COSMIC PIETY

MODERN MAN AND THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

EDITED BY
CHRISTOPHER DERRICK

A WISDOM AND DISCOVERY BOOK

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Modern Man and the Meaning of the Universe

Edited by CHRISTOPHER DERRICK

MAN'S CONCEPT OF THE WORLD AROUND HIM from primitive and biblical times to the present is here discussed by six distinguished religious thinkers—Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox, and Protestant. They argue that men of the twentieth century, despite their advances in space and technology, have need to recover some sense of that piety and respect toward their created environment which characterized earlier ages.

The contributors to this volume challenge the view that God's lordship over the world is threatened by every new discovery of a natural law of organic growth, by every new invention, and by every new medicine that tames disease and solves another of life's mysteries. Achieving harmony in the scientific and religious approaches to the universe is presented as a task to which the theological and the scientific mind both have a contribution to make; only together do revelation and science give a concept of the universe which is both correct in detail and satisfying to the human spirit.

A chapter is devoted to the work of Mircea Eliade, who has turned the history of religions into a source of creativity and rebirth for modern man. Another chapter is a study of the thought of the scientist and philosopher Teilhard de Chardin, of his unparalled capacity to see "the divine in the heart of matter," and of his faith that the further man discovers the world the more magnificently will expand the frontier at which he meets God.

Jacket design by Rus Anderson

+

To Mutti

who first taught me to see

the world

transparent for God.

With all my love,

& David.

May 12, 1965.

Cosmic Piety

Modern Man and the Meaning of the Universe

A WISDOM AND DISCOVERY BOOK

Under the theme "Wisdom and Discovery for a Dynamic World," Georgetown University marked the 175th anniversary of its founding in 1789 with a varied program of lectures, conferences, and symposia on the key ideas and issues of our time. From the addresses and deliberations of these occasions, attended by noted scholars and experts, have come the volumes being published as WISDOM AND DISCOVERY BOOKS.

In the present volume are the addresses given at the 27th Annual Convention of the Catholic Art Association, held in the Reiss Science Center, Georgetown University, August 12–15, 1964, in conjunction with the University's anniversary observance.

RILEY HUGHES
General Editor

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The Biblical View of the Cosmos

Myth, Symbol, and Ritual

BROTHER DAVID, O.S.B.

LET US BEGIN BY SQUARELY FACING A problem. Can we still accept the image of the cosmos which the Bible takes for granted? Can we accept the following description of the world?

> The earth is a disk, covered by the inverted bowl of the sky. The disk floats upon the limitless waters of "the lower abyss," which erupt at intervals into springs and fountains, and which are the source of the sea which surrounds the earth. In the sky are the heavenly bodies, revolving in their orbits, and above the sky are the storehouses of rain, snow, wind. Light and darkness are imagined as distinct entities, each with its proper place of repose, from which they go out to cover the earth in their regular turn. Above the sky is the heaven, the seat of divinity.[1]

This is the world image of ancient man, the world image also of the Bible. Let us admit that we have outgrown this image. But let us distinguish between world image and world view.

The image which a given view, a given outlook, will produce must change as man's knowledge increases and new data are added; but his view, his approach, may basically remain the same. Think of a traveler exploring a foreign land. His view will be determined by the basic characteristics of the country and by his own character, and both these factors will be fairly stable. Yet, while his view remains the same, the image he has of this new land will change with every new day, new impressions being added with every turn of the road.

Thus man's *image* of the cosmos will change with every new discovery, but his *view* of the cosmos will be more stable. It will be determined by the basic characteristics of the universe and by his own character, by what makes man *man*. But it will also make a difference whether our traveler is a child, an adolescent, or a mature person. And that is why we shall have to examine the phases of mankind's history and their typical world views, so as to understand the biblical world view in its context. When we have done so we may understand what acceptance or rejection of the biblical view (not image) of the cosmos means for us here and now, at a moment when mankind seems to be entering into a new phase of history.

Beginnings: The World View of Mankind's Childhood

We must begin by studying the world view of prebiblical man, going as far back as we can in history and prehistory. Of course we find a great variety of cultural patterns in the ancient world, each culture seeing the cosmos in a somewhat different shade. And yet these are different shades of the same light. The light in which ancient man sees the world is the light of his religious experience. No matter how far back we go in history, we find that man's view of the world depends on his view of God.

It is not to be expected that we shall ever reach absolute

certainty regarding man's view of God in earliest times. We can, however, study the religious beliefs of peoples with very primitive cultures surviving to our own times, ascertain the most ancient elements of their traditions, and compare them with the findings of archaeology. The picture of man's earliest religion which this method reveals stands in sharp contrast to the preconceived notions anthropologists had in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They simply took it for granted that man's religion and, in general, his view of the world around him developed step by step in close parallel to his biological evolution; that the further we go back in time, the more "savage" we expect man to be; and that the closer we come to our own time, the more "refined" become his religious views, culminating in the appearance of monotheism. Within our century, however, a wealth of objective material has been accumulated which proves beyond doubt that the most ancient cultural stratum to which we can penetrate by anthropological methods is simple but by no means "savage."

The most remarkable feature of man's earliest religion ascertained by this method is the belief in a Supreme Being who is beyond the world, in no way part of the cosmos, and often said to be its maker and sustainer. Sometimes the way in which this Supreme Being made the world is described in elaborate myths; sometimes only the fact of creation is stated, as when one primitive tribe says: "He brought all things into being by inexplicable ways." [2] Frequently the Supreme Being is described as making the world by thinking it, by a word of command, by singing, or by merely wishing it to be. The Wijot Indians in northern California, for example, say: "The Old Man Above did not use earth and sticks to make men. He simply thought, and there they were." [3]

But even where the Supreme Being is described as using what we might call pre-existent matter (for example, mud from the primordial sea) in order to fashion all things, he remains the

altogether Other, transcending the universe by being without beginning or end, immortal and unchanging, "the One Who Stands (forever)" (Cree Indians).[4]

He is not always said to know all things, but his power is supreme. And this is the power of a personal will; the Supreme Being is not power, he has power. He is a person, conceived in vaguely anthropomorphic (or sometimes zoomorphic) terms, but hardly ever depicted, for, as they say, "no one has ever seen Him." [5] And yet the Kono, an African tribe of the Sierra Leone, call him *Yataa,* "the One You Meet Everywhere." [6] You meet him in everything around you, because he is "the Beginner," [7] "God the Maker," [8] "the One Who Fills Everything." [9] And you meet him in your innermost heart, because he is "the All-Seeing." [10] The world is "open" toward him in this double way: it comes from him, and it faces him, "the Seeing One," [11] eye-to-eye through man. For man is responsible to the "Owner of Breath" [12] for all his actions. "The Great Chief" [13] is the embodiment of goodness, but he is also feared for his severity.

All these names given to the Supreme Being are of great interest, for they tell us much about the theology of "primitive" man—primitive in the sense of being "uncorrupted by the mendacity of civilization." [14] The most widely used name for the Supreme Being is "Father." We find it all over the world in the most primitive cultural stratum, and it expresses most concisely man's reverence, confidence, and responsibility toward the Author of the universe.

Still more telling than these names are the creation myths of "primitive" peoples. Many of them are great masterpieces of mankind's poetry, philosophy, and theology all in one. Here is one example, the opening words of the creation story as the Maori of New Zealand tell it:

> In the beginning all was darkness with water everywhere. There was no light and Io dwelt alone in immensity. And out

of utter darkness the voice of Io said, "Darkness, be light." And light appeared. Then he said, "Light, be dark." And again it was dark. Thus was the alternation of day and night ordained.[15]

Stories like the following often remind us of the Genesis account, even when their independence of the Bible is beyond dispute.

The Tierra del Fuego Indians have been called the most primitive, the least advanced of all the people in the world, and "without religion." Yet long before there were any missionaries among them, or any outside contact or influence, these people worshipped an invisible supreme god, whom they thought of as living in the sky. The supreme god of the Ona was Témaukl', whom they called That One There Above, or The One in the Sky. The Yahgan say My Father, or The Old One, The Good One, or The Strong One, or (when they are stricken with grief for a death) The Murderer in the Sky. Both the Ona and the Alacaluf regard their supreme gods as creators of the universe. Témaukl' always existed, the Ona say. He created the sky and the earth, and there was no time when Témaukl' was not. He had the giving of life and the giving of death, and sometimes punished the people by sending epidemics.[16]

The religious beliefs of these Fireland Indians did not find poetic expression in any myth. But among other peoples we sometimes encounter myths of the highest refinement; for example, the following one of the South American Uitoto of Colombia:

In the beginning there was nothing but mere appearance, nothing really existed. It was a phantasm, an illusion that our father touched; something mysterious it was that he grasped. Nothing existed. Through the agency of a dream our father, He-who-is-appearance-only, Nainema, pressed the phantasm to his breast and then was sunk in thought.

