morphe* obviously indicates something contingent.

How can the same word be used in a completely different sense in one and the same passage? How can *morphe theou* signify essential deity (*Gottheit*), and the immediately following *morphe doulou* signify merely assumed transitory servanthood? This is inconceivable to anyone with sound ideas about exposition.

The real explanation is: he was *en morphe theou*, i.e., he was not truly and essentially God (for he could be this only in unity with the

Father), but he was God *specie, actu*; he had at least the external aspect of God, which consists in sovereignty, the sovereignty over being (VI:433).

As for the word *υπαρχων* (*en morphe theou huparchon*), it too is always used by Paul (and by Luke) to indicate actual and therefore contingent being, never essential being.

For example, it is used of accidental, bodily defects, even of one who was lame from birth (*χωλος εκ κοιλιαις μητρος αυτου απαρχων*, Acts 14:8) ..., of transitory states, as in Acts 7:55 where Stephen sees the heaven open, being full of the Holy Spirit (*υπαρχων σε πληρης πνευματος ...*), and in Gal 1:14 where Paul says of the time when he was still persecuting Christians: *ζηλωτης υπαρχων*. Christ in Luke 9:48 says: 'he who is the least among you shall be the greatest' (*ο μικροτερος εν πασιν υμιν υπαρχων* - here the *huparchon* is used not of one's essential being but of one's character, not *dem Wesen nach* but *der Gesinnung nach* - *ουτος εσται μεγαλος* - here *ειναι* is used of the true, essential being. The meaning is: he who *makes* himself the smallest, shall truly be the greatest.) In his speech to the Athenians, in Acts 17:24, Paul says: God who made the world and who is Lord of heaven and earth, *ουρανου και γης κυριος υπαρχων*, dwells not in temples made with hands. The state of affairs in which God is Lord of heaven and earth is not an essential one (for otherwise it would be a necessary one) but an actual and in a higher sense accidental one.

How then can we suppose that the essential deity of the Son is expressed by these words: *en morphe theou huparchon*. The expression applies perfectly, however, to that middle state (that in-between condition) of a sovereignty independent of the Father which the Son had before his appearance as Christ. *This* state was a merely transitory one, in the highest sense accidental; nevertheless, nothing prevented him from grasping it and asserting it as a permanent one (VI:433f).

The words of Phil 2:6f continue to confirm this interpretation. For example, if the preincarnate Christ already possessed essential God-likeness, why would Paul bother to describe it as something Christ "set no store by" (*ουκ αρπαγματον ηγησατο*), something he refused to seize for himself. Furthermore, the words *το ειναι ισα θεω* can be translated only as "being on the same footing with God". "This neuter

plural, *ισα*, has here the force of an adverb; it is as much as to say *ισος θεω*." The Son was never "*ισος θεω* adjectivally, essentially equal to God, but could only ever be *ισος*, on the same footing, possessing an external equality with him. "

Every word of the passage speaks for our explanation. *En morphe theou* cannot mean: he was true God; *morphe theou* is something accidental, like *morphe doulou*. The verb *huparchein* expresses the same accidentality. And as far as the *isa theou einai* is concerned, this could not express the being of the one who is true God, but expresses a merely external equality (*Gleichheit*) (VI:435).

Now if the Son "assumed the form of a servant" and became completely like man, then obviously he is not at the same time "in divine form". Some, therefore, unwilling to concede that the human Jesus was purely human, have wanted to translate *en morphe theou huparchein* by (*cum*) *in forma Dei esse posset* (was able to be in the form of God), i.e., "he could still have shown his divine sovereignty but did not want to." But this is forced. "He could be" is really equivalent to "he was - essentially - God". And *huparchein* cannot bear this meaning since, as already shown, it is used only of accidental or contingent being. Finally, "he who has once decided to become man has certainly not made this decision in order to shine forth as God!" Such action would be self-contradictory, and hence an impossibility for a divine or even a rational being. "That *potuisset* is therefore entirely deceptive." The truth is that "the highest emptying (*Entausserung*) of Christ consisted in the fact that he decided to become man" (VI:436f).

Thus, Phil 2:6ff is "really decisive", since, to understand it completely, we *must* acknowledge "that Christ, before his Incarnation was different from God, i.e., he was not himself God, although he was not man either. He was in a middle state in which he was *instar Dei* (*en morphe theou*) without being God himself." "He was *instar Dei* because he alone was still Lord of the being which was estranged from God or the Father (VI:437).

### Support from Other New Testament Passages (VI:437-440).

Many other New Testament passages support this view.

(a) Heb 12:2 reads *αντι της προκειμενης αυτω χαρας υπεμεινε σταυρον*, i.e., "instead of (*anstatt!*) the joy which lay before him (which he could choose if he wished), he endured the Cross."

(b) In John 17:5 Christ prays: "Glorify me with the glory (*Herrlichkeit*) which I had with thee" - not, as one might expect, "before I became man", but "which I had before the world (*kosmos*) was made." That is, "Christ recognizes that *since* the world began (for as soon as there is the world, there is the Fall), he ceased to possess that sovereignty which he had *before* there was a world, i.e., when he was still *with* the Father and not separated from him."

(c) In John 10:17f Jesus says: "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again" - revealing a freedom and independence which is totally incompatible with the dogma of his substantial dependence on the Father. ("He has this being neither from himself nor from the Father, but from man - therefore he calls this being after the son of man").

(d) In John 8:58 Christ says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Now, "he could not say of himself as God, 'I was', in the same sense as he says it of Abraham." His meaning must be: "Before Abraham was, I am as the one I am *now*, as this personality posited outside God, distinct and independent of Him."

(e) John 17:3 distinguishes the Father, "the only true God" and Jesus as Christ, whom the Father "sent" into the world; and

(f) John 13:31 clearly distinguishes and subordinates the Father and the Son: "the Father is greater than I."

If one does not distinguish different moments in the existence (*Dasein*) of Christ, then all these passages will be taken to refer to the *eternal* being of Christ. But they do not refer to the *eternal* being of Christ. Instead, they refer to his being as Christ, which cannot be an eternal condition, because it is posited only through the Fall of man (VI:439).

The most decisive passage of this kind is (g) Mk 13:31 "Of that day and hour (when heaven and earth shall pass away) no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, *nor even the Son*, but only the Father." Now some say it is only with respect to his humanity that Christ professes this ignorance. But "the Son is here set above the angels ... According to the New Testament, however, only God is above the angels. Hence the Son is conceived as God - and yet he knows nothing of that day! Clearly, then, ... the Son is above the angels and yet is *not God*." Similarly, in Acts 1:7, "it is not for you to know time or season which the Father has fixed by *his own* authority." It is the Father's exclusive prerogative to determine when this present world shall cease. The

expression *ἡ ἰδία ἐξουσία* "excludes any complicity, not only of the Son who has become man, but also of the Son before the Incarnation" (VI:439f).

