

SYMBOLISM  
IN THE BIBLE AND  
THE CHURCH



I IVORY BOOK COVER Ravenna (*Alinari*)

GILBERT COPE

SYMBOLISM  
IN THE BIBLE AND  
THE CHURCH



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## CONTENTS

<i>List of Plates</i>	7
<b>I · BIBLICAL TYPES</b>	
1 The Interpretation of Scripture	11
2 Definitions	16
3 Typology in the New Testament	25
4 Typology in the Church	29
5 Early Christian Art	35
6 Icons and Idolatry	42
<b>II · MEDIEVAL IMAGERY</b>	
1 Medieval Iconography	50
2 Medieval World-View	59
3 Types and History	67
<b>III · PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES</b>	
1 Myth	74
2 Dreams and Visions	80
3 Archetypes and Symbols	84
4 Types and Archetypes	88
<b>IV · ARCHETYPES OF CREATION</b>	
1 In the Beginning—Water	92
2 God and King	97
3 Water and Spirit: Breath and Life	100
4 Darkness and Light	104
<b>V · ARCHETYPES OF MALE &amp; FEMALE</b>	
1 Male and Female	113
2 Adam and Eve	118
3 The Great Mother	131
4 Sex and Religion	141
5 Virginity	153
6 Types and Symbols of the Virgin	164
7 Trees and Horns	170
8 The Serpent	181

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*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

VI · ARCHETYPES OF SUFFERING

1	The Two Brothers	186
2	Sacrifice	198
3	Father and Son	208
4	The Death of Christ	213
5	The Lamb of God	227

VII · SYMBOLISM AND WORSHIP

1	Christian Worship and the Shape of Church Buildings	232
2	Liturgy and Architecture	241
3	Reformed Church Buildings	247
4	The Theological Shape of a Modern Church	249
5	Symbolism Today	259
6	The Decoration of a Modern Church	265
7	Liturgical Substances and Sacramental Practice	273

*Acknowledgments* 277

*Index of Subjects* 279

*Index of Biblical Passages* 283

## LIST OF PLATES

*Appearing in one section between pages 32 & 33*

1. IVORY BOOK COVER—*frontispiece*  
(*Ravenna, sixth or seventh century*)
2. NATIVITY AND ADORATION  
(*Ivory Book Cover, sixth century*)
3. THE PORTAL  
(*Chartres Cathedral, thirteenth century*)
4. MELCHIZEDEK  
(*Chartres Cathedral, thirteenth century*)
5. SAMSON AND THE LION  
(*Norwich Cathedral, fourteenth century*)
6. CAPTURE OF A UNICORN  
(*Lincoln Cathedral, fourteenth century*)
7. PRIDE  
(*Lincoln Cathedral, fourteenth century*)
8. LUST  
(*Auxerre Cathedral, fourteenth century*)
9. HYDRUS  
(*Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Ashmole, 1511, Bestiary*)
10. LABOURS OF THE MONTHS  
(*Brookland Font, Kent*)
11. MOSES  
(*Dijon, fifteenth century*)
12. TREE OF JESSE  
(*Ivory panel, British Museum*)
13. LUCIFER  
(*Jacob Epstein, Birmingham*)

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

14. THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN  
(*Norwich Alabaster, Birmingham*)
15. THE CRUCIFIXION  
(*Graham Sutherland, St Matthew's Church, Northampton*)
16. THE PELICAN  
(*Moncys*)
17. MAJESTAS  
(*Jacob Epstein, Llandaff Cathedral*)
18. THE LIVING CHRIST  
(*Lawrence Lee, Christ Church, Port of Spain, Trinidad*)
19. COVENTRY CATHEDRAL (*Model*)  
(*Basil Spence*)
20. ENGRAVED GLASS SCREEN (*Design*)  
(*John Hutton, Coventry Cathedral*)
21. ECCE HOMO (*Stained glass*)  
(*M. Rocher*)
22. THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST (*Mural*)  
(*Hans Feibusch, Chichester Cathedral*)
23. THE FOUR EVANGELISTS (*Mural*)  
(*Franck Pilloton*)
24. STATIONS OF THE CROSS (*Copper plaque*)  
(*Jean-Pierre Pernot*)
25. RESURRECTION, MACEDONIA (*Mural*)  
(*Stanley Spencer, Burghclere, Hants*)
26. MADONNA AND CHILD  
(*Henry Moore, St Matthew's Church, Northampton*)



*List of Plates*

27. VIRGIN AND CHILD (*Design for Engraved Glass Screen*)  
(*John Hutton, Coventry Cathedral*)
28. 'REMEMBER HIROSHIMA'  
(*Josephina de Vasconcellos*)

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

1. CHI-RHO SYMBOL *page 41*
2. TYPOLOGICAL PATTERN IN CHURCH  
WINDOW, BOURGES 54



# Biblical Types

## I. THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

THE Bible is concerned with human nature and human destiny. Since it was written, and since the general pattern of the Church and its doctrines has emerged, there have been many new discoveries concerning man's mode of consciousness and his awareness of the environment in which he finds himself. The development of the modern scientific method and its application, not only to an investigation of the physical universe (including human anatomy and physiology), but also to human consciousness and its evolution, has brought us to the perplexing intellectual situation in which we now find ourselves. Our problem is further complicated by the application of scientific techniques of literary, historical and textual criticism to the Scriptures themselves, and in this post-critical phase we are confronted by formidable fresh questions of interpretation. In the light of our contemporary appreciation of human psychology and the universe of which we are a part, we may well ask what is the validity of the Biblical view of man's place in a theological scheme of Creation, Sin and Salvation.

Whether we regard the Scriptures as the outcome of 'intuition' or as the product of 'inspiration' makes little difference to a consideration of this question. Does the imagery of the Bible correspond to our present understanding of the human psyche and its total environment? Is the doctrinal and ritual pattern of the Church an effective agency in giving human nature its correct orientation? Do the symbolic things and actions, so powerful in past ages, have a genuine significance in our own time? (Contemporary philosophers would

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

no doubt ask whether these questions themselves have any 'meaning'—we will assume that they have.)

The general thesis of this book is that the imagery and symbolism of the Bible and the Church are valid and effective still—perhaps even more so now that the rational analysis of human consciousness and natural environment has disclosed such a vast realm of mystery and ineffability. The modern scientific method has opened a door not only to knowledge but to ignorance as well: the more we know, the more we realize how little we know. It may be that the Bible really is 'a door opened in heaven', and that, by keeping this door open, the Church enables some to pass through it. But such a desirable possibility does not absolve us from the very difficult task of re-evaluating the traditional Hebrew-Christian 'mythology' in this post-Darwinian, post-Freudian, post-Einsteinian age.

Many Christians today are profoundly uneasy in their acceptance of the pattern of 'myth' by means of which the Bible sets an estimate of human nature and experience in a cosmic drama of salvation. Considerations of pre-history and history, of comparative anthropology and psychology, and of natural science all emphasize the need for a fresh study in the interpretation of Scripture if we are to avoid the alternatives of materialist rejection or fundamentalist literalism. A very real part of this problem (as of so many others) lies in the realm of semantics, and so it is that much of what follows is by way of extended definition of the terms involved in such a discussion.

To use the word 'myth' at all is a hazardous proceeding. To use it in conjunction with the Bible and the Church is likely to spread alarm and confusion unless care is taken to distinguish between the popular use of the word and its proper use. A dictionary definition of 'myth' reads: 'Purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, etc., and embodying popular ideas on natural phenomena, etc.; fictitious person or thing'.<sup>1</sup> This suggests a story which is *untrue*, or a person or thing which is false, invented, imagined, feigned and so on. But truth is not simple. We have to distinguish between historical (or scientific) fact which is true in one sense, and fiction which may disclose truth in another sense. Nobody supposes that *Pilgrim's Progress* is an historical record or that Christian is not a fictitious person, but few would deny that the story discloses a good

<sup>1</sup> *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1934.

## *Biblical Types*

deal of truth about human nature and spiritual reality, albeit from so individualistic a point of view as to give rise to much misunderstanding. A narrative can be historically untrue but psychologically true—in fact, a myth. Therefore the popular use and dictionary definition of ‘myth’ can both be very misleading, and much deeper meanings are to be sought.

So far, so good. A further difficulty often arises when it is suggested that some of the narratives and persons in the Bible should be regarded as mythical. This, however, is not a real difficulty and can occur only when a mistaken view of Scripture is held. If it is supposed that the complete Bible is to be accepted as *literally* true, then to question the historical or scientific truth of any particular passage is to cast doubt upon the whole. But this view of the Bible (popularly known as ‘fundamentalist’) is comparatively modern and quite contrary to the main tradition of the Church. The Church has always had to guard against an exclusively literalist interpretation of Scripture, just as it has always had to prevent an excessive allegorization of it. As quotations given below will make clear, the general tradition of the Church has been to accept the literal meaning whenever possible, but always to seek an allegorical meaning as well; if the literal sense seemed to be untrue, then an allegorical meaning of some sort was to be preferred. If some reference in Scripture appeared to be contradicted by secular knowledge (e.g. the immobility of the earth in Psalm 104.5 contrasted with the motions observed by physicists), then it was held that the language was that of ‘accommodation’ to the limited knowledge of the people by whom and for whom the passage was originally written. It was against this reasonable approach that opinion began to harden some three centuries ago when the world-outlook of modern science began to take shape. When, later on, the scientific method began to be applied to the Scriptures themselves with the techniques of textual, historical and literary criticism, the reaction of some Biblical students led to the rigid literalism with which we are sadly familiar today.

The climax came with the Darwin controversy. Evolutionary ideas and theories had been ‘in the air’ for more than a century, but the publication of *Origin of Species* in 1859 brought matters to a head. Darwin propounded a relatively simple and credible theory of

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

'natural selection' to explain how evolutionary change takes place and demonstrated the probability that, contrary to what appeared to be stated in Genesis (and in Aristotle, for that matter), the species were not fixed. But the crowning affront to some (though by no means all) Bible students was the suggestion that man himself had evolved from non-human stock and was not the result of a sudden special creative act. In other words, Adam was not an historical person at all, and therefore the 'Fall' recounted in Genesis 3 was some kind of a myth. The fact seems to have been completely lost sight of that many church leaders, centuries previously, had held this view of Adam (though not, of course, on evolutionary grounds)—following the rabbis they regarded Adam correctly as 'everyman', and following St Paul they regarded him also as the 'type' of Christ, i.e. the first man of the former dispensation who 'pre-figured' Christ as the first man of the new world-order.<sup>1</sup>

But once the admission was made that the Scriptures might contain non-historical narratives about imaginary persons, how was this interpretation to be controlled? If Adam was mythical, what about Abraham, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist? In some quarters hostile to religion doubts were cast upon the historicity of Jesus himself. Such Christ-myth theories are not now advanced by serious opponents of Christianity—they have long been exploded: apart from other considerations, the parables alone by their originality prove the existence of the single person who spoke them. Nevertheless, among sincere Christians the belief has grown that the gospel-records are primarily theological presentations of what God had done in and through Christ, and that all the actions and sayings and events attributed to him (particularly in John) are not to be regarded as accurate accounts of precisely what he had said and done and undergone, but rather that his actual historical words and deeds are interwoven with the fruits of inspired meditation upon them in the light of the post-Crucifixion experiences of the Church. Thus, in the New Testament generally, and in the Gospels in particular, we should recognize that accurate biographical recollection is used and developed in such a way that we are presented with a composite figure of Jesus, the man from Nazareth, and Christ, the Messiah of the Jews and the Saviour of the world.

<sup>1</sup> See below for a fuller treatment of the 'typological' method of allegorization.

## *Biblical Types*

In terms of music, we might say that the original, authentic, historical reminiscences of the pre-Resurrection words, actions and experiences of Jesus of Nazareth have been transposed, arranged and orchestrated within the new fellowship of the Holy Spirit to produce a concerto-like interpretation of God's decisive act in history leading to the emergence of the Church. The Gospels are not biographies—they contain authentic biographical material, but it has been selected, modified, arranged and presented in such a way that a great variety of associated events and ideas and symbols are evoked—some historical, some legendary, and some mythical. If, for instance, we consider the baptismal immersion by John of Jesus in the river Jordan, the Voice and the Dove, and his crossing the river to be tempted by Satan in the wilderness, we are immediately overwhelmed by symbols, images and themes which find expression both in the Old Testament and elsewhere in the New Testament, and which, moreover, relate to some of the deepest experiences of mankind and are therefore part of the common psychological heritage of humanity. John the Baptist is an Elijah-like figure, Elijah too fasted forty days in the wilderness, so did Moses; after crossing the Red Sea the Israelites were forty years in the wilderness, after which they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land: the Flood marked the end of one period, and the beginning of another was betokened by a Dove: over the primeval chaos-water the Spirit of God hovered and brooded like a bird, and the Voice of God spoke the creative word—the evil power of the Deep was vanquished and order was established. A baby is born from the waters of the womb, water gives life (as the rivers of Eden brought life to the four quarters of the earth), water washes clean, water causes death by drowning. All these associations combine to make baptism a complex symbol of death and rebirth to a new life. To Jesus at his baptism comes the confirmation of the conviction that he himself is the Messiah of the new age of Jewish expectation: indeed, his baptism pre-figures his death and resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Quite clearly, in the Gospels we are reading much more than an objective record of events as seen by an impartial observer. The evangelists were not Hansard-reporters or radio commentators—they were *creative* writers drawing upon a wealth of material, some

<sup>1</sup> A fuller treatment of this instance is given below.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

of which was historical and some which had associations in the realm of legend and myth. History and interpretation are interwoven to disclose the pattern of God's saving action at many levels of experience and in several categories of existence. Any theory of 'inspiration' must be derived from the real character of the writings, for no particular theory of 'inspiration' must be imposed upon them. The evangelists did not have tape-recorders in place of minds, and to suppose that the Holy Spirit 'dictated' the records like a business-editor is the depth of blasphemy. Did the gospel-writers deliberately and consciously compose their works? If you want to know, ask a poet.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

Returning to our original concern to define the full meaning of the word 'myth', it is not unprofitable to compare the meanings which we give to a number of associated words, viz. Fable, Legend, Allegory, Parable and Type, together with Symbol, Image and Sign. By defining these words we shall at least understand better what 'myth' does *not* mean, though it must be realized that the distinction between these terms is by no means absolute and elements of one kind may well appear in examples of another.

*Fable* is usually taken to mean a story (originally spoken) not founded on fact, with a strong 'moral', and most frequently having talking animals for its characters. The Fables of Æsop are characteristic, but there is obviously an element of the fabulous in the Genesis account of the temptation of Eve by a talking snake. In the Dream-Vision section of the Book of Enoch (written c. 165-160 BC) there is an interesting, though tedious, 'fabulization' of the Biblical history of the world to the founding of the Messianic kingdom. In this curious allegory the personages in the story are presented as animals: the following passage appears to refer to Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel:

'Behold a bull came forth from the earth, and that bull was white; and after it came forth a heifer, and along with this came forth two bulls, one of them black, and the other red. And that black bull gored the red one and pursued him over the earth.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Enoch*, 85.3 f.



## *Biblical Types*

The coming of sin into the world is attributed to 'Fallen Angels'—stars which fell from heaven became bulls and mated with the cows, who then bore elephants, camels and asses (86).

Of particular interest, however, is the vision of the Messiah as a great horned ram—a symbol which recurs in Revelation:

'... they all became white bulls; and the first among them became a lamb, and that lamb became a great animal and had great black horns on its head; and the Lord of the sheep rejoiced over it and over all the oxen.'<sup>1</sup>

There is very little of the fabulous in Scripture, notable exceptions being the story of Balaam's ass (Num. 22) and the conference of trees (Judg. 9).

(In passing, it is interesting to note the extraordinary extent to which the technique of fable dominates children's comics. Not only do the animals talk, but they are clothed and behave generally in human fashion. Adults, too, delight in the Disney-world of fabulous animals. The mountain of applied science has laboured and brought forth a Mickey—a mythical creature who has the morals of neither a mouse nor a man—an optical illusion which is the projection of modern man's uncertainty concerning his own status, and a symbol of his recognition of kinship with the animal world. Fabulous animals and the projection of human attitudes into the description of animal behaviour (particularly that of bees and dogs) are in fact a great hindrance to the correct interpretation of animal perceptions and conduct. But it would, after all, be a pity to sacrifice Pluto on the altar of bestial exactitude.)

*Legend* is used of traditional stories: the word originally referred to anecdotal 'lives' of saints collected for reading—these were usually a mixture of historical fact and pious fiction. The word now is close in meaning to *Folk-lore*, a term which is used of traditional stories which have been learned. Some legends appear to refer to pre-historical events, and some of the legendary monsters may reflect a primitive recollection of extinct species, both animal and para-human. Noah's Flood may be legendary in the sense that it recounts some elements of a pre-historical inundation of Mesopotamia: in other words, it is partly historical, but the interpretation of the

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Enoch*, 90.38.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

event as an example of judgement upon sin and deliverance by divine action takes it into the realm of myth.

In the Church the legends of the saints had a considerable influence in popular religion: collections of these 'lives', together with descriptions of festivals, were made in the middle ages (notably the Golden Legend of the thirteenth century), and such collections were used as handbooks for a good deal of the iconographic decoration of churches, manuscripts and ecclesiastical objects generally.

*Allegory* is defined as a 'narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar'; etymologically the word means 'other-speaking' (not to be confused with the modern term 'double-talk!'). We have to distinguish between, on the one hand, a narrative (or saying) which is deliberately and consciously composed to have two meanings—a literal sense and a second or allegorical sense, and, on the other hand, a narrative (or saying) which is capable of being '*allegorized*'—i.e. a narrative which was originally intended to be a straightforward account of what was believed to have happened (or to have been said), but which can subsequently be interpreted as referring to something else as well.

*Pilgrim's Progress* is a deliberate allegory, and, characteristically of this literary form, every person and event in the story has a symbolic meaning. An allegory may be fictional, semi-fictional, or factual: it may recount a version of what did happen, or what could have happened but did not, or of what could not happen. The purpose of an allegory may be to reveal a second meaning generally, or to conceal the second meaning except from the initiated. Some narratives are capable of more than one allegorical interpretation, and some allegories can be further allegorized to give additional interpretations. Allegory is a general term and various kinds of allegory can be classified.

As has been stated above, the mainstream tradition of the Church has been to accept, wherever possible, the literal meaning of any passage in the Scriptures, but always to set alongside it an allegorical meaning of some sort. The allegorization of the Old Testament has most frequently been 'typological' (e.g. the virgin Eve as the type of the Virgin Mary—see below), but it has also been *moral* (e.g. Augustine's interpretation of 'dashing the children against the stones' as referring to evil desires), and *mystical* (e.g. the lovers of

## *Biblical Types*

Canticles as Christ and his Bride, the Church). The underlying theory of this method of double allegorization is based upon Plato's psychological theory of the threefold character of human nature—body, soul and spirit. In the last two centuries BC and in the first century AD hellenized Jews at Alexandria sought to bring Hebrew religion and Platonic philosophy to a synthesis by allegorizing the Scriptures, and from the second century onwards church teachers adopted the same method in the interests of Christian interpretation: by the third century the Scriptures were interpreted systematically on the basis that the literal meaning corresponds to the body, the moral to the soul, and the mystical to the spirit. In the middle ages this threefold interpretation of Scripture was commonplace, and a couplet attributed to Nicolas of Lyra (d. 1340) shows that even a fourfold interpretation was not unknown:

*'Littera gesta docet, qua credas Allegoria,  
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas Anagogia.'*

(Literal teaches the things that happened, Allegorical what should be believed, Moral how we should behave, Anagogic where we are tending.)

These varieties of allegorization, in the main, were used to relate the Old Testament to the New Testament—the content of the Old Testament deriving its full and proper meaning from what is recounted in the New Testament by the process of 'back-interpretation'. Hence the saying: 'The New is concealed in the Old—the Old is revealed in the New'. Thus, it could be held that some of the narratives in the Old Testament not only could be (and ought to be) allegorized, but they were in fact allegories and not historical accounts. Occasionally in the early Christian centuries and more frequently in modern times, it has been suggested that some of the New Testament narratives also are really allegories and that their basis in history may be very slight, e.g. the account of the marriage at Cana, where the changing of six enormous jars of water to wine suggests an allegory of six new days of creation, the old covenant-dispensation of Moses being replaced by the new covenant-dispensation of Jesus, and the remark of Jesus to his mother (very harsh, if taken literally), suggests a reference to the relationship of the Church to Jewry at the time the Gospel was written.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Needless to say, this kind of interpretation of New Testament narratives produces a strong reaction, and in modern times has resulted in a resurgence of 'literalism' or 'fundamentalism' on the one hand, and on the other a development of post-critical neo-typology in the face of so much historical uncertainty. As Basil Willey has remarked: 'It is hard to say which is the more misleading—the fundamentalist reading which mistakes mythology for history, or the Alexandrian, which sees allegory where none was intended.'

*Parable* is really a very special kind of allegory. In the parables of Jesus a secondary meaning is 'thrown alongside' a straightforward instance. The superficial meaning is almost invariably familiar (e.g. the Sower), and, if fictional, is easily credible as something that might have happened or could happen, though often not without an element of surprise, novelty or exaggeration (e.g. the Prodigal Son who went to the dogs, and then to the pigs, and then came home to the calf). Even the story of the rich man and Lazarus, unfamiliar to us, was a well-known folk-tale to Jesus and his hearers, and its general idea acceptable to all except the Sadducees.

In the parables of Jesus the allegorical meaning may be obvious (e.g. the Pearl Merchant), or it may be enigmatic and hidden from all except the initiated. Many of the Gospel parables could be fully understood only by those who had been let into the secret that the kingdom of God had already begun to come, and that not only was Jesus the Messiah but that as Messiah he would have to suffer and perhaps die—this is especially the case in the Wicked Husbandmen which is unique among the parables of Jesus in being an allegory in the ordinary sense. In his recent book *The Parables of Jesus*,<sup>1</sup> Joachim Jeremias holds that it is preaching in general, and not only the parables, which is referred to in the notoriously difficult passage which he translates:

'To you has God given the secret of the kingdom of God; but to those who are without everything is obscure, in order that they (as it is written) may "see and yet not see, may hear and yet not understand, unless they turn and God will forgive them".'<sup>2</sup>

Parables are certainly not 'sermon illustrations', nor are they

<sup>1</sup> SCM Press, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 4.11 f.

## *Biblical Types*

simply narrative analogies. Neither are parables generally to be regarded as allegories in the sense that a symbolic meaning should be sought for every detail of the story (e.g. the 'oil and wine' or the 'twopence' and the 'inn' in the Good Samaritan)—they are allegorical in a more general sense which is usually messianic and eschatological and which is peculiar to Jesus.

Above all, if their original significance is to be apprehended, the parables of Jesus should not be allegorized. As Jeremias has shown, the allegorization of the parables has already been taken quite a long way in the Synoptic record of them, and his book is devoted to recovering the authentic words of Jesus in the actual historical situation in which they were delivered, and to disentangling them from the various interpretative modifications which reflect the historical situation in which they were recorded. For example, on the Parable of Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20.1-16) he writes:

'From the earliest times this was the source of much allegorizing: already from the time of Irenaeus the hours of the five-fold summons were taken to symbolize the periods in the history of redemption from Adam onwards; from Origen's time they symbolized the different stages of human life at which men become Christians. . . . But leaving entirely out of account these allegorical interpretations, the parable does not bear the meaning of a summons to the divine vineyard. Such an interpretation misses the point of the conclusion of the parable, which shows that the emphasis does not lie on a call to the vineyard, but on the distribution of wages at the end of the day . . . each hearer must have been compelled to ask himself the question, "Why does the master of the house give the unusual order that all are to receive the same pay? Why especially does he allow the last to receive a full day's pay for only an hour's work?" . . . There is no question here of a limitless generosity, since all receive only an amount sufficient to sustain life, a bare subsistence wage. No one receives more. He sees that they will have practically nothing to take home; the pay for an hour's work will not keep a family; their children will go hungry if the father comes home empty-handed. It is because of his pity for their poverty that the owner allows them to be paid a full day's wages. In this case the parable does not depict an arbitrary action, but the behaviour of a large-hearted man who is compassionate and full of sympathy for the poor. This, says Jesus, is how God deals with men. This is what God is like, merciful. Even to tax-farmers and sinners he grants an unmerited place

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

in his Kingdom, such is the measure of his goodness. . . . The parable is clearly addressed to those who resembled the murmurers, those who criticized and opposed the good news, Pharisees for example. Jesus was minded to show them how unjustified, hateful, loveless and unmerciful was their criticism. Such, said he, is God's goodness, and since God is good, so too am I. He vindicates the gospel against its critics. Here, clearly, we have recovered the original historical setting. We are suddenly transported into a concrete situation in the life of Jesus such as the Gospels frequently depict. Over and over again we hear the charge brought against Jesus that he is a companion of the despised and outcast, and are told of men to whom the gospel is an offence. . . . As the context in Matthew (the question of Peter in 19.27) shows, the primitive Church related the parable to the disciples of Jesus, and thus diverted its use to the instruction of the Christian community. Their reason for doing so is easy to understand, since they were in the same position as the Church today when it uses the Pharisee-stories of the Gospels as material for sermons: it is obliged to use for the instruction of the community words which were addressed to opponents. Thus we have gained a method of approach to the parables which is of far-reaching significance, a second principle of transformation, to wit: Many parables which the primitive Church connected with the disciples of Jesus, were originally addressed to a different audience, namely, to the Pharisees, the scribes, or the crowd.<sup>1</sup>

Again, dealing with allegorization in general, Jeremias demonstrates the need to recognize a considerable degree of christological allegorizing in the recounting of parables during the period between the Cross and the expected *parousia*. The evangelists had the general desire to find deeper meanings in the words of Jesus in the manner both of rabbinic Scriptural exegesis and of the hellenistic understanding that narratives of this sort were the vehicles of esoteric knowledge.

In sum, we may say that the parables of Jesus exist in their own right, primarily as powerful dynamic challenges to his opponents and living arguments in defence of his own activity; secondarily, they disclose the irruption of the kingdom and the secret of his Messiahship to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. They frequently relate contrasting human attitudes and there is an unasked question at the end of them which amounts to 'Don't you see that your be-

<sup>1</sup> *The Parables of Jesus*, SCM Press, 1954, pp. 23-8.

## Biblical Types

haviour towards me is like that of X in the story?', or 'Can't you understand that God deals with men like Y in this parable?', or simply 'Which sort of person are you like?'

When the parables are 'de-allegorized' and presented in their authentic pre-Crucifixion form (as is successfully done by Jeremias), we are, of course, confronted by a very serious problem. It is bound up with the enigma of what Jesus himself expected would happen after his inevitable arrest and suffering, and with what, in fact, did happen after his death. The content of the parables is that of eschatological imminence conceived in terms of apocalyptic cataclysm and the immediate establishment of the kingdom in power and glory. The allegorization of the parables, begun in the period of oral transmission, and recorded in the Gospels, represents an attempt made by believers within twenty years of the Crucifixion (when the expected *parousia* had not occurred) to interpret them in the light of their experiences of the Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit in the Church: two thousand years later the *parousia* has still not occurred, and we are apparently faced with the task of 're-allegorizing' the parables in terms that are relevant to Christians in the contemporary world-situation. This is a particular part of the general problem of 'de-mythologization' raised by the fact that the world-outlook of the first century AD is very different from that of the twentieth century, and the struggle of Christianity to find convincing expression in a thought-world dominated by the 'mythology' of current science.

It is worth noting at this point the method of allegorization of parables which was popular in the middle ages. Attention was concentrated mainly on four parables—all highly dramatic, strongly eschatological, and proposing a powerful either-or incentive of promise or warning. They were the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and the Rich Man and Lazarus.

The Good Samaritan was presented not just as an example of 'charity', but as a detailed allegory of God's redemptive action for fallen humanity. The man travelling from Jerusalem is 'everyman' journeying through life, the robbers are his sins which strip from him the garments of immortality, the priest and the levite demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Mosaic Law in procuring salvation, but the coming of the Good Samaritan, who is Jesus Christ, not only saves mankind from death but also provides for restoration at the inn,

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

which is the Church: until the Good Samaritan 'comes back again' he has left two pence, which are the sacraments of baptism and eucharist.

This allegorization is vividly depicted in a large stained-glass window at Sens. There are three central lozenges illustrating the three main stages of the narrative: at the top the man has fallen among thieves, in the middle the priest and the levite pass by, and at the bottom the Samaritan is seen bringing him to the inn. Around each lozenge are four typological comments on the scene depicted. Thus, around the despoiling is shown the origin of man's heritage of sin in the Garden of Eden—the tree, the fall, the judgement and the expulsion. Around the passing by are reminders of the Old Covenant—the burning bush, Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, the serpent on a standard and the golden calf. Around the salvation-hostel are scenes of the redemptive act—the trial of Jesus, the flagellation, the crucifixion and the empty tomb. By this remarkable concentration of images, easily apprehended by illiterate pilgrims, the whole drama of man's destiny is set forth and his own choice put before him.

The parable of the Virgins was usually presented as an allegory of the Last Judgement, the women being respectively types of the saved and the damned, while the oil was regarded as a symbol of the supreme virtue, charity. The five wise virgins were also held to signify the five senses of the soul or five stages of interior contemplation, while the five foolish virgins were related to the indulgence of the five senses or to five forms of carnal concupiscence. The Bridegroom was, of course, Christ himself at the Second Coming, the cry in the night was the archangel's trumpet, and the awakening was the resurrection. Pictorially, the wise virgins appear on the right hand of the apocalyptic Christ and the foolish ones on his left.

The parables of the Prodigal Son and of Lazarus were allegorized mainly to illustrate the rejection of the Jews (the Elder Brother and Dives) and the acceptance of the Gentiles (the Prodigal and Lazarus). In iconography the profligate life of the Prodigal was illustrated by lively scenes of his association with ladies of easy virtue: the feast on his return was held to represent the Messianic Banquet provided by the heavenly Father at the end of the age. The extraordinary reversal



## *Biblical Types*

in the ultimate fortunes of the Rich Man and Lazarus also served as a warning against gluttony and a powerful example of the need for charity. Not only this, but 'Saint' Lazarus was adopted as the patron of all beggars and lepers.

Such allegorization is not completely remote from the original meaning of the parables, and there is much to be said for it; but once the process of allegorization begins there is no telling where it will end—one has even heard of the beneficence of God as exemplified in the parable of Labour in the Vineyard being used as a justification for capitalism!

Finally, in connection with the parables, we have to notice the probability that some of the actions of Jesus have the character of 'acted parables'—his choice of twelve disciples, eating with publicans and sinners, setting a child in the midst, cleansing the Temple, washing the disciples' feet, breaking bread and pouring wine. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on a donkey, for instance, seems to have been arranged to 'fulfil' the prophecy of Zechariah which he interpreted as referring to the 'type' of his own kingship—'just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass' (9.9). And further, some of the incidents recorded by the evangelists have the appearance of being a subtle kind of 'literary parable'—the account of Jesus stilling the storm recalls the poetic myth of the Psalmist when he sings of God who 'maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still' (Ps. 107.29), and thus in the Gospel we have a theological interpretation of Jesus' calmness during a sudden squall on Lake Galilee, and a command which was originally addressed to the disciples transferred to the elements.

### 3. TYPOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The term 'type' has the technical sense of a person, thing or event serving as a prophetic similitude; the word is derived from the Greek for 'to strike'—hence 'impression' or 'model'. (The Biblical use of the term must not, of course, be confused with the other technical use of it in Jungian psychology!) St Paul uses the term when he speaks of Adam as the 'type' of Christ (Rom. 5.14f). The same method of interpreting Scripture is to be seen in Paul's reference to the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael by the Egyptian servant Hagar and Isaac by the freewoman Sarah; these things, he says, 'contain an allegory'

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

(Gal. 4.22—5.1). This particular typological interpretation is complex: Hagar, he continues, corresponds to Mount Sinai in Arabia which is the type of the mount of Jerusalem 'that now is', implying that Sarah, the ancestress of Israel, corresponds to 'the Jerusalem that is above (which) is free, which is our mother'—she is the type of the new dispensation of freedom: Hagar and Ishmael were cast out from the old Israel, but now the 'new Israel' (the Church) casts out the people of the old Covenant of Mount Sinai, because the action of God in the mount of Jerusalem establishes a new covenant which releases believers in Jesus from the bondage of the Law of Moses: 'With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.' (The reading of this passage as the Epistle for Lent IV underlies the custom of 'Mothering Sunday', but in the vulgar commercialized 'Mother's Day' it would be a wise child who could recognize his own mother—in the Pauline sense.)

In another passage Paul implies that the crossing of the Red Sea was a type of baptism, and the water in the wilderness was a eucharistic pre-figuration—'the rock was Christ'; so, too, with the manna (I Cor. 10.1-4).

The typological method of interpretation appears to have some dominical sanction in the synoptic record: Jesus likens the eschatological day of the Son of man to the destruction of the world in the Flood and to the destruction of Sodom (Luke 17.26-30), and he also refers to the 'sign of Jonah' as a pre-figuration of his death and resurrection (Matt. 12.39 f), though this may well be an evangelistic embellishment of a saying which originally referred to something else. There is also the reference to Elijah and Elisha as types of a mission to Gentiles (Luke 4.25-27), and in the account of the Walk to Emmaus we read how 'beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24.27). Of particular interest is the passage in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus refers to the brazen serpent of Moses as a type of the 'lifting up' (crucifixion) of the Son of man (John 3.14 f). This surprising symbol of Christ as a snake or serpent does make an occasional appearance in Christian art, though understandably it is not very frequent: in the form of a small dragon on a pillar it is often to be seen as an attribute of Moses.

## *Biblical Types*

The 'acted parables' of Jesus are mostly typological: as we have already indicated, the entry into Jerusalem on a donkey suggests that the meek and lowly king of Zechariah was regarded by Jesus as a type of his own kingship. There is little doubt that in interpreting the event in this way we are close to the original intention of Jesus: presumably, it was generally supposed that the verse in Zechariah referred to the Messiah, and, by choosing a donkey instead of a war-horse, Jesus shows that he had rejected the popular form of the hope for a restoration of the kingdom under the leadership of a Davidic prince-warrior, but that, nevertheless, he was claiming to be a king.

But the way in which Jesus completely transformed contemporary beliefs concerning the Messiah was simply by giving a *personal* messianic significance to two other extraordinary types in Scripture—the 'Servant' of Deutero-Isaiah (40-55) and the 'Son of man' of Daniel (7). These figures were originally symbolic of the faithful in the nation: the one is *Israel suffering* and the other is *Israel glorified*. These corporate symbols are transformed by Jesus into personal ones. And they are integrated into a single person. As part of the messianic function he himself will suffer and be glorified. These are the basic types embodied by Jesus in his new dynamic concept of the Messiah. Other types in Scripture (e.g. the 'I' of Ps. 22, the lowly king of Zechariah, the sacrificial lamb) also receive messianic interpretation, but in a sense accessory to the fundamental figure of the Suffering Servant who becomes the glorified Son of man.

In Judaism there is no trace that the Sufferer of Second Isaiah was ever thought of as a messianic figure (with the still doubtful exception of the Dead Sea Scrolls) nor that the sacrificed lamb signified a Messiah killed as an offering to God—indeed the death of the Messiah was hardly contemplated at all. Again the Son of Man figure in Daniel was not originally a figure of the Messiah: in the vision he does not come to earth, but, being received in audience in the divine court of the Ancient of Days, is a personification of the righteous in Israel (the 'saints of the Most High', 7.21 f), entering into their earthly inheritance after the destruction of the bestial empires which had oppressed the nation. In subsequent apocalyptic writings which were current in the first century BC (e.g. in the Similitudes of Enoch), the Danielic Son of Man had, as it were,

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

become messianic, and, as the heavenly 'Elect One', was presented as God's agent in the expected judgement and resurrection, mentioned in Daniel 12, which would mark the end of the existing world-order and inaugurate the new Age of the Messiah.

It is impossible to form any estimate of the precise influence (if any) upon Jesus himself of such writings as Enoch, but there can be little doubt that this type of visionary description and apocalyptic imagery was not without some effect upon his preaching of Messiahship. It is certainly clear that this kind of symbolism strongly coloured the early Christians' accounts of his teaching and their own beliefs about the end of the age and the *parousia* of the glorified Christ.

The Evangelists themselves regard the Scriptures as being typologically 'fulfilled' in what they recount of Jesus—sometimes by implication and sometimes by direct quotation. In some cases the instances given appear to us to be curious distortions, as when Matthew links Joseph's dream leading to the Flight to Egypt with the metaphor to be found in Hosea which originally referred to God, as the Father of Israel, bringing the nation out of Egypt in the Exodus: 'Out of Egypt did I call my son' (Hos. 11.1=Matt. 2.15). Again, it is obvious that the various accounts of the Passion have been composed after a meditative study of Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. A further development of the typological interpretation of Scripture is to be found in Hebrews: while it is true that Jesus chose the Passover season to make his final challenge to those who put him to death, and, therefore, we may conclude that in a general sense he conceived his action in terms of the divine deliverance which was symbolized in the Passover lamb-sacrifice, it is unwarrantable to suppose that Jesus thought of himself as 'a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (Heb. 6.20). (See below for a fuller treatment of Sacrifice, and also the strange fact that apparently 'opposite' symbols can stand for the same thing, e.g. in Hebrews Jesus is both High Priest and Sacrificial Victim, and in John he is at once the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd.)

The most familiar example of typology for most people is to be observed in the libretto of Handel's *Messiah*, and thus in the concert-hall is exemplified what is expressed liturgically in the Church. A more recent example of typology in worship is the increasingly popular Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at Christmas.

#### 4. TYPOLOGY IN THE CHURCH

When we turn to the interpretation of Scripture in the early centuries of the life of the Church we find a very great development of allegorization—moral, typological and mystical. For more than two centuries hellenized Jewish scholars (particularly at Alexandria) had been allegorizing the Scriptures in an attempt to show that, properly understood, the Jewish holy writings included all the wisdom of the Greeks, and that the revelation to the 'chosen people' harmonized with the best of speculative philosophy. The only hope of establishing Judaism as an intellectually respectable faith in a sophisticated pagan milieu was to maintain that the crudely anthropomorphic passages, together with the narratives in the Scriptures which appeared to be disgustingly immoral, should be interpreted allegorically. The founder of this approach was Aristobulus (b. 160 BC), but the best-known exponent of it is Philo (a contemporary of Jesus and Paul), who systematically set about allegorizing the Scriptures so that they could be made to harmonize with Stoic philosophy.

Philo is thoroughgoing. For instance, he says that to take literally the words that 'God planted a paradise in Eden' is impious: 'let not such fabulous nonsense ever enter our minds'—the real meaning, he says, is that God implants terrestrial virtue in the human race. Similarly, the creation of Eve means that God took the power which dwells in the outward senses and led it to the mind. No exception need be taken to this treatment of what is itself a myth, but a mistake is made when more or less historical people and events are allegorized away into abstract personifications: Moses is intelligence, Aaron is speech, Abraham is virtue acquired by learning, Isaac is innate virtue, Jacob is virtue acquired by struggle, and so on. In other words, as Henry Ford was to express it forcibly nineteen hundred years later, 'History is bunk'. But, as F. W. Farrar comments:

'We can hardly blame Philo if, under stress of circumstances, and painful antagonism of Hellenic and Jewish culture—amid the taunting criticisms of philosophers and the grovelling letter-worship of Rabbis—he eagerly embraced a method which rested indeed on unverified pre-suppositions, but seemed to offer the possibility of reconciliation. Allegory in Philo's days was not an

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

intentional falsification nor a hypocritical subterfuge. It was a phase of thought which seemed to be inevitable in the education of the world. It is more astonishing—and would be more culpable, if we could ever call men culpable for not rising superior to the religious opinions of their age—that Philo's methods, teeming as they do with impossibilities, and based as they are on the shifting sand, should yet have been adopted and practised by Christian commentators for thousands of years after the high-minded Alexandrian had passed away.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the earliest Christian commentators—the 'apostolic Fathers'—in the *First Epistle of Clement* (written about AD 100 and included in the fifth century *Codex Alexandrinus* of Scripture) we find that the action of the harlot Rahab in hanging a scarlet rope out of her house (Josh. 2.18) is interpreted as 'showing that by the blood of our Lord should be redemption to all that believe and hope in God' (XII). Clement goes not only to the Scriptures but to pagan folklore in his search for 'types' and finds in the Arabian legend of the phoenix a 'wonderful type of the resurrection' (XXV).

In the *Epistle of Barnabas* there is a long exposition of the sacrifice of a red heifer as described in Numbers 19. The following extract exemplifies the method of interpretation:

'Consider how all these things are delivered in a figure for us. This heifer is Jesus Christ; the wicked men that offer it are those sinners who brought him to death. . . . Why was the wool put on a stick? Because the kingdom of Jesus was founded upon the cross. . . . Wherefore these things being thus done are to us indeed evident; but to the Jews they are obscure, because they hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord'.<sup>2</sup>

The method is taken to even greater lengths by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus and ends in the realm of legend and fancy. It is clearly based on the theory that the Old Testament writings are primarily allegorical, and that they are intended for, and can be properly understood only by, Christians.

The typological method of interpretation reaches its full flower in the third century at Alexandria. In his treatise *On Marriage*, Clement of Alexandria writes as follows of the opponents of Christianity:

<sup>1</sup> *History of Interpretation*, Macmillan, 1886, pp. 155-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle of Barnabas*, VIII.

## *Biblical Types*

‘These folk also collect extracts from the prophets, making a selection and mischievously stringing them together. They interpret in a literal sense sayings intended to be understood allegorically.’<sup>1</sup>

On the saying of Jesus ‘Woe to them that are with child and are giving suck in those days’ (Matt. 24.19), Clement comments: ‘a saying, I admit, to be understood allegorically’.<sup>2</sup> And on another saying of Jesus, he writes:

‘But who are the two or three gathered together in the name of Christ in whose midst the Lord is? Does he not by the three mean husband, wife and child? . . . According to another view the three may be passion, desire and thought; another interpretation makes them flesh, soul and spirit.’<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere Clement allegorizes the Decalogue and treats some of the New Testament miracles as if they were parables—concerning the Feeding of the Multitude, for instance, he says that the ‘barley loaves’ signify the preparation of the Jews for divine knowledge because barley ripens before wheat, and that the fishes represent the preparation of the Gentiles by Greek philosophy because it was generated in the waves of heathendom. This fanciful kind of treatment is very different both from the Johannine interpretation of the Feeding as typological with reference to manna in the wilderness, and mystical with reference to eucharistic partaking of Jesus as the ‘bread of life’ (John 6), and from the modern view which would also include a reference to the Messianic Banquet.

All in all, Dr Farrar takes rather a poor view of Clement of Alexandria. He writes:

‘. . . believing in the divine origin of Greek philosophy, (he) openly propounded the principle that all Scripture must be allegorically understood. The motto of the school was “Unless ye believe ye will not understand”. . . . He does not deny the literal but thinks it only furnishes an elementary truth. . . . He makes room for legends even in the New Testament story. His quotations are loose and paraphrastic, and sometimes attributed to the wrong author. He quotes verses which have no existence. He refers to Apocryphal writings as though they were inspired’.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *On Marriage*, 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 183-6.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

With Origen we come to a careful scholar who, accepting most of the views of his predecessors, really built up the fabric of a vast allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures which prevails in the un-reformed churches and which is now being revived in some sections of Protestantism. Origen himself writes:

‘You must be prepared to recognize that the narratives of Holy Scripture are “figures”, and for that reason you must consider them in a spiritual rather than a carnal fashion, and thus grasp their purport. For, if you take them in a carnal manner, they harm you and fail to nourish. You get cases in the Gospel of the “letter which kills”; for it is not only in the Old Testament that the “letter which kills” is discoverable, but in the New Testament also occurs the “letter which kills” the man who does not apply a spiritual interpretation to what is recorded.’<sup>1</sup>

In another passage his attitude is extraordinarily ‘modern’ and ‘liberal’ in tone, and it is a great tragedy that Origen did not bring his tremendous intellect to bear upon the literary relationships of the first three Gospels: if he had seen the ‘Synoptic Problem’ there is little doubt that he would have solved it, and the Church would have been spared both the over-emphasis on allegorical interpretation and the modern development of extreme ‘liberalism’ in response to the challenges of science. In spite of this understandable failure of Origen, it is very refreshing to read:

‘I do not condemn the Evangelists even if they sometimes modified things which in the eye of history happened differently in the interests of the mystical aim which they had in view, so that they speak of a thing which happened in one place as if it happened somewhere else, or of what took place at one time as if it had happened at another time, and introduce certain changes into the words actually spoken. Their intention was to speak the truth when it is possible both materially and spiritually and, when it was not possible to do both, they preferred the spiritual to the material. Indeed, spiritual truth was often preserved in what might be described as material falsehood.’<sup>2</sup>

How close this attitude is to the principles of modern critical study of the Scriptures, and yet how far away! For Origen got carried away by his allegorizing and carried the Church away with him. The

<sup>1</sup> *Hom. on Leviticus*, viii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *On John*, x, 5.



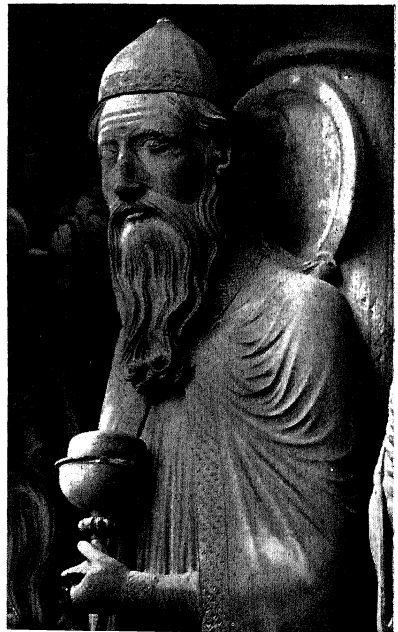


2 NATIVITY AND ADORATION *Ivory Book Cover*

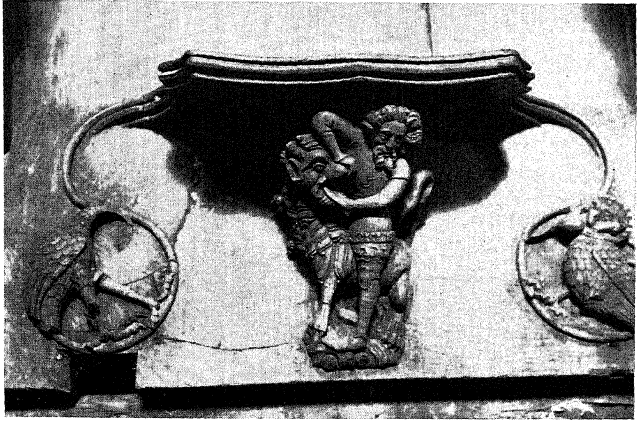


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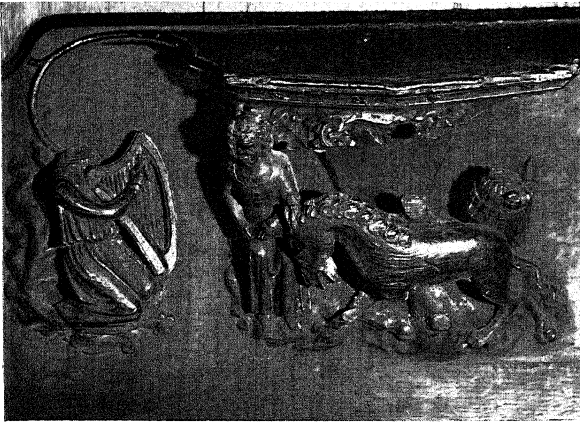
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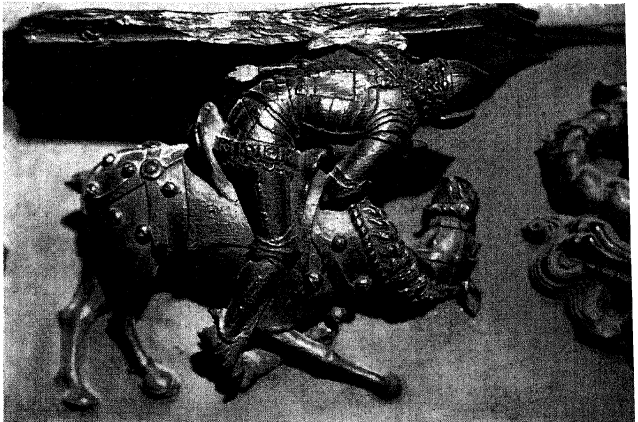
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CAPTURE OF  
A UNICORN  
Lincoln  
Cathedral



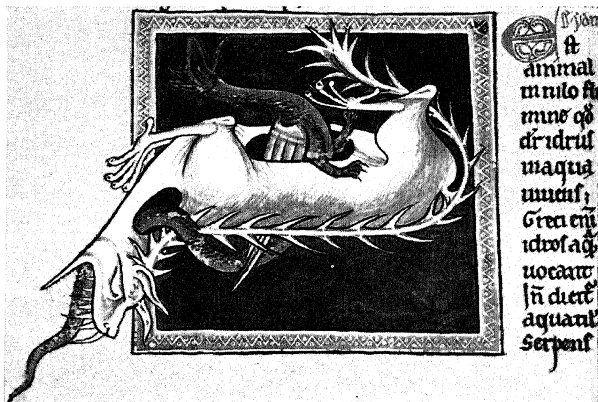
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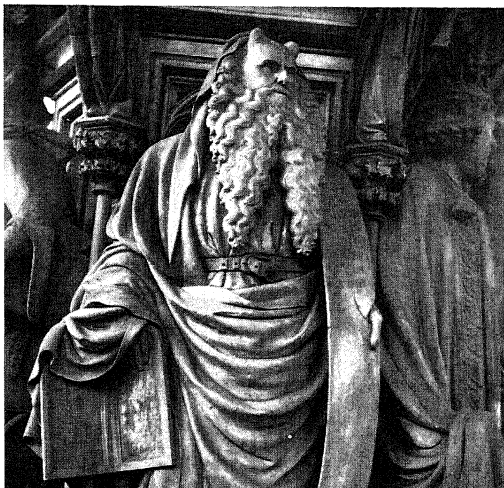


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10  
LABOURS OF THE  
MONTHS  
Brookland Font  
Kent

11  
MOSES  
Dijon



12  
TREE OF JESSE  
*Ivory panel*  
British Museum

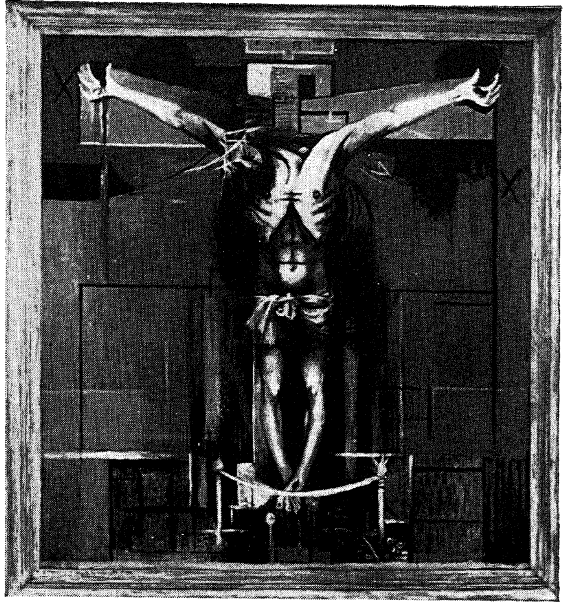


13  
LUCIFER  
Jacob Epstein  
Birmingham

14  
THE CORONATION  
OF THE VIRGIN  
*Norwich Alabaster*  
Birmingham

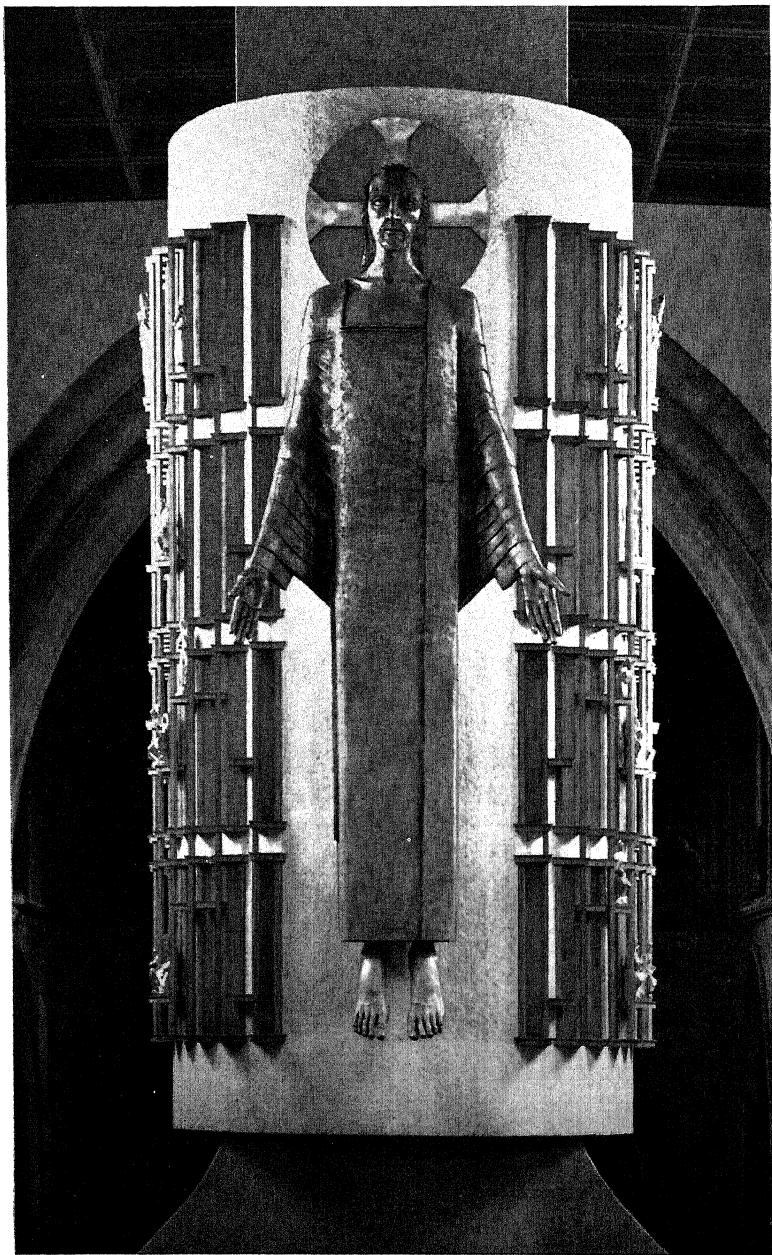


15  
THE CRUCIFIXION  
Graham Sutherland  
Northampton



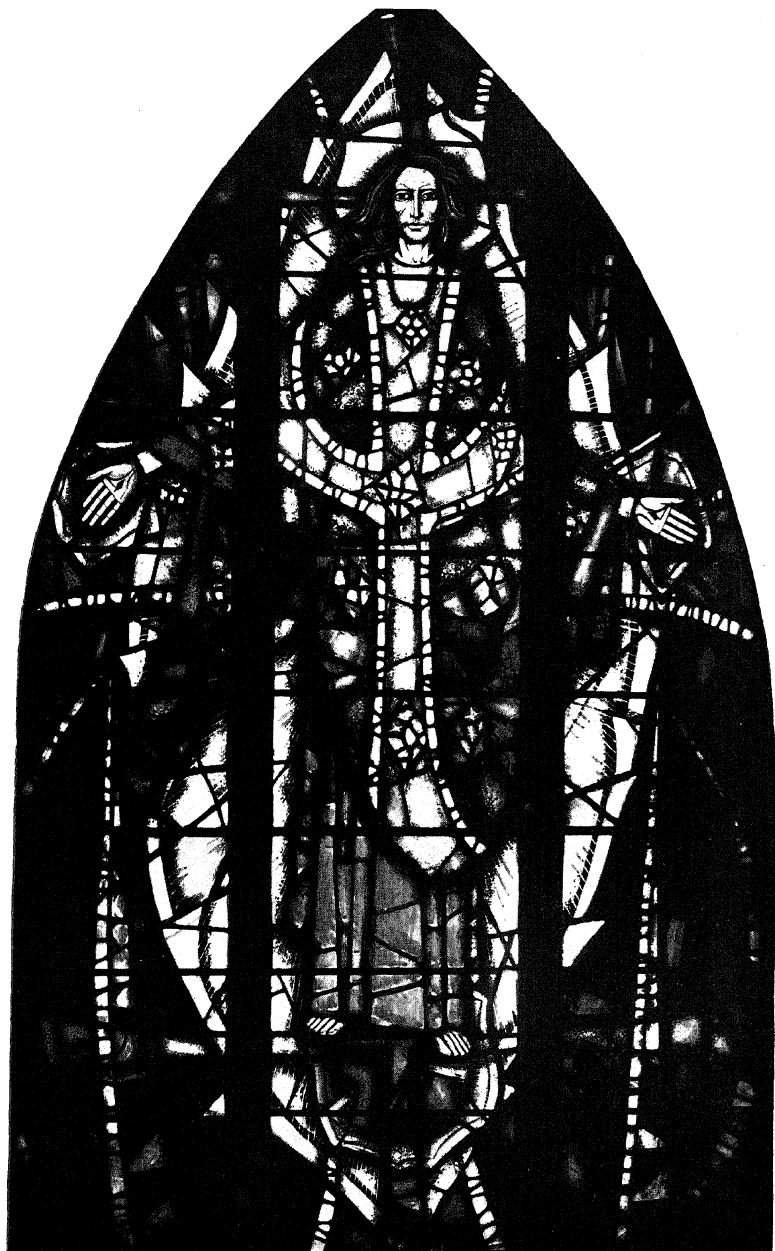
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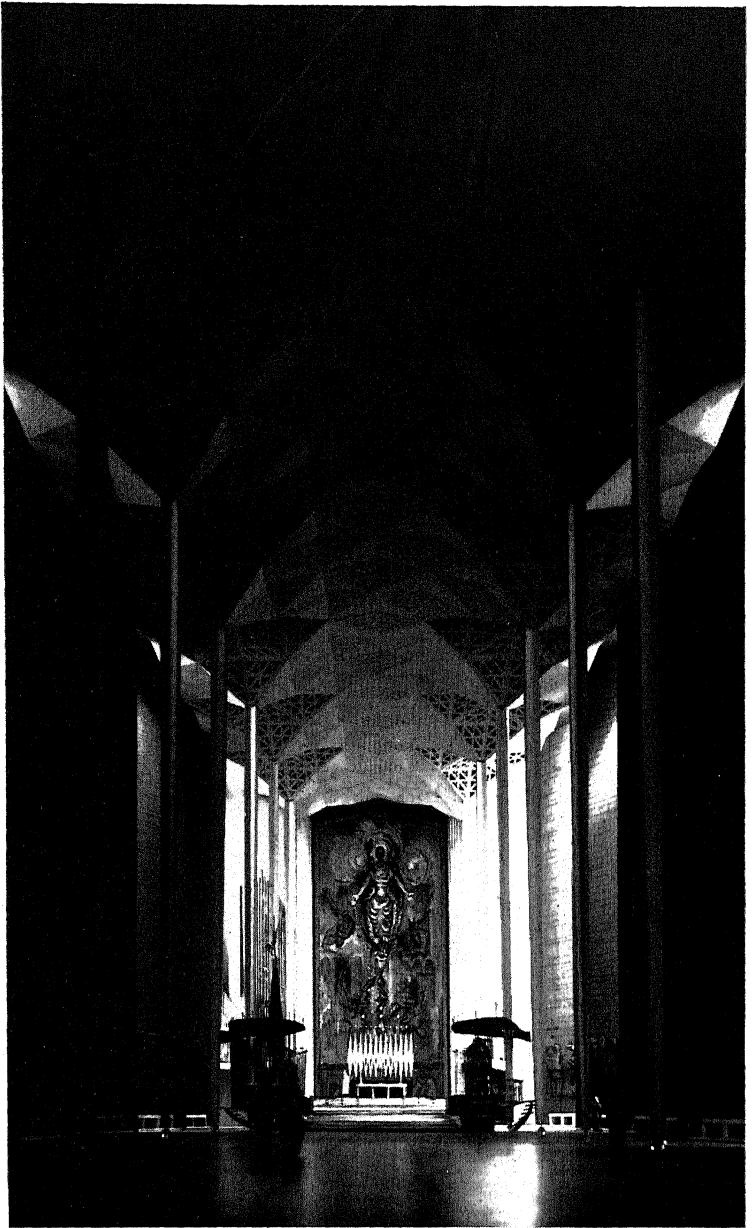