> Not even a tree existed that might have supported this phantasm and only through his breath did Nainema hold this illusion attached to the thread of a dream. He tried to discover what was at the bottom of it, but he found nothing. "I have attached that which was non-existent," he said. There was nothing. Then our father tried again and investigated the bottom of this something and his fingers sought the empty phantasm. He tied the emptiness to the dream-thread and pressed the magical glue-substance upon it. Thus by means of his dream did he hold it like the fluff of raw cotton.
>
> He seized the bottom of the phantasm and stamped upon it repeatedly, allowing himself finally to rest upon the earth of which he had dreamt.[17]

One can feel the strain of the poet-philosopher who labored under the painful search for the ultimate ground of all being until he gave birth to this myth. But even where the imagery is coarser, the essential features remain: a supremely powerful and good Being beyond space and time freely decides to make the universe and to make man the lord of the world, a lord responsible to his Maker. It is through man's relation to God that the cosmos remains "open."

Man's relation to God often finds expression in the concept that God made man in his own likeness, another feature we know from the Bible. In the myths of prebiblical man this idea is often expressed in poetic language of surpassing beauty, for example, in this Winnebago story of creation:

> Earthmaker made man out of a little piece of earth and shaped it like himself. Then he spoke to the man, but the man did not answer. He did not hear. So Earthmaker put his finger into his own right ear, and then into the ear of the man. Then he spoke to the man again. The man could hear, but he did not answer. He could not see. So Earthmaker touched his own eyes, then the eyes of the man, and the man could see.
>
> Earthmaker spoke to him again, but still the man did not

speak. So he put his fingers on his own lips and then touched the lips of the man. The man could speak, but he did not know what to say. Earthmaker then perceived that the man had neither mind nor heart. So he breathed his own breath into the mouth of the man, and the man breathed and his heart was full. Earthmaker spoke to the man again and the man answered his creator; very nicely and quietly he answered.

Earthmaker then sent the man into the world. When he came to the very center, there he split and was dispersed. And thus all the different peoples and all the languages came into existence.[18]

Or more colorful still, this part from a long creation myth of the Jicailla Apache Indians of New Mexico:

Dog was going around with Creator. Everywhere he went, Dog went, and watched all that he did. When Creator finished one job and moved on to another, the dog went too.

"Are you going to stay around here all the time?" said the dog. "Or will you have to go away?"

"Well, perhaps someday I shall have to live far away," said Creator.

"Then, Grandfather, will you make me a companion?" So Creator lay down on the ground.

"Draw a line around me with your paw," he said.

So Dog scratched an outline in the earth all around the great Creator. Creator got up and looked at it.

"Go a little way off and don't look," he said. The dog went off a little way. In a few minutes he looked.

"Oh, someone is lying where you were lying, Grandfather."

"Go along and don't look," said Creator.

The dog went a little farther. In a few minutes he looked.

"Someone is sitting there, Grandfather," he said.

"Turn around and walk farther off," said Creator.

The dog obeyed.

At last Creator called the dog. "Now you can look," he said.

"Oh, Grandfather, he moves," cried the dog in delight.

So they stood by the man and looked him over. "Pretty good," said Creator.

"He's wonderful," said the dog.

Creator went behind the man and lifted him to his feet. "Put out your foot," he said. "Walk. Do this." So the man walked.

"Now run," Creator said.

He took hold of the man and showed him how to run. The man ran.

"Talk," said Creator. But the man said nothing.

Four times Creator told the man to talk. "Say words," he said. Finally the man said words. He spoke.

"Now shout," said Creator. He gave a big yell himself and showed the man how.

The man shouted.

"What else?" he said.

Creator thought a minute.

"Laugh," he said. "Laugh, laugh, laugh, laugh."

Then the man laughed.

The dog was very happy when the man laughed. He jumped up on him and ran off a little, and ran back and jumped up on him. He kept jumping up on him the way dogs do today when they are full of love and delight.

The man laughed and laughed.

"Now you are fit to live," said Creator.

So the man went off with his dog.[19]

There is great subtlety behind this lively coloring, and if we listen carefully we perceive precisely a deep sorrow in this myth about the creation of laughter. Surely there is a bond between laughter and sorrow. Man alone can laugh because man alone is capable of this sorrow, this grief too deep for words. People tell one another about their little pains. About their great sorrows they are silent. All the myth tells us is that perhaps one day the Creator will have to "live far away," and that "man went off with his dog."

Somehow this one phrase seems to sum up thousands and

hundreds of thousands of years of man's history before history: "man went off with his dog." Man went off on his own; he got preoccupied with the gifts and forgot the Giver. The anthropological data agree with this poetic word: the Supreme Being is pushed into the background as man becomes more and more preoccupied with "deities associated with his daily needs, that is, with the minor gods. The Supreme Being thus develops into what has been admirably described as an otiose deity, one resting on his laurels after the creation of the world and leaving it entirely to its own devices." [20]

"When his work was done, he disappeared," say the Pomo Indians of California. "Hold together," he told the world, for the last time, and disappeared.[21]

In other myths the estrangement between man and the Supreme Being is explained by a misunderstanding, by disobedience on the part of man, or by some fatal coincidence. Often death and sickness and all human misery are said to result from this estrangement, sometimes as a punishment. But whatever the cause of the estrangement, it sheds a new light on the world. Man sees the world in the light of this estrangement. Or shall we call it the "darkness" of estrangement?

It is a darkness filled with dreams. At first man's view of the cosmos remains "open" toward that which lies beyond the cosmos. But this Beyond is the altogether Other, the great and painful Question raised by everything around man, cross-questioning man's innermost heart as he "walks off with his dog." When we are pained by a gnawing question, we tend to get busy with something that will distract us. We see this tendency at work in the early myths of mankind; gradually elements are added which have little to do with the original perspective. Man, preoccupied with practical matters or with poetic embellishment, pays less and less attention to the Great Question.

Sometimes it is easy to trace the older elements within more

recent stories, and they are frequently the ones concerned with the origins of the world and with the serious side of man's world view:

> When the Haida Indians tell the story of Raven and how he created the world out of nothing, they call it the Old Man's story, and no one may laugh. As the story lengthens into Raven's ridiculous adventures of stealing the sun for mankind or stealing the halibut from a fisherman's hook and getting hooked himself, then the people may laugh.[22]

In connection with creation myths, the more ancient concept of a Supreme Being long persists even in a more complex cultural environment, at least in the form of one supreme head of a hierarchy or family of gods. But these minor gods are much closer to man than the transcendent Creator who made both man and the gods. For they are personifications of the powers with which he is most concerned in daily life, especially in agrarian cultures: the earth, vegetation, sun, moon, and stars, the seasons, or the weather. Sometimes they are magnified figures of ancestors. The more their characteristics are projected onto the image of the Supreme Being, the more the concept of creation changes from a "making" to a "begetting" of the world by the gods, or to an impersonal evolving of both gods and world out of primordial chaos. Where this process is completed, man no longer takes the transcendent into view. His cosmos closes in upon itself. His world view becomes a "closed" one.

As a typical example, we might quote a myth from the Wiyot Indians, the same tribe from which we quoted above the word about the Old Man creating man simply by his thought. This myth expresses an altogether different view:

> There was nobody there. Space was there and emptiness: Kyuvish, space; Atahvish, emptiness. These two called out

to each other and became Omai-Yaman, which means "Nothing Exists."

Then came upheaval, the time when things were stirring and coming into shape, and a time when things were falling in various directions through space.

Then came the pale glimmering time, and the Milky Way, Piwish, was stretched across the emptiness. And after that came a time when all things were moving in the dimness, without the sun, without the moon; and deep down in the heart of the earth things were working together to become.

Then Empty Space made a man, Tukomit, the sky; and a woman, Tamayowut, the earth.

Still there was no light, but these two knew there was somebody there.

Sky said, "Who are you?"

"I am stretched out; I am extended; I resound; I am earthquake; I revolve; I roll—who are you?"

"I am night; I am inverted over you; I am the arch of heaven; I cover; I seize; I devour."

"Brother!"

"And you are my sister, the Earth."

