

# Christ as Copula: On the Incarnation and the Possibility of Religious Exclusivism

*Tyler Tritten*

## Preview

Focusing on F.W.J. Schelling's lectures in Munich in the 1830s, published as *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*,<sup>1</sup> I will explicate Christ as the copula, i.e., the incarnation of the universal Word or Logos, in order to argue that Christ is not human and divine, but neither human nor divine, at least not as such. Humanity and divinity are rather the two termini or relata united by the differentiating enactment of the Logos as the copula itself. Copulation only unites by differentiating. Thus, humanity and divinity are not pre-given data to be combined in the incarnation, but are rather both consequents. The Logos is neither God the Father as the subject-term proper, who would accept the form of—i.e., acquire as a predicate-nominative—human nature, nor is the subject-term Jesus of Nazareth, who would be predicated with divinity. To say that Christ is both human and God is neither to say that God became human (which tends toward Docetism) nor that a human became God (which tends toward Arianism). It rather says that that which is God is the same as that which is human. That which is already a middle nature, the Logos as copula, becomes God precisely by becoming human (a sort of monophysitism or Eutychianism that does not begin with two distinct natures but nevertheless ends with two natures).

**Christ as Copula:  
On the Incarnation and the Possibility of Religious  
Exclusivism**

*Tyler Tritten*

Focusing on F.W.J. Schelling's lectures in Munich in the 1830s, published as *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*,<sup>1</sup> I will explicate Christ as the copula, i.e., the incarnation of the universal Word or Logos, in order to argue that Christ is not human *and* divine, but *neither* human *nor* divine, at least not as such. Humanity and divinity are rather the two *termini* or *relata* united by the *differentiating* enactment of the Logos as the copula itself. Copulation only unites by differentiating. Thus, humanity and divinity are not pre-given data to be combined in the incarnation, but are rather both consequents. The Logos is neither God the Father as the subject-term proper, who would accept the form of—i.e., acquire as a predicate-nominative—human nature, nor is the subject-term Jesus of Nazareth, who would be predicated with divinity. To say that Christ is both human and God is neither to say that God became human (which tends toward Docetism) nor that a human became God (which tends toward Arianism). It rather says that that which is God is the same as that which is human. That which is already a middle nature, the Logos as copula, becomes God precisely by becoming human (a sort of monophysitism or Eutychianism that does not begin with two distinct natures but nevertheless *ends* with two natures).

As a consequence of this study, I will conclude that a possible argument for the exclusivity of the Christ-event is contained within Schelling's Christology. Should one accept this event, then one has evidence not just for the fact that God exists in general, but that a very specific or particular God exists, a God that would not be God apart from the Christ-event. I will begin by analyzing Schelling's analysis of the copula as it occurs in a judgment, which will show why beginning with two pre-given natures always leads to an impasse. Subsequently, I will sketch an alternative account of the materialization of the Logos, i.e., the incarnation, as the critical event within a theogenetic happening. If God's (eternal) genesis is only enacted and completed through the incarnation, thus through the human nature, then God only actualizes his divinity not in spite of but precisely and *exclusively* by means of the assumption of a human nature.

---

<sup>1</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Vols. I-II (1831/32), ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1992).

## Copulation and the Nature of the Judgment

Schelling's account of the copula has (1) ontological and not just linguistic ramifications, and (2) it is to be thought transitively, taking an accusative rather than a predicate-nominative as its object. The copula does not extensionally *identify* two pre-existing things, the subject- and predicate-term, but it *posits* / *posit-ions* the subject and predicate as two; it identifies only by *differentiating* or *bifurcating*. In what sense "S is P" or "Jesus is divine" can be understood as a statement of identity is thus radically called into question.

As transitive the "is" in so-called identity statements ought to be understood as "can." Schelling writes, "In the Arabic language the 'is' (the copula) is expressed through a word that is entirely [equivalent] to our German 'can' (*Können*)" and is rendered "with the accusative."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, as shall be seen, the subject will acquire the role of potency (*Können*) and the predicate that of actuality (*Seyn*). Consequently, as *das Seynkönnende*, the subject "can" the predicate, which means the subject has the potency to bring about a predicate different from itself. This is Schelling's break from Spinozism, for whom substance is not at all a subject because it can do nothing except analytically unfold itself unto the predicate, i.e., the attributes and modes. Unlike in Spinoza, the relationship between subject and predicate is not one of *implicitum* and *explicitum*, but rather one of *antecedens* and *consequens*. Where there is an antecedent and a consequent, there is a real trans-ition from the subject to the predicate—hence time, the trans-itory or the trans-itive nature of the copula— instead of a merely logical relation as in Spinoza and Hegel. Subject *is* predicate means the subject *can* the predicate, that is, it has the potency to bring about something other than the mere explication or unfolding of itself, something *novel*, something not already contained in the subject. Contrary to Spinozism, and as Schelling has argued in his 1821 lectures, all real assertions are synthetic.<sup>3</sup>

Schelling is able to draw far-reaching conclusions from this insight into the transitive nature of the copula. Significantly, it dictates a method that draws inferences *per posterius* rather than *a priori* or *a posteriori*. The defect of methods that function *a priori* is that they reduce identity statements to merely extensional identity such that the predicate is but a characteristic extensionally contained under the full concept of the subject. The problem with traditional *a posteriori* approaches is that they still view the subject as something pre-given rather than as something first constituted by the predicate. *A posteriori* approaches only deny that one can *know* what predicates the subject might bear in advance of any actual experience of those determinations of the subject. Both approaches, however, labor under the assumption that one begins with two domains, that of the subject and that of the predicate, and that the role of the

---

<sup>2</sup> "In der arabischen Sprache wird das Ist (der Copula) durch ein Wort ausgedrückt, das ganz unser deutsches Kann (Können) ist... mit dem Accusativ." F.W.J. Schelling, *Die Philosophie der Offenbarung: Erster Teil*, SW II/3, 177-530, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1858), 229.

<sup>3</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Initia Philosophiae Universae: Erlanger Vorlesung WS 1820/21* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969).

copula is simply to unify these two givens. In short, they labor under the assumption that the “is” or the copula is the *third* term. Schelling, however, views the copula as the originary element that, via its transitive activity, posits both the subject and the predicate as its consequent *termini*. Accordingly, not only can nothing be known in advance of copulation, as *a priori* methods would have it, nor does the predicate add a novel content to the subject as a simple appendage, as *a posteriori* methods permit. It is only *through* the posterior, the consequent or the predicate, that the subject even acquires its identity at all. Traditional *a posteriori* approaches still assume the existence and identity of the subject in advance of the predicate, which would be but an accrued determination of the subject, but they simply deny that the subject was known in advance of this accrual. A *per posterius* method, on the other hand, denies even the existence of the subject in advance of its determinations or qualifications, hence why all assertions do not just happen to be synthetic, but why all assertions *must* be synthetic and, consequently, contingent. There is here, if one will, an argument for the necessity of contingency.