17 MAJESTAS Jacob Epstein, Llandaff Cathedral

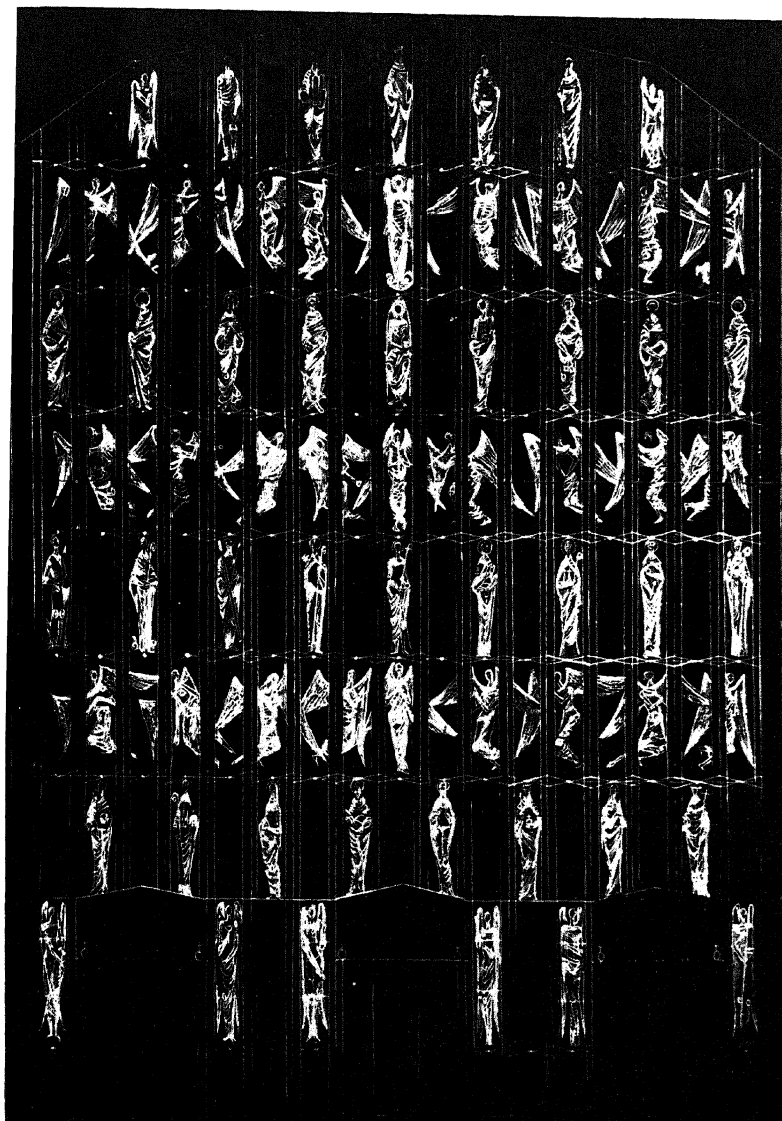




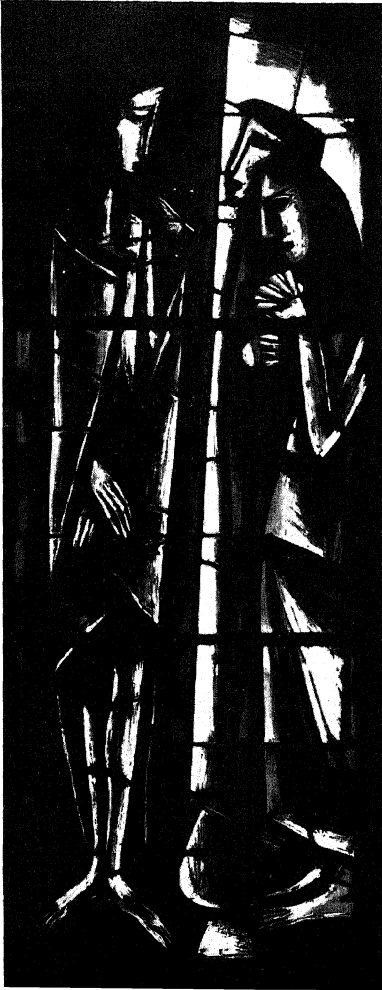
18 THE LIVING CHRIST Lawrence Lee, Port of Spain, Trinidad



19 COVENTRY CATHEDRAL (*Model*) Basil Spence



20 ENGRAVED GLASS SCREEN (*Design*) John Hutton, Coventry Cathedral

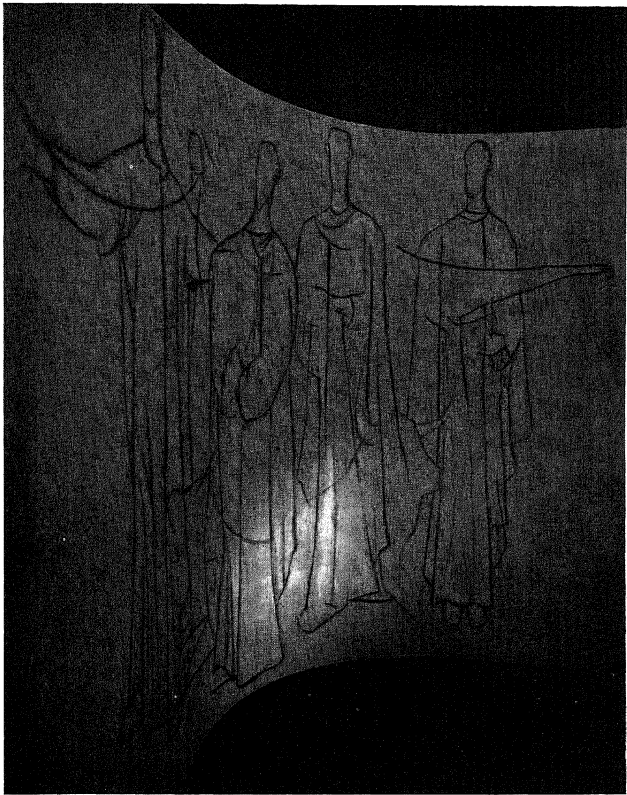


21  
ECCE HOMO  
*Stained glass*  
M. Rocher

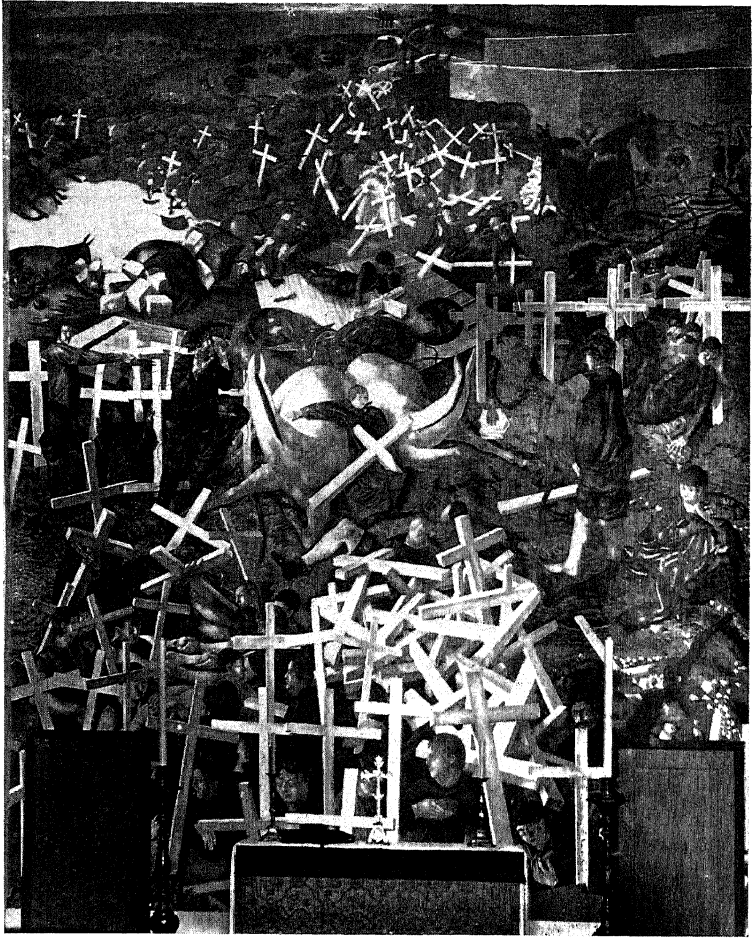


22  
THE BAPTISM OF  
CHRIST  
*Mural*  
Hans Feibusch  
Chichester Cathedral

23  
THE FOUR  
EVANGELISTS  
*Mural*  
Franck Pilloton



24  
STATIONS  
OF THE CROSS  
*Copper plaque*  
Jean-Pierre Pernot



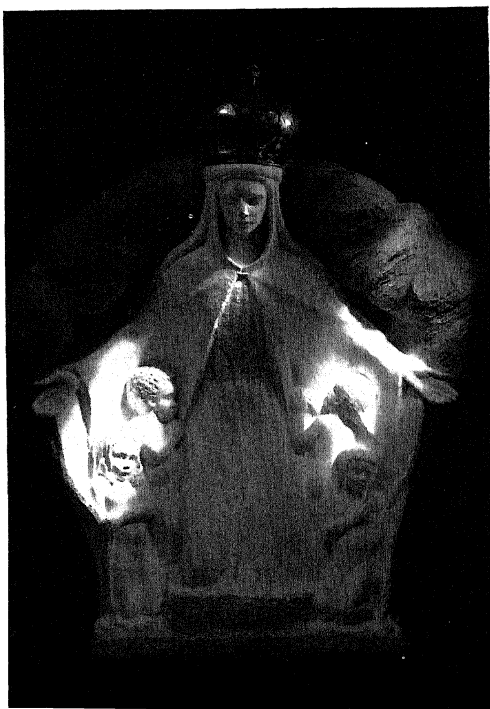
25 RESURRECTION, MACEDONIA *Mural* Stanley Spencer, Burghclere, Hants



26 MADONNA AND CHILD Henry Moore, Northampton



27  
VIRGIN AND CHILD  
*Design for Engraved Glass Screen*  
John Hutton  
Coventry Cathedral



28  
'REMEMBER  
HIROSHIMA'  
Josephina de Vasconcellos



## *Biblical Types*

historical content of Scripture became submerged under a fantastic mountain of allegory, and the fanciful excesses of the medieval Church comprised one of the elements which the Reformers sought to counteract by getting the Bible into the hands of the laity. But, as seems to be the habit of pendulums, this one swung too far, and an exclusive literalism gradually became established as the predominant attitude of Protestantism. If, in the third century of our era, a Carolus Darvinus, sixteen centuries prematurely born, had put forward a theory of natural selection, he would have met with no opposition in Alexandria from church leaders. (This is by no means as impossible as it sounds: the simple facts upon which Darwin based his theory were there for any naturalist to see, viz. that in spite of the fact that any mating pair produces far more offspring than is necessary to replace itself, yet, in a constant natural environment, plant and animal populations also remain approximately constant in number; and, secondly, that offspring are not absolutely identical with parents and that some of the variations can be passed on to succeeding generations, and hence some of those that do survive in nature have a survival-value in relation to the environment. The extraordinary thing is that no one noticed this until the middle of the nineteenth century.) Origen would certainly not have opposed an evolutionary theory on the grounds that it contradicted what appear to be accounts of the creation if Genesis is taken literally. The temptation to quote him again cannot be resisted:

‘Since the chief aim was to announce the spiritual connection in the things that have been done and ought to be done, where the Word found actual events in history which could be adapted to the mystical senses He made use of them, hiding from the multitude the deeper meaning; but where in the narrative of the development of spiritual things there did not follow (already indicated because of the mystical meaning) the performance of certain events, the Scripture wove into the history an event which did not happen, sometimes what could not have happened, and sometimes what could have happened and did not.’<sup>1</sup>

With this passage we may contrast an utterance of Dr Burgon in the University pulpit at Oxford in the year following the British Association meeting at which the Darwin controversy reached its climax (1860):

<sup>1</sup> *de Princ.*, IV, ii, 7-9.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

'The Bible is none other than the voice of him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it (where are we to stop?), every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme.'

Most unfortunately, there is at the present moment a strong resurgence of this extraordinary attitude, which, though it might have been excusable a hundred years ago, can now only be interpreted as a flight from knowledge and reason.

There is no need at this point to pursue further the development of typological interpretation in the history of Christian literature. The Fathers really overplayed the hand which had been dealt by Paul when he referred to the misdeeds of Israel in the wilderness in the following terms:

'In these things they became types of us, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. . . . Now these things happened unto them by way of example (*tupikos*); and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come'<sup>1</sup>

In I Peter the Christian ark is launched into the troubled waters of interpretation:

'Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, into which few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through water: which also in the *antitype* doth now save you even baptism.'<sup>2</sup>

This odd passage, which makes the Flood a type and baptism its 'antitype', serves well as a cue for a brief consideration of early Christian art, for there, too, we find a typology and symbolism which is parallel to the written interpretations.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 10.6-11.

<sup>2</sup> I Peter 3.18-21.

5. EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

The earliest surviving Christian art is of the third century, and, apart from the mural at the house-church at Dura (AD 232), the paintings, glass-engravings and low-relief carvings are virtually all in the catacombs at Rome. The principal concern of these paintings is therefore with immortality and with sacramental worship.

The emphasis is on the destiny of the departed souls and the types pictorially represented are acts of deliverance and the giving of new life. One of the most popular symbols is that of Noah in the Ark, and in it there is a fascinating compression of symbolism. The presence of the Dove links Noah's Flood with the Baptism of Jesus, and hence with every Christian baptism at which the spirit of salvation is given; but the loving and peace-giving Dove, signifying the Holy Spirit, thereby also represents the 'author' of Scripture wherein these things are written. The Ark is usually represented as a tomb-like or coffin-like box from which Noah is emerging in a 'resurrection-attitude': the general effect is very suggestive of both Greek and Egyptian myths in which death is likened to a journey by boat to the next world, and, as such, would readily have been accepted by converted pagans. Noah's wife and family and the animals appear to have been lost in transit—the point is that the emphasis is on individual salvation in the context of burial, rather than on the corporate salvation which is more generally symbolized by the Ark.

Several of the commonest pictures and symbols are connected with boats and water. In the Gospels there is a great deal about boats and fishing: several of the disciples were fishermen, Jesus travelled in and preached from a boat, he stilled a storm and walked on water, he spoke of 'fishers of men', he referred to Jonah in the 'whale's belly' as a type of his resurrection (Matt. 12.39 f) and to Noah's Flood as a type of the *eschaton* (Luke 17.26-30), fishes were eaten at the eucharistic meals when the crowds were fed, there was a coin in a fish's mouth, after the seven disciples had caught 153 the Risen Lord gave them fish and bread to eat (John 21.1 ff). The catacomb funeral congregations could very easily be reminded of these stories by simple pictures of a boat—the Ark or a small boat with two or three disciples fishing, or even more simply by the

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

drawing of a fish or fishes. (Incidentally, there is a typological reference here to the words of Jeremiah: 'I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them' (16.16).) A boat very soon became a symbol of the Church carrying the faithful to salvation, and Christ saving Peter as he tried to walk on the water was readily seen as a symbol of Christ rescuing the soul from death. In Hebrews there is a reference to the hope of immortality as 'an anchor of the soul' (6.19) and this anchor is another common symbol; also in the nautical tradition is the use of a lighthouse to symbolize 'the light of the world'. Justin Martyr drew attention to the fact that the mast and cross-beams of a ship suggests the Cross, and even today we speak of the *nave* of a church, and at baptism are 'received into the ark of Christ's Church'. In earliest times the Cross remained a manual sign and was not directly represented—still less the crucifixion: it was deemed sufficient that the Cross was suggested in the anchor and in the Greek letter X—the initial of Christ.

The Boat is a universal symbol connected with both birth and death—cradle and coffin are alike special cases of a boat. We are reminded of such diverse examples as the boat-crib of Moses and the ship-burials of Germanic peoples right back to the Bronze Age. Ships are always spoken of as 'she', and we should realize that the Boat is also one of the main symbols of the feminine—it is a 'container' which provides safety. As a mother encloses her young, so the cradle confines the baby; the confined body is laid in Mother-Earth, and the ship of death carries the departed soul to the place of re-birth. The Ark, depicted as a small box with Noah alone emerging from it, plainly indicates the symbolism of uterus and new birth. Moreover, in antiquity the Fish was sometimes a symbol of the Great Mother-Goddess, and the popular belief in mermaids is perhaps a relic of this connection: the Zodiac sign, Virgo, is often depicted with a fish-tail. In the catacombs the Fish is a very common symbol, though here its multiple significance is specifically Christian rather than archetypally feminine: even here an exception may be seen in the case of Jonah and the sea-monster where there is more than a hint of the 'devouring' aspect of maternity which is frequent in mythology. The continued use of the word *piscina* for the ablution basin used in cleansing the chalice is an interesting ecclesiastical survival of a term, the primary meaning of which is fish-pond and

## *Biblical Types*

the secondary meaning bathing-place, and it may be that there is a remote connection with some aspect of the original Christian fish-symbolism.

In early Christian art a Fish, in the first place, signifies the soul of the departed; secondly it signifies the eucharistic spiritual food; thirdly it signifies the presence of Christ himself, for very early it had been noticed that the letters of the Greek word for fish—I-Ch-Th-U-S—acrostically provided the initials for *Jesus-Christ-of God-Son-Saviour*. The Fish, in the early Christian centuries, was therefore a very powerful symbol indeed. Tertullian uses it to recall the sacrament of Baptism in these words:

‘. . . we little fishes, following the example of our Fish Jesus Christ, are born in water.’<sup>1</sup>

In the terms of this imagery, we are, so to speak, received into the aquarium of the Church, where we are eternally saved. The same kind of imagery was used in a Greek epitaph of the third century on a tombstone discovered at Autun:

‘Divine offspring of the heavenly Fish, preserve a reverent heart when thou takest the drink of immortality that is given among mortals. Comfort thy soul, beloved, with the ineffable fountains, in the never-failing waters of Wisdom, giver of riches. Take the honey-sweet food of the Saviour of saints and eat it with hunger, holding the Fish in thy hands. Fill me with the Fish, I pray thee, Lord Saviour. May my mother sleep well, I pray thee, Light of the dead. Aschandius my father, dearly beloved of my heart, with my sweet mother and my brethren, remember thy Pectorius in the peace of the Fish.’

Bishop Abercius of Hierapolis about the year AD 200 composed his own epitaph: he describes himself as ‘a disciple of the chaste shepherd’ and mentions some of his journeyings in order to emphasize the fact that everywhere he went he was welcomed into the eucharistic fellowship of the Church. Once again, we find the imagery of the Fish as the symbol of the Christ in this delightful passage:

‘Everywhere faith led the way and set before me for food the Fish from the Spring mighty and pure, whom a spotless Virgin caught,

<sup>1</sup> *de Baptismo*, i.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

and gave this to friends to eat, always having sweet wine and giving the mixed cup with bread.<sup>9</sup>

A fish or two fishes are often depicted in the catacombs, either alone or with five loaves, or with seven or twelve baskets of bread. The indications are that, in the early days of the Church, the Fish was a frequent eucharistic symbol: one might suppose that in circumstances where the sacrificial death of Christ was not emphasized the Fish was a more convenient symbol than the slaughtered lamb. Further, it is possible that in the ancient world the 'resurrection' in nature was symbolized by a fish or fishes: the two fishes of the Zodiac sign, Pisces, may indicate the new life of the rivers after the coming of the rains.

Another favourite pictorial type (based on the typological reference of Jesus himself), is the rather fishy story of Jonah. Here we have a characteristic symbolic inversion—the great fish is here a symbol of death, while the departed soul is symbolized by Jonah—but that is not all, for Jonah is also the type of Christ, 'for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' (Matt. 12.40). In the catacombs the main incidents of the Jonah story are sometimes presented as a kind of sacred strip-cartoon: Jonah is thrown overboard, he is swallowed by the sea-monster, he is spewed out, he lies at naked ease under a bower—the new-born soul in the new garden of Eden in the land beyond death. This kind of symbolism was further developed in medieval art so that the 'gate of Hell' is often represented as a giant fish's mouth into which the wicked are thrust, and thus a link is made with the Biblical monsters of evil, Leviathan or Rahab in the Old Testament and the great serpent-dragon of the New Testament.

The more common water-symbols in early Christian art are Moses striking the rock for life-saving water ('and the rock was Christ'), and the marriage at Cana (the first of the Johannine 'signs') where the purificatory water of the Jews is changed to the eucharistic wine of the Christian new life. In the house-church at Dura, Peter, as he tries to walk on the water, is shown being helped by Christ; in another mural Christ is pictured with the woman of Samaria at the well of living water.

The raising of Lazarus (the last of the Johannine 'signs') is, of

## *Biblical Types*

course, another frequent symbol of resurrection in the catacombs, and it is often arranged to be a New Testament parallel to the deliverance of Jonah. So, too, with the healing of the paralytic—Christ will raise the departed from the paralysis of death. Daniel in the Lions' Den, and the Three Men in the Burning Fiery Furnace are also common pictures symbolizing deliverance from destruction: sometimes in the latter a dove is incongruously introduced to symbolize the divine presence.

In later periods more fanciful and creative ideas make their appearance, as when Christ is shown presenting an ear (or a sheaf) of corn to Adam and a lamb to Eve.

In the Graeco-Roman world the Old Testament in the Septuagint Greek version was quite well known, and, in spite of the Mosaic prohibition upon any 'likeness' of human beings, there is evidence that at the beginning of our era this ban was being ignored. Incidentally, the proscription had never been completely effective, for archaeological finds in Palestine of the Old Testament period include figurines of a mother-goddess, probably used as amulets in connection with fertility and childbirth. Moreover, synagogues have been unearthed which are decorated with human figures, and there is also reason to think that 'illustrated' copies of the 'books' of the Scriptures were in circulation. One of the latter, the *Rotulus of Joshua*, is in the Vatican Library. The roll, originally thirty feet long, is decorated with a continuous frieze which illustrates the conquest and occupation of the Promised Land. The original of this version can be dated in the second century AD, because Joshua and his army are clad in uniforms identical with those of Roman soldiers as depicted on the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. Thus, when Christian artists (or possibly pagan artists employed by Christians to begin with) began to decorate the sacred places, they made use of some of the models already familiar to the converts: naturally they chose those which were most easily susceptible of a typological interpretation. These include Noah and the Ark as a type of the Church, Moses striking the Rock for water as a type of Christian baptism, and the binding of Isaac as a type of the sacrificial death of Jesus; as types of endurance and deliverance under persecution Daniel in the Lions' Den and the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace were particularly valuable.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

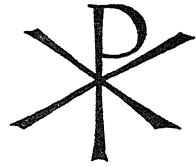
When New Testament incidents began to be illustrated the main interest was focused on the sacraments, deliverance from sin and the hope of immortality. The Baptism of Jesus, the Changing of Water to Wine, and the Feeding of the Multitude 'illustrated' the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist; the Healings of the Paralytic, the Blind Man, the Leper, and the Woman with an issue of blood, all exemplified the regenerative and cleansing power of Christ; the raising of Lazarus was a most telling symbol of resurrection and the hope of immortality. All these works of power provided the guarantee of deliverance from sin and death and their simple graphic representation helped the non-literate to appreciate immediately what was offered to them in the Church. The universal appeal of the Mother and Child led eventually to a marked interest in the Infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke: the Visit of the Magi and the Flight to Egypt were particularly valuable in presenting two aspects of the universality of Christianity—the recognition of Christ by Gentiles and his persecution by Jews right from the time of his birth. The 'miraculous' element in these stories made them popular with credulous people, and the embroidery of the traditions connected with the Virgin-Mother, both in the Apocryphal Gospels and in the later legends, soon came to be reflected in the visual art-forms—particularly was this so amongst converts whose former pagan religion included reverence for a great mother-goddess. As the establishment of the canon of the New Testament proceeded, so the main themes of Christian art also became formalized to a considerable extent and the conventions for the pictorial representation of the Gospel-events were steadily accumulated.

In the earlier art there is no direct representation of Jesus: this is parallel to the general disinterest of the early Church in the man from Nazareth. The Gospel-writers make no attempt to describe his appearance for the simple reason that his physique, colouring and costume had no theological significance, and they lacked the intimate biographical concern which is characteristic of this 'candid camera' age. In the early Church attention is concentrated on the saving acts of God as mediated by his mysterious agent, the Christ, and in this atmosphere typology flourished at the expense of biography in both literature and art. Thus, the catacomb and house-church artists not only adopted the hellenistic technique of impressionistic vignette



## Biblical Types

painting, but they also made use of contemporaneous pagan symbolism to illustrate Christian truths! For this reason we find Christ represented by the figures of Hermes in the guise of a youthful shepherd, Orpheus with his lyre taming the wild beasts, Helios driving his sun-chariot across the heavens, and Eros, the god of Love, with Psyche as the soul of a Christian. In a later sarcophagus sculpture a youthful Christ is to be seen seated above the canopy of the firmament which is held aloft by a pagan sky-god, and on either side of Christ stand Peter and Paul looking like Greek philosophers. The commonest emblem of Christ was some form of the sacred monogram, e.g. chi-rho—the first two letters of the Greek word for CHRist, IHS the first three letters of the Greek JESus (these were later rationalized as the initial letters of the Latin *Iesus Hominum Salvator*); the chi, X, was often turned through an angle of 45 degrees to make a vertical cross, +, and sometimes the alpha and omega signs were added to it.



One of the commonest ideograms for Christ was the Lamb, a symbol which appears with many variations: with the attribute of the Cross, the Lamb symbolizes the sacrificial death of Jesus; with the blood caught in a chalice, it suggests the cup of the New Covenant; with a banner, it signifies the Resurrection; and with a crown, it signifies the apocalyptic Christ. Moreover, the Lamb is sometimes represented as performing the miracles of the ministry of Jesus—the Lamb who is also the Good Shepherd. (A fuller consideration of the Lamb symbolism is to be found in a later section.) Curiously enough, the Crucifixion itself is not properly represented before the fifth century in the West: the reluctance to portray Christ Crucified is probably because the Cross remained a foolishness and a stumbling-block to many of the 'Greeks' for a very long time, and the believers found it politic to emphasize the resurrection rather than to draw attention to the ignominious death of their Lord. The very real danger of such hostility and ridicule is to be seen in an early *graffito* in the form of a very crude caricature, executed, no doubt by the acquaintances of a certain Alexamenos: it depicts a man acknowledging a crucified figure which has a man's body and an ass's head, and is inscribed 'Alexamenos worships his god'.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

In the catacombs the figure of a miracle-worker (including Christ) is often shown with a rod in his hand—almost a 'magic wand'. On an ivory book-cover of the sixth or seventh century (*Frontispiece*) this rod takes the form of a cross, rather like a sceptre, in the hands of a beardless Christ as he performs his miracles: four such miracles are shown in panels around a central panel in which the same youthful Christ sits enthroned; above him is a Greek cross in a laurel wreath supported by angels, and below are panels which depict the Three Hebrews in the Furnace and the story of Jonah. This single composition illustrates well the synthesis of Greek and Hebrew culture which was achieved in Christianity.

### 6. ICONS AND IDOLATRY

At this point it might be well to consider what is really 'the previous question' in any study of religious imagery. The question is whether or not the deity and holy personages are to be represented visually in any or all of the usual art-forms, and, if so, in view of the dangers of idolatry, for what purpose and under what conditions the continued use of images should be sanctioned. Sooner or later the question was bound to become acute in the Christian Church. In fact it became acute both sooner and later: sooner in the Byzantine part of the undivided Church in the eighth century, and later at the time of the Reformation in the Western Church. It is relevant to our purpose to discuss briefly the so-called Iconoclastic Controversy: this curious episode in the history of the Church was in itself extremely involved, and also had far-reaching repercussions in the subsequent development of the Church.

The fundamental trouble in the whole business seems to be that when the verbal imagery (which inevitably is used of deity) is translated (so to speak) into manufactured things, there are always some believers who start treating the artefacts as though they were inherently sacred or divine in themselves. It was one of the great achievements of Hebrew religion, in the midst of a world dominated by idolatrous worship, to insist that no attempt must be made to produce a 'likeness' of the invisible God, nor even of his visible creatures as they occur in nature. Moses and the prophets knew only too well how easily the similitude, designed as a visual aid in the worship of the unseen, would come to be regarded by many with supersti-

## *Biblical Types*

tious awe as the magic residence of the divine power. The imaginative and creative artists of Israel were not only circumcised, but narrowly circumscribed as well in the exercise of their talents: with the pictorial arts closed to them, their aesthetic energies found an outlet mainly in sacred literature, and to a lesser degree in architecture. But, as we have seen, at the beginning of the Christian era the Mosaic prohibition of pictorial representation was not completely and universally obeyed within Judaism: in hellenistic Jewry there were illustrated copies of the Septuagint in circulation, the Herodian Temple in Jerusalem contained a certain amount of naturalistic decoration, and there is archaeological evidence that some synagogues of an early period were not devoid of embellishment. As soon as the Church ceased to be a movement within Judaism, it was natural that the new converted-Gentile membership, without perhaps giving the matter much thought, should adapt the contemporaneous hellenistic religious patterns of illustration to Christian ends. This process can be traced in the art of the catacombs, and, in particular, the 'translation' of verbal typology into visual typology can be observed.

So long as Christianity was not an officially permitted religion, and 'places of worship' were generally domestic rooms or modified houses, the question of decoration on a large scale did not arise. It would seem that the decoration of the catacombs and house-churches developed spontaneously as a vernacular art, and that the principle involved in the use of 'images' did not become a theological issue of major importance at this stage. But, after AD 313, when by imperial edict, Christianity was not only permitted, but to some extent supported, by Constantine (306-337), the building of large churches began, and consequently the question of their decoration became a practical matter of some magnitude. For some time there was no controversy. There seems to have been a tacit agreement in the Church as a whole that there should be no statues in churches: life-size naturalistic effigies in temples built to house them were characteristic of most pagan religions, and therefore anything of this nature would have been bound to confuse the evangelistic work of the Church. But, on the other hand, the value of pictorial art and the use of symbols in the edification of illiterate people could not be denied: by means of Biblical illustrations and visual images the unlearned could be brought into, and confirmed in, the Christian faith.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

As Pope Gregory the Great said: 'Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read.'

With the dangers of idolatry in mind, Christian art thus became non-naturalistic, formal and deliberately primitive in style; largely confined to two-dimensional murals, mosaics, engravings and low-relief carving in substance; typologically or liturgically concentrated in content; and numinous in effect. In the 'illustrations' of the Gospel events, for instance, there is no attempt or intention to depict the scene as it might have appeared to a casual spectator—Jesus and the disciples are always hieratic figures and their activity is always mysterious, and frequently liturgical. In this art there is no attempt at portraiture, just as in the Gospels there is no concern to describe the physical appearance of Jesus. In the earlier works Christ is depicted as a beardless youth—the young victorious hero-god of the classical tradition; gradually, however, oriental influences had their effect and the characteristic full-bearded Byzantine Christ appears—the sombre majestic Pantocrator, a stern Judge, yet one who has suffered before his glorification. To this period, too, belongs the beginning of the veneration of Mary, 'the mother of God', as a cultic figure. Representations of the archetypal mother-and-child increasingly find a place in ecclesiastical decorative art and liturgical practice; but, again, the figures are still and stylized and even the baby Jesus is an hieratic figure. [*Plate 2.*]

This phase in the development of Christian art was deeply involved in the theological questions of the day, not only the acute Christological controversies of the times, but also the complex relationship between Church and State, particularly in the conditions of the growing tension between the Latin-West and the Greek-East. (Incidentally, because it had long been the custom in the Graeco-Roman tradition for art to subserve the cult of the ruler, it is not surprising, when Christianity became the official religion of the Empire, with the Emperor himself regarded as Christ's personal vicerent on earth, that in the decoration of the church of San Vitale, Ravenna, the figures of Justinian (AD 527-565), his wife and his courtiers, should have such a prominent place.) To these considerations must be added the fact that both Church and State were being subjected to formidable external pressures—the 'barbarian' pressures from the north and west, and, later, the Islamic

### *Biblical Types*

pressures from the east and south. The point which particularly concerns us is the fresh challenge to the use of visual imagery (particularly in the Greek-Eastern parts of the Empire) occasioned by the rise of Islam. The absolute prohibition on representational art by the new Arabic religion stirred the Hebrew conscience of many church leaders. In the eighth century, under the leadership of the Isaurian Emperors Leo III (717-741) and his son, Constantine V (741-775), the attempt was made to suppress the use of icons in the Church, and, in the middle of the century religious art was formally proscribed. This iconoclastic announcement (from a Council attended mainly by Eastern bishops) was strongly resisted in the Western part of the Church. In their reaction to the Eastern 'heresy', the Latins tended to go much further than Gregory in their advocacy of painted and carved figures, and suggested an analogy between the incarnation and image-making, arguing that, though the images themselves were not worshipped, Christ and the saints could properly be worshipped through or across their likenesses. The Latin view eventually prevailed (in spite of Charlemagne's casuistical support of the iconoclasts against the Pope). At the Second Oecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) it was decreed:

'Proceeding as it were on the royal road and following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers, and the tradition of the Catholic Church (for we know that this tradition is of the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Church), we define, with all care and exactitude, that the venerable and holy images are set up in just the same way as the figure of the precious and life-giving cross; painted images, and those in mosaic and those of other suitable material, in the holy churches of God, on holy vessels and vestments, on walls and in pictures, in houses and by the roadsides; images of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ and our undefiled Lady, the holy God-bearer, and of the honourable angels, and of all saintly and holy men. For the more continually these are observed by means of such representations, so much the more will the beholders be aroused to recollect the originals and to long after them, and to pay to the images the tribute of an embrace and a reverence of honour, not to pay to them the actual worship which is according to our faith, and which is proper only to the divine nature: but as to the figure of the venerable and life-giving cross, and to the holy Gospels, and the other sacred monuments, so to those images to accord the honour of incense and

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

oblation of lights, as it has been the pious custom of antiquity. For the honour paid to the image passes to its original, and he that adores an image adores in it the person depicted thereby.'

In the early part of the ninth century there was a slight resurgence of the iconoclastic heresy, but by the middle of the century the controversy was brought to an end. In this way, not only was the veneration of images vindicated, but the Church had established its right to make its own decisions in matters of doctrine and practice even against the will of the secular ruler. The success of the iconodules did, however, re-orientate the whole question of the significance and function of icons. Never again, in the catholic tradition, could they be mere 'illustrations' or simple visual aids for illiterate people: to this basic function was added a mystic aura so that by the faithful they came to be regarded as visible 'reflections' in this world of the realities of the invisible order. Such an attitude, combined with the practice of veneration with incense and so forth, clearly opens the door to idolatry. This danger can be minimized by keeping the imagery stylized and non-realistic (as was the case in Byzantine art and early medieval Western art), but when the creative talent and naturalistic techniques of artists broke through these restrictions, and when more or less realistic statuary was introduced into Western churches, then a genuine reverence for the personality portrayed very easily metamorphosed into a superstitious idolatry of the image itself. The iconoclasm of the Reformers and the bareness of post-Reformation churches demonstrate the extent of the Protestant rationalistic reaction against the excesses of the medieval Church in the West. But today there is a growing realization that visual religious imagery is psychologically significant in ways never previously analysed.

The bitter invective of the Elizabethan *Homily against Peril of Idolatry and Superfluous Decking of Churches* shows how deeply Protestant feelings ran. The author writes:

'Let us therefore of these latter days learn this lesson of the experience of antient antiquity, that idolatry cannot possibly be separated from images any long time; but that as an unseparable accident, or as a shadow followeth the body when the Sun shineth, so idolatry followeth and cleaveth to the public having

## *Biblical Types*

of images in Temples and Churches. And finally, as idolatry is to be abhorred and avoided, so are images (which cannot be long without idolatry) to be put away and destroyed. Besides the which experiments and proof of times before, the very nature and origin of images themselves draweth to idolatry most violently, and Man's nature and inclination also is bent to idolatry so vehemently, that it is not possible to sever or part images, nor to keep Men from idolatry, if images be suffered publickly.'

This Homilist is very pre-occupied with man's idolatrous inclinations which, he believes, are part of his 'corrupt nature'. He continues:

'Now as was before touched, and is here most largely to be declared, the nature of Man is none otherwise bent to the worshipping of images (if he may have them and see them), than it is bent to whoredom and adultery in the company of harlots. And as unto a Man given to the lust of the flesh, seeing a wanton harlot, sitting by her, and embracing her, it profiteth little for one to say, "Beware of fornication, God will condemn fornicators and adulterers". For neither will he, being overcome with greater inticements of the strumpet, give ear to take heed to such godly admonitions; and when he is left afterwards alone with the harlot, nothing can follow but wickedness. Even so suffer images to be set in the Churches and Temples, ye shall in vain bid them beware of images, as St John doth, and flee idolatry, as all the Scriptures warn us, ye shall in vain preach and teach them against idolatry. For a number will notwithstanding fall headlong unto it, what by the nature of images, and what by the inclination of their own corrupt nature.'

Our Homilist discloses the puritanical temper of his own mind when he insists that the presence of images in a church is a constant temptation to 'spiritual fornication', and he concludes with a magnificent explosion:

'True Religion then, and pleasing God, standeth not in making, setting up, painting, gilding, cloathing and decking of dumb and dead images (which be but great puppets and babies for old fools in dotage, and wicked idolatry, to dally and play with) not in kissing of them, capping, kneeling, offering to them, incensing of them, setting up of candles, hanging up of legs, arms, or whole bodies of wax before them, or praying, and asking of them, or of Saints, things belonging only to God to give. But all these things

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

be vain and abominable, and most damnable before God. Wherefore all such do not only bestow their money and labour in vain; but with their pains and cost purchase to themselves God's wrath and utter indignation, and everlasting damnation both of body and soul.'

Such, presumably, is still the fundamental attitude of Protestant Non-conformity; less violently expressed it has been fairly general in the Church of England, though, because Anglicanism never ceased to be Catholic, a wide range of opinion and practice has been possible. A certain amount of rethinking of the whole question is now going on in the light of recent psychological theory so that in this (as in many other matters) the Church of England is taking up a reasonable intermediate position. The twenty-second of the Articles of Religion reads:

'The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.'

Nowadays, this is usually taken to mean that while the excesses of the later Romish medievalists in these matters are abhorrent, and that while *dulia* in respect of icons and *hyperdulia* in respect of the Blessed Virgin Mary must be kept to a minimum, nevertheless the presence of images (in the broadest sense) as part of the decorative scheme of a church is by no means forbidden. Thus it is that in most Anglican churches there is a cross on or above the altar-table, in many there is a crucifix near the pulpit, and in some there is a rood; again, as often as not, the side-chapel is a 'Lady-chapel', and in stained glass, murals, carvings, or otherwise, the figures of Christ and the saints or the Christian emblems are ubiquitous. Moreover, often at a rather sentimental level, there is a growing fashion for Christmas Cribs and Easter Sepulchres in which the figures are three-dimensional and naturalistic, while, at a different aesthetic level altogether, is the current introduction into Anglican churches of the iconographic art of such masters as Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, John Piper and Jacob Epstein. (It is an amusing exercise to try to imagine what the Elizabethan Homilist would have said about either a set of Crib



### *Biblical Types*

figures bought at Woolworth's or of one of the less conventional of the contemporary works.) No one would seriously suggest today that there is any danger of idolatry as the result of the presence in churches of these symbols of the faith: on the contrary, many would say that their faith is enhanced and deepened by meditation before visual images appropriate to their powers of aesthetic appreciation. There is no fundamental difference between religious contemplation of a remembered text and studied reverence before a work of religious art. In fact, today, there is a much greater danger of bibliolatry than of idolatry in the ordinary sense of the word, particularly amongst those to whom visual imagery has no immediate appeal. A more serious idolatry of our times is revealed in those churches where the most solemn moment in the service occurs when reverence is made to paper oblongs and metallic discs at the elevation of the almsdish—a strange mammonized parody of the true offertory of bread and wine. It may well be that the restoration to churches of the archetypal religious imagery in its Christian forms will release mankind from the worship of money and machines—the spiritual fornication of our new Elizabethan age.

We must now return to the middle ages and trace something more of the development of Christian iconography in the West.

# Medieval Imagery

## I. MEDIEVAL ICONOGRAPHY

THE interaction of literary and visual typology continued throughout the early centuries in the development of the Church: the primary iconography was enriched from a number of different sources and found expression in a variety of art-forms. Following the recognition of Christianity by Constantine, a new ecclesiastical architecture arose (see below), and with it the problem of church decoration on a large scale—in the mosaics of Byzantine churches we can see the immediate answer to the problem, and we can also begin to trace the further developments of pictorial typology. As we have already noted, the person of Christ was increasingly represented by a human figure rather than by the Lamb or Fish symbols or by one of the sacred monograms, and eventually the dark bearded figure was universally accepted as the icon of the Christ, and this figure, with cruciferous halo as his attribute, is immediately recognizable in all subsequent Christian art.

The typological interpretation of Scripture was all-pervasive: early in the seventh century Isidore of Seville summarized its main content for practical use, notably in the 'cloister crafts' of manuscript illustration, the making of vessels and boxes in metal, wood and ivory, the provision of altar furnishings, etc. Other encyclopaedias of typology followed in succeeding centuries, notably that of Peter of Troyes (d. 1178): such handbooks were used by the higher clerics who directed the embellishment of abbeys and cathedrals with sculpture, glass and paintings; a thirteenth-century manual guide of this kind (*Pictor in Carmine*) lists no less than 508

### Medieval Imagery

Old Testament types and 138 corresponding New Testament anti-types. The literary and liturgical expression of typology continued in such works as the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux (especially those on Canticles), the Sequences of Adam of St Victor (c. 1130), and the *Speculum Ecclesiae* of Honorius of Autun (c. 1150).

In the meantime the art of the illuminated manuscript was being developed, and frequently the 'illustrations' have a typological significance. Illuminated monastic commentaries have had a marked effect upon the forms of the better-known and more obvious kinds of Christian art, viz. sculpture and stained glass. It has been shown, for instance, by Émile Mâle that an illuminated commentary on Revelation written by Abbott Beatus of Liebana in AD 784 (and subsequently much copied) has had a direct influence on the twelfth- and thirteenth-century church sculpture—the effect being first seen in the Apocalyptic Christ on the tympanum of the Abbey of Moissac. (See *L'Art Religieux du XIIe siècle en France* and *L'Art religieux du XIIIe siècle en France*, or *Religious Art*—all by Émile Mâle.)

During the fifteenth century block-books were in circulation, and one of these, the *Biblia Pauperum* (originally published in manuscript c. AD 1300), was concerned to juxtapose pictures of types and anti-types with a brief explanatory text: the comparatively wide circulation of these books (each page being printed on paper from a single wooden block) led to their being used as an important source for the iconography of smaller churches where access to the illuminated manuscripts was limited, and often the design and composition of misericords and window pictures can be closely paralleled with illustrations in the block-books. A further collection of types and anti-types, *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, which gave examples from secular history and legends, was also influential.

Another instance of action, reaction and interaction is to be seen in the emergence of liturgical drama from the tenth century onwards. It seems that the custom grew of inserting into the Mass a short dramatic reconstruction of the event being particularly commemorated in the service—thus, on Easter Day, the celebration would be interrupted and three monks in women's clothes might mime the visit of the Three Maries to the sepulchre, and then the liturgy would continue. Later on, a brief dialogue, based on Scripture, was sometimes introduced, and, eventually, these nuclei of

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

liturgical drama were extruded from the churches and continued their development in the market-places into the popular 'mystery' plays.<sup>1</sup> Many other elements were added to them including traditions from the apocryphal gospels of the second century, and, in some cases, a measure of vulgar fun. But, above all, these plays were typological in their revelation of the mystery of God's action: in dramatic form they demonstrated how the personages and events of the Old Testament prefigured the incarnate life of Christ and how the happenings of the New Testament not only 'fulfilled' the prophetic situations of the Old Testament, but were also re-enacted in the life of the Church in general and in the action of the mass in particular. Furthermore, there was mutual interaction between the form taken by the mystery plays and the development of other forms of visual art: thus in the composition of stained-glass windows, in the pages of the early block-books, and in the sculpture of the period we can often see a reflection of the scenes which would be witnessed in the mystery plays—the gesture and costume of the actors, the scenery and 'props', and the stage conventions associated with an incident. For example, in some of the plays when the occasion of the Appearance to Mary Magdalene was enacted, it is known that the Risen Lord carried a gardener's spade instead of the usual resurrection-attribute of the cross-banner, and there are examples of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art where this piece of stage-realism can be observed. Again, the dramatic representation of the

<sup>1</sup> The origin of drama in the Church is described by Professor Allardyce Nicoll in *British Drama*. In particular, he quotes the dialogue provided for the Three Marias and the Angel at the sepulchre. As the 'women' approach, the 'angel' asks:

'Whom do you seek in the sepulchre, O Christians?' to which they reply: 'Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, O heavenly ones', whereupon the angel tells them:

'He is not here; He has risen even as He said before. Go; proclaim He has risen from the grave.'

Bishop Ethelwold's instructions (tenth century) contain the following directions:

'While the third lesson is being chanted, let four brethren vest themselves. Let one of these, vested in an alb, enter as though to take part in the service, and let him approach the sepulchre without attracting attention and sit there quietly with a palm in his hand. While the third respond is chanted, let the remaining three follow, and let them all, vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and stepping delicately as those who seek something, approach the sepulchre. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument, and the women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus' (Trans. Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, quoted in *British Drama*, pp. 21 f).

### *Medieval Imagery*

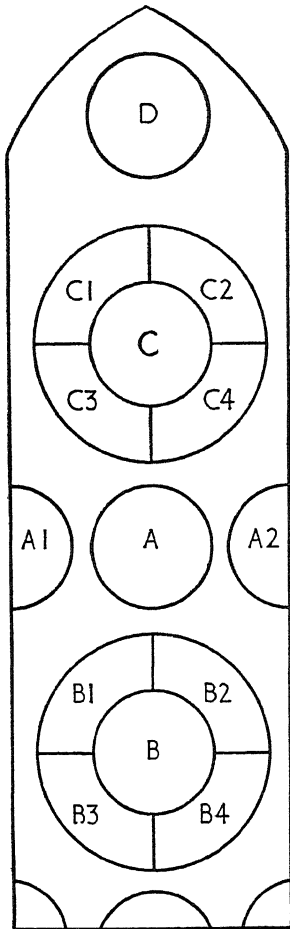
Walk to Emmaus was enacted with Christ and the disciples in the garb of medieval pilgrims, with staff, scrip and corded cap (as is known from stage directions in surviving manuscripts)—these same figures appear from the twelfth century onwards in sculpture. Very occasionally an illustration of Christ as the ‘gardener’ or the ‘pilgrim’ depicts him wearing a hat—a token of the failure to recognize him: there can be little doubt that there is interaction here between art and the drama. Both Dürer and Rembrandt produced works in which Christ wears a magnificent broad-brimmed ‘gardener’s hat’.

Above all, when we think of the wonderful array of figures on the portals of so many Gothic cathedrals, it is easy to imagine how to those who witnessed the mystery plays it would seem that these figures had stepped down into the dramatic action and then returned to their niches after the performance; especially is this so when we remember that these figures were originally painted and that the colours of their robes would match the costumes of the actors. At Chartres, for example, in the central bay of the north porch we may see a wonderfully vigorous array of typological figures, each with his characteristic attribute: Melchizedek with the offering of bread and wine in the mysterious chalice, [Plate 4] Abraham with the son he is prepared to sacrifice, Moses with the tables of the law and the serpent on the standard, Samuel with the knife and the sacrificial lamb, King David with a spear, Isaiah with the flowering rod, Jeremiah with a cross of suffering, Simeon with the infant ‘light of the Gentiles’, John the Baptist with the Lamb of God and finally Peter in papal regalia with pastoral staff and keys [Plate 3]. And in the midst, on the central pillar of the doorway, St Anne carrying the infant Virgin Mary in her arms, and above, on the lintel, the Virgin’s Death and her Assumption, and above that, on the tympanum, the Coronation of the Virgin by her Son, and all around, in the voussures, figures of angels and prophets. This general pattern occurs frequently, though more commonly the figure on the central column is Christ himself (‘I am the Door’) with an Apocalyptic Christ on the tympanum above. Two other typological figures are Solomon and the Queen of Sheba: Solomon signified the kingship, the wisdom and the temple-building of Christ, while the Queen of the South prefigured the Bride of Christ, the royal offertory of the Magi, and the salvation of the Gentiles: together

these romantic lovers were also associated in thought with the protagonists of the Song of Songs. The majesty of Solomon could be linked with the matriarchal crowning referred to in Song of Songs 3.11, while the account of Bathsheba being provided with a throne

by her son (I Kings 2.19) was held to prefigure the Enthronement of the Virgin.

The same kind of juxtaposition of Old Testament types and New Testament anti-types can be seen hundreds of times in the windows of medieval churches, and at Chartres the underlying principle of the method finds expression in the great window of the south transept where the figures of the four evangelists are shown uncomfortably perched on the shoulders of the four major prophets; Matthew on Isaiah, Luke on Jeremiah, John on Ezekiel and Mark on Daniel—and in the midst the figure of Christ whose gospel is prefigured in prophecy. A characteristic example of the typological pattern in a window may be seen at Bourges (Fig. 2). In the central medallion (A) is a Crucifixion in which a figure representing the Church collects water and blood from the right side of Jesus in a chalice, while another figure on his left, representing the Synagogue, turns away: on one side Moses strikes the rock and the living water springs forth (A1), and on the other side he points to the bronze serpent on a standard the sight of which heals the people (A2). Below, in the central medallion of a larger circle (itself divided into four segments—a mandala), is Jesus carrying the Cross (B): in one segment the widow of Zarephath carries two 'crossed' pieces of wood to Elijah



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### *Medieval Imagery*

(B<sub>1</sub>) (I Kings 17.12); in a second segment the Jews in Egypt mark their doors with the blood of the Passover-lamb in the form of a tau-cross, T, (B<sub>2</sub>) (an elaboration of Ex. 12.7 with some reference to Ezek. 9.4); the two remaining segments depict scenes from the narrative of the Binding of Isaac (Gen. 22)—in one Isaac is seen carrying the wood of the sacrifice in the form of a cross (B<sub>3</sub>), and in the other the intervention of the angel and the provision of the ram is shown, Isaac being on the altar with crossed legs (B<sub>4</sub>). Another favourite figure of the Cross is that of Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph (Gen. 48.13 f)—Jacob deliberately crossed over his hands so that his right hand rested upon the younger son, and this was taken to be a figure of the two Covenants, in that Manasseh, the elder son, represented the Jews of the Old Covenant, while Ephraim was a type of the Gentiles or 'New Israel' of the New Covenant inaugurated by the Cross: at Bourges, in the window we are considering, this figure has the place of honour at the top (D). (Another common type of the death of Christ is the death of Abel, the younger son killed by the elder as Jesus was killed by the people of the Old Covenant; incidentally, Cain is often shown murdering his brother with the jaw-bone of an ass—an interesting transference made in the interests of symbolizing the stubborn foolishness of the Jews.)

Above the central crucifixion in the Bourges window is another large mandala circle divided into four segments around an inner circle (C) which depicts the resurrection: in one segment (C<sub>1</sub>) we may see the resuscitation of the widow's son by Elisha (II Kings 4.32-37); in another (C<sub>2</sub>) is the regurgitation of Jonah by the sea-monster. (Other common types of the resurrection are Samson, possessed of the spirit of the Lord, rending the lion with his bare hands [*Plate 5*] (Judg. 14.6), or carrying away the gates of Gaza at midnight (Judg. 16.3): these incidents in the career of this somewhat dubious character were treated as types of the conquest of Hell by Christ.) The struggle of a man with a lion (or other strong animal) is a very ancient symbol indeed which signifies human triumph over devouring or destroying animals by killing or taming them (e.g. Mithras and the Bull), but the symbol also has the inescapable suggestion of man's struggle with death itself and the uncertainty of the outcome of this struggle apart from religious faith. This archetypal imagery

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

undoubtedly underlies the Petrine warning against the devil, who 'as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour' (I Peter 5.8).

In a third segment of the Bourges window (C<sub>3</sub>) we may see David and the Pelican to which he referred in Psalm 102, again taken as a type of Christ, and in the fourth segment we may see a lion breathing into the mouth of a still-born cub!

The last two figures, the Pelican and the Lion, exemplify another tributary to this great stream of typology, for it was held that the world of nature was also a 'mirror' in which the providential action of God in Christ could be observed. So it was that the natural history of the middle ages was subjected to fantastic allegorization on the assumption that the phenomena of plant and animal life typologically reflected the divine order of the spiritual realm. Generally speaking, no effort whatever was made to check the accounts of animal life which were so used and the Bestiaries of the period are a fascinating jumble of fact and fiction. It was believed, for instance, that it was the habit of the Pelican to destroy its fledglings shortly after hatching because of their importunity, and then, after three days, to peck its breast so that the blood flowed upon them and restored them to life: in this way a completely erroneous piece of natural history became a perfectly satisfactory figure of the Fall of Man and his redemption through the Blood and the Resurrection of Christ. Again we may read: 'When a lioness gives birth to a cub, she brings it forth dead and watches over it for three days, until the father coming on the third day breathes upon its face and brings it to life. So the Father Almighty raised His Son our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.'

Many other examples of this unnatural history might be given. The Tiger, for instance, is the subject of an interesting bit of theological allegorization: it was said that if a hunter wished to take a tiger-cub he must strew mirrors in the path of the parent-tiger which would then become so interested in its own reflection that the offspring might be captured—so does the Devil capture our souls by tempting us with vanities. Again, quite imaginary animals were introduced into the picture: it is recorded, for instance, that in the Nile lurked a water-serpent called the hydrus [*Plate 9*], which contrived to be swallowed by a crocodile; it thereupon devoured the



### *Medieval Imagery*

vitals of the crocodile and escaped—thus signifying the escape of Christ from Hell. The fabulous unicorn (Scripturally vouched for in Psalm 92 apparently—though not in modern versions), was also regarded as a type of Christ. Honorius writes: ‘The very beasts prefigured this birth. The unicorn is a very fierce beast with only one horn; to capture it a virgin is placed in the field. The unicorn approaches her, and resting in her lap, is so taken [*Plate 6*]. By this beast Christ is prefigured; by the horn his insuperable strength is expressed. Resting in the womb of the Virgin he was taken by the hunters, that is he was found in the form of a man by those who loved him.’ (No doubt the interpretation by Freud would have been somewhat different.) There is a remarkable ‘prefiguration’ of the popular misconception of evolutionary theory at Stanley St Leonard’s (Glos.) where a twelfth-century tympanum depicts one monkey handing an apple to another!

Another interesting example of something like ‘natural selection’ is to be found in the tradition concerning the Eagle: it was supposed that eagles were able to fly towards the sun and gaze without blinking into the glare, and, further, that when their fledglings were still quite small the parent bird would carry them on its wings in the direction of the sun, then those which were unable to endure the brilliance of the light would fall off and die and only those who passed this strange test would be reared. Thus, typologically the Eagle represented Christ and the eaglets his faithful followers, for only Christ and his elect can surely behold the face of God.