And thus by her brother, the Sky, did the Earth conceive and give birth to all the first things and creatures.[23]

Note how similar this myth is in its general outline to the following lines from the Babylonian creation myth which brings us close to the cultural environment of the Old Testament. It describes the origin of the cosmos in terms of a wedding between Apsu, a personification of the fresh waters, and Tiamat, the sea:

When on high the heaven had not been named,
Firm ground below had not been called by name,
Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter,
(And) Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,
Their waters commingling as a single body;
No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,

When no gods whatever had been brought into being,
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined—
Then it was that the gods were formed within them.[24]

It matters little whether the myth speaks of a wedding between Fresh Waters and Sea or between Sky and Earth. In either case it is two innercosmic forces—that is the important point—which produce the gods. In the further course of the Babylonian myth man and (presumably, as that part of the myth is lost) all things are made out of the limbs of these gods who in a cosmic struggle tear one another to pieces: the gods and the cosmos are of the same stuff; that is decisive. Man's view no longer goes beyond this "closed" universe.

To sum up what we have said so far: two views of the cosmos find expression in early myths about the world's origin: an "open" world view and a "closed" one. To the open world view the universe is an immense house, as it were, with transparent walls. But outside it is night. Beyond the transparent walls lies the darkness of mystery, the invisible presence of the utterly Other, nameless, imageless. And as man tries to understand the mystery in which the world is embedded, he begins to project images, as it were, onto the walls of glass behind which lies the night of the Great Question.

Man's poetic imagination creates images of the Invisible, a wall of images that turns out to hide more than it reveals. The darkness of man's loneliness and estrangement in the world becomes filled with dreams, in the sense in which a child defines dreams: "You look at the night and see things." [25] At last man can become so preoccupied with the dream images his own heart has projected onto the walls of his cosmic house that he loses the power of looking through at the night. The transparent walls become opaque for the closed world view, and finally man denies that anything could lie beyond.

It has not always been sufficiently stressed that the open and

the closed world view are two diametrically opposed metaphysical perspectives, although their lines are not yet completely drawn at this stage, which we might call mankind's childhood. The two examples we quoted from the Wijot Indians show that we can find expressions of these opposing views side by side. Still, two seedlings might look very much alike, and yet the one will grow into a ground ivy, the other one into a tall tree. Only later will the implications of man's childhood views of the cosmos become fully evident.

The term childhood which we have used for this phase of man's history and prehistory should not be pressed, but in a certain respect it is useful and accurate. Like the child, primitive man looks at the world not objectively, not in profile, as it were, but with the frontal approach of personal encounter. And, again like the child, he focuses not primarily on the world of phenomena but on the mysterious ground from which these phenomena rise. We call him primitive because he is also "unspoiled" with regard to this broadness and depth of vision, this power to marvel, to be filled with wonderment like a true philosopher.

When a child says: "The world is so you have something to stand on," we sense that for this child the world is but a small island surrounded by deep mystery. In fact, we must compare this definition of the world with that of a floor. "A floor," says the child, "is so you don't fall in the hole your house is in." [26] This is what I mean by seeing the world on the background of mystery. And this mystery behind things is what really counts both for the child and for primitive man.

In this attitude the open and the closed world view of ancient man agree. And we must stress this psychological similarity in spite of the metaphysical opposition between the two views. Metaphysically the Mystery on which the open world view focuses is altogether transcendent, although it will not be neatly distinguished in every case from mysterious phenomena which

belong to the cosmos. For the closed world view, on the other hand, there is nothing beyond this cosmos, nothing transcendent, and so mystery is merely that which lies beyond man's comprehension. But psychologically, mystery is in both cases the "real reality" behind everything; in both cases it is known through symbol, expressed through myth and shared through ritual.

Myth, symbol, and ritual are the three forms of ancient man's contact with that mysterious reality which ultimately counts for him, and unless we understand these forms we shall understand neither the prebiblical nor the biblical view of the cosmos.

Myth, in the sense in which we are using the term, is an intuitive insight into the mystery of human existence, expressed by concrete, dramatic imagery, and sanctioned by the authority of tradition. Through myth, man bears witness to his religious experience, to the awareness that his existence is open toward that which lies beyond his comprehension, the mysterious reality which attracts him, and at the same time, fills him with awe. Myth in this full sense is not a fiction but a testimony to unquestionable fact. "Myth has reality," says Paul Tillich, "because it focusses on the unconditionally real . . . but it has not the reality of a portrait, for it lives in symbols." [27]

Let us only beware of assuming that the reality of a symbol is less than that of a portrait. Quite the contrary is true. There is in varying degrees an inner connection between a symbol and the reality it manifests. The symbol and the symbolized stand in a relation similar to that of body and soul. Man discovers that he is a symbol, and therefore he can see symbols. For by symbol we do not mean an arbitrary sign chosen by man to denote a well defined reality, but rather a sign in which some not fully definable reality manifests and expresses "itself"; a sign distinct from that reality, and yet to a certain degree participating in it.

Word and gesture as symbols of that kind make it possible for

man to participate in the sacred reality to which the myth bears witness. For whenever a mythical event is recounted or re-enacted, it is made present through the symbolic power of word and gesture, and one can enter into it. It is through ritual that time participates in that which lies beyond time. "By every sort of ritual, and therefore by every sort of significant action (hunting, fishing, etc.) the primitive is placing himself in 'mythical time.'" For the mythical period "must not be thought of simply as past time, but as present and future, and as a state as well as a period." [28] Ritual is, then, an observance which makes the sacred reality expressed in the myth present through symbol and symbolic action. Often this observance is a common celebration, and even where it is performed in private it is never done in isolation. For the myth belongs always to a community, and ritual joins the individual to this community through communication with the mythical reality.

Myth, symbol, and ritual show these general characteristics whether they pertain to the open or the closed world view. Their religious significance, however, will be quite different in these two cases; myth, symbol, and ritual, we said, are the forms of man's encounter with mystery, and so they will bear the marks of this encounter, which has one typical emphasis within the framework of the open, and quite a different one within the framework of the closed view of the cosmos.

Man's encounter with mystery is his basic religious experience; it is his confrontation with the "Holy," [29] with a power beyond his comprehension which challenges him, and to which he yet feels akin. This experience places man at the crossroads of two tendencies: the tendency to give himself over to this power (the religious attitude toward the Holy), and the tendency to lay hold of this power, to make use of it according to his own will (the magic attitude toward the Holy). Most often we find both tendencies expressed side by side in primitive religion.

One illustration is worth a thousand words. There is a little story which illustrates the truly religious attitude in prayer, contrasting it with the magical one. A little girl had been praying for weeks before Christmas that she might get that beautiful big doll she had seen in a shopwindow. The day after Christmas all the other girls asked her: "Did you get that doll for which you prayed so hard?" "Well, no." "What a shame," said her little friends. "God didn't answer your prayers." "Oh, yes, he did. He said 'No.' " By taking a "no" from God for an answer man proves that his attitude is truly religious.

The religious attitude will be emphasized to the extent to which man's world is "transparent" for the transcendent. This stands to reason. For the only appropriate attitude toward the "all-Powerful," [30] the "Unexplainable," [31] is reverence and obedience. Where the myth depicts him as the "Maker," [32] "Who is of Himself" [33] in contrast to the lesser gods, he must be the "Irresistible" [34] who cannot be manipulated. The typical worship offered to him is spontaneous prayer, especially in moments of extreme crisis. We find no elaborate cult offered to him, often no cult at all, sometimes the setting aside of the first or best portion of food or drink, not for his use, but as a gesture of acknowledgment. "He who alone is full of abundance" [35] is also called by the same tribe "He who is beyond all thanks." [36]

In this context everything is symbol insofar as it is received out of the hands of him who remains the "Owner of His Things" [37] and thus everything bears his power. Where man's view is open toward the "Providence which watches over all as does the sun," [38] the whole cosmos is conceived as symbol, pregnant with the power of "God in whom you may put all your trust," [39] the "Kindly-disposed," [40] the "Greatest of Friends." [41] Man and all other creatures have the same Father, and are therefore bound together in piety. Man is the son who bears his Father's image in

a house that bears his Father's imprint, the transparent cosmos of the open world view.

The power of vision necessary for the discovery of symbols is strong in primitive man, as it is strong in children. The tent as the dwelling place of the family may become a symbol for the universe, the dwelling place of the family of mankind; and by participation in this greater reality fashioned by the hands of the Creator, the tent becomes a sacred place. Its central support is identified with the center of the world, the Cosmic Tree, rooted in the nether world and reaching into heaven. This concept of the "center" is of great importance for the world view of primitive man. It is at this center, the navel of the world, that creation began, and only through this center can one communicate with mystery. But the inverse also holds true: any point of symbolic communication can become the center of the cosmos.