Specific stories - such as the account of the Temptation of Christ - are also incomprehensible without recognizing a preexistence of the Son *extra patrem* (VI:441f). Let the Temptation story be a later Christian fabrication if you will, the point here is that Satan will "waive his claim to dominion over the world and hand it over to Christ if Christ will accept it only from *him*."

The Tempter knows what he wants. If Christ were to take the being for himself and as a result, so to speak, of a contract with that blind, cosmic principle, then the unity of the world with God would have been for ever torn asunder. The only bond by which that principle (=B) was still connected with God was precisely the mediating potency (Christ). If the latter surrendered its connection with the Father, there would really be a world *completely* independent of God.

Through the Fall, man made for himself three lords out of the one Lord whom he should serve. The first one he served was that blind power which man called forth but could not reduce again to latency. This power had developed so far as to offer Christ - who is the second lord, and in whom the first recognizes its previous conqueror and *foresees* with foreboding the one who is to destroy it completely - it offers him lordship over all being if he, Christ, will recognize him as God, worship him, and determine in this way to tear himself loose from the true God.

But Christ fights off the Tempter with one word: it is written, thou shouldst worship God thy Lord and serve him *alone*. Thus the Mediator shows here what task he has taken upon himself: it is to lead fallen being back from the many lords to the one lord, the Father. But the Temptation shows that Christ, even after he became man, was potentially able to seize a glory independent of the Father; hence, much more was it possible for him to continue in that glory or sovereignty, in that *morphe theou*, which he had acquired *before* the Incarnation (VI:441f).

### Exposition of the Johannine Logos Christology (VI:481-510).

In investigating the question of the preexistence of Christ, the

Johannine Prolog is, for Schelling, a prime resource. Schelling can discern here a complete intra-divine history. He is explicit: "Understand that the words of John are for me only the text on which I develop the history of the second person in the uninterrupted, precise succession of its moments" (VI:481). He appears to regard this passage - and his "elucidation of each verse in the light of the Christological moments contained within" - as of the highest significance. His thirty-page discussion reveals in striking fashion Schelling's characteristic blending of speculation and exegesis. He (i) examines the meaning of the term *Logos*, (ii) offers a critique of certain linguistic and philosophical explanations of the Prolog, and then (iii) and (v) presents "the true exposition" with (iv) a related discussion of the nature of Time, times and eternity.

**(i) The meaning of  $\acute{\omicron}$  *logos* in the Prolog (VI:481-488)**

There are many explanations of the term *Logos* in John. According to one view, "John had assumed that this expression was known through the teaching of Cerinthos." True, the Fourth Gospel does contain expressions hostile to the system of the Gnostic Cerinthos (and other later Gnostics), but it is "a risky business" to suppose that John's work is a deliberate anti-Cerinthos document (VI:483n).

The "most recent interpretation" suggests that *Logos* in its Johannine use is to be understood in terms of its use in Philo (VI:481-484).

Philo actually speaks a great deal of a *logos theou*. Sometimes it is for him the prototypical world in God, the original sketch of the world, God's representation of the world and the order and symmetry in it. Sometimes it is for him the principle *through which* everything has come to be. To this extent it appears identical with the demiurgic potency of which John says: all things came to be through him.

[But Philo's *Logos*] can be identified with the Platonic idea of the divine *Nous*. For him, this *Logos* was actually the divine understanding, which he could conceive as a mediating member between the created world and the invisible God, in order to keep the latter from direct contact with matter.

Whether Philo ever conceived this *Logos* as a potency *operative* in the creation of the world or *merely* as pre-worldly, is still a big question;

but in John, the Personality which is meant by the word *Logos* is decidedly demiurgic, i.e., the potency active in creation. [What is more] Philo never speaks absolutely of the *Logos*, as John does, but always adds *ὁ θεῖος λογος* or *ὁ θεου λογος*, where John says simply *ὁ λογος* (VI:481f).

There are problems, then, with the Philonic explanation. First, it is hard to imagine how John could assume in his readers such a good, general acquaintance with Philo as would justify him using the term *Logos* in the Philonic sense. Second, the Philonic explanation makes the mistake of "always presupposing a genitive which is not there in John". John never has *ho logos tou theou* but the completely abstract *ho logos*, (verses 1 and 14).

It is easy to see why John avoided the usual names or designations,

... for how should he refer to the one who was in the beginning? Should he use the name Jesus? But Jesus is the name of the incarnate one, and this one was not in the beginning. Could he use the term 'Christ'? But this personality is not Christ until after the Fall of the world from God. But John wants to make the person of Christ ... this Subject who already was in the beginning, to become intelligible from the very beginning. So he has every reason to designate it, in the beginning of his exposition, as *generally* as possible, and the more abstractly we explain the expression *ho logos*, the more may we hope to approach the meaning of the evangelist (VI:484).

The most abstract explanation would be to assume that *Logos* means simply the Subject (*Sache*) in question, *de quo sermo*: "the Subject (*das Subject, der Gegenstand*) of which we speak *was* in the beginning." i.e., the Subject *par excellence*. Just as the Jews use  $\square \Psi \sqcap$  (the name) to mean Jehovah himself, the name above all names, the name *κατ' ἐξοχην*, so *ho Logos* would mean the Word above all words, i.e., the Subject or Person above all others (for "it is not necessary to take *ho Logos* in a personal sense"). Taken abstractly, the question is: "*τις ὁ λογος ουτος*, What kind of Subject is this?" (VI:484f).

It is "not unusual for the New Testament to express the personal abstractly where an indeterminateness is *intended*" (as, for example, in the angel's words to Mary at the Annunciation). And here in his Prolog, John's intention is to begin *at the beginning* and give the whole

history of the one who would one day appear in the flesh. So for him to use an abstract, indeterminate word for Christ in his opening statements, "is quite in accordance with his plan to show the successive revelation of the person of Christ." Hence, he does not say "the living or enlightening one, but the Life - the Light - completely *in abstracto*." The First Letter of John begins in the same abstract way: "ὅ ἡν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, what was from the beginning" and "that which we have heard, seen, touched, etc.," (always the neuter = *quod* = *was*, in German). Again, ὁ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς, in the Prolog, is "just a circumlocution for ἡ ζωῆ," as *Mimra da Jehovah* (the word of God) is, in the Chaldean translation, a mere circumlocution for God. Clearly "it is quite gratuitous and groundless to supply *τῷ θεῷ* to the *ὁ Λόγος* in the gospel" (VI:486f). *ὁ Λόγος*, then, "means nothing more than the Subject in general."