Some odd ideas were associated with the Elephant: like the elk it was supposed to have no joints in its legs, and to be unable ever to get up again if it fell over or lay down; to sleep the elephant was supposed to lean against a tree, and therefore elephant-hunters had to prepare trees for elephants to lean against! The theological moral of all this was that Adam also, so to speak, fell through a tree, and was raised from his mortal fall only by the action of Christ. Further, it was suggested sometimes that the fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden possessed aphrodisiac properties, and this tied in nicely with the notion that elephants are sexually passionless and must needs eat mandrakes before they can take the first steps towards parenthood: at least it may be noticed that the Elephant embroidered on chasubles is there to signify priestly chastity.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

The main source of this allegorized natural history is a collection of some fifty moral beasts in the *Physiologus* or Naturalist. This encyclopaedia is at least as early as the fifth century: it was extremely popular and was known not only in Latin but also in the vernacular of many countries in Christendom. In spite of having been proscribed as heretical in the sixth century, this Bestiary was a most influential source of church decoration in the middle ages. The origin of much of its natural history was in the works of Pliny (and a good deal of this in its turn can be traced back to Aristotle). The achievement of the author of *Physiologus* was to mingle the Graeco-Roman information and misinformation with references (real or supposed) to the various animals and birds mentioned in the Scriptures, and, from this strange admixture, draw a moral referring either to the providential action of God in Christ or to some aspect of human conduct.

According to one's mood or temperament this sort of thing is rather pathetically delightful, or psychologically fascinating, or blasphemously ridiculous. Quite clearly, in the hands of medieval monks the typological method got completely out of hand. The most fantastic exegesis was devoutly proclaimed—David lecherously regarding Bathsheba bathing on the housetop was held to prefigure Christ beholding the Church as she cleansed herself from worldly pollution! Or again, of the Rod of Aaron, which overnight budded, flowered and bore nuts (Num. 17.8), Bernard of Clairvaux said: 'What is the rod of Aaron which flowered without being watered but Mary who conceived although she knew not a man?', and in a Victorine Sequence the nut is seen as a figure of Christ in the sense that the shell is his body and the kernel his divinity—and so forth indefinitely. At least one can understand the violence of the pendulum swing as a result of which the Reformation in England stripped existing churches of their typological decoration, removed a great deal of the symbolism from liturgical worship, and completely secularized the drama: for the same negative reason (and other positive ones) the post-Reformation Protestant churches are so lacking in embellishment apart from boards inscribed with the Ten Commandments and the arms of a Royal Family notorious for its failure to keep them.<sup>1</sup> We in England are most unfortunate in that very little of the typological sculpture and glass remains in our

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Roger Fulford, *The Royal Dukes*.

## *Medieval Imagery*

ancient cathedrals and churches: no doubt with the best of intentions, and supported by Acts of Parliament, the Puritan reformers deliberately and systematically destroyed it, so that only seldom are we able to look upon undecapitated figures of the divine personages and the saints, or even of the bishops. And what the Puritans spared or overlooked, the Victorians obliterated in their zeal for 'restoration' carried out at the very nadir of English taste. Our churches are characterized by empty niches and remarkably full and well-preserved monumental tombs—Christ, Our Lady and the saints were beheaded, but the sepulchral effigies of the local gentry were honoured during the successive assaults of the iconoclasts. In France the reverse is the case, and at the time of the Revolution the holy persons in stone and glass were respected, while the treatment of the likeness of the aristocracy leaves little doubt concerning the popular opinion. In all this there would appear to be an important indication of a difference in national temperament and of a wholly different conception of the relationship between religion and society. The epitome of the English outlook is to be seen in the centre of England at Warwick where the sole task of the angels is to hold aloft the shields which bear the heraldic devices of the gentlemen of the county!

In our present day the pendulum is swinging back, though not in quite the same direction. We who recognize the tremendous psychological power of symbolic things and actions, are confronted with the very difficult problem of finding a symbolic pattern which at the same time has some continuity with tradition and yet is not inappropriate to our modern scientific world-outlook—the problem is particularly pressing in the suburbs of many of our large cities where new churches are being built in considerable numbers. It is unlikely that in the decoration of our contemporary churches we shall revert to all the extravagances, misunderstandings and near-superstitions of the era preceding that of modern science, but with all our attempts to rationalize the Christian religion we are in danger of losing a great deal of the joy and the mystery and the wonder and the humour of the creation.

### 2. MEDIEVAL WORLD-VIEW

However much we may criticize adversely the medieval world-picture (and that quite properly), there is no doubt that it was a

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

remarkable achievement of *integration*. In medieval Christian Europe the pattern of eternity could be seen in every temporal experience—the supernatural in nature, the macrocosm in the microcosm, the heavenlies in the earthly, the divine purpose in the types and anti-types of history. For many centuries it seemed that there was no item of information (or misinformation) which could not be worked into this universal scheme, and even when the major discoveries were made which inaugurated our modern scientific age every possible effort was made to preserve the existing theological pattern—an effort which still continues in some quarters. But until the scientific and rationalistic reaction set in there was no superstitious belief nor suppositious creature which could not be accommodated in the iconographic configuration which comprised the all-pervasive ‘visual aid’ provided by the Church for an illiterate people: there was no element of heathen design or pagan mythology which could not be incorporated in the embellishment of a sacred building—and all to the greater glory of the Christian Trinity and the Queen of Heaven. Thus it is that we find incorporated into the visual decoration of the Romanesque and Gothic periods such diverse elements as the chimera of the fables of many traditions, men-animals and monsters of strange variety—large-eared, single-footed, and belly-faced (as at Vézelay); fish-tailed mermaids and mermen, and leafy-faced ‘green men’; griffins, asps, basilisks, sphinxes, dragons, salamanders, centaurs and so on to the limits of human imagination. Their shapes derive from many sources, including travellers’ tales of great antiquity, Indian mythology and oriental fabrics, and, not least, from the unconscious minds of story-tellers and artists. The history of monsters has been studied by Rudolf Wittkower.<sup>1</sup> He traces the origin of many of the ‘marvels of the east’ to fourth-century Greek traditions concerning India, and especially to a work produced *c.* 303 BC after Alexander’s campaigns: in this work are accounts of winged serpents, people with feet turned backwards, people without mouths who live on smells, people with dog’s ears and only one eye. Other monsters which found their way into the tradition included the dog-headed people (*cynocephali*), those with only one foot which was so large that it could be used as a sunshade (*sciapods*), people with faces in their chests, people with ears large

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, V, 1942.

### *Medieval Imagery*

enough to be used as sleeping-bags, and so on. These monsters appear occasionally in church decoration and some are to be seen in the *Mapa Mundi* in Hereford Cathedral.

The reason for belief in such creatures was twofold. Monstrous births do occur occasionally and sometimes the individual monster may survive, thus it could be argued—if individuals, why not races of monsters? Secondly, the difficulties of travel were so great and the spirit of scientific observation so lacking that very few people ever felt any reason to doubt the travellers' tales. The place of these supposed monsters in the divine economy was discussed by Augustine and his ingenious arguments were accepted throughout the middle ages, particularly his suggestion that we have no right to make a judgement about the fabulous races because God may have created them so that we should not be tempted to think that there was any failure of his wisdom and skill when a monster was born into a Christian family. From the Christian point of view, every living entity is to be brought into the great theological pattern of Creation, Sin and Redemption; therefore, every kind of man is a creature to whom the gospel must be preached, and any other sort of creature may be a demonic agent of temptation to be resisted in the name of Christ.

From similar sources came garbled traditions concerning Alexander and Aristotle. The Flight of Alexander is depicted here and there, and an example may be seen in a misericord carving at Wells: the story is that Alexander, on one of his journeys, believed himself to be near the end of the world and wished to ascend into the air so that he might see where the sky meets the earth; two (or more) griffins were therefore harnessed to a large basket and raw meat was held on spears in front of their noses (like carrots before a donkey), so that in their efforts to get the meat they flew upwards and carried Alexander so high in the basket that the earth looked no bigger than a threshing-floor; he then pointed the spears downwards and returned safely to earth. The Lay of Aristotle tells how he had occasion to reprimand Alexander for the attention he was paying to a courtesan: the lady took her revenge by so ensnaring Aristotle himself by her charms that he went on all fours through the street carrying her on his back clothed only in the most diaphanous of garments: illustrations of this libel are to be found in churches at Lyon and elsewhere.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Elements from classical mythology occasionally find their way into ecclesiastical decoration. Thus, the Carrying Off of Ganymede may be seen at Vézelay—an eagle bears the young man away to the obvious delight of a demon. The usefulness of such illustrations was to reinforce the teaching of moral theology. Other devices used to exploit the hopes and fears of man for his post-mortal existence included the Wheel of Life and the Dance of Death: elements of this symbolism are found in the Tarot Playing Cards along with a remarkable collection of other mysterious symbols, many of Egyptian origin.

Other sources, particularly for animal symbolism, included the Fables of Æsop and the Adventures of Reynard the Fox. The satirical wit of the time sometimes used figures from these stories to express itself in wood and stone: thus it is that we can see a fox preaching to geese and a donkey playing a harp—the commentary of the cathedral clergy on the preaching friars and the wandering musicians.

Another fertile source of illustrative material was found in the fantastic adventures of the saints as transmitted in their 'legends': such narratives were found to be particularly suitable for the sequence of pictures used in large windows, and while in the case of the better known saints their stories are easily recognizable, in the case of purely local saints recourse to the guide-book is essential if the adventures are to be followed. In terms of probability and excitement the heroes of modern strip-cartoons have no advantage over these wonder-men. Occasionally we find that misunderstandings of the symbolism gave rise to the most extraordinary versions of the legend: a notable case is that of St Nicholas, who, because of his fame in converting the heathen and baptizing them, was accorded as his attribute a font with three naked people in it; in the pictorial convention of the time the three people were made much smaller than the saint, and thus the idea grew up that they were boys, and this led on to the creation of the legend that St Nicholas called at an inn and found that the inn-keeper had killed three boys and salted them away in a large jar, whereupon he restored them to life in the name of Christ! A further series of figures symbolized (in the classical manner) the virtues and vices and other abstractions of wisdom and ignorance: at Chartres, for instance, we may see the three great Virtues and their opposites—Faith (with a chalice on her shield)

### *Medieval Imagery*

and Idolatry (worshipping an idol), Hope (looking to heaven) and Despair (stabbing herself), Charity (lamb on shield giving clothing to a beggar) and Avarice (hoarding her gold). Sometimes a 'battle' of Virtues and Vices is envisaged, and other figures depicted include Prudence (with a serpent), Gentleness (with a lamb), Cowardice (running before a hare), Pride [*Plate 7*] (falling from his horse), Lust [*Plate 8*] (a naked woman on a goat), and Discord (a quarrel between husband and wife). An amusing example of the last-named may be seen in a misericord carving in King Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

Of particular interest, perhaps, is the frequent association of the age-old figures and signs of the Zodiac with the vernacular sequence of the 'Labours of the Months': this association is wonderfully exemplified in the west front of the Cathedral of Amiens. The underlying idea of this association is to relate the mysterious signs of astronomical time and space to the more familiar sequence of the seasons and the activities characteristic of them. Thus, the macrocosmic and the microcosmic symbols are presented synoptically as a reminder that Time, both in terms of the motions of the stars and planets and in terms of human life, is to be appreciated in relation to the divine process of Creation and Redemption. The Zodiac, for the medieval Christian, was reminder of the creation of the firmament, the heavenly bodies and all living creatures, while the Labours of the Months constituted a reminder of the punishment of Adam that his work should be laborious, and that the Word of God, who had created the heaven and the earth, and who had laboured as a carpenter, had also died on a cross to deliver Adam's descendants from the consequence of sin.

The origin of the traditional Zodiacal signs is now obscure, but it seems likely that some (at least) of them had reference to seasonal changes as measured by the phases of the moon and the sun, e.g. Aquarius—the coming of rain or the flooding of a river, Aries—the breeding season of flocks, Virgo—the harvest-queen, and so forth. Further, it seems probable that these monthly symbols, originally connected with husbandry and agriculture, were later 'projected' on to particular constellations—each Zodiacal sign being connected with the particular star-pattern which was prominent at its monthly

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

season. In this way, in antiquity there was an integration of the calendar of settled men with the already existing astral lore of their forebears. When the medieval artists devised a new series of Labours of the Months they were, in fact, revising the Zodiac, and, by replacing its animals by men and women, it might be said that they had produced an Anthropodiac! The curious fascination which the Zodiac still has (not only at the level of 'What the Stars Foretell', but at more sophisticated levels too), is an indication that in the unconscious mental processes of modern man there are the vestiges of ways of thinking which were established at this stage in the evolution of human consciousness.

The actual Labours of the Months are obviously not the same everywhere; they vary considerably with climate and geographical situation: this variation is to be observed in extant examples of the Labours, but it is noticeable that conventional sequences had been

ablished by continental manuscript illuminators and that sometimes these sequences are not altogether appropriately imposed upon English examples—this is notably the case in the comparatively frequent appearance of scenes connected with wine-growing (never very extensively practised in England), and the almost complete absence of any representation of sheep-husbandry (extremely important in much of medieval England). Thus, for instance, the sequence to be seen in the outer arch of the north porch at Chartres is virtually identical with that on the Brookland Font in Kent [*Plate 10*]. The sequence is as follows:

January	Aquarius	Two-headed Janus with cup of wine
February	Pisces	Hooded figure sitting by fire
March	Aries	Man pruning a vine
April	Taurus	Man holding a handful of corn
May	Gemini	Man with hawk
June	Cancer	A mower
July	Leo	Man raking hay
August	Virgo	A harvester
September	Libra	Treading grapes
October	Scorpio	A sower
November	Sagittarius	Man collecting acorns for pigs
December	Capricornus	Pig-killing



### *Medieval Imagery*

In Worcestershire (in Worcester Cathedral and in the parish church at Ripple) there are misericord sequences in which the vine and grape incidents have been replaced by others more familiar to the Midlands scene, e.g. bird-scaring, log-splitting and ox-killing. (The presence of the full sun under one of the Ripple seats makes one wonder whether the summers really were better in days gone by, or whether an optimistic wood-carver was trying his hand at a little sympathetic magic!)

Another memorable and frequently appearing symbolic device (usually attributed to Suger at Saint-Denis) is the great Tree of Jesse: a perfect example in glass (dating from *c.* AD 1145) is to be seen at Chartres, and there is an interesting variation in the abbey church at Dorchester (Oxon.) where the stonework of the window forms the branches of the tree. From the loins of sleeping Jesse arises the trunk of a mystic tree on which are seen the kings of Israel—David and his descendants who are the fleshly ancestors of Mary: the Virgin is enthroned above them, and above her is the Christ himself with the seven gifts of the spirit radiating from him: near the branches of the Tree are the spiritual ancestors of Christ—the prophets who proclaimed the coming of the Messiah. In this complex symbol we can see another remarkable example of the integration of a number of different aspects of reality—of physical descent, of prophecy, of eternal relationships, of virginity, of vegetative growth, of motherhood, of spiritual power and of kingly rule [*Plate 12*].

From the foregoing it is clear that a very considerable part of medieval Christian iconography is essentially typological in character, and that it is centred upon the main festivals of the Church and the Passion and Death of Christ, together with the corresponding doctrines. One such article of faith which received a good deal of pictorial treatment was that of the Last Judgement, and there are many fascinating representations of the respective fates of the blessed and the damned. Characteristic of such Dooms is a stern apocalyptic Christ sitting in judgement while the Archangel Michael, balances in hand (another Zodiacal sign, incidentally), weighs the worth of each individual soul—as often as not there is a demon attempting to pull one scale-pan down on to Satan's side! On the right of Christ those accounted worthy are led, newborn and naked, to a life of

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

bliss by angelic guides, while on his left the devils, with obscene gestures, drive the damned towards the mouth of Hell—usually the gaping maw of a Leviathan-monster. The eschatological alternatives are uncompromisingly set forth—often, on the one hand, the prospect of being roasted or indecently assaulted and tortured, or, on the other hand, of being accommodated in Abraham's bosom—a resort which in some sculptures is reminiscent of a large kangaroo-pouch! It is difficult to estimate just how seriously these Dooms were taken when they were originally devised, and, though many are not without touches of humour, fundamentally the appeal for good moral conduct is based upon the fear of post-mortal punishment: this appeal, rightly or wrongly, is not popular these days when (on the principle of a bird in the hand) a Diana's bosom of the present seems to be a more attractive prospect than an Abraham's bosom of the future. Sculptured Dooms are sometimes to be seen in portal tympana as a reminder that by entering a church the worshipper stepped into a vessel of salvation from the wrath of God, and that there he would take part in the holy mysteries whose purpose was to 'show forth the Lord's death till he come' in judgement.

It has to be remembered that in a typical medieval church the most prominent feature, so far as the laity were concerned, was the chancel-screen surmounted by the Rood (flanked by the Virgin and St John) against the background of a painted Doom. These paintings usually formed a tympanum in the chancel arch and were generally painted on a solid screen of lath and plaster or of wood. In England they were painted out or destroyed in the middle of the sixteenth century under the Protestant Tudors: those which had survived the reign of Edward VI, or had been restored under Mary, were disposed of (together with the rood-loft and figures) early in the reign of Elizabeth I. Here and there a Doom which was a true mural on the wall of the chancel, and which had been painted over or covered by the royal arms, has been recovered in recent times—though usually, of course, in a very damaged condition (e.g. the Guild Chapel at Stratford-on-Avon, and at St Thomas', Salisbury).

In addition to the typological and doctrinal subjects of medieval iconography there is, of course, a certain amount of purely illustrative and narrative material, together with simple personal representations of saints and others with their respective attributes. Many of

### *Medieval Imagery*

the 'illustrations' have reference to incidents in the ministry of Jesus or to occasions described in his parables: these are usually to be seen in the nave of a church for the edification of the laity. The 'narratives' are series of pictures (usually in windows) of incidents in the 'legends' of the saints—some of these are well-known figures throughout Christendom, while others are of mainly local reputation. The saints are usually recognizable by a conventional attribute (in the case of a martyr this is generally the instrument of his execution), but as a number of saints have the same attribute identification is not always certain.

From the saints of Christendom we are led back by way of Saint John the Baptist, in the hairy robe of a prophet and bearing the sacrificial Lamb of God, to the great typological figures of the Old Testament. These, too, have their identificatory attributes—Melchizedek with the chalice, Isaiah with the sprouting stem of Jesse, and so on. One of the most interesting of these personages is Moses with two horns sprouting from his forehead [*Plate 11*]: these horns arise from a slight mistranslation into Latin and a consequent misunderstanding of the original 'shining countenance' in Hebrew (the words have the same root). However, since horns are often associated with 'outcrops' of super-abundant wisdom and potency, they are not quite so inappropriate as they might seem to be—horns are not always to be connected with goatish lechery or cuckoldry and their significance as symbols of vitality and creative power should not be overlooked. Moses is usually furnished with the two tablets of the Old Law and the Serpent-on-the-Standard, and these attributes witness to the belief that he prefigured the Christ who gave a New Commandment and who was lifted up for the healing of the nations.

### 3. TYPES AND HISTORY

The typological interpretation, both literary and pictorial, as it was developed in the Church implies a very particular view of the significance of history. Coming events were held in a peculiar sense to have cast their shadows before, and thereby to have revealed the foreordained divine plan. The Christian view of history is a singular development of the characteristically Jewish view, and the Hebrew theory of history was itself in marked contrast to the general view of ancient peoples. Furthermore, the traditional Christian view, which

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

places the Cross at the centre of the historical process and regards the period AD as but an interregnum until the *parousia* or 'second coming' of Christ, is not easily accommodated in the modern scientific world-outlook which stretches back evolutionarily past Eden for more than 2,000 million years and forward astronomically to the 'death of the sun'.

The ancient world of established culture was essentially a farmer's world. The passage of time was significant almost exclusively in terms of the annual cycle of agricultural seasons. The universe was regarded as essentially static: as it was, so it had been created. The basic notion underlying the religion of the Near East (in spite of considerable local and national variations) was that the regular annual performance of rituals would keep things as they were as comfortably as possible. In Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine this religion was centred upon the New Year Ceremonies (held in the autumn at the time of the general harvest) when the king mimed the myths of creation and fertility, while in Egypt the life and death of the pharaoh was closely linked with the myth of Osiris, the god of the annual death and rebirth of vegetation. The *status quo* was all-important. As H. Frankfort writes:

'Movement and change were not denied to exist, of course; but change, in so far as it was significant, was recurrent change, the life rhythm of a universe which had gone forth complete and unchanging, from the hands of its creator. The alternation of night and day, of drought and inundation, of the succession of the seasons, were significant changes; their movement was part of the established order of creation. But single occurrences, odd events, historical circumstances were ephemeral, superficial disturbances of the regularity of being and for that reason unimportant.'<sup>1</sup>

In Mesopotamia the existence of a number of national groups and succession of empires holding sway over the 'fertile crescent' led to a somewhat greater acknowledgement of the sequence of events which we call history, but even here no particular significance seems to have been attached to it. H. and H. A. Frankfort comment:

'The differences between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian manners of viewing the world are very far-reaching. Yet the two

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, pp. 49-50.

## *Medieval Imagery*

peoples agreed in the fundamental assumptions that the individual is part of society, that society is embedded in nature, and that nature is but the manifestation of the divine. This doctrine was, in fact, universally accepted by the peoples of the ancient world with the single exception of the Hebrews.<sup>1</sup>

A rough kind of analogy would be to say that for the Near Eastern peoples other than the Hebrews history is like a man on a fixed bicycle with the wheels on a revolving belt—provided he makes the right motions the wheels will go round and the belt will run smoothly to make a complete revolution each year: in contrast, the Hebrew outlook can be likened to a man on a free bicycle who is going somewhere—the priests teach him to ride and keep him going, and the prophets and law-givers provide the map and keep him on the route which God has ordained. (Warning: do not take this analogy too far or you will get a puncture.)

That is the difference. Jehovah has a directional purpose for mankind and Israel is his chosen people. God expresses his Will in history: he is a Shepherd leading a selected flock and not an annually revolving personification of natural processes and seasonal change: natural events are directed by God to produce historical occasions. Events and persons have a significance in relation to God's historical purpose, they are not just ephemeral incidents in the all-important yearly round. For the Hebrews the nation moves forward along a line through Time and does not merely perambulate a circle in Time.

The difference is not absolute. There are a number of passages in the Old Testament which indicate that some of the cultic practices of Israel were not without resemblance to those of neighbouring peoples. This is particularly the case in the so-called 'royal' psalms: these psalms appear to enshrine parts of the liturgy of the New Year and Enthronement ceremonies of monarchic Israel, and in Psalm 72, for instance, there is a clear expression of the belief that the divinely approved monarch will ensure not only political peace and justice but natural fertility and prosperity as well (vv. 1-11, 16). With the disappearance of the actual monarchy these ideas tended to be transferred to the hoped-for Messiah of the future, and in this way the difference between the Hebrew outlook and that of Israel's neighbours received a further emphasis.

<sup>1</sup> *Before Philosophy*, Penguin, p. 241.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

This difference in religious outlook is basically the same as the difference in outlook of a farmer and a nomad. Israel as a nation had a long history of wandering—under Abraham the people came from Mesopotamia and under Moses they came from Egypt. They were going somewhere—to a Promised Land. And though they settled there they did not ‘settle down’. They occupied the territory, but, as soon as they stopped looking forward to a ‘place’, they started looking forward to a ‘time’—the Day of the Lord and the kingdom of the Messiah.

Christianity has inherited this characteristic Hebrew view of life and history. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus replace the exodus as the critical historical event in which God ‘showed His hand’, and the belief that the Risen Lord ‘shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead’ continues by transformation the Old Testament expectation of the Day of the Lord. Scratch a Christian and you will find a Wandering Jew! The Church, in its typological interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, has given a fresh emphasis to the implication that the history recorded in them is of unique significance and of universal importance.

In contrast to the religious mythology of the Near East in general, including the special case of the Hebrews, we now have to notice the entirely different stream of Greek thinking associated particularly with Plato and Aristotle. Here we find the kind of abstract thought and logical conceptual reasoning which underlies much of our modern scientific attitude to environment.

One effect of Greek ways of thinking upon Hebrew religion is to be seen in the Wisdom literature, where, for instance, the creative knowledge and activity of God from ‘the beginning’ is presented as a feminine spiritual entity *Sophia*, as in Proverbs:

‘The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way,  
Before his works of old.  
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,  
Or ever the earth was. . . .  
When he established the heavens, I was there. . . .  
When he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
Then I was by him as a master-workman,  
And I was daily his delight.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 8.22-30.

### Medieval Imagery

The name of God, JHVH (=Jehovah) itself suggests eternal existence—at once ‘becoming’ and ‘unchanging’, and it did not prove difficult to ‘hellenize’ the Hebrew notion of deity along these lines. In the New Testament the same kind of thought is expressed in terms of the eternal masculine *Logos* whose supra-temporal activity was historically manifest in the seven ‘signs’ of Jesus:

‘In the beginning was the Word. . . . The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. . . . This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory.’

And in the same spirit, the saying ‘Before Abraham was, I am’ is attributed to Jesus. Such a surprising confusion of tense is by no means unknown in the Old Testament, and there is more than one passage in which the tense of verbs is so rapidly oscillating that it is impossible to be sure whether one is reading about the past, the present or the future. It may well be that, intentionally or otherwise, one is reading about eternity. This would seem to be the case in the Suffering Servant passage of Isaiah 52.13—53.12: in the *past*, the Servant was despised and rejected, wounded and oppressed, he poured out his soul unto death; in the *present*, he hath no form nor comeliness; in the *future*, he shall deal wisely and prolong his days. If this passage refers to an actual single person, and not to a corporate personification, it is impossible to say whether he is dead or alive. And so, either through the vagaries of Hebrew idioms, or through deep prophetic insight into the things of eternity, we are confronted here by an archetypal figure of great importance. Moreover, the description of the Servant as ‘a lamb that is led to the slaughter’ provides a link which is used in the New Testament to connect the death of Jesus with the blood-sacrifices of the Temple worship.

As we have seen, another effect of this Greek philosophic and metaphysical approach was to give rise to an allegorizing school within Judaism at Alexandria: with the coming of Christianity, particularly in the mind of Paul (a hellenized Pharisee, born midway between Athens and Jerusalem), we get the beginnings of a synthesis between these two quite different modes of apprehending human experience.

Perhaps one of the clearest examples of how the traditional Hebrew

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

'picture' of repeated blood-sacrifice is interpreted in terms of popular Platonism, and in the interests of Christian doctrine, is to be seen in the following passages from Hebrews:

'Now if Christ were upon earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern (type) that was shewed thee in the mount.'<sup>1</sup>

'According to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often; as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by his sacrifice. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgement; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.'<sup>2</sup>

'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

Whether there is direct Platonic influence in these passages may be questioned, but there can be little doubt that the writer has in mind characteristic Platonic teaching concerning the eternal 'forms' or 'ideas' of which terrestrial things and events are but ephemeral reflections, and that the Cross of Christ is the connecting link between these two orders of existence.

We are thus confronted by the extremely difficult concept of 'eternity', and the notion that historical events, though they happen but once in human experience, yet have a permanent non-temporal existence both 'before' and 'after' their terrestrial manifestation. On this kind of basis the eucharistic offering of the liturgy is regarded as an *anamnesis*—a 're-calling' into the time-sequence of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 8.4 f.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 9.22-28.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 10.19 f.



### *Medieval Imagery*

the eternally-existing action of Christ, an action which was itself manifest historically at Jerusalem 'under Pontius Pilate'. Also on this basis we can imagine that certain 'patterns of relationship', or *archetypes*, exist eternally, and that they are recognizable from time to time as persons, things and events in the historical sequence. Further, we can believe, that through the inspired or intuitive recognition of types and antitypes, it is possible to discern the purposeful activity of God in history. This belief is expressed in the following passage from Augustine in reference to certain *ideae principales*:

'There are certain main forms (=archetypes), or stable and unchangeable rational principles of phenomena which do not themselves possess form, and thereby persist eternally and constantly in the same mode, which are contained within the Divine Intelligence. Now, since these cannot pass away, everything which can come into being and pass out of existence is said to be formed according to them. It is denied, however, that the mind could have knowledge of these principles unless it is itself rational.'<sup>1</sup>

From this, and some similar passages, Jung has derived his notion of archetypes. He has transposed the term humanistically so that it has the technical meaning of various themes or patterns which exist in the unconscious mental processes of mankind. And although the use of the term in modern psychology is different from the Hebrew-Greek-Christian use of it in the Church, the two are by no means incongruous—as is evidenced by Jung himself in *Answer to Job*, on the one hand, and on the other in *God and the Unconscious* by the Roman Catholic scholar, Victor White.

<sup>1</sup> *Liber de divers. quaest.*, XLVI, 2.

# Psychological Types

## I. MYTH

CONSIDERATIONS of literary and pictorial typology, together with the implied view of history, bring us to a point at which we can consider more closely the deeper meaning of myth and the mythic understanding and interpretation of human experience in antiquity.

If we are to appreciate at all the myth-making of primitive people and the myth-using of people in the ancient world, we must firmly grasp two facts. First, that our modern attitude towards nature and history is very different from that of primitive and ancient peoples. Secondly, that our scientific and historical understanding of events is *superimposed upon* these earlier responses to environment, and that deep in our mentality these pre-scientific and pre-logical processes are still active: their presence is indicated in our dreams, in our 'recognition' of myths and symbols, in the behaviour of children, through hypnosis and psycho-analytic techniques, by the study of the mentally disordered.

Our modern scientific attitude to our environment (apart from other persons) is to regard it as a series of *things*: we see these things objectively and unemotionally, and we try to relate them to one another in logical and systematic patterns of cause and effect. We seek to formulate general 'laws' which 'explain' the phenomena we observe in abstract terms. The earlier human response was quite different—it was immediate, personal, emotional and concrete; it was associative rather than logical. For instance, we can scientifically observe changes in atmospheric pressure, differences in wind velocity and direction, relative humidity, the distribution of land masses and

## *Psychological Types*

water, ocean currents and so on, and in this way we try to 'explain' changes in the weather in terms of anti-cyclones and deep depressions and to formulate general meteorological laws which will enable us to predict future climatic states. In the ancient world, stories were told perhaps of a giant bird whose wings darkened the sky, and who, in the rain, devoured the Bull of Heaven whose hot breath scorched the crops. Or perhaps, as in Hebrew thought, God was pictured as one who, himself standing outside nature, controlled the natural forces like a craftsman dealing with his materials—one who 'saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth, likewise to the shower of rain', 'he giveth snow like wool, he scattereth hoar-frost like ashes', he 'covereth his hands with the lightning', he 'shuts up the sea with doors', he 'walks in the recesses of the deep'. In Biblical mytho-poetry, God controls the elements as part of his directive purpose for his chosen people—he sends the rain to flood the earth and destroy the wicked, 'he rebuked the Red Sea and it was dried up'—he is providentially present in volcano and earthquake, in wind and the burning bush: similarly, in the New Testament Jesus is represented as rebuking the waves and addressing a fig-tree.

The matter could not be more clearly stated than it is by H. and H. A. Frankfort in *Before Philosophy*:

'The ancients, like modern savages, saw man always as a part of society, and society as embedded in nature and dependent upon cosmic forces. For them nature and man did not stand in opposition and did not, therefore, have to be apprehended by different modes of cognition . . . natural phenomena were regularly conceived in terms of human experience and human experience was conceived in terms of cosmic events.

'The fundamental difference between the attitudes of modern and ancient man as regards the surrounding world is this: for modern, scientific man the phenomenal world is primarily an "It"; for ancient—and also for primitive—man it is a "Thou".'<sup>1</sup>

'The ancients told myths instead of presenting an analysis or conclusions.'<sup>2</sup>

To our modern scientifically conditioned minds (to take another example), the spinning motion of the earth-ball on its own axis as it moves in an elliptical path round the sun accounts for both day

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

and night and the seasons of the year. This is an abstract impersonal mathematical concept in remarkable contrast to the series of pictures by means of which primitive and ancient men expressed their experience of the same phenomena—a myth in which, perhaps, a hero-god travelled in his chariot across the heavens during the day to be devoured each night by a sea-dragon-goddess, and, after a hidden nightly struggle, was born again every morning; or a myth of a corn-god who grew to maturity during the spring, was killed at the harvest, and then was born again after being planted in the virgin-earth-mother. But a myth of this kind is not just an ‘explanation’. As Frieda Fordham writes:

‘Myths, it is true, often seem like attempts to explain natural events, such as sunrise and sunset, or the coming of the spring with all its new life and fertility, but in Jung’s view they are far more than this, they are the expression of how man experiences these things. . . . Primitive people do not differentiate sharply between themselves and their environment, they live in what Lévy-Bruhl calls *participation mystique*, which means that what happens without also happens within, and vice versa. The myth is therefore an expression of what is happening to them as the sun rises, travels across the sky, and is lost to sight at nightfall, as well as the reflection and explanation of these events.’<sup>1</sup>

When we see a field of wheat springing up and growing, we may well think of it in terms of germination, soil pH, osmosis, humus, trace elements, chlorophyll, solar radiation, photosynthesis, virus disease, chromosome variety, and so forth: we are not like the farmer in the parable who sees it growing and ‘knoweth not how’. We think in terms of a slow ‘automatic’ development according to certain laws of nature: in contrast, Jesus, typical of his times, presents us with a quick series of pictures, ‘first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear’ and then the sickle—the coming of the kingdom of God, he says, is like that—sudden and cataclysmic.

As a third example we may think of primitive and ancient attitudes to sickness and disease as contrasted with our scientific knowledge of germs, toxins, genetic defects, neuroses and so on. In the Bible, and in antiquity generally, many kinds of illness are attributed to the activity of demons or other evil spiritual agencies. The Scriptural

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to Jung’s Psychology*, Penguin, 1953, pp. 26-7.

## *Psychological Types*

demons are the creatures of God in the sense that they do not exist in their own right (as in other religions), and even their leader, Satan, is a 'fallen' son of God, permitted for a time to harass mankind. Those healings of Jesus which are recorded as exorcisms signify the theological belief that this dominance of spiritual evil is being overthrown through his action. This interpretation of Jesus' unusual powers of treating certain sick persons is highly mythological, and we should try to recognize the positive significance of this attitude of mind. As H. and H. A. Frankfort write:

'In telling a myth the ancients did not intend to provide entertainment. Neither did they seek, in a detached way, and without ulterior motives, for intelligible explanations of the natural phenomena. They were recounting events in which they were involved to the extent of their very existence. They experienced, directly, a conflict of powers. . . . The images had already become traditional at the time when we meet them in art and literature, but originally they must have been seen in the revelation which the experience entailed. They are products of imagination, but they are not mere fantasy. It is essential that true myth be distinguished from legend, saga, fable and fairy tale. All these may retain elements of the myth. . . . But true myth presents its images and its imaginary actors, not with the playfulness of fantasy, but with a compelling authority. It perpetuates the revelation of a "Thou".

'The imagery of myth is therefore by no means allegory. It is nothing less than a carefully chosen cloak for abstract thought. The imagery is inseparable from the thought. It represents the form in which the experience has become conscious.

'Myth, then, is to be taken seriously, because it reveals a significant, if unverifiable, truth—we might say a metaphysical truth. But myth has not the universality and the lucidity of theoretical statement. It is concrete, though it claims to be unassailable in its validity. It claims recognition by the faithful; it does not pretend to justification before the critical.'<sup>1</sup>

In a remarkable novel entitled *The Inheritors*, William Golding has described the mental processes of a group of Neanderthal peoples—they do not say 'I have an idea' but 'I have a picture': instead of abstract notions which can be seen in logical relationships, they have a series of 'pictures' which are associated together because of superficial resemblances. Such association is the basis of

<sup>1</sup> *Before Philosophy*, pp. 15-16.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

myth-making and of the practice of sympathetic magic: to us it is hopelessly illogical because, to our minds, cause and effect relationships are not necessarily connected with apparent similarity. One of the earliest facts to be 'pictured' by mankind was the birth of a child from its mother, and thus it was that when the attempt was made to visualize the growth of plants and trees they were 'pictured' as having been born from Mother Earth, and, because there was no apparent 'father', Earth was often thought of as a Virgin Mother. Again, when attempts were made to visualize the creation of the world, this too was often 'pictured' as a birth or a begetting from parent-gods: the imagery of the sexual and family relationship is still very much with us in Christian terminology concerning the divine relationships—Israel as alternatively the son or the wife of Jehovah, Jesus as the Son of God with the Church as his Bride, Mary the Virgin 'mother of God'. It would be difficult, even were it desirable, to avoid language of this sort when divinity is thought of in personal terms.

Neither in antiquity nor in present times is mythology restricted to literature and pictorial symbolism—it is also dramatized. The spoken myth becomes, as it were, the libretto of the ritual enactment. In the Near East there was a close association of the myths connected with creation and the annual New Year Festival of the harvest and the enthronement of the king. The embodiment of both national and natural prosperity in the person of the monarch has a 'logic' of its own which finds expression in the cultus: in the autumn, as vegetation dies down, the king must be ceremoniously humiliated and ritually slain in order that he may come to life again, and, by a symbolic marriage with his consort, ensure fertility for the ensuing year. On the darker side of such a cultus the argument might run—the king is ill (or dying), if he does not recover the crops will fail, we must kill the sick king and enthrone a young prince so that prosperity may be assured.

The Hebrew people reacted strongly against this kind of religion with its many immanent gods and goddesses, the virtual divinity of the monarchs, and the promiscuous sexual practices often associated with such cults. Ethical, historical and transcendental monotheism could have little to do with amoral, seasonal and immanent polytheism. But in spite of the profound difference in religious

## *Psychological Types*

outlook, the Hebrews had their own ways of mythologizing. In their case it was mainly in the interpretation of natural and historical events. A coincidence of unusual natural phenomena with a human crisis could have far-reaching effects in the realm of theology and religious mythology. Particularly was this the case at a crucial moment in the Exodus when some rare tidal effect enabled the Israelites to get across the Red Sea before the waters returned and swamped their Egyptian pursuers. The 'coincidence' was believed to be providential—a divinely ordered coincidence: God exercises direct control over the elements, therefore the crossing of the Red Sea 'proved' that the nation was chosen for salvation—'So he led them through the depths as through a pasture land' (Ps. 106.9).

In the New Testament this underlying belief that God rules the waves in an immediate sense is very much in the minds of the Gospel-writers as they recount an incident in the ministry of Jesus. During a sudden typical squall on Lake Galilee the frightened disciples are indignant that Jesus sleeps through the danger, they wake him and say, 'Are we to drown, for all you care?', and his words on waking, 'Silence, be muzzled!' are even more brusque: coincidentally the storm dies down, and in their amazement the disciples ask, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?' The answer that Mark subtly suggests is to be found in Psalm 107:

'They that go down to the sea in ships,  
That do business in great waters;  
These see the works of the LORD,  
And his wonders in the deep.  
For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,  
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.  
They mount up to heaven, they go down again to the depths:  
Their soul melteth away because of trouble.  
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,  
And are at their wits' end.  
Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,  
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.  
He maketh the storm a calm,  
So that the waves thereof are still.  
Then are they glad because they be quiet;  
So he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 107.23-30.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Thus it is that the incarnation is suggested in terms of Hebrew mytho-poetry, and the words of Jesus are recorded as having been addressed to the sea—in some sense he is 'the LORD'.

Rightly or wrongly in this scientific age, we do not think of weather conditions in this kind of way, and the very few people who used similar arguments to account for the fine weather which made possible the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk were regarded as eccentric. Are such coincidences fortuitous or are they divinely providential? How can we tell? The ancient Hebrews would have had no doubt, but we have so much doubt that we hesitate to speak at all.

Hebrew religion, with its insistence on the transcendence of God, marks a significant transition from the all-pervasive pantheism and polytheism of the ancient world. The concept of a Creator-God who stands apart from his creation involves a change in man's attitude from the 'I-Thou' relationship towards an 'I-It' relationship, for, with the exception of mankind (made in his own image), the whole of Nature was an It so far as Jehovah was concerned: only man, made in the likeness of God, was not a thing. The creation itself was thought of no longer in terms of sexuality and birth: the Lord God is masculine rather than male, and the world comes into existence as the result of his spoken will.

### 2. DREAMS AND VISIONS

Turning to another aspect of the Biblical interpretation of history, it is extraordinary to modern minds how much attention is paid to dreams and visions as determinative events in the life of Israel. The belief that God made his will and purpose known in this way is clearly expressed in Numbers:

'If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream.'<sup>1</sup>

And again in Job:

'In a dream, in a vision of the night,  
When deep sleep falleth upon men,  
In slumberings upon the bed;  
Then he openeth the ears of men,  
And sealeth their instruction,  
That he may withdraw man from his purpose.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Num. 12.6.

<sup>2</sup> Job 33.15 f.



## *Psychological Types*

The promised out-pouring of the Spirit of God is also associated with mental awareness of this kind: 'your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions' (Joel 2.28). So it is that in the Old Testament insight of one sort or another is vouchsafed in this way to Abraham, Abimelech, Laban, Jacob, Joseph, Pharaoh, Moses, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, and in the New Testament to Mary, Joseph, Peter, James, John, Pilate's wife and Paul. In addition, there are, of course, the visionary experiences of Jesus himself connected with Satan (the Temptation and the Lightning Fall). This category of religious experience, common enough again among the mystics of all ages, has not really been taken very seriously in the modern world until the comparatively recent developments of psychology have shown that in dreams and visions there is a vast source of information concerning human mental processes.

The fact of the matter is that there is a close similarity between the structure of most dreams and the primitive ways of 'picture-thinking' described above. Dreams are strongly emotional and are usually expressed in a series of concrete symbols in which there is association of appearance rather than logical connection. Dream symbols are usually 'pictures' because most people are 'visualizers', though some people dream smells, sounds and tastes, and blind people dream mostly in the realm of touch: a few people dream words and sentences. Many of our dreams are in terms of recent everyday experience and reflect the attempts of the mind during sleep to solve our current problems—if the problem seems insoluble we may wake up in a nightmare, but it is a common experience to wake up and find that some part of the mind has solved the previous night's problem while the rest of the mind was asleep. But the feature of dreams which concerns us most is their curious and completely illogical movement from one thing or person to another with no respect for time and space—we experience a series of pictures which are related only in superficial similarity or absurd analogy in a manner which is strongly reminiscent of the ways of thinking of primitive peoples. As J. A. Hadfield writes:<sup>1</sup>

'Dreams, coming as they do from primitive sources, argue in quite illogical ways. They have their own laws of argument and

<sup>1</sup> *Dreams and Nightmares*, Penguin, 1954, p. 142.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

we cannot expect to understand their meaning until we learn their language, otherwise dreams just make nonsense as they do to most people. It takes all the skill of the anthropologist to understand primitive man's way of thinking and so to talk in his language, and it takes all the skill of the psychologist to understand the interpretation of dreams—and in neither case has complete comprehension been achieved.

Imagine yourself trying to carry on an argument with someone who has no sense of reason but who can only draw pictures, and you will realize how difficult it is for dreams to express what they are trying to say and to make themselves understood. They have to resort to ways of thinking and arguing quite different from those of logical thinking. Dreams, like primitive thinking and children's thinking, are illogical, and therefore when a dream wishes to convey the idea of cause and effect it can only do so in terms of antecedent and consequent, by putting one thing before the other.<sup>1</sup>

Another feature of dreams is their content of surprising, and sometimes fantastic, imagery, their mysterious and obscure symbolism, and the spontaneous appearance of mythological persons and situations—these things have no easily recognizable relationship to our personal experience and are sometimes demonstrably outside it, and it is generally held that they arise from deep down in the normally unconscious processes of the mind which we inherit as part of our common humanity. Frieda Fordham writes:

'The existence of the collective unconscious can be inferred in the normal man from the obvious traces of mythological images in his dreams—images of which he had no previous conscious knowledge. It is sometimes difficult to prove that no such knowledge ever existed (one can always say there was a possibility of cryptomnesia), but in certain kinds of mental disorders there is an astonishing development of mythological imagery which could never be accounted for by the individual's own experience.'<sup>1</sup>

There is a rough degree of correspondence between the anatomy of the brain and the distinguishable levels of mental activity. The 'oldest' part of the brain (in terms of evolution), controls those physiological processes of which normally we are unconscious (breathing, digestion, temperature, stability); the 'newest' part of

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 25-6.

## *Psychological Types*

the brain, i.e. the fore-brain, including the cerebral cortex, is concerned with characteristically human mental powers—logical conceptual reasoning and scientific knowledge; in between these two parts of the brain, and intimately connected with both, is that part which is much concerned with sensation and the emotions. The size of the cerebrum and the convolutionary area of the cortex, both relative and absolute, is approximately correlated with intelligence, and fossil brain-cases of our presumed ancestors and of para-human beings indicate that an increase in brain size (especially of the cerebrum) corresponds roughly with the development of characteristically human mentality.

It seems reasonable to suppose that in the evolutionary process various structural patterns have been established in the brain and nervous system generally which correspond to particular ways of thinking and behaving. The behaviour of the lower animals is, as we say, 'instinctive': in a given situation every normal individual of a species will behave in exactly the same way (e.g. nest-building and egg-sitting among birds)—individuality and intelligence are at a minimum. In man, on the contrary, instinctive behaviour is at a minimum, and practically all human activities have to be slowly learned during a long period of maturation. But, nevertheless, just as the pattern of the human body is common to all human beings and is the end-product of a long evolutionary development, so, too (it would seem), the brain has its common patterns which have been established in a comparable way. Just as we 'inherit' binocular vision, grasping hands and upright posture from our pre-human ancestors who lived in trees, so we 'inherit' from stone-age and ancient men certain brain-patterns which correspond to their responses to environment. These ways of responding and thinking, including myth-making, have been very largely submerged beneath the ever-increasing logical and scientific activities of the mind of *homo sapiens*. Conceptual reasoning and the accumulation of knowledge by constantly improved methods of communication have, as it were, driven these more primitive modes of thought underground. But they are still there in the unconscious functioning of the mind of everyone.

And so, along a different line of approach, we have arrived again at Jung's theory of archetypes of the collective unconscious.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

### 3. ARCHETYPES AND SYMBOLS

Archetypes, in Jung's thought, are analagous to instincts—a 'given' disposition to behave in a certain way in particular circumstances: they can also be thought of (as Jung suggests) as the abstract 'lattice-structure' of crystals, i.e. the pre-determined pattern which is common to all the possible varieties of the actual concrete crystals of any particular crystalline substance. Archetypes bear a similar relationship to the symbols which are their manifestation, and from which their existence is inferred. A *symbol* is not deliberately thought out like an allegory: a consciously contrived device designed to 'symbolize' something is better called a *sign* or an *emblem*. A genuine symbol cannot be completely rationalized; because of its very nature its roots are in the unconscious: in fact, the extent to which a symbol is capable of being rationalized seems to be inversely proportional to its subsequent effectiveness in awakening a response in many people—this raises the whole problem of the use of ancient symbols in modern worship, a topic to which we shall return. As we have seen above, the Fish, in an early Christian context, is a remarkable symbol which represents simultaneously many different levels of existence and experience—past, present and future; historical and metaphysical; religious and seasonal; eucharistic and post-mortal. For a variety of reasons, in our contemporary culture the Fish is no longer a symbol of this sort: in some areas of our society the Fish might be taken to mean 'Frying Tonight'!

In his book *The Origins and History of Consciousness* Erich Neumann discusses the function of symbols as 'stepping-stones' in the historical development of human thought-processes:

'Generally speaking the symbol works in opposite ways for primitive and modern man. Historically, the symbol led to the development of consciousness, to reality-adaptation and the discovery of the objective world. It is now known, for instance, that sacred animals came "before" stockbreeding, just as in general the sacred meaning of a thing is older than its profane meaning. Its objective significance is only perceived afterwards, behind its symbolic significance.

'In the dawn period the rationalizable component of a symbol was of crucial importance, since it was at this point that man's view of the world passed from the symbolic to the rational. The

## *Psychological Types*

advance from prelogical to logical thinking likewise proceeds via the symbol, and it can be shown that philosophic and scientific thinking gradually developed out of symbolic thinking by progressively emancipating itself from the emotional-dynamic components of the unconscious'.<sup>1</sup>

Symbols are also very important 'energy-transformers' linking the unconscious and the conscious: by means of them we are able to orientate our attention and focus our abilities in both customary and new directions. By means of religious and national symbols a peaceable carpenter can, in time of war, be persuaded to accept training which will convert him into an efficient destroyer of his fellow men—the appeal to reason is only a part (often a small part) in the achievement of this kind of metamorphosis. As Erich Neumann writes:

'In early cultures, everyday habit is simply the unconscious existence of primitive man, the habitual clinging of his libido to the world in *participation mystique*, in which state his natural life is spent. Through the symbol, the energy is freed from this attachment and becomes available for conscious activity and work. The symbol is the transformer of energy, converting into other forms the libido which alone enables primitive man to achieve anything at all. That is why any activity of his has to be initiated and accompanied by a variety of religious and symbolic measures, whether it be farming, hunting, fishing or any other "unaccustomed" work not done every day. Only with the help of the fascinating, libido-catching, and ego-absorbing effect of the symbol can the "unaccustomed activity" be undertaken.'<sup>2</sup>

Many different objects can become symbols of the same archetypal figure. Motherhood, for instance, suggests such processes as sheltering, enclosing, containing, preserving, nourishing, supporting, etc., so that typically feminine symbols include valleys, walled gardens, wells and springs, vessels and ships, caves and rock-clefts, houses and cities, cradles and coffins, trees, fruits and certain flowers. In the Church many of these symbols are associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary (derived mainly from the Song of Songs), and

<sup>1</sup> *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, pp. 367-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

the Church itself (often with boat-shaped buildings) is thought of as 'our Mother' and the Bride of Christ.

Conversely, the same symbol can refer to opposite poles of experience: thus, the snake symbolizes both death and resurrection, disease and healing, Satan and Christ.

Further, as distinct from symbols which have the same kind of significance for everybody (because of their connection with the archetypes of the unconscious), we all tend to acquire a number of personal symbols and what is almost a private mythology: some objects have a symbolic significance for us *individually* because they are associated with experiences which have made impressions in the personal unconscious. Hence the difficulty of interpreting dreams, i.e. of knowing whether a particular dream-symbol belongs to the collective or to the personal unconscious.

Archetypes, as the choice of name implies, are also analogous, in a way, to what Plato called 'forms' or 'ideas'; but whereas the Platonic 'form' is, as it were, a divine archetype—wholly light and eternal, the Jungian archetype is a temporal human 'form' having a 'dark side' as well as a light side. (In his *Answer to Job* Jung goes so far as to write of the 'shadow side' of God's consciousness as it is revealed in his dealings with Satan and Job.) The principal archetypal matrices are connected with the primordial, universal and inescapable experiences of mankind—birth and death, mother and father, day and night, light and dark, summer and winter, drought and water, eating and mating, adolescence and senescence, danger and escape. Such archetypes of the collective unconscious 'crystallize' in many different myths and symbols, they are enacted in a variety of rituals, and they arise in a multitude of images in dreams and visions. In *The Psychology of C. G. Jung* Jolande Jacobi writes:

"The number of archetypes is relatively limited, for it corresponds to the "possibilities of typical fundamental experiences", such as human beings have had since the beginning of time. Their significance for us lies precisely in that "primal experience" which they represent and mediate. The themes of the archetypal images are the same in all cultures, corresponding to the phylogenetically determined portion of the human constitution. We find them repeated in all mythologies, fairy tales, religious traditions and mysteries. What else is the myth of the night sea-voyage, of the wandering hero, or of the sea-monster than our timeless knowledge,

## *Psychological Types*

transformed into a picture, of the sun's setting and rebirth? Prometheus, the stealer of fire, Hercules, the slayer of dragons, the numerous myths of creation, the fall from Paradise, the sacrificial mysteries, the virgin birth, the treacherous betrayal of the hero, the dismembering of Osiris, and many other myths and tales portray psychic processes in symbolic-imaginary form. Likewise the forms of the snake, the fish, the sphinx, the helpful animals, the World Tree, the Great Mother, and no otherwise the enchanted prince, the *puer aeternus*, the Mage, the Wise Man, Paradise, etc., stand for certain figures and contents of the collective unconscious. In every single individual psyche they can awaken to new life, exercise their magic power and become condensed to a kind of "individual mythology" that forms an impressive parallel to the great mythologies handed down from all peoples and times, and helps to render their source, essence, and meaning concrete, so to speak, displaying them in a clearer light.<sup>1</sup>

The theory of archetypes is, of course, not 'just a theory'—it is the basis of practical treatment for the mentally ill. There are, as it were, centres of mental energy which seem to be associated with the archetypal patterns and which operate in a way analogous to the behaviour of physical organs: if we disregard the 'rules' which govern the digestion of food we are liable to suffer from flatulence, ulceration, constipation, diarrhoea or some other alimentary condition: it would appear that there are certain analogous mental conditions which arise as though 'laws' governing the activity of archetypes had been 'broken', and conversely, when these 'laws' are understood and observed the result is likely to be mental good health. To continue the above quotation:

'The sum of the archetypes signifies thus for Jung the sum of all the latent potentialities of the human psyche—an enormous, inexhaustible store of ancient knowledge concerning the most profound relations between God, man and the cosmos. To open this store to one's own psyche, to wake it to new life and to integrate it with consciousness, means therefore nothing less than to take the individual out of his isolation and to incorporate him in the eternal cosmic process.'<sup>2</sup>

It is in this spirit that the remainder of this book is written: it is an attempt to apply some of these ideas to the study of the Scriptures

<sup>1</sup> *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951, pp. 63-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-6.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

and of Christian worship in the hope that we may be helped to find a way out of the present impasse in religion.

### 4. TYPES AND ARCHETYPES

It is extraordinary how many of the archetypal symbols of humanity appear in Genesis. One might even say that these introductory themes receive symphonic development in the course of the Scriptures: new themes are introduced in successive stages, and in the last movement the full and typological significance of the symbols is made manifest. Psychological studies, particularly those of Jung, enable us as never before to appreciate the full poetic power of this religious mythology and to come to a fuller understanding of the compelling fascination of Adam and Eve and their adventures in a strange yet familiar country.

The story of Adam and Eve is not, of course, a Creation-story at all. It is not even an antique specimen of science-fiction. It is a *myth*—in a very full and deep sense of that much misused word. It is a poetic drama concerned with human personality and the relationships of human beings with one another, with the world of nature, and with the Creator. It is not an account of 'the Creation' but a profound study in creativity. It is, above all, a dynamic picture of man's experience of his sexuality—his pro-creativity in all its ambiguity. In the brief interval between birth and death man is given this mysterious creative power of life and love. His procreative sexuality is the source of both his glory and his shame. He is 'as God' in his knowledge and creativity, but he is not as God in his lusting and his dusty mortality.

This picture is painted in vivid colours and the striking symbols are interwoven in an intricate pattern. At first sight it all seems so simple. To us the story looks like a naïve and 'pre-scientific' attempt to explain how the world came into existence, how man was created, why childbirth is painful, why work is laborious, why snakes have no feet, and so forth. But the aetiology is apparent rather than real. The essential meaning lies deeper. Those who have accepted the account as literal pre-historic truth have usually seen an allegorical meaning as well. Amongst the earliest of such interpretations is that in the *Apocalypse of Baruch*: 'Everyone of us has been the Adam of his own soul' (liv, 19). An allegorical meaning was well recognized



## Psychological Types

before St Paul initiated the great flood of Christian typology which has swamped the study of the Scriptures for so many centuries—and now, once more, the waters of post-critical neo-typology are rising rapidly.

St Paul wrote:

‘For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.’<sup>1</sup>

‘The first man Adam became a living soul.  
The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.’<sup>2</sup>

‘The first man is of the earth, earthy:  
The second man is of heaven.’<sup>3</sup>

‘Death reigned from Adam until Moses,  
even over them that had not sinned  
after the likeness of Adam’s transgression,  
who is a TYPE of him that was to come. . . .  
For if by the trespass of the one the many died,  
much more did the grace of God,  
and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,  
abound unto the many.’<sup>4</sup>

‘For if, by the trespass of the one,  
death reigned through the one;  
much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace  
and of the gift of righteousness  
reign in life through the one,  
even Jesus Christ.’<sup>5</sup>

The method was elaborately developed by the Fathers, as the following examples show:

‘Eve, being a virgin and undefiled, conceiving the word which was from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death; but the Virgin Mary, taking faith and joy, when the Angel Gabriel told her the good tidings, answered: Be it unto me according to thy word.’<sup>6</sup>

‘. . . the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith.’<sup>7</sup>

‘And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so it is rescued by a virgin’.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 15.22.    <sup>2</sup> I Cor. 15.45.    <sup>3</sup> I Cor. 15.47.    <sup>4</sup> Rom. 5.14 f.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 5.17.    <sup>6</sup> Justin Martyr, *c. Trypho*, 100.

<sup>7</sup> Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.*, III, xxii, 4.    <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, V, xix, 1.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Or again, in the seventh century, Bishop Isidore of Seville writes:

‘Eve signifies the Church established through the mysterious water which proceeded from the side of the dying Christ just as Eve proceeded from the ribs of a sleeping man.’