And why? Because man becomes aware that he reaches the center of the universe whenever he returns to his own innermost heart. There, at the very core of his being, he encounters the nearness of that mystery which surrounds all things beyond the farthest horizon. In discovering this polarity of center and periphery, man discovers himself as the Cosmic Tree springing up from the taproot of creation and branching out into a region beyond space and time. He discovers Man, Man at the center of the world, and the staggering possibility that his own little self may become one with Man.

Ritual brings him to this center. For the open world view, this center is the point at which the cosmos is open toward the transcosmic. Symbol is the static expression of this openness, ritual the dynamic one. For the function of ritual is to bring man to this center, to this point of communication. The ritual center becomes the place of meeting, as ritual brings about the moment of encounter. Through ritual, space is open toward that which is

beyond space; time is open toward that which is beyond time.

Above all, every beginning is such "an opening into the Great Time, into eternity." [42] Every beginning will therefore be marked by some sort of ritual. We have already mentioned the offering of first fruits. The beginning of every building enterprise is in a special way open toward the Beginning when the world was built. But quite generally the beginning of any work is related to that mythical beginning in which the Creator or some great ancestor taught man how to hunt, or how to fish, or how to make things. That is why so often the beginning of an action is marked by a ritual remembrance of the "Beginner." [43]

Before eating, the African Galla always puts a small portion of food on the ground. The one who presides at the meal performs this gesture and stresses its meaning by the following prayer: "O God! You have made heaven and earth. It is you that gave to me all the good things which the earth brings forth. Here is your part, O my God, accept it!" Similarly a Muluba of Kasai in the Belgian Congo who goes fishing will never keep the first catch for himself; he brings it close to his mouth, breathes upon it, lifts it up toward the sky and calls out "Lord God! Here is your part, but where shall mine be found?" And with that he casts the fish back into the water, and no one will touch it any more. The same ritual is observed in hunting.[44]

Similar rites and prayers mark the beginning of day or season or life. "Among the Waka-ny-ama of South-West Africa the men do not greet one another before sunrise. It is God who must be greeted first." [45] And at sunrise they pray to him. A Pigmy chieftain lifts up his newborn son toward the rising sun with the following prayer: "To You, Creator, to You, Mighty One, I offer this young seedling, first fruit of the ancient tree. You are the Master, we are Your children. To You, Creator, to You, Mighty One, I offer this young seedling. . . ." [46] Sunrise, birth, and the prayer to the Creator of whom the myth tells come

together in this particularly clear example. But always the reference to the "original time" of the myth as the "model for all times" [47] is an essential aspect of ritual.

Consequently the kind of "original time" we are concerned with in the myth will make a great difference for man's view of the cosmos. Is it the real beginning made by the free decision of a Creator, or is the world emerging out of chaos through the struggle of cosmic powers personified in the gods? Within the framework of the closed world view the cosmic order is not established by the autonomous will of a transcendent Creator. It is the precarious equilibrium between the powers of gods at war with one another, liable to fall back into chaos at any moment as the balance of power changes.

This uneasy world view is above all typical for agricultural society. There the cycle of the seasons stands so much in the focus of man's attention that the pattern of unending change is projected back into the past and forward into the future; time closes in upon itself and the cyclic myth is born. As day emerges out of night only to be swallowed up again by night, so order rises out of chaos and falls back into chaos in unending succession. This world view is expressed in the Myth of the Eternal Return.

Mircea Eliade has shown how the Myth of the Eternal Return leads man to attempt the "regeneration of time" by magic means.[48] This assumes particular importance in agrarian cultures, where man's life depends on the regularity of the seasons, and in biblical times we find typical examples for this world view among the Semitic peoples who had settled down to agricultural life.

Creation, in ancient Semitic religions, was a cosmic struggle; a primitive chaos, personified as a monstrous being, was subdued by the creative deity, who made the world from the remains of the monster. The annual cycle is a production of

> life from death; and the god who produces fertility must himself die. Chaos, in the world of nature, is victorious in its turn; but the creative deity will rise from death and smite his enemies. Fertility is the union of the male and female principles; for the ancient Semitic peoples, sex was as primeval as nature, as divinity itself. And so the god of fertility was of necessity accompanied by his consort, who is the deification of the most mysterious powers of fertility. . . .
>
> At the bottom of the myth was the belief that the annual cycle of fertility was an annual renewal of creation; the earth was produced anew each year. . . .
>
> In order to assure the regular and beneficial recurrence of the celestial drama, man must enact this drama himself; and so, through the official representatives of the gods, he performs a series of symbolic actions which portray the adventures of the gods.[49]

In this kind of ritual, symbol has a different significance. It is not so much the vessel of God's power as a means of power for man. Not the religious self-surrender to the power of the Holy is emphasized, but the magic use of this power for man's purposes. There is a similar shift of emphasis with regard to the concept of the "center." It retains its importance, not so much as the point of encounter between man and mystery, but rather as the fulcrum for that magical leverage by which man tries to manipulate the mysterious powers. For to the closed world view the cosmos is not the household over which an all-powerful Father presides; it is more like a battlefield of all against all, where might is right, and where each brings as much power to bear as he can.

Perhaps the immediate environment of biblical Revelation represents as typical an example for this closed world view as we can point out anywhere; even there we find some allusion to the Supreme Being as "El," the Mighty One. Let me stress it once again: hardly anywhere do we find either the closed or the open view of the cosmos neatly by itself. In real life each one of them is apt to show admixtures of the other. And yet, while we cannot

separate the two, it is extremely important to distinguish them. Only a penetrating study can ascertain in a given case whether a certain detail is magical or religious in origin. This is so in any frontier area of investigation. But for our comprehensive view of the question, the large lines of the distinction will be of great help.

Crisis: The World Views of Mankind's Adolescence

Myth, symbol and ritual are, as we have seen, the forms of man's encounter with mystery, with sacred reality; and this holds true both for the open and for the closed world views of primitive man. But in the one instance these forms have a predominantly religious, in the other a predominantly magical significance. To the open world view the cosmos becomes transparent for the Mystery which is of its essence transcosmic, although many phenomena may remain mysterious this side of the transcendent "beyond." To the closed world view these innercosmic phenomena constitute the mystery, for here man no longer looks beyond the cosmos. In both cases, however, man's attitude toward mystery is spontaneous and unreflective at this stage, which we have compared to childhood.

Now, as soon as this spontaneity gives room to reflection, the closed world view of mankind's childhood must disintegrate. For, as the mysterious innercosmic phenomena are one by one explained objectively, the light of religion that gave meaning to the cosmos is found to be an illusion; man discovers that the gods are of his own making, projections of his own image onto the walls of his world, and, having long lost sight of anything beyond this world, he is left with the bare walls as ultimate reality.

For the open world view reflection will also introduce a new phase, but it will not prove fatal. Innercosmic mystery will be dispelled through objective investigation, but Mystery, lying

"beyond," will remain untouched. Man can destroy the gods he made; the God who made him he can at most forget, though even that he cannot sustain for long; man remains open toward that which transcends him, even though he closes his eyes to it; he cannot give meaning to his own life, he must receive this meaning from beyond. In fact, reflection upon true Mystery will bring home to man a new and deeper appreciation of its transcendence.

When the unreflective attitude toward mystery gave way to a reflective one, these two possibilities did actually come true: the Greeks, investigating their closed world, found that their gods had been mirror-images of man himself; and they were left with opaque cosmic walls. The Hebrews held that their prophets had received a message from altogether beyond the cosmos, and its walls became more and more transparent toward the God in whose image man had been made. To this day the world is reeling from the impact of what happened then, and our view of the cosmos will depend on our reaction to these two events.

It has often been maintained that the great achievement of Hebrew religious genius is the concept of God's absolute transcendence. There is truth in this statement. But the more we come to see how nearly universal at least some notion of a transcendent being proves to be in early religion, the more we recognize as the really outstanding feature of Hebrew religion that it does not at all confuse transcendence with remoteness. This great light began to dawn when He who is in the sky was suddenly found in the midst of man's daily affairs, no longer merely the remote Beginner of everything that happens, but personally involved in it here and now, without losing the sovereign freedom of his absolute transcendence.