### (ii) Critical Comments on Philological and Philosophical Explanations (VI:489-495)

Linguistic and philological studies can make an *essential* contribution to our awareness of meaning, and yet, "the most complete knowledge of the language in which a work is written cannot in itself bring about an *understanding* of its content." Mere linguistic knowledge does not prevent foolish mistakes. For example, in a certain French literary work, the phrase "*Anaxagoras établit en principe le Nous*" was translated into German as "he established as a principle the *We* (*Wir*)."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the translator thought that "since a German philosopher has established the *Ich* as a principle of philosophy, a Greek philosopher could well have set up the *Wir*. In any case, it sounds more social and less egotistical" (VI:490).

Certainly as far as the New Testament is concerned, mere grammatical-philological exposition is *no substitute* for an understanding of the character of the divine life. As an example of the shaky support afforded theological orthodoxy by linguistic analysis, consider the opening words of John's Gospel: *Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος*.

"These words have always been regarded as an incontrovertible support for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ." Opponents of this doctrine have tried changing the *θεὸς* to *θεοῦ*, but this is "against the agreed testimony of all manuscripts and ancient translations." If however, they were to try placing a period after the last *ἦν*, what

grammatical or linguistic objection could there be? After all, there was no punctuation in the original! If we adopted this suggestion, we could view the passage in the following way: the author first says, "in the beginning", i.e., before anything was, "there was the Word." But then it occurs to him at once (so we must suppose) that before anything was there was only God! So he immediately adds: "And the Word was with God," - which is his way of saying that he by no means posits the Word *before* God. In fact, to exclude such a misunderstanding, he adds explicitly, "and (truly) God was." A philologist might object on the ground that *θεος* occurs without the article. But, it could be replied, it always so occurs when no contradistinction (e.g., with respect to the Son) is intended. Of course, the Prolog would then go on (according to this suggested punctuation) *ὁ λογος ουτος ην εν αρχη πρως τον θεον*. But this whole phrase, as well as the *ουτος*, now seems completely superfluous - and is, indeed, "omitted from several manuscripts" for that very reason (VI:491f).

But such interpretations are not to be taken seriously, for

in interpreting the New Testament the following rule applies: Seek first the Kingdom of God. Look first for the whole, the complex of divine activity (*Veranstaltungen*) in the New Testament, then all the rest will automatically be added unto you. That is, the coherent whole (*Zusammenhang*), the totality of divine truth is decisive over the separate elements (VI:492).

The "narrow pietists of certain Protestant schools" miss this point, and equate acceptance of the divine authority of the Scriptures with "submission to *particular* passages." They search for proof-texts to be used in verbal battles. But this method of arriving at theological truth is indecisive and, in practice, these people fall back on the authority of 16th Century orthodoxy. But this ignores the fact that the most important truths are discovered only through an understanding of the whole of Scripture and implies, furthermore, that "neither knowledge of language nor the art of interpretation nor the human spirit itself, have made any advance since the 16th Century." The Reformers themselves, of course, were not "blindly oriented toward individual passages, but toward the spirit of Christianity" (VI:493).

Just as we cannot hope to construct "that great historical context" in terms of which alone Christianity becomes intelligible, by bringing together a mosaic of disparate individual texts, so we cannot hope to

achieve our end by employing a philosophy which excludes *everything* historical.

Fichte, for example, attempted a purely philosophical exposition of the Johannine Prolog, i.e., he tried to bring it into harmony with his Idealism (VI:493-495). For Fichte, all things exist only in and through Knowledge (*Wissen*). Later, he identified this Knowledge (or Wisdom or Reason or Logos) with the divine *existence* (*Dasein*) which is both other than and inseparable from the divine being (*Sein*). Thus, "in the beginning was the Word" means "all extra-divine being has its ground and place only in Knowledge." And how, we ask, does this general Knowledge or divine *Dasein* become the historical Christ? Actually, replies Fichte, everyone could be the Logos become man. "The peculiar feature of Christianity is simply the affirmation that the specific historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, was *of himself* and by his nature and without *any* instruction, just such a perfect, sensible representation of the eternal Knowledge, i.e., of the Logos." Since Jesus was unique in this respect, he is truly called only-begotten and first-born Son of God. Christian dogma holds that others can discern the truth - that human knowledge is nothing but the divine *Dasein* - only through Christ's mediation. But Fichte believes his philosophy has found this truth independently of Christianity.

But now we must set aside all such expositions of the Johannine Prolog - those which rest on merely grammatical and linguistic considerations, and those which are purely philosophical - and proceed to elucidate the Prolog in the light of the Christological moments contained in it.

### (iii) The "True Exposition" (VI:496f)

"*In the beginning*" - i.e., without presupposing anything.

"*the Logos was*" - *simpliciter*. Here is that absolute beginning in which the Logos is the pure being (*Seiende*) of God. Arius says there was a time when the preexistent Christ *was not*, implying that he was created out of nothing, hence a created being, albeit the first and highest. But this simple *ην* disallows such conjecture. The Logos "was" and "in such a way that absolutely *nothing* preceded it." It *was* without qualification; hence, *not* as a particular potency or personality, but as the *actus purissimus* of the divine being itself.

"*and the Logos was with God*". Here is the same Logos that "was in the beginning" but now it is, so to speak, different. To say it was "with God" means more than "it was in God eternally." An advance is

implied. The Logos has now become "a particular potency distinct from God." Hence we have here the first *moment* of primordial being (*unvordenkliche Sein*), "when this pure being (*Sein*) is already posited *ex actu puro*, hypostatized, potentialized, and made into an Existent (*Seienden*) with God." The God *with* whom the Logos "is", is later called "Father".

The Logos was *with God* first in God's *idea*; that is to say, before the Creation it is an *ideally*-distinct but not yet *really*-distinct particular potency. But after that, it is *in* the Creation where it operates as a particular, demiurgic potency, *really* distinct from God, although still *with him* (i.e., it is not yet independent of him). These two moments are embraced by the phrase: "the Logos was with God."

"*and the Logos was God*"; i.e., at the *end* of Creation when it is Lord of being (*Sein*), in possession again of the divinity it had when it *was* in the beginning. It possessed that former divinity not independently but in and only in the Father. Hence John does not say here "the Logos is *ho theos*" - only the Father is God himself - but just "the Logos is *theos* (divinity)."