And now, by way of reaction against the uncertainty and scepticism engendered by Biblical criticism, there is a resurgence of this technique of interpretation, but with a subtle difference and a modern sophistication. For example:

‘It seems possible to hold, without any forcing of the facts, that the interpretation of the Church and the Virgin Mary as the Second Eve, so far from being contradictory, are implied in each other. *Christ was born from the womb of Mary, and Mary was born again from the side of Christ.* By the former birth she is the mother of Christ’s natural body; by the latter she is the mother of his Mystical Body. And as her motherhood of the natural body was given her by the overshadowing of the Spirit of Christ’s annunciation, her motherhood of the Mystical Body was given her by the breathing forth of the Spirit at his death’.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of interpretation has the advantage of enabling those who practise it to show that anything in the Scriptures can mean anything else. The typological method can be used, and is being used, to avoid the problems raised by the scientific and historical study of the Bible. It seeks to interpret any given passage in the Scriptures only by some other passage, or passages, so that everything is either prophecy or fulfilment—or both. Because context is disregarded, and original meaning and contemporary significance are ignored, this method ultimately rests upon a belief in the infallibility of Scripture and a view of inspiration and transmission which is no more than that of mechanical verbal inerrancy. The fact that traditional dogma or liturgical phrases are sometimes introduced makes no difference in principle, for these too are based upon a literal reading of Scripture.

The new ‘biblicism’, whether it be propounded in the interests of dogmatic catholicism or of old-fashioned evangelical piety, is

<sup>1</sup> *Christ, the Christian and the Church*, E. L. Mascall, Longmans, 1946.

### *Psychological Types*

profoundly unsatisfactory.<sup>1</sup> The dialectical ingenuity in itself gives rise to the suspicion that perhaps something is being done with mirrors—and this would be so even if Dr Farrer had not called his 1948 Bampton Lectures *The Glass of Vision!*

Christianity is in all senses of the word an *historical* religion, and therefore it has been necessary to make a very close historical examination of its Scriptures in which is recounted God's action in history and in nature. This critical process, which really began less than two centuries ago, is still providing surprising and valuable results. As a method it has largely superseded the verbal jugglery of eighteen centuries which went on within the closed circle of the Bible. But the historico-critical approach has revealed a good deal of uncertainty and has given rise to some scepticism: the new biblicism and neo-typology represents the current reaction of some people to the challenge of the results of scientific investigation. But it really is no use getting out these old blunderbusses. There are new weapons to hand which will prove far more effective in defending the faith and elucidating the meaning of much that is now obscure in the Scriptures and the liturgies of the Church.

For Christianity is not merely an historical religion. Nor is it a purely verbal religion. The typologists, ancient and modern, are correct in recognizing in the Scriptures a complex pattern of powerful myths, symbols, figures or types which awaken responses in the psyche of anyone who hears them. These symbols and figures are presented in the written words of the Bible, and they are also communicated in the sacramental actions and substances and the uttered words of liturgical practice. Sometimes the recognition is conscious, sometimes unconscious, and frequently a mixture of the two. The reason why the psyche does respond is because among what Jung calls the archetypes of the collective unconscious (as distinct from the personal unconscious) are many which correspond to the figures and symbols of Scripture and Liturgy. This is, after all, precisely what one would expect.

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Flight from Reason in the Interpretation of the Bible', L. B. Cross, *Modern Churchman*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 3.

# Archetypes of Creation

## I. IN THE BEGINNING—WATER

THERE is always something to be said for beginning at the genesis, and we will confine ourselves (for the time being) to the opening chapters of the Bible. Moreover, we will accept the editorial order and start with the great dramatic liturgy in praise of divine creativity. We are immediately plunged into very deep waters, but, fortunately, illumination is at hand. The first four days of creation are concerned with the bringing of order out of chaos, the differentiation of light and darkness, of sky and earth, of land and water, of ground and plants, of sun-by-day and moon-by-night.

There is a close (but incomplete) parallel between this description and the experience of a new-born baby as during the early months of life he gradually becomes aware of his environment. Emerging from the dark watery chaos of the womb, he slowly 'orders' his sense-impressions into a more or less intelligible pattern. At first there is only an awareness of light: a new-born baby does not 'see' anything, or, rather, he does not 'perceive'. Occasionally it has been found possible (by surgery) to give sight to people who were born blind and had grown up without sight, but when their eyes are opened they do not immediately 'see'—the light is blinding and only after many weeks of very difficult practice do they learn to focus properly and select suitably from the mass of information reaching the retina: for a long time they 'see men as trees walking' and it may be weeks before they can distinguish between a square and a circle by sight alone. We have, of course, all gone through this experience though we do not remember it: only after several months of life were we

### *Archetypes of Creation*

able to 'see' the difference between stones and trees, sun and moon, birds and animals, things and people—but, in the meanwhile, our other senses had been making us aware of the difference between sky and earth, land and water, ground and trees—as listed in Genesis.

But what is missing from Genesis is most significant. A new-born baby is immediately and supremely aware of the warmth, support and food supplied by mother. But, for the Hebrew writer this was a forbidden subject! It was much too dangerous. At all costs the primary creativity of the Feminine must go unacknowledged. Just as a baby's father is comparatively remote, so the Father-Creator of Genesis 1 is not intimate with his creation. His spirit broods over the chaos-waters, he speaks the word and it is done—order is conceived, the world is born, and, as the creation matures, so its own self-consciousness emerges in the human mind, and man knows in himself the likeness of God. In Genesis 2 the 'parenthood' of God is likewise masculine and it is clear that in the story of the creation of Adam the more primitive traditions have been systematically reversed. God is envisaged as a potter moulding man from clay, but in primitive societies the making of pottery is always a feminine occupation: the 'birth' of Eve from Adam is a complete reversal of the natural process, but more of this later.

Turning to another aspect of the symbolism of Genesis 1 we notice how the deep watery chaos is a perfect symbol for the unconscious, as is also the positive darkness of night. Alike in mythology and dreams, great waters often (though by no means always) have reference to the dark and hidden impulses which are active below the level of consciousness. Water is frequently also a symbol of both birth and death—the emergence of life from the past unknown and the submergence of life in the future unknown. In the poetic imagery of the Old Testament the direct control of the sea is commonly attributed to God, (Pss. 65.7; 77.19; 89.9, etc.), and for this reason the Gospel accounts of Jesus stilling the storm (Mark 4.41) and walking on the water (6.51) are full of theological significance. Should we not see psychological allegory as well? Jesus moves on the face of the Galilean waters, and thus symbolizes the power of the human psyche in full consciousness and its control of the mysterious depths of the unconscious. Here is another way of thinking of his 'perfection'. And we need not be surprised that in the vision of the new

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

heavens and the new earth 'the sea is no more' (Rev. 21.1), for at this new level of experience full consciousness leaves no place for the unconscious—there is neither birth nor death—salvation is accomplished and danger is past—the integration of the psyche is complete.

In the opening verses of Genesis an earlier non-Hebrew creation-narrative has been transformed into a majestic hymn of praise and wonder. There were many such creation-myths current in the Near East, several of which might have been known to the Hebrew writers: in the Egyptian, Sumerian and Babylonian sources alike there is reference to the destruction of a sea-monster, and elsewhere in the Bible we find accounts of the slaughter of a monster of the deep—Leviathan:

'In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the swift serpent, and Leviathan the crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.'<sup>1</sup>

It seems most probable that the Mesopotamian New Year Festival included a ritual enactment of the defeat of the evil chaos-monster as a prelude to the creation of an ordered cosmos, and in some of the Enthronement or Covenant Psalms we can catch echoes of corresponding Hebrew rites, e.g.

'Yet God is my king of old,  
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.  
Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:  
Thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.  
Thou breakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces,  
Thou gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.'<sup>2</sup>

In another passage the destruction of a sea-monster is linked with the redemption of Israel brought about by the control of the sea at the time of the Exodus:

'O arm of the Lord . . . art thou not it that cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon? art thou not it that dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep: that made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 27.1. Cp. Amos 7.4; 9.3; Ezek. 29.3, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 74.12-14.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 51.9 f. Cp. Job 26.12 f; Ps. 89.10, etc.

### *Archetypes of Creation*

Presumably it is for reasons such as these that 'the sea', in the sense of the underworld abode of the chaos-monster, is absent from the picture of the redeemed cosmos in Revelation (21.1).

A variation of the theme of the defeat of the chaos-monster is that it was not destroyed but used as a punishing agent by God (e.g. Amos 9.3; Job 3.8), and in apocalyptic speculations the figures of a bewildering variety of monsters signify the punitive activity of God—the agents of his 'wrath'. In Daniel (c. 165 BC) for instance, we read of four great beasts which come up from the great sea, and Revelation goes into some detail concerning the millennial imprisonment of the serpent-dragon and his eventual destruction in the lake of fire (20.1-10). The composite beasts of the apocalyptic writers raise some interesting questions, and the antiquity of this kind of symbol is evidenced by a fantastic painting recently discovered among the palaeolithic cave-pictures at Lascaux. This 'apocalyptic' creature was painted at least 10,000 years ago and maybe a good deal earlier. Its significance is a matter of speculation: it may represent the inter-marriage or fusion of several different animal-totem groups into one composite tribe, or it may be an imaginative depiction of 'beastliness' in all its power and mystery. At least it may be said that such monsters roam in the unconscious: in dreams these nightmares sometimes stamp their feet. It is not unfitting that the apocalyptists used them to symbolize evil political forces such as emperors and empires.

These traces in the Bible of a primitive mythology emphasize the tremendous creative achievement of the priestly writer of Genesis 1 in distilling from crude cultus-traditions the spirit of a grand *Te Deum*, while yet retaining the essence of the archetypal symbolism.

The underlying pattern of the Genesis 'creation-week' may well reflect Hebrew knowledge of the Babylonian New Year king-god festival in which the monarch ritually enacted the triumph of the sun-god, Marduk, over Tiamat, the monster-goddess of the watery chaos: Marduk used the winds as his weapons, and from the carcass of Tiamat (Heb. *tehom* = the deep) was created the heaven and the earth. It is difficult to believe that the first chapter of Genesis was composed in complete ignorance of some such myth. As we have seen, from Mesopotamia to Egypt, there was a general myth-and-ritual closely associated with the ruler of every community and with

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

the agricultural year. In spite of important variations at different times and in different places, there was a considerable constant content in this religious pattern. Frequently occurring elements include a rebellion of gods against other gods, the intervention of a national hero-god who is the type of the monarch, the defeat of the rebellious, creation from a corpse or by a begetting, the accession of a king (sometimes preceded by the ritual humiliation or murder of the old king), a triumphal procession and enthronement of the restored king, a royal marriage or ceremonial consummation of the union of the monarch and his consort. (In Mesopotamia this climax was enacted, it seems, in a leafy 'booth' at the summit of the artificial mountain or ziggurat-temple—the original of the Tower of Babel. In Canticles it is almost certain that we have, at several removes, part of the dramatic liturgy of such a sacred marriage—see below.)

The annual repetition of a dramatized version of these events, accompanied by the recitation of the myth (including singing and dancing), was held to ensure the maintenance of the fertility of plants, animals and men throughout creation. A similar pattern in Egypt was centred on the pharaoh and the regular inundation of the Nile valley, though, in marked contrast to Babylonian religion, there was great concern for life after death—a concern which, incidentally, is hardly to be found in the Old Testament. It is of the essence of Hebrew genius that it was able to demythologize Near Eastern religion and to restate the inner truths of these mysteries in terms of transcendent ethical monotheism.

In both Mesopotamia and Egypt civilization was considerably based upon the fertility generated by great rivers, but, for the Hebrews, their experience in crossing the Red Sea became the dominant water-symbol of their subsequent religion. The destructive power of water was recognized and 'passing through water' became a very significant token of deliverance from bondage and homelessness and the gate of entry into a new life. At the end of their wanderings—sustained by the beneficent issue of water from the desert rock—the Israelites crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land: there can be little doubt that the combined Red Sea and Jordan crossing-symbolism was strongly evoked when John began to baptize in Jordan as a way of entry into the eschatological new age of the Kingdom of God. For associated reasons, Jesus, immediately after



## *Archetypes of Creation*

his baptism, crossed the Jordan for a forty-day period in the wilderness and then recrossed it (in the wake of Joshua) to inaugurate the messianic kingdom. It is in this kind of way that the Gospel-writers suggest that Jesus 'fulfils' the forty-year period of temptation of the Israelites of old and goes on to usher in a new dispensation—in directly it is suggested that he is the 'prophet like unto Moses' whom the Lord had promised to raise up (Deut. 18.15). For had not Moses, on the eve of the Jordan-crossing, recalled how he had fasted for forty days before he received the Law of the Old Covenant (Deut. 9)? (Incidentally, the action of Jesus had also been pre-figured by Elijah in his forty-day angel-ministered fast in the wilderness before he heard the 'still small voice' of God (I Kings 19).) Jacob, after passing over a river, wrestled all night with a mysterious stranger (Gen. 32.22-32). But the wrestling of Jesus was neither with a fluvial personage nor with a chaos-monster of the deep: his conflict was with the dark angel of the air. And in this transcendental encounter he rejects utterly the temptation to present himself as a king-god in the existing world-order—a Hebrew Caesar.

### 2. GOD AND KING

At this point it seems desirable to make a short digression concerning the Hebrew notion of kingship, and this again involves a consideration of the origination of the religion of the Old Testament. In one form the question is: What religious belief and cultus did Israel have when Jordan was crossed and the nation settled in Palestine, and to what extent was this religion influenced by the religions of the Canaanite people already there? Another form of the question is: What changes occurred in Israelite religion when the people ceased to be nomadic shepherds and cattle-drovers, and when these former slaves settled down (partly by conquest and partly by infiltration) as an agricultural-cum-urban nation? These are very big questions and we can do no more than sketch the probable answers.

Contrary to what has often been supposed, it now seems likely that Israel's religion started at a 'high level'. That is to say that as soon as Israel is recognizable as a separate nation, it is recognizable precisely because its religion is monotheistic and ethical. In other words, specifically Hebrew religion did not 'evolve' according to a neat

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

plan from animism, through polytheism and henotheism, to ethical monotheism. On the contrary, from its recognizable beginnings, right from the time of Abraham and of Moses, it was essentially monotheistic. It arose (in human terms) as a reaction against other highly developed religions rather than as the end product of a gradual evolutionary process. It arose (in its own religious terms) because God chose Abraham and his people for a unique task and directly inspired the patriarchs and prophets with a new insight into his true nature. To begin with, this monotheism and its accompanying ethical codes were, no doubt, simple and possibly rather crude. Hebrew religion did develop. This development consisted partly in refinement and sophistication and partly in successive stages of modification—these changes are not difficult to discern.

The contrast between the single austere God as conceived by the early Hebrews and the many gods of their neighbours is, as we have noted, probably to be understood in connection with their experience of nomadic wandering. Abraham and his people left the sophisticated urban-agricultural civilization of Mesopotamia, with its elaborate pattern of ritual and belief centred upon the divine king, for a period of journeying through wild country under an impressive sky. Later on, Moses led the Israelites from an essentially similar milieu in Egypt through the awe-inspiring volcanic region of Sinai. In both journeys the familiar fertility-gods and a divine monarchy were left behind, and the conviction grew that the true God is single and celestial, and that he alone is both Shepherd and King. Moreover, he is to be worshipped by the sacrifice of sheep, goats, cattle and birds on altars of stone—simple nomadic offerings rather than a complex metropolitan ritual focused upon the king-god to maintain the fertility of land and people. The ideal hope at this time is for a 'land flowing with milk and honey'—the pastoral paradise of a wandering people: likewise, the pastoral animal 'totems' of this period, the Bull and the Snake (the golden calf and the brazen serpent), are symbolic of the opposite poles—prosperity and danger.

Israel came into Canaan with priests and prophets, but no king; with a portable tent of meeting and some sacred objects, but no notion of a national Temple; with a weekly Sabbath and an annual Passover, but no other seasonal festivals; with a passionate belief in a single male God, whose likeness must never be made, who had chosen

### *Archetypes of Creation*

Israel to be a nation bound to him by a covenant of moral requirement which was sealed in the blood of circumcision and honoured in the sacrifice of animals. Israel came into the midst of nations with a very different religious pattern—many nature gods and goddesses, elaborate seasonal cults observed in a variety of sacred places and making use of a multitude of idols and images (especially of the Great Mother), a cultus-pattern closely linked with sexuality and making few moral demands—the whole integrated into a system of monarchical government.

The time of the settlement of Palestine is not accurately known, but, after not many generations, Israel was observing a number of seasonal festivals, was ruled by a king, and was building a metropolitan Temple. The original monotheism had been enriched by 'controlled borrowing' from neighbouring religions.

The concern of the prophets of the monarchical period was to control this borrowing—negatively, to prevent the moral and polytheistic debasement of Israel's religion by foreign cultic influences, and, positively, to develop creatively such of these influences as were congruous with Israel's new status as a settled agricultural-urban people. As the Hebrews became small-holders and householders, as they became 'house-bound', so Jehovah was thought of as the Husband of Israel and the nation as his Bride (Hos. 2.16, 19; Jer. 3.14; Isa. 54.5; 62.4 f).

A second stage in the development of Israel's religion is associated with the Exile and the subsequent period when religious dualism of Persian origin led to a modification of Hebrew monotheism: the Jews rejected any suggestion that there were two opposed gods, but they admitted the principle of a cosmic conflict and held that it took place by permission of Jehovah and was within his ultimate purpose—a struggle pictured with increasing detail and apocalyptic symbolism as being between Satan and his demons and the angelic hosts. A third stage of modification was due to the increasing pressures of Greek culture, including philosophic dualism—but that does not concern us here, and has been referred to above.

By the time the Pentateuch was being realized in its present form, it was clear that the Hebrew experience of kingship had been profoundly unsatisfactory. Apart from the 'golden age' of David, considerably tarnished by Solomon, the monarchy had failed miserably.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

The reluctance of Samuel to anoint Saul had obviously been justified, and the failure of Zerubbabel to re-establish the monarchy was interpreted as an indication of the divine will that God was king and his alone was the kingdom. Both the ritual king and the political king were abhorrent to faithful Jews: the problem of leadership was solved for the immediate future in terms of the High Priest, and ultimately in some version of the Messianic hope. Thus, in brief, the Jews of the Exile and the Return, as they generated the Pentateuch, did their best to strip away every trace of polytheistic influence, to demythologize the traditions, and to assemble an integrated account of God's dealings with his people incorporating a full statement of his Law. They were also concerned to minimize the institution of a divinely ordered monarchy and to build up the characteristic doctrine of theocracy—an all-pervading kingdom of God with no human king and governed, in fact, by the priesthood.

But though the Pentateuch composers and editors succeeded in demythologizing the cosmogony, at the other end of the time-sequence the reverse process was beginning, namely, the mythologizing of eschatology in apocalyptic terms. Myths driven out at the front door crowd in at the back.

#### 3. WATER AND SPIRIT: BREATH AND LIFE

Returning to the demythologized Genesis text, we next read how the darkness which was upon the face of the deep was dispelled by the Breath (LXX *pneuma*: Heb. *ruach*) of God 'brooding over' the waters, and how the breathing condensed into the creative Word and light shone forth. In these few verses there is an amazing concentration of symbolic themes which recur in many forms throughout the Scriptures, and which are also common to the myths and dreams of all peoples. Looking westward across the darkening sea, the people of Palestine could see the nightly death of the sun—sometimes in the redness of fire or blood: in the morning, having passed through the dark waters of night, the sun was born anew in the glory of light. At his own birth, the blood-stained man-child emerges from the dark waters of the womb, he draws his first breath, and he opens his eyes to the light. When he dies, and his body is buried in earth or burned in fire, is there no hope of a new birth? Nicodemus went to see Jesus by night: he was told that if he wished to

### *Archetypes of Creation*

see the kingdom of God he must be born anew, and when he asked if a man could enter again into his mother's womb and be born, he received the answer: 'Except a man be born of Water and the Spirit (*pneuma*) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God . . . the wind bloweth (the spirit breatheth) where it listeth . . . so is every-one that is born of the Spirit' (John 3.1-8). The Fourth Evangelist, in his interpretation of Jesus, the kingdom of God, and life in the new age, shows how deeply he has meditated on the archetypal symbolism of Genesis. The waters of baptism are the uterine waters of a new birth and they are also the covering depths of death to the old life. 'All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection.' (Rom. 6.3-5). (The present practice of the baptism of infants without immersion makes it very difficult to bring out the significance of Christian initiation.) In the vision of John the Baptist, the Spirit as a dove (the airy symbol of love) hovers over the waters and abides on Jesus signifying that 'the same is he that baptizeth in Holy Spirit' (John 1.32 f). In this connection one cannot help thinking of the dove which returned over the death-waters of the Flood with a tree-token of the new life—a leaf from the tree which provides the oil of healing, sanctification, and baptismal anointing.

Because of the dependence of fertility upon the immaterial light and heat from the sun falling upon the substantial damp earth, it is common in mythology to find that the male principle is regarded as immaterial or spiritual (symbolized by the elements, air and fire), while the female principle is treated as material (symbolized by water and earth). There is a linguistic connection between the words matter, mater, matrix, etc. In antiquity, conception was often thought of as being accomplished by the *aura seminalis*, the female providing the material home and nourishment for the organism to develop. 'Fertilization' by wind or by divine afflatus is a common idea in the ancient world, and until the microscope had been invented there was no particular reason for supposing that among the higher animals and man both parents make an equivalent material

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

contribution; some of the Fathers go so far as to support the doctrine of the virgin conception by quoting the supposed fertilization of eagles by the wind. With these facts in mind we can see more clearly why 'baptism in Holy Spirit' (Luke 3.16) is not just a second birth, but is also, as it were, a 'male' birth. Christian Confirmation, signifying the gift of the Spirit by the laying on of hands, also corresponds to a puberty-initiation and marks the point at which the boy leaves a mother-dominated society for that of the males: paternal birth from the 'father's womb' is quite explicit in some tribal initiations.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional Christian font-rituals (now discontinued in Protestant churches) give full expression to the sexual aspects of the regenerative process of baptism. The font is unmistakably a womb, and in the Holy Saturday ceremonies the Paschal candle signifies the contribution of the masculine spirit. The massive candle is plunged three times into the font and, in some rites, the liquid wax is made to drip into the water, and in other rites oil is poured in. One of the prayers used is as follows:

'May the Holy Ghost fertilize this water prepared for the regeneration of man by the secret admixture of his light, that by a holy conception a heavenly offspring may come forth from the spotless womb of the divine font as a new creature, and may all who differ in sex or age be begotten by parent grace into one and the same infancy.'

Other prayers make reference to Genesis passages concerning creation and the Flood, and as part of the rite water is cast to the four points of the compass in recollection of the four rivers of Eden.

St Ambrose of Milan, writing at the end of the fourth century, links the spiritual rebirth of Holy Baptism with the fertilizing power attributed to the Holy Spirit in Matthew:

'Therefore, having received all these rites, let us acknowledge that we are regenerate, nor let us say: How are we regenerate? Have we entered into our mother's womb and been born again? I do not recognize any natural process. But there is nothing of the order of nature here where the excellence of grace obtains. For Mary did not conceive of a man, but in her womb received from

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Male God and the Males', R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Hibbert Journal*, July 1955.

### *Archetypes of Creation*

the Holy Spirit, as Matthew says: "Because she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1.18). If, then, the Holy Spirit coming upon the Virgin brought about conception and brought to completion the office of generation, surely we must not doubt that coming upon the fountain, or on those who receive baptism, he brings about the reality of their generation.<sup>1</sup>

In the same treatise, St Ambrose also makes use of an interesting typological argument which suggests the idea of the purification or sanctification of water by wood:

'The fountain of Marah was most bitter. Moses cast wood into it and it became sweet (Ex. 15.23-25). For water without the proclamation of the Lord's cross serves no useful purpose for future salvation. But when the water is consecrated by the mystery of the saving cross, then it becomes suitable for use in the spiritual laver and in the cup of salvation. As, then, Moses, the Prophet, cast wood into that fountain, so also the priest casts the proclamation of the cross into this fountain and the water becomes sweet for grace.'<sup>2</sup>

The Cave and the Rock are also ancient symbols of motherhood: Lazarus emerging from a cave or 'little house' is easily seen as a new-birth symbol, and also as a pre-figuring of the resurrection from a rock-hewn tomb of Jesus; as usually depicted the winding-sheet is reminiscent of the swaddling-bands of the newly-born. In a similar kind of way, water issuing from a rock is a reminder of maternal sustenance. The womb-symbolism of Toplady's hymn is unmistakable, and this, indeed, probably accounts for its great popularity:

'Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the Water and the Blood,  
From thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.'

Thus, although Christianity in the early centuries faithfully carried forward the masculinity of Judaism, some of the primitive symbolism is characteristically feminine, and it is not surprising that later on the figure of the Mother of Jesus comes into great prominence.

<sup>1</sup> *On the Mysteries.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

It is very doubtful if any part of this kind of symbolism is consciously appreciated by the multitude of Protestant parents and god-parents who bring their babies to be 'christened' by head-watering. (Especially is this the case with modern small fonts which look like bird-baths, and in which it is impossible to dip the infants properly.) The fact that so many babies are brought to baptism does suggest that there may be some measure of unconscious recognition of a need for a 'second birth'—a spiritual parallel to the physical parturition. The matter of baptism in a cold climate is extraordinarily complex: Protestant opinion is very divided and not always very well informed on some of the fundamental issues. The baptism of newly-born infants, as distinct from that of believing or converted adults, further complicates the matter: it is a considerable departure from the principle of baptism in antiquity and in the New Testament, and it introduces a new set of doctrinal questions and often involves theories concerning 'original sin' and the body-soul relationship. (To these matters we shall return in a subsequent section.)

#### 4. DARKNESS AND LIGHT

Darkness and light are very powerful symbols: not only do they signify the contrast between the unconscious impulses and conscious thoughts, ignorance and knowledge, danger and deliverance, but they can also symbolize death and life; furthermore this pair of opposites easily acquires the strong moral significance of evil and good.

In the Old Testament there are a number of associations of darkness with the Wrath of God in his judgement at the Day of the Lord, and, correspondingly, light is referred to in the description of the salvation which is promised to the faithful. Amos uses the imagery of an eclipse to define the character of the Day of Jehovah:

'It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.'<sup>1</sup>

According to the Synoptic Gospels, at the time of the death of Jesus, 'there was darkness over the whole earth' (Mark 15.33), but John does not report this overshadowing because in this Gospel the

<sup>1</sup> Amos 8.9.



### *Archetypes of Creation*

crucifixion is a manifestation of glory rather than a tragedy. In the Fourth Gospel the deed of darkness is to be observed in the action of Judas Iscariot who went out 'and it was night' (John 13.30). Luke records that at the time of the arrest, Jesus said to those who came for him 'this is your hour and the power of darkness' (22.53), and in Ephesians this kind of imagery is considerably amplified:

'Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.'<sup>1</sup>

Paul's account of his conversion (as reported in Acts), contains a striking example of the same religious dualism: the voice of the Risen Lord commands him to go to the Gentiles 'to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God' (26.18), and at the end of this speech before Agrippa, Paul identifies the Resurrection of Christ with the 'enlightenment' promised in the Scriptures, 'how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles' (26.23). There is a singular appropriateness in the tradition that it was on the first day of the week, 'when the sun was risen' (Mark 16.2) that the women found the angel whose 'appearance was as lightning and his raiment as white as snow' (Matt. 28.3). One is inevitably reminded of the magnificent words of Isaiah:

'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.'<sup>2</sup>

The 'illumination' of the darkness of the Gentiles is a frequent metaphor in Isaiah, and a significant passage, which is quoted by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13.47), depicts the 'Servant' as the Enlightener:

'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 6.12.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 60.1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 49.6.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Again, in an earlier passage there is a prophetic assurance concerning a radiant Messianic Prince:

‘The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.’<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is that when the son was born to Mary, old Simeon declared him indeed to be ‘a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel’ (Luke 2.32). In the New Testament there is a considerable focusing of this light-symbolism upon the person of Christ.

Especially in the Fourth Gospel is the Light-Darkness symbolism developed. The keynote is struck in the opening phrases: ‘In the Logos was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness apprehended it not’ (1.4 f). This theme is elaborated in many characteristic ways, e.g. ‘This is the judgement, that the light is come into the cosmos, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil’ (3.19); ‘I am the light of the cosmos: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life’ (8.12); ‘When I am in the cosmos, I am the light of the cosmos’ (9.5); cp. ‘God is light, and in him is no darkness at all’ (I John 1.5). In this kind of way the Hebrew symbol of the *Shekhinah*—the brightness of God’s presence and power—is transmuted into Christian terms. In spite of the Psalmist’s claim that to God ‘darkness and light are both alike’ (139.12), another significant verse should not be forgotten:

‘I am the Lord and there is none else.  
I form the Light and create the Darkness;  
I make peace and create evil;  
I am the Lord that doeth all these things.’<sup>2</sup>

Darkness, and what appears to be calamity, just as much as light and peace, are the result of God’s deliberate action: evil does not have its origin in an independent dark god. In this sense, in I Samuel we read ‘The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him’ (16.14). Again, in order to

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 9.2.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 45.6 f.

### *Archetypes of Creation*

account for the mysterious and dark emptiness of the inmost chamber of his temple, Solomon declared 'The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness' (I Kings 8.12). Thus, according to the Old Testament, there is a 'dark side' to the activity of God: this is a theme which receives a great deal of attention in Jung's recent *Answer to Job*.

Darkness and Light also convey the sense of 'dirty' and 'clean' in both physical and a moral sense. Because of the cleansing property of water, Holy Baptism has acquired the secondary significance of 'the washing away of sin', and the traditional use of candles associated with actual baptisms and other font-rituals introduces the element of light. This deep awareness of the dangers of darkness probably underlies the irrational uneasiness which many 'white' people feel in the presence of 'coloured' people (and, no doubt, vice versa). In Genesis 9 and 10 we find a narrative which in modern times has been interpreted as a justification for light-skinned people to identify darker-skinned people as the accursed descendants of Ham condemned to perpetual servitude: that any section of the Church should use Scripture in support of racialism is a complete betrayal of the New Testament and must be condemned by all other Christians.

In Genesis 1 darkness and light are presented as cosmic qualities of the first 'day': only on the fourth 'day' are the 'lights of the firmament of heaven' created 'to give light upon the earth' and so give terrestrial experience of these primary elements. It is significant that in Hebrew thought the mythology of sun, moon, planets and stars is minimized. This is in very marked contrast to the religions of most of the surrounding peoples amongst whom solar deities, moon-goddesses and astrological beliefs proliferated with bewildering complexity. The Hebrew prophets and reformers had to fight a constant battle against reversion to such beliefs and idolatrous practices as such passages as II Kings 23 plainly show, e.g.

'King Josiah put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem: and them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets (or twelve signs), and to all the host of heaven. . . . And he took away the horses that the kings of

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Judah had given to the sun . . . and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.<sup>1</sup>

Only occasionally and indirectly does the celestial symbolism find expression in the Scriptures and in subsequent Christian doctrine and devotion. It is not entirely absent, however, and can be seen in such passages as the eschatological reference to 'the sun of righteousness with healing in his wings' who shall 'arise' on the Day of the Lord (Mal. 4.2): this metaphor and similar astral ones are given a Messianic interpretation in the New Testament, as in Ephesians 'Christ shall shine upon thee' (5.14) and in Luke 'the dayspring from on high' (1.78). This kind of imagery has found its way into certain Christian hymns—'Sun of my soul . . .' and 'Sun of righteousness arise . . .', but the dangers of taking too much account of the heavenly lights in religious thought has always been realized in the Hebrew-Christian tradition. The Bible insists on the omnipotence of God over all his celestial creation, for example in the rhetorical questions in Job:

'Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades,  
Or loose the bands of Orion?  
Canst thou lead forth the signs of the Zodiac in their season?  
Or canst thou guide the Bear with her sons?'<sup>2</sup>

Or again in the worshipful dependence implied in Psalm 148:

'Praise ye him, sun and moon:  
Praise him, all ye stars of light.  
Praise him ye heavens of heavens. . . .  
Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
For he commanded, and they were created.'<sup>3</sup>

A certain validity to astrological prediction is admitted in the infancy narrative of the visit of the Magi (Matt. 2.1-11), and, by the Church, this event was typologically linked to a metaphorical reference in Balaam's vision treated as a Messianic prediction.

'I see him, but not now:  
I behold him, but not nigh:

<sup>1</sup> II Kings 23.5 and 11; cp. Ezek. 8.16; Jer. 7.18.

<sup>2</sup> Job 38.31 f.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 148.3-5.

### *Archetypes of Creation*

There shall come forth a star out of Jacob,  
And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Balaam's star was thus held to prefigure the star seen by the Magi, and this star was itself taken as a symbol of Christ. The journeying of the Magi was also related to the journey of Balaam and the angelic visitation (Num. 22), and representations of these two events are often to be found in medieval religious art. The Epiphany 'star' may be connected historically with a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn estimated to have occurred in 7 BC, or it may be associated with a comet which is thought to have been visible in Palestine in 4 BC. Alternatively, the brief appearance of a *nova* in the Zodiacal house of Pisces (said to be the sign of Judah) may have stimulated Mesopotamian astrologers to seek the birthplace of a new Jewish king.

In Revelation we may see the identification of Jesus with the star symbol: 'I, Jesus, am the bright, the morning star' (i.e. Venus!) (22.16), and in II Peter there is a reference to the 'day-star' arising 'in your hearts'—and the word which is translated 'day-star' is *phosphorus*—the 'light-bearer' or Lucifer!<sup>2</sup> This Lucifer-figure appears in Isaiah: 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning!' (14.12). In his wonderful figure of Lucifer, Jacob Epstein gives unforgettable expression to the pathos of this falling son of light [*Plate 13*]. In Revelation, however, Lucifer has become Satanic: 'I saw a star from heaven fallen to the earth: and there was given to him the key of the abyss' (9.1); this fallen star is also called Wormwood, or Absinthe, because he 'poisons the waters' of the earth, with the result that their bitterness causes the death of many men (8.10f). Jesus himself echoes the same symbolism in his vision of the defeat of spiritual evil: 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven' (Luke 10.18), and thus it would appear that dominical authority is given to elaboration of apocalyptic imagery. Considerations of this kind illustrate the curious ambivalence of certain archetypal symbols—the Lucifer-Star figure represents a manifestation of the Son of God; as a Falling Star he is the presumptuous and disobedient originator of evil, but as a Rising Star he is a humble and obedient bringer of salvation: a mysterious dualism is presented in this strange

<sup>1</sup> Num. 24.17.

<sup>2</sup> II Pet. 1.19.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

mirror-imaging of the 'two sons of God', the one portending calamity and darkness, the other announcing deliverance and light.

According to Josephus various cosmic symbols were depicted on the 'veil', i.e. the enormous tapestry-curtain, which was hung across the entrance to Herod's Temple at Jerusalem. Concerning the outer chamber, or Holy Place, he writes:

'It had golden doors fifty-five cubits high and sixteen broad. Before these hung a veil of equal length, of Babylonian tapestry, with embroidery of blue and fine linen, of scarlet also and purple, wrought with marvellous skill. Nor was this mixture of materials without its mystic meaning: it typified the universe. For the scarlet seemed emblematic of fire, the fine linen of the earth, the blue of the air, and the purple of the sea. On this tapestry was portrayed a panorama of the heavens, the signs of the Zodiac excepted.'<sup>1</sup>

Although the actual signs of the Zodiac were excluded, the annual numbers, twelve and thirteen, and the planetary number, seven, were all represented in the furnishings of the Holy Place:

'Passing within one found oneself in the ground-floor of the sanctuary. . . . The first portion, partitioned off at forty cubits, contained within it three most wonderful works of art, universally renowned: a lampstand, a table, and an altar of incense. The seven lamps (such being the number of the branches from the lampstand) represented the planets; the loaves on the table, twelve in number, the circle of the Zodiac and the year; while the altar of incense, by the thirteen fragrant spices from sea and from land, both desert and inhabited, with which it was replenished, signified that all things are of God and for God.'<sup>2</sup>

(Another 'veil' hung over the entrance to the inner chamber, the Holy of Holies, but Josephus is silent concerning any designs which may have been embroidered upon it: this is the veil which is said to have been 'rent in twain' at the death of Christ. Josephus says that there was nothing within the Holy of Holies, but it is commonly believed that from the floor there was an outcrop of rock.)

In Revelation astrological symbolism is quite prominent, particularly in association with numbers four, seven and twelve. Ultimately, the supposed significance of these numbers derives

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish War*, V, 211-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-18.

### *Archetypes of Creation*

from the approximations of four times seven days in a month and twelve (plus one) months in a year: unfortunately, the relative motions of sun, moon and earth cannot be expressed in whole numbers with any reasonable degree of accuracy; nevertheless, the approximate figures are deeply embedded in religious symbolism. Seven is also associated with the seven 'stars' of antiquity—Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn, and presumably these are in mind when the author of Revelation refers to 'he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars . . .' (3.1). These seven Spirits of God, which were sent forth into all the earth, are figuratively described as the seven horns and the seven eyes of the apocalyptic Lamb of God (5.6): in the magnificent Tree of Jesse window at Chartres these seven Spirits are seen as seven doves in flight around the head of the glorified Christ.

It is clear that Revelation has some affinities with both the Jewish worship in the Temple and the developing pattern of Christian worship in the first century: thus it is that we read of the 'seven lamps of fire before the throne of God' (4.5), liturgically represented by the seven-branched candlestick in the Temple, and subsequently by the seven sanctuary lamps of the Church.

But it is the heavenly sign of Revelation which has formed the basis of the most familiar celestial symbolism of Christian art:

'A woman arrayed with the sun,  
And the moon under her feet,  
And upon her head a crown of twelve stars.'<sup>1</sup>

Interpreted as referring to the glorified mother of Jesus, this majestic figure of a woman becomes the Queen of Heaven, and so it is that she is depicted in bright clothing against the blue of the sky, standing on a crescent moon, and with an aureole of the Zodiacal stars. (A fuller consideration of the iconography of the Virgin is given below.)

There are several references in the Old Testament to the worship of the Great Mother as a sky-goddess—the Queen of Heaven. In Jeremiah, we learn how she was worshipped with imprinted loaves:

'The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 12.1.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 7.18.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

In a later chapter we read that these offerings were made 'in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem', and that the cakes in some way portrayed the goddess (44.15-19). It is interesting to note that a set of cake-moulds of clay has recently been unearthed in the royal kitchens of the Palace of Mari (Syria)—one of these has a figure of Ishtar-Astarte, another depicts two goats nibbling a sacred tree on a mountain, another a wheel-like formation of dancers. There can be little doubt that the cakes which were produced by such moulds as these were in use in Israel. When we eat hot-cross buns, or receive imprinted eucharistic wafers, we should recognize that Christianity has adopted a very ancient practice indeed for a communion or sacramental sharing of the 'food of the gods'.



# Archetypes of Male & Female

## I. MALE AND FEMALE

RETURNING to Genesis I, we are now confronted by the passage which deals with the creation of mankind 'after our likeness' by Elohim:

'And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.'<sup>1</sup>

There is probably more than an echo of the notion of an androgynous 'parent' in these strange verses. Somehow the two sexes are thought of as being in the likeness of a single God who has a plural name. So too in a later passage when God 'called *their* name Adam (=man) in the day when they were created' (5.2). The word *sex* itself implies division, and hence the incompleteness of one 'section' without the other. In some religious myths this is explicit in the bisexual nature of the primordial parent. For example, Egyptian coffin-texts refer to Atum as the great He-She, and in a pyramid-text the spirit of primeval waters is addressed thus:

'O Guardian wherein is the mother of P,  
O Dweller in the Nether Sky:  
P was born by his father (*sic*) Atum,  
Before the earth or the sky came into existence.'<sup>2</sup>

Another example from an unrelated source may be seen in the figure of Ymir, the Norse monster of the primeval waters, who was believed to be bisexual: it is thought that the name itself means 'the twins'

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1.27.

<sup>2</sup> Pyramid Text 1466, Ed. Sethe.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

(male and female). A similar notion can be observed in the respect which is paid in some societies to the mysterious 'intersex' person who is born from time to time: these unfortunate individuals of ambiguous sexuality still attract a good deal of popular press publicity, particularly when they appear to 'change' their sex, and the public interest in such phenomena reflects a deep-rooted concern with the possibility of permanently unified sexuality. In most mythologies the divinities appear in complementary sexual pairs, and in spite of the extraordinary masculinity of Hebrew religion, there have been occasions when rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 1 has been androgynous in character, and therefore, in order that the divine image might be fully experienced, celibacy was condemned. The Elephantine documents show that among this Egyptian colony of Jews it was believed (as late as the fifth century BC) that Jehovah had a consort named Anath. In Near Eastern religion generally, the sacred marriage of the king-god at the New Year festival restored the unity which was sundered by sex, and was a dramatic symbol of fruitful union and held to be necessary for the welfare of the state. In Genesis 2 the idea that the original human being was bisexual perhaps underlies the extraordinary account of the 'bisection' of the initial creature to make a mating pair.

The exclusive masculinization of divinity in Hebrew religion which was inherited by Christianity has itself produced a reaction in the Church. There is no doubt that many people experience the need for a feminine element in the Godhead, and in Christian belief and practice this need has shown itself in various ways. For instance, there was a time when the Holy Spirit was thought of as female. In the lost *Gospel according to the Hebrews* there was a saying attributed to Jesus:

'Even now did my mother the Holy Spirit take me by one of my hairs, and carried me away to the great mountain Thabor.'

Origen comments that this description of the Holy Spirit as 'my mother' is due to the fact that the Hebrew word for Spirit is of feminine gender, and that the saying probably refers to the Temptation. Other ways of providing a feminine aspect of deity have been to regard the feminine Wisdom (*Sophia*) as in some way incorporated in the Trinity, or in the generally repugnant feminization of the

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

Jesus of popular devotion and of ecclesiastical commercial art. A few painters of homosexual tendencies (e.g. Leonardo da Vinci) have produced pictures of a very effeminate Christ, and in many a Victorian picture the artist seems to have thought of Jesus as a 'bearded lady'. But by far the most extensive and satisfactory way of expressing the feminine aspect of divine love and care has been to accord to Mary a virtual 'parity of esteem' with the Three Persons: womanhood in all its aspects finds expression in the Virgin-Mother of Christian devotion.

In *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*, Alan W. Watts goes so far as to say with reference to the recent promulgation of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Virgin as dogma:

'... one can hardly doubt that these in due course will be followed, first, by the dogma that she is the Mediatrix of All Graces, and, ultimately, by some dogma to the effect that she must receive *latria*—the worship proper to God himself—by virtue of her assimilation to the Godhead. This will be the victory of what was apparent long ago at Chartres and today in Mexico, where the Virgin of Guadalupe is—in practice—honoured far above the Father and the Son, and whose icon stands before the worshippers in its own right, representing the Virgin alone without even the Christ Child in her arms.

'We are within sight of the recognition that the Assumption is the revelation of what the Virgin was from the beginning—the one who reigns eternally with Christ, Sophia as the consort of Logos, divine Matrix of the universe. All the honours and symbols of this estate are present, and the only thing lacking is the precise theological definition.'<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental difficulty in trying to envisage God in terms of *personality* is simply that personality is known only in terms of male or female persons. The 'intersexes' do not really count because functionally they are never hermaphrodite; in fact, they are usually sterile and only infrequently does one become a parent—never a father *and* a mother. Nevertheless, the occasional occurrence of 'intersex' persons may well have given rise to the idea of a permanent union of the sexes in a single individual—a notion which had some appeal to Plato. So long as a single Creator is conceived in personal terms there is bound to be some measure of 'projection' of any man's

<sup>1</sup> *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*, Thames and Hudson, 1954, pp. 110-12.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

experience of his own father or his own mother. There is also some correspondence with the archetypal figures of the Wise Old Man or the Great Mother of anthropology and of psychological theory. Anthropomorphism is inevitable, and in the earlier Genesis tradition of chapters 2 and 3 it is developed explicitly.

In the Garden of Eden story we can trace the interwoven symbolism of the fertility of the earth and human sexuality and procreative power. The man is himself taken from the virgin earth and is then put into the garden to work and control the earth's fertility. The Creator (who later in the narrative is heard 'walking in the garden in the wind of the evening'), is most easily visualized as the Wise Old Man—the Ancient of Days. By his 'breath' life is given to the moulded clay. He is the 'father' of the man as the earth is his 'mother'. And again we notice that the masculine aspect of parenthood is thought of as unsubstantial breath in contrast to the material damp dust of maternity: in spite of the complete difference in style, the essential symbolism is the same as that of Genesis 1 where the spirit of God broods over the watery material of creation. In the Fourth Gospel the fruit of the evangelist's meditation on this paradisaical imagery is clearly seen: the Risen Lord is reborn from the earth-tomb and by the woman is taken to be a gardener, and from thence he proceeds to breathe on the new community the spiritual power which will give them life in the new age.

The figure of God, the Father-Creator, under the form of a 'gardener' occurs several times in the Old Testament, notably as the owner and planter of a vineyard, e.g. Isaiah 5.1-7 which concludes with the verse:

'The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,  
And the men of Judah the plant of his delight.'

Again in Psalm 80 there is a passage which includes these verses:

'Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts;  
Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,  
And the stock which thy right hand hath planted,  
And the "branch" (Heb. son) that thou madest strong for  
thyself'.<sup>1</sup>

Against this sort of background must be read the allegorical discourses in John, in which Jesus speaks of himself as the Vine.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 80.14 f.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

But, when, at the end of the Gospel, the evangelist describes how Mary Magdalene sees the Risen Lord as a gardener, he is suggesting (with characteristic obliqueness) that he is none other than the Logos-Creator of the world about to embark upon a new stage of 'gardening'.

The extraction, as it were, of Eve from the side of Adam though 'untrue' in terms of history and evolution can, nevertheless, be seen to be 'true' in terms of physiology, psychology and morality. There is a woman in every man, just as there is an element of masculinity in every female. The mythological notion of sex being the result of the bisection of an androgynous original does, in fact, correspond to certain aspects of sexuality from biological and psychological points of view. Though any theory of evolution is completely absent from the Biblical concept of nature, it does seem to be most probable that living organisms existed and reproduced themselves for long ages before there occurred any differentiation which might be called sexual. In other words, the non-sexual mode of reproduction did precede the sexual (and, in a curious way, persists at the human level in the origin of identical twins). And, oddly enough, the real significance of sexual differentiation is concerned with the transmission of evolutionary variation and not with reproduction itself. Sexuality provides the means for mixing up the variant hereditary factors (genes) and so enormously speeds up the evolutionary process: non-sexual (or vegetative) reproduction is more 'efficient' in terms of mere numbers, but has the disadvantage that the offspring are seldom distinguishable from the parent, and this makes the spread of variation very slow and limited. Sexuality makes possible the combination of variants and thus is essentially creative in that new varieties, which might otherwise never have occurred, come into existence in profusion.

Again, from many points of view, it is true that Adam and Eve together constitute 'one flesh'. In a general sense the masculine and feminine characteristics are complementary, but, more than that, the difference between them is relative rather than absolute. In the anatomy of every man there are organic structures which correspond to typically female ones, and *vice versa* (e.g. male nipples, female clitoris): in the blood stream of every man there are gland-substances (hormones) the relative proportions of which are closely correlated

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

with his masculinity—the same or very similar substances in a reversed proportion are correlated to the femininity of a woman. Thus in a strange anatomical and physiological sense it is true that within every Adam there is an Eve. Certainly in a psychological sense this is true. In a discussion of various aspects of the psyche (i.e. the totality of all psychic process, both conscious and unconscious), Jung writes:

‘The inner personality is the manner of one’s behaviour towards the inner psychic processes: it is the inner attitude, the character, that is turned towards the unconscious. I term the outer attitude or outer character, the *persona*, the inner attitude I term the *anima*, or soul. . . . As regards the character of the soul, my experience confirms the validity of the general principle that it maintains, on the whole, a *complementary* relation to the outer character. . . . Where the *persona* is intellectual, the soul is quite certainly sentimental. That the complementary character of the soul is also concerned with the sex-character is a fact which can no longer be seriously doubted. A very feminine woman has a very masculine soul, and a very manly man a feminine soul. The opposition is based on the fact that a man, for instance, is not in all things wholly masculine, but has also certain feminine traits. The more manly his outer attitude, the more will his womanly traits be effaced; these then appear in the soul. This circumstance explains why it is that the very manly men are most subject to characteristic weaknesses; their attitude to the unconscious has a womanly weakness and impressionability.’<sup>1</sup>

Thus modern psychology provides another way of understanding human nature for which the old symbols are still valid. ‘Every man carries his Eve within himself.’ The strange account of the ‘deep sleep’ of Adam and the rib taken from within him which was made into a woman can be understood perfectly well as a mythological description of the *anima*, or contra-sexual soul-image, lying concealed within the psyche.

### 2. ADAM AND EVE

There is nothing new in regarding Adam as generalized ‘man’. Seventeen centuries ago Origen wrote as follows:

‘. . . the story of Adam and his sin will be interpreted philosophically by those who know that Adam means *anthropos* (man) in the

<sup>1</sup> *Psychological Types*, Routledge, 1923, pp. 593-5.

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

Greek language, and, that in what appears to be concerned with Adam, Moses is speaking of the nature of man. For, as the Bible says, "as in Adam all die", and they were condemned "in the likeness of Adam's transgression". Here the divine Word says this not so much about an individual as of the whole race. Moreover, in the sequence of sayings which seem to refer to one individual, the curse of Adam is shared by all men. There is also no woman to whom the curses pronounced against Eve do not apply.<sup>1</sup>

We moderns sometimes feel that we have a difficulty which was not explicit in the days of pre-evolutionary thought. For us it seems difficult to imagine how anything really like 'the Fall' actually occurred in the evolutionary process, and many people now speak of human nature as 'fallen' without really believing that it was ever perfectly upright. But this difficulty disappears when we cease to think of Adam as 'a man' and realize that he is 'everyman'. The mistake is to think of the Eden story as past history instead of a myth of what is going on in human nature all the time—what might perhaps be called an 'existentialist myth'. It is an inherent quality of human nature that moral tensions should develop. Jesus himself experienced the sense of temptation and described his sensations in terms of a challenge from God's other son, Satan-Lucifer. As we grow up from innocence which is really ignorance we normally acquire some sense of right and wrong: as a result of our ambivalent relationships with our parents and the rest of our environment, we increase in knowledge and find ourselves possessed of a way of reacting which we call 'conscience'. It is sometimes possible to observe children and young people 'listening to the serpent' or 'eating the apple' for the first time. The evolution of the race is reflected in the development of every child from birth to maturity. In this world we are certainly 'outside the garden', but not because Adam misbehaved himself.

Our present difficulty is twofold. On the one hand, the traditional doctrine of the Church relates human consciousness of 'sin' to the disobedience of Adam, and, in its more extreme form, regards Adam as the historical single 'first man', originally created without sin and immortal, and because (on this basis) all mankind is therefore physically descended from him it is also held that his guilt and

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Celsum*, iv, 40.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

punishment is 'inherited' as well.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, on the basis of evolutionary theory the concept of a single 'first man' seems hardly tenable, because 'human nature' itself has to be defined in terms of evolutionary change and not *vice versa*. If the general development of specifically human consciousness corresponds to the sequence of anatomical evolution (as evidenced by fossil and tool remains), it would be a purely arbitrary judgement to say, even if it were possible, that any particular creature was the 'first man' while his parents were only humanoid apes—and similarly for the 'first woman'. Such a view would imply, in terms of biology, that there was a sudden evolutionary 'jump' of much greater magnitude than has ever been

<sup>1</sup> The Council of Trent at a session in 1546 pronounced as follows:

'If any one does not confess that the first man Adam, when he had transgressed the command of God in Paradise, straightway lost that holiness and righteousness in which he had been established, and through the offence of this disobedience incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and therefore incurred death, which God had before threatened to him, and, with death, captivity under the power of him who thereafter had the power of death, namely the devil, and that the whole of Adam, through the offence of that disobedience, was changed for the worse in respect of body and soul: let him be anathema.

'If any one asserts that the disobedience of Adam injured only himself and not his offspring . . . or that . . . only death and the pains of the body were transferred to the whole human race, and not the sin also, which is the death of the soul: let him be anathema.

'If any one asserts that the sin of Adam—which in origin is one and which has been transmitted to all mankind by propagation, not through imitation, and is in every man and belongs to him—can be removed either by man's natural powers or by any other remedy than the merit of the one mediator our Lord Jesus Christ . . . let him be anathema.'

The doctrine contained in these statements is obviously based upon a literal reading of Genesis as an historical account of the disobedience of the 'first man', the results of which are believed to be engendered in his descendants—the whole human race. The Articles of Religion of the Church of England express a very similar, if not identical, doctrine:

'Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil. . . .' (Article IX.)

Again, we are confronted with the inherited results of the 'first man's' disobedience. Presbyterians and Quakers are also committed to a similar view of man's condition being the result of the inescapable inheritance of the consequences of the wanton contumacy of the 'first pair'. The Westminster Confession (1643), subscribed to yet by the ministers of the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland, declares:

'Our first parents . . . so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature



## Archetypes of Male & Female

observed—a massive complex of mutations occurring together to give rise *simultaneously* to a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’. Or, in terms of theology, it would be equivalent to saying that the offspring of two animals was suddenly given a human ‘soul’. It cannot be proved that such an event did not take place, but neither can it be proved that if it did happen, it happened only once.

In the evolution of man the phenomenon of neoteny has probably been of importance. The term refers to the persistence of some

conveyed, to all their posterity . . . whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil. . . .’ (Article VI.)

In 1678 fifteen propositions were put forward as an exposition of the Quaker position, and though in some ways the relevant proposition is different from the statements quoted above, it is, nevertheless, based on an identical interpretation of Genesis. Proposition IV reads:

‘All Adam’s posterity (or mankind) both Jews and Gentiles, as to the first Adam or earthly man, is fallen, degenerated and dead, deprived of the sensation or feeling of this inward testimony or seed of God; and is subject unto the power, nature and seed of the serpent. . . . Hence are rejected the Socinian and Pelagian errors, in exalting a natural light; as also those of the Papists, and most Protestants, who affirm that man, without the true grace of God, may be a true minister of the Gospel. Nevertheless, this seed is not imputed to infants, until by transgression they actually join themselves therewith.’

All these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century formulations of doctrine would appear to be dependent upon the supposition that the ‘fall’ of the ‘first man’ is historical rather than mythological: considerable ingenuity must be exercised to interpret these statements when an evolutionary view is taken and ‘Adam’ is taken to mean ‘everyman’ rather than a hypothetical ‘first man’.

The current Roman Catholic attitude to Evolution and Original Sin has been very clearly and unequivocally stated as recently as 1950 in the Papal Encyclical *Humani generis*. The Holy Father is firmly of the opinion that there was an individual man named Adam, who, by an historical act, caused all his descendants to inherit the quality of original sin: Pius XII makes it quite plain that, in his view, any evolutionary ideas which cannot be reconciled with this proposition are to be avoided by the faithful. The Encyclical reads:

‘The Teaching of the Church leaves the doctrine of Evolution an open question, as long as it confines its speculations to the development, from other living matter already in existence, of the human body. (That souls are immediately created by God, is a view which the Catholic faith imposes on us.) In the present state of scientific and theological opinion, this question may be legitimately canvassed by research, and by discussion by experts on both sides. . . .

‘There are other conjectures, about polygenism (as it is called), which leave the faithful no such freedom of choice. Christians cannot lend their support to a theory which involves the existence, after Adam’s time, of some earthly race of men truly so called, who were not descended ultimately from him, or else supposes that Adam was the name given to some group of our primordial ancestors. It does not appear how such views can be reconciled with the doctrine of original sin, as this is guaranteed to us by Scripture and tradition, and proposed to us by the Church. Original sin is the result of a sin committed, in actual historical fact, by an individual man named Adam, and it is a quality native to all of us, only because it has been handed down by descent from him.’

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

characteristics of early stages of development into the adult stage. The most striking example is the Mexican axolotl, an aquatic creature which is sexually mature and breeds freely: in the absence of iodine in the water its whole life-cycle is complete at this level. But in the presence of iodine, the axolotl undergoes a metamorphosis (analogous to the tadpole-frog transformation) and changes into the amphibious amblystoma—a brown salamander. The point which concerns us is that sexual maturity occurs at the larval stage.

The relevance of this example of neoteny to consideration of human evolution is the fact that in several respects the adult human being resembles the foetus (i.e. the 'larval stage') of the anthropoid sub-order, and at these particular points differs markedly from adult anthropoid apes. In other words, an adult human bears a greater resemblance in some significant points to a new-born ape than he does to an adult ape, and it would appear that there has been a relative 'slowing down' of the development of these characteristics in the human being as compared with the ape. For example, the human distribution of much hair on the head and little hair on the body resembles a temporary condition of the ape at the time of birth. But most important is the general form of the human face and skull, which, being without snout and bony ridges, is in marked contrast to that of the adult ape but is quite similar to that of a new-born ape. Ossification is (as it were) slowed down, and so the cranium is enabled to continue growing to accommodate the larger human brain, while the teeth are cut later and the jaws remain small. But, before bodily and mental growth is complete, sexual maturity has been accomplished. At the beginning of the extraordinarily long 'metamorphosis' from childhood to manhood pubescence occurs; indeed, this 'hairiness' is one of the earliest signs of the onset of adolescence. And so, in England, boys of 14 years and girls of 12 years are legally at the age of puberty, and thus held to be functionally capable of procreation, as in fact most of them are.

Obviously, to be physically capable of parenthood is one thing and to be mentally and emotionally fitted for it is another thing altogether. It is one of the complicating facts of human nature that potency precedes mental and emotional maturity: puberty anticipates true nubility: the power comes before the glory. No wonder the phase of adolescence is both exciting and dangerous.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

But is not this precisely the situation of Adam and Eve? As a girl usually reaches puberty before a boy, so Eve's sexual awareness precedes Adam's: mutual recognition of sexuality follows, and, as Genesis recounts, 'the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked', whereupon they covered the outward signs of their sexuality with fig-leaves. (The shape of the fig-leaf is singularly appropriate in the case of Adam, and the fruit of the fig-tree is a most suggestive symbol of the fruitful uterus of Eve.) In Hebrew religion nudity seems to be thought of as something virtually evil in itself: sexual immorality is often euphemistically described as 'uncovering the nakedness'. The natural awe aroused by the external organs of reproduction is, in the Bible, also associated with sin and guilt, and this association has largely been carried over into the Church. In another of the early myths of Genesis, nakedness is unpleasantly connected with drunkenness: Ham and his descendants are cursed because he has 'seen the nakedness' of his inebriated father (9.20-27), while the behaviour of his brothers indicates the reverence which ought to be shown to the paternal seat of life.