The biblical view of the cosmos is something altogether new. In it three factors have come together and united. The first one is the basic monotheism of the open world view. It is represented by

Melchisedech, King of Salem, the pagan "priest of the most high God" who blesses Abraham in the name of this "most high God, who created heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:17–20). Abraham accepts this blessing, and thus the Supreme Being of pre-biblical religion is implicitly identified with the God of Abraham, the God of the Bible. Biblical Revelation is grafted onto the most ancient stock of man's religious belief. This fact stands in the background.

In the foreground of consciousness stands the second factor: an acute historical crisis. Different examples could be pinpointed, but the Exodus is the most important one, the prototype: man is completely at the end of his resources, at the point of panic and despair. Israel is caught between death from the sword of Egypt and death in the waters of the Red Sea. "And they said to Moses: Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us into the desert to die? . . . Is this not what we told you in Egypt: leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert" (Ex. 14:11 f.).

The third and decisive factor is the prophetic intuition which brings the other two factors together, perceiving that "the Most High God" is not somewhere above the clouds, but near in this hour of crisis; and more, that he has brought about this crisis in order to manifest himself as the Holy One in the midst of the people he has chosen. "And Moses said to the people: Fear not, stand still and see . . ." (Ex. 14:13). And what do they see? "I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of you" (Os. 11:9).

As the "Holy One," God is the absolutely Other, absolutely separated from his creatures (that is what the Hebrew term "holy" implies); and yet through his mercy he is closer to man than man is to himself. This double aspect of transcendence and nearness is the clue to the meaning of God's Name revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush.

> As reply to his question about the name Moses is told: Ehyeh asher ehyeh. This is usually understood to mean "I am that I am" in the sense that YHWH describes himself as the Being One or even the Everlasting One, the one unalterably persisting in his being. But . . . the verb in the Biblical language does not carry this particular shade of meaning of pure existence. It means: happening, coming into being, being there, being present, being thus and thus; but not being in an abstract sense.[50]

What God really says to Moses is this: "I shall be present. I am and remain present. But—present the way I shall choose."

> YHWH indeed states that he will always be present, but at any given moment as the one in whom he then, in that given moment, will be present. He who promises his steady presence, his steady assistance, refuses to restrict himself to definite forms of manifestation.[51]

The Burning Bush sheds a new light first of all on history. Gradually man begins to see the whole universe in this new light. The biblical view of the cosmos is established as soon as Moses begins to look at the world in the light of Revelation, the paradoxical light of "immanent Transcendence." The more man's eyes are adapted to this light, the more the world becomes transfigured before his eyes. This process of transformation is as gradual as history itself. It began when "Moses said: I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt" (Ex. 3:3); and it will not be completed until the Apocalyptic image shall have become reality, "the city of pure gold, like unto clear glass," with "streets of pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (Apoc. 21:18, 21).

Throughout the course of sacred history we see this transfiguration take place. The universe becomes transparent for the divine light, as man begins to see more and more clearly how deeply God

has committed himself in history. We begin to realize that God's transcendence goes so far beyond man's concept of transcendence that it paradoxically embraces even divine immanence in Creation. Indeed, the most subtle crisis between the open and the closed world view arises at the culminating point of this revelation, within the very heart of Israel. It is the resistance of those who in the name of God's transcendence, as man conceives it, refuse to accept the ultimate revelation of that transcendence as it is conceived by God himself, the Incarnation.[52]

JHWH's refusal to be restricted in the forms which his presence may take culminates in the paradox of the Incarnation. But this paradox is also the final seal on the promise to be present, the promise expressed in his Name JHWH. Up to that point in the dialogue between God and man, it still was "not yet revealed through a decisive event that the last word was not to be man's 'no' but God's 'Yes.'"[53] But in the God-man, God's call and man's response coincided. God's offer and man's acceptance, God's total self-giving to man and man's total self-giving to God coincide and become an irrevocable historical reality in the person of Jesus the Christ.

Throughout the ages man found himself surrounded by question, steeped in question. The cosmos around him seemed to be waiting for someone to give it meaning, and man's own heart, called to intepret the world and to name its meaning, was to itself an unsolvable question. Man found himself at the center of the world, but it proved to be a center of crossroads, a place of cross-questioning. The Guarani Indians of Brazil gave mythical expression to this truth when they said: "In the beginning our Great Father made the earth and propped it up on the eternal Cross," the cosmic cross. That is why in the end the answer to man's ultimate question had to come from a cross. The Word-made-flesh brought this answer: He is the answer. He is the divine "yes" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20).

He is the "yes" also to the cosmos in all its beauty, all its greatness, all the challenge it contains for man. Only God could invent this solution. Man, when he became aware that he had indulged in the gift and forgotten the Giver, turned away from the world, despising and rejecting it. That is the effort of the great Eastern religions, man's effort, and a noble one indeed. But God—when man was fleeing from him into deeper and deeper involvement with the world—God came to meet the fugitive in the very heart of the world; the heart of a man who is God is for all questions the ultimate answer.

We can see how profoundly all this is bound to change man's view of the cosmos. Before biblical Revelation the Mystery beyond the universe was darkness to the eyes of man, the darkness of an insoluble question. Man's deepest intuition could barely discern a personal God and Creator, the boundless fountain of goodness. But how could man tell "whether God, self-contained within His own silence, wanted to set infinite distance between His Immensity and our own finiteness, or whether he wanted to be for us the absolute nearness of radical self-giving? Who could tell whether He could meet the guilt of our 'no' to Him as Judgement or as Forgiveness?" [54] This explains a certain air of sadness so typical of symbol, myth, and ritual of the ancient world. In fact, one way of stating what happened at the turning point of time is simply that the light of Revelation turned this sadness into joy.

What happened to myth? I would like to put it this way: myth was "realized." What I mean is this: we have seen that myth was the expression of an intuitive insight into the mystery of man's existence. But man's existence was from the very beginning open toward God's gratuitous self-giving. The Incarnation was not an afterthought of the Creator but his guiding idea. Man was created in "the image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1:26), and this "image

of the invisible God" is Christ (Col. 1:15). Whatever true insight man had into the mystery of his own existence was therefore a glimpse of the Mystery of Christ. This explains the countless points of resemblance between the reality of Revelation and its anticipation in myth. But by being thus "realized" myth ceases to be myth; it becomes history.

This is true also for the creation account of the Bible. Surely many of its elements are taken from ancient mythical traditions; but the prophetic experience sees these elements in an entirely new light, no longer the light of myth but of history. Once prophetic intuition perceives that in a given crisis God has intervened in history, the lines are drawn out not only toward the future (God will carry out his purpose), but also into the past (God must have had a design from the beginning). The historical religious experience is the starting point; its cosmic implications are gradually discovered.

The creation account in Genesis may not be as powerful poetically as the presentation we find in some primitive myths. But it stresses the essential elements with incomparable clarity: God creates freely and without effort; he sets a beginning and has an end in view; he delegates man to carry out his purpose in the world, and gives the whole world over to man that he may explore and administer it in responsibility. Here too myth has become history, the beginning of history.

What happened to symbol? Only at the climax of biblical Revelation does this become fully clear. When "the Word was made flesh," symbol was established in its full validity as the mode of communication between God and man. The essence of symbol was seen to be rooted in the innermost core of Being, in the triune life of God. For God the Father expresses himself—all of himself, to perfection—in his Son, the Eternal Word, infinitely distinct from the Father, yet perfectly One with him. And all creation in a

countless variety of degrees bears the imprint of this pattern, for it is through the Word that the world was created. Thus everything there is bears on its own level of existence the character of word and image. By being traced back to this ultimate foundation, symbol ceased to be mere symbol, it began to participate in the sacramentality of creation, culminating in the sacraments of the Church.

There are symbols because man is the protosymbol. There are sacraments because Christ, the God-man, became the Proto-Sacrament. When the Word was made flesh, the symbol "man" was raised to the dignity of sacrament in the God-man.

How does this new dimension of symbol and myth affect the concept of ritual? For ancient man, as we have seen, ritual meant participation in the sacred reality expressed in the myth made present through symbol and symbolic action. Now myth has been realized in history, and symbol has been opened up to the dimension of sacramentality. The new ritual will consequently be participation in the historical saving event made present sacramentally.