#### (iv) The "History" of Being and the Nature of Time (VI:498-503)

Distinctions such as those above illumine the age-old puzzles about the relation of eternity to time and the whole genealogy of time. "From the very beginning, time has been the bad conscience of all empty metaphysics, the point it liked to avoid." The Positive Philosophy clarifies matters, however, by distinguishing:

First, the eternal, pure being of the Logos (or Subject). "That is eternal which no potency precedes. In eternity nothing can be posited as something, e.g., as A, without exclusion of a not-A." This idea of pure actuality, Being as *actus purissimus* prior to all potency and event, is eternity in the absolute sense. We call it "absolute eternity" or "supra-temporal eternity" since it does not yet have any relation to time. "It is not even a first moment, but is above all time and precedes the first moment *only in thought*." It is the absolute *terminus a quo*.

Secondly, the being (*Sein*) of the Logos (or Subject) as A, i.e., as a *particular potency*. In its pure substance the Logos is eternal, but as a particular potency in the divine idea it is said to be "from eternity". This "moment" sets out from eternity (i.e., absolute being or supra-temporal eternity is its starting point), and we call it *pre-temporal*

*eternity*. As such it is not yet *time*, but it is (or becomes) a time inasmuch as the Creation posits it as *past*.

Third, the being of the Logos as *active, demiurgic potency* from the moment when Creation began. For the Logos is active or operative only after the contrary being has moved from mere possibility to actuality. The being that is anti-divine appears at the Fall. And at the same time the Son is brought into being in order to overcome fallen negative being. "Hence the generation of the Son is parallel to the beginning of Creation." We reject the notion of his "eternal generation", for the *generation* of anything is inconceivable in "absolute eternity." It is impossible to think of him, furthermore, as being *produced* in that *first "moment"*, i.e., "from eternity" - unless we have logical relations in mind and conceive the Son as a purely logical emanation from the Father. Hence we must speak of "the eternal being of the Son", not the eternal generation of the Son. The former alone is scriptural. Hence, John does not say, "in the beginning the Logos was generated", but simply that it "was". "He holds to the eternal being of the Son - and, of course, the *simple* being, not the as-Son-being, for all being-as-something presupposes already an exclusion, a distinction, hence an Act" (VI:498-500).

Thus, if the Creation begins when the Son, or that *which* shall be the Son, is posited *ex actu puro in potentiam*, i.e., posited as a potency distinct from the Father, then the Son is also posited before all aeons (*προ παντων αιωνων*) as Heb 1:2 declares of the Son: *δι ου και τους αιωνας εποησεν*, by whom he has made the aeons. "He by whom the world-times are posited can himself belong to no particular aeon. He is before all aeons, and *not* a creature at all (VI:503).

To summarize our view of Time and Eternity, we distinguish - in addition to absolute or supra-temporal eternity (which is not a time at all, but is above all time) three aeons or times.

Only with the Creation does there begin a distinction of aeons or times. That is, we distinguish (A) the pre-temporal eternity which is posited *by* the creation as past; (B) the time of the Creation itself, which is the present; (C) the time which everything is supposed to reach by means of the Creation and which is a kind of future eternity ...

"The world or creation has not arrived at this time, this third time; it has become arrested in the second time ... which simply repeats itself over and over but cannot break through ... into the third time. This arrested time, whose schema is the series A+A+A, *this merely apparent*

time ..., which is only an *epoch* of the true time, is the time of *this* world in which we live ... only one member of the great system of times which was in the divine intention - hence the old lament that under the sun, i.e., in the creation, nothing new comes to pass, one day is like the other, today as tomorrow, tomorrow as today, everything going around in a dreary circle of monotonously recurring phenomena - this apparent time, which as such has neither a true past nor a true future, is not the true time. For the true time is not just one time which ever repeats itself, but it itself a series of times. But a series of times, i.e., *true, actual* time, was posited with and only with the Creation. So the act by which the Creation is posited is also the act which posits time in general. This act is itself *before* all aeons ... (VI:501f).

An old oriental apophthegm says of apparent time: it rests without ceasing to flow and it flows without ceasing to rest. It rests since it is always the same =A, and it flows since it is *always* an other (namely another A). It rests since it never makes progress but always remains A, and it flows since it is always passing away and is constantly required to posit itself again. Because the time of the world is in every moment the whole, and the whole constantly follows the whole, ... men have compared its continuity with that of a stream ... Heraclitus referred to this never-remaining-the-same when he penetratingly remarked: 'no one climbs twice into the same stream' or ... 'no one emerges from the same stream into which he entered.' The whole stream is in every moment an other and yet in each moment the same, for the whole always follows the whole. If I understand by A not part of the stream but the whole stream, then I can say of it: it is A+A+A ... in constant movement, yet always the same, like the time of this world (VI:502n).<sup>9</sup>

#### (v) The "True Exposition" Concluded (VI:503-510)

Now we can see that "in the beginning" (verse one) is to be repeated three times, each time with a different meaning. (a) "In the beginning *was* the Logos." Here "in the beginning" means absolutely eternal being. (b) "In the beginning he was with God". Here "in the beginning" means "from eternity": from eternity the Logos was with God. And likewise (c) "in the beginning the Logos *was* God", i.e., "before the present world-order, which is posited by the Fall and by which the Logos became an extra-divine person." "It does not say 'he is God' ... From John's standpoint, at the beginning of his story, He *was*

God and is He who *will be* God, but he *is* not God. This is not Arianism, for Arianism would say: there was a time when he *was* not, or a moment when he *was* not. But according to our view, there is no moment when he *was* not, although not in every moment is it to be said: he is God, i.e., actually. *Natura*, of course, he is God in every moment (VI:503f).

The strongest definition of the deity of Christ is undoubtedly this: the Son is *so* essentially God, that the Father himself would not be God *without* the Son. But in his pure absolute eternity ..., God is not distinguishable as God, for there he is nothing but the necessary being. But God is essentially freedom, yet *in* the freedom vis-a-vis his original being (*Ursein*) (for only therein can his freedom consist), in the freedom to be Creator, he sees himself and *is* only when he has the Son who alone makes the creation possible for him, because he has in himself alone that by which he can bring back again into potency the other, contrary being. Hence only he who has the Son is actually God as such. To this extent he is, of course, posited by the *essence* of God (*necessitate naturae divinae*) if one understands thereby the divinity (*Gottheit*) of God but not God as mere substance (VI:504).

"*In him was life*" (verse 4). This means: "he has life in himself", and here the story moves a step forward. "*In him was life*" is, so to speak, the opposite of "he was God", for it means he is now *outside* the Father "as an independent personality who has life in himself." That the extra-divine being is meant, is even clearer from the following phrase.