The sense of awe associated with the visible sexual organs is another characteristic of the onset of puberty; it is accentuated as children begin to be more aware of the difference between the sexes through the development of their own organs. Boys, in particular, notice that there is a mysterious part of themselves which, almost apart from conscious control, appears to have a life of its own—responding (or failing to respond) to certain feminine stimuli. Irrespective of climatic conditions most people have sooner or later come to believe that this 'life-member' is better clothed and concealed: its power for both good and evil is too great to be exposed to familiar gaze. And what could more suitably symbolize this ambivalent phallic potentiality than the snake—itself a source of danger to mankind, yet apparently able to regenerate itself? (See below.) It is not surprising that we should read how Eve was beguiled by this fascinating creature, and, that after tasting the fruit with Adam, they both felt impelled to conceal the tokens of their pubescent knowledge.

The remainder of Genesis 3 can be read as an account of the course of adolescence following puberty—the acquiring of adult knowledge in its darker aspects, namely the painfulness of childbirth, the laboriousness of work and the prospect of death. During childhood

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

and adolescence we grow up in the garden of life—we neither toil nor spin and our future is before us: but when we reach maturity we are thrust out of the garden into the struggle for existence, and then eventually we realize that our future is behind us and that we are growing down to the dust of death. The Genesis story of chapters 2 and 3 is a myth which communicates these basic facts of human experience; in the same way, chapter 1 may be read as an account of man's growing awareness of the development of his own self-consciousness from birth to childhood.

In considering the evolution of human beings, the phenomenon of neoteny suggests how it may have come about that sexual potency greatly precedes mental and emotional maturity. This fact in itself underlies many of our characteristically human problems, and it is possible to speculate how much easier life might be if puberty were delayed until mental development and emotional maturity had more closely approached their maxima—as is indeed the case with animals! Such speculations are, however, not very profitable, for we have to accept our human nature as it is—and that is what the writer of Genesis does, albeit rather pessimistically. He sees that awareness of sexuality is a fundamental characteristic of human nature; and, although he was no evolutionist, there is no doubt that on any evolutionary view the emergence of this acute consciousness with its conflicting emotional drives was a very important feature in the metamorphosis of pre-humanity. The emergence of recognizably human species is dependent upon relatively late ossification so that the brain may increase in size throughout a long maturing process, and the fact that sexuality is incident early in adolescence is an important element in the myth of Adam and Eve.

The emergence of a new 'species' is biologically still something of a mystery. Ultimately, the definition of a 'species' is an arbitrary judgement of classification, but when two types of creature, recognizably distinct in other ways, are also mutually sterile (i.e. cannot be mated to produce viable fertile offspring), we have, at least, a practical criterion for defining their 'separateness'. In spite of all the breeding experiments which have been done, it is doubtful if the emergence of a new species (in this sense) has ever been observed: innumerable new varieties and hybrids have been seen, but not a

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

completely new species. The reason is probably twofold: in the first place, the species which have been observed closely for mutations are probably near the end of their variability, and are so fully adapted to their environment that automatically a limit is set to the number of possible further varieties—in these circumstances the only chance of getting a new species would be by a series of reverse mutations or 'devolution'. Secondly, the number of generations it is possible to observe is insufficient for an adequate number of mutations to be combined to give the change in chromosome pattern which corresponds to species differentiation. It is difficult to comprehend the time scale involved in evolutionary change, but it is perhaps made more intelligible when we contemplate the developmental change which occurs from the fertilized egg-cell through embryo, foetus, baby, child and adolescent to mature and old age in normal human life—here there is, as it were, a tremendous compression of the evolutionary time-scale to the life-term of an individual person during which something analogous to the evolutionary process takes place.

We are still left with the problem of whether or not the present human species had a single origin, or, in other words, whether the present distinct racial types represent divergences from a common stock, or whether they carry forward some characteristics from several proto-human races of independent origin. Whether it happened in one evolutionary line or in more than one, it seems that we must accept the view that from an accumulation of differences in quantity there gradually emerged human beings who were qualitatively different from their animal ancestors. Rather than thinking in terms of the sudden gift of a human soul, it would seem more reasonable to suppose that the mental and spiritual activities of man which are attributed to his soul have, in fact, evolved along with his body—in much the same way that the 'conscience' can be observed to 'evolve' in the course of the physical and social development of a child to maturity.

The way out of our dilemma is to return to the Genesis narrative *as it is*, and to discard the theories of human nature which have mistakenly been read into it by Christian theologians who had no idea whatever of the evolutionary process. Only in this way will it be possible to arrive at a view of human nature and sin which is

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

tenable in the light of modern knowledge and, at the same time, in the original Biblical tradition. The fundamental error has been the unjustifiable treatment of the Adam-and-Eve story as an historical account of how sin came into human experience by an act of disobedience by the 'first-man-and-woman', instead of the recognition that the narrative is a *myth* which discloses profound truths concerning the moral consciousness of every human being. In the myth the man and the woman are already possessed of the 'evil inclination' (Gen. 8.21) *before* their active disobedience—their action makes them *conscious* of what is already there—a given ambivalence in human nature, inherent and accepted. Rabbinic scholarship recognized that this was the case, and even the words of St Paul do not necessarily carry an Augustinian interpretation.

There is a full discussion of the whole question in *The Christian Doctrine of Man* by H. Wheeler Robinson, and the following short extracts indicate the nature of his argument:

'Prior to the modern historical study of the Old Testament, it was generally assumed that the third chapter of Genesis was intended to supply both an explanation of the origin of sin and a statement of its consequences for the whole race, which included mortality and a corrupted nature. This view is no longer possible to the modern student who studies the narrative in its historical setting. It would have been strange that such a doctrine, if really found in Gen. 3 by its earliest readers, had left no definite trace in the rest of the Old Testament; yet there is none. . . . Gen. 3 really raises no problem as to the silence of the rest of the Old Testament about "original sin", for this conception is absent from that passage. . . . The centre of the narrative, in its present form, is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The words "good" and "evil" suggest distinct ethical issues to the modern reader; but to Hebrew thought they are of broader significance, and cover what is useful or advantageous on the one hand, and what is harmful on the other, i.e. the knowledge implied is that of civilization, culture, progress. . . . That there is deep ethical meaning in the narrative of Gen. 3 is clear, but it lies in man's disobedience of a divine command through his desire for what God sees fit to withhold from him. Man gains what he desires, and passes from the naked innocence of the child to the knowledge and powers of maturity; but the price he has paid makes his civilization accursed, since progress in civilization proves to be progress also in evil.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, T. and T. Clark, pp. 58-9, (1952 edition).

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

This point that 'knowledge of good and evil' in Hebrew thought has a broad connotation is obviously important, and it is one which is frequently overlooked. The primary concern of the narrative is clearly with sexuality—the wonder of procreativity and the mystery of human relationships, but by no means absent from the writer's mind is the secondary theme that human creativity and civilization itself has a corrupting effect. Even during the Bronze Age and at the beginning of the Iron Age, when these traditions took shape, it was felt that technical 'know-how' was one of the roots of human tragedy.

Again, for us moderns, this is a very difficult proposition, even when we admit that the writer of the Garden of Eden story would not have been greatly surprised by what happened at Hiroshima. If we accept the phrase 'knowledge of good and evil' as meaning 'the experienced knowledge of civilization and culture' or 'the development of human capacities for scientific knowledge and control of environment', then we are confronted by the view that the Creator did not wish Adam to experience his full humanity, or (in other words) that man was divinely intended to be no more than a primitive gardener and that the culture of cities was forbidden fruit. We feel that the matter is not quite so simple as this: on the one hand, we believe that the scientific activity of man is of the very essence of his human nature, and, on the other hand, that the evils of civilization lie not in the technical knowledge itself but in the ambivalent moral consciousness of men by which this knowledge is used or misused.

In this so-called atomic age we have become acutely aware of the choice between life and death. Humanity really is in the situation of crisis in which Adam found himself. If nuclear energy is used not to dress and keep the garden but to destroy others who live in it, then, in that day, mankind will surely die. We all know quite well what is right and good in this matter, but we also know that the temptation to use atomic bombs was not resisted in 1945, and we know that inconceivably more frightful weapons are now within reach, and we know that there are religious leaders who justify this fruit of technology and who are prepared to sanction its use. We hear the voice of God in one ear and the voice of the serpent in the other. Our human nature stands revealed naked in both its glory and its shame.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

We have pride in the human achievement of such tremendous power and we have the experience of freedom to choose, and yet we know that we are ultimately dependent and bound to obedience. We can recognize anew the significance of the myth of Adam's disobedience and in him see ourselves.

Having glanced at two approaches to the Adam and Eve myth—the biological and the theological—it is now necessary to consider briefly some of the psychological interpretations which have been put forward. Earlier rationalistic theories of modern times suggest that the so-called Fall should properly be understood as a Rise—the triumph of reason over instinct. In other words, the account is a myth of the emergence of rational human consciousness; elaboration of this theme stressed the apparent aetiological content of the story. On this rationalistic basis, psycho-analysts set up a variety of interpretations in most of which the sexual elements of the myth were emphasized. Using principles of interpretation derived from psychological practice, it has been suggested, for instance, that (by the principle of reversal) Eve is really the Mother of Adam and that we are confronted with a Mother-incest situation and that the fundamental 'sin' is of this character and the guilt is associated with the murder of the Father by the primeval Sons. The pre-historic origin of man's sense of guilt may well have a social character which has to be referred ultimately to the desperate relationships between the despotic Father of a proto-human horde and his Sons. The recent elaboration of this theme by Theodor Reik in his *Myth and Guilt* (Hutchinson) suggests that Eve and the Serpent should be extricated from Paradise, leaving a suggested original myth of Man and Tree. In this interpretation the Tree is identified with the Father-God and, hence, eating (the fruit of) the tree becomes the cannibalistic meal 'enjoyed' by the Sons of their murdered Father whose 'trunk' they consume. Certainly, the notion of 'eating the god' to attain his *mana* is common enough in religions and undertones of this nature are not entirely absent from eucharistic worship.

Returning from this stimulating discussion of possibilities, we will take up again the less disturbing theological approach as expressed by Wheeler Robinson:

'The act of disobedience is done by one in a state of moral freedom, according to the general view of the Old Testament. . . . In regard



## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

to the consequences of the act of disobedience, the threat of 2.17 is in any case unfulfilled, so that we are not entitled to infer from it that man's mortality is here traced directly to his sin; on the other hand, we read in 3.22 f that man is removed from Eden in order that he may not eat of the tree of life, and live for ever, the inference being that without it he is naturally mortal. . . . There is no suggestion in the narrative that man's nature is changed by his act of disobedience; still less, that he handed on a corrupted nature to his children, which placed them in an ethical position essentially different from his own; in fact, Cain, when his turn comes, is bidden by Yahweh to master the sin that couches at his door (4.7).<sup>1</sup>

In another section of his book, Wheeler Robinson outlines St Paul's teaching concerning man's sinfulness in terms of the invasion of his 'flesh' by cosmic powers of spiritual evil, and continues:

'Paul offers no explanation of the origin of these evil spirits; it is enough for him that their existence helps to explain man's present state, and that Christ "must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor 15.25). It will be seen that this doctrine of the fall of each man through the weakness of his physical nature, which is of primary importance in Pauline theology, takes no account of the pseudo-historic Adam other than is implied in the fact that he was the first to fall in this way. But another passage remains, on which the traditional doctrine of the Fall has been based, namely, Rom. 5.12 f. The difficulties of this famous passage are great, and the opinions of exegetes are very varied. But a contrast is drawn between Adam and Christ in their relation to mankind, which implies that Adam's transgression affected the race in a manner at least comparable with the redemptive act of Christ:

"As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5.19).<sup>2</sup>

After a lengthy discussion of this verse, Wheeler Robinson concludes:

'In the foreground (of Paul's mind) we have the distinct thought of Adam as the "corporate personality" of the race, over against Christ as the corporate personality of His body the Church. God dealt with the race in Adam, because in a real sense for ancient thought, he was the race; because of Adam's sin, God passes sentence of death on the race. The sentence is a just one, because

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, T. and T. Clark, pp. 59-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

“all sinned” (Rom. 5.12) as a matter of experience; but Paul has not connected this fact causally with his conception of the race as (corporately) constituted sinners through Adam’s transgression.’<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we may say that fundamentally Paul’s interpretation of Adam is *typological*: he is not really concerned with history and heredity in the modern sense. Nor were the writers of the Early Church. Origen may be profitably quoted again; he writes:

‘Who is so foolish to suppose that God, in the way of a man who is a husbandman, planted a garden in Eden eastward, and that he made in it a tree of life visible and palpable, so that he who should taste of the fruit with his bodily teeth would obtain life, or again that one was a partaker of good or evil by eating that which was taken from the other tree? . . . Thou who art not totally blind can collect countless instances recorded as if they had happened, but which did not literally happen.’<sup>2</sup>

The allegorical interpretation of Origen may be compared with that of Tertullian: here we can see the typological method carried to considerable lengths:

‘For as Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam’s sleep shadowed out the death of Christ, who was to sleep a mortal slumber, that from the wound inflicted on his side, might, in like manner (as Eve was formed), be typified the Church, the true Mother of the living.’<sup>3</sup>

And again in his *Exhortation to Chastity*:

‘After that God had formed man and saw that he must needs have a companion like himself, he took one of his ribs and made of it one woman; although obviously matter for others was not lacking, nor was the Artisan unequal to the task of making more. Adam had many ribs, and the hands of God are tireless, yet more wives than one did not God create. And, therefore, the man whom God made, Adam, and the woman whom God made, Eve, living in monogamy, fixed this as an inviolate law for mankind.

‘For Adam was the only husband that Eve had, and Eve was his only wife: one rib, one woman.’

Though it sounds slightly ridiculous in this form, the argument is fundamentally sound, and is, in fact, the one which had been used

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Man*, T. and T. Clark, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *de Princ.*, IV, iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *de Anima*, XLIII.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

by Jesus in support of lifelong monogamy (Mark 10.6-9). In contrast, we can see how this same myth expresses perfectly that aspect of human nature which can be scientifically stated in the theory of the *anima*. Typology and psychology can be seen in relation to one another. The *anima* is connected with both the mother of a man and his beloved: Eve is at once the great Earth-Mother of all living and the Virgin Bride of Adam: she is the type of Mary the Mother of Christ and also of his Bride the Church: and to complete the circle, the new Jerusalem (another symbol of the Church), is 'our Mother' (Gal. 4.26), and also 'the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb' (Rev. 21.9).

#### 3. THE GREAT MOTHER

In spite of the fact that it is possible to 'rationalize' the Genesis myth of the Adam-Eve relationship in some such terms as the foregoing, there does remain a considerable anthropological problem. (Attention has again been drawn to it by Robert Graves in *Adam's Rib* and his very ingenious suggestion clearly deserves consideration.) The problem is constituted by the fact that in all primitive and ancient religion the Mother-Goddess is primary and the male figure (Son—Hero—Lover—Husband) is secondary and derivative. This corresponds to the basic physiological and anatomical fact that the son comes out of his mother and not *vice versa*. Motherhood is immediately comprehensible to primitive people (and even to animals), and so is mating and affection; but the connection between mating and pregnancy is not obvious—or even that there is a connection. The moment of 'quickenings' is more likely to be identified with the occasion of impregnation, and only in a fairly advanced society (and one which had learned to count beyond 4 or 5) would speculation begin concerning a connection between the cessation of menstrual flow and pregnancy. Intercourse, in primitive society, even when its procreative function is recognized, is often regarded as having a much wider social significance: in these circumstances, coitus has been called a 'magic lubricant' when indulgence is held to be necessary for the successful performance of other activities which, to us, seem to be totally unrelated to it—e.g. fighting, fishing and ritual dancing. In later times, but on the same basic principle, abstinence has been counselled lest success in some other enterprise be hindered. Fatherhood, then, is a concept which requires a

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

measure of sophistication. A child learns where he came from long before he understands how he got there. Further, there is the domestic fact that in early years a child is much more subject to his mother than to his father, and not until puberty does a son leave the side of his mother to undergo an initiatory rebirth into the 'father-world'.

As far as investigation can reach into the Stone Age world, and right through to the Old Testament period, the primary divinity of the Semitic peoples amongst whom the Israelites attained nationhood was the Great Mother-Goddess—notably Ishtar-Astarte. Then, for reasons which are not entirely clear, the Hebrews managed to repress the early mother-son relationship and completely restate their religion in terms of male monotheism. Female-dominated polytheism with its associated sexual cultus was abrogated, though the frequent denunciations of the prophets indicate that for a long time this earlier kind of religious life did not lose its attractions: excavation on Jewish sites has unearthed many female figurines, but no male ones. It is, of course, tempting to suppose that social-religious evolution recapitulates the normal development of an individual from birth to maturity in much the same way that pre-natal embryonic and foetal development approximately recapitulates the main features of species-evolution. In other words, it is not improbable that matriarchal societies preceded patriarchal, just as the centrality of the Mother-Goddess has preceded that of the Father-God in the history of religious worship: in Creto-Mycenaean culture, for instance, the religion of female divinity quite suddenly ceases and the female images are replaced by those of males.

An interesting sidelight on this subject is thrown by a consideration of potters and pots. In Genesis 2, in the account of the creation of Adam, God is depicted as a clay-modeller or potter who 'generates' man from the moist earth (Heb. *adamah*): this metaphor is fairly frequent in the Bible and is wonderfully explicit in Isaiah:

'O Lord, thou art our father;  
We are the clay, and thou art our potter.'<sup>1</sup>

Here we have a complete reversal of the primary situation in which the potter was the *mother*, for it is recognized that pot-making

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 64.8.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

originated as a feminine occupation. In all known primitive societies ceramic art is in the hands of women, and only in an advanced civilization is it taken over by men. Moreover, pots are universally symbolic of motherhood in primitive and ancient thought and practice: not only are they made from the very substance of Mother Earth, but their form as containers and their function as providers of sustenance most aptly links them with maternity; the design and decoration of many ancient pots leaves no room for doubt on this point. Evidence of this kind provides strong support for the theory that in the development of human society a matriarchal stage dominated by the Mother-Goddess was primary.

Whether this hypothesis is ever clearly established or not, the fact remains that one of the characteristics of post-Exilic Hebrew religion in the Scriptures is the unequivocal declaration of the exclusive maleness of God. As R. J. Zwi Werblowsky sums the matter up:

‘God is father, lover, king, shepherd. He loves, yearns, blesses, punishes; and the Old Testament as a whole is a classical example of the domination of male virtues.’<sup>1</sup>

The only possible exception to the entirely masculine concept of God in the Bible is to be found in the last chapter of Isaiah: here the loving-kindness of Jehovah for Israel is pictured with the dangerous imagery of the Mother and Child:

‘Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream, then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne on the side, and shall be dandled upon the knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.’<sup>2</sup>

But the male dominance is firmly asserted in the notorious words of St Paul:

‘The man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.’<sup>3</sup>

And in this connection, the mysterious words attributed to Jesus in the lost *Gospel according to the Egyptians* have a peculiar significance:

‘I am come to destroy the works of the female.’

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. LIII, July 1955.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 66.12 f.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. 11.8 f. (Cp. Ecclus. 25.24.)

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

In spite of the masculinity of Judaism, it was generally recognized that only in the married state could a man achieve the perfection of the divine likeness. On the foundation of Genesis 1.27, which suggests that the 'image of God' is male-and-female, Rabbinic law prohibited celibacy. It is noteworthy, therefore, that neither Jesus nor Paul married. In the case of Paul various psychological speculations have been put forward on the basis of his markedly unsympathetic attitude to the opposite sex (an unfortunate love-affair, impotence, etc.). But the celibacy of Jesus is seldom discussed. Clement of Alexandria, giving reasons why Jesus did not marry, writes:

'In the first place he had his own bride, the Church; and in the next place he was no ordinary man that he should also be in need of some helpmeet after the flesh. Nor was it necessary for him to beget children since he abides eternally and was born the only Son of God.'<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, the normal orthodox doctrine of his divinity really precludes such a discussion. But, equally clearly, Jesus was himself very sympathetic towards women and attracted many of them to his following. Moreover, in his attitude to marriage he is an orthodox Jew:

'From the beginning of the creation, male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother (and shall cleave to his wife), and the twain shall become one flesh.'<sup>2</sup>

In this saying, which quotes Genesis 2.24, Jesus himself equates Adam with 'everyman', for Adam regarded as an historical person had no 'father and mother' to leave.

There can be no doubt that, in human terms, Jesus experienced a vocation of celibacy and also cut himself off from his own family home. Further, he chose only men as his intimates and deliberately drew them out from their wives and families. The reason for this is not far to seek. It is messianic and eschatological. In no form of the Messianic hope was it supposed that the Messiah would have a consort or that the messianic function involved either sexuality or domesticity. The Messiah would lead, deliver and rule: he had no

<sup>1</sup> *On Marriage*, 49.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 10.7 f.

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

'private life'. Moreover, the function of the Messiah was to signalize the inauguration of a completely new order of relationships, in the resurrection stage of which sex would be irrelevant:

When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

This vision stands in some contrast to the much more materialistic forecast of the immediate future in Luke:

'There is no man that hath left house, or wife (*sic*), or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus, for both Jesus and Paul, apart from other considerations, the imminence of the 'end of the world'—the *eschaton*—was a determining factor against matrimony. Paul's mystical experience of being baptized 'into Christ' or having 'put on Christ' leads him to assert that the significance of sex is overcome in the new relationship:

'... there can be no male and female, for ye are all one (man) in Christ Jesus.'<sup>3</sup>

But however correct Paul may be concerning a future state of non-sexual felicity (if that, indeed, is what he means), sex is still very much with us. Religious people, like all other people, have to come to terms with it. It is important, therefore, that we should realize just what is happening in the exploitation of feminine sexuality for commercial gain in western male-dominated society, and how very different the present situation is from both the prehistoric and ancient regard for the Great Mother and medieval cult of Mary.

Valuable commentaries on the existing state of affairs are to be found in the writings of two contemporary novelist-essayists, Aldous Huxley and J. B. Priestley. In his recent collection of essays, *Adonis and the Alphabet*, Mr Huxley includes one which is entitled simply 'Mother'. His comments, he says, were stimulated by a contemplation of an enormous rack of standardized greeting-cards, designed to be used in connection with 'Mother's Day', and containing puerile verses of the utmost sentimentality. He sees in these very

<sup>1</sup> Mark 12.25.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 18.29 f.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 3.28.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

profitable pieces of paper all that now remains of the cult of the Great Mother, and continues:

'For palaeolithic man, every day was Mother's Day. Far more sincerely than any modern purchaser of a greeting card, he believed that "Mother dear, you're wonderful". Just how wonderful is attested by the carvings of Mother unearthed in the caves which, twenty thousand years ago, served our ancestors as cathedrals. In limestone, in soapstone, in mammoth ivory—there they stand, the Mother-images of man's earliest worship. Their bowed heads are very small and their faces are perfectly featureless. They have next to no arms and their dwindling legs taper off, with no hint of feet, into nothing. Mother is all body, and that body, with its enormously heavy breasts, its prodigal wealth of belly, thigh and buttock, is the portrait of no individual mother, but a tremendous symbol of fertility, an incarnation of the divine mystery of life in defiance of death, of perpetual renewal in the midst of perpetual perishing. Mother was felt to be analogous to the fruitful earth and, for centuries, her images were apt to exhibit all the massiveness of her cosmic counterpart.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr Huxley goes on to remark that most people today seem unwilling to go further into the subject of Mother than such greeting-card doggerel as 'The happiness of fam'ly life/Depends so much on YOU'. There is a marked reluctance to face the fact that 'Mother dear can be wonderful in more ways than one—that there are wonderful, possessive mothers of only sons, whom they baby into chronic infantility, that there are wonderful, sweet old vampires who go on feeding, into their eighties, on the blood of an enslaved daughter.' He continues:

'For our ancestors, as we have seen, Mother was not only the particular person who made or marred the happiness of family life; she was also the visible embodiment of a cosmic mystery. Mother manifested Life on all its levels—on the biological and physiological levels and also on the psychological level. Psychologically speaking, Mother was that oceanic Unconscious, out of which personal self-consciousness (the masculine element in human subjective experience) is crystallized and in which, so to speak, it bathes. More obviously, Mother was the source of physical life, the principle of fecundity. But the principle of fecundity is also, in the very nature of things, the principle of mortality; for the giver

<sup>1</sup> *Adonis and the Alphabet*, Chatto and Windus, 1956, pp. 170 .



## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

of physical life is also, of necessity, the giver of death. Ours is a world in which death is the inevitable consequence of life, in which life requires death in order to renew itself. Wherever she has been worshipped—and there is no part of the world in which, at one time or another, she has not been worshipped—the great Mother is simultaneously the Creator and the Destroyer.’<sup>1</sup>

Considerations of this kind, as Mr Huxley remarks, make it difficult for theologians to ‘justify the ways of God to man’, and Job shows that the problem is made no easier when God is thought of as a Father instead of a Mother.

The conclusion Mr Huxley reaches seems to be that since the mystery of creation will not yield to a satisfactory *verbal* explanation, somehow western man must find appropriate *non-verbal* religious symbols to help him to accept the facts of life and death:

‘To cope with the mysteries of experience, modern man has no such cosmic symbol as the Great Mother; he has only science and technical philosophy. As a scientist, he observes the facts of generation, growth and death, he classifies his observations in terms of biological concepts, he tests his hypotheses by means of experiment. As a philosopher, he uses the methods of Logical Positivism to prove to his own satisfaction (or rather to his own deepest dissatisfaction) that all the theories of the metaphysicians, all the pregnant hints of the symbol makers have no assignable meaning—in a word, are sheer nonsense. And of course the Logical Positivists are perfectly right—provided always that we accept as self-evident the postulate that no proposition has meaning unless it can be verified by direct perception, or unless we can derive from it other “perceptive propositions”, which can be so verified. But if we admit—and in practice we all behave as if we did admit it—that “the heart has its reasons” and that there are modes of understanding which do not depend upon perception or logical inferences from perception, then we shall have to take the metaphysicians and especially the symbol makers a little more seriously. I say “especially the symbol makers”; for whenever we are dealing with a cosmic or subjective mystery, the verbalized concept is less satisfactory as a means of presentation than the pictorial or diagrammatic symbol. . . . When it comes to symbolizing cosmic, rather than all too human, matters, we find ourselves very poorly equipped. Our religious symbols, such as the Cross, refer only to realms of ethics and of what may be called pure spirituality. We have no religious symbols covering the other aspects of the cosmic

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

mystery. . . . In the West, Nature has been completely isolated from the religious context, in which our ancestors used to view it. . . . Will it ever be possible to revive the Great Mother, or create some equivalent symbol of the cosmic mysteries of life and death? Or are we doomed to remain indefinitely, or until the masses lose their minds and run amuck, on the level of the greeting-card?"<sup>1</sup>

Is the outlook as gloomy as Mr Huxley supposes? Or can we not recover the significance of some, at least, of the ancient symbols, and particularly those of the Bible and the Church? By its historically understandable emphasis upon the individual and his reason, Protestantism has, nevertheless, impoverished the valuable symbolism of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. In its successful attacks on idolatry it has virtually destroyed much of the psychologically precious imagery. But men cannot live without imagery, and if the good imagination is denied the evil imagination will obtrude. Those who have grown up in the Protestant plain-glass and bare-walled tradition of the Stern Father, the Suffering Son and the Spirit of Reason, must ask themselves if too much was not lost when Mary was deprived of the attributes of the Great Virgin-Mother in the worship of the reformed churches. If men may not meditate in church or chapel upon the beauty and virtues of womanhood, they will gloat in cinema or music-hall on surreptitious glimpses of female anatomy. But old Adam is a lusty character still and would, no doubt, regard these sentiments as mere tilting at windmills.

In *Journey Down a Rainbow*, J. B. Priestley analyses, with characteristic verve, the current mammary cult provided to satisfy the cravings of 'Admass' men. He defines 'Admass' thus:

' . . . the whole system of an increasing productivity, plus inflation, plus a rising standard of material living, plus high-pressure advertising and salesmanship, plus mass communications, plus cultural democracy and the creation of the mass mind, the mass man.'

and he continues:

'Good-looking girls who have slender and almost boyish figures, with no pelvic breadth to suggest maternity, the ancient fertility of Earth-and-Mother goddesses, yet proudly, insolently, carrying

<sup>1</sup> *Adonis and the Alphabet*, Chatto and Windus, pp. 175 ff.

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

breasts that are exceptional among young white women, are now the favourite erotic symbols of *Admass* men. They are seen everywhere, in night clubs, in films, in advertisements, and above all in the little magazines, reproducing "art photographs" and offering more sumptuous specimens for private sale, that lie thick on the news-stands, where boys and men starved of sex buy them by the hundred thousand. And all this, to my mind, is only further proof that *Admass* is a society unhealthily dominated by the masculine principle. But its maleness, no longer balanced and nourished by the feminine principle, no longer rooted in Earth, has something stale, almost rotten and perverted, poisoning it. There is no true feeling for Woman herself. These over-emphasized breasts and undeveloped hips do not belong to, never suggest, man's mate, his companion along the road from the Old Stone Age. It is not the time-old simple healthy lust that is roused in this exotic field, far removed from the meadows where many a wide-hipped country lass lost her virginity. Woman has not changed; these girls merely have an unusual physique and cannot be blamed for taking advantage of the fashion: it is men—the patrons, the customers, the fans—who have changed. There is in them now, it seems, still a famished and frustrated baby, never finally weaned, still eager and hungry for the breast. So this exotic field has a secret no press agent will reveal: all its straining curved silk, its bulging sweaters, its "thems and thoses", its melons and globes and moons, so generous in their promise of lactation, are not luring the customers to bed but making them leap up in the cradle. But that is only one side of the picture. What about the narrow-hipped boyish figures that support, so inadequately, those magnificent bosoms? Surely no mothers there? No indeed; they do not belong to essential Woman, brooding, fertile, deep-rooted: they represent Woman in her new aspect, away from her own ancient realm, all the smart hard girls who may compete with men but do not challenge and reject the values of the society that men have created: they symbolize what is left, sadly diminished, nearly impotent, almost a freak, of Eros in *Admass*.<sup>1</sup>

One thing at least is clear, and that is that mealy-mouthed puritanism, whether Protestant or Catholic, will not provide an effective Christian alternative for the satisfaction of natural desires to the commercialized exploitation of near-nudity which proves so profitable today. In contrast to the Greek tradition which delighted in the human form unadorned, the Hebrew tradition has always been very clothes-conscious, and even if the representation of human

<sup>1</sup> *Journey Down a Rainbow*, Heinemann: Cresset, 1955, pp. 130-2.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

beings had been permitted by the Law of Moses, it is quite certain that there would have been no nudes. As in other matters, the tradition of the Church has been something of a compromise between the Greek and Hebrew attitudes. While, on the whole, clothing has been *de rigueur*, there are many examples of nudity to be found in ecclesiastical art, and it is clear that some Christian artists have enjoyed such opportunities as the Bible and the Apocrypha provide for depicting naked persons—though not very recently. One is tempted to suggest that the Church should counter-attack in the matter of nudity: it might be possible to expose the contemporary guilt-ridden glamorization of the human body for what it is by providing unashamed paintings and sculpture of Adam and Eve before the serpent got at them, of Mary giving her breast to the Child, and of Jesus completely naked on the Cross. Coyness in these matters, even in the guise of piety and decency, does more harm than good.

Some support for such an attitude to nudity might be found in a exposition of the symbolism of Holy Baptism written by St Cyril of Jerusalem in the middle of the fourth century. Concerning the undressing before baptism he writes:

‘No sooner had you entered than you took off your undergarments. Now this was an image of the stripping off of the old man and his deeds (Col. 3.9). Having stripped yourselves, you were naked, imitating Christ in this also, who was stripped naked on the cross, and by His nakedness exposed the principalities and powers and boldly vanquished them on the tree. For since hostile powers have overclouded your members, you may no longer wear that old garment—I by no means refer to this visible one, but the old man who grows corrupt in deceitful lusts (Eph. 4.22). Let the soul which has once put him off never again put him on; rather with the Spouse of Christ in the *Song of Songs* let him say: ‘I have put off my garment, how shall I put it on?’ (Cant. 5.3). O wonder of it all! You were naked in the sight of all and you were not ashamed. Truly you bore the likeness of the first-formed Adam, who was naked in Paradise and was not ashamed.’<sup>1</sup>

In Western civilization our members are certainly overclouded by hostile powers, and it may prove to be the case that shameful nudity can be most speedily vanquished by unashamed nakedness.

<sup>1</sup> *On the Mysteries.*

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

### 4. SEX AND RELIGION

In spite of the deep significance of the myth of Adam and Eve which can be brought out in so many ways, there is something profoundly unsatisfactory about the story. Although Adam and Eve are, *par excellence*, the types of 'man' and 'woman', they are curiously inhuman. Completely lacking from the narrative is the slightest suggestion that they were 'in love' with one another, that Adam appreciated the fact that Eve was 'the only girl in the world', that they enjoyed their relationship, or that they took any pleasure in their children. There is nothing that could be called conversation—they speak to God rather than to one another, and with a certain air of recrimination. Although they were not troubled with in-laws neither their courtship nor their honeymoon seems to have been particularly felicitous. There is something rather Neanderthal about Eden: perhaps it is not without relevance that some skulls of this type have been unearthed in Palestine.

The fact of the matter is that romantic love, that major pre-occupation of modern Western civilization, with one exception finds no place in the Bible. Where in the Scriptures, apart from the Song of Songs, is it possible to find a passage to read at the service of Holy Matrimony which accords with the dominant sentiments of those present? Young people of today find little in the Bible which directly and immediately throws light upon the problems of the most intimate of all relationships. Puritanism has triumphed over religion. It now requires considerable erudition to relate the Biblical attitude to sex and love to the contemporary situation—or even to discover what it is. But in seeking to establish the Scriptural point of view, we do not have to confine ourselves to the disinterested emphasis on principles enunciated by Jesus and Paul, nor to the shameful mating of Adam and Eve: we can, if we will, turn to the ecstasy of the unashamed lovers of the Song of Songs.

The immediate impact of Canticles is that its theme is that of carnal love between a man and a woman. There are a number of passages of great lyrical beauty in which the physical attributes of the sexes and their mutual attraction form the basis. Besides this there are many other images which are obviously capable of a sexual interpretation, and modern psychologists have demonstrated that

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

this is so with evidence from dreams and other activities of the unconscious mind.

Here, as nowhere else in the Bible, we are confronted with the relationship between sexuality and religion. The existence of this collection of lyrics in the canon of Scripture has long been a source of embarrassment in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, which, on the whole, has increasingly developed a 'puritanical' temper: especially in the Church, virginity and the celibate life have been made into positive virtues surpassing those of the state of matrimony. Hence, the imagery of the Song has increasingly been 'allegorized' and 'spiritualized' in such a way that even quite sensual passages could be used liturgically in honour of Mary, the virgin-mother, and of Jesus, the celibate Son, whose bride is the Church or the soul of the believer.

There are two important points to be noted straight away. The first could not be more clearly stated than it has been by Alan W. Watts in *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*:

'A sexually self-conscious culture such as our own must beware of its natural tendency to see religion as a symbolizing of sex, for to sexually uncomplicated people it has always been obvious that sex is a symbol of religion. That is to say, the ecstatic self-abandonment of nuptial love is the average man's nearest approach to the selfless state of mystical or metaphysical experience. For this reason the act of love is the easiest and most readily intelligible illustration of what it is like to be in "union with God", to live the eternal life, free from self and time.'<sup>1</sup>

That is to say, that so far from being a sublimation of sexual drives, sexual love can be a sacramental experience of participation in the divine creative activity.

There can be little doubt that our modern isolation of sexuality is a very considerable departure from the primitive attitude. Intercourse in primitive communities is not a private act between two people, whatever its object may be—release of tension, procreation or affection. Coitus, it was and is believed in such societies, has far-reaching effects in the communal activities of hunting and warfare and so forth; further, on religious occasions the ordinary rules of the husband-wife relationship (whatever they may be) are abrogated,

<sup>1</sup> pp. 104 f.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

and promiscuity is encouraged for the period of the festival. (A survival of this attitude in England is to be recognized in the old ceremonies of the Maypole and in the Witches' Sabbath.) When the normal taboos concerning sexual relationships are temporarily removed in the interests of religious cults connected with the fertility of plants and animals, it is clear that the underlying attitude to sex is predominantly social. We must, therefore, avoid applying our modern standards of sexual behaviour as a basis of criticism and judgement, remembering that our 'Christian' attitude to sex and marriage is a pattern which has been super-imposed upon earlier patterns in our mental processes. And that brings us to the second point, which is concerned with the connection between cultus and morality.

We, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, are so accustomed to the integration of morality and belief that we find it difficult to realize that in antiquity the cultus and the ethical code were, in a sense, quite separate. The religious cultus was generally based on a kind of sympathetic magic, which, by a ritual imitation of the desired effects, sought to bring them to reality. The cultus was designed to preserve life, ensure health, bring prosperity, and above all, to accomplish the fertility of crops, animals and men. The mysterious forces of nature, personified as divinities, were, it was believed, brought into co-operation by the correct performance of the ritual. As the Frankforts write in *Before Philosophy*: 'It would be meaningless to ask a Babylonian whether the success of the harvest depended upon the skill of the farmers or on the correct performance of the New Year's Festival. Both were essential to success.'<sup>1</sup>

The extraordinary and unique insight of the Hebrew prophets led them to state that this was not so. The prosperity of a community depended, so they declared, on its moral conduct. National calamities, whether as a result of natural phenomena or of conquest and oppression by other nations, were a punishment by God for a failure to observe his declared moral law. The cultus in itself could achieve nothing: it was significant only when performed by a repentant and a righteous people. Thus, we can observe in the Old Testament a developing tendency of the Hebrew prophets to denounce the non-ethical cultus, as it persisted in Israel and as it flourished among the

<sup>1</sup> Penguin edition, p. 22.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

other Semitic peoples in the midst of whom they lived, both in Palestine and Mesopotamia.

It is the common pattern of the civilizations of the Near East and Egypt that sooner or later the religious cultus should be focused on the monarch, and that the monarch should be regarded under the dual aspect of the representative of the people and the incarnation of a deity. We cannot attempt to go further into the controversial question of matriarchal or patriarchal societies and which preceded the other; so far as we are concerned the emphasis in the Song of Songs is on the king and his bride. It seems most likely that what appears to be a bucolic idyll is in reality a collection of fragments derived from the myth of the royal marriage—the spoken part of a cultus in which the king enacted the part of the god and went through a ceremonial marriage, thus consummating the union of the sexes to give wholeness. In the Babylonian cultus it seems that this marriage was consummated in a rustic bower or ‘booth’ erected on the summit of the ‘mountain-temple’ or ziggurat. There is little doubt that the ‘tower of Babel’ (Gen. 11) was a temple of this kind. (Certain of the Psalms are also connected with these royal ceremonies and have been used liturgically by the Church in connection with the Ascension—e.g. Pss. 2, 72 and 110.)

With these thoughts in mind, let us now consider a few verses from Canticles.

First the Bride speaks:

‘Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:  
Also our couch is green,  
The beams of our house are of cedar,  
And our rafters are of cypress.  
I am a rose of Sharon,  
A lily of the valleys.’<sup>1</sup>

(It would be a great pity to lose the beauty of these verses for a more literal translation which might read: ‘I am a colchicum of the plain, I am a scarlet anemone of the valley’!) She continues:

‘As an apple tree among the trees of the wood,  
So is my beloved among the sons.  
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.

<sup>1</sup> S. of S. 1.16—2.1.



*Archetypes of Male & Female*

He brought me to the house of wine. . . .  
Stay ye me with flagons (raisins),  
Comfort me with apples,  
For I am sick of love.  
His left hand is under my head,  
And his right hand doth embrace me.<sup>1</sup>

The King speaks:

‘A garden enclosed, is my sister, my bride;  
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.  
Thy shoots are an orchard (paradise) of pomegranates with  
precious fruits,  
Henna with spikenard plants, etc.  
Thou art a fountain of gardens,  
A well of living waters,  
And flowing streams from Lebanon.’

And the Bride responds:

‘Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;  
Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.  
Let my beloved come into his garden,  
And eat his precious fruits.’<sup>2</sup>

The King again:

‘How fair and how pleasant art thou,  
O love, for delights!  
This thy stature is like a palm tree,  
And thy breasts to clusters (of grapes).  
I said I will climb up the palm tree,  
I will take hold of the branches thereof:  
Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine,  
And the smell of thy breath like apples:  
And thy mouth like the best wine,  
That goeth down smoothly for my beloved,  
Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.’<sup>3</sup>

These passages, and others like them, supply what is lacking in the Adam and Eve story. But the content is essentially the same: sexuality, procreation and fertility in terms of trees, fruit and running water in a garden of delights.

The great and subtle power of such verses as these in praise of

<sup>1</sup> S. of S. 2.3-6.

<sup>2</sup> S. of S. 4.12-16.

<sup>3</sup> S. of S. 7.6-9.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

feminine beauty may now be compared with a very different and much later attempt to introduce into Judaism some recognition of the fact that the body of a woman may have some attractions for a man coupled with the notion that this may not be altogether a bad thing. The attempt to provide an Arabian-Nights-type literature has turned up in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls—variously known as the Genesis Apocryphon or the Memoirs of the Patriarchs. The passages which survive are paraphrases or elaborations of certain Genesis narratives, notably the account in Genesis 12 which tells how Sarah's physical charms attracted the Egyptians and how she was taken temporarily into the Pharaoh's household because Abraham feared for his life if he acknowledged her as his wife. Half a verse in Genesis, 'The Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair' (12.14) is made the excuse in the Scroll for a detailed catalogue of Sarah's points. The fact that one of the Pharaoh's princely panders appears to be named Hyrcanus indicates that the composition of this panegyric belongs to the hellenistic period. The account of Sarah's attractions, however, is curiously impersonal: it could be about almost anybody and the original might well have been composed by a slave-market auctioneer's copy-writer. It certainly lacks the imaginative lyricism which is such a feature of the Song of Songs.

The following extracts from the description of Sarah (alleged to have been given by Pharaoh's emissaries) illustrate the emptiness and the banality of the praise. Two alternative translations are provided in order to indicate how differences in translation may easily lead to differences in interpretation, and *vice versa*!

How comely is the shape of her  
face

how . . . and finespun are her  
tresses!

How beautiful her eyes!

How delicate is her nose  
and the whole lustre of her  
countenance!

How fair are her breasts,  
and how comely withal is her  
complexion!

How comely too are her arms,

How . . . and pleasing is the  
shape of her face,

and how . . . and how fine were  
the hairs of her head,

how beautiful looked her eyes,  
and desirable her nose,

and all the flower of her face  
(*her mouth*).

How lovely was her breast,

And pleasant the whiteness of  
her arms,

*Archetypes of Male & Female*

and how perfect her hands

How (delightful) are her hands  
to behold,

How lovely her palms,  
how long and slender all her  
fingers.

How comely are her feet!

How well-rounded her thighs!<sup>1</sup>

and how comely were her  
hands.

How round and . . . the look of  
her hips,  
how beautiful her palm (*euphemism for pubis*).

How pleasing and perfectly  
shaped her thighs.<sup>2</sup>

In one or other of these versions there would appear to be a certain dislocation of the text if not of Sarah's anatomy, and a resort to palmistry might seem to be indicated if we are to appreciate the subtler aspects of her appeal. It is perhaps with some relief that we turn back from this prosaic and conventional schedule to the earthy exuberance of the Song of Songs.

In addition to its deeply satisfying imagery, Canticles has wonderful lyrical qualities—especially in the Authorized Version. Many passages in the collection are so congruous with modern notions of romantic love that we seem to be confronted with poetry 'born out of due time', for the development of romantic love in Christendom is usually traced back no further than the late middle ages, and is not for a long time associated with marriage. It is difficult not to believe that underlying the cultic pattern of the Song of Songs there are a number of love songs which are both passionate and personal. The insistent allegorization of the Song, both in Judaism and in the Church, indicates an awareness that the literal meaning of the verses was something of an embarrassment.

The Judaeo-Christian attitude to sex has, on the whole, been repressive: the fig-leaves of concealment sort ill with the vine-leaves of enthusiasm or the laurel-leaves of naked athleticism in the Graeco-Roman tradition. At various times and in various places the Church has put forward celibacy as the ideal, though this is in marked contrast to the Rabbinic counselling of marriage as the divinely intended state. The Church has generally taken the attitude that for most people sex is a necessary evil, sanctifiable only within the bonds of matrimony, and, even there, its exercise permissible only when the

<sup>1</sup> Th. H. Gaster: *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect*, Secker & Warburg, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> H. E. Del Medico: *The Riddle of the Scrolls*, Burke, 1958.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

intention of intercourse is procreative. This is made quite clear in the Marriage Service in the *Book of Common Prayer* where the 'causes for which Matrimony was ordained' are listed as follows:

'First, It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name.

'Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

'Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.'

The primary reason for marriage is procreation, and the second reason, which is a negative reason, subtly implies that those who 'have not the gift of continency' are less favoured of God. The *Revised Prayer Book* (1928) clearly indicates the change of opinion which is taking place in the Church of England. The third reason is left unchanged, and in the first a slight change of words leaves the meaning unaltered, ('the increase of mankind according to the will of God' is inexplicably substituted for 'the procreation of children'). But the second reason is radically changed and expressed in a positive form:

'Secondly, It was ordained in order that the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed and directed aright; that those who are called of God to this holy estate, should continue therein in pureness of living.'

This is certainly a move in the right direction and implies an equality of spiritual status for celibacy and matrimony. The condition of the clergy in the main sections of the Church provides interesting comparisons: in the Roman Church matrimony and orders are alternatives, in the Eastern Church the 'lower' parochial clergy are married but the hierarchy must be celibate, and in the reformed churches (including the Church of England), the clergy and ministers may be married or celibate according to their personal sense of vocation.

The Church's insistence on permanent monogamy as the ideal for marriage has been accompanied by consistent condemnation of

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

fornication, adultery, coitus interruptus, masturbation, prostitution and homosexuality, and even the delights of marital sexuality have frequently been condemned. Yet the rigidity of the ideal has usually been related to the intractable carnality of man by the ordered practice of confession, absolution and penance: this system is easily open to abuse, and in the middle ages led to open scandal throughout the Western Church. The Protestant reformers got rid not only of the abuses but of the easily accessible means of forgiveness, and by a puritanical insistence on the traditional Christian ideals with little or no allowance for 'original sin' have without doubt been responsible for a great deal of guilt-ridden neurotic tragedy. But of late a changing attitude to sex is perceptible in the Churches. The physical relationship between husband and wife is no longer regarded as an unfortunate but necessary incident in the procreative process, in which pleasure serves to overcome the disgust which otherwise might (or even ought to) be experienced, but the pleasure is seen as something which is good in itself when it is a 'sacramental' expression of the mutual honour, respect, worship, regard, affection—in a word, the love between the spouses. Although the use of contraceptive substances and articles is expressly forbidden in the Roman Church, the isolation of intercourse from procreative intention (previously acknowledged only during pregnancy), is now accepted in the official recognition of the 'safe period': married Roman Catholics who wish to limit their families without foregoing conjugal joy and felicity are therefore provided with the means for calculating in which few days of each month conception is least likely to result from intercourse. This is a somewhat hazardous method of avoiding a quiverful: it depends on a certain ability in arithmetic, the possession of a clinical thermometer (or a 'precision calculator' recently marketed to indicate the 'conception days'), and a regularity of function which appears more frequently in statistical tables than in individual women. The Church of England is characteristically less precise in its disciplinary requirements in this field and a variety of opinion is expressed from time to time. There are within its comprehensiveness those who adopt the Roman viewpoint and counsel abstinence mitigated by calculated 'safety', but there are also those who are associated with societies which advocate the use of any efficient contraceptive techniques and who believe that positive

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

instruction should be given as part of a preparation for marriage. In addition there are, in all parts of the Church, those who would 'really rather not speak about these things at all': this point of view is found notably in the quarters where the influence of puritanism is still strong and all pleasure is regarded as slightly suspect, and where romantic love and sexual enjoyment are thought to carry a faint odour of unsanctity. Repression of this kind, with which is often associated a hatred of the body and a fear of nudity, very easily becomes pathological, and if it does not result in furtive whoring or surprising indecency, may well lead to tragic neurosis and even suicide.

At the Lambeth Conference of 1958 the Anglican bishops made a notable advance in their corporate attitude to the husband-wife relationship. The Report categorically states:

'The Biblical revelation, however, does not limit the function of sexuality and the family to the reproductive purpose. Equally deep-rooted in Genesis is the reflection of a second factor—the need of man and woman for each other, to complement and fulfil each other and to establish a durable partnership against the loneliness and rigour of life.

'It is clearly not true that all other duties and relationships in marriage must be subordinate to the procreative one. Neither the Bible nor human experience supports such a view.

'Sexual intercourse is not by any means the only language of earthly love, but it is, in its full and right use, the most intimate and most revealing . . . therefore it is utterly wrong to urge that, unless children are specifically desired, sexual intercourse is of the nature of sin. It is also wrong to say that such intercourse ought not to be engaged in except with the willing intention to procreate children.

'The *means* of family planning are, in a large measure, matters of clinical and aesthetic choice, subject to the requirement that they be admissible to the Christian conscience. Scientific studies can rightly help, and do, in assessing the usefulness of any particular means; and Christians have every right to use the gift of science for proper ends.'

There is much virtue in the term 'family planning': at last we can all talk about the marital enjoyment of sexuality without appearing to do so. No longer is there any need for recourse to such nasty words and phrases as contraceptive, birth control, the sex act and

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

so forth. The whole thing must be thoroughly respectable—like town planning!

But, seriously, it is a very good thing that within the Church there is now developing a positive appreciation of sexuality and of the psycho-somatic delight which can be its accompaniment. Perhaps this is no more than a return to an earlier English marriage requirement that the bride should be 'buxom by bed and by board'. The reasons for this change and for associated social phenomena are many and complex—they include what is called the emancipation of women and the growing 'equality' of the sexes (including educational and vocational opportunity), the approximate equalization of the numbers of men and women in the 20-30 age-group, the mass-production of low-priced contraceptive contraptions, the discovery of effective remedies and prophylaxis for venereal diseases, the facilities for easy and inexpensive divorce processes, the effects of universal near-literacy and other aspects of a great modification in the class-structure of society, the social changes produced by two major wars, and so on.

Obviously a change is taking place in the sexual attitudes and *mores* in the countries which lie within Western Christendom. Society is less male-dominated as women demand and obtain their freedom and equality. But as a reasonable tolerance increases, so the commercial exploitation of sexuality grows apace in directions which are socially undesirable from any point of view and which are positively irreligious from the Judaeo-Christian point of view. Wholesome regard for physical beauty becomes debased into a crude display of 'cheese-cake' for financial gain in the theatre, cinema and the popular press, and in the constant titillation of the male sense by ubiquitous advertisements for brassieres. The nineteenth-century deterrents from extra-marital intercourse (fear of pregnancy, fear of venereal disease, fear of social ostracism, fear of hell-fire) having now largely disappeared, promiscuity spreads and the divorce-rate increases rapidly.

In this situation the Churches could take a more positive attitude, particularly in the preparation of engaged couples for marriage and in a thoroughgoing revision of the marriage service. There is far too much bewailing and protesting and far too little encouraging and directing. On the one hand the churches could do

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

much more in demanding from the State the facilities for marriage-guidance and preparation which are already granted for marriage-dissolution. (It is estimated that in Britain the State subsidies for legal aid in the obtaining of separation and divorce are at least one hundred times greater than the grants made to such bodies as the Marriage Guidance Council.) On the other hand, it should not be beyond the wit of a team of theologians, psychologists and liturgiologists to compose a service for the solemnization of Holy Matrimony which would be sound from every point of view, and which would make use of the elements of Biblical psychology which are relevant to the present century.

It remains to add a note on the completely new factors which are introduced into a consideration of the relationship of the sexes in general, or virginity in particular, by two comparatively recent technological inventions—efficient methods of contraception and practical techniques for artificial insemination. The first means that love (or lust) is completely separable from parenthood, and the second means that pregnancy is completely separable from intercourse: a woman may lose her virginity with no prospect at all of becoming a mother, and a maid may become pregnant without losing her virginity. And what is more, the ‘father’ of an artificially inseminated child may be distant both in space and time, for semen can now be transported over long distances and stored for long periods (even beyond the death of the ‘donor’!). In other words, we need a lot of new words for a lot of quite new moral situations. For it is absurd to extend the use of strongly emotive words such as ‘virgin’ and ‘adultery’ to the completely unemotional relationships which exist between an artificially inseminated woman and the donor who is unknown to her. If such a woman were the wife of an impotent husband she might well be technically a ‘virgin’, and yet legally the insemination could be regarded as an act of ‘adultery’ even though she still remained *virgo intacta*! All of which is quite ridiculous. The trouble arises when words which have a definite meaning are used with an extended meaning in relation to circumstances which are new or irrelevant to the original meaning. The term ‘virgin’ in relation to the ordinary man-woman relationship is something we can understand and define reasonably accurately, but in the completely new circumstances of



## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

pregnancy without intercourse, to use the same word 'virgin' is bound to lead to difficulties and misunderstandings which are, in fact, quite unnecessary and purely verbal.

Oddly enough, this is more or less where our argument started. The 'virginity' of Mary is, in a sense, a religious notion which is independent of the parentage of Jesus. We Christians, on grounds quite other than the Infancy traditions recorded in Matthew and Luke, believe that Jesus is properly spoken of as 'Son of God'—but we do not take the paternal aspect of his parentage in a literal biological sense, and it is difficult to see why we should not take the maternal aspect in any other than a similar religio-archetypal sense. This amounts to saying that, biologically, Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary, and that, theologically, Christ was the only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. Such a statement is, one supposes, no more likely to make sense to a strictly orthodox believer than to a convinced atheist, and one can only hope that this kind of approach will be of some help to those who have tripped over the stumbling-block of the 'virgin birth' in their efforts to follow Christ.

### 5. VIRGINITY

A brief consideration of virginity in general, and in particular about what is commonly called 'virgin birth', would not be irrelevant at this point. The subject bristles with difficulties of all kinds, and though one treads even more delicately than Agag, one is likely to be hewn in much smaller pieces. But the risk must be taken.

At the heart of the matter stands the archetypal figure who is both Mother and Virgin. At the level of modern objective biological science, the notion of a human virgin-mother is no more than a paradoxical contradiction in terms. There is no doubt that for many thoughtful people today it is not belief in 'Christ crucified' which is a stumbling-block and a foolishness, but rather that the statement that Jesus was 'incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary' should be understood literally in its entirety. But at the level of archetypal religious awareness the concept of the virgin-mother has a reality which cannot be dismissed by considerations of historical evidence and scientific probability.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

The question we have to ask is *not* 'Did Jesus have no human father?', but rather, 'What is the significance of the presentation of Mary as both Virgin and Mother?'

The first question is unanswerable historically because of the inconclusive nature of the only evidence which is, or could be, available. Again, few biologists would admit the possibility of auto-fertilization at the human level—it would have to be supposed that abnormal conditions existed in which an egg-cell was induced to begin 'dividing' as though fertilized by a sperm-cell, presumably because 'male tissue' co-existed with functional ovaries and uterus in the same woman: such a state of affairs is not unknown 'lower down' in the animal scale, but that it should occur in a human female seems most unlikely, and even if a parthenogenetic child were produced, it would almost certainly be a female (as indeed is the case in the claims which have recently been made). But biological considerations of this kind are really quite irrelevant to the mytho-religious beliefs in antiquity concerning the virgin-conception of divine sons. A much more profitable consideration can be given to the second question, 'Why is Mary presented as both Virgin and Mother?'

The concept of the virgin-mother is, of course, of very great antiquity. In order to understand how this 'picture' has become established as one of the elemental patterns of human expression, we have to go back far into human pre-history and try to imagine how various impressions concerning *origins* were moulded in the minds of our ancestors into this singular figure of the virgin-mother. We may then appreciate why this figure, which to us is paradoxical, seemed reasonable enough in antiquity, and why it still has a curious fascination. The effort required to 'think ourselves back' into the early situation of human society is considerable. We have to imagine a situation in which the male was not dominant, in which the group was more significant than the individual, in which sexual relationships were promiscuous and often commenced before puberty, in which pregnancy and motherhood were not necessarily connected with mating, and in which the 'I-Thou' relationship prevailed between man and his environment. This is an almost complete reversal of our present situation. With us the emphasis is on male dominance, individualism, permanent

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

monogamy, delayed marriage, sexual technology and the scientific 'I-It' relationship to environment.

In the primitive situation the whole emphasis was upon the creativity of motherhood. The earth would 'bring forth' unending vegetation whether or not a man 'sowed his seed'; thus, in analogical 'picture-thinking' the earth itself was a virgin-mother, and hence, one of the predominant female symbols is the Tree. In passing, we may note the presence in the Zodiac of the figure *Virgo*: there is every likelihood that this sign originally marked the season of the harvest and the sowing of the Great Virgin-Mother-Earth. Pregnancy was itself numinous. The female animals in the Stone Age cave-paintings are always pregnant. A pregnant woman was a numinous being: she was in a powerfully mysterious condition which was impossible for a man to attain. The contribution of a man to this condition, if appreciated at all, was considered to be quite incidental—the real source of this mysterious procreativity lay beyond human activities and came mysteriously to reside in the female. In the matriarchal group society, father did not count for much either before, during or after the pregnancy of a woman. As Erich Neumann writes:

'In her character of Great Mother, the Feminine is a "virgin": a creative principle independent of the personal man. For many good reasons, the basic matriarchal view saw no relation between the sexual act and the bearing of children. Pregnancy and sexuality were dissociated both in the inner and outward experience of woman. This may be readily understood when we consider that these early societies were characterized by a promiscuous sex life that began far before sexual maturity. The continuity of this personal sex life was just as mysteriously interrupted by the inception of menstruation as by its cessation and the wonder of pregnancy. Both phenomena occur in the inner feminine-matriarchal sphere and are not connected either with sexual love play or with the profounder experience of love for a personal man, if, as is more than doubtful, the latter existed at the primitive stage.