This will be most perfectly realized in the sacraments, the ritual to which God has pledged himself. But from this center, sacramentality will radiate throughout the whole cosmos, and the whole of Christian life will become an encounter with God's presence in a transfigured world, a dialogue between God's "faithfulness" and man's faith. Any point of the cosmos and any point of time can become the "sacred center" and the "sacred Now," because JHWH is, in Buber's words, "present not merely sometime and somewhere but in every now and in every here." [55]

Throughout the history of Revelation, myth, symbol, and ritual are thus gradually transformed, not destroyed. They are like designs in the rose window of a cathedral. The candlelight from

within reveals the basic pattern, the tracery. Then at sunrise, all the dark areas in between begin to radiate in the light from beyond. We hold our breath and realize that "the One Who stands on the other side has made the frontier between Him and us the nearness of His love." [56]

For that trend of Greek thought that was destined to give rise to the modern world view, the "frontier" is no frontier at all, the rose window is a solid wall, there is no beyond whence light could come. Myth, symbol, and ritual of this opaque world could not be transformed; they were bound to be destroyed. "Man does not worship what he thinks he can control," [57] and when, through the intellectual adventure of the Greek mind, science and technology evolved, man could begin to hope that he would gain control over cosmic powers. And that there are no other powers was tacitly taken for granted.

We shall see how important this assumption became in the course of a development which has already lasted twenty-five centuries, and which we shall have to simplify here and to telescope as drastically as we did with the unfolding of biblical Revelation. Only in recent times was this development enormously broadened and accentuated through the use of scientific experimentation and the use of modern technology. But in seed it was all prepared from the moment the Greek philosophers began to approach mystery reflexively, no longer taking it for granted as children do, but approaching it with the skepticism typical of adolescence.

Like a child, "early man was confronted not by an inanimate, impersonal nature—not by an 'It', but a 'Thou.' . . . Such a relationship involved not only man's intellect but the whole of his being—his feeling and his will, no less than his thought. Hence early man would have rejected the detachment of a purely intellectual attitude toward nature, had he been able to conceive

it, as inadequate to his experience." [58] But among the Greek philosophers contemporary with the Hebrew prophets, this purely intellectual approach breaks through as a new power, a power destined to shape the world with ever increasing impetus. One of the leading physicists of our time, Erwin Schroedinger, borrows a phrase from John Burnet and describes science simply as "thinking about the world in the Greek way." [59]

This Greek way of looking at the cosmos is characterized above all by its preoccupation with the world of phenomena, by its power of abstraction, and by a passion for consistency. These three factors operate within the framework of the closed world view, and are in some way its expression, because each one of them implies an important restriction of vision. The preoccupation with the phenomenal world cuts out meaning and purpose in order to focus, sharply, on observable facts alone, oscillating, however, between the extremes of taking them for the only reality (Democritus) and denying them reality altogether (Parmenides). Abstraction becomes objectivity and tries to cut out as far as possible man, the subjective observer. And the Greek passion for consistency, finding its expression in "the hypothesis that the display of nature can be understood" [60] and predicted, must, at least for methodical reasons, eliminate Mystery, the Unpredictable. We can easily see that there is no room for myth, symbol, and ritual in this world of science.

"Mythos," in its original sense, means a statement of ultimate truth accepted on the authority of tradition; "logos," in contrast, means originally a statement of truth derived from discursive reasoning. And this discursive reasoning now replaces tradition as ultimately valid authority. Myth is replaced by logic. The "symbols" with which this logic manipulates are not symbols in the sense in which we have been using the term. Here the dimension of mystery in which things partake, thereby becoming symbols in our sense, must be excluded from consideration in

order to make terms manageable within an exclusively intellectual frame of reference. What used to be a whole "thing with meaning" is now split up into observable facts and abstract terms. These are the realities which count within this frame of reference. And since we saw that ritual is the means of man's participation in that reality which ultimately counts for him, the new "ritual" must be logical speculation and scientific experimentation.

In an excellent passage, H. A. Frankfort describes this intellectual turning point: When the Greeks, looking at the cosmos, asked for the "origin," what they sought was not understood in the terms of myth; they asked for an immanent and lasting ground of existence.

> This change of viewpoint is breathtaking. It transfers the problems of man in nature from the realm of faith and poetic intuition to the intellectual sphere. A critical appraisal of each theory, and hence a continuous inquiry into the nature of reality, became possible. A cosmogonic myth is beyond discussion. It describes a sequence of sacred events which one can either accept or reject. But no cosmogony can become part of a progressive and cumulative increase of knowledge. Myth claims recognition by the faithful, not justification before the critical. But a sustaining principle or first cause must be comprehensible, even if it was first discovered in a flash of insight. It does not pose the alternative of acceptance or rejection. It may be analyzed, modified, or corrected. In short, it is subject to intellectual judgment.[61]

Notice what is happening here. For the first time the universe is conceived as an intelligible whole without reference to any transcendent reality. It is intelligible because man can comprehend the cosmic order.

> Heraclitus asserted that the universe was intelligible because it was ruled by "thought" or "judgement" (Logos) and

that the same principle, therefore, governed both existence and knowledge.[62]

It is important to note that the essence of this Logos concept is not an optional superstructure but the very foundation stone for "the Greek way of thinking about the world." Unless a unifying principle gave order to the cosmos, and unless man could grasp this principle and thus in part, at least, comprehend that order, all science would break down.

It might almost appear as if we had found an innercosmic light to make the world meaningful for man. Heraclitus makes a statement that seems to express as closed a world view as one could imagine: "This ordered world, which is the same for all, no one of the gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living fire, flaring up according to measure and going out according to measure." [63] The measure of its flaring up and its going out is determined by the Logos that brings forth harmony from the tension of opposites "as in a bow or in a lyre."

All seems self-contained. And yet, man, by definition, has a share in the Logos; he is the "clearest-selvéd spark" [64] of this fire; but he is dark to himself. This is the point where the Greek world view does remain open after all, as long as man remains man. Man can never settle down to live content side by side with the unknown. Sooner or later he will rise to face it. And as long as anything remains unknown, the Unknowable has not been completely ruled out; mystery (the unknown) implicitly points toward Mystery (the Unknowable).

We have Heraclitus' own word for it: "the soul's frontiers you could not find in your wandering, though you travelled every road: so deep is its Logos." [65] Man's heart communicates with the mystery in which the universe is embedded, like those inland lakes that communicate underground with the ocean. We can

comprehend the sustaining principle of cosmic order, but only as pointing beyond itself toward mystery. The fire of Heraclitus, the Dark One, as they called him, is a dark fire.

It is on this background that we must read the Prologue to St John's Gospel and the proclamation: "Light shines in darkness" (John 1:15)—"in" darkness, not "into" darkness (that would be a platitude). The very darkness now shines because Mystery made himself known to us through the Logos. How was this possible?

> John's answer is that what is in the mind of God—His thought, His purpose—is expressed in the whole of His creation, more especially in the life of living things, and most of all in the thinking mind of man. And not only has He thus revealed Himself in the standing constitution of nature and of man; His Word has also "come" to men in history in special ways, through the work of prophets and men of God. Consequently, it is possible to hear God speaking to us over the whole range of nature, history, and human experience. . . . Then, finally, God spoke in a human life: "the Word was made flesh." So the meaning which all creation holds, if we could only see it, is precisely the meaning of this story of Jesus: what he did, what he said, how he suffered, died and rose to life. If we knew what all that means, we should know what God means by this universe, and what He means by our own lives in His universe.[66]

All this had been prepared by the contact between Greek and Jewish thought as it is reflected in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and in Philo's writings. Here it has crystallized beyond all expectation. At a decisive point in his career the Jews ask Jesus: "Who are you?" and he answers with a verbal allusion to the promise contained in the unspeakable Name: "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I

AM" (John 8:25–28). And again: "Before Abraham came to be, I AM" (John 8:58)—outrageous blasphemy apparently, but after Christ was "lifted up" on the cross and in his Resurrection, the Evangelist knew: the One who spoke in the fire that did not consume the thornbush (the mystery of his transcendent immanence) was the Logos of the Heraclitean fire, Jesus, "the Light of the world" (John 8:12).

Should we consider it mere coincidence that Hebrew prophets proclaimed the Great Sunrise on a transcendent world at the very hour at which Greek thinkers destroyed the mirror world of the closed world view? Thales of Miletus who says that "all things are full of gods," but goes ahead and treats them as mere things, implicitly agrees with the psalmist who sings: "All the gods of the heathens are nothings." Of course the psalmist adds: "but the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 95:5). The "lesser gods" who are part of the cosmos may one by one be dethroned as man's knowledge of the universe expands. The Transcendent One will not be affected; he lives beyond Olympus. If the Greek way of looking at the world gradually removed the myth, symbol, and ritual of man's closed world, biblical religion merely remarks that what could be destroyed in them had never been worth preserving.