"*And this life was the light of men.*" "By allowing the Son to be outside him, the Father has *given* him to the human race" as its light and salvation. Therefore the text continues (VI:505):

"*And this light shineth in the darkness.*" "Darkness" equals Paganism, and "shining" is something involuntary and natural. Hence the phrase expresses precisely the "purely natural operation of this light in Paganism" (Cf. Isa 42:6, 19; 49:6).

"*And the darkness comprehended it not.*" "This is just what *we* say of Paganism: in Paganism is Christ, but not as such; not that he is not there, but he is not comprehended as such. For the Pagan, Christ is a merely natural potency, a purely natural light" (VI:506).

"*There was a man sent from God whose name was John ... He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light*" (vv. 6-8). Here the author continues "the history of that still undefined personality" on

into Christianity, mentioning first the fore-runner of Christ. Notice that there "is not an immediate transition from pure divinity into human form." The conventional interpretation understands everything from the fourth verse on as referring to the Incarnation. But "the Light shines in the darkness" represents "the whole of Paganism as well as Judaism", and this lies in between "the demiurgic function in verse three and the appearance in humanity" (VI:507).

"The true Light which lightens every man was coming into the world" (v. 9). Here the true light is opposed to the light which merely shines - Christianity is contrasted with Paganism (not with John the Baptist, who was not a light of any kind, but merely a witness). Of course, the true light was always in the world as the demiurgic potency, through whom the world was made (as verse 10 says), yet "the world knew him not", i.e., he was not recognized. (Verse 10, therefore, does not refer to his Incarnation, but his presence in Paganism). Now, however, he "enlightens every man" and can be comprehended in his truth (VI:507f).

"He came to this own" - the Jews who already knew him as the coming Christ. *Εἰς τὰ ἰδία* means "to his race (*Geschlecht*), *ad familiam, ad gentem suam*." But "his own received him not." Notice that the world (*kosmos*) "knew him not", the darkness "comprehended him not", but the Jews "received him not." They knew him, they comprehended him as the Son of God, but they rejected him. "Now that he appears as a person, the time of uncomprehended operation is over, and the time of comprehension and therefore of free acceptance is come" (VI:508f).

"But to all who received him ... he gave power ('possibility') to become children of God" (verse 12). Here John moves completely into the personal mode of speech. Now the divine birth, broken by the Fall, is restored in those who believe. And now "the end reveals what was in the beginning":

"The Word" - John again takes up the abstract term: "this Subject which is now fitted out" with its predicates - "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory as the glory of the only-begotten son of the Father" (verse 14). That is, "we saw in him that glory which derived from his original divinity, his being-one with the Father; we saw in him ... One in whom there is in truth only the Father himself." This Subject, who comes from heaven, i.e., from original divinity, reveals himself as true Son (hence, as the Father) only in the Incarnation.

"This is the remarkable end of that history of the beginning of

things, indeed, of being itself", which John presents in his prolog. To *know* this history - we do not mean "merely rational knowledge which is fundamentally nothing but a not-knowing" - is "worth more than all other knowledge" (VI:509f).

### C. Christ's Preexistence in Old Testament Religion<sup>10</sup>

Judaism - Old Testament religion - is seen by Schelling as at once shackled Paganism and potential, still-hidden Christianity. It is not something positive, but a means to an end (VI:540f). Christ is the potency of Paganism, strange to Judaism. Judaism restrained and finally destroyed the matter of Christ who then arose free, putting an *end* to Paganism, Old Testament religion and Revelation alike.

Christ's "Double History" (VI:511).

Christ, or the mediating potency, has a "double history". "There is, so to speak, a *historia sacra* and a *historia profana* of its activity." (a) The profane or *natural* history of the mediating potency works itself out in natural (Mythological) religion, "the sphere of Christ's general activity (which he does not exercise *as* Christ)." "The moments of the process which produces Mythology are only the different moments of this natural activity of the mediating potency." (b) The *sacred* history is Christ's *personal* activity in Revelation: Christ is "the personal cause of all Revelation." It is this *historia sacra* of Christ in Old Testament religion (going right back to the Patriarchal period) which here interests Schelling.

### Old Testament Revelation Presupposes Relative Monotheism

Revelation is a general term, but Schelling uses it here to refer specifically to the self-disclosure of the *true* God. Every revelation is a definite act, hence it effects change, and this implies a prior state of affairs. Now what is the precondition of Revelation? It is the God of Relative monotheism (= Elohim in the Old Testament, and Ouranos among the Pagans), for, as we have seen, "the human consciousness *naturally* posits God." This natural or relative monotheism - in which "mankind as a whole, and therefore consciousness even for example in Abraham, has an immediate relation only to the God who is one-sidedly or 'falsely' One" - is the starting point for the activity of the mediating potency which proceeds to operate "naturally" in Mythology and "personally" in Revelation. Revelation is the personal

self-disclosure of the "true God" in the place of, and mediated by, the God who is relatively One. The true God is not the original God, but the One who is "brought forth", and therefore "revealed to the consciousness which does not know him" (VI:512f).

### The Manner of Christ's Operation in the Old Testament (VI:514ff)

How did Christ, the mediating potency, operate in the Old Testament? How is he related to the first God (the God of relative monotheism) on the one hand, and to the true God on the other? The answer, Schelling believes, is to be found in the account of Abraham's temptation (Gen 22) which is *archetypal* for the whole sequence of Old Testament revelations.

In this story, God (*Elohim*) tempted Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Now, *Elohim* is the God of Relative Monotheism, the God who ruled the consciousness of the nations of mankind; hence we must recognize the *pagan* influence at work in Abraham.

Consider that at about the same time there were whole peoples, including peoples of the same race as Abraham, who saw it as a divine command to sacrifice in certain cases the best loved children, i.e., the only child or the first born child. We would have to set aside all historical probability if we did not assume that the principle by which Abraham was directly *tempted* or solicited to perform that act, was essentially the same as that which misled those peoples (VI:514).<sup>11</sup>

But "just as Abraham stretched out his hand to slay his son, the *angel of Jehovah* called to him and prevented him from laying his hand on the boy." Here we see the mediation of the "true God" (the "angel" of Jehovah, i.e., the "appearance" of Jehovah) by the "false" God. This is what the story really means when it says that the Angel of Jehovah appeared and prevented the execution of the command given by *Elohim*.

He who is called *Elohim* is the *substance* of consciousness. The Angel of Jehovah, however, is not something substantial, but one who simply 'becomes' in consciousness, one who just 'appears'. He is not in consciousness *substantia* but always only *actu*, just the 'angel' of Jehovah, i.e., an appearance, a revelation of Jehovah. Hence [the angel

of the Lord] constantly presupposes the Elohim as substance, or medium of his appearance ... Strictly speaking, neither of the two is, as such, the true God, for the true God *appears* only when he negates the preceding insofar as it is not the true God ... So the true God is mediated in the Old Testament by the 'false' God and, so to speak, is bound to the latter (VI:515).

Now, as in the Abraham story, so in the whole of the Old Testament, revelation of the true God presupposes Paganism as the condition and medium of its reality. Old Testament Revelation presupposes a ceaseless *tension* between the true God and the God of Paganism, a tension in which the true God comes to be, hence a tension necessary to God's self-generation, but also one which indicates the limits of Old Testament Revelation.

When the higher potency, which is the cause of all Revelation, overcomes the opposing principle, it *brings forth* in it the true God as appearing. Thus, from God's side, Revelation is not possible unless he is immediately, in consciousness, an other, unless he becomes unlike himself in consciousness. *But*, in negating himself in this non-mediated being, he mediates himself to himself, and so in fact *produces* himself in consciousness. Without such a self-generation in consciousness, there would be no Revelation at all (VI:515f).

It appears that for Schelling the tension or conflict between Jehovah (or his "appearance") and Elohim (the God who, pluralized, is the god of Paganism) *is*, so to speak, Christ's struggle with himself. For Christ, we said, has "a double history", and here in Old Testament religion his personal activity (his *historia sacra* as cause of Revelation) is struggling with his blind or natural activity (his *historia profana* as the mediating potency of Paganism), so that "he mediates himself to himself". In the end (i.e., in his Sacrifice of himself) the "personality" wins, putting to death the natural potency, (in Christ's death died the power of Paganism), and therefore literally bringing to an *end* all Revelation which took Paganism as its principle.

The actual appearance of Christ is therefore more than just Revelation, because it negates the presupposition of Revelation and therewith Revelation itself. If we posit Paganism, Judaism and Christianity as the three great forms of all religion, then the Revelation of the Old

Testament is simply the Revelation which is operating through Mythology, Christianity is the Revelation which has broken through this shell (Paganism), thus cancelling out in the same way and at the same time, both Judaism and Paganism (VI:516).

### The Successive Character of Old Testament Revelation

Schelling stresses the successive aspect of the three potencies in the Old Testament, and understands the concept of the "angel of Jehovah" as an objectively developing one. He disagrees with those theologians who *identify* the "angel" of Jehovah with the second divine person.<sup>12</sup> "To be sure, it is the second potency which is the real cause of Revelation, i.e., the cause of the appearance of Jehovah in the B of consciousness, but it is not this appearance itself" (VI:520). The *Malach Jehovah* (i.e., the "angel", "appearance", "harbinger" of Jehovah) is different at different periods. In Genesis and the historical books, the *Malach Jehovah* is the B defined by A<sup>2</sup>; the second potency makes the first its harbinger. In the Old Testament, the second personality has not broken through the second potency; it merely operates through it.

It makes the first and deepest principle B to be a medium of the appearance of the true God. It makes it the angel of Jehovah to whom everything worthy of God is ascribed, while things like the temptation of Abraham and even the temptation to idolatry are ascribed to the Elohim (VI:522n).

To this extent, Jehovah always appears as having a double aspect. On the one side, on the "fore-part", he appears as avenging, jealous, blindly punitive and consuming.<sup>13</sup> On the other side, the "hind-side", he appears as compassionate, long suffering and forgiving - and this is Jehovah proper. Jehovah says Moses may see his back, but none may see the Lord's face and live. Later on, however, in the prophets, the second potency is made the *Malach* of the third; it is the potency of the future, A<sup>3</sup>, for which the A<sup>2</sup> itself now becomes objective (VI:523n).

### The Pagan Ground of Old Testament Religion (VI:524-533)

Schelling emphasizes that, as we have seen, the people of Israel refrained from becoming just another polytheistic nation (*Volk*). Instead, "they held fast to the God who was once common to all mankind", the *Lord* of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham. The

unity and spirituality of this God remained their chief dogma (although he disintegrated for mankind in general, forming the deities of Mythology). The prohibition against images became their first commandment (VI:517, 519f). Even during the wilderness wanderings, the true God could not break loose from the false God, but kept the latter as his premise (See Amos 5:26f, Jer 7:31ff), and hence as a true principle of the divine economy.

In the story of Abraham, the angel, the appearance of Jehovah, recognizes the one who had required the offering up of Isaac as identical with himself, and blesses Abraham because he had wanted to fulfil his command. If we maintain that Revelation does not need to negate its presupposition absolutely - this happened only when the end of all Revelation had come - then much will become comprehensible which must seem to us, in the Old Testament, partly unworthy of God and partly downright pagan, like the clearly *pagan character* of many practices prescribed by the Mosaic legislation (VI:520).

To document his theses "that the Revelation of the Old Testament has its *ground* and immediate presupposition in common with Paganism", which it limits but cannot negate, Schelling turns not to a full discussion of the Mosaic cultus but to certain of those puzzling customs and institutes which reveal clearly pagan features. Such an inquiry will also help us understand the relation of the strict Mosaic ceremonial-law to the freedom to which man was introduced by Christ.

(i) **Circumcision.** This religious custom the Israelites had in common with pagan peoples. "Abraham received the command to circumcise himself and all his masculine descendants" (Gen 17:10-14). Moses "confirmed the command" and male circumcision eight days after birth became one of the "most binding prescriptions of the Mosaic Law." But circumcision is practised by many peoples, and "usually by those who are the most ancient in terms of the mythological process, the Arabians, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians." Clearly, the custom pre-dated Abraham.

How could Jacob's son say "it would bring disgrace upon us to give our sister to an uncircumcised person, if Abraham's family had been

the only circumcised in the world? So if circumcision was already practiced before Abraham's time and among pagan peoples, it must have its ground in the principle of Paganism, and the higher principle, which we assume to be present in both Abraham and Moses, had only to sanction this requirement, just as it negated or rejected other solicitations of the principle (VI:525).

Noting Philo's view that circumcision was recommended for reasons of health and cleanliness, Schelling insists that the practice was so widespread that it must also have had, in the beginning, a religious significance. He agrees with Spencer (in his *de legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus*) that it was connected with the phallic rites (*Phallagogien*) of pagan peoples, but thinks Spencer wrong in suggesting that "circumcision was introduced in order to prevent the *Phallosprocessionen* by the mutilation of this part: for circumcision is much older than the *Phallagogien* (VI:526). Herodotus says the custom arose among the Egyptians *απ αρχης*, from the most ancient times (Schelling cites *Lib. II, c. 104*).

The origin of circumcision may be discerned in Mythology, when Kronos castrated his father Ouranos. "Hence Circumcision originated in the Kronic period of Mythology." For Schelling, it is a vivid way of saying that an earlier principle has been nullified or that a wild, untamed principle has been limited. As man became more humane, and as moral insight quickened, castration gave way to circumcision and finally to the circumcision of the heart" of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah (Deut 10:16, 30:6, Jer 4:4).

In the fragments of Sanchoniathon in Eusebius ... circumcision is derived from Kronos ... For it is a common way of putting things to say that the nullification of an earlier ruling principle is represented as the emasculation of the same. Connected with each such transition ... were manifestations of fanatical orgiastic excess so that, for example, priests of Cybele emasculated themselves in holy passion, just as loathsome customs of the Orient - the castration of young men in great numbers and the consecration of them to the service of certain deities - also had their first cause in this mythological representation. (But) now the emasculation, i.e., the overcoming of an earlier, most ancient principle, was to be celebrated in a milder and more humane way, i.e., by circumcision ... This view, or the view that circumcision expressed the limitation of the wild principle, is so much the more probable since

in the Mosaic Law-book itself, the circumcision is interpreted morally as circumcision of the heart, or of the wild, unbridled, headstrong, titanic aspect of the soul. The prophets, too, speak of it in the same sense. For example, Jeremiah 4:4 says: 'Circumcise yourselves to Jehovah (the true God) and remove the foreskin of your hearts, lest my wrath go forth like fire and burn such that none may quench it.' What is here called 'wrath' must be overcome in Revelation as well as in Paganism (VI:527).

**(ii) Dietary Regulations.** Like Circumcision, dietary regulations were taken up out of Paganism into Old Testament religion. The "prohibition of certain foods" and the "division of animals into clean and unclean" are not natural or rational phenomena but religious. The pig, for example, has been widely banned since time immemorial. "According to Bochart, it is the subject of abomination for Phoenician, Ethiopian, Hindu and Egyptian alike." This aversion was "taken up out of Paganism into the Mosaic legislation." The pig was sacrificed in Egypt to Dionysus and among the Romans to Ceres and later to the Lares. "The priests of the komanic goddess (it corresponds to the moment of Urania) may not eat any swine-flesh nor may any such animal enter the city dedicated to her" (VI:528).

**(iii) The Tabernacle.** Schelling also sees a striking parallel between the tabernacle as Moses describes it, and ancient pagan shrines.

Whoever turns to the illustrations in the *Description de l'Egypte* will easily recognize the prototypes (*Gegenbilder*) of Mosaic prescriptions and descriptions - the carpets, the cherubs, the so-called mercy-seat, the tables with the shew-bread. The Ark of the Covenant recalled the holy boxes which played so great a role among pagan customs, and were common among the Phoenicians as among the Egyptians and later the Greeks. The material (*Stoff*) is here mythological (VI:528).

**(iv) Sacrificial Offerings.** As an example of the pagan or superstitious elements in the Old Testament, Schelling cites the elaborate instructions for the sacrifice of a red heifer in connection with the purification of those who had defiled themselves with a dead person (Deut 19:1-13). "Red is the color of Typhon, and Plutarch, in *de Isid. et Osir.* c. 22, expressly says: 'Take to sacrifice for him the red bull' ..." (VI:528f).

(v) **The Scapegoat.** No less superstitious is the custom of sending a scapegoat into the wilderness on the great Day of Atonement (Lev 16).

Two similar he-goats shall be set before Jehovah at the door of the Tabernacle. Then lots shall be cast upon both (goats), one lot for Jehovah and one for Azazel, i.e., the lot decides which of the two goats is to be brought to Jehovah as a burnt-offering, and which shall be allowed to go free. The latter would first be presented alive before Jehovah; then Aaron was to lay his two hands on its head, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel and lay them upon the goat and send him away into the wilderness ... where he bears all their iniquities and remains in the wilderness forever (VI:529).

This Azazel, concludes Schelling, is not just "the wilderness", but a person or personality, just as Jehovah is. Azazel is not the *devil*, as Spencer thinks, but he is a *theos antitechnos*, a demon, whose habitation is the desert. There are elements of Mythology here. For the later Orientals, who were making the transition to civic life, the wilderness is the place of all horror; and the idea of evil is connected with that earlier period when *everything* was wilderness. Azazel is the essence (*Wesen*) of this past.

There in lonesome places, as habitation of the past into which the power and noise of present circumstances had not yet penetrated, the Greek relegated his Pan and the essence which belonged to him, the melancholy reminder of the earlier principle. Therein also the imagination of the Israelite placed the *Schedim* and *Seirim* who clearly are a kind of Pan, Satyr or Panic essence, and whose dwelling is conceived to be in the wilderness. Therefore the Israelites allowed no sacrifices in the open. Every offering, even in the wilderness, must be brought before the holy tent. The field, the open space, belongs to the *general*, the unbounded God. Jehovah was *not* such a general God. He was personal, and therefore comprehensible ... with a name. Therefore he could be worshipped not in the open, but in a house ... or at least a tent. Whoever made his offering in the open, would be looked upon ... as if he intended to offer it to the *Schedim* (Lev 17:7) (VI:531f).

Since the goat is not merely sent into the wilderness, but is sent to Azazel and allowed to go free, there is surely here, in addition to the removal of sin, the survival of an older superstition. This view is

supported by the fact that "the name Azazel is not *explained*, but presupposed as one well known to the people." Although for the Hebrew, Azazel is now a creature of the past, still he must be recognized, "just as Typhon in Egypt, to whom the wilderness also belonged, was conceived as having been overcome, and yet was still honored by individual sacrifices." Clearly, "Revelation recognizes Paganism's reality" (VI:532).

(vi) **The Cleansing from Leprosy**, in Lev 14, seems a similar case in point. The prescription says: "two birds shall be taken; the one shall be slaughtered and the other dipped in the blood of the slain bird and then released into the open field." Was this supposed to propitiate the God of the free life of nature by those who now enjoyed established civic life, circumscribed by laws? Do we have here echoes of ancient pagan propitiation of nature-deities - the freeing of consecrated flocks (VI:532f)?<sup>14</sup>

#### Explanations of the Pagan Elements in the Old Testament (VI:534-539).

How are we to explain the presence in the Israelite cultus of these pagan features, these superstitious elements, the irrational appearances unworthy of God and the strict legalism?

(i) **Spencer's Theory of Divine Condescension** held that God "indulged the Israelites and permitted them" some Pagan rites, seeking simply to relate such practices to the true religion. This theory at least *recognizes* the presence of the pagan element in the Old Testament, but it implies that it was something fortuitous, accidental, "merely a divine condescension". Schelling, however, sees Paganism as a *necessary* process, and the pagan ground of Mosaic religion as therefore having a necessity about it. Understandably and inevitably, the Old Testament Jews were *practical pagans* (polytheists) for whom "Revelation" is what is accidental!

By no religion of antiquity was any people subjected to so intolerable a servitude, reaching into all its activities and covering every commission and omission, as the Israelite. In fact, one can scarcely believe that what this religious law prescribed was always and at every time observed by everyone.

... Though monotheists in theory and according to the Law, the children of Israel are in practice almost without exception polytheists. The substance of their consciousness is really Paganism. True religion is simply accidental, i.e., revealed, to their consciousness. Again, they have run through pretty much every stage of polytheism. From the *melaecheth haschamaim*, the queen of heaven, with whom all real polytheism began - from Baal and Ashtaroth up to the abominations of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, and even up to the second turning point of Mythology, the Cybele (under the name Mizplezeth ... ), none of the mythological stages are missing (VI:536).<sup>15</sup>

This so-called "tendency to idolatry" is found among the cultured Israelites (even the enlightened rulers) as well as the uncultured, and lasted till post-exilic times: "it disappeared among the Jews as soon as they returned from the Babylonian Exile." The usual explanation cites Jewish exposure to the Persians, "among whom a more spiritual religion, a kind of monotheism, was dominant." But for Schelling the real explanation is that the Jewish people were caught up in the mythological process which affected all mankind, and lost their inclination toward polytheism only when this process "attained its goal in mankind in general."

This co-incidence is a proof that polytheism is not something accidental, but a kind of general malady which, like a contagious disease, had to run its destined course. It gripped not only one particular people but the whole human race, and even the chosen people could not escape it until the process lost its power (and subsided) in the rest of mankind (VI:536).

[The phrase] tendency to idolatry ... makes it appear that monotheism was the original form, and polytheism the secondary and accidental, whereas it was really the other way around - polytheism is the basic, original form, and monotheism is the secondary, set up in opposition to the former (VI:535).

(ii) **The Typological Explanation** (*Typische*), which is "more generally accepted," holds that the numerous acts prescribed in the Mosaic law are *typi*, prototypes, prefigurements of "relations which have appeared in their truth only in Christ", (especially the great Sacrifice of the New Testament). Schelling agrees, but adds that

Paganism, too, has such models or prefigurements. In fact, "the truly prototypical aspect of Mosaism is precisely what is pagan in it." Mosaic religion is incomprehensible if one does not recognize in it both the reality of Paganism and the actual presence of Revelation (VI:534).

Revelation could not immediately negate the tension which was once objectively posited (the tension out of which the mythological process arose). The need to propitiate the angered deity by sacrifice is not *aroused* by Revelation. Moses' instructions did not establish sacrifice in general nor individual sacrifices, but simply gave directive prescriptions for the same ...

When the Jew brought his offering prescribed by the Law, he really followed the same necessity, the same impulse, which the Pagan followed in bringing his sacrifice. All that distinguishes the two is the prophetic element in the former, the future which is hinted at (VI:537, 539n).

In the prophets, of course, Jehovah disapproves the offerings which he himself had earlier willed. "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices ... I am tired of *enduring* them" (Isaiah 1:11, 14). Here, says Schelling, the Spirit, the potency of the future, speaks. Prophecy transcends the Law as the Mysteries transcend Mythology. "Prophetism as such was strictly speaking the potency which was opposed to the law - it was the Dionysiac, so to speak, in the Old Testament." An understanding of Prophetism is as essential to a full understanding of Old Testament religion as an understanding of the Mysteries is to our comprehension of Greek religion (VI:539n cf. 537).

Thus Paganism (indirectly) and Judaism (directly) are prototypical of Christianity. Just as the *goal* of any movement operates in that movement as its *final cause*, so Christianity is present in the earlier two religions.

### Concerning the World-historical Destiny of the Jews (VI:539-543).

Paul ascribes to Mosaic religion "no more reality than he ascribes to Paganism." Why then were the Israelites chosen from among all earth's peoples to be the bearers of divine revelation? In Schelling's view, it was because they were *not* destined to make a great and enduring name in world history.

Historically, their (selection) is attributed to the personal virtues of their ancestor Abraham and the promises given to him. But considered absolutely, the reason is ... that the Israelite people was destined least of all to have its own history according to the standard of other peoples, least of all to be possessed by that world-spirit which inspired other nations to establish great monarchies, [etc.] (VI:540).

Though commanded to be separate, the Israelites remained in contact with idolatrous peoples, and were almost continually under their seductive influence. Yet "there is scarcely a trace of evidence" that the religious institutions or public worship of the Jews ever itself had any religious or moral influence on *other peoples*. "Judaism, strictly speaking, was never something positive. It can only be defined either as shackled Paganism or as potential, still-hidden, Christianity; and it was just this middle position that was fatal to it" (VI:540f).

"Christ was more for the Pagan than for the Jew," in the sense that the pagan element taken up into Christianity - the human Son of God - made Christianity easier for the Pagan but difficult for the Jew. Hence Paul's sadness on account of his "kinsmen by race" (Rom 9 and 11).

Christ as such is not to be understood on the basis of Judaism. Judaism gives the matter of his existence, but he himself, strictly speaking, is the potency of Paganism, and this potency is strange to Judaism. Therefore the Jews had to destroy his matter, and out of what was destroyed arose free the potency of Paganism (VI:541n).

The Jews were aware of this. The influence of Christ on the pagans, who in this way became part of Revelation and of the promises, aroused their jealousy. They looked upon Christ as sent merely for the Pagans, not, as in later times, as an imposter, but rather as perhaps an emanation of the principle of Paganism, and saw Christianity itself as just a modification of Paganism. 'You who came out of Paganism might worship him', says the Jew Tryphon, 'but we, worshippers of the God who made this Christ, need neither to know him nor to worship him' (Neander: *Kirchengeschichte* Part I, Vol. I, p. 380)(VI:542, 542n).

So the Jews were just a means to an end! When they failed to become Christians, "they excluded themselves from the great course of

history. They *had to* cease to be a people, and were dispersed and scattered among the other peoples. They were something only as bearers of the future." And yet, though homeless and exiled, they are still a "reserved" people, in the sense of "reserved for the Kingdom of God into which they are destined to enter last. God's promise to them will be kept, but with divine irony: 'the first shall be last'." "The day will surely come when they will be taken up into the divine economy." "*Auferat Deus omnipotens velamen ab oculis vestris*" - God almighty will take away the covering from your eyes. Meanwhile, enlightened policy will "no longer withhold from them necessary rights" (VI:543).