'In the primordial phase, therefore, the woman always conceived by an extrahuman, transpersonal power. The myths and fairy tales of all times and peoples teach us that she was usually impregnated by contact with numinous animals, e.g. bird and serpent, bull and ram, but also by the eating of fruit, by the wind, the moon, ancestral spirits, demons, gods and so on.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Mother*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955, pp. 269-70.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

In the course of time, as civilization was transformed, the kind of social order with which we are more familiar was established—male-dominated and monarchical. But behind and beneath the pattern of the patriarchal kingdom was the archetypal Great Mother. The New Year festival included an enthronement of the priest-king followed by his sacred marriage: in this he was simultaneously most things that man is to woman—son-lover-husband-father-brother (just as any man may at once be the son of his mother, the husband of his wife, the father of his child, the brother of his sister). The throne itself is a symbol of the Great Mother, and the enthroning really signifies the new birth which (in the ancient ritual) follows the king's vicarious humiliation and death—he is annually reborn as the son of the virgin-earth-mother. In the sacred marriage the consort is not only the virgin-bride, but just as the king now represents the husband-father-god, so the chosen priestess enacts the part of the wife-mother-goddess as well. The princely offspring of such a union would be regarded as a divine son, 'without father, without mother, without genealogy', as was said of Melchizedek, the priest of El-Elyon and king of Salem, who is referred to in the Enthronement Ode which underlies Psalm 110, and who is the type of the priest-king referred to in Hebrews (7.3).

Concerning the parentage of the saviours of ancient belief, Erich Neumann writes:

'The essence of the mythological canon of the hero-redeemer is that he is fatherless or motherless, that one of the parents is often divine, and that the hero's mother is frequently the Mother Goddess herself or else betrothed to a god.

'These mothers are virgin mothers. . . . As everywhere in the ancient world, virginity simply means not belonging to any man personally; virginity is in essence sacred, not because it is a state of physical inviolateness, but because it is a state of psychic openness to God.'<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this brief and inadequate mention of a complex subject is that considerations of this kind may well have some significance in relation to the critical passage in Isaiah (7.14) which must always be referred to in any discussion of the virginity of Mary. It is now well known that the Hebrew text reads 'the young woman is

<sup>1</sup> *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, p. 133.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

with child and bears a son, and will call his name God-is-with-us', whereas the Greek LXX version reads 'a virgin shall conceive and bear a son', and that it is the latter translation (or 'mistranslation') which is cited by the angel in Joseph's dream (Matt. 1.23). Because of the Christian typological use of this passage, later Jewish translations into Greek correct the LXX and substitute the general word *neanis* for the specific *parthenos*.

All sorts of speculations concerning 'the young woman' have been made, e.g. that she was the wife or concubine of King Ahaz, or the wife of Isaiah, or a pregnant woman who happened to be present when the oracle was uttered. While one of these suggestions may be historically true, it is far more likely that the prophet was deliberately echoing the mythological imagery of the 'sacred marriage' and the birth of the 'divine son'—imagery which would be quite familiar to Isaiah and his audience. The phrase 'the young woman' is certainly a technical theological term, and in a Ras Shamra text a very similar expression ('the young woman shall bear a son') occurs in a passage which is clearly associated with a cultic announcement concerning the birth of a royal or divine son. The name Immanuel itself appears to have the character of a liturgical utterance, and may be compared with the repetitive refrain 'The Lord of hosts is with us' in Psalm 46.7, 11. Helmer Ringgren sums the matter up:

"The prophet adopts the formula of the official cult, intending to say: "Take your cultic confession seriously. You say that God is with you; why do you not trust in him? You take the ancient words of the birth of the royal child into your mouths, but you dare not trust the expectations that are bound up with the traditional formula."'<sup>1</sup>

This being the case, the Alexandrian translators (who would themselves be familiar with Egyptian versions of the king-god cultus) had some justification for making a 'deliberate mistake'. Further support for this interpretation of the passage is to be found in the description of the food of the Immanuel-child—'curds and honey shall he eat': it is believed that milk and honey were sacrificed in earliest times to earth-goddesses, and, hence, that these substances were the original 'food of the gods'. Milk is obviously a functional substance in motherhood, and in later times there was often an

<sup>1</sup> Helmer Ringgren: *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, SCM Press, 1956, p. 27.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

association between the Great Mother and the Queen Bee of the honey hive. The association of honey with fertility is easy enough to understand, not only in relation to the number of bees in a colony, but also in connection with the fact that a find of honey would be very important to primitive people living near the subsistence level: a meal of concentrated sugars would have an immediate effect in the release of vital energy, hence the reputation of honey as an aphrodisiac and its ritual use. Again, naturally fermented honey-water, or mead, was one of our rude forefathers' most exciting discoveries, and the association of alcohol with both religion and love is not unknown.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the Wisdom literature (see below), the Hebrew eradication of all reference to the primordial Mother-Goddess in the interests of the masculinity of Jehovah is virtually complete. If the passage in Isaiah does not have these faint overtones of reference to the Virgin-Mother and her Divine Son, overtones which are amplified in the LXX version, then we should search the Scriptures in vain for any verse in which it could be held that the virgin conception of Jesus was prefigured. It is true that there are legends telling of remarkable and unexpected conceptions of saviour-heroes in certain strata of the Old Testament: for instance, in Genesis the barrenness of Sarah is said to be the result of God's intention (16.2), and the conception of Isaac when she was ninety years old—an age generally supposed to be well beyond the period of child-bearing—is also attributed to divine intervention (17.15 ff). Again, in his turn, Isaac seems to have had the same sort of trouble with Rebekah, his wife, but as a consequence of his entreaty, God caused her to bear twins (25.21 ff). There is, of course, in these narratives, no suggestion whatever of virgin conception, and the New Testament anti-type is the conception of John (the Baptist) when Elizabeth, hitherto barren, was 'well stricken in years' (Luke 1.7). We may say, in general, that both barrenness and fecundity are regarded in the

<sup>1</sup> The temptation to mention quite irrelevant modern knowledge about bees is irresistible. It is now known that the male 'drones' are parthenogenetically produced from unfertilized egg-cells, and that on the 'nuptial flight' the 'drone' who succeeds in mating with the 'princess' loses his genitalia when she loses her virginity, and that as she hives off, so he drops down dead. A bee's 'honeymoon' is an emasculating experience for the bridegroom, while for the bride a single occasion suffices. What a wealth of mythology might have resulted had these facts been known in antiquity!

*Archetypes of Male & Female*

Hebrew tradition as being within the direct providence of God, though there is no suggestion that the husband had no part to play in the process—indeed, barrenness is always attributed to the wife and never to the sterility of the husband.

Apart from this one verse in Isaiah, there is no concern whatever in the Old Testament with non-human parentage: there is certainly no trace in Judaism of the expectation that the human Davidic Messiah would be otherwise than normally conceived and born; at most there is only the underlying idea that God would providentially appoint the time. The outlook is always predominantly masculine; in another Enthronement Ode, the anointed king says:

‘The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son;  
This day have I begotten thee.’<sup>1</sup>

There is a Father but no Mother: the Sonship is declaratory and mystically ‘adoptive’: and this Sonship is ritually established by anointing with oil:

‘I have found David my servant;  
With my holy oil have I anointed him;

He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father,  
My God, and the rock of my salvation.  
I will also make him my firstborn,  
The highest of the kings of the earth.’<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not David was originally a title rather than a personal name, it is certainly the case that Divine Sonship and Kingship are together linked with the anointing with oil, and it is not difficult to see the confluence of ideas which underlies the concept of the Messiah—the ‘Anointed One’ who is Son of God and Davidic King. The sacral use of oil to signify a ‘begetting’ suggests that the oil is really a ceremonial substitute for semen. But clearly this sacramental notion is considerably spiritualized in the verse of Isaiah quoted by Jesus: ‘The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he hath anointed me . . .’ (Isa. 61.1 = Luke 4.18). This kind of Sonship—by spiritual declaratory anointing—is attributed to Jesus in connection with his Baptism, his Transfiguration and his Resurrection. In

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 2.7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 89.20, 26 f.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Romans, Paul, writing of the 'sonship' of Jesus, makes no reference to virgin-conception, mentions Davidic descent, and associates the Divine Sonship with the Resurrection:

'... his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, declared to be Son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead.'<sup>1</sup>

A similar attitude underlies the whole of the incarnational Logos-theology of John, where there is considerable emphasis on the Fatherhood of God and the eternally begotten Son ('I and the Father are one', yet 'My Father is greater than I'), but little concern with the Motherhood of Mary.

It is all the more surprising, then, that the Divine Sonship of Jesus is thought of at all in terms of a virgin conception in the New Testament. Paul and Mark have no knowledge of such an idea (or if they have, they significantly do not record it), and John makes no more than a characteristically oblique and ambiguous reference which is interpreted by some as showing his acquaintance with the tradition. Yet, in the hellenized circles in which Luke and Matthew were current, this very un-Hebraic tradition was readily accepted, and eventually became the peg upon which the whole cult of Mary was hung.

At this point we must distinguish between two quite distinct ideas: virgin conception and virgin birth. Virgin conception refers to a pregnancy not preceded by human sexual intercourse but terminated by a normal birth: virgin birth means that the termination of such a pregnancy is supernatural and leaves the mother still *virgo intacta*. In the apocryphal Infancy Gospel called the *Book of James*, the virgin birth of Jesus is described in some detail and the continued virginity of Mary is investigated by a midwife and a certain Salome: furthermore, in this work it seems to be implied that Mary was herself of divine parentage. Now quite certainly in Matthew, and almost certainly in Luke, we have an account of the virgin conception of Jesus, but nowhere in the New Testament is there any suggestion of a virgin birth: nor in the New Testament is the view put forward that Joseph *never* 'knew' Mary—indeed the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 1.3 f.



### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

statement that 'he knew her not till she had brought forth a son' (Matt. 1.25) is by implication a clear denial of any doctrine of 'perpetual virginity'.

In the light of these considerations, let us return to our original question: What is the significance of the presentation of Mary as both Virgin and Mother? Briefly, it is nothing less than the restoration of the element of femininity to the Godhead of the Christian dispensation of which the New Testament is the record. From the manward side, it was felt (on the one hand) that the exclusive masculinity of the Father and the Son was inadequate to give full expression to the divine love, and (on the other hand) that the notion of God as Spirit too impersonal and abstract to retain the devotion of the rapidly increasing number of Gentile converts. From the Godward side, if we believe in any sense in the inspiration of Scripture, we must accept the fact that Matthew and Luke were inspired to introduce into the Gospel this element of femininity which is so noticeably lacking elsewhere in the New Testament doctrine of God.

Our difficulty, where difficulty exists, is historical and scientific. We know very little about the mother of Jesus as an historical person: what we are told in the Gospels about her conduct and her relationship with Jesus during his ministry would indicate that she had no knowledge of his status as 'virgin-born Son of God'—on the contrary, she seems bewildered by what he is saying and doing and undergoing, as though she is quite unaware of the traditions recorded in the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. Again, we have no Biblical information concerning the rest of her life and her death, and to depend for history on the legends of the second century and onwards would be folly indeed. We are faced with the fact that upon this virtually unknown figure is projected (apparently by divine intention) so tremendous a status that eventually in the Church she becomes the focus for the purified and refined essence of age-old reverence for the Great Virgin-Mother. In worship, the historical betrothed of Joseph is vastly mythologized: for the faithful worshipper she becomes the august but familiar figure who is at once Virgin-Beloved and Divine Mother—the Queen of Heaven.

In Revelation the figure of the Queen of Heaven appears both as

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

the 'woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars' (12.1), and as 'the bride, the wife of the Lamb' (21.9). Commenting upon this, C. G. Jung writes:

'Only in the last days will the vision of the sun-woman be fulfilled. In recognition of this truth, and evidently inspired by the workings of the Holy Ghost, the Pope has recently announced the dogma of the *Assumptio Mariae*, very much to the astonishment of all rationalists. Mary as the bride is united to the son in the heavenly bridal-chamber, and, as Sophia, with the Godhead.'<sup>1</sup>

Jung goes on to discuss the promulgation of the new dogma:

'It was interesting to note that, among the many articles published in the Catholic and Protestant press on the declaration of the dogma, there was not one, so far as I could see, which laid anything like the proper emphasis on what was undoubtedly the most powerful motive: namely, the popular movement and the psychological need behind it. Essentially, the writers of the articles were satisfied with learned considerations, dogmatic and historical, which have no bearing on the living religious process. But anyone who has followed with attention the visions of Mary which have been increasing in number over the last few decades, and has taken their psychological significance into account, might have known what was brewing. The fact, especially, that it was largely children who had the visions might have given pause for thought, for in such cases the collective unconscious is always at work. . . . One could have known for a long time that there was a deep longing in the masses for an intercessor and mediatrix who would at last take her place alongside the Holy Trinity and be received as the "Queen of Heaven and Bride at the heavenly court".'<sup>2</sup>

In the Church of England, as in Protestantism generally, there is a difference of approach: apart from the few who accept the Catholic dogmatic teaching in these matters, there are many who believe that the basic assertion of the virgin conception of Jesus is, in fact, an obstacle to belief in a genuine and complete incarnation, and that the elaborations of the fundamental idea (virgin birth, perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, assumption), make confusion worse confounded. This point of view is clearly expressed in the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine (1938). The Commissioners wrote:

<sup>1</sup> *Answer to Job*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954, p. 159.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6.

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

‘Many of us hold that belief in the Word made flesh is integrally bound up with belief in the Virgin Birth, and that this will be increasingly recognized. There are, however, some among us who hold that a full belief in the historical Incarnation is more consistent with the supposition that our Lord’s birth took place under the normal conditions of human generation. In their minds the notion of a Virgin Birth tends to mar the completeness of the belief that in the Incarnation God revealed Himself at every point in and through human nature.’<sup>1</sup>

The Report truly reflects our contemporary predicament in recognizing the tremendous intellectual problem which confronts anyone who tries to formulate the doctrine of the Incarnation:

‘It is to be recognized that there is in the whole orthodox Christian position a great difficulty in reconciling belief in the eternity of God the Son “who was made man” with the equally essential conviction, based on the Gospel narratives, of the truly human life of the Incarnate Christ. This challenge to the intellect is an inherent element in the Gospel. Whether or not the intellectual difficulty can ever be fully overcome, it is our duty to be always seeking the way to solve it, provided that this is not done by neglect or obscuration of either of the contrasted elements which give rise to it.’<sup>2</sup>

In the worshipping fellowship of the Church each one of us has to try to work out a way of thinking of the conception of Jesus. But we must be careful to recognize that whatever virtue virginity may have for those with a vocation for it, it is not in itself a state better (in an absolute sense) than that of consummated matrimony. When Jerome wrote of Peter that he had ‘washed off the filth of marriage in the blood of martyrdom’, he demonstrated just where such a mistake leads, and we need to be on our guard against this dangerous perversion.

There is as much to be said psychologically as there is little to be said historically for according to Mary all the traditional honour due to the Virgin-Mother-of-God. We who belong to parts of the Church where regard for Mary is neglected or ignored or sentimentalized would do well to ponder these things in our hearts and seek ways of recognizing the feminine aspects of the Godhead

<sup>1</sup> p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

which are neither superstitious, idolatrous, puerile, nor an offence to intelligence and credulity. And in so doing we must make allowance for a wide range of temperamental and environmental difference. There are many people who are quite content with Jesus' own presentation of God as a loving and forgiving Father, but there are others whose wholesome fear of the 'wrath' of the Father-God makes them long for a feminine mediatrix to plead their cause with the stern Judge. We are not all cast in the same mould, nor is our experience of parental behaviour identical; on both sides, therefore, there should be tolerance and understanding. We are all confronted by the problem of how to apprehend the 'personality' of the Godhead, and if some Christians experience the divine love partly in feminine terms, the duty of those who do not is no more than to try to keep regard for the Queen of Heaven within the bounds of what is seemly.

### 6. TYPES AND SYMBOLS OF THE VIRGIN

At this point we may try to draw together a few of the threads running through the various sections of this present work. We may do this by a brief consideration of the symbolism which was elaborated in the middle ages in connection with the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The underlying principles of the world-outlook of medieval Christianity had been laid down in the early centuries in the manner outlined above: in essence it was a combination of Biblical and Platonic interpretations of reality—this combination, or synthesis, of Hebrew religion and Greek philosophy being achieved by the free use of allegorization, and, in particular, by the typological interpretation of the Old Testament in relation to the New. Saint Paul had written:

'The invisible things of him since the creation of the cosmos are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, (even) his everlasting power and divinity,'<sup>1</sup>

and these words, taken in a characteristic sense, formed the basis of the medieval attitude. The 'invisible things', i.e. the eternal divine order, was regarded Platonically as the real and intelligible universe, whereas 'the things that are made', i.e. the creaturely

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 1.20.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

world of phenomena, was regarded as no more than a reflection of reality. The subsequent advent of modern science involved a complete revolution of man's attitude towards his environment: nature came to be directly observed and investigated *for its own sake*, and not merely viewed as a symbolic pattern—a kind of mirror image which disclosed the character of the real, but invisible, spiritual universe. This kind of symbolic interpretation of nature and history reached its climax in Christian Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, just at the time, incidentally, when the first stirrings of the modern scientific approach are also to be observed in the renewal of the influence of Aristotle in the West and the work of Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas and Roger Bacon.

Very clear examples of medieval allegorization and symbolism in relation to the Blessed Virgin Mary are to be found in the *Speculum Ecclesiae* of Honorius 'Augustodunensis' (c. 1125-50) and in the Sequences of Adam of St Victor (c. 1130). The subject is treated at length in a book by F. J. E. Raby, who remarks:

'In the West, by the eighth century, the cult of the Virgin was universal; churches were raised everywhere in her honour, her praises were celebrated in the offices, and it soon became usual for an altar to be dedicated to her in every large church. But the monasteries were the great centres where the devotion to Mary grew, and from which it radiated. Nearly every monastic order professed some kind of special devotion to the Virgin. . . .

'In the twelfth century the custom was widespread in the monasteries of reciting the *Little Office of the Blessed Virgin* before the canonical office, and to add to Compline the *Salve Regina* or other anthems in her honour. By this date the cult of the Virgin had assumed such proportions and evoked so much fervour that the figure of the Mother of Christ began to eclipse that of her Son and of all the apostles and saints. It might almost seem true to say that, in the later Middle Ages, the central object of the popular cult was in actual fact the Virgin Mary, exalted to the rank of Queen of Heaven, crowned with the twelve stars, and invested with all those human and tender attributes in which the early Church had first clothed the figure of the Saviour.'<sup>1</sup>

The following example from the Sequences of Adam of St Victor illustrates the remarkable picture of family relationships which

<sup>1</sup> *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry*, O.U.P., 1953, pp. 364-5.

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

would logically result from a purely literal understanding of the virginity of Mary:

‘Castitatis in tenorum,  
Plasma gignit plasmatores,  
Virgo parit amatorem,  
Lactat patrem filia.  
Argumentum geniturae  
Hujus nescit jus naturae;  
Suae legis fracto jure,  
Stupet de potentia.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Virgin still, the creature giveth  
Birth to Him through Whom she liveth;  
Maiden’s womb her spouse conceiveth;  
Daughter’s breasts her father feed.  
Nature’s law no instance knoweth  
Of such birth as this one showeth,  
And since it all law o’erthroweth,  
Nature trembles at the deed.’<sup>2</sup>

In the typological interpretation of Scriptures supposed to relate to the Virgin, the Song of Songs (as has been indicated) was a fruitful garden indeed, but it is illuminating to note other unexpected items which are similarly recognized. From Canticles the following symbols are most frequent in medieval devotion: the fountain sealed and the garden enclosed (because the seal of Mary’s virginity was unbroken by the birth of Christ); the tower of David (signifying inviolate chastity and strength); the fountain (from which Christ flowed); and the lily (flower of purity). From Ecclesiasticus 24 are derived many tree-symbols for Mary—cedar, cypress, palm, rose and olive. Further, it was held that the Virgin was prefigured by the Temple (because divinity resided within her body), by the Ark of the Covenant (a container of holiness), by the Ark of Noah (a vessel of salvation), and by the Throne of Solomon (ivory signifying chastity and gold signifying charity).

Other passages (quoted by Raby) which are particularly related to the Virgin Birth by Honorius include the following: the Burning Bush (‘This prefigured the blessed Virgin, whom the fire of the Holy Ghost illuminated with offspring, yet defiled not with the flame of concupiscence’); the Manna (‘By the manna Mary

<sup>1</sup> Sequence i, line 9 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Trans. D. S. Wrangham: *The Liturgical Poetry of Adam of St Victor*.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

is meant, of whom the worm Christ was born. For he himself saith: *I am a worm and no man* (Ps. 21). For a man is born by the intercourse of a man and a woman, but Christ was born of a Virgin only, even as a worm is formed out of the mud of the earth<sup>1</sup>);<sup>1</sup> Gideon's Fleece; the Rod of Jesse; the Closed Door of Ezekiel; the Mountain of Daniel.

These and other symbols of the Virgin are translated into the sculpture, paintings, stained glass and carvings which enrich churches and cathedrals everywhere, particularly those which were built and decorated in the middle ages. From this period onwards much regard was paid to the 'legend' of Mary, and incidents from her 'life' increasingly figure in illustrative art. In the early centuries comparatively little attention was given to Our Lady, either in literature or in art: in the catacomb paintings she is occasionally depicted in an attitude of prayer between St Peter and St John, and there are some sarcophagus representations of the Virgin Mother with the Child on her knees. Before the fifth century she does not appear alone. In the earlier representations her Son is very young and she is ageing, but, as time goes on, he, as it were, gets older while she gets younger. Thus, when the cult of the Virgin reaches its climax in the twelfth century she is depicted in all the glory of young womanhood. Very many churches and cathedrals of this golden age of architecture were dedicated to the Virgin, and consequently she figures prominently in the sculpture, especially in the portals. Enthroned and wearing a crown, she is often to be seen upon a tympanum, with the hieratic Child on her knees holding the Book of Life and pronouncing a blessing. She is indeed his 'throne', as Émile Mâle points out:

"The Virgin enthroned held her Son with the sacerdotal gravity of the priest holding the chalice. She was the seat of the All-Powerful, "the throne of Solomon", in the language of the doctors. She seemed neither woman nor mother, because she was exalted above the sufferings and joys of life. She was the one whom God had chosen at the beginning of time to clothe His Word with flesh. She was the pure thought of God. As for the Child, grave, majestic, hand raised, He was already the Master Who commands, and Who teaches. So appear the

<sup>1</sup> I.e. by the supposed process of spontaneous generation, a theory which was reasonable enough in the middle ages.

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Virgin and Child at the Saint Anne portal of Notre-Dame of Paris.<sup>1</sup>

In later versions of the Coronation, the Virgin is actually being crowned—sometimes by her Son and sometimes by an angel; and in some of these sculptures there is the additional symbolism of a flowering-sceptre which Christ hands to her [*Plate 14*].

To be associated with this sort of presentation of Mary as the Queen of Heaven, crowned and enthroned, sharing the rule of Christ as his Bride-Consort, are depictions of most of the incidents, both evangelical and apocryphal, which were popularized during the middle ages. In all the visual art forms we find representations of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Visit of the Shepherds, the Purification, the Adoration of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, and the Crucifixion: understandably absent is an attempt to depict Mary on the occasion when Jesus was left behind as a boy in the Temple, or on the occasion when with his brethren she sought access to Jesus during the Galilean ministry. To these Gospel incidents is added their apocryphal embellishment, together with newer traditions concerned with the conception, birth and childhood of Mary and the doctrinal occasions concerning her 'falling asleep', resurrection and assumption. In addition, from the twelfth century onwards, she appears as an essential figure in the popular Tree of Jesse.

As time went on, the more human aspect of Mary began to receive an emphasis which balanced her earlier cultic significance. Thus, it is more characteristic of the thirteenth century that she should appear standing with her Child upon her left arm—she smiles down upon him, and, perhaps, gives him her breast. By the fifteenth century this tendency towards historical realism has led to a situation in which a 'coronation' was seldom produced, and in which, in addition to the young happy mother with her Baby, there appeared the older sad mother (*Mater Dolorosa*) supporting her dead Son after the Deposition from the Cross—a symbol of her care and protection for suffering humanity. This scene as it were 'fulfilled' the prediction of Simeon to Mary that 'a sword shall pierce through thine own soul' (Luke 2.35). So it is that a common emblem of Mary is a heart pierced by a sword thus

<sup>1</sup> *Religious Art*, p. 121.



### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

signifying her humanity, while a capital M surmounted by a crown signifies her queenly rule.

In the cult of Mary as it was developed in medieval catholicism we can see how every aspect of the Feminine is accorded religious honour and recognition. What is so notably lacking from the Judaeo-Early-Christian tradition with its tremendous emphasis on masculinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is adequately compensated in the whole cult of the Virgin-Mother-Queen. Mary is presented to us from the moment of her conception (popularly supposed to have occurred on the occasion of the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate) to the time of her coronation and enthronement. In the gamut of her 'legend' we are confronted with Woman in her every aspect—the baby girl, the pure virgin, the espoused maid, the pregnant woman, the young mother, the loving nurse, the careful parent, the devoted follower, the bereaved mourner, the faithful believer, the dying friend, the resurrected saint, the enthroned queen and the heavenly bride. The one person of Mary as virgin, mother and queen, provides a focus of devotion for all those who psychologically are unsatisfied by a Godhead conceived solely in masculine terms. In a single figure Mary personifies the feminine aspect of the experience of human love, and through her this mundane experience is transmuted to a spiritual level in the Christian tradition. Her 'virginity' is not really a matter of an unfertilized ovum and an unruptured hymen, but is rather a recognition of the creative activity of God manifest in human procreativity and a symbolic adjunct to the mystery of the Incarnation. Her 'motherhood', though historical, is also ultra-historical, and the ubiquity of the mother-and-child figure witnesses to its eternal significance as a symbol of the mystery of human generation. Her 'queenship' is a profound religious myth which seeks to express humanity's need for a feminine intercessor at the Judgement and a recognition that a womanly element is necessary to human apprehension of the mystery of the relationships of love which prevail within the divine rule.

The religio-psychic needs of individuals vary considerably. To some, no doubt, what has been written above may seem to go much too far in sympathy for the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while, to others, the points which have been put forward may seem to

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

undermine authoritative dogmas of the Church by drawing attention to some of the empirical considerations which are involved. This is symptomatic of our present dilemma in religious thought and practice. Both those who are antipathetic to the honour paid to Mary, and those who are most fervent in its practice, might do well to reconsider the psychological bases of their own religious life—or lack of it. For if there is a psychology of religion, there is also a psychology of irreligion.

### 7. TREES AND HORNS

Leaving the human inhabitants of Eden, let us now turn our attention to the symbolism associated with trees. (We need not concern ourselves unduly with the fact that in the Genesis narrative there is considerable confusion between *two* trees: the reason is that two separate traditions have been imperfectly assimilated.)

It is nowadays recognized that the original centres of human civilization were in river valleys where annual flooding and irrigation made possible the controlled cultivation of trees and crops. No doubt the Eden tradition embodies an ancient memory of the beginnings of Babylon, or some other Mesopotamian centre, which is 'eastward' from Palestine on the Euphrates. The verses about the four rivers would also have reference to similar centres of civilization, and it has often been supposed that one of them refers to the Nile. It is understandable that the 'garden' or 'river-and-tree' symbolism became very important in ancient thought. In the Bible rivers are frequently thought of as 'rivers of life', and springs of water also acquire a powerful symbolic status. The 'river-and-tree' imagery occurs very clearly, not only at the beginning of the Scriptures, but in the middle and at the end:

'He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God . . . on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life bearing twelve manner (crops) of fruit, yielding its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.'<sup>1</sup>

A link between the Old Testament and the New Testament is, as it were, provided by John's baptism in the river Jordan: the baptism of Jesus and his command to baptize into the new life of the king-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 22.1 f; cp. Ezek. 47.12.

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

dom, together with his likening of the kingdom to the growth of a tree, complete the pattern.

In modern Western urban civilization we tend to overlook the extraordinary significance of trees. To the man in the street it seems a little odd that an object so banal as a tree should have become for the man in the wood, or the man in the desert, a most powerful symbol of both life and knowledge. It is not, however, really difficult to understand why this should be so. Primitive man confronted by a tree sees an object which is alive but which does not wither and die quickly like most plants, an object which is almost as strong and as permanent as stone, an object which seems to be alternately dead and alive. A tree is the epitome of the annual death and rebirth of all vegetation, while the evergreen species suggest the possibility of unending life. The tree, as the type of all plant life, is a source of food, clothing and shelter. Vegetable fruits and fibres provide for the maintenance of life: the living tree gives shade and indicates the presence of water in an oasis; the dead tree gives material for building and for fire. Many birds and some animals make their homes in trees, and very many creatures are directly dependent upon fruit, berries, shoots, leaves or tubers for their food. Moreover, a tree is buried half in earth while half ascends in the air towards heaven. This mysterious monstrous growth from a tiny seed in the watered earth into the warm light air is itself the fruit of Mother Earth.

It is no wonder, then, that the Tree is one of the commonest of the feminine symbols, and is very frequently to be seen in association with the Mother Goddess in one form or another. Often the symbolic woman is depicted alongside a growing tree (or trees), or giving or receiving a branch or fruits; she has her sacred flowers, plants or trees; sometimes the woman and the tree are fused together so that branches sprout from her body, and sometimes a tree is envisaged as giving birth to a man (as in a myth of Adonis).

The material significance of the Tree is also to be observed in the primitive and ancient attitude to wood as one of the basic *materials* of civilization. After being born a baby is laid in a wooden cradle, and after dying a corpse is laid in a wooden coffin or burned on a fire of wood. The life of Jesus begins in a wooden manger and ends on a wooden cross: it is not without significance that he was a master of matter—a wood-worker by trade.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

It is understandable how the Tree came to be associated with goddess-worship—either a solitary tree, or a grove (or orchard), or a pole-substitute. The wooden pole is called *asherah* in the Bible (e.g. Deut. 7.5; 16.21), and the same word is also used of a goddess: this name is a variant of Astarte-Ishtar, the great Mother-goddess of Semitic religions. In I Kings we read how Asa removed his mother from being queen because ‘she had made an abominable image for Asherah’, and how he ‘cut down her image and burnt it at the brook of Kidron’ (15.13), and also that at Jezebel’s court there were four hundred ‘prophets of Asherah’ (18.19).

But such is the ambivalence of symbols that a Tree is occasionally regarded as a phallic symbol—particularly those trees whose shape suggests a masculine aspect and on which fruit is inconspicuous or absent. In ancient Babylon it was recognized that some palm trees were male and others female, and that the pollen from the males had to be carried by the wind before the females could bear fruit. With knowledge of this kind there may be some connection with a common belief in antiquity in the fertilizing power of the wind and the notion that pregnancy sometimes followed a ‘breathing upon’ of this kind, and hence that virgins might conceive by divine afflatus.

Civilization was impossible until sufficient knowledge of vegetative processes had been acquired so that men were able to control and increase the production of food both for themselves and their domesticated animals. Life in cities depended upon fruit and timber. From this point of view the Tree became a symbol of both Knowledge and Life, and this is echoed in the Genesis story, for the ‘knowledge of good and evil’ is really the knowledge which underlies urban life. In the evolution of architecture, especially of sacred buildings such as churches and temples, we can see that the pillars are really trees in stone, and the tracery of ceilings is sometimes a deliberate attempt to represent the overhead branches: in such buildings many people are aware of the wakening of subliminal reactions of the psyche and speak of the ‘atmosphere’ of worship which they experience. All over the world, in all sorts of religions, trees occupy an important place in the symbolism and cultus. The maypole, the mistletoe, and the palms of the Sunday next before Easter are three familiar, but very diverse, examples of how these ancient symbolisms still persist. In some parts of the world there

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

grew up the idea of a heavenly tree—an invisible night-tree which sheltered the astral animals and upon whose branches the stars hung as lights: the lights were sometimes identified with the souls of the departed, and the same kind of pattern of ideas is recognizable in the candles associated with funeral rites and with the Christmas tree of the winter solstice. The cult of the Christmas tree is popular because the unconscious ‘recognizes’ a mystery of life and knowledge signified by a tree, and we moderns, just like the members of a primitive society, hang our gifts upon its branches.

In the Hebrew cultus the seven-branched candlestick played an important part; it is still used in Jewish rites and is occasionally to be seen on Christian altars, though seven sanctuary-lamps are perhaps a more common furnishing of this kind. In the descriptions to be found in Exodus it is clear that the lamp-stand or candelabrum with its seven lights is an illuminated tree:

‘Thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it: and there shall be six branches going out of the sides thereof . . . three cups made like almond-blossoms in one branch, a knop and a flower; and three cups made like almond-blossoms in the other branch, a knop and a flower. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

The most notable association of the divine presence with a tree in the Scriptures is, of course, in the account in Exodus of the fiery tree of Horeb, and Moses, in his blessing of Israel, refers to God as ‘him that dwelt in the bush’ (Deut. 33.16). We notice here the characteristic Hebrew masculinizing of what was generally a feminine symbol in antiquity, and it is interesting to remember how the medieval Church reversed the symbol again so that the Burning Bush signified Mary and the Virgin Birth. In the Prologue to the Prioress’ Tale, Chaucer writes:

‘O moder mayde! O Mayde moder free!  
O bush unbrent brenninge in Moyses sighte.’

Aaron’s Rod, which mysteriously budded, blossomed and bore almonds overnight, is another interesting tree-image; it may be

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 25.31 ff.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

compared with Joseph's rod from which a dove emerged and then alighted on his head to indicate that he should be the husband of Mary, the Temple virgin (according to the apocryphal gospel called the *Book of James*). When the Cross came to be used as a Christian symbol, it was frequently made to bud or to flower.

Also in tree-lore we often find that oracular power is attributed to trees: the sounds which trees make as they are moved by the wind are interpreted as divine decisions (e.g. I Sam. 14.2; 22.6; II Sam. 5.23f), and we find Deborah, the prophetess, sitting under a palm tree (Judg. 4.5).

In Judges we can read a rare Biblical fable in which talking trees discuss who shall be king over them (9.8-15): the olive, the fig and the vine reject the offer of the kingdom, while the thorn appears to accept—in this oblique way Jotham comments on the anointing of his half-brother Abimelech.

Mention of the olive, the fig and the vine immediately evokes a whole series of Scriptural images where these trees are used symbolically: from the olive-twig in the beak of Noah's dove by way of the oil of anointing, to the confused horticultural grafting instanced by St Paul; from the fig-leaves of Adam and Eve to the withered fig-tree of Jerusalem or the sheltering fig-tree of Nathanael; from Noah's experiment with the fruit of the vine to the deep symbolism of the vine and its branches.

In Ecclesiasticus there is a long passage spoken by *Sophia* in which tree metaphors abound:

'I took root in a people that was glorified,  
Even in the portion of the Lord's own inheritance.  
I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus,  
And as a cypress tree on the mountains of Hermon.  
I was exalted like a palm tree on the sea shore,  
And as rose plants in Jericho,  
And as a fair olive tree in the plain;  
And I was exalted as a plane tree.  
As cinnamon and aspalathus, I have given a scent of perfumes;  
And as choice myrrh, I spread abroad a pleasant odour;  
As galbanum, and onyx, and stacte,  
And as the fume of frankincense in the tabernacle.  
As the terebinth I stretched out my branches;  
And my branches are branches of glory and grace.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

As the vine I put forth grace;  
And my flowers are the fruit of glory and riches.  
Come unto me, ye that are desirous of me,  
And be ye filled with my produce.<sup>1</sup>

In the traditional mythology of the Church there has been some measure of identification of the creative masculine *Logos* with the feminine *Sophia*, and in this way there is a degree of compensation for the absence of the female element in the Judaeo-Christian Godhead. Then, by transference, the imagery associated with *Sophia* is assimilated to the symbolism of the Virgin Mary, and it comes about that the above sylvan passage is appointed as the Lesson at the Feast of the Assumption.

The Branch, too, suggests another vista of symbolism stemming from a 'family-tree'. The best-known Biblical example is Isaiah's description of the hoped-for royal saviour as 'a shoot out of the stock of Jesse and a branch out of his roots' (11.1). (Looking back to choir-boy days, one remembers the annual mystification of having to sing 'O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny'—a salutary reminder that symbolism may just as easily obfuscate as illuminate!) In the prophets this imagery is developed so that eventually 'the Branch' becomes virtually a messianic title (Zech. 3.8). And in John the organic unity of Christ and the Church is expressed in the meditation which is centred upon the theme 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' (15.5). The whole pattern of dendriform imagery has naturally been taken up with enthusiasm by religious artists, and some of the Davidic royal family-trees (Jesse-trees) leading to Mary and Jesus are shown growing literally from the loins of a recumbent Jesse [*Plate 12*].

This kind of symbolism has been embellished by tradition: it is recounted that a branch or a seed from the Eden Tree was somehow obtained, and from it were derived the rod of Moses, a beam in Solomon's Temple, a plank in Joseph's workshop, and thence (through the agency of Judas) the Cross of Crucifixion. Thus the Tree of Life and Knowledge becomes the Tree of New Life and Salvation—a theme which finds expression in a number of prayers. Indeed, the New Testament writers themselves speak of the Cross

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. 24.12-19.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

as 'a tree' (Acts 5.30; I Pet. 2.24). One is tempted to say that tree symbolism can be very fruitful.

Part of the reason for the universal appeal of tree symbolism may be connected with the evolutionary stage of tree-dwelling which appears to have been a necessary phase in the development of certain essential human characteristics. When some four-footed mammals took to the trees some forty or fifty million years ago they made possible such vitally important developments as upright posture, binocular vision and manual dexterity. Without an evolutionary period of brachiation it seems most unlikely that these essential physical bases of human nature would have been established. It was, of course, eventually necessary that *pithecanthropus* should come out of the wood so that *homo sapiens* might be able to see the trees.

Incidentally, the fossil-bones found in South Africa of the race known (in the confused nomenclature of anthropologists) as *Australopithecinae* indicate that here were borderline beings whose bodies had the characteristically human upright posture but whose heads were typically ape-like with small brain-case and large jaws. These 'monkey headed men' (or 'human-bodied apes') were definitely not forest-dwellers but made their homes in the veldt. It is unlikely that they were ancestors of modern men—more probably they were representatives of one of a number of 'dead-end' branches from a common hominid stock. (They really were 'out on a limb'!) Their existence may also be witnessed to in the animal-headed figures which appear in so many religions. In palaeolithic art there are very few representations of the human figure, and almost invariably these are brute-headed: it is generally thought that these are 'sorcerers' or 'priests' wearing animal-masks as part of the sympathetic-magic ritual which, it is presumed, took place in the caverns. (The most elaborately vested is the horned-and-tailed officiant in the cave at Trois Frères.)

It seems likely that when very primitive men managed to kill a large animal they used its head and skin for both practical and ritual purposes (though they would not have made this distinction). By wearing the head and pelt a hunter would achieve a high degree of camouflage (by sight and by scent), thus finding it easier to stalk and capture other animals of the same species, and,



## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

by wearing them again, perhaps in a cave, and by a ritual miming of the motions of the hunt, the leader of a group would, in fact, be assuming a priestly function, the head and skin corresponding to the religious vestments of later days. Such practices presumably underlie the animal-totem kind of religious society, and also the animal-headed gods and goddesses (notably of Egypt) and the various sphinxes, centaurs, satyrs and the Biblical chimera of apocalyptic writing (e.g. Ezek. 1.5-14; 10.14).

Some of the animals so treated in the Stone Age possessed antlers, and it is probable that the symbolic crown of divinity and leadership originated as a crown of horns—the antlered head-dress of some palaeolithic priestly-hunter. The annual dance of the Horned Men at Abbots Bromley (Staffs.) would seem to be an extraordinary survival of the 'old religion' of Europe which, in turn, has its roots in the very remote past.

There is clear evidence in Ezekiel that the characteristic cave-religion of the Stone Age not only persisted to the time of the Exile, but was quite a formidable temptation to Israelites when it seemed that Jehovah had deserted them:

'Then said he (the angel) unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel. . . . Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in his chambers of imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.'<sup>1</sup>

The mental patterns laid down as human consciousness itself began to take shape are possessed of an energy which on occasion can break through the later layers of rational thought.

Antlers and horns have always had a peculiar fascination for mankind—partly, perhaps, because man is unable to grow them for himself even though he is able to subdue powerful horned animals, partly because of the variety of uses to which horns may

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 8.8-12.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

be put, and partly because of the sexual significance which has become associated with them. Antler-picks were used in very early times to make the earth more fertile, and since horns grow on some of the most fertile and fecund animals (and hence were often thought of as 'outcrops' of excessive generative power), there are obvious 'reasons' why horns should be associated with fertility. The suggestion that a cuckold should 'wear the horns' would appear to mean that he needs to do so in order to make up a sexual deficiency. The horn has both a masculine and a feminine significance—the phallic symbolism is obvious, so that every man is his own unicorn; while, as a container and provider, the hollowed horn becomes the cornucopia when filled with harvest fruits. Another ambivalence of horn symbolism is to be noted in that both Satan and Moses are often represented as horned, especially in medieval art. The reasons for this are quite different, though there is a connecting link in the sense that horns may be taken as a sign of wisdom or guile. As has been mentioned elsewhere, the horns of Moses arise (as it were) from a slight misunderstanding of the Hebrew expression for his shining face [*Plate 11*]. In the other case, the representation of Satan no longer as Lucifer, the fallen Son of God, but rather as an obscene goat-like figure is due partly to the transference of the attributes of the god of the 'old religion' to the devil of the new religion, and partly to the pungent lechery of the goat being taken as a most appropriate symbol of evil at a time when there was a tendency to regard sexuality itself as sinful. In line with this mode of thinking is the medieval symbol of Lust as a naked woman, legs apart, on the back of a he-goat [*Plate 8*].

We are here on the threshold of what is commonly called witchcraft. In several books on the subject, Dr Margaret Murray has demonstrated that the cult of the witches in northern Europe was really a survival of the Stone Age religion in which worship was addressed to a Horned God. The god was impersonated at various ceremonies by the chief witch or 'devil' of the coven: this disguised figure was sometimes arrayed to appear in the form of a horned animal, and at some ceremonies the female witches submitted to his sexual embrace—a 'divine encounter' in the interests of fertility generally. The surviving descriptions of this congress suggest

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

that the 'god' employed an artificial phallus in order to satisfy the demands made upon him. From some descriptions of the appearance of the chief witch, it is also clear that he wore a second 'head' or 'face' at his back, and that this was sometimes under his tail: there are connections here with the two-faced new-year god, Janus, and with the January figure of the Labours of the Months: moreover, a very vulgar phrase (never heard in polite society) indicates how the second 'face' was ceremonially recognized.

That the worship of the Horned God was a continuing tradition in England is evidenced by repeated ecclesiastical bans upon it. For instance, Dr Murray quotes from the *Liber Poenitentialis* of Theodore, the seventh-century Archbishop of Canterbury:

'Not only celebrating feasts in the abominable places of the heathen and offering food there, but also consuming it. Serving this hidden idolatry, having relinquished Christ. If anyone at the kalends of January goes about as a stag or a bull; that is, making himself into a wild animal and dressing in the skin of a herd animal, and putting on the heads of beasts; those who in such wise transform themselves into the appearance of a wild animal, penance for three years because this is devilish.'<sup>1</sup>

As late as the fourteenth century, the then Bishop of Coventry was accused before the Pope of having done homage to the Devil in the form of a sheep—presumably a horned ram. Other evidences of the cult are to be seen in the Roman horned god, Cernunnos, and in the ceremonial mask known as the Dorset Ooser.

The horned gods and goddesses, the horns of the crescent moon, the horned altars, the horned gates, the horn of assembly—all these are evidence of the importance attached to these bony excrescences in the religions of antiquity. In the form of antlers their similarity to the branches of a tree may have seemed to establish the essential continuity in nature of what we distinguish as plants and animals. Whether or not this be the case, it is clear enough that in the early stages in the development of human consciousness man was much more aware of his ambivalent relationship with the rest of the living creatures—his oneness with them and his separation from them. The frequency with which animal-headed beings, or other monstrous mixtures, are to be found may even reflect a kind of

<sup>1</sup> *The Witch-cult in Western Europe*, OUP, p. 21.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

traditional recollection of 'dead-end' cousins of *homo sapiens* whose very appearance was nasty, brutish and short.

Inconclusive though many such speculations must be, it is reasonable to suppose that the evolutionary phase of enormously significant physical change leading to the emergence of anatomical man was accompanied by equally significant mental evolution with the human psyche as its end-product. In a word, as the skull and the brain got bigger and more complex over many thousands of generations of arboreal evolution, so there were laid down certain psychological patterns which still are present as part of normal human mental activity. It is not inconceivable that 5,000 years ago these mental activities were 'nearer the surface' in our ancestors' lives than they are in ours. Yet even in our manufactured civilization, when we seem so remote from the time when man (as it were) lived in his family tree, there are surprising signs that trees still have some significance as symbols of life and knowledge and salvation. One of the most popular ballads of recent years ends with the words ' . . . only God can make a tree'—it is a sickly song but apparently it awakens deep reactions in urban man. Again, the same unrecognized process accounts for the popularity of the city-dweller's backyard motto: 'You are nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth.'

And this brings us back to the Tree of Know-How in the Garden of Eden, and the notion that by eating the fruit of it the seed of all human evil was sown. It is certainly true that increasing technical knowledge leads man further and further away from 'nature', if the word is used of the environment of primitive man: in a sense, the greater one's understanding and control of natural forces, the more difficult it is to participate in the rhythms of natural processes and the traditional mythology which accompanies them. Many town-dwellers rush out into the country on the slightest pretext, nearly all want a patch of garden or, failing that, try to cultivate window-boxes: even the most sophisticated make some use of flowers or plants as elements in a scheme of decoration. We who live with piped water and gas, electric light and heat, and every other mod. conv., are still aware of atavistic longings for the 'natural' simple life, but, at the same time, we realize that this paradisaical state would be far too complex and difficult for us and that we should barely

## *Archetypes of Male & Female*

survive in such an 'unnatural' way of life. In other words, our 'human nature' has itself been considerably modified by the use of technical knowledge: the tensions which have been set up between our primitive psychological patterns and our super-imposed urban sophistications provide another source of trouble in our characteristic human predicament. Particularly is this so in sexual relationships—a fact which is fully recognized in Genesis.

### 8. THE SERPENT

The Tree of Eden leads naturally to a consideration of various aspects of tree-symbolism associated with snakes. We think immediately of the serpent who beguiled our Mother, of the sticks of Moses and Aaron which turned into snakes, and of Moses' bronze snake on a standard. We may think also of the two snakes entwined on the caduceus—a device which is used on the 'pastoral' staff of a bishop of the Eastern Church, and which, in the Aesculapian form, has been adopted as the badge of the medical profession. What, if any, is the connection between these variations on a theme, and with other examples which occur in other religions?

The subject is complex. And for two main reasons. The first complication is that in the Bible there is confusion concerning ordinary snakes and mythic 'dragons'—a confusion which is further confounded by the indiscriminate use of the word 'serpent' for both.

The second complication goes much deeper. It is concerned with the ambivalence of mythological symbols—the strange fact that the same symbol can stand for two completely opposite poles of experience. For example, the term 'seraphim' is used sometimes for burning-biting snake-demons of the desert (Num. 21.6; Isa. 14.29; 30.6), and sometimes for the angelic attendants of the Most High (Isa. 6.2). Or again, it would seem that in the caduceus one snake signifies poisoning and the other healing. In religious tradition the Serpent is at once the symbol of Satan and of Christ—just as Lucifer is really the 'light-bearer' fallen to earth standing in opposition to the 'light of the world' risen to heaven.

If we are to trace the significance of the Biblical serpent symbolism, we must rid our minds of later notions concerning 'the Devil': we must avoid the religious dualism of supposing that the Satan-figure of the Old Testament has anything of the character

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

of a 'second god'—a positive divinity of evil such as we find in Persian theology. In the Scriptures Satan is usually thought of as an agent of Jehovah, indeed as a 'son of God'—to some degree independent, yet ultimately encompassed within the purpose of God (e.g. in Job and Zechariah).

The Genesis narrative does not itself identify the Serpent with Satan—the identification is apparently first made by inference in the first century BC in the Alexandrian Greek Wisdom: 'By the envy of the Devil death entered into the world' (2.24). Even here, the identification is by no means certain, for the first actual death recorded in Genesis is the murder of Abel by Cain (4.8), and it is this that seems to be referred to in John: 'He (the Devil) was a murderer from the beginning' (8.44). St Paul's words, 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' (Rom. 16.20), seem to echo the obscure verse in Genesis which refers to the relationship between human beings and snakes (3.15).

The first unequivocal identification of the Dragon, the Serpent, Satan and the Devil is in the well-known passage in Revelation: 'the great Dragon was cast down, the old Serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world' (12.9). Here we have the assimilation of several diverse myths. The Dragon would appear to be connected with the chaos-monster of the deep—Tiamat-Leviathan-Rahab of Genesis 1, while the serpent refers primarily to the tempter of Genesis 3.

The appropriateness of the snake as a symbol of evil is obvious enough—snakes are a danger to men: they move mysteriously and rapidly, they have the power to fascinate, their bite is sudden and their poison is insidious and often fatal. In Luke, in response to the report of the Seventy that they had found the demons subject to them, Jesus says:

'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall in any wise hurt you.'<sup>1</sup>

(Incidentally, this association of serpents and scorpions is very interesting—they are both sudden and dangerous 'stingers' and are

<sup>1</sup> Luke 10.18 f.

### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

thus equivalent as the agents or symbols of evil and destruction: the Scorpio sign of the Babylonian-Greek Zodiac corresponds to the Serpent sign of the Egyptian Zodiac.)

In the false ending of Mark we find an echo of the saying about 'authority over serpents' in the assertion that believers will be able to 'take up serpents' (16.18), and in Acts we have an account of how Paul shook a snake from the wood off his arm into a fire (!), and, suffering no ill effect, was judged to be a god (28.3 ff).

In Numbers we have a very interesting account of how the Lord punished the distrustful Israelites in the desert when he 'sent fiery serpents (seraphim) among the people, and they bit the people and much people of Israel died' (21.6). And then, in answer to his prayer on their behalf, Moses received the command:

'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live.'<sup>1</sup>

Moses did as he was commanded, and his bronze-serpent-on-a-standard became, according to the tradition, an effective emblem of salvation from snake-bite. But there is clearly more to it than that, for in II Kings we read how this totem had somehow become an object of idolatrous worship, and how King Hezekiah:

'removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the *Asherah*: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and it was called *Nehushtan* (a piece of brass).'<sup>2</sup>

Once again we find the serpent associated with tree-symbols, and in a context which suggests the possibility that what is really involved is a fertility-cult connected with Astarte in which there was idolatrous worship and phallic images.

In the light of Hezekiah's destructive action it is, perhaps, a little surprising that in John we read an interpretation of Moses' life-giving serpent-on-a-standard as a type of the eternal-life-giving Son of man on the cross—as Moses' serpent cured snake-bite so the crucifixion delivered mankind from the dominion of the prince of this world, elsewhere called that old serpent:

<sup>1</sup> Num. 21.8.

<sup>2</sup> II Kings 18.4.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.’<sup>1</sup>

It is understandable that this particular imagery has never become a common or popular representation of Christ, though it is by no means unknown in earlier Christian art.

In Christian art the figure of Saint John is often to be identified by his attribute of a chalice from which a snake is emerging; this is a symbolic convention to illustrate the tradition that he was unharmed after drinking a poisoned cup—the poison being suggested by the venom of the snake.

That snakes should also be regarded as a symbol of healing is less easy to understand until we accept something of the ‘logic’ of primitive myth-making and the practice of sympathetic magic and the notion of homoeopathy. As a hair from the coat of the dog that has bitten one, so, perhaps a scale from the skin of a snake! And that is a reminder of an even more impressive fact about snakes, namely that they slough their skins and thus might appear to be immortal—to die and to be reborn: it is for this reason that the snake became a symbol of healing, new life and resurrection.

Further, there is a sexual significance in snakes, as the analysis of many dreams has disclosed. Many snakes are to some extent capable of erecting themselves, and their general appearance and movement is very suggestive of genital masculinity. Further, snakes are found naturally in association with trees, and trees are very frequently regarded as feminine symbols of fecundity. It is no accident, therefore, that it was by a snake that Eve was tempted, and that a fruit was the prelude to her own fruitfulness. In the Genesis myth the serpent is associated with both sexual awareness and with the possibility of immortality.

There are many ancient representations of a feminine figure in conjunction with a snake (or snakes)—notably those which have been found in Crete. Sometimes a woman (goddess or priestess) is depicted with the snake entwined around her, and there are also various vessels which are decorated with snakes. Other examples of this association are to be seen in images of one sort or another from Greece, Syria, Phoenicia and Babylon, and snakes

<sup>1</sup> John 3.14 f.



### *Archetypes of Male & Female*

are sometimes depicted alongside the Egyptian Isis and the Roman Ceres. In all these instances the primary significance of the snake is phallic: it is as though the Great Mother is accompanied by her fecundating male consort. There is more than an echo of this mode of experience in the Biblical account of Eve and the serpent in Eden (in medieval art the serpent is sometimes shown as an attribute of Eve), but some elements in the story have been inverted in the interests of masculine superiority so that the blame for human misfortune might be laid upon the woman. This is quite clear in Ecclesiasticus:

‘From a woman was the beginning of sin,  
And because of her we all die.’<sup>1</sup>

and the charge is repeated in I Timothy:

‘I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression.’<sup>2</sup>

There is perhaps a link here with the ‘dark side’ of the archetypal Feminine—the devouring and destroying aspect of the Mother Goddess. In contrast to the life-giving phallic significance of snakes, their death-dealing power is to be recognized in the snake-hair of the Gorgon. Again, from another related approach, the chaos-monster-sea-serpent is the devouring feminine fish-dragon, and her beastly mouth is the gate of Hell.

The connection between snakes and immortality is to be seen in the Greek notion that the life-soul which survives death is closely associated with the cerebro-spinal marrow: the snake-like form of the spine itself apparently gave rise to the belief that after death the life-soul would assume the form of a snake. There is probably a connection with the fact that a bone at the bottom of the spine is still called the ‘holy bone’ (*os sacrum*), and with this is associated a belief of both Jews and Moslems that, while the rest of the body decayed in the ground after burial, this bone survived and would function as a kind of ‘seed’ from which the resurrection-body would grow.

The serpent is indeed ‘more subtil than any beast of the field’.

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. 25.24.

<sup>2</sup> I Tim. 2.12-14.

# Archetypes of Suffering

## I. THE TWO BROTHERS

NOTHING is more characteristic of the opening of the Bible than an intense awareness of the human tragedy. This intensity is unrelieved by such ordinary human qualities as joy and humour. We begin with a myth of sexuality without delight, of man confronting woman without romance, and of both confronting God in shame. There is immediate confusion of desire with disobedience. The story of Adam and Eve is also the myth of maturation from childlike innocence to knowledge, but the innocence is ignorance and the knowledge is the knowledge of sin. We pass at once from the garden of guilt to the field of blood: from the man and the woman to the two brothers. We move from the theme of God's command and man's disobedience to the theme of man's sacrificial offering and God's acceptance or rejection of it. We proceed from the giving of life to the taking of life—first of an animal and then of a man. We turn from the image of two human beings made one by their love to the image of one human being made solitary by his hatred. We pass from horticulture to agriculture—from serpentine womanizing to animal husbandry. We leave the blood of marriage and birth for the blood of sacrifice and death. We contrast the spirit of life breathing into the damp clay with the blood of life soaking into the dry earth.

The origins of the narrative of the Two Brothers in Genesis is discussed at length in an essay entitled 'Cain and Abel' which is included in Professor S. H. Hooke's recent book *The Siege Perilous*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SCM Press, 1956.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

He points out that the tradition must be studied in isolation from its present artificial situation between the Paradise story and the genealogies which follow it: it has been editorially placed in this context by Hebrew theologians who were anxious to obliterate as far as possible the real significance of the story. The conflict between Cain and Abel is basically cultic. In the first place it reflects the contrast between the ritual activities of two communities—one pastoral and the other agricultural. But, secondly, there is also a deeper cultic significance which is concerned with ritual human sacrifice in the interests of the fertility of the earth—the ceremonial slaughter of a man so that his life-blood may fertilize the soil. Cain is therefore not a common murderer but a ‘priest’; his flight is also part of the ritual because he is ceremonially defiled, but, as a sacred fugitive, he is ‘marked’ (? tattooed) for his own protection.

The Biblical editors of the Exilic or post-Exilic period were disinclined to admit that human sacrifice had ever formed part of the ritual heritage of Israel, and they have therefore reorientated the tradition so that it appears to be the account of a murder which is to be linked with the disobedience of the fratricide’s parents. That the Hebrew editors did not simply discard the story is an indication of its powerful archetypal character and its great significance as a myth of human relationships within a family, and, indeed, of individual consciousness within a person.