"Heaven is the heaven of the Lord," sings another Psalm (113, B:15), "but the earth He has given to the children of men." The whole earth. Revelation creates the space in which science can expand. Revelation of the transcendent God relegates the whole cosmos to man's investigation, for it affirms that God's transcosmic heaven alone lies beyond man's reach. But being in this way "handed over" to man, the cosmos is not divested of its mysterious sacredness. Remaining God's gift, it keeps referring back to him. The frontier between man and Mystery does not lie at some imaginary "outer edge" of space; it goes right through everything everywhere. There is no place in the universe that could not

become the point of meeting between man and the transcendent and incarnate God.

Does this not imply that the further man discovers the world, the more magnificently will the frontier expand at which he meets God? Indeed, not only will there be more points of contact, as it were, but there will be new and deeper vistas. As far as man's view of the cosmos is concerned, Revelation merely opens man's eyes to the light. Only through living, loving contact with the things around him will he actually see. And science is one form of man's contact with the world, a limited one, that is true, but one of great importance. The two world views are compatible and complementary. Only together do Revelation and science give us a concept of the world which is both right in perspective and correct in detail.

One might smile at this optimistic approach, or even get angry and point out the clashes in the past. But we shall not be able to make a true and full view of the cosmos our own unless we realize that these clashes were not at all between Revelation and science. How can science, which never claims to explore anything but this universe, clash with the revelation of that which lies beyond? The clashes of the past were never between science and dogma (i.e., the necessary and legitimate formulation of Revelation), but between scientism and dogmatism. Scientism, which restricts man's whole world view to the limited perspective of science, and dogmatism, which makes the world image of a certain period in history an absolute—these two must clash. And the deadlock between them is one cause of mankind's present dilemma.

Science, as we saw, happened to grow up in an environment with a closed world view. That is why from the beginning scientism grew up along with it. The gods of Greece, personifications of natural forces and of human desires, must necessarily

totter and fall before the new way of looking at the cosmos. But beyond Olympus the Greeks knew no transcendent heaven. Was it not logical, then, to extend the approach of science to the whole of life? This was all the more alluring as it made man "the measure of all things." To retain the illusion of being himself the absolute, man must of course keep his eyes closed as best he can to that which by definition transcends his comprehension. One can hardly call that an outlook; but for lack of a better term let us call it the profane outlook [67] on life, the fullest realization of the closed world view.

Closing his eyes to mystery this way, man has no organ left for symbol, myth, and ritual. The focusing on observable facts and abstract terms to the exclusion of everything else proved methodically fruitful within the realm of natural science. It is only when this attitude monopolizes all realms of man's contact with reality that a transparent world of symbols becomes opaque and meaningless. Myth is no longer replaced by logic, but by the dogmatic exclusion of transcendence. The "ritual" of experimentation, sound and necessary as a scientific method, is extended to all realms of life and becomes pragmatism: truth is to be tested by its practical consequences; what is "successful" is right.

The tares grow with the wheat in every field. Just as scientism grew up with true science, so dogmatism with true dogma. And just as scientism is only one symptom of the profane outlook, so dogmatism is but one symptom of what I would like to call "domesticated religion." A friend to whom I mentioned this term expanded it into a little parable which better explains what I mean:

> When a flock of wild geese were going south one fall, they rested on their journey near a farmyard. One of them, watching the farmer's geese, began to admire the comfortable life they were living and decided to stay at that farm for the winter. And it proved to be a comfortable life indeed: no

worries, no dangers, all the needs of a goose taken care of—or almost all of them. Springtime returned, and one night our goose heard the cry of wild geese flying north, high overhead. In the pangs of a sudden longing, she started flapping her wings; but soon she realized that she had got much too plump and chubby to raise herself from the ground. She was no longer fit for the wild life: only for the frying pan. But the real sad part of this little story is its last sentence: our goose got *used* to viewing the world from the barnyard perspective.

Myth is the proclamation of mystery; but domesticated religion cuts mystery to size and reduces it to dogmatism, keeps mystery at arm's length by turning religion into a social convention, and then "gets used to it." Symbols call for awe; but domesticated religion thinks it can "manage" mystery through a "sacramental automatism" which approaches magic and is an utter perversion of the Catholic concept of sacrament. Ritual is communication with mystery; but domesticated religion "dissolves" mystery into something else. The *liturgical* communication with mystery may be dissolved in ritualism—all that matters then are rubrics; or the communication with mystery *in life* may be dissolved in moralism—all that matters then are "dos" and "don'ts."

But what does this have to do with our view of the cosmos? Very much indeed. Domesticated religion perverts myth, symbol, and ritual by turning the personal reality of Mystery into an object. The profane outlook denies the existence of Mystery altogether, and so leaves no room for myth, symbol, and ritual. Thus neither the one nor the other can attain to a world view in any true sense. There can be no vision without acceptance of Mystery.

To have a world view means to see not only the sum total of knowable realities, but its meaning. "Meaning," however, opens a new dimension. That which gives meaning to something must come from beyond that which it explains. The question for the meaning of the cosmos leads beyond the cosmos. Longing for

meaning, man longs for a vision that goes beyond the visible; and the only light in which he can gain this vision is, paradoxically, the darkness of Mystery.

The cosmos looks toward man for its meaning. But man cannot give meaning to it, unable as he finds himself to give meaning to his own life. He must receive this meaning from that which transcends him. And this demands humility. Complacent man can give a glib answer to the question for "meaning," or pretend not to hear it, as a bad teacher might do when he fears his sham authority to be threatened. But if man dares humbly to face Mystery its darkness will be his light.

We have outgrown the sleepwalking sureness of childhood, and we have not yet attained the sober reassurance of maturity. Both childhood and mature age are gifted with the power of vision that springs from humility. The characteristic of the profane world view as well as of domesticated religion is arrogance, the typical, hopelessly groping arrogance of adolescence. That is the root of our misery, of our lack of vision.

Integration: The World View of Mankind's Maturity

There is only one way of shattering this blinding arrogance: a new confrontation with mystery. Complacency darkens the mind; yet somehow our natural center of gravity falls so within ourselves that we tend to prefer complacency to ecstasy. Humility is the *élan* that raises us out of ourselves, out of our illusions, into reality, a kind of sober ecstasy. There lies our hope for vision. And I think we can discern many symptoms in our time to encourage this hope. It seems to me that here and there within the profane world, and in spite of it, suddenly someone is struck by awe; and within the realm of domesticated religion, suddenly somewhere the courage breaks through to face mystery anew.

Albert Schweitzer is truly a spokesman for our time when he

says: "The deepest insight is this: to realize that on all sides we are surrounded by mystery." Let me quote from one of Rilke's letters to show what I mean by the new courage to meet mystery:

> We must assume our existence as broadly as we in any way can; everything, even the unheard-of, must be possible in it. That is at bottom the only courage that is demanded of us: to have courage to meet the most strange, the most singular and the most inexplicable that we may encounter. That mankind has in this sense been cowardly has done life endless harm; the experiences that are called "visions," the whole so-called "spirit-world," death, all those things that are so closely akin to us, have by daily parrying been so crowded out of life that the senses with which we could have grasped them are atrophied. To say nothing of God.[68]

The courage to encounter the unheard-of, the inexplicable, is one of the noblest trends of our time. And let us not take the "spirit of our time" lightly. As sober a scientist as Werner Heisenberg warns us:

> The spirit of a time is probably a fact as objective as any fact in natural science, and this spirit brings out certain features of the world which are even independent of time, are in this sense eternal. The artist tries by his work to make these features understandable, and in this attempt he is led to the forms of the style in which he works. Therefore, the two processes, that of art and that of science, are not very different. Both science and art form in the course of centuries a human language by which we can speak about the more remote parts of reality.[69]

As soon as we venture into these more remote parts of reality we stand awestruck before the unheard-of. Contemplating the structure of a molecule of riboflavin, another prominent scientist marvels:

> What frightens me is the enormous complexity and precision of the system, which has now been thrown into relief

> for the first time by quantum mechanics. I find it difficult to believe that such an enormously complex system could have been built by blind, random mutation. My feeling is that living matter carries, in itself, a hitherto undefined principle, a tendency for perfecting itself. Whether this principle can be expressed in terms of quantum mechanics, I do not know.[70]

We do know, at any rate, that whatever can be expressed about this "self-perfecting principle" will have to be expressed in terms of human insight. "Classical physics can be considered as that idealisation in which we speak about the world as entirely separated from ourselves," says Heisenberg. But "quantum theory does not allow a completely objective description of nature." [71] This new insight links again the principle of human cognition to that principle which distinguishes cosmos from chaos so that it can become the object of cognition at all. Suddenly and unexpectedly, we encounter in the midst of atomic physics the Logos of Heraclitus; if only we could see the Burning Bush too! All we need to do is "take off our shoes," and realize that we are standing on "holy ground" (*cf.* Ex. 3:5). It is not by mere chance that a man like Schroedinger should invite us to raise our eyes, and to realize that the "world of science" in all its grandeur is only an enclave within the great world, the world of real life:

> The scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity.[72]

But let me give a last example for these new dimensions, this one taken from a field often regarded as strictly profane. Let me quote a diplomat of rank, Jacques-Albert Cuttat:

> A truly spiritual attitude which had been banned from politics and business for centuries is gradually becoming a factor in practical politics. In the interplay of world forces interreligious dimensions, dimensions of the sacred, are opening up; not as camouflage for selfish goals, nor as wishful thinking, but as what they really are: the strongest power on earth.[73]

Are we not reminded of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dag Hammarskjöld? Hammarskjöld's posthumous book *Markings,* a breathtaking witness to communion with Mystery, may be characterized by three words: courage, awe, vision.

This is renewal, as when we have been walking through a forest for hours, and suddenly the sky shines through between distant trees. The same is happening in the field of religion. I need only mention the central position the cult mystery has regained in Christian thought and life; of the new witness to mystery in terms that our time can understand; of the liturgical renewal that has taken hold of the Church with consequences no one can as yet foresee. But I would rather quote a remarkable little document, written by a teenager in the Sunday Bulletin of the Unitarian Church at Ithaca, New York, after their study group had visited Mount Saviour:

> . . . In the chapel there were only a few people watching the service, and I sat in front of them. I wanted the sensation of being alone there. I wanted to be open to the beauty of the chapel and the circle of monks and to the chanting. And I see now that I wanted more than that. I wanted through some sort of magic to enter into the service, not simply because its forms were beautiful, but because they seemed at once mysterious and full of meaning. . . . The monks knelt and rose and bowed; bowing, their bodies bent forward from the waist, torsos almost horizontal. But I could not move. This is reasonable. I was brought up in this church where no one kneels and no one bows. Physically, I'm very inhibited, so that I don't move easily. And *when* has it ever been suggested that I *might*

> kneel, even figuratively kneel, before or to Something? I wanted to kneel, that's the important thing. But I could not. . . . To kneel and to mean it would be frightening, because there is a darkness in the kneeling and a darkness in us which we cannot reason about. You teach the fear of form without meaning, and that is right; but having avoided forms, you have sometimes avoided the darkness, and it is from the darkness that real questions arise.[74]

No comment of mine could do justice to this insight. Under the impact of insights like this, the mediocrity of domesticated religion is giving way to new life, just as under the impact of new scientific insights the profane world becomes again transparent. And the two lines of development are converging. In both realms we find a new encounter with mystery, a new witness to mystery, a new communication with mystery—in other words, a new discovery of the "Light in darkness" and thus the possibility of true vision, of a new world view.

Think only of Teilhard de Chardin, who followed both these converging lines and became the man of vision in our century, a man truly possessed of the biblical view of the cosmos. Think of his passionate outcry: *"Voir ou périr."* "To see or to perish," he writes, "that is the condition imposed (by the mysterious gift of existence) upon all who share this universe. It is also, and all the more so, the condition of man."[75] Yes, it is man who is at stake in this quest for true vision. Man will see or perish. And to see means, at this juncture of human history, to embark on the adventure of the integrated world view of mankind's mature age.

It is truly an adventure; it takes courage; it demands that we refuse the cheap comfort which the illusion of a static world image might afford. As soon as we enter into the dynamic perspective of Revelation we must brave the risk of confrontation with Mystery. The biblical view of the cosmos is not presented to

us as a *fait accompli,* but as a challenge, a calling, a task. Revelation is "complete" in so far as the true Sun has definitely risen; but to the end of time we shall continue to discover in this light ever-new marvels.

No single mind, no single generation can expect to accomplish this task. It is our common task, the great task of mankind as a whole. And here lies the tremendous challenge. No one sees the world as you do; every insight you gain will enrich the world view of mankind; no one else ever stood, nor ever will stand, at the particular vantage point that makes your facet of the vision unique and irreplaceable. And yet, as C. S. Lewis puts it, "each of us is at the centre." Metaphorical language becomes paradoxical at this point, but in the light of what we know about the concept of "center" as the point of ritual encounter with the Ineffable, it does make sense to say: "Each thing was made for Him. He is the centre. Because we are with Him, each of us is at the centre."

This passage occurs on one of the last pages of *Perelandra,* where C. S. Lewis magnificently describes cosmos and history as the Great Dance. (The Fathers, we recall, saw in the Logos the Great Leader of the Cosmic Dance.)

> All that is made seems planless to the darkened mind, because there are more plans than it looked for. . . . In the plan of the Great Dance plans without number interlock, and each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed. Thus each is equally at the centre and none are there by being equals, but some by giving place and some by receiving it, the small things by their smallness and the great by their greatness, and all the patterns linked and looped together by the unions of a kneeling with a sceptred love. Blessed be He.[76]

If piety in its most basic sense is reverence for natural ties, then the biblical view of the cosmos (as a task that ties each one of

us with all and all with God in Christ) is truly "cosmic piety." The whole created universe is straining its eyes during this present twilight of suffering and hope (*cf.* Rom. 8:18–25), looking for the full cosmic revelation of Christ. "Seeing" means "entering in" by faith, and being transformed by the *"deificum lumen,"* as St. Benedict calls it in the Holy Rule, the light that makes man God-like.

> The same God who bade light shine out of darkness has kindled a light in our hearts, whose shining is to make known His glory as He has revealed it in the features of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

> It is given to us, all alike, to catch the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, with faces unveiled; and so we become transfigured into the same likeness, borrowing glory from that glory, as the Spirit of the Lord enables us (2 Cor. 3:18).

> What we shall be is not yet apparent. But we know that when He comes we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him, then, as He is (1 John 3:2).

The New Testament makes it clear: by faith in Christian Revelation we do not accept a static image, we enter into the dynamic sweep of a new light, the light of Christ's Transfiguration. But at the very hour of his Transfiguration Christ speaks of his way to Jerusalem, to the "center" (*cf.* Luke 9:31 and 13:33). The final transformation can be accomplished only at the "center," and there stands the cross. It is through this center that each one of us must enter into the biblical view of the cosmos.

> Set your eyes on one movement (on the little steps assigned to you personally in the Great Dance) and it will lead you through all patterns and it will seem to you the master movement. But the seeming will be true. . . . There seems

no plan because all is plan: there seems no centre because it is all centre. Blessed be He!

NOTES

[1] John L. McKenzie, *The Two-Edged Sword, An Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1956), p. 75.

[2] The tribe referred to is the Baining of New Britain. Cf. *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche,* ed. J. Hoefer and K. Rahner (Freiburg: Herder, 1960), V, 409.

[3] Joseph Haekel, "Hoechstes Wesen," in *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche.*

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 410.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 408.

[6] Robert T. Parsons, "The Idea of God among the Kono of Sierra Leone," in *African Ideas of God,* ed. Edwin W. Smith (London: Edinburg House Press, 1950), p. 260.

[7] J. Davidson, "The Doctrine of God in the Life of the Ngombe, Belgian Congo," in *African Ideas of God,* p. 167.

[8] R. C. Stevenson, "The Doctrine of God in the Nuba Mountains," in *African Ideas of God,* p. 213.

[9] Davidson, *loc. cit.*

[10] H. St. John T. Evans, "The Akan Doctrine of God," in *African Ideas of God,* p. 249.

[11] Rosemary Guillebaud, "The Doctrine of God in Ruanda-Urundi," in *African Ideas of God,* p. 187.

[12] G. Parrinder, "Theistic Beliefs of the Yoruba and Ewe Peoples of West Africa," in *African Ideas of God.* p. 228.

[13] W. T. Harris, "The Idea of God among the Mende," in *African Ideas of God,* p. 278.

[14] John W. Dixon, Jr., *Nature and Grace in Art* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 29.

[15] Maria, Leach, *Beginning; Creation Myths Around the World* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1956), p. 172.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 130.