

The Seventh Book

# Schelling's Philosophy of Revelation

---

Translated and Reduced

Being Volume VI, Pages 391-726  
of the *Münchener Jubiläumsdruck* of *Schellings Werke*  
Edited by Manfred Schröter (1959)

In the Positive Philosophy Schelling tells us "how God was moved to create the world, why he created it, how humankind then upset the divine plan of creation, and how it is to be restored".

- Bracken (1977:329)

The content of revelation is nothing but a higher history which goes back to the beginning of things and on to the end. The Philosophy of Revelation will simply explain this higher history and trace it back to the principles which are known and given to it from elsewhere".

- Schelling (VI:422)

# Introduction

---

In order to come to grips with Positive Philosophy in the narrowest sense - in the sense of Philosophy of Christianity or Philosophy of Revelation - I will now present in translation and reduced the fourteen lectures which make up Book 3 (Part II) of the Philosophy of Revelation (VI:395-726).<sup>1</sup>

The crowning idea in these lectures is that in Revelation we are dealing with - and may be grasped by - the gracious and astonishing act of God, an act that goes quite "beyond reason" in the same way that magnanimity and self-sacrifice are "beyond reason." But acts such as these are not therefore unintelligible! Though reason alone can give us no certainty that God is Redeemer, or even that he is Creator, still, once Creation and Redemption are *facts* - and they *are* facts for Schelling - reason *is* able to make these divine activities intelligible. This "faith become intelligible" is free Philosophical Religion, and is made possible ("mediated") by Christianity.

Now it is precisely this "making intelligible" of the divine decision and deed which is the task of the Philosophy of Revelation. And the latter will accomplish its purpose, according to Schelling, only in terms of a "higher history", the inner history of the triune God, which breaks through into ordinary or external history with illuminating and saving power.

**Chapter One** investigates the nature and content of Revelation, and the presuppositions and purpose of a Philosophy of Revelation. Revelation differs from Mythology as a freely willed process differs from a necessary one. Its content cannot be known *a priori* but only *a posteriori*. Revelation "reveals" the divine Will or purpose, and can do so only in terms of an actual deed (the appearance of Jesus as the Christ). Hence Revelation is concerned not with nature but with grace, since God acts in a way that is "beyond reason" when he deals graciously with man in man's self-willed estrangement. Faith, objectively considered, is that goal, that state of certainty, at which all knowledge aims (although, in another sense, it is the very precondition of knowledge). Faith, subjectively, is the courage to believe, and may be experienced as unmerited grace.

The content of Christianity is Christ - and Christ is the content and end of Revelation. But for Schelling, and for the New Testament, the "history" of Christ is not limited to the years of his manhood in Palestine. These were but a "transition" or "moment" in his "higher history". This latter goes back to the beginning and on to the end of time. It is the history of a special divine potency-personality, independent of God, and yet ultimately an expression of and moment in the divine life itself. The fundamental motif of Christianity is that this preexistent divine Son, who possessed his own sovereignty independently of the Father (though ultimately derived from him), refused to exercise his Lordship and chose, instead, the form of a servant and the death of the cross. As a result, the Father again made him Lord of Being, and at the end of time the Son will deliver all things to the Father. Then the divine life will be restored, consummated, and God will be "all in all".

**Chapter Two** presents Schelling's account of the preincarnate activity of the Christ (or Logos), including his activity in Judaism and in the other non-Christian (or, rather, pre-Christian) religions (referred to by Schelling as "Paganism"). **Chapter Three** explains how the Christ, through his incarnation, voluntary self-sacrifice, death and resurrection, changed the divine Unwill or Wrath into gracious goodwill once again, and made it possible for men to become free children of God.

The Wrath or Unwill of God is the "enemy" Christ had to overcome. The Bible calls this "enemy" Satan or the Devil, and **Chapter Four** is Schelling's unusual and provocative discussion of Satanology and Angelology. With respect to the human situation,

Satan is the Primal anti-divine power, the Urpotency of Evil, the basic structure of self-will and destructiveness ever present in human existence. "Evil spirits" are his "children" and represent the innumerable possibilities of evil - as good angels represent the possibilities of good - under which all human actions stand. But ultimately, and theologically, Satan and Christ - the Devil and the Logos, Wrath and Love, Darkness and Light - are all principles in the divine economy, moments in the "higher history" of God's life.

To find the remedy for alienation in reconciliation, to experience a triumph over self-will through union with the Father, to become "free children of God", is the goal of human development, individually and collectively. In **Chapter Five**, Schelling puts forth his vision of that future community, that free association of all people, united in a kind of religionless religion or "post-Christian Christianity".

Christianity will then no longer be the old, narrow, stunted, puny Christianity of the prevailing dogmatic schools, and still less a Christianity thinly confined to miserable formulas which shun the light, nor will it be whittled down to an exclusively personal kind of Christianity. Instead, it will be a truly public religion - not as a State church or as a High Church, but as the religion of all mankind in which mankind will, at the same time, find the supreme knowledge (VI:720).