It is easier to recognize the mythological character of the story of Cain and Abel than it is to analyse it or define it precisely. Fundamentally each one of us *is* ‘two brothers’ at war with one another. ‘The good that I would I do not, the evil that I would not, that I practise’—in these powerful words Paul expresses our Jekyll-and-Hyde mode of self-consciousness. Thus it is not surprising that the theme of two opposed brothers is frequent, not only in the Bible, but in the mythology of other traditions and faiths. In Genesis, in addition to Cain and Abel, we read of Isaac and Ishmael (16), Esau and Jacob (25), Perez and Zerah (38), and, correspondingly, of the two sisters Leah and Rachel (29). In ordinary family life there is often jealousy and hatred between two brothers, but just as frequently there is deep and abiding friendship, so that we must dig a little deeper to unearth the full

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

significance of the Cain and Abel symbolism, and we must take our spades to two fields—that of ancient mythology and that of modern psychology.

In one of the documents excavated at Ras Shamra in Syria there is an account of a struggle to the death of two Ugaritic gods, Baal and Mot. Baal is killed, but eventually he rises again and the struggle is repeated in the following year. In this guise Baal appears to represent the growing corn which is cut down at the harvest, but which comes to life again when the seed-corn is sown, whereas Mot (the name corresponds to the Hebrew word for Death) represents the ripe harvest-corn, and is thus the *alter ego* of Baal. The struggle is related in these words:

‘They shake each other like gmr-beasts;  
Mot is strong, Baal is strong.  
They bite like serpents;  
Mot is strong, Baal is strong.  
They kick like steeds;  
Mot is down, Baal is down.’<sup>1</sup>

In spite of many differences, it is impossible not to be reminded of the Genesis account of the weird nocturnal struggle of Jacob with God on the banks of the Jabbok (32.22-32). Whatever may have been the origin of this extraordinarily anthropomorphic legend, the significance of the wound in the ‘hollow of the thigh’ should not be overlooked. In antiquity the thigh-bone was commonly thought of as a place of importance in the life-giving generative process—the marrow being connected with ‘seed’: the Latin word *femur* has linguistic roots which might give it the meaning ‘that which engenders’, and it is significant that a still current symbol of death is the skull and crossed *thigh*-bones.

In another part of the Baal and Anat cycle of Ugarit is recounted the destruction of Mot by the Virgin-goddess, Anat(h) (this, incidentally, is the name given to the consort of Jehovah by the Jews at Elephantiné), and this is followed by the resurrection of Baal. The following extracts indicate that it is the love of the virgin-mother-earth which restores the corn-god Baal, while the treatment of Mot is a clear account of what happens to the harvested corn:

<sup>1</sup> 49, VI, 16.

*Archetypes of Suffering*

'She seizes Mot in ripping his garment,  
She grabs him in tearing his clothes.  
She lifts her voice and shouts,  
"Come, Mot, yield my brother!"  
And the god Mot replies,  
"What dost thou ask, O Virgin Anat?"'

The luminary of the god, Sun, glows,  
The heavens gleam on account of the god, Mot.  
A day, two days pass;  
From days to months.  
The maiden Anat meets him,  
As with the heart of a cow towards her calf,  
As with the heart of a ewe towards her lamb,  
So is the heart of Anat towards Baal.  
She seizes the god Mot,  
With a sword she cleaves him,  
With a pitchfork she winnows him,  
With fire she burns him,  
With millstones she grinds him,  
In the fields she plants him.  
So that the birds do not eat his flesh,  
Nor anyone destroy his portion.<sup>1</sup>

In these passages Baal and Mot are fairly clearly two aspects of the same thing—the annual death and rebirth of corn. One cannot help thinking of how this analogy is developed in the New Testament: as a symbol of resurrection by Paul—'that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die' (I Cor. 15.36), and as a symbol of immortality in John—'Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit' (12.24). But what a difference is here! God in the Bible is not a corn-god but a Creator directing the natural order—transcendent not immanent, for as Paul continues: 'that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind, but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own' (15.37 f).

In later Judaism the strict monotheism of earlier Hebrew religion was modified by the introduction of a considerable measure of religious dualism: Jehovah remained supreme, but he 'permitted' a cosmic conflict to go on between the spiritual hosts of

<sup>1</sup> 49, II, 10.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

wickedness under Satan and the spiritual hosts of goodness under the Archangel Michael, and it is implied that the disorder in human life, both social and personal, corresponds to the supernatural struggle between angels and demons. This mythological conflict is very close to the surface in the New Testament, and in a variety of forms appears as the wrestling of the Two Sons of God—Messiah and Lucifer, Jesus and Satan, Jesus and Judas (into whom Satan had entered), Christ and Anti-Christ, the Risen Lord and the Man of Sin, Michael and the Old Serpent. At all levels—personal, social and cosmic—the conflict is there: a conflict which is aptly symbolized in the familiar struggling of two brothers. The psychological insight of Jesus himself into this situation is to be seen in the Parable of the Two Sons (Matt. 21.28-31), and even more clearly in the Parable of the Two Brothers (Luke 15.11-32—usually called the Prodigal Son).

There is a peculiar poignancy attaching to fraternal conflict when the brothers are twins. For twins of either sort are mysterious and fascinating. Identical twins are, in a sense, one person with two bodies. Fraternal twins may be so disparate, and are regularly of opposite sex, that it may be doubted (sometimes not without reason) whether they have the same father. It is not surprising, therefore, that in some primitive cultures (where *ipso facto* the facts of reproduction are not understood) it has been held that one of a pair of twins is of divine or demonic paternity. This kind of belief finds no place in the Scriptures, but there was a strangely persistent underground tradition in the fringes of the Church that Thomas Didymus (=the Twin) was, in fact, a twin-brother of Jesus. The existence of this rumour may well underlie the elaborate accounts in John of two resurrection-appearances of Jesus, first to the ten disciples without Thomas, and then to the ten disciples with Thomas—as though the writer is going out of his way to leave no suspicion that there might have been a case of mistaken identity after the Crucifixion, and that some people who saw his twin-brother Judas Thomas thought that they had seen Jesus risen from the dead. It is not without significance that the Synoptic Gospels have no knowledge of this very striking resurrection tradition, and there is a curious silence concerning who was twin to Thomas.

The importance for the unconscious of the theme of the Two

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

Brothers, or the twins, or the Opposite Pair, is witnessed to in the variety of forms which it takes in our Western culture: e.g. in the Graeco-Roman mythology of the Dioscuri, of Castor and Polydeuces, and of Romulus and Remus; it appears notably in two signs of the Zodiac—*Gemini*, the Twins, and *Pisces*, the Two Fishes pointing in opposite directions; it appears in Mithraism in the two mysterious figures, Cautes and Cautopates, who stand on either side of the sun-god, Mithras, one with torch held up at dawn and the other with torch held down at dusk. We cannot help but be reminded of the two who hang on either side of Jesus—one repents and goes to Paradise and one reviles and goes to Gehenna. One is taken, the other is left. There is a terrible undercurrent of fatalism in this mystery of the Two Brothers. Why is Abel's sacrifice acceptable? Why is Cain's sacrifice refused? What is it that we don't quite recognize in this strange story?

In the New Testament, apart from Jesus himself, the most attractive figure is Peter. Why is this so? Simply because he is a rather more than life-size figure of Everyman: he is at once everything a Christian would like to be and everything a Christian hopes not to be. It is Peter who makes the greatest possible avowal of faith, 'Thou art Messiah', and it is Peter who makes the greatest possible betrayal, 'I know not this man of whom ye speak'. He is the rock that can crumble to sand, and yet be restored again. Peter is the great New Testament type of the strength and weakness of humanity, and it is this ambivalence of character which we recognize so easily, albeit unconsciously.

A sentence in Acts provides us with a word which links Peter with a current psychological interpretation of this polarity of human behaviour: we read how sick people were brought out into the streets when Peter went by so that 'at the least his shadow might overshadow some one of them' (5.15). Jung makes use of the analogy of a man and his shadow to describe the relationship between the normally conscious 'self' and this archetypal 'dark brother' who is there all the time, but seldom consciously experienced.

'Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. . . . If the repressed tendencies, the shadow as I call them, were decidedly evil, there would be no problem whatever. But the

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

shadow is merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward, not wholly bad. It contains inferior, childish or primitive qualities that would in a way vitalize and even embellish human existence, but "it is not done".<sup>1</sup>

How often in the police-courts is heard the plea, 'I don't know why I did it, something came over me'. It is in moments of emotional crisis that the shadow takes possession, and we say, very significantly, 'I was beside myself'. We are briefly aware of this atavistic monster, this sinister delinquent, this intimate poltergeist, this primitive humanoid entity within ourselves struggling for the mastery of our bodies—another 'self' who wants to do the things we forbid, whose very existence we hate to recognize—Caliban, a Frankenstein creature, a Dorian Gray. We perhaps see him in dreams, sometimes in grotesque horror and sometimes in the familiar guise of someone we dislike—and we often dislike other people because unconsciously we recognize in them the disgusting shadow of our own personal unconscious. But we all have this shadow-self, and it is as inescapable as the shadow we cast in the sunshine. We are extremely uncomfortable, and not without reason, in the presence of anyone who seems 'too good to be true': if we catch no glimpse at all of his shadow we suspect that it must be a very black one indeed, and we are not really surprised when he turns up in the *News of the World*. Some features of the shadow are personal to us, but, because we all have a shadow, many of its features are common to all: thus it is we can project and personalize the collective shadow as the Devil. And the Devil, we have been told, himself casts no shadow!

In the Bible story, God warns Cain about his shadow, which, he says, is lurking at the door (of his consciousness):

'If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door, and unto thee is its desire, but thou shouldest rule over it.'<sup>2</sup>

Cain failed to rule over it, 'something came over him', and he 'rose up against Abel his brother and slew him'. Beside his brother, paradoxically he was beside himself. Once again, Genesis provides us with a concrete symbol: the shadow and the self in Cain and Abel—the two brothers who wrestle together within us every one.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology and Religion*, Yale, 1938, pp. 93-5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 4-7.



### *Archetypes of Suffering*

And again, in Genesis, we are reminded of the impossibility of concealing the shadow-self: even dim-eyed Isaac could say, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.'

Psychological insight of this kind is also recognizable in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, parts of which underlie the Genesis accounts of the Creation and the Flood. This Akkadian narrative poem is the earliest integrated literary example of the archetypal Quest—man's experience of being a wanderer in a strange Kafka-country seeking a fulfilment, concerning the nature of which he is uncertain, and even of the existence of which he is not quite sure. As an adolescent he leaves the security of mother and home and is initiated into the man's world—a world which then appears to be a self-conscious journey through life to the goal of death. If he emerges with strong feelings of guilt his journey may well seem to be the wandering of Cain through a waste land—a fruitless errand which can only end in a desperate 'waiting for Godot'. If he emerges with faith he will seek the Holy Grail, fulfil his Herculean tasks, and have confidence in a continued Pilgrim's Progress beyond the grave. As the Psalmist sings:

'Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are thy ways.

Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well, and the pools are filled with water.'<sup>1</sup>

In the quest for eternal life the wandering hero is in conflict with horrors by the way and panics from within—these are often symbolized by beasts and monsters (as in Ps. 91). In the *Gilgamesh Epic* the hero is accompanied in the first part of his quest by a half-human, half-animal other-self, Enkidu. As G. R. Levy writes:

'He is the first hero whose divine part urges him to defy the limitations of mortality, and in vain. Associations derived from a source far older than Sumerian theology, urge him also to take an animal-man as his companion, without whose aid he could not have rid the land of monsters.'<sup>2</sup>

The excessive divine energy of *Gilgamesh* disturbs the people of Uruk and leads Anu, Lord of heaven and of Erech, to call upon the mother-goddess Aruru,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 84.5 f, *BCP* version.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sword and the Rock*, Faber and Faber, 1953, p. 122.

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

‘Who brought this furious wild-ox into being:

‘Now create his likeness; for the impetuosity of his heart pro-  
vide an equal,  
Let them strive together and let Uruk have rest.’ ’

And Miss Levy continues:

‘Aruru received in her heart the imagination of Anu, and shaping a lump of clay in that image, she created Enkidu, the primitive man, whose body was covered with fur, and his head adorned with long tresses like a woman’s.’<sup>1</sup>

The description of Enkidu sounds very much like a modern anthropologist’s description of some pre-human ancestor of man, and it may well be that there are genuine recollections of near-human survivors enshrined in these ancient verses. To continue the tale, Enkidu is enthralled by the charms of a courtesan; she trains him in the ways of mankind, and he is brought to Gilgamesh: they wrestle furiously and in his moment of victory Gilgamesh is magnanimous; a kind of mutual recognition occurs and they become brothers and inseparable companions in the struggle against demonic monsters on the journey they undertake. After terrifying conflicts and visions, their success engenders *hubris* and the gods take vengeance upon their prideful presumption by decreeing that Enkidu should die. After a mysterious sickness Enkidu dies on the twelfth night, and, with infinite pathos, and with a gradual realization of the fact of death, Gilgamesh mourns him thus:

‘‘Enkidu

My friend, my younger brother, who with me in the foothills  
Hunted the wild ass, and panther in the plains;

Who with me accomplished all things, who climbed the moun-  
tains,

Seized and brought down the Bull of Heaven,

Who overthrew Humbaba, dwelling in the forest of cedars,

Now, what sleep has taken hold of you?

You have grown dark, and cannot hear me.’’

He did not raise his eyes.

(Gilgamesh) touched his heart; it was not beating.

Then he covered his friend like a bride,

He lifted his voice like a lion,

Like a lioness chased from her whelps.

<sup>1</sup> *The Sword and the Rock*, Faber and Faber, p. 124.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

Again and again he turned to his friend,  
Tearing out his hair and flinging the clusters aside,  
Stripping off his beautiful garments.<sup>1</sup>

Gilgamesh now has to go on alone in his search for the secret of eternal life, and in so doing is fortified by the experience of conflicts in which he had received the help of Enkidu—his mortal other-self. Eventually he finds his ancestor, Ut-Napishtim, whom the gods had saved from the Flood. Ut-Napishtim tells him that the secret of Life lies in a plant which grows on the sea-bed (an extraordinary coincidence with the evolutionary view of the origin of plant life, and hence of animal life too); Gilgamesh obtains this plant but a serpent steals it from him, sloughing its skin as it goes on to its 'new' life.

Obviously, many of the elements of Biblical mytho-psychology are present in this Epic, but in the Bible they are transmuted and worked into a strictly monotheistic pattern which is dominated by the overwhelming person of the single masculine Creator. In spite of a thoroughgoing reorientation of the features of the story which are used, there is a full Scriptural recognition of man's ambiguous relation with the animal creation, and also of his self-consciousness experienced, as it is, as two 'selves' in conflict with one another.

Human perceptions tend to express themselves in terms of opposite pairs: already we have considered Earth and Heaven, Water and Land, Light and Darkness, Day and Night, Male and Female. This phenomenon is not unconnected with the general bilateral symmetry of human anatomy: we have a right side and a left side, a front and a back, and we have many limbs and organs which occur as right-left pairs (arms, legs, eyes, ears, breasts, kidneys, gonads, etc.)—but there is, at the same time, an awareness of unity which is exemplified in the single head and heart and privy member. We naturally extend this two-in-one experience to our interpretation of time and space: past and future, horizontal and vertical, east and west, north and south. In the Greek scientific tradition a double binary interpretation prevailed: it was held that there are four elements consisting of two pairs of opposites—earth and air, fire and water, and also that human temperament and health depended on the relative proportions of four humours—yellow bile

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133-4.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

(choleric) and black bile (melancholic), blood (sanguine) and phlegm (phlegmatic). Modern science has revealed that the carbon atom—essential to all organic substances—has a valency of four; and also, that in the realm of biology, the elements of heredity—genes and chromosomes—also occur in pairs.

In his recent book,<sup>1</sup> Dr William Sargant surveys the results of the extensive experiments on dogs of the Russian physiologist, Pavlov; he draws particular attention to the fact that Pavlov found that in their responses to experimental interference of all kinds the dogs showed a variety of reaction, and that this variety could best be classified under four headings which correspond closely to the four 'temperaments' of Hippocrates. Dr Sargant writes:

'The first of these four corresponded with Hippocrates's "choleric" type, which Pavlov named the "strong excitatory". The second corresponded with Hippocrates's "sanguine temperament"; Pavlov named it "lively", the dogs of this type being of a more balanced temperament. The normal response to imposed stresses or conflict situations by both these types was increased excitement and more aggressive behaviour. But whereas the "choleric", or "strong excitatory", dog would often turn so wild as to be completely out of hand, the "sanguine" or "lively" dog's reactions to identical stresses were purposeful and controlled.

'In the other two main temperamental types of dog imposed stresses and conflict situations were met with more passivity, or "inhibition", rather than aggressive responses. The more stable of these two inhibitory temperaments was described by Pavlov as the "calm imperturbable type, or phlegmatic type of Hippocrates". The remaining temperament identified by Pavlov corresponded with Hippocrates's "melancholic" classification. Pavlov named it the "weak inhibitory" type. He found that a dog of this type shows a constitutional tendency to meet anxieties and conflicts by passivity and avoidance of tension. Any strong experimental stress imposed on its nervous system reduces it to a state of brain inhibition and "fear paralysis".<sup>2</sup>

These experimental results are highly suggestive that human temperaments may properly be thought of in this way, and, though men are not dogs, it may well be that the ancient classification will prove to be a valuable hypothesis for the fruitful study of human behaviour.

<sup>1</sup> *Battle for the Mind*, Heinemann.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4 f.

## *Archetypes of Suffering*

Man's introspective awareness of two pairs of opposites constituting a unity was reinforced by his external observation of the sun and moon associated with light and darkness to make a complete day. The sun by day and the moon by night make up a unity of opposites, and often serve as symbols of male and female. This strange equality in opposition of sun and moon, so alien to our way of thinking of them as star and satellite of a planet, was facilitated by the extraordinary coincidence that their apparent size from the earth is identical. Incidentally, we may note the second coincidence that the relative rotations of the moon around the earth and on its own axis are such that from the earth the appearance of the moon is unchanging apart from its waxing and waning—we never see the other side of the moon. These fortuitous relationships in the sizes, distances and motions of sun, moon and earth underly a number of the mythological notions concerning them. Observation of the phases of the moon—from full circle to nothing and back again to full circle—was most easily thought of in terms of four stages of approximately seven days' duration. It is for reasons such as this, which go far back into the evolution of human consciousness, that a peculiar status is often attributed to the numbers four and seven. (Unfortunately, neither the number of days in a month nor the number of days in a year is an exact number, still less is the number of months in a year—hence the great difficulty the ancients had in constructing a calendar and the honour which was paid to those who were able to arrive at a scheme which worked reasonably well.) Nevertheless, we feel that it is appropriate to divide the year into four seasons, and not two, three or five; we can understand why it was thought to be of divine intention that there should be seven days of creation and four gospels. Similar considerations apply in the case of the four rivers of Eden, the four letters in the divine name JHVH, the four beasts from the sea, the four creatures of the Apocalypse and the four horsemen, the four Archangels (or the seven).

And what is the basic symbol by which the fourness-in-unity can be most appropriately and simply represented but a cross in a circle? A hot cross bun is a perfect example. It is not surprising that this 'mandala' is both ancient and widespread: it frequently makes a spontaneous appearance in dreams and in attempts to

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

draw and paint mental experiences, and it is reasonable to suppose that this 'pattern' exists generally in the collective unconscious. When Jesus was crucified the fourfold cross already had a host of religious associations, both conscious and unconscious: the fact that historically Jesus hung on a three-armed T-shaped 'tree' did not prevent Christian artists from using the four-armed cross as the basis of a great deal of Christian symbolism.

It is interesting to notice that Jung, having drawn attention to the importance of the 'mandala' pattern, himself takes two crossed pairs of opposites as the basis of his central hypothesis concerning psychological types: he develops his theory from the belief that there are two pairs of functional opposites (thought and feeling, sensation and intuition), and that character, temperament, behaviour, etc., can be understood in terms of the distribution of emphasis of these functions in the individual, together with the effect of a further pair of opposites in the orientation of the psyche—introverted or extraverted.

We have strayed somewhat from the original conflict of the two brothers—that which bears 'the primal eldest curse upon it', and we must now return to the occasion of it.

### 2. SACRIFICE

We now have to look from another angle at the story of Abel and Cain—the first Biblical shepherd with his acceptable sacrifice of a lamb and the first-born of Adam and Eve who murders his brother. The story as it stands takes for granted the custom of sacrifice, as is indeed the case throughout the Bible. The reference in Revelation to 'the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the cosmos' suggests that bloody sacrifice is an inescapable element in the very pattern of existence. The Abel and Cain narrative does not disclose why the animal sacrifice was acceptable and why the vegetable offering was not, nor are we told how God indicated this fact (cp. Judg. 6.21). The subsequent behaviour of Cain is not really an adequate explanation of the rejection of his offering: the interest of the story is cultic rather than ethical, and in any case we are not informed concerning the moral character of Abel. Obviously there are many and various problems, but all we can concern ourselves with are certain symbolic elements in the story

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

and others which are suggested by it, e.g. the shepherd-butcher who is himself slain, the blood which soaks into the earth, and the wanderer who is a mysteriously 'marked man'.

Abel, the good shepherd who makes an acceptable sacrifice, and who is then put to death, clearly can be thought of as a *type* of the Shepherd-Priest who is also the Lamb of God: in the same way Cain can be thought of as pre-figuring Judas Iscariot. Or again—Abel is the sacrificial atonement-goat offered as a sin-offering to Jehovah, while Cain is the scape-goat driven to wander in the desert as an offering to Azazel or Satan. Or, in the developed typology of the Church, Cain pre-figures the Israel of the Old Covenant who put Christ to death, while Abel signifies the New Israel with his acceptable sacrifice.

The theme of acceptable animal sacrifice itself reminds us of another of the fascinating Genesis stories: equal to the narrative of Adam and Eve in significance and importance stands the account of the Binding of Isaac by Abraham (22). As the one deals with the Man-Woman relationship, so the other is concerned with the Parent-Child relationship. And not only this, for in the myth of Abraham and Isaac we also have the classic occasion for the replacement of the Son by the Lamb, and hence of the restoration of the Son. Needless to say, this extraordinary and most moving story has been made the basis of a wealth of typological interpretation of the Son of God who, in obedience to his Father's will, died as the Lamb of God, and yet was victorious over death. This typological identification is explicit in Hebrews:

'By faith, Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a parable receive him back.'<sup>1</sup>

And the details of the two sacrificial journeys show some striking typological parallels, e.g. Mount Moriah and Golgotha; Isaac bearing wood and Jesus carrying the cross; Isaac's hands and feet bound, Christ's hands and feet pierced; the knife and the spear; two young men and a donkey common to both narratives; the young men

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 11.17-19.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

who remain behind and the disciples in Gethsemane; the ram and the passover lamb; the thicket and the crown of thorns. There is no doubt that in the New Testament, and hence in Christian doctrine and worship, the death of Christ is understood as being sacrificial, and that traditionally the death is described and interpreted in terms which really belong to the ritual slaughter of animals in the Temple at Jerusalem.

These facts give rise to many contemporary Christian problems for the simple reason that animal sacrifice lies completely outside the experience of modern Western man. Whereas Jesus, the disciples, the first-century Christians, including the New Testament writers—Jews and Gentiles alike—were all familiar with animal sacrifice and had participated in the rites, comparatively few of us twentieth-century westerners have ever seen a large animal killed—still less have we assisted at the religious slaughter of beast or bird. When Jesus ‘cleansed’ the Temple he proleptically drove out the sacrificial animals from the Christian Church: by recording this incident at the beginning of the gospel it would seem that the readers of John are intended to receive this fact that animal sacrifice is replaced by a spiritual offering and eucharistic worship.

Although the notion of ‘sacrifice’ has really been completely transformed and spiritualized in Christian thought, the continued use of the terminology of animal-sacrifice with reference to the death of Christ, especially in eucharistic worship, creates difficulties which many have tried to resolve. Some of these difficulties are connected with blood and its symbolic power: in most of the animal sacrifices an essential feature was the shedding of blood—the life of the creature was ‘taken’ by cutting important blood vessels with a knife, and by a natural association of ideas in this context the ‘blood’ was the ‘life’. In this way the offering of blood is really the offering of life, and the ceremonial use of the blood—dashing it on the altar, sprinkling it on the congregation, allowing it to soak into the earth—testifies to its accepted significance. Further, whatever may have happened in the sacrificial rites of other peoples, amongst the Hebrews the blood was never drunk—on the contrary, there was the strictest of tabus upon it—all the blood, i.e. the life, must be given to Jehovah, and only the blood-drained flesh might be eaten. There are two important difficulties



### *Archetypes of Suffering*

which arise immediately concerning the interpretation of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice: first, the mode of his death, and secondly, the eucharistic communion of his body and blood. The fact of the matter is that death by crucifixion does not occur as the result of the shedding of blood: for this sort of reason some commentators suggest that the spear-thrust which produced water and blood from the side of Christ is a highly symbolic embellishment of the historical record in the interests of typology and sacramental doctrine (John 19.34; cp. Ps. 22.14). Certainly the blood-of-Jesus symbolism plays a big part in traditional Christian thought and in some hymns seems to descend to a pathological level, e.g.:

'Come let us stand beneath the Cross;  
So may the Blood from out His Side  
Fall gently on us drop by drop;  
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.'<sup>1</sup>

The second difficulty arises in connection with the apparent identification of the 'life-blood' with red wine and the sacramental drinking of this 'wine-blood' of the new covenant. Nothing could be more abhorrent to Jews than the drinking of blood, and the imagery which we find in the New Testament corresponds to an extraordinary revolution of thought: it is not surprising that, according to John, when many of the disciples heard teaching in these terms they said: 'This is a hard saying; who can hear it?' (6.60). The degree of spiritualization is so great that the phrases, if taken literally, can only give rise to feelings of revulsion: the starkness of the metaphor still gives offence to sensitive people and is so great a hindrance to the uninstructed that some devout Christians wonder whether an alternative could not be found to the completely alien and remote imagery and vocabulary of blood sacrifice in connection with the death of Jesus and with eucharistic worship.

The only references in the Old Testament to drinking the blood of sacrifices occur in some striking apocalyptic passages where there is a curious inversion of the customary imagery. Towards the end of the seventh century BC Zephaniah interprets an attack upon Palestine by Scythians from the north as a sign of the near approach

<sup>1</sup> *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, No. 114.

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

of the Day of the Lord: he declares that the invaders are the guests of Jehovah at the sacrifice which he has prepared—Israel being the victim!

‘For the day of the Lord is at hand;  
For the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice,  
He hath sanctified his guests.’<sup>1</sup>

This imagery is taken up in an extraordinary eschatological passage in Ezekiel which is highly mythological in content. Jehovah is again the celebrant and he now makes a sacrifice for predatory beasts and for birds of prey, and the victims this time are the Gentile enemies of Israel. Of particular interest in this grim passage is the description of the drinking of blood:

‘Speak unto the birds of every sort,  
And to every beast of the field,  
Assemble yourselves, and come;  
Gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice  
That I do sacrifice for you,  
Even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel,  
That ye may eat flesh and drink blood.  
Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty,  
And drink the blood of the princes of the earth,  
Of rams, of lambs and of goats,  
Of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.  
And ye shall eat fat till ye be full,  
And drink blood till ye be drunken,  
Of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.’<sup>2</sup>

In Revelation the same imagery appears again at what is described as ‘the great supper of God’, and this seems to be another name for ‘the marriage supper of the Lamb’ (19.9,17).

The transition from Sacrifice to Banquet is to be seen in an apocalyptic passage in the latest section (possibly third century BC) of Isaiah (24-27). The sacrifice of Jehovah has become a great feast:

‘And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

<sup>1</sup> Zeph. 1.7.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. 39.17-19.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people shall he take away from off all the earth.<sup>1</sup>

This is an eschatological banquet which in later apocalyptic thought appears as the Banquet of the Messiah which signalizes the inauguration of the 'age to come'. This imagery of the Messianic Banquet provides a pattern which underlies many of the references to feasts in the parables of Jesus, and is, of course, not without significance in relation to the Last Supper and to eucharistic worship. The Jews were thoroughly familiar with the practice of sacramentally eating the flesh of some of their sacrifices, but the idea that the drinking of the Passover-wine should in some sense signify the drinking of the blood of the New Covenant must have come as a great shock originally; the additional notion that the wine might also signify the blood of the sacrificed Messiah must have caused a 'sensation' indeed when it was first enunciated. The extraordinary daring of Jesus in completely revolutionizing the concept of sacrifice is a matter for wonder still: that the great majority of Jews rejected such teaching is not surprising. The difficulty is still with us, though perhaps now in not quite so acute a form.

The problem can be seen, for instance, in the explicit prayer that we may be granted 'so to eat the Flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us'. The echoes of Johannine thought in this Prayer of Humble Access have a deep and unspeakable significance for communicants of a devout and mystical temperament, but for others they constitute a 'hard saying' indeed. But such imagery, though it presents difficulties for the conscious mind and eludes logical consideration, yet possesses a mysterious power of awakening a response in the unconscious mental processes of the most prosaic of churchgoers. It seems as though we have 'inherited' from our remote ancestors certain sacrificial patterns of unconscious thought coupled with corresponding emotional attitudes which can be stirred by the sacrificial words and actions of the spiritual offering and communion of the Eucharist.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 25.6-8.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

One of the main patterns in the Bible as a whole is the interwoven pastoral and priestly imagery of sheep, shepherd and holy butcher. The domestication of some animals, and their slaughter for food, is, of course, one of the basic achievements of man and is characteristic of his *human-ness*: no other creatures deliberately enclose their fellow-creatures, selectively breed them, and then fatten them up in order to kill and eat them. And there seems to be a continuous embarrassment about the taking of animal life to satisfy human hunger. Many peoples throughout the world are vegetarian; some great faiths insist upon abstinence from flesh-eating, and even Mithras always turns his head away as he strikes the victorious blow which kills the bull—the animal-king whose blood fertilizes the earth. We modern carnivores hide our slaughterhouses in the back streets, we hide their nature behind the foreign word—*abattoir*, and we try to think as little as possible of what goes on there. We are embarrassed by our power over animals and by the fact that all too often the man-animal relationship is summed up in the verse ‘The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth’ (Gen. 9.2). We wish it were not so—we support the societies which protect animals from cruelty, we make fools of animals in our homes and in our circuses, though a few still make a sport of their destruction, and we allow our cities to be befouled because we cannot persuade starlings to depart unless we harm or destroy them. The Hebrews of Biblical times surrounded the slaughter of animals with religious ritual founded upon the view that the blood of the animal is its ‘life’ and is therefore tabu: before the flesh could be eaten the blood must drain away and by some ceremonial be returned to the God who gave the life, e.g. by sprinkling or by allowing it to soak into the ground.<sup>1</sup> (The practice of modern orthodox Jews is apparently of a similar nature.) According to the Genesis traditions antediluvian mankind was vegetarian (1.29), but, after the Flood the saved remnant was permitted to eat animals provided the blood was avoided: ‘The flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat’ (9.4). This sequence, no doubt, corresponds in general to the pre-history of mankind—our remote ancestors were herbivorous before they became carnivorous as well: the larger apes very

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 17.10-13.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

seldom eat flesh in their natural state, but in captivity they may develop a taste for it and also acquire an intestinal flora and fauna suitable for its digestion. Furthermore, the primitive recognition that blood is numinous and mysteriously to be identified with life itself is so ingrained in the unconscious that most people are irrationally uneasy when they see blood shed and accustom themselves only gradually to surgery and slaughter.

An important aspect of the Hebrew pastoral imagery is that the people regarded themselves as a flock of sheep and goats and thought of their leaders as shepherds under the jurisdiction of God—the Great Shepherd (e.g. Ezek. 34). The archetypal Lord-is-my-Shepherd is projected, as it were, upon the image of Israel's ideal king, David, who is called from his sheep to be the anointed shepherd-king; it is then further developed in connection with the figure of the Messiah:

'For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the day of clouds and thick darkness. . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David prince among them. . . . And ye my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.'<sup>1</sup>

For modern city-dwellers this kind of imagery is bound to be only 'literary' at the conscious level, for we very seldom see a living sheep and think little of it when we do: nevertheless, the popularity of Psalm 23 and the hymns based upon it (e.g. 'The King of Love my Shepherd is') is an indication that below the level of consciousness there are sleeping images which can be awakened without much difficulty. When, however, we realize that for ancient Israel this pastoral imagery was no mere figure of speech but a vital part of their daily experience, we are brought face to face with a basic fact which we easily overlook, namely, that when they sacrificed lambs and kids, they were, in a sense, making substitute *human* sacrifices—they, the 'sheep' offered lambs, and thus the animal 'stood for' a human sacrifice or self-sacrifice. The readiness

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 34.11 f, 23 f, 31.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

of Abraham to knife his son Isaac and burn his carcass reinforces this view: the providential appearance of the ram signifies that Jehovah finds this substitute for human sacrifice acceptable, and indeed provides it. In the Christian interpretation of the death of Christ as sacrificial, this imagery is re-inverted—the Son is substituted (as it were) for the animal, and, in a sense, God provides his own Son as an offering which takes the place of both the Pass-over Lamb and the Atonement sacrifice.

Before we go on to discuss in more detail the New Testament presentation of Christ in this pastoral-sacrificial imagery—as at once Good Shepherd and Sacrificial Lamb, simultaneously the High Priest and the Victim—a brief consideration of the general characteristics of sacrifice would seem desirable.

In all forms of Hebrew sacrifice the essential elements are giving and receiving through the agency of death, i.e. by the taking and giving of life. This corresponds to a fundamental pair of opposites in human attitudes—renouncing and grasping. Closely associated with sacrifice is the notion of a 'covenant' or binding agreement between the two parties concerned: a sacrificial covenant-meal may take place between two men or two peoples (e.g. Gen. 26.28-30; 31.44-54), or the sacrificial relationship can be established between a people and their God (e.g. Ex. 24.3-8). The latter has some similarity to the terms of agreement which a conqueror may impose upon a subject people—provided they fulfil the obligations he lays upon them, he, for his part, will protect them and preserve any agreed privileges. In the people-God sacrificial-covenant relationship it is common to find, sooner or later, a priest (or priesthood) which performs the sacrificial rite of offering on behalf of the people, and often the people (or their representatives) identify themselves with the sacrifice by some symbolic action such as laying their hands upon it; the priest also communicates the divine benefit on behalf of God, and has usually been ceremonially commissioned for this function by anointing with oil or laying on of hands. The purpose of the sacrifice is concerned with the relationship between the two parties to the covenant—either to establish it, or to maintain it, or to restore it. A sacrifice can thus initiate a new relationship (as in the case of Noah), and a new kind of sacrifice marks a new kind of relationship (as in the case of Christ and the New

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

Covenant, e.g. 'Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell', Eph. 5.2). The repetition of the sacrificial rite serves to bring into the 'remembrance' of both parties the relationship which exists—the eternal covenant is actualized in the temporal action and the offerers are 'reminded' of the obligations and God's promises are 'recalled'. The maintenance of the relationship is all-important, whether it be achieved by regular sacrifices (daily, weekly, monthly or annual), or whether the intention of particular types of sacrifice may be propitiatory or expiatory, or just according to rule. The sacrifice may be wholly given, as in a burnt offering which is completely etherealized to make a 'sweet savour' (e.g. Ex. 29.38-42, daily morning and evening sacrifice), or only parts of the animal (but always including the blood) may be completely given, the remainder being eaten as a communion both 'horizontally' between the offerers themselves and 'vertically' between the offerers corporately and God, with the effect of a divine participation and indwelling (Ex. 12, Passover). Sacrifice is normally corporate, but may on occasion be individual. A further type of sacrifice does not directly involve slaughter but rather the 'sending away' (to death) of the victim with a burden of guilt or uncleanness (Lev. 14.7, Leprosy; 16.21 ff, Atonement and Scapegoat). Cattle were used occasionally in special Hebrew sacrifices and doves and pigeons were prescribed for some offerings, but the commonest victim was the lamb or kid. Frequently the blood was ritually splashed or sprinkled on the altar or other sacred objects and upon the congregation (Ex. 24.6-8; Lev. 16.14). In addition to animal sacrifices there were, of course, offerings of harvest produce (especially corn and barley), and of food and drink (especially bread and wine) (Lev. 23.9-21, Pentecost).

(Contrary to the practice of many peoples, the Hebrews do not appear to have used the sacrifices for divinatory purposes, i.e. the priests did not examine the shape and size of the liver or other internal organs in order to base predictions of the future or character-readings on supposed information of this kind: every sort of sooth-saying and prognostication was sternly denounced by the prophets, it being held that God made his will known in the events of nature and history without recourse to visceral phenomena.)

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Such a brief survey of sacrificial practice as it is recorded in the Old Testament immediately discloses how most of the beliefs connected with sacrifice are in one way or another associated in the New Testament with the death of Christ, and in the Church with eucharistic worship. To this sacrificial imagery of giving life and receiving life are added further apocalyptic images relating to the Messiah (the ram) and to the kingdom of God (the Banquet), and thus the complex pattern is worked out. We shall return to this pattern, but before we do so we must face the 'previous question': How did the practice of animal sacrifice ever get established at all?

#### 3. FATHER AND SON

The heart of the matter of sacrifice lies in the parent-child relationship, and especially in the need to achieve a reconciliation between the conflicting emotional interests of father and son. The nature of this conflict has, of course, been studied at length by Freud and others and is interpreted by this school largely in terms of the myth of Oedipus, but a recent work by Erich Wellisch entitled *Oedipus and Isaac* suggests that the Biblical psychology of the Hebrews provides a better way than that of Greek mythology for understanding how the conflict may be resolved—the providential provision of a sacrificial animal enables Abraham and Isaac to resolve the tension of love and hatred which exists between them and so worship together, whereas in the humanistic Greek myth the conflicts remain unresolved and the result is tragic for everyone who is involved in the Oedipus situation.

From this point of view, the 'Binding of Isaac' is a profoundly important myth of the parent-child relationship, and hence of all relationships, for, as Dr Wellisch writes: 'All other human relationships are modifications or extensions of the basic experience within the family.' If it is true that the evolution of human consciousness is approximately recapitulated in the mental and emotional development to maturity of the individual, then it would follow that, to some extent, we experience individually the pre-historical and historical sequence of filio-parental relationships in our own actual relationships with our parents and with our children, and that in our inherited patterns of mental activity (both conscious



### *Archetypes of Suffering*

and unconscious) there is a correspondence between ancient myths and current experience.

It is well recognized that in the parent-child relationship there is bound to be a conflict of emotion which, if it is not more or less satisfactorily resolved, leads to neurosis, perversion or crime. To a father his son is at once an object of tender love and a challenger and potential usurper: to the son his father is not only an ideal person to be imitated and loved, but he is also a rival for the love and affection of his mother. A tension exists between love and hate: in extreme cases infanticide or patricide results if the former emotional attitude does not overcome the latter, and all too often the resolution of the conflict is far from complete and on both sides feelings of estrangement and guilt may be set up. Mythology and primitive practice (both ancient and recent) alike bear witness to the virtually universal custom of infanticide, and in the Bible there is evidence of this barbarous practice amongst both the Hebrews and their neighbours. For instance, in a battle against Israel the sheepmaster-king Mesha of Moab lacked success and in order to win the favour of the god Chemosh, 'he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall'—the sacrifice was effective, for 'there was great wrath against Israel: and they departed from him and returned to their own land' (II Kings 3.27).

Again, in Deuteronomy there is a warning that Israel must not worship as do the Canaanites 'for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods' (12.31), but Jeremiah bears witness that this cult was practised by some in Israel: 'the children of Judah have done that which is evil in my sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name to defile it. And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind' (7.30-31). Ezekiel too has occasion to denounce the practice of ritual infanticide in honour of Moloch: 'thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured . . . thou hast slain my children and delivered them up, in causing them to pass through the fire unto them' (16.20-21). Moreover, it is thought

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

by some that the narrative of Jephthah who killed his daughter in fulfilment of his oath (Judg. 11.29-40) contains elements which suggest that underlying the apparently historical account there is a cultic myth connected with the sacrifice of a virgin. Again, it is a curious fact that the account of the institution of the Passover (Ex. 12) with details of the ritual slaughter of a lamb is deliberately placed between the threat that all the firstborn of Egypt should be killed (Ex. 11.4-6) and the account of the fulfilment of this threat (Ex. 12.29).

Evidence of this kind suggests that the ritual sacrifice of children is a secondary rationalization of a more primitive urge. It seems probable that when the sacrifice of a child is justified as the offering to a god of a man's most valuable possession it is really an attempt to make a religious virtue of a human vice. The human vice is fundamentally that of the selfish fear of being supplanted and a failure to accept the fact that (in a sense) when the son begins to live the father begins to die. Only when love for the new life triumphs over jealous fear can the experience of guilt be overcome. In the primeval state it seems not unlikely that fathers themselves strangled or knifed their offspring and perhaps ate the flesh to acquire for themselves the new life and vigour, but as time went on and as moral consciousness developed, so the means of death was transferred to impersonal agencies such as fire, water, wild animals or exposure. There are a number of legends which recount how a hero survived exposure because a slight chance of survival was provided, and here we glimpse a fundamental change of heart in the secret hope of the parents that the child should live.

Eventually the conviction grew that the cultic immolation of children, so far from pleasing God, was an offence, and Micah in the Old Testament challenges the practice in unforgettable words:

‘Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’<sup>1</sup>

At this stage comes the substitution of an animal for the child. Amongst pastoral peoples the substitute was usually a young male from among the sheep or the goats—a lamb (or a kid) vicariously sacrificed for a son. (The fact that we sometimes speak of our

<sup>1</sup> Mic. 6.7.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

children as 'kids' suggests horrible possibilities!) The transition to this stage is epitomized in the story of the Binding of Isaac and the divine provision of the ram. This is the prevailing situation throughout the Old Testament in the relationship between the chosen flock, Israel, and Jehovah, the Father-Shepherd—this relationship being maintained by the regular sacrifice of lambs.

But even this enormous advance upon the barbarity of child-sacrifice did not go unchallenged. There are a number of prophetic passages which violently denounce sacrifices, and others which reflect a striving for a new covenant-relationship based upon inward spiritual awareness rather than upon outward blood-shedding rites. It is difficult to be sure in such passages whether the prophet is denouncing sacrifices as such and *in toto*, or whether he is merely fulminating against the separation of cultus and ethics, i.e. the assumption that correct liturgical practice is an effective substitute for works of charity.

‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.’<sup>1</sup>

Such utterances undoubtedly paved the way for the vision of a ‘new covenant’ in which the bonds would not be physical:

‘Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 1.11-17; cp. Jer. 6.20.

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.<sup>1</sup>

In this context we should understand the strangely paradoxical metaphor 'Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah' (Jer. 4.4)—a phrase echoed by Stephen in his attack upon the Temple (Acts 7.51) to express his belief that the new covenant had been established through Christ.

At this point we may notice the essentially sacrificial character of circumcision, and also the profound significance of the site at which this ritual surgery is performed. Returning to Genesis, we find what purports to be an account of the origin of this initiation into the covenanted people of Abraham and of God (17). In the course of fulfilling the divine command Abraham circumcised the thirteen-year-old Ishmael (his son by his wife's personal maid, Hagar), and, subsequently, he circumcised Isaac (his wife's child) when he was eight days old (21.4). Circumcision may thus be seen as expressing an aspect of the father-son relationship, and also as a social action of initiation into a select community. The father's 'attack' upon his young son is thus reduced to a ceremonial slicing in which blood is shed but no harm is done. (Incidentally, this widespread practice is both hygienic and beneficial, but it would be a mistake to suppose that this is the main reason for the custom among so many peoples.) By one stroke the father's potential hatred of the son is assuaged, and by the same stroke the father's love is fulfilled as his son is received into the beloved community. The 'assault' is significantly made upon the protective skin of the male generative organ, and not upon some other fleshly integument: the very seat of life is ritually approached and sacrificially offered. By removing the prepuce, the father (or his priestly surrogate) removes the emblem of mutual hostility between the two generations and also establishes his love for all his descendants. Here we have, in the characteristically masculine terms of Hebrew theology, another aspect of the blood of the covenant. And so, when the Church came to believe that this covenant in blood had been superseded by the new spiritual covenant (adumbrated by Jeremiah),

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 31.31-34.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

the new Israel abandoned the rite altogether and substituted baptism for it.

Following the lead of Jeremiah, the spiritualizing of the whole concept of sacrifice was a continuing tendency within Judaism: this was so even during the post-Exilic period during which the Temple cultus came to be established on a very considerable scale at Jerusalem. It is as though a few in Israel realized that the ritual slaughter of animals was not a thing-in-itself, but a mysterious and elaborate screen which concealed a vital and intimate secret of the creation—a secret which had somehow become a 'guilty secret', for many of the sacrifices were believed to remove the effects of sin and to restore an innocent relationship. In the last verse of the English Old Testament we can perhaps catch sight of the recognition of the essential nature of this secret. In the new age to come, says Malachi, what is wrong with the existing order will be put right:

'Behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'<sup>1</sup>

Luke records that some of these words were quoted by the 'angel of the Lord' in his announcement to Zacharias concerning the unborn John who was to become the Baptist (1.17), and this suggests that the 'reconciliation' of parents and children—the resolution of the father-son relationship—is of the very essence of the new covenant which John Baptist proclaimed. The writings of this 'new covenant'—the New Testament—are virtually unanimous in interpreting God's action in and through Jesus in these terms: God is Father and Jesus is Son of God, the Father gives his Son, the Son offers his life, the Father gives new life to the Son. This God-initiated process of incarnation, death and resurrection is presented in the New Testament as a *cosmic* event which puts the God-mankind relationship on a new footing as a result of the death of the Son, interpreted, following St Paul, as a *sacrifice*.

#### 4. THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The interpretation of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, while it solved some of the difficulties connected with the tremendous first

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 4.5 f.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

century problem of a *Messiah* who was tortured and killed, has certainly given rise to a whole series of new problems. If the death of Jesus is to be interpreted as a 'sacrifice', one may point to the fact, for instance, that the members of the Sanhedrin and the Roman officials, when they took the life of one who seemed to threaten their security, certainly had no intention of making an offering to God, and, though the High Priest was instrumental in securing the execution of Jesus, he did not for a moment imagine that he was exercising his priestly function in so doing. Thus, right from the start, we are faced with the fact that if sacrificial imagery is used in connection with the death of Jesus, then the meaning of the word 'sacrifice' is being radically transformed and elements are being introduced into the whole process which were not really there before. The death of Jesus can be called a 'sacrifice' only if he himself, the victim, is thought of also as both offerer and priest—and this is precisely what is done most explicitly in Hebrews:

'Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?'<sup>1</sup>

The Christian transformation of the meaning of 'sacrifice' is further underlined when obvious questions begin to be asked, e.g.: What kind of a Father-God would require the death of his innocent Son? How could the death of one man ensure spiritual benefits for many (or all) others? If the death was a cosmic 'ransom', to whom was it owing? And so on. On the basis of the meaning of 'sacrifice' which is normative in the Old Testament, these questions are legitimate enough, but as soon as they are asked in relation to the death of Jesus it ought to be clear that they are virtually unanswerable in terms of animal sacrifice and juridical agreements. Attempts to answer in these terms have given rise to objectionable

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 9.11-14.

## *Archetypes of Suffering*

theories of the Atonement and a more satisfactory solution must be sought in other directions.

The problem we are grappling with is fundamentally that of death itself. In Hebrew thought, God the Father gives life to his children: why then does he take it away? The answer of Judaism (apart from the Sadducees) was that its removal was temporary, and that life would be restored at a new level at the resurrection in the future new age. The Christian experience of Jesus as the Risen Lord is preached as a guarantee that this is so. The argument is forcibly stated in I Corinthians: in effect, St Paul says that if there is no resurrection, then Christ has not been raised, but Christ has been raised and his resurrection is therefore the 'first-fruits' guarantee that all who accept him will likewise undergo resurrection from the dead:

'For as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ shall all be made alive.'<sup>1</sup>

Adam is the archetypal 'representative-first-man' of the former covenant, and Jesus-Messiah is the 'representative-first-man' of the new covenant. The Fatherhood of God is vindicated by his abolition of the power of Death as it may be previewed in the resurrection of his Son.

At this point, some may say, 'Very well, but why not leave it at that? The love and the power of God is sufficiently demonstrated in the conviction of those who had these experiences of the Risen Lord, and we will accept the belief that the death of Jesus was a necessary prelude to the glorified life of the Son of God. But why bring in all this stuff about sacrifice? Why not leave us to see the death of Jesus as an unsurpassable martyrdom, the ultimate exposure of human cruelty and sin, an example-to-be-followed of self-giving love and the final obedience by the Son of the Father, a guarantee of God's love for us if we are obedient and accept this revelation of the inmost process of existence? Why introduce all these somewhat incongruous ideas that the death of Jesus was sacrificial, that it was a kind of substitute-death which delivered mankind from the consequence of sin and brought salvation from the justifiable wrath of God? Why attribute to the suffering and

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 15.22.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

death of Jesus the benefits associated with the vicarious deaths of lambs, kids, bullocks, heifers, pigeons and doves? Why suppose that the justice of God in some way needed to be satisfied by the deliberate killing of an innocent man—especially if that man is to be accepted as a mysterious Son of man?

To us these questions may seem reasonable enough, and if 'Christianity' could have emerged from within Stoicism (or some other ethical fraternity), then maybe the martyrdom of the founder might not have been given a sacrificial interpretation. But because Jesus was a Jew, and because all his earliest followers (not least Paul) were Jews, the saving action of God had to be presented in terms of the Messiah. Particularly is this so if we accept the evangelists' teaching that Jesus presented himself and his work in messianic terms. The first-century problem consisted in the fact that it was no part of the general messianic expectation that the Messiah would suffer and die *as part of his messianic function*. Pursuing the course laid upon him Jesus himself foresaw, in the light of what had happened to John the Baptist, the inevitability of his arrest and suffering and the probability of his death at the hands of the rulers of his time: in this knowledge he transformed the concept of Messiahship in terms very largely of the 'Servant' of Second Isaiah and the 'Son of man' of Daniel. This interpretation of the messianic work was acceptable to very few in Israel, and in spite of his powerful personality he was condemned as a blasphemous pretender and executed as a political menace. Following their experiences of the Risen Lord the earliest believers in the Messiahship of Jesus were confronted with a formidable intellectual problem. Testimony to their religious, mystical or psychical experiences of the Risen Lord was not in itself enough to convert many Jews to the belief that Jesus, who had hung on a tree, was in fact the Messiah, for, just as the ignominious death of the Messiah formed no part of the common tradition of Judaism, still less did the expectation of his resurrection. Therefore, in order to account for the death of Jesus-Messiah, the 'new Israel' had to provide a convincing interpretation of the Crucifixion. That men who were 'day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the Temple' (Acts 2.46) should eventually understand the death of Jesus in terms of sacrifice is therefore not surprising, and, because they



### *Archetypes of Suffering*

were also 'breaking bread at home', it was natural that this characteristic action of Jesus should eventually be associated with the communion aspect of the sacrificial pattern. But before the advent of St Paul it seems unlikely that the Jerusalem Christians put forward an interpretation of the Crucifixion as a cosmic sacrifice, for besides this kind of interpretation there are other accounts in the New Testament which probably reflect the pre-Pauline attitude in Palestine.

The most primitive Jewish-Christian view of the death of Jesus seems to have been that it was an unfortunate accident which came about through the ignorance of the Jewish nation and its leaders. It is reasonable to suppose that the speeches of Peter in Acts reflect some of the original preaching, and in his address to the crowds at Solomon's Porch, after having reminded them that they had delivered up God's 'child' (Gk. *pais*) Jesus, that they had denied him before Pilate, and that by asking for Barabbas they had 'killed the Author of Life', he continues:

'And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But the things which God foreshadowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled.'<sup>1</sup>

The second of these verses sums up the principle upon which the Scriptures were searched for prophetic passages which presaged the suffering of the Messiah, and there is little doubt that amongst the earliest writings of the Church were collections of Scriptural quotations or *testimonia* which appeared to have been fulfilled in the passion of Jesus. The particular point which we have to notice is that, so far as this speech is concerned, the *death* of Jesus is not held to have soteriological significance: it is certainly not put forward as a sacrifice on this occasion, and its importance is to be seen partly as the consequence or climax of predicted suffering, but primarily as the necessary prelude to the raising from the dead and the glorification of the 'servant' of God. 'Salvation', for Peter, lies in the future return of the Christ and the 'times of restoration of all things' (3.21), and not in the past death of Jesus on the Cross. Similarly, the account of the Walk to Emmaus is, in effect,

<sup>1</sup> Acts 3.17 f.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

a justification for interpreting prophetic passages about suffering in relation to the passion of Jesus, though here again the transition is from suffering to glory and no attention is paid by the Risen Lord to his death *per se*: 'Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?' (Luke 24.26).

There is a considerable treatment of the beliefs of the pre-Pauline Church of Jerusalem by Professor S. G. F. Brandon in his *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, and after remarking of the Palestine Christians that 'it was obviously not to their advantage to emphasize the tragedy more than the requirements of the defence and propagation of their faith demanded', he concludes:

'Consequently, it would appear that, beyond equipping themselves with a well-developed apologetic, which mainly consisted of a circumstantial narrative of the events immediately leading to the Crucifixion and a series of Scriptural texts attesting the necessity of the suffering of the Messiah, the Jewish Christians were content to leave the possible theological significance of the tragedy largely unexplored, and, beyond the passing reference to its fulfilment of prophecy, the death of Jesus thus assumed no essential place in their exposition of the new faith which they professed.'<sup>1</sup>

This may be something of an overstatement, for it suggests that until Paul came along no one had thought of interpreting the death of Jesus in sacrificial terms. But it is to be noticed that when Paul acknowledges the traditions which he had 'received', he includes the phrase 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures' (I Cor. 15.3)—this would appear to suggest that when Paul elaborates a sacrificial interpretation of Christ's death he is, in fact, developing a theme which had already been stated in the words 'for our sins'.

However this may be, from the documents at our disposal we can only conclude that a new turn was given to the interpretation of the death of Jesus with the advent of Paul. Many completely new ideas are introduced by him, and there is very considerable development of elements present only in germ in the original preaching.

What is interesting is that Paul makes no direct reference to the

<sup>1</sup> *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, SPCK, 1951, p. 77.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

Suffering and Dying Servant passages of Deutero-Isaiah even though it is clear that this mysterious personage was strongly held in the Church to have pre-figured Christ, and (in the view of the writer) to have profoundly influenced Jesus himself. The account of the conversion of the eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8.26-38) emphasizes the importance of verses in Isaiah 53 in this connection: the eunuch has been reading about one whose 'life is taken from the earth', and then Philip 'beginning from this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus'. And yet it seems that Paul deliberately avoids the use of this imagery of the Servant as a dumb lamb about to be slaughtered as a type of the Crucifixion. Professor Brandon very plausibly suggests that the reason for this is that before his conversion-experience the Crucifixion was for Paul personally 'the stumbling-block', and the nature of his vision provided a way round this stumbling-block without having recourse to the Servant passages. Paul's direct contact with the Jerusalem Christians led him to persecute them, for the fundamental notion that one who had been crucified could be the Messiah was unspeakable blasphemy: in spite of the Christian claim that the sufferings of Jesus were 'according to the Scriptures', Paul could not forget that the Scriptures also maintained that 'he that is hanged (on a tree) is accursed of God' (Deut. 21.23). The complete *volte-face* in his attitude was brought about by his own personal visionary experience. The basis of his faith was his overwhelming vision of the Risen Lord in glory, and not the suffering and dying man from Nazareth. The death of Jesus was important, and the preaching of 'Christ Crucified' became an essential feature of Paul's gospel, *but* the reason for this was that the death was interpreted 'backwards' from his own mystic experience and not 'forwards' from the recollections of the disciples concerning the words and deeds of the man from Nazareth. In the Epistles of Paul there is an obvious lack of interest in the events of the life of Jesus and in the historical circumstances of his passion and the reasons for his arrest, trial and conviction. Paul goes so far as to write:

'Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. 5.16-17.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

In this way he repudiates the value attached by the Jerusalem Christians to their acquaintance with Jesus himself, upon which they based their authority, and he does so, in effect, by repudiating the significance of the historical events in the life of Jesus. In Galatians he emphasizes that 'the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. 1.11-12). Only at the beginning of his list of resurrection-appearances does Paul admit having 'received' the tradition from anyone else. And his evaluation of this list is shown by the fact that he does not hesitate to add his own name to it, thus equating his vision with the resurrection-experiences of Peter, the disciples, and James. The magnitude of Paul's claim is to be seen in the striking phrase where he asserts that his knowledge and his mission are derived directly from the intervention of God:

'... it was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles.'<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of this stupendous claim Paul justifies himself in his new and extended interpretations of the significance of what God was doing in and through Jesus—not least in the matter of his death.

Thus, as Paul extricates the death of Jesus from its actual historical circumstances, so he gives it an interpretation in the realm of metaphysics and 'mythology'. And at this point we have to pause to remember that the background of Paul was not the same as that of the Jerusalem Christians. Although trained as a Pharisee, he grew up in a Gentile environment and was not unacquainted with the religious cults and philosophic ideas of hellenistic culture. When it suits his purpose he does not hesitate to use thought-forms which would be understood and acceptable to Gentiles of the Graeco-Roman world. This is the language of what he calls the 'gospel of the uncircumcision'.

In two particulars the hellenistic culture differed fundamentally from the Jewish: first, it did not make the absolute distinction between God and man which is such a marked feature of Jewish monotheism, so that the appearance of divine beings in human form was almost a commonplace of pagan religion; secondly, there

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 1.15-16.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

was a widespread preoccupation with the hope for personal immortality, and this found common expression in the mystery-religions wherein the initiate was sacramentally united with a saviour-god or goddess and guaranteed a place in the next world. There is little doubt that such notions were not without some influence on Paul in his presentation of the Gospel, and the wide acceptance of what he preached shows that he was able to communicate the good news in terms which were understood.