Schelling often explicates this as a method of narration (*erzählende Philosophie*), which is the only method appropriate for contingent occurrences that cannot be explained by their prior conditions. If the copula generates both the subject and predicate in tandem as unforeseen novelties, then the subject can never ground the necessary conditions—i.e., the sufficient reasons—why the predicate is as it is. The predicate cannot be determined by the subject as its antecedent condition, but it is always a novel, unforeseen and contingent consequent. Such can only be explained by means of narration and never by means of logical explanation, just as a free human person can never be encompassed by their description. The sum of something’s predicates only totalizes a subject if those predicates are nothing but the unfolding of the pre-given essence of the subject. With a person, however, no amount of words and deeds suffices, which is to say, no matter how long their history there is always the possibility that their next word or next act will be surprising and falsify their prior character. Because the potency of the subject betrays an irreducible remainder (*ein nie aufgehender Rest*), no amount of predicates can ever definitively encapsulate the subject. There is no identity between antecedent and consequent, but the “and” or “is” only identifies through *disjunction*. The transitive occurrence of copulation posits the subject as potency and as antecedent at the same time that it posits the predicate as the actualization of the prior, i.e., as its consequence. Neither subject nor object are pre-given and neither exist in advance of the other, but they are simultaneously posited, one *as antecedens / prius* and the other *as consequens / posterius*. The posterior is just as much a condition of the identity of the prior as the subject is the condition of the being of the predicate, hence a method *per posterius*. If anything is to be thought as ultimately prior, at least in an ontological (but not in a temporal) sense, it is the act of copulation by which the two are posited as *termini*. This ontological event only admits of narration, never explication.

If the subject is what is expressed and the predicate its actual expression, then the copula is the event of expressivity itself. Of note, however, is that expressivity resists expression just as in Emmanuel Levinas the domain of the Said can never say Saying. What is Said or what is predicated is thus never the explication of a pre-given subject, but rather, as repeatedly stated, it is a fact only to be narrated. The subject does not contain a total set of possible predicates, but, as generated from the expressivity of the copula, no predicates have been determinately excluded from it. (Note that, for Schelling, this entails a rejection of the Medievalist doctrine that there cannot be more being in the effect than in the cause insofar as the effect or consequent can always be something that was not already in the cause or antecedent. This is precisely the consequence of the positing of the copula as transitive rather than merely explicative of extensional identity.) Subject X can bring about predicates A, B, C etc. *ad infinitum*. If, however, X is A *in actu*, it follows that it can only be B, C, D etc. *in potentia*. A only excludes every other predicate, even its contradictory, not-A, in fact, but never in potency. A sick boy, for example, could always become healthy. All that is denied is that he can be *actually* healthy and *actually* not-healthy at the same time and in the same respect. As Schelling says, “The healthy man bears the possibility of sickness in himself, but the healthy man and the man which can be sick are not two different men, but only one and the same man who does not exclude the other man.”<sup>4</sup> *Potentia* thus signifies nothing other than the indivisible remainder of actuality. Consequently, there is no potency in advance of actuality just as there is no subject in advance of actual predication, which constitutes the actualization of the subject *as* its potency. Subject and predicate are mutually determining and so neither exists in advance of the other. Schelling’s key claim is that both are generated from copulation itself and so both are only able to be narrated *post factum* or *per posterius*. Both are posterior and only the copula is the true *prius*, the absolute *prius*, namely, *Daß* without *Was* or *actus purus* prior to *potentia* as Schelling often speaks of it.

While a subject is never totalized by its predicates, it is rendered definite by them. Without these determinations the subject is the *ἄπειρον* or indefinite, i.e., nothing at all. The subject only exists as the remainder of potency, namely, the potency *of* a determinate actuality. Schelling remarks:

- A *is* B means: A is the subject of B.... Herein lies a twofold determination:
- (1) A is something for *itself*, even without B it could thus also be something else than B; only insofar as it also has a being for *itself* and is thus also capable of a being which is not equivalent to B....[and]
  - (2) Just for this reason, because it could also be something other than B, so does it make this, its own ‘potency-to-be-other’ against B, into a mere

---

<sup>4</sup> “Der gesundeste Mensch trägt die Möglichkeit der Krankheit in sich, aber der gesunde Mensch und der krank seyn könnende Mensch sind nicht zwei verschiedene Menschen, sondern nur ein und der nämliche Mensch, der eine schließt den anderen nicht aus.” Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung: Erster Theil*, 222-223.

potency or possibility of B, and only *in this way* or in *this manner* is it B.<sup>5</sup>

A, the subject, is not something for itself in *exclusion* from B, the predicate, existing in advance of B, but A has its own being only insofar as it *is* B, only insofar as it *is* the predicate, and has thereby acquired the potency also not to be B—i.e., to be not-B. Beforehand it may have had the potency of A, B, C, etc., but only afterwards can it have the potency of no longer being B or of not having to remain B. That, however, presupposes its actuality as B. Schelling thus explicitly binds the idea of potency to that of matter and substrate. He asserts:

By saying that what I see here is, for example, a geranium, so the subject of the statement is actually the matter of the plant. This matter is now *something* even without the plant; the plant can be destroyed and the matter remains. The matter is indifferent in regard to form; it is, in its way, even an *ἄπειρον*, i.e., it is capable in itself also not to be *this* plant, but another, or not even a plant at all.<sup>6</sup>

“The matter is *now* something even without the plant.” This “now” is critical, as it precludes potency in advance of actuality, prime matter in advance of form, an absolute subject in advance of its qualifying predicates. The potency of the subject is simply its freedom from the predicate, but only on account of the actual predicate. Freedom is neither pure potency nor pure act, but it is the remainder, the potency, *of* an act, the fact that an act has taken place that just as easily could have never happened. *If* an act occurs, then it can only be narrated as actual, but never as necessarily actual. Schelling confirms: “*Actual* freedom consists not in the potency to *be*, not in the potency to express oneself, but in the potency not to be, in the potency not to express oneself.”<sup>7</sup> The subject is the reserve of non-being in the being of the predicate, but both are posited at once by the act of copulation, which, although a middle term, is not a third term, but rather the most originary.

What has been acquired by this preparatory discussion of the nature of the copula, which will prove indispensable to any understanding of Schelling’s Christology, is the insight that subject and predicate are not united (or divided)

---

<sup>5</sup> “A *ist* B, heißt: A ist Subjekt von B. Darin liegt zweierlei: 1) A is für *sich* etwas, auch ohne B, es könnte also auch etwas anderes seyn als B; nur sofern es auch eines Seyns für *sich*, und also auch des nicht = B seyns, fähig ist.... 2) eben darum, weil es auch etwas anderes seyn könnte als B, so macht es dieses sein—ein ‘Anderes-seyn-Können’ gegen B zur bloßen Potenz oder Möglichkeit von B, und nur *so* oder nur auf *diese* Weise *ist* es B.” Ibid, 228-229.

<sup>6</sup> “Indem ich also sage: das, was ich hier sehe, ist z.B. ein Geranium, so ist das Subjekt der Aussage eigentlich die Materie der Pflanze. Diese Materie ist nun *etwas* auch ohne die Pflanze, die Pflanze kann zerstört werden und die Materie bleibt, die Materie ist gegen die Form gleichgültig, sie ist in ihrer Art auch ein *ἄπειρον*, d.h., sie ist an sich fähig, auch nicht *diese* Pflanze, sondern eine andere, oder überhaupt keine Pflanze zu seyn.” Ibid, 229.

<sup>7</sup> “Die *eigentlichen* Freiheit besteht nicht im *seyn*—, nicht im sich äußern—sondern im nicht seyn-, im sich nicht äußern-Können.” Ibid, 209.

from without as two pre-given elements. Likewise, Schelling's Christology does not assume two natures, the divine and the human, so that either the divine subject assumes human form or a human subject acquires divine form, but rather *das Mittlere* (the medium) between the two is anterior to both. As Schelling states it:

The *meaning* or the intention ... was to hold firm to that which can be [*das Seynkönnende*] as something that can be [*Seynkönnendes*], to preserve it before the transition into being. We want it *as* something that can be, which means we want that it remains standing as *potentia pura*, as pure potency [*Können*], as potency without *being*.<sup>8</sup>

What is wanted is the copula as the purely transitive power to be before it has passed over into its being as subject / substance or as predicate / object. Similarly, in Schelling's Christology, he will not assume that the human subject becomes divine or vice versa, but he rather asks, more profoundly, about that *Mittleres* which brings itself into being *as* two, i.e., with two *termini* or two natures. Copulation posits the subject or nominative as antecedent and the consequent is thus not a predicate nominative but, given the nature of the copula as *Können* (can), it is posited as an accusative, which is used only with transitive verbs. "The accusative shows that with this the 'is' means so much as *potest...*"<sup>9</sup> *Potest*, that is the potency or power [*Macht*] of bringing about a possibility [*Möglichkeit*], hence why Schelling sometimes speaks of this power of the copula as magic [*die Magie*],<sup>10</sup> the original *Mögen* and *Vermögen*.

Identity is not extensional but generative; identity only unites by dividing natures. The consequents are the *termini*, the subject- and object-positions, and the originary is that which posits positions in the first place. One does not assume two things, the subject and a possible predicate, and then ask how to unite them, but as Schelling describes the matter: "We have posited with the three concepts [the three potencies] not, as it were, three distinct givens of which each is for itself; we have not posited 1 + 1 + 1, but always only one. We do not have three beings, but only **one** *threefold* being."<sup>11</sup> Likewise in his Christology, Schelling will not add one nature to another, not 1 + 1, but he will begin with the *Mittleres* that enacts itself in a twofold or dual-natured *manner*. The "is," the copula, is a verb and verbs do not take adjectives but only adverbs or *manners* of being.

---

<sup>8</sup> "Der *Sinn* oder die Absicht unseres Übergangs war also, das Seynkönnende *als* Seynkönnendes festzuhalten, es vor dem Übertritt in das Seyn zu bewahren. Wir wollen es *als* Seynkönnendes, heißt: wir wollen, daß es als *potentia pura*, als reines *Können*, als Können ohne *Seyn* stehen bleibe." Ibid, 210.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 229.

<sup>10</sup> "Magic—this word is simply one with our German *power*, *possibility*, thus with potency. [Die Magie—dieses Wort ist nur eins mit unserem deutschen *Macht*, *Möglichkeit*, also mit *Potenz*.]" Ibid, 231.

<sup>11</sup> "Wir haben mit den drei Begriffen nicht etwa drei außereinander Befindliche, deren jedes für sich ist, wir haben nicht 1 + 1 + 1, sondern immer nur eins gesetzt. Wir haben nicht drei Wesen, sondern nur **Ein** *dreifaches* Wesen." Ibid, 236.

Humanity and divinity are the *manners* or the *modus operandii* by which *das Mittleres*, the copula, enacts itself, by which the *Verbum* of God verbalizes itself. This is possible because the identity statement is not a unity statement, i.e., a unification of two terms, but a disjunctive that differentiates the manner of being of the predicate from the state or condition (*Stand*) of the subject as its substrate (*Unter-stand*).

### The Aporia of Two Natures

To assume two natures of Christ, a human and a divine nature, inevitably leads to the suspension of one nature in the other, either Docetism, which suspends human nature, or Arianism, which suspends the divinity of Christ. Assuming that God as such cannot change—which Schelling too accepts—the most common option is to avoid that blasphemy and rather assert that the divine assumed humanity. This view presupposes two pre-given natures, placing the divine in the subject-position and then regarding humanity as a merely superfluous addition, predicated of the divine subject indeed, but without actually altering the substance and essence of the divine subject. The divine unchangingly remains as is, hence why the predicate can only be an appendage, an accident accrued by the divine, and nothing substantial that might alter the identity of the subject as such. Christian Danz helpfully explains that for this viewpoint, “The being of the man, i.e., the human nature, becomes an accident of the divine substance that steps into a relation with human nature.”<sup>12</sup> The divine *relates* in this way with human nature, it accompanies or clothes itself with human nature, but the divine does not actually *become* human. It is, Schelling writes, “as if the divine personality merely took up or put on a human nature independent from itself as one, for example, pulls on an outfit.”<sup>13</sup> Just as clothes cannot truly be predicated of a person, but only draped upon them like a walking suit, so, according to this traditional view, human nature can become, at best, only a walking vehicle for the divine. Schelling reiterates this criticism, stating, “If A turns into B, then one can say that A + B is posited, thus it does not necessarily follow that A has been changed in itself; it can have remained what it was. It has only entered a relation that previously was not, but it has not become something else in itself, certainly not a human being.”<sup>14</sup> Whenever two distinct natures are assumed in advance, only an *external* relation between them is possible, but a real transformation of the one into the other can never take place. Not even a composition of two

---

<sup>12</sup> “Das Menschsein bzw. die menschliche Natur wird zu einem Akzidenz der in eine Relation mit ihr tretenden göttlichen Substanz.” Christian Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996), 71.

<sup>13</sup> “Als habe die göttliche Persönlichkeit die von ihr unabhängige menschliche Natur bloß angenommen oder angezogen, wie man z.B. ein Kleid anzieht.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 527.

<sup>14</sup> “Wenn nämlich A zu B wird, so kann man sagen, daß A + B gesetzt ist, so folgt nicht notwendig, daß A in sich selbst verändert worden sei; es kann geblieben sein, was es war. Es hat nur ein Verhältnis eingegangen, das vorher nicht war, ist aber nicht in sich selbst ein anderes geworden, so wenig ein Mench.” Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 71.

natures accomplishes that. As much as Schelling may find a role in his own thought for kenosis / *Entäußerung*, there is a critique here of Martin Luther's Christology of kenosis. God, on account of his immutability, cannot just empty himself or lower himself unto human nature. Such is unbecoming for God, because it entails a loss of God's divinity. The divine subject would be transformed into a human subject, but it would not be a divine subject retaining, let alone *acquiring*, its divinity in the very act of becoming human, and this is what is required by the notion that the same that is God is the same that is Man.

Any Christology worthy of the name seeks to describe the scandal that in the Christ-event there is a being that is *fully* God and *fully* human, and neither a transition from one to the other nor a mixture of the two. All theories that begin with two natures will collapse under the temptation of viewing the Christ as a composition of natures. The demand is not for the admixture of two natures, 1 + 1, but that one be disjuncted *as* two, lest tri-theism, 1+1+1. Schelling's point is not just that the presupposition of two natures leads to insurmountable difficulties, i.e., his claim is not just that this starting point is wrong for philosophical reasons, but it also does not measure up to the kerygmatic content of Christianity itself. The only escape from this impasse is to begin not with two but with the singularity of the copulating enactment, that of *das Mittlere*, the Logos of God. According to Schelling, this is divinity posited outside of God

*simpliciter* or "the outer-divinely posited divinity (*das außergöttlich gesetzte Göttliche*)."<sup>15</sup>

### **The Incarnation of the Logos<sup>16</sup>**

Only the Person of Christ is the kerygma, the content of divine revelation. Revelation is not an esoteric content, but it is wholly relational. It is neither doctrinal nor dogmatic, even if one is repeating a holy text verbatim—the idolatry of Biblicism—but it is utterly historical, a historical enactment and not a historical content. The revelation is the historical person of Christ, not his beliefs, teachings or activities (apart from his death and resurrection<sup>17</sup>), but his historical actuality. Even the Bible is but the witness to this historical personage, a witness *to* the revelation, but not the revelation itself. The revelation is not a doctrine or content, but the historical enactment of the Logos of God who *materializes* himself as the Person of the Christ, the God-Man.

What is under question is neither the divine nature of the Christ nor the human nature, but these are both consequents of the enactment of the Logos. The claim of every Christology should be that the Logos who has materialized itself

---

<sup>15</sup> Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 538.

<sup>16</sup> Due to space, this essay must forego an explication of the Logos and how it came to be posited as *extra deum* or as the outer-divine divine through the Fall, assuming all of this in order to skip straight to the incarnation. Due to space, the completion of the incarnation, which only finds its perfect enactment in the crucifixion and resurrection, will also not receive the attention that it deserves.

<sup>17</sup> I, with the Apostle Paul, preach only Christ crucified!

as Man is the same that, by the same act, forfeits its separation from God and thereby accomplishes / manifests / reveals (its) divinity. The scandal of the Christ-event is that the Logos reveals divinity precisely *by* becoming human. This is the act of the incarnation, which can also be described as a materialization of the Logos.

Recall that, for Schelling, acts of materialization, potentiation, subjectification and subjection are one and the same considered from different aspects. For something to materialize itself is for it to subject or subordinate itself to an ensuing superior, for it to yield its present *actus* and recede into *potentia* in order to make possible, i.e., become the potency of, the coming *actus*. In this way something becomes matter for that which follows by positing itself as ground or substrate, by becoming subject to and, therefore, the subject of, the ensuing consequent. For the Logos to materialize itself is to become the ground of a consequent, to become the substance or *ὑποκείμενον* of that which it bears. Schelling comments, “With the word ‘stuff’ only the final *ὑποκείμενον*, only the *material ultima*, is intended.”<sup>18</sup> The act by which the Logos materializes itself as Man is the same act by which the human nature of the Christ becomes the substance or substrate of the actualization of divine personality, of the divine Person. Matter is to potency as form is to act. The Logos could only be the Christ, i.e., the actualization of the form of God in the world posited outside of God (due to the Fall), by incarnating itself, i.e., materializing itself as the potency of divinity. Without human nature being posited as subject divinity could not reign as the efficacious personality or form of this substrate; in the incarnation humanity becomes the substance of the divine Person. Without the incarnation or, more exactly, materialization of the Logos, divine personality remains concealed rather than revealed. Revelation is a human-divine enactment insofar as the Logos brings about the sovereignty (*Herrschaft*) of divine personality precisely by historically enacting itself as Man.

The copulating event is a free enactment of the Logos, of the divine posited outer-divinely, albeit not the enactment of God *simpliciter*. The Logos copulates as subject and as predicate, i.e., it materializes itself as the antecedent substrate and *ὑποκείμενον* in order to ground the coming of, i.e., the actualization of, God in the world posited outside of God. Revelation, again, is an enactment that alters the *relation* of the world to God, not a secret and esoteric dogma to which one must give epistemic consent. Revelation is ontological and not epistemic. It is the incarnation of the Logos *as* the Christ, the materialization of the subject, human nature, and the actualization of the predicate, divine personality. Through the incarnation the subject, human nature, becomes the potency of the actual predicate, the divine *persona*; Christ’s humanity becomes the potency or power by which God is actualized as a procession of Persons. Schelling can thus say that “the divine in Christ is the Father who remains in him.”<sup>19</sup> In the procession of divine Persons the Father is posited as the first, i.e.,

---

<sup>18</sup> “Offenbar ist bei dem Worte »Stoff« nur das letzte *ὑποκείμενον*, nur die *material ultima* gemeint.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 558.

<sup>19</sup> “Das Göttliche in Christus ist der in ihm gebliebene Vater.” Ibid, 559.

as the potency of the other two Persons. Potency is the remainder of actuality and the Father is, in Christ, i.e., in the Logos incarnate, the indivisible remainder of the divine, God as subject and abyss of power and potency. Without the Father Christ is impotent, i.e., without potency, and thus not divine at all. If, however, potency / substrate never exists in advance of the actuality / predicate of which it is the potency, then one sees that the Father only comes to be *as* Father *in* the actual Son, i.e., in Christ as the Logos incarnate. God is not Father in advance of the Son, but only *in* the Son, only *as* the potency of the incarnate Son. Schelling can now thus claim a bit more provocatively that “it is God in Christ who generates the Christ as a Man.”<sup>20</sup> Far from the human and the divine constituting an impasse and contradiction, as is the case if one begins with two natures, when regarded as *termini* of an enactment, an act of copulation, the aporia dissolves and the human and divine necessarily belong together, each indispensable for the actualization of the other.

If one does not *begin* but only *ends* with two natures, then these natures can only be *novel* consequents generated by the copulating enactment of the Logos. Christ is thus not the name for a combination of two natures, but the name that signifies the very generation of two natures in one. As Danz comments in this regard, “If Christ is the production of the product, so it is said with this that he can only be conceived from his self-enactment.”<sup>21</sup> “Rather, first through this enactment of his entrance into history does the Christ become Christ.”<sup>22</sup> The matter of the incarnation is then clearly not already in a pre-given human being. It is the enactment that makes the Christ the Christ and not the stuff of his nature. The matter of the incarnation is not to be found anywhere except through the very potentiation, and that means self-subjection / subjectification, of the Logos itself in order that the actual God may be revealed / manifest. This reading, therefore, truly thinks the incarnation as the incarnation of *the Logos* (rather than of God *simpliciter*). If the Logos were already to find its matter and substrate in something other than itself, in a human nature, then one could not truly say that the Logos itself has been incarnated, only that the Logos has found a human vehicle. The scandalous aspect of the incarnation, however, is the claim that the Christ is not the vicar of the Logos, but that the Christ *is* the Logos incarnate. The incarnation is the act, i.e., the enactment, of the Logos itself, such “that he has expressed himself in a divest manner and has become man, and he has *not* disposed himself of his divinity (for, this would be impossible), but of his outer-divine being.”<sup>23</sup> It is, in fact, only the latter that the Logos has suffered involuntarily; for, as Schelling says, “Without his assistance he is posited as

<sup>20</sup> “Es ist der Gott in Christus, der den menschen Christus zeugt.” Ibid, 559.

<sup>21</sup> “Wenn Christus die Produktion des Produktes ist, so ist damit gesagt, daß er nur aus seinem Selbstvollzug heraus begriffen werden kann.” Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 74.

<sup>22</sup> “Vielmehr wird der Christus erst durch diesen Vollzug des Eintrittes in die Geschichte zum Christus.” Ibid, 75.

<sup>23</sup> “Daß er sich selbst entäußert habe und Mensch geworden sei, und *nicht* seiner Gottheit (denn dies wäre unmöglich), sondern seines außergöttlichen Seins sich entledigt habe.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 528.

outer-divine potency,”<sup>24</sup> i.e., through the Fall of Man. The incarnation of the Logos is the Logos’ own enactment as a self-subjection, as a sacrifice of his *outer*-divine divinity, of his independence from God. At any rate, the human body must be more than a vehicle for the Logos. Had the Logos merely descended into a human body, it would not be incarnation, but inhabitation, a possession and haunting, namely, something demonic. Jesus is not the host of the Logos, but he *is* the manifestation, the revelation, of the Logos.

Two natures are indeed present in the Person of the Christ, but only as consequences of the copulating enactment of the Logos and not as something composed. The two are not composed into one, but the one speaks itself as two. Only in this way is Christ *fully* God and *fully* human. The incarnating act is, as it were, a decision, which is, of course, always a ‘cision,’ a cut. The enactment of the Logos is the event by which the divine and human natures are severed one from the other, not in order to further their estrangement, but in order to bring each into distinctness. The act, if one will, is efficacious only *per contrarium*. The divine and human are united in Christ only because they are first decisively separated and opposed in Christ. The Logos proves its unity with God only by yielding its independence from God, by sacrificing its existence outside God. The Logos only elevates itself to its divinity by taking on flesh and subjecting itself to the vicissitudes of material existence. The Logos only proves its divinity and makes itself into the Son of God by forfeiting the divinity that it had outside of God, i.e., as an outer-divine divinity. The decision for incarnation—and the revelation is the revelation not of a content but of divine will, i.e., of a personal decision—is a decision against equality with God! The Logos sacrifices his own equality with God as something posited outside of God in order to return to God, who is now God as Father insofar as the Logos has enacted itself as a Son obedient to the will of the Father, as one who lays down his own will. Without the incarnation, then, God is not Father and the Son is not the Son. The incarnation is the enactment of the being of God as Trinity, as a life of free persons, as a consequence of free and personal decisiveness. The incarnation is not something that happens *to* God, but it is an event within the life *of* God. It would not be an overstatement to say that the decision for the incarnation on the part of the Logos is a decision for revelation, i.e., for the manifestation of God, and, consequently, a decision *against* atheism. Without the incarnation, God would not prove himself the personal Lord (*Herrschaft=Göttlichkeit*) of being, i.e., God would not be God and atheism would rather hold true.

The decision for and enactment of the incarnation is one and the same as the decision for and enactment of divine revelation. Schelling contends:

The incarnation is only the highest act of its divinity itself... If the Son would divest himself of his divinity in the incarnation, then divinity would be invisible and concealed... His divinity would thus rather

---

<sup>24</sup> “Ohne sein Zutun ist er als außergöttliche Potenz gesetzt.” Ibid.

become invisible than visible, as this is also the supposition of traditional theology.<sup>25</sup>

The incarnation is not the Logos' forfeiture of divinity *per se*, but rather the very act by which divinity is manifest. It only forfeits the divinity that it had *outside* of God, its independence from God; it lays down its own will, demonstrating its obedience to the will of the Father. Schelling explains that "the Logos has not divested itself of its divinity, but of the *μορφή θεου*."<sup>26</sup> The Logos, insofar as it is God's Word or expression, does not impossibly abandon its divinity *tout court*; it only divests itself of its divine *form*, taking on human form instead. Nevertheless, this change in *μορφή* is a change in the Logos itself and not just a clothing that it puts on, not just a change of relation to something other than itself. To be in the *μορφή* of the human being means more than that the human becomes the mere vehicle by which the Logos circumnavigates; it is a change in its very being / *actus*. To drive the point home once more against the assumption of two natures: "If the Logos only attached itself to the human being that had arisen independently from him, then, in himself, no change would occur; he would remain in himself what he was and in this respect this would not be a self-divestment in a real sense."<sup>27</sup> Schelling further suggests that such "union," so-called, between the divine and human nature only amounts to a moral union, not to a personal and substantive one.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> "Daß eben diese Menschwerdung nur der höchste Akt seiner Göttlichkeit selbst ist.... Wenn der Sohn in der Menschwerdung sich seiner Gottheit entäußerte, so wäre die Gottheit unsichtbar und verborgen.... Seine Gottheit wäre also eher unsichtbar als sichtbar geworden, wie dies auch die Annahme der gewöhnlichen Theologie ist." Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "Der Logos nicht seiner Gottheit, sondern der *μορφή θεου* sich entäußert hat." Ibid, 531.

<sup>27</sup> "Wenn der Logos mit dem unabhängige von ihm entstandenen Menschen sich nur verband, so ging in ihm selbst keine Veränderung vor; er selbst blieb in sich, was er war, und insofern war dies keine Selbstentäußerung im eigentlichen Sinne." Ibid, 531-532.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 534. Schelling always notes in this context that the sinless nature of Christ is to be explained as a result of his obedience (*Gehorsam*) to the Father. Sin is but estrangement from God and this is precisely what the Logos gives up through the incarnation. The obedience, i.e., the subjection, to the will of the Father, then, can only occur as a materialization. Again, recall that for Schelling subjectification / subjection, potentiation and materialization are nearly synonymous. The Logos becomes Son by giving up its own will and to give up its will is to materialize or potentiate its will in order that it might become the substrate upon which the Father can work, upon which the Father might enact his own will. The act, then, by which the Logos became the Son of God is one and the same as the act by which it became materialized as the Son of Man. This transparency to (the will of) the Father is the meaning of the fact that even as a human being the Christ retains divine omnipotence; the Christ retains the power / potency of the Father by retaining the will of the Father and sacrificing his own. The omnipotence of the Christ is acquired through his own impotence. "According to this theory, however, the human being still has a root, a *terminus ex quo* in omnipotence, not merely in the Logos alone [*Nach jener Theorie hat aber der Mensch noch eine Wurzel, einen terminus ex quo in der Allmacht, nicht bloß im Logos allein*]." Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 534. In other words, since the Logos has its root in the second potency, which always has power over the first, so does the incarnated Logos retain this power of the base. Both the human and the divine attributes are ultimately predicated of the second potency as the outer-divine divine. As mere potency, however, it is only a cosmic cause, something merely natural, and not yet operative according to will and not yet, therefore, as personal. For a detailed

Should two natures be assumed as the prior conditions of the incarnation, then one would be falsely asserting, however common-sense it may seem, that the incarnation's possibility precedes its actuality. As the prime exemplar of a *free* enactment, however, the incarnation generates something original, something unforeseeable in advance of its actuality. Schelling writes: "We only call original, namely, in human life itself, that from which the possibility is first given through the actuality."<sup>29</sup> In something original, act precedes potency or possibility. Think here of the nature of copulation as an event that brings about its two *relata* or *termini* as unforeseen and im-possible, i.e., not-yet-possible, novelties. Neither subject nor predicate are pre-contained as possibilities in the other; all assertions are synthetic. The incarnation can only be narrated as a fact precisely because it exceeds merely rational explication. In other words, the philosophical explanation of its possibility can only occur *after* the fact, *post factum* or *per posterius*. This is the only way to philosophize about something original, the free deed *par excellence*. Insofar as this can be said to occur in the incarnation of the Christ, Schelling draws the following conclusion: "One must assert, according to the force of the expression 'σαρξ ἐγένετο,' that this σαρξ would not only not have actuality, but not even possibility, without the will of the Logos to divest itself of the divine nature [that it has outside of God], that, therefore, human nature has no other *terminus ex quo* than the Logos."<sup>30</sup> The matter of the human flesh of the Christ has nothing more than the will of the Logos as its *terminus*, which has as its will the revelation of God *per contrarium*, i.e., by means of the incarnation. The incarnation is not of God *simpliciter*, but of the externally posited God, of the Logos.

### The Christ-Event as Theogenesis

The Christ-event, i.e., the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Logos, of God's Word and Son, is the revelation of God himself. This event would not be worthy of the name "revelation" if the will of God, i.e., God himself, did not reside therein. This event is not primarily moral in quality, but it is an ontological event. Danz acutely remarks, "In Christ not only does the true God appear by becoming in consciousness, but Christ is the true God and that means that in him God manifests himself as he is in himself."<sup>31</sup> As has been hinted at already,

---

account of Schelling's doctrine of the potencies see Tyler Tritten, "Schelling's Doctrine of the Potencies: The Unity of Thinking and Being," *Philosophy and Theology* 24, no. 2 (2012): 217-253. <sup>29</sup> "Ursprünglich nennen wir nämlich selbst im menschlichen Leben nur das, wovon die Möglichkeit erst durch die Wirklichkeit gegeben ist." Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 82.

<sup>30</sup> "Man muß nach der Strenge des Ausdruckes »σαρξ ἐγένετο« behaupten, daß dieses σαρξ nicht nur keine Wirklichkeit, sondern sogar keine Möglichkeit hätte, ohne den Willen des Logos, sich der göttlichen Natur zu entäußern, daß also die menschliche Natur keinen andern terminus ex quo, als den Logos, hat." Ibid, 534.

<sup>31</sup> "In Christus erscheint nicht nur der wahre Gott, indem er im Bewußtsein wird, sondern Christus ist der wahre Gott, und d.h. in ihm zeigt sich Gott, wie er an sich ist." Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 55.

without the incarnation, without the Christ, God would not come into his propriety or, more poignantly stated, would not be *as* God.

“The customary theory,” says Schelling, “does not distinguish between the pure or *simpliciter* being of God and being *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ* or being *as* God.”<sup>32</sup> That is exactly what Schelling’s account, however, is equipped to handle, precisely because of his account of the copula and the concomitant relation of subject and predicate. The idea of a subject *simpliciter* is nonsense. There is no such thing as a subject, e.g., God, apart from the predicate / expression / Word that would actualize this subject in a certain way or with a determinate *modus operandi*, apart from a determinate form of this subject; for, to be subject is to be the matter *of* a form or determination, to be the potency *of* an actuality. Potency is the remainder *of* actuality and, hence, nothing existing in advance of actuality. Note again Schelling’s notion of originality. This is the meaning of the idea that act precedes potency. It is not the Medieval notion of a *first actualitas*—for older still is always the act of copulation—but it is the insight that a thing only is the thing that it is, i.e., that a subject only is the subject that it is, on account of its predicate / form. The consequent is the condition of the identity of the antecedent or, better, an antecedent only is an antecedent if it has a consequent, which means that it is nonsense to posit an antecedent, i.e., a subject, apart from its determination. Even God, apart from his form or determination, is but *ἄπειρον*, i.e., nothing or the horrific abyss of Hell. God only attains his propriety, i.e., is only first truly God, through his determination, i.e., through his expression, his Logos. This Logos is not just *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ*, but it *is* the *μορφῇ θεοῦ* as such, i.e., the actuality of God. Given Schelling’s account of copulation and the co-eternality of both the subject and the predicate, the subject and its determination, then apart from God’s Word / expression / eternally generated consequent God is nought. Schelling concurs, writing that “for theology the *subjectum incarnationis* is the pure God, for us, however, *ὁ λογος*.”<sup>33</sup> The incarnation is not a union of the divine with the human, as traditional theology conceives of the matter, but that which is *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ* and so that which is the actuality of God, though still not God *simpliciter*, becomes human.

Whatever is not necessary cannot be known in advance of its facticity, but it is a contingency to be narrated, never derived. Things could have happened otherwise. The Logos, for example, did not have to take on human flesh. God did not have to be revealed. Danz appropriately identifies this perhaps disconcerting thought, writing: “If the reconciliation is an event that lays claim to facticity and contingency, then the Trinity constitutes itself in its complete form just through the contingency of this happening.”<sup>34</sup> This event, this happening, is theo-genetic.

---

<sup>32</sup> “Die gewöhnlichen Theorie unterscheidet nicht zwischen dem reinen oder simpliciter Gott Sein und dem *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ* Sein oder dem *Wie* Gott Sein.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 539.

<sup>33</sup> “Das *subjectum incarnationis* ist der Theologie der reine Gott, uns aber der *ὁ λογος*.” Ibid, 539.

<sup>34</sup> “Denn ist die Versöhnung ein Ereignis, welches Faktizität und Kontingenz beansprucht, so konstituiert sich die Trinität in ihrer Vollgestalt gerade durch die Kontingenz dieses Geschehens.” Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 66-67.

Apart from this revelatory event God is not God, minimally not the Trinitarian God and not a *personal* God that has acted freely and with volition rather than from the necessity of his nature; for, God only (eternally) generates his nature by means of free enactment, the eternal will to incarnation. Danz is not afraid to push this point to its extreme, writing “that the incarnation [*Menschwerdung*] of Christ is his divinization [*Gottwerdung*]. Insofar as this concept thematizes the enactment of difference from the Father and the Son.”<sup>35</sup> Danz recognizes both the radicalism of the notion that Christ is only God because he is also human, such that far from these two natures standing in contradiction they are rather mutual conditions, and the radicalism of the notion that apart from the adoption or reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] of the Logos to God the Logos is not Son and God not Father. In short, apart from this event there is no Trinity and God can never come into his propriety, his proper form, i.e., his actuality. The Christ-event is the cornerstone to the actualization of God himself in his personhood and propriety.

While the reading sketched here certainly pushes Schelling to an extreme, it does not push Schelling any farther than he himself was willing to venture. Schelling is quite explicit that the copula only identifies by means of differentiation and that the Son and Father can only be reconciled by being differentiated, because this is the very condition of their being *as* Father / potency and *as* Son / actuality. The Son, in turn, lays down his actuality or potentiates / subjects himself in order to lay the ground for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Christ, Logos materialized, is the cornerstone on which the very being and life of God, the procession of Persons, is dependent.<sup>36</sup> The copulating enactment of the Logos, namely, the incarnation, is an act of freedom and an event of appropriation. Only through this act are subject and predicate, God *simpliciter* and his form of being, Father and Son, appropriated one to another. The event is an event of appropriation because each of these now belongs to the other only insofar as each has been de-cided, i.e., disjuncted one from the other. Identification is differentiation. God always acts *per contrarium*.

Danz explains: “The realization of the difference of the Father and Son, which comes into view with the incarnation, is thus at the same time the occurrence of identity between Father and Son, in that, in its enactment, this difference is lifted up into the identity of the Spirit.”<sup>37</sup> The incarnation, as the event of materialization, is nothing other than the laying of a ground or substrate for the coming Spirit. It is nothing other than the substance of the Spirit and the substance of God *in actu*. As Schelling says: “Everything substantial of the subject is in the incarnated, in that which has become human [*im*”

---

<sup>35</sup> “Daß die Menschwerdung Christi seine Gottwerdung ist. Insofern thematisiert dieses Konzept den Vollzug der Differenz von Vater und Sohn.” A literal rendering of the German is more descriptive, which would read “that the becoming human of Christ is his becoming God.” Ibid, 78-

<sup>36</sup> At this point, I would dare one, particularly any readers worried that I am sketching a heretical Christology, to be more Christocentric than this!

<sup>37</sup> “Die Realisierung der Differenz von Vater und Sohn, die mit der Menschwerdung in den Blick kommt, ist so zugleich das Geschehen der Identität von Vater und Sohn, indem sich diese Differenz in ihrem Vollzug in die Einheit des Geistes aufhebt.” Ibid, 84.

*Menschgewordenen*], but the divine is not the substantial, rather the über-substantial of the subject.”<sup>38</sup> God proper is not non-substantial, but the über-substantiality of the human substance or substrate. God only proves to be more than substance or über-substantial by acquiring a substance for himself, over which he can reign as Lord (*Herrschaft=Göttlichkeit*). God, apart from form and substance, is purely ethereal or not really God at all. Both the human and the divine natures are generated by the copulating activity that the Logos is, but human nature operates as the substantiality of the divine and the divine nature as its principle of actualization and determination, as the über-substantial, i.e., the sovereign and *personal*. Just as the body, the animality of a person, is the substance over which one must prove oneself as sovereign lord and master in order to be called personal rather than beastly and slavish, all the more so with God.

This account of the incarnation as bringing about a change in God himself does not mean that God is changed in his antecedent being as God *simpliciter*, but it does mean that this antecedent being acquires a consequent, which is but the revelation, visibility and actualization of the prior; for, again, that without consequent simply is nought. Said differently, there is no change in God himself, but there is a change in the “shape of God” and, of course, apart from his shape God is as if nothing or, more exactly, apart from this God only is *as* nothing, *as* without actuality and efficacy, without consequence. Nevertheless, these changes occur in God’s state [*Zustand*] or essence (*modus essendi*) and not in his brute existence [*Stand*], according to which God is *actus purus* without substance or pure *Daß* / quoddity without *Was* / quiddity. This is just as copulation, thought in advance of its *relata* or *termini*, is pure act without potency, or *prior* to potency, but also therefore really nothing at all. Something can only be said to be if it has a consequent, lest it be impotent (without potency), hence why potency is always the potency of an actuality and actuality is not the actualization of a prior potency. There is no movement *a potentia ad actum*. This, again, is the meaning of Schelling’s oft-repeated mantra that act precedes potency and that God, in his abysmal being at least, is therefore *actus purus* without *potentia*. The substantiality of God could only have been posited by God’s copulating enactment or by God as pure act of copulation; yet, God cannot be über-substantial, i.e., sovereign or Godly, without first having provided a ground or substance for himself, over which he then resides.

The act by which God proves himself as personal or über-substantial, however, is not complete in the incarnation or, more exactly—since God only acts once—the incarnating enactment culminates in the crucifixion and resurrection. Schelling writes: “In this sacrifice the divine breaks through the natural and the über-substantial the substantial.”<sup>39</sup> God is properly iconoclastic,

---

<sup>38</sup> “Alles Substantielle des Subjekts ist im Menschgewordenen; aber das Göttliche ist nicht das Substantielle, sondern das Übersubstantielle des Subjekts.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 542.

<sup>39</sup> “In diesem Opfer durchbricht das Göttliche das Natürliche, das Übersubstantielle das Substantielle.” Ibid, 547.

only coming into his propriety by breaking his own substance, which proves unable to contain him. Now, remarks Schelling, “Christ is conceived in his continual subjection under the Father, which is only fulfilled and confirmed through the death [on the cross].”<sup>40</sup> What is so scandalous here is that without the crucifixion (and resurrection, which proves that the divine will is love and triumphs over death) Christ is not Christ. Christ is not the Christ simply by means of his materialization, but the act of incarnation, the subjection of the Logos, is only complete with Christ’s subjection to the cross. What revelation really reveals is the *will* of the divine, which is revealed in the Logos forfeiting its own will in order only to know only the will of the Father. Had Christ not been obedient (*Gehorsam*) unto death, he would have retained a particular will of his own and would not have been utterly abandoned / forsaken to the will of the Father. He would not have been a perfect transparency for the will of God, but retained an individual will that would have concealed the will of God, i.e., God himself, who is nothing but the *actus* of his will / deed / decision / enactment. To have foregone the crucifixion would have been to have forestalled God and the procession of Persons in the Trinity, a will to preclude the actualization of God, at least in his propriety or Personhood. Schelling writes: “This death was not, for instance, an accidental event”—though it is a contingent event that could have easily not have taken place!—“it was an event decided for in advance,”<sup>41</sup> i.e., from all eternity. This is an event that can only be historically narrated because it is unknowable apart from its actual revelation just as the will of a person is unknowable apart from its revelation in the history of the person, i.e., her words and deeds. In the revelation, the Absolute proves itself as personal and godly rather than as impersonal and, hence, atheistic. The revelation is only complete with the death and resurrection of Christ, which reveals that the divine will has overcome *Umwille*, i.e., God’s wrath. This is the event that mediates his will and so mediates nothing other than himself, the accomplishment of himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This reveals too that love is the ground of being, that human individuals are accepted despite their outer-divine standing. Humanity is accepted as it is, i.e., in its estranged state.

The foregoing section has hopefully shown that the Christ-event as the revelation of God concerns the very *being* of God and not simply the mere *representation* of God. Revelation is not the representation of the true God, but it is the ontological event by which God comes into his truth as God.

### **The Exclusivity of the Christ-God**

The universality of the Christ-event lies beyond dispute for Schelling; however, in this final section it will be asked whether this might also constitute an exclusivism. If it is true that had the Logos not become incarnate as the Christ

---

<sup>40</sup> “Inwiefern Christus in seiner fortwährenden Unterwerfung unter den Vater begriffen ist, welche durch den Tod nur vollendet und bestätigt wird.” Ibid, 563.

<sup>41</sup> “Dieser Tod war nicht etwa ein zufälliges Ereignis—er war ein zuvor beschlossenes Ereignis.” Ibid, 582.

that God would not be God, at least not in propriety, then can it also be said that the Christ-event is the exclusive condition of the proper or Personal being of God as a triune Life of Persons? Danz seems to indicate as much in asserting that “a diminution of the human-being of Christ would also have as a consequence a diminution of the God-being of Christ.”<sup>42</sup> Might one then say that had the Logos not become human, then God would not have been God? Is not the Logos, namely, its expression or consequent, the posterior condition of the identity of the antecedent? Is it not the case that the divine is *only*, i.e., exclusively, visible in the person of the Christ, and not just that it would not be visible apart from the Christ but that it would not exist in its propriety at all? Again, that which does not admit of a consequent simply is nought. As Schelling quite radically states:

For, the divine as such has not existed prior to the humanity, but only *das Mittlere* has. The condition of the appearance of the divine is just the being of that which has become human; the divine is not there before the incarnation, but Christ is first God and Man at the same time in the incarnation....Were he not actually human, so he could also not appear as God.<sup>43</sup>

As Hans Michael Baumgartner neatly summarizes, “The humanity of Jesus Christ is for this reason not that which conceals his divinity, but that which reveals divinity above all else.”<sup>44</sup>

The Logos copulates *as* God and *as* Man, i.e., *as* the God-Man. The subject of this enactment is neither God nor Man nor some pre-given God-Man, but it is the hyphen betwixt the two, i.e., the disjunction of the two natures. This is the copulating event of the Logos itself. God is not the subject of the incarnation because the actualization of God is the consequence of this event. It is thus truer to say that if there had been no incarnation, then there would not be God than it is to say that the incarnation has taken place only because God already existed as the datum of incarnation. Moreover, God is only actualized in conjunction with and insofar as the Logos materializes itself, i.e., becomes flesh. Schelling contends: “Only through the actual humanity does it put itself in a position to receive the divine impartations ... humanity is the presupposition of

---

<sup>42</sup> “Eine Abschwächung des Menschseins Christi hätte auch eine Abschwächung des Gottseins Christi zur Folge.” Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> “Denn nicht vor der Menschheit hat das Göttliche als solches, sondern nur das Mittlere existiert. Die Bedingung der Erscheinung des Göttlichen ist eben das Menschgewordene Sein; das Göttliche ist nicht vor der Menschwerdung da, sondern Christus ist erst in der Menschwerdung Gott und Mensch zugleich....War er nicht wirklicher Mensch, so könnte er auch nicht als Gott erscheinen.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 574.

<sup>44</sup> “Die Menschheit Jesu Christi ist darum nicht das Verbergende seiner Göttlichkeit, sondern das die Göttlichkeit allererst Offenbarende.” H.M. Baumgartner, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling*, (München: C. H.Beck, 1996), 188.

the appearance of the divine.”<sup>45</sup> Only through the materialization of the Logos does the human nature become receptive to the divine attributes; only through its materialization does it become the receptacle. Far from standing in contradiction, the human is the receptacle of the divine and, since something only is what it is on the basis of the predicates it receives, so is the human nature the condition of the possibility of the actualization of the divine nature. The Person of the Christ is the cornerstone of the actualization of the true and personal God.

Let Schelling, who normally states the position more radically and with more clarity than any of his commentators, reiterate his point one last time: “If the being which is human would not be, then so too would the being of the divine not be. Only because he is wholly and truly human is he divine.”<sup>46</sup> It thus seems quite plausible that Schelling would have considered the Christ-event not only to have universal significance, but also a legitimate appeal to exclusivity; for, it is the exclusive means by which God comes to be as true and personal, i.e., as God. To forego the Christ-event would be to forego God in his propriety—atheism. Danz seems to concur with this reading in suggesting that the religion which properly understands this historical facticity, philosophical religion, “realizes a fundamental Christological insight, namely, the insight that the Christ, as manifestation of freedom, transcends all finite determinations as provisional and finite.”<sup>47</sup> The Christ is apparently the final and thus definitive manifestation of God, thereby transcending, which presumably also entails surpassing, all other theophanies. Yet, Christ, properly understood, would also surpass all particular forms of conceiving of the Christ-event itself, which would remain limited and provisional. In other words, one might say that the Christ-event even surpasses all forms of Christendom. One might then be in a position to speak of the exclusive universality of the Christ-event and simultaneously the inability of the Christian Church ever to claim this universality and exclusivity for itself.

Enter the Protestant Principle of Paul Tillich, who claimed that Schelling was formative of his entire philosophical development.<sup>48</sup> The Protestant Principle, as outlined in Tillich’s *Dynamics of Faith*,<sup>49</sup> states that every bearer of the divine must be in constant protest against itself as the divine itself. The true bearer or true revelation of divinity is one that in the same act by which it reveals the divine conceals itself as the mere bearer of the divine. What is required is a

---

<sup>45</sup> “Nur durch die wirkliche Menschheit setzt es sich erst in den Stand, die Mitteilungen des Göttlichen zu empfangen ... die Menschheit ist die Voraussetzung der Erscheinung des Göttlichen.” Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 575.

<sup>46</sup> “Wäre das menschliche Sein nicht, so wäre auch das göttliche Sein nicht. Nur weil er ganz und wahrhaft Mensch ist, ist er göttlich.” Ibid, 576.

<sup>47</sup> “Realisiert die philosophische Religion eine fundamentale christologische Einsicht, nämlich die, daß der Christus als Manifestation der Freiheit alle endlichen Bestimmungen als vorläufige und endliche transzendiert.” Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, 16.

<sup>48</sup> “What I learned from Schelling became determinative of my own philosophical and theological development.” Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968),

<sup>49</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957).

self-effacing event incapable of being viewed for itself, but only consisting as a transparency, i.e., only visible as that which immediately effaces its own visibility. Such a criterion is arguably encountered in the Christ-event insofar as the human nature is the substance of the divine nature only by receding into potency, only by subjecting itself to the divine personality, only by offering itself merely as the edifice iconoclastically to be broken in order that the divine might prove itself as more than the substance which it shatters. God only reveals himself by proving always to outstrip any of his forms or apparitions, any dogmas and catechisms. The human substrate must operate as nothing more than a transparent artifice to be looked *through* and not *at*. Jesus is nothing to be venerated on his own and as God, but one ought to know, and to know exclusively *through* the Christ, that only God is good.<sup>50</sup> Christ is only Christ if obedient, i.e., self-effacing, even unto the point of crucifying the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross in order that the divine personality thereby completely reigns sovereign over the human substance now transfigured / glorified into a complete and utter transparency.

It is because the Christ-event transcends all particular conceptions, necessarily reducing them all to something preliminary and provisional, that Joseph Lawrence would disagree with the assertion that Schelling views the Christ-event as something exclusive, however much he might otherwise agree with its universality and definitive character. Lawrence writes, in general agreement with the thesis here, that the Church ...

... is just as little something exclusive as the Person of Christ himself.... The truly universal Church is not to be based on the universalization of a particular form, but on its liberation from every form, on a liberation, which at the same time means openness for every form. In order to reach toward the higher life even the Christian Church, i.e., in its particularity and exclusivity, must first die.<sup>51</sup>

Lawrence, shall it be said, cannot help but to be wrong for being right. It is certainly and admittedly true that any and every Christian denomination is finite, provisional and preliminary. None have a right to claim universality. Where Lawrence errs, however, perhaps despite his own intentions, is in claiming that the person of Christ is also just as provisional. Certainly, given that the enactment of the Logos is not completed in an instant, but requires the whole life and death history of Jesus to be completed, there is a temporal aspect to the Christ-event.

---

<sup>50</sup> Note Mark 10:17-18, in which Jesus asks a man why he calls him good and whether it is not rather the case that God alone is good.

<sup>51</sup> "... ist so wenig etwas Ausschließliches wie die Person Christi selber... Die wahrhaft allgemeine Kirche wird nicht auf der Verallgemeinerung einer besonderen Gestalt beruhen, sondern auf der Befreiung von jeder Gestalt, einer Befreiung, die zugleich die Offenheit für jede Gestalt bedeutet. Um zum höheren Leben zu gelangen, muß auch die christliche Kirche, d. h. in ihrer Besonderheit und Ausschließlichkeit, zuerst sterben." J.P. Lawrence, *Schellings Philosophie des ewigen Anfangs: Die Natur als Quelle der Geschichte* (Worcester: Könighausen & Neumann, 1989), 196.

This, however, does not make its significance merely provisional and temporary. Certainly, given that the meaning of revelation is only to be understood on the basis of the prior history of mythology and given that it looks forward to a “second coming,” it can be said that there is even a provisional aspect to the revelation that is the Christ-event. Yet, the claim is that the past history of mythology is only to be understood in the light of the Christ-event and that the future or second coming is to be understood as the subjection of all things to Christ as its head. The meaning of the past and future are hinged on this cornerstone. In this respect the Christ-event is not to be surpassed, although, in another sense, it always already calls for its own surpassing. Revelation is not a content, but an enactment, which as an act with temporal and historical consequences, i.e., as an act which is only fulfilled temporally, already looks beyond itself. Yet, all of this can be said only if this event is understood as the fulcrum of history, even God’s own history, i.e., the fulcrum even of the theogenetic procession of the three Persons in God himself.

If God only is *as* God in the Christ—Christ incarnate, Christ crucified and Christ risen—then one here finds an argument for the exclusivity of the Christ-event. *If* God exists, then he is the God of Christ and not a pagan, Jewish, Christian or Muslim God.