Thus it is that, for Paul, the Crucifixion of Jesus is a cosmic event to be interpreted primarily as the sacrificial death of the incarnate Son of God, and that this act, taken together with the Resurrection, effects a deed of salvation for all mankind and provides a means of attaining immortality by obviating the effects of sin and defeating the powers of evil.

In the thought of Paul the Crucifixion is a 'mystery' of God, ~~foreordained by him and accomplished by demonic powers:~~

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'We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world knoweth: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'<sup>1</sup>

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The cosmic significance of the Crucifixion is attested by the Resurrection, for

'having blotted out the bond that was against us by its ordinances, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; having put off from himself his body, he made a show of the principalities and the powers openly, triumphing over them in it.'<sup>2</sup>

The outcome of the Crucifixion-Resurrection is that mankind is delivered from the Law and sin, and also from death (Rom. 5.12-21; I Cor. 15.26).

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It is for reasons such as these that Paul can suggest that the death of the Christ was ordained by God himself, and that he treated Jesus as a sin-offering, if not as the very personification of sin (Rom. 8.3), so that God may be spoken of as 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all' (Rom. 8.32). And in another passage

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 2.7 f.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 2.14 f.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Jesus is regarded as a kind of metaphysical 'representative man':

'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us: for it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.'<sup>1</sup>

In this sense, too, Jesus is the anti-type of Adam (Rom. 5.14). The centrality of the Crucifixion in Paul's theology is finally expressed when he writes to the Church at Corinth: 'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (I Cor. 2.2).<sup>2</sup>

In this way the Cross becomes the central focus of Paul's preaching as the wisdom and the power of God (I Cor. 1.24), and he attacks the Judaizing Christians for neglecting the soteriological efficacy of the Crucifixion and for insisting on the continued observance of the Law, which, in his view, has been superseded (Gal. 6.12). It is when he attempts to explain *how* the death of the incarnate Son of God accomplishes universal salvation that Paul has recourse to the imagery of animal sacrifice and the theological beliefs associated with it. He likens the death of Jesus to the slaughter of the Paschal Lamb of Deliverance when he writes: 'For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, (even) Christ' (I Cor. 5.7). Or again, he introduces the blood-symbolism of expiatory sacrifice<sup>3</sup> in relation to the offering of his life by Jesus: 'the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God purposed to be a means by which sin is forgiven, through faith in his blood, to shew his righteousness, because of the passing-over of sins done aforetime' (Rom. 3.24 f), or when he writes: 'being now justified in his blood shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him' (Rom. 5.9).

Through this kind of imagery in Paul's own writings we are led

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 3.13.

<sup>2</sup> In an extraordinary 'anti-semitic' passage in I Thessalonians the death of Jesus is attributed to 'the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drave out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins alway: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost' (2.14-16).

The final phrase pretty clearly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the whole passage gives the impression of being a late Gentile interpolation when the Church had effectively moved out of the orbit of Judaism. It is difficult to believe that Paul himself should so write of Palestinian Jews in general in view of the pride he took in his own ancestry.

<sup>3</sup> Expiation rather than propitiation: see *The Epistle to the Romans*, C. H. Dodd, Hodder and Stoughton, 1932, pp. 54 f.

## *Archetypes of Suffering*

to its full exploitation in Hebrews, and in different ways in John and Revelation.

Turning first to Hebrews, we may say at once that it is 'Pauline' in the sense that it is a sophisticated elaboration of a theme of salvation through Christ which had been more simply or seminally stated by Paul himself. Concerning the authorship of this remarkable treatise we are in the same position as Origen seventeen centuries ago when he said, 'Who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, God alone knows'. Nor is it at all clear to whom it was addressed or when it was written. (Possibly it was written to refute the doctrine of the Two Messiahs which appears to be implied in the Dead Sea *Manual of Discipline*.) Fortunately, we need concern ourselves only with its content in relation to sacrifice and symbolism. The basic theme is the 'primitive' Pauline gospel that mankind is offered both salvation from the dominion of evil and immortality through the sacrificial death of the incarnate Son of God. This theme is developed with a wealth of typological interpretation of Scripture, with particular reference to the sacrificial cultus of Judaism, and with the object of demonstrating that the death of the Divine Son completely superseded all the sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses. Christ as the anti-type of Melchizedek, the ancient priest-king of Salem, has now made the once-for-all eternal sacrifice of himself: his blood has effected a permanent remission of sins.

The opening verses of Hebrews, by a remarkable compression of symbolic language, illustrate the transformation in the concept of Messiahship accomplished by the Church in the first century.

'God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets,  
hath at the end of these days  
spoken unto us by a Son,  
whom he appointed heir of all things,  
through whom also he made the worlds (ages),  
who being the effulgence of his glory,  
and the very image of his substance,  
and upholding all things by the word of his power,  
when he had made purification of sins,  
sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high,  
having become by so much better than the angels,  
as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 1.1-4.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

These verses might be paraphrased as follows:

‘God, having made his purpose known typologically in the Scriptures,  
has now, eschatologically, at the end of the first of the two ages, anti-typologically revealed himself in the Prophet-Messiah, who has been declared his Son and Heir, who is also the pre-existent creative Wisdom of God, yet one with the Father, and also one with the Holy Spirit, who was sacrificially crucified as Priest-Messiah and Victim-Messiah, and then ascended to glory as King-Messiah, in superiority to all other spiritual beings.’

Jesus was a real man (2.14, 18; 4.15), but, because he was also the messianic Prophet, Priest and King, and the Divine Son, ‘for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising shame’ (12.2), that ‘through death he may bring to nought him that hath the power of death, and may deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage’ (2.14 f). He is now Messiah-King at God’s right hand (8.1), but ‘he shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation’ (9.28), and that very soon for the faithful may see ‘the day drawing nigh’ (10.25). This forthright statement of primitive Christian ‘mythology’ probably accounts for the neglect of Hebrews by modern ‘liberal’ Christians, and also its excessive use by our contemporary obscurantists—both Catholic and Evangelical—the former emphasizing the priesthood and the latter the blood.

As has been mentioned, the great symbols in Hebrews for the sacrificial rôle of Christ are Melchizedek and the High Priestly offering of Blood. What is interesting is that the author does not dwell upon the ‘passive’ aspect of Christ’s death, and he deliberately avoids the symbolism of the Lamb of God of which so much is made in John and Revelation. The ‘active’ offering by Jesus of his life, i.e. his blood, is emphasized in Hebrews at the expense of the obedient acceptance by Jesus of his rôle as dumb victim—a figure most effectively symbolized by the Lamb: John, as it were, balances the Lamb symbol by presenting Jesus also as the Good Shepherd (who, incidentally, is far from dumb before the



### *Archetypes of Suffering*

'shearers'), and in Revelation the Lamb, though 'slain', yet stands in judgement and power (see below).

The figure of Melchizedek was particularly appropriate as a type of Christ in the mind of the author of Hebrews. The historical fact was that Jesus had not been a Levitical priest, still less the actual High Priest, and therefore, if his action was to be interpreted as a priestly act of sacrifice, it was most desirable to find a non-Aaronic High Priest who might be presented as his Scriptural type. Melchizedek filled the bill perfectly. Abraham himself, the father of Israel, in whose loins resided the whole nation throughout its generations, had recognized the supremacy of this mysterious Priest-King of (Jeru) Salem by offering him tithes, therefore (to continue the rabbinic argument) the priesthood of the descendants of Abraham (especially Levi and Aaron) must be inferior to that of Melchizedek. In this way, it could be argued that the 'priesthood' of Christ superseded the contemporary Jewish priesthood, and that his eternal sacrifice rendered otiose the repeated sacrifices prescribed in the Law of Moses.

The author of Hebrews describes the entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies:

' . . . the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people.'<sup>1</sup>

And this, he says, by the action of the Holy Spirit, 'is a *parable* for the time present' (9.9): the new High Priest, Christ, by his sacrifice and his own blood-offering, established the New Covenant:

'But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.

'And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 9.7.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 9.11-16.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

The general argument of Hebrews seems to suggest that at the time of its composition the Temple at Jerusalem was still standing (esp. 9.8), and certainly the original readers of the treatise, were they converted Jews or Gentiles, would have accepted the premise upon which so much of the argument turns, viz.:

‘According to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.’<sup>1</sup>

Our problem derives from the fact that such propositions are no longer axiomatic, and that the continued use of the imagery of blood-sacrifice sets up a tension between our conscious and unconscious mental activities.

Before we leave Melchizedek (so wonderfully portrayed on the west front of Chartres Cathedral) [*Plate 4*], we should perhaps note a curious omission from Hebrews—very surprisingly the author does not develop in a eucharistic sense the recorded fact that Melchizedek ‘brought forth bread and wine’ (Gen. 14.18): he is content to give a messianic interpretation to the verse in the Psalm which declares:

‘Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.’<sup>2</sup>

and thereby he stresses the non-temporal character of Christ’s priesthood and the eternal nature of his offering. This treatment of the Melchizedek-type is completely in line with the enigmatic overtones concerning the mystery of the origin of Jesus which finds expression thus:

‘Melchizedek . . . without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.’<sup>3</sup>

With these words we are carried back into the pre-Hebrew origins of some aspects of Near-Eastern religion—to the god-king-priest who at the New Year festival fathered his successor on the priestess-goddess so that as a result of this ‘divine’ union the sacred monarch might be said to be without genealogy. One of the most extraordinary characteristics of the Bible is the transformation wrought

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 9.22.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 110.4=Heb. 7.17.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 7.3.

## *Archetypes of Suffering*

first by the Jews and then by the Christians upon this ancient faith and practice. No less a transformation of thought-forms is again required in this our modern age, and in one way or another the faithful must strive to expedite the sought-for metamorphosis.

### 5. THE LAMB OF GOD

The figure of the Lamb of God as a symbol for Christ is deeply imbedded in current liturgies in spite of the fact that without considerable instruction it is, at best, misleading or incomprehensible to many churchgoers, and, at worst, is quite revolting to modern people for whom the ritual slaughter of animals is both unfamiliar and disgusting. And yet in the *Gloria in excelsis* we say or sing:

‘O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, . . .’

and similarly in the *Agnus Dei*. Again, in the Proper Preface for Easter, Christ is referred to as ‘the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sins of the world’, and similarly in many hymns and prayers.

Our immediate association with lambs is usually a mental picture of rather silly woolly animals frisking with unwonted enthusiasm between bouts of milk-drinking—creatures which are stupidly (or not so stupidly) apprehensive of man’s friendly overtures, and which run hastily to the comfort of their equally timid mothers. Or perhaps we think of roast lamb for Sunday dinner, or even of lamb cutlets at some local ‘Lamb and Flag’. We may even be reminded of the nursery rhyme, ‘Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow’, and though this doggerel may have a religious origin with reference to the Blessed Virgin and her Son, such possible significance is usually overlooked.

How very differently situated were the first-century Jewish and Gentile converts who read the salutation of John the Baptist, ‘Behold the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world’, or the visionary description of John the Seer, ‘I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain’! To them the figure of the Lamb had an immediate impact of profound religious importance, whereas for us, whatever its effect may be at the unconscious level, the

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

symbol becomes meaningful at the conscious level only after considerable historical and literary analysis.

In the New Testament the use of Lamb as a symbolic title for Christ has a predominantly *sacrificial* reference, though in Revelation there is, in addition, a reference to an apocalyptic figure of the Messiah as a young horned ram who is the leader of the flock of Israel. St Paul, as we have seen, has the Paschal Lamb in mind when he refers to 'our Passover, Christ', but in I Peter the sacrificial implication is less precise and the emphasis is rather upon the blood-symbolism of redemption through the taking of life:

'Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.'<sup>1</sup>

In Acts there is a specific quotation from the great Servant passage in Isaiah where it is written:

'He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself,  
And opened not his mouth;  
As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
And as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb,  
Yea, he opened not his mouth.'<sup>2</sup>

Here, if anywhere, the emphasis is upon the passive acceptance by the victim of his fate, and this idea is sometimes paralleled in Christian thought when attention is drawn to the obedience of Jesus to his destiny. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus barely opens his mouth before his 'shearers', but this is far from being the case in John, where long dialogues with Pilate are recorded.

The significance of the title Lamb of God is discussed at length by Professor C. H. Dodd in *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. The complexity of the symbolism, and the delicacy of certain linguistic considerations to which he is very sensitive, appear to make his conclusions very tentative:

'I conclude that the expression *o amnos tou theou*, in its first intention, is probably a messianic title, virtually equivalent to *o basileus tou Israel*, taken over by the evangelist from a tradition which also underlies the Apocalypse of John. It is possible that other ideas may be in some measure combined in it, for our

<sup>1</sup> I Peter 1.18 f.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 53.7=Acts 8.32.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

author's thought is subtle and complex. Since he certainly used *testimonia* from the prophecy of the suffering Servant in Isa. 52.13—53.12, reminiscences of the *amnos* of 53.7 may have had some influence. . . . It is even possible that in speaking of the removal of sin he recalled that the Servant was a sin-offering, and thought of the lamb of sacrifice—but if so, in a highly sublimated sense. Yet none of these possible lines of meaning is followed up in the gospel. All the more probable does it seem that for the evangelist "Lamb" was a traditional Messianic title, like "Messiah" itself and "King of Israel", and that it is introduced into ch. 1 as such. If that is so, it would seem to be by no means impossible that it may have been used, in its apocalyptic sense, by John the Baptist, and so have passed into early Christian usage in certain circles.<sup>1</sup>

Following the practice of the Church in the development of its iconography, we may perhaps be a little more definite in outlining the multiple significance of the Lamb as a symbolic synonym for the Christian Messiah, and leave on one side considerations of the precise meaning the title may or may not have had in the mind of any particular writer.

Primarily, then, the Lamb is the sacrificial victim—in its several aspects as Passover Lamb of deliverance from enslavement, as guilt-offering Lamb of expiation, as 'scape-lamb' which removes the sin from the community, and as dumb Servant-Lamb concerning whom Isaiah declared 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when his soul shall make a guilt-offering, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand' (53.10).

In Revelation there is a remarkable surrealistic fusion of the victim-lamb with the leader-ram: a veritable union of opposites which is by no means uncommon in striking symbols. The Lamb is both slain and standing, sacrificed and ruling, bloody and a bridegroom, wrathful, and about to have an eschatological supper! His horns and eyes proliferate sevenfold, he opens the seals of the Book of Life, and is also the source of illumination in the heavenly city!

The apocalyptic source for the all-powerful divine ram as a messianic symbol is to be found, for instance, in the *Book of Enoch*:

'Behold lambs were borne by those white sheep, and they began to open their eyes and to see and to cry to the sheep . . . and

<sup>1</sup> *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, CUP, 1953, p. 238.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

I saw in the vision how the ravens flew upon those lambs and took one of those lambs, and dashed the sheep in pieces and devoured them. And I saw till horns grew upon those lambs, and the ravens cast down their horns: and I saw till there sprouted a great horn of one of those sheep . . . and it cried to the sheep, and the rams saw it and all ran to it . . . and those ravens fought and battled with it and sought to lay low its horn, but they had no power over it. . . . And I saw till a great sword was given unto the sheep, and the sheep proceeded against all the beasts of the field to slay them, and all the beasts and the birds of the heaven fled before their face.<sup>1</sup>

This passage is probably the account of a phase in the history of the revolt of the Jews, under the leadership of the Hasmonean family, against the Syrian oppression of about 165 BC, presented in the form of an allegorical fable. Such writing very easily lends itself to the expression of eschatological and messianic beliefs, and the imagery develops to the near-fantastic level of Revelation:

‘I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. . . . And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests: and they reign upon the earth. . . . Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing. . . . Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.’<sup>2</sup>

How much of this kind of symbolism was in the mind of John the Evangelist is hard to say: there are some points of contact, and he seems not unaware of this mode of expression, and further, the tradition that both the Gospel and the Apocalypse were written in Asia Minor might be taken into account. John uses a different Greek word for Lamb and may thereby seek to indicate that his emphasis is not so much on the militant apocalyptic Lamb as upon the Isaianic *rôle* of the Servant, predestined to obedient suffering, which the incarnate Word has taken upon himself. In John the

<sup>1</sup> xc. 6-19.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. 5.6, 9, 12 f.

### *Archetypes of Suffering*

Crucifixion is made to coincide with the slaughter of the Passover lambs, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels the Last Supper is the Passover meal: secondly, when it is recorded that the Roman soldiers did not break Jesus' legs that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'A bone of him (i.e. the Paschal Lamb) shall not be broken' (19.32-37). These two facts suggest that John is deliberately presenting Jesus as the supreme anti-type of the Passover victim, and is, at the same time, refraining from the use of the imagery of the Ruling Ram, preferring to attribute to Jesus the divine titles King of Israel and Good Shepherd.

Iconographically the Lamb appears in a variety of forms which correspond to the different interpretations which have been discussed. In the catacombs the Lamb is often to be seen carried by the Good Shepherd—the shepherd usually being a young man of the idyllic classical type. Sometimes the Lamb is himself the shepherd and carries a pastoral staff and a pail of milk, and sometimes the actions of Jesus are strangely performed by a lamb. Elsewhere, the apocalyptic Lamb appears crowned and victorious on Mount Zion—a theme popular in the fifth century. As a symbol of the Crucifixion the Lamb carries a cross, and sometimes from a wound in his side blood flows into a chalice. As a symbol of Resurrection the cross carried by the Lamb becomes the standard for a banner (in many more realistic representations of Christ emerging from the tomb he is also shown with this standard of victory): in the symbol the Lamb stands with crossed legs holding the banner-cross to himself, and this image is, of course, the origin of the insign of the Lamb and Flag. The Lamb also appears as an attribute of John the Baptist, and a splendid example of this can be seen on the west front at Chartres [*Plate 3*]. Yet another Lamb symbol is that in which he is depicted opening the seals of the Book of Life. The climax of the Lamb symbolism is perhaps to be seen in the remarkable fifteenth-century altar-piece at Ghent by van Eyck—an extraordinary composition which has a very mysterious fascination and which integrates a complex symbolism into a very satisfying whole.

# Symbolism and Worship

## I. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND THE SHAPE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

ONE of the keys to an understanding of the origins of specifically Christian worship is to be found in the wealth of symbolism summed up in the image of Christ as the Lamb of God. There can be no doubt that for many of the first Christian-Jews the death of Jesus was most convincingly understood in terms of the sacrificial lamb of the Temple cultus coupled with the idea of the Servant-Lamb of Second Isaiah. In particular, their weekly common meal was inevitably linked, on the one hand, with the Last-Supper-Passover-meal of the Crucifixion, and, on the other hand, with the future Messianic Banquet of the King-Bridegroom-Ram. Once convinced of the continued life of the Crucified One, it was perfectly natural that they should go on eucharistically breaking bread and drinking wine in, so to speak, a pastoral-sacrificial-eschatological context. And from this initial practice developed not only the liturgy of the Church, but also some of its doctrines as well.

There is a very intimate relationship between 'things done' in the way of worship and 'things believed' in the matter of doctrine—but the relationship is not always quite what it appears to be. It is often assumed that a certain thing is done *because* a corresponding belief is held, but it is worth asking the question whether the original state of affairs might not have been the other way round: that is to say, that a doctrine was formulated because certain rites had become customary. It has been suggested, for instance, that belief in immortality or resurrection arose because people adopted



## Symbolism and Worship

the custom of burying the dead, and not *vice versa* as is commonly assumed. We ought to have considerations of this kind in mind as we study the emergence of specifically Christian worship, especially in its sacrificial aspects.

The worship of the Church obviously began within the traditional worship-patterns of Judaism, namely in the synagogue, in the Temple and in the home. After AD 70, when the Temple was destroyed, all association with the actual sacrifice of animals was perforce abandoned, but, clearly, certain aspects of Jewish sacrificial theology found continued expression in the Church. As the Church became 'gentilized', and gave full expression to its inherent universalism, so it came to some extent under the influence of pagan ways of thought and practice: it began to develop a philosophy which was much influenced by Platonism (and already Platonized Judaism), and (as we have seen) an art which has obvious derivations from non-Jewish sources. If we consider the architectural forms in which Christian worship came to be performed, it is clear in this field, too, that specifically Christian buildings had their foundations (and elevations) in a number of already existing types of building, and did not arise as a completely new kind of edifice.

In its beginnings the setting of Christian worship was domestic. The Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah did not stop being Jews; they continued to attend the *synagogue* for the readings, prayers and sermons, and (when in Jerusalem) to participate in the worship of the *Temple*. What they did as Christians was in addition to what they did as Jews, and this (so far as we can judge) consisted, first, in the admission of new converts by the rite of Baptism and the Laying on of Hands, and, secondly, in the weekly eucharistic meal—ceremonially breaking bread and drinking wine on the first day of the week, in the manner enjoined by Jesus, and with special reference, of course, to the Last Supper in the *Upper Dining Room*. As time went on, and as more and more Gentiles were converted to the new way of life, these Christian gatherings began to assume the form of a 'Christian synagogue' with readings from (a) the Scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament), (b) letters such as those sent by Paul, and (c) collections of the sayings of Jesus, or narratives concerning his ministry and passion, which eventually

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

were crystallized out as 'Gospels': the readings were accompanied by prayers and hymns and were expounded in a sermon, and matters of policy and discipline were dealt with accordingly. Thus, quite naturally, there grew up the basic pattern of Christian worship: (i) initiation by Baptism, (ii) regular 'first-day' meetings for 'synagogue' worship followed by eucharistic worship—communion in bread and wine as sacramental tokens of the Saviour.

In the early days the 'communion' on Saturday evening (i.e. early on the first day of the Jewish week) was a substantial meal, but certain abuses which crept in (I Cor. 11.21), together with the increase of numbers attending, eventually led to the separation of this *agape*, or 'love-feast', from the eucharistic communion in which only a small token quantity of the ritually offered bread and wine was consumed by the believers, while the 'real meal' was continued as a separate function. Thus, the 'domestic dining-room' aspect of Christian worship was modified, and when, eventually, church buildings were erected, it was necessary that they should be so designed that it was possible to express therein the elements of both synagogue-worship and temple-worship in their transformed Christian sense.

A word must be said at this point about the twofold character of eucharistic worship itself, as distinct from the 'Ministry of the Word' (Readings, Prayers and Sermon) which normally preceded it. The Last Supper was closely associated with the Jewish Passover, and this annual feast was essentially the sacrificial offering of a lamb by the head of a household at an altar in front of the *Temple*, followed by a shared meal of roast lamb *at home*. Through Christian practice (as we have seen), the death of Jesus was very early thought of in terms of the sacrificial offering of the Lamb of God, and therefore the *table* around which Christians gathered for the weekly communion-meal was also thought of as a '*spiritual*' altar, on which the significant gifts of bread and wine were first offered and then shared as body and blood. Thus, the elements in the 'place of worship' of Christians derive partly from:

- (a) the synagogue—as a place of prayer, reading and preaching;
- (b) the domestic dining-room—the place of the family meal;
- (c) the Jerusalem Temple—a place of sacrificial offering.

### *Symbolism and Worship*

With regard to the general plan and furnishing of these three types of accommodation, the following points may be noted:

- (a) the synagogue was usually rectangular in plan, having a shrine-cupboard containing the rolls of the Scriptures set in one wall, and also having a raised platform in the midst (the *bema*) which accommodated the elders and officials of the synagogue, and from which much of the service was conducted.
- (b) the domestic dining-room was furnished with a D-shaped low table around which guests reclined to eat; in Roman or other pagan homes there would be a domestic altar for the worship of family gods somewhere in the house.
- (c) the Jerusalem Temple itself consisted of two chambers, the first of which was furnished with an altar of incense, the seven-branched candlestick and the table of twelve loaves, while the second chamber was empty; the altar of sacrifice stood outside and in front of this building.

From this brief description it can be seen how these diverse elements, by modification and selection, were moulded together to meet the needs of the new specifically Christian worship.

In the first century Christian worship was practised without any special buildings: Baptism was administered in any suitable river, and Eucharist was celebrated in the most convenient room in the home of a believer. (The latter practice has been revived recently as part of evangelistic campaigns in large heavily populated urban districts with a deserved measure of success.) In the second century, as Christianity began to attract some of the wealthier Roman citizens, it seems most likely that special arrangements were made in their villas to accommodate the worshipping group, and, by the third century, special villas were built for a bishop and his assistants with the accommodation suitably disposed for residence, administration and worship. One theory which has been put forward to account for the basic 'ground-plan' of a Christian church finds its origin in the general pattern of a typical Roman villa.<sup>1</sup> On this view, the entrance hall (*vestibulum*) became the narthex of a church, the pillared hall (*atrium*) became the nave, the inner room (*tablinum*) with the household gods, family records and the ceremonial seats, and before which stood the stone *cartibulum*, became the chancel

<sup>1</sup> See *The Shape of the Liturgy*, by Gregory Dix.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

with its altar-table, bishop's throne and presbyter's seats: it is further suggested that the well or cistern (*impluvium*) served as a baptismal font, and that the adjoining dining-room (*triclinium*) was used for the *agape*. It is pointed out that into this arrangement all that would have to be introduced for Christian worship would be a lectern and a lamp.

The theory is plausible, but, when Christians were at liberty to build churches, they invariably built a separate baptistery, and this fact causes some hesitation in accepting the view that the villa-pattern was determinative. It is equally true that the pagan basilica needed very little modification to make it eminently suitable for Christian worship, and, from the third century onwards, the great majority of churches were basically of this type: in contrast, the baptisteries generally (and comparatively few churches) were built on a circular, square or polygonal foundation. (See below.)

In the New Testament there is no indication of the existence of any buildings specifically designed for Christian worship. A possible exception to this statement is to be found in the Apocalypse of St John: much of this strange work is 'liturgical' in tone, and, in particular, chapters 4-6 envisage a 'temple-church' of some kind which is presented as an earthly counterpart of the heavenly realm. But what is the building of this vision? While it obviously has some affinities with the Temple of Jerusalem (e.g. the seven lamps of fire), it is equally clear that it is not merely a glorified version of the cultic centre of Judaism. At least it may be said that this heavenly vision of the great throne, flanked by lesser thrones for the elders, in the midst of which stands an altar for the mystic Christ-Lamb, established a pattern for Christian worship which eventually found actuality in the liturgy of the Church on earth, especially as this came to be celebrated in the Christian basilica.

Owing to the lack of documentary evidence, and the uncertainties involved in the interpretation of archaeological remains, it is virtually impossible to speak of the origin of specifically Christian architecture as a simple fact, or to link it with some particular time or place. On the one hand, so long as Christianity was not formally accepted in the Roman Empire as a permitted religion, and was therefore subject to intermittent persecution, church building was bound to be sporadic and tentative: in any case, so little

### *Symbolism and Worship*

remains of the second- and third-century Christian buildings that no common pattern can now be identified—even supposing such a pattern ever existed. But, on the other hand, when, shortly following upon the persecution of the Church under Diocletian (AD 303-305), Imperial edicts announced the recognition of Christianity as a tolerated religion and ordered the restitution of church buildings to the Christians (Edict of Toleration issued by Galerius, AD 311, and Edict of Milan issued by Constantine and Licinius, AD 313), a considerable programme of new church building was put in hand forthwith, and, with the subsequent establishment of Christianity as the state religion, lavish support was provided by the wealthy. What emerges from a study of this complex process is that, first, before the official acceptance of Christianity as a *religio licita*, church buildings in the early days were mainly of a domestic character—adaptations of the normal Roman house or 'villa'. Secondly, it is clear that, when churches as such were erected in the intervals between persecution, and more particularly after the Peace of the Church, the basic pattern most frequently adopted resembled closely the contemporaneous public hall for civil meetings, law courts, covered markets and so forth—the basilica or hellenistic 'royal hall'. In its simplest form the basilican church was a rectangular chamber with a semi-circular apse at one end, and having a tiled roof supported by wooden beams; the main body of the church was usually flanked on each of the longer sides by an aisle, the aisles having lower ceilings and flat roofs and being divided from the nave by rows of columns; the nave was lighted through windows in the walls above the colonnades; at the end opposite to the apse, between the main entrance and the nave, was an ante-chamber or *narthex*, and outside a courtyard (*atrium*) with a fountain. On entering a basilican church the worshipper's attention would immediately be focused on the raised altar-table—his eyes being led there horizontally by the apparently converging colonnades and the relatively low roofing, and being attracted also by the ciborium (or other structure) erected above it. The basilican churches were often of considerable size, and, in the course of time, underwent various modifications such as the addition of transepts or the building of 'vestries' alongside the apse.

In addition to this primary basilican type of church building,

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

there was a secondary type of ecclesiastical architecture which grew up and developed independently of it mainly in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. The second type may be conveniently and generally called 'central', for though the ground plan took many forms, and though orientation was often not without significance, the characteristic pattern of these buildings was the disposition of forms around a vertical central axis. The Byzantines made much use of a common Eastern brick or stone construction which was, in essence, the setting of a cupola and vaulting on a square foundation; when this type of edifice was adapted for Christian buildings the domed ceiling once again fulfilled its primordial symbolic function as a visible sign of the heavenly sphere above.

Such centrally designed buildings were originally used by the Church as memorial shrines; they usually housed the mortal remains of revered church leaders or martyrs. In the East, these martyria continued to provide accommodation for the ceremonies connected with the cult of the saints, but, in the West, by setting the altar-table of the basilica over the holy relics in a crypt below, the eucharistic worship was integrated with the remembrance of the saints, while the central type of building was used mainly for baptisteries. Such baptisteries were often on an octagonal base-plan, and the font itself was sunk two or three feet below floor-level: the catechumens, as they went down the steps into the water, were thus symbolically 'buried with Christ in his death' (Rom. 6.4): at this period baptism was not by total submersion—the candidate stood ankle-deep in water and the officiant poured water over him.

When and where, in the East, it was decided to unite the eucharistic worship with the reverence for saints, it often happened that the central tomb-like building was so adapted and orientated that the liturgy could be conveniently celebrated within—this gave rise to a considerable variety in ground-plan as apses, or other projecting chambers, were added to circular or polygonal buildings. In Syria, from the fourth century onwards, a solution was sought to the architectural problem of providing a domed building which also contained the appropriately divided accommodation for clergy and laity. By various building devices the dome was set upon a square foundation, and this type of building became normative in the Byzantine world and a characteristic architectural expression

### *Symbolism and Worship*

of Eastern Christianity. The greatest achievement in this type of building is generally acknowledged to be Hagia Sophia built at Constantinople in the middle of the sixth century. (It is now used as a mosque.)

Churches of the central type are comparatively infrequent in the West: the Carolingian Dom of Aachen (*c.* AD 800) and the Byzantine St Vitale at Ravenna (*c.* AD 547) (upon which the Dom is modelled) are outstanding examples from the earlier period. Later in the middle ages returning crusaders who had formed themselves into military religious orders (such as the Knights Templar) built some circular churches in Europe: these were supposed to be based upon the rotunda of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built by Constantine over the reputed tomb of Christ; they include the Temple Church, London, St Sepulchre at Cambridge and at Northampton, and the ruined chapel of Ludlow Castle.

There was a limited revival of interest in circular or oval churches in England at the end of the eighteenth century, e.g. All Saints, Newcastle (1786-96), and St Chad's, Shrewsbury (1790-2), but this revival was primarily connected with the desire to provide large auditory churches with good acoustic properties. Again, towards the end of the nineteenth century the central type of building was used for a number of large Nonconformist chapels, e.g. Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road (octagon within a Greek cross: 1872), Union Chapel, Islington (octagon within a Greek cross: 1876), and the King's Weigh House Chapel (oval within a rectangle: 1891). In such chapels as these the building was really designed around the pulpit, and the main objective was to provide for the maximum audibility of the preacher to a large congregation: little attention was paid to eucharistic worship and its architectural requirements. An interesting case of a circular church is that of Notre Dame de France in London: this church has recently been rebuilt following destruction in the 1939-45 war: it replaces a circular building, originally erected for secular use at the end of the eighteenth century, and converted for ecclesiastical use in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Again today, though for quite different reasons, contemporary building techniques and materials are being used in the construction of centrally-planned churches, and, indeed, of churches which

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

are neither rectangular nor centrally-planned in their basic design. This shift of architectural interest is an expression of the current liturgical movement within the churches, one of the main aims of which is the creation of a truly corporate sense of worship. The movement has made great headway in France where it has been necessary to build many new churches following the destruction which occurred during the war. Many imaginatively designed churches have been built to provide an architectural setting in which the corporate action of the mass may be experienced more completely than in any long rectangular building; e.g. Boust (circular); St Pierre, Yvetot (circular); St Joseph, Le Havre (square); Notre Dame de Royan (oval); St Julien, Caen (oval); Suarce (oval); Ste Agnes, Les Grées (triangular); Les Deux-Villes (hexagonal). Similar developments are taking place in other European countries, e.g. SS Felix and Regula, Zurich (oval); St Michael, Wipperfurth-Neye (irregular octagon); St Rochus, Dusseldorf (three intersecting circles). In addition, there are amphitheatrical plans in some variety, e.g. St Francis, Riehen; St Rochus, Turnich; St Albert, Saarbrücken.

In England most of the new churches are based on the unimagined oblong—one for the chancel, one for the nave, and one for the side-chapel, or a single big one for everything: even Coventry Cathedral, so stimulating in many of its features, is extremely traditional and conventional in this respect. However, a few of the more recent English churches to be designed are centrally-planned, e.g. Holy Cross, Doncaster; St Swithun, Kennington; St Paul, Bow Common; Ronkswood, Worcester; St Peter, Hall Green, Birmingham.

In the United States similar developments are taking place: where departures from the rectangular are made they seem to be mainly in the direction of the amphitheatre. A notable exception to this tendency is to be seen in the square-planned church of St Clement, Alexandria (Virginia) with its central altar-table: incidentally, this church has no windows—in contrast, at least one other American church has walls of glass. More attention is paid in the United States than elsewhere to the grouping of other parish buildings around the church itself: provision is made for every conceivable congregational activity in rooms of all sizes and shapes. One might mistake the lay-out of such a complex of buildings for that of a



## *Symbolism and Worship*

medieval monastery until one sees a room labelled 'Ladies' Lounge'!

Returning from this digression on the central type of church building to the mainstream of Western church architecture, it is important to realize that the basilican shape is normative. Even in elaborate Gothic churches—cruciform in plan and sometimes square-ended—it is still possible to see plainly the contained rectangle-plus-semicircular-apse. Only in the definitely two-chambered nave-plus-chancel type of church has the basilica been modified out of immediate recognition by the conversion of the apse into a long rectangular chancel, while in the single-chambered auditory churches of the post-Reformation period the apse has simply been lopped off and the basilican shape lost completely. It is comparatively easy, of course, to restore the basilican pattern to such churches simply by adding an apse: this has been done at St Philip's, Birmingham, but unfortunately the 'apse' has been so elongated that it looks more like a medieval chancel.

In the middle ages, and subsequently, much symbolism was read into the actual shape assumed by churches, and it should be recognized that pleasant and stimulating though these interpretations may be, they are, for the most part, rationalizations after the event. Thus, it is most unlikely that anyone ever said, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have a church with a ground-plan in the form of a cross?'; what is far more likely is that the cruciform shape with transepts arose either to meet the need to accommodate more clergymen or singers, and/or as an architectural necessity in the construction of a central tower or cupola. Someone then noticed that the ground-plan was cruciform and 'preached a sermon' about it. Similarly, the differential orientation of nave and chancel, piously interpreted as Christ bowing his head on the cross, probably originates in reality from inaccuracies of measurement revealed when a chancel was added to a nave (or *vice versa*). A better understanding of the real significance of the general shape of a church is to be obtained by considering the functional character of the building as a place of liturgical worship.

### 2. LITURGY AND ARCHITECTURE

In the 'evolution' of church building in the West from the relatively simple Roman basilica to the elaborate Gothic of the later

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

middle ages, there are a number of factors which must be mentioned—political, ecclesiastical and architectural. They include the split of the Roman Empire into West and East, the collapse of the West under successive invasions from northern Europe, the acquisition of political power by the Church, the growth of the monastic movement and of the parochial system, the slow conversion of the north to Christianity, the comparative lack of building experience in the north and the eventual exhaustion of the older building materials, the developments of Romanesque art, and, finally, mainly through new architectural discoveries concerning arches and vaulting, the emergence of Gothic architecture—particularly as applied to cathedrals, abbeys, monasteries and large parish churches. To these considerations must be added the very considerable increase in the numbers of the clergy; the development of doctrines concerning the Church, the sacraments and the ministry; the cult of relics and of saints, and the growing cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and the development of the typological interpretation of Scripture in all art forms (including the drama).

Of particular interest in a consideration of the connection between liturgy and architecture is the important change in the relative disposition of the clergy and the laity (which took place mainly in the eighth and ninth centuries), and the associated question of the orientation of churches, and hence of the position of the altar and all other furnishings. From the earliest times for which there is any evidence, the celebrant at the Eucharist (originally the bishop, but subsequently the parish priest acting as the bishop's *locum tenens*) presided from his seat in the apse and did his part of the service across the altar-table facing the congregation: his assistants, the presbyters, sat on seats arranged around the semi-circle of the apse, and also (more or less) faced the congregation. Now what is both interesting and confusing is that in the surviving remains of the Constantinian churches, the apse is at the *western* end of the basilica so that the celebrant faced east, and it is suggested that this may have some connection with Constantine's addiction to sun-worship. However, from the middle of the fourth century onwards, the apse is almost invariably at the eastern end of the church (though the orientation is seldom accurate), and since the altar-table usually stood on or near the chord of the apse,

## *Symbolism and Worship*

this was symbolically a more satisfactory arrangement, in that worship was in a sense directed eastwards towards the rising of the sun and the expected appearance of Christ at his Second Coming.

This desire to face east is, no doubt, one of the factors which eventually led to the general arrangement by which everyone, celebrant, assistants and congregation, turned in the same direction. When the clergy, so to speak, 'came round to the lay side' of the altar, the tendency was to elongate the apse to accommodate them in what we now call the chancel, and to 'push the altar back' nearer to the east wall. Moreover, the practice of having a separate baptistery was abandoned, and the font was brought into the church itself: at first there was no particular place appointed for the within-church font, but eventually the custom prevailed of siting the font near the main entrance as an appropriate symbol of entry into the Church. (As will have been gathered, the origins of church architecture are far from clear, but in his *The Origin and Development of Early Christian Church Architecture*,<sup>1</sup> Dr J. G. Davies surveys the whole field in the light of the available evidence.)

We must now look a little more closely at the general arrangements which were made before and after the re-positioning of the celebrant and his assistants in the eastward-facing position, and compare the lay-out of the basilica with that of the later Romanesque and Gothic church. At the same time we must bear in mind the increasing number of priests and other orders of the clergy, and the change in their status, both theological and political, as the doctrines associated with the Church and its worship were developed.

In the fourth-century basilica, as we have noted, the bishop sat in the centre of the apse, with the presbyters ranged on either side. The floor of the apse was raised above the level of the nave floor, and this 'platform' (sometimes called the *bema*) often extended beyond the chord of the apse a little way into the nave. The altar-table usually stood near the chord of the apse: as a rule it was made of wood, though often it had a stone table-top. The size and shape varied considerably; some of the surviving early altars of stone are oblong, while others are circular or semi-circular. (A very strong case has recently been made for supposing that the original of the Holy Grail in the British tradition was a circular altar of this

<sup>1</sup> SCM Press, 1952.

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

type, having a twelve-lobed rim with a central depression—much the same shape as many silver patens.) The use of ‘pull-out’ stone slabs in the catacomb sepulchres probably underlies the tradition which eventually became established of making the altar in the form of a rectangular stone ‘box’, with provision within it for the relics of a deceased ‘saint’. In the early centuries of church building, it was often the case that churches were erected over the grave of a saint, or that the mortal remains of a saint were transferred to a reliquary within a crypt excavated beneath the apse: the Scriptural basis for this practice is perhaps to be found in the vision of John the Seer, ‘I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God’ (Rev. 6.9)—these words raise acutely the question whether the writer is describing an actual Christian altar in a first-century church, or whether he is indulging in a piece of architectural apocalypticism which was subsequently actualized.

The altar was honoured by some kind of construction above it: perhaps originally a triumphal arch (in the Roman manner) which was eventually modified to give three main types of structure:

- (a) the *ciborium* (or civory)—a more or less domed covering supported by four pillars or posts, the whole suggesting the canopy of heaven and symbolizing the earthly presence of celestial activity.
- (b) the *baldachino*—draperies hanging from a four-poster frame; the name derives from an Italian rendering of Baghdad from where many rich silks and tapestries were brought. The hanging draperies suggested the ‘veils’ of the Temple, which were themselves derived from the hangings in the original Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle—the term still used for the veiled aumbry on a Roman Catholic altar. No doubt the riddel-posts and hanging curtains of many English churches also derive from the baldachino, though their use seems to be less symbolic than utilitarian—they prevent the candles from being blown out in draughty churches.
- (c) the *tester*—a suspended head-board; this can often be a very effective decoration in modern churches, and may even improve the audibility of the celebrant.

Another later way of honouring the altar was the suspension over it of a *corona*—a great circular chandelier with twelve lights—symbolizing the heavenly city coming down to earth.

### *Symbolism and Worship*

The readings from the Scriptures in the basilican church were made from an *ambo*(*n*), or lectern, which was situated somewhere in the low *cancellus*—a balustraded enclosure towards the eastern end of the nave which accommodated the singers (it is from the Latin name for this screen that we derive our word *chancel*). Sometimes there were two such ambos, and near the one on the 'gospel-side' stood a massive candlestick for the paschal candle. This feature has something in common with the synagogue *bema*, and in some early churches (though not earlier than the fifth century) there is archaeological evidence of some sort of structure right in the middle of the nave: opinions vary as to its function, and, while some suggest that the altar may have stood there, and others that it housed a reliquary, a 'place of commemoration' in the cult of martyrs, it seems quite possible that it may be directly connected with the *bema* which stood in the midst of every synagogue, and that for a short period in some churches the first part of the eucharistic worship (readings and prayers) was conducted there. Across the west front of many basilican churches stretched a kind of ante-room, the narthex, and here, we may suppose, the catechumens received further instruction when they were excluded from the second part of the liturgy which was attended only by the baptized-confirmed.

Enough has been said to indicate how the early church buildings were designed so that the faithful—clergy and laity—were literally gathered round the altar-table in an orderly and theologically sound manner: the altar-table was the immediate focus of attention on entering such a church, and the whole of the service could be seen and heard by everyone present.

With the advent of the monasteries the number of clergy increased, and, as time went on, so more and more were ordained to the priesthood. This necessitated increased provision for their accommodation (especially in cathedrals, abbeys and large collegiate churches), and also for opportunities for them to celebrate mass daily. Architecturally this meant an increase in size of the chancel (especially the 'choir'), and also the provision of 'chapels', or small side-altars, in the aisles and sometimes all around the chancel and at the 'back' of the altar. With these developments are associated the corresponding doctrines of transubstantiation,

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

masses for the dead, the cult of Mary, and so forth. The beginning of tendencies of this kind seems to have coincided with the adoption of the 'eastward position' for the celebrant, in which position he no longer faced the congregation across the altar but 'turned his back on them', though perhaps in the sense that he led them as an officer leads his troops! Thus, the general tendency was to place the altar further back in the apse, and, in square-ended churches, to set it against the east wall.

The increase in size of the chancel, together with the enhanced estimation of their own status and importance assumed by the clergy, eventually led to the erection of high and semi-solid screens between the chancel and the nave; nothing could have been better designed to destroy the essentially corporate nature of Christian worship. The ordinary laity were reduced to the position of being passive peepers through squints and screens, vainly seeking to overhear a liturgy said in a language they could not understand, or sung in a manner in which they could not join: their only intimate participation in the rites in large churches was at the Easter communion, in the various processions, or in the side-chapels. The people's worship was provided for in small parish churches, a surprising number of which is often to be found in cathedral towns.

Other changes involved in the re-disposition of the clergy include the provision on the Gospel-side of the chancel of a *cathedra* for the Bishop (or a similar throne-chair for the Abbot), three seats for the main officiating clergy at High Mass (viz. the *sedilia* for the priest, deacon and sub-deacon), stalls for the other clergy and minor orders, and a pulpit in the nave—also on the Gospel-side, except in cathedral- or abbey-churches. (In Anglican churches, later on, a lectern also came to be provided for the readings at the new congregational services of Morning and Evening Prayer, and a prayer-desk for the Litany.)

In the medieval period the Reserved Sacrament was kept in a hanging pyx (suspended from the ceiling) over the altar; the pyx was sometimes in the shape of a dove—a pleasant combination of symbols. Other common features of church buildings of the period were wall-cupboards (or aumbries) for the holy oils, a piscina for cleansing the sacred vessels, and a holy water stoup near the entrances.

### *Symbolism and Worship*

In Britain the development of Romanesque architecture, and hence of the subsequent Gothic, was rather different from the continental developments. There were some fourth-century Romano-British churches of the simple basilican pattern (e.g. the remains at Silchester), but from the fifth century onwards the Celtic church-builders apparently had difficulty in constructing a semi-circular apse (domed or otherwise roofed), and started building square-ended churches—basically two-chambered. During the fifth and sixth centuries lowland Britain was much de-Christianized under the Anglo-Saxon invasions, but in the seventh century (following the mission of Augustine) basilican churches again began to be built as conversion of the country proceeded (e.g. Brixworth, Wing, Worth, Bengoe). Apparently there was then something of a 'collision' in this country between the Latin missions moving northwards and renewed Celtic missions moving southwards. This encounter is to some extent reflected in the church architecture of the period (e.g. the so-called 'Saxon' church at Bradford-on-Avon). The eventual outcome was that the square-ended two-chambered type of church building triumphed, and even the coming of Gothic architects failed to restore to any extent the apsidal basilican pattern.

### 3. REFORMED CHURCH BUILDINGS

When the Church in England became the reformed Church of England, it 'inherited' the already-existing two-chambered parish churches. (These buildings often had other 'rooms' as well—aisles, chapels, chantries: the larger churches and cathedrals of this time have been described as 'a mysterious succession of self-contained rooms seemingly stretching away to infinity'.) These churches were not altogether appropriate to the reformed liturgy and other services which were taking shape in the successive editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, but only limited modifications of the buildings were possible, and a variety of practice ensued for a time.<sup>1</sup>

One of the main objectives of the Reformation was to break down 'the middle wall of partition' which had been erected in the medieval church between the clergy and the laity. This was done figuratively by rendering the revised services in the vernacular and

<sup>1</sup> The matter is fully discussed in *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship* by G. W. O. Addleshaw and Fredk. Etchells, Faber, 1948.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

by making the English Bible available to all: literally and symbolically, in the church buildings, it was achieved by reducing the screen between the chancel and the nave, and by removing the rood and the solid tympanum with its Doom painting from the chancel arch. In the comparatively few churches built from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a marked tendency to build single-roomed churches; after the building of St John's, Leeds (1634), no Anglican church was built in the Gothic style for two hundred years. The single-chambered auditory Anglican churches were similar in ground-plan to the Dissenting chapels of the period, but gave due prominence to the altar-table and were usually more ornate in decoration in the contemporary styles: the non-conforming Protestants were not interested in the Baroque style, whereas the Jesuits loved it.

In the older churches compromise reigned supreme. After a period of uncertainty, when, at the Eucharist, the altar-table was brought into the body of the chancel and set up 'table-wise' (the communicants gathering round it at the Invitation in the Communion Service), it was eventually pushed back permanently 'altar-wise' against the east wall. In this position it is neither an altar (which can be ceremonially perambulated), nor a table (around which priest and people can gather); instead, it is a very peculiar kind of sideboard, and as such is often beset with accessory shelving, enclosed by elaborate draperies, and infested with flower-vases and candlesticks. Such is the unhappy state of affairs in the majority of parish churches today—an offence to sight and to doctrine.

Again, there was compromise in the manner of conducting the new Prayer Book services other than the Eucharist—the morning and evening worship and the various occasional services of the Church. The chancel—which in the medieval cathedrals and collegiate churches had become the preserve of the clergy who sang the offices antiphonally—eventually came to be occupied by lay singers (at first only men and boys, but nowadays a 'cock and hen' choir including women and girls). Meanwhile, what are essentially the *nave* services of Morning and Evening Prayer came to be conducted by the parson from his stall in the *chancel*, with the result that throughout the services he must walk in and out of the nave to the lectern and pulpit, and, perhaps, to the litany-desk as well.



## *Symbolism and Worship*

It is a considerable architectural problem to provide a building in which two apparently different kinds of worship are to be accommodated—one in which the altar-table is used and the other in which it is present but not used. But the key to the solution of this problem is that the *Book of Common Prayer* intends that both types of service should be fully *corporate*, and, hence, that parson and people should be near to one another. In large buildings, such as cathedrals, it may not be unreasonable to find what in effect are two 'churches' under one roof, and the solution of the problem is simply to set up a nave altar in front of the chancel-screen and to use this when there is a large congregation (accommodating the choristers in a transept or elsewhere), and to reserve the use of the chancel for services at which few, if any, of the general public assist. In comparatively small new churches a different solution of the problem must be found. It is fantastically stupid to perpetuate in red-brick the bi-cameral Gothic-type pattern of the nineteenth-century revival which imposed itself not only upon practically all Victorian Anglican churches but on some 'Nonconformist cathedrals' as well.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. THE THEOLOGICAL SHAPE OF A MODERN CHURCH

A considerable number of parish churches are now being built to serve the vast populations on the new housing estates surrounding industrial towns and in the new towns. If these churches are to prove satisfactory from any point of view, there is an urgent need that the clerical clients should try to think architecturally and that the church architects should try to think liturgically. Many recent churches give the impression that the architect has not received a clear directive concerning the theological shape of the building he has been asked to design, and that, for his part, he has not made sufficiently clear to the church authorities the new possibilities in the matter of materials and construction techniques. Anglican theology is in a state of some confusion at the moment, and many liturgical experiments are being undertaken: architecture, too, seems to be in a transitional phase. The time is particularly appropriate for a free and frank exchange of views.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Coats Memorial Baptist Church, Paisley (1893), and Otley Congregational Church (1899).

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

In the first place, it should be recognized that no one ought to assume that he knows what a parish church looks like—either in itself or in relation to other parish buildings. We need to contemplate the possible alternatives to the customary two-chamber church—chancel and nave—and to do this with a full consideration of the current trends in the theology of worship.

But what is the theological shape of an Anglican church? Particularly of the new parish churches being built in the new housing areas?

The respective theological shapes of a Roman church and of the other dissenting churches—the Free Churches—is clear enough. In the Roman Church the central feature must always be the altar as a place of priestly sacrifice separated to a considerable degree from the laity. In the Free Churches generally the central feature is a place for reading and preaching the Word of God from the Bible, with a communion table in a subsidiary (though usually central) position. Somewhere in between is the Church of England—both Catholic and Protestant.

Most Anglicans would agree that ultimately the purpose of a church building is to house the altar-table, but they would not allow this view to minimize the importance of reading and preaching the Word of God to a communicant congregation. Few would go so far as a Roman Catholic who has written:

‘The Altar is regarded in the liturgy as expressly deputed to represent Christ Himself . . . our real altar is Christ Himself, and all material altars are identified with him . . . the functional requirements of the Altar are that it be an express figure of our Lord, Jesus Christ, our Altar, Victim and Priest.’

On the other hand, Anglicans would not now permit the altar-table to be dominated by the pulpit-lectern-prayer desk, or by the choir, or by any other feature of the furnishings.

All this is obvious, but at times we need to remind ourselves of the obvious. Where there is a ‘high’ sacrificial doctrine concerning the altar-sacrament plus a considerable emphasis on the separateness of the priestly calling, it is natural that the plan of the church should be basically two-chambered—a long chancel for the clergy (which includes a sanctuary for the altar) separated by a screen from the nave of the laity. (In the Roman Church abroad

## *Symbolism and Worship*

this 'separateness' is being rethought, and Catholic worship is becoming much more congregational in many places.) But when the emphasis is on the ministry of the Word with a 'low' doctrine of the Eucharist, i.e. with the stress on the commemoration of the Lord's Supper rather than on the sacrificial offering, then it is equally natural that the ground-plan of the church should be that of a single-chambered auditorium. (When, in addition, as in the Methodist Church, considerable attention is paid to singing, great prominence is given to the choir and a place is sometimes provided for the singers behind the officiating minister, often with the unfortunate effect that the building is primarily a concert-hall.)

During the nineteenth century the Oxford Movement and the Gothic Revival combined to establish the Anglican compromise and to impose upon parish churches a shape which, though intelligible and functional in cathedrals and abbeys, is not really suitable for congregational worship. The character of the churches built during this period in the rapidly-growing industrial centres of England is often a considerable embarrassment today—in the matter of size, of shape, of decoration, and, not least, of condition.

The assumption that an Anglican church building must be like this—a long narrow chancel for the altar and sanctuary, the lay choir, the organ and the parson, and a large nave for the lectern, the litany-desk, the pulpit, the font and the congregation—this assumption seems to have lasted well into the present century; but, fortunately, during the last thirty years or so, it has been fundamentally challenged.

The reasons for the change of approach are too numerous to attempt to analyse in detail here: suffice it to say that the emergence of a more 'democratic climate' generally accounts for a good deal of the change. This has been accompanied by the development of a theology which takes fuller account of the *social* nature of Christianity: this is in contrast to the elements of individual piety which had come to be stressed previously at the expense of truly corporate worship. The outcome is the emergence of a widespread 'liturgical movement' which seeks to relate more intimately the worship of the Church with the contemporary patterns of society. For Christianity is a living religion—the Church is an organism rather than an organization. Under the action of the Holy Spirit

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

the Church is capable of growth and change, and this is peculiarly true of the Anglican Church. From one point of view, it might be said that there is a realization now that the Reformation, in so far as it finds expression in the Church of England, in some respects went too far, and in others not far enough. In other words, the synthesis of Catholic and Protestant expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *XXXIX Articles* can now be taken a stage further. Under the influence of the heat and light generated by new knowledge and new patterns of society, the frozen condition of Anglicanism is thawing out and its essential virtues can be remoulded in contemporary forms.

For example, in so far as the Reformation, by way of reaction to the unacceptable theology of the medieval mass, and the superstitious practices associated with it, led to a minimizing of the Eucharist as the central act of Christian worship, it went too far. But, in so far as the Reformation left the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion a priest-dominated rite, it did not go far enough. Moreover, many would say that it did not go far enough *back* into the early centuries of Christian worship, for there, nearer the source, may be found patterns of worship which could well provide the most satisfactory basis for public worship today.

In our present state of theological flux and liturgical experimentation, the great need in church design seems to be for flexibility. In the arrangements of the essential features and furnishings of a church-building there must be room to manoeuvre—figuratively and literally. Open space is most important, especially as we ought to envisage a development of religious drama in churches and an increased introduction of orchestral music: varying floor-levels should not be forgotten in this connection. The provision of adjoining vestries and committee rooms is obviously of great importance too.

Above all, we must recognize that the time is drawing nearer when the Church of England will no longer be tied to the 1662 Order for the Holy Communion. Really radical revisions of eucharistic worship are going on, and it is to be hoped that some of these new Orders of Service will soon be authorized as alternatives to the present rite. In general, the objective of such new services is to ensure the fullest possible expression of corporate worship and to bring the whole congregation into much fuller participation in

## *Symbolism and Worship*

the action of the liturgy: after all, the word 'liturgy' means 'the work of the people'.<sup>1</sup>

This ideal is difficult of achievement in a two-chamber church with a fixed altar or table against the east wall: it is much more satisfactorily achieved with a free-standing altar-table in a single-chamber church. Such an arrangement is, of course, perfectly practicable for the 1662 rite, but the point is that we should look ahead to the time when radically revised alternative services will be authorized.

The fact that some non-rectangular churches have been built at all periods in Western Christendom is of considerable importance today. The older centrally-planned churches, whether circular, oval, square, octagonal, or based on a Greek cross, do at least demonstrate that there is no exclusive sanctity in a long oblong. Only when site considerations are such that a rectangular plan is unavoidable need modern churches be of this shape. If there really is no alternative to a rectangle, then there is much to be said for the basilican plan, particularly if the altar-table is free-standing in its original position on the chord of the apse. However, a long oblong is not the best shape of building in which to experience to the full the corporate character of the Eucharist, and this fact has yet to be recognized and accepted in Britain. Church builders in this country seem to have an obsession with oblongs. Practically every new church built so far this century in England is oblong in plan—either a single auditory rectangle or two (or more) long oblongs in juxtaposition. Very few of these new churches are at all distinguished in appearance, and, what is worse, most of them betray a neglect of thought concerning the liturgical requirements of today. However, there are signs that a change is beginning to take place in England. Church authorities and architects are realizing what enormous advances have been made in church design in the continental countries of Europe and the extent to which these advances are finding expression in America.

If our eucharistic worship is to be experienced as a corporate action, it follows that new churches ought to be so designed that this liturgical function is most suitably provided for. If it is agreed that a long oblong room with a sideboard-type altar-table is not the best possible arrangement for corporate worship today, then we

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *An Experiment Liturgy*, Lutterworth, 1958.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

have to ask what the alternatives may be. Elsewhere, pioneering work has already been done in exploiting the possibilities of modern materials and building techniques, and there have been many bold experiments in church planning. This experimental church building is proceeding on a very large scale in both Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches in Europe and America, and there is no reason why we should not benefit from foreign experience. There are some advantages in not being pioneers: we may learn not only from achievements, but from mistakes as well.

A new situation exists in the field of building materials and methods, and it is important that we should recognize it. Until the present century the size of a building, particularly its 'breadth' was limited by the constructional limitations of wood, brick, stone and iron. In an oblong church-building with a timber roof (e.g. a basilica), the width of the mid-nave seldom exceeded 40 feet or so, though a span of over 70 feet was not impossible. Extra width was usually obtained by means of aisles (i.e. 'wings'), but, obviously, this method of widening also has its limitations, and the multiplication of columns makes it difficult to see the high altar or to hear the liturgy from the aisles. The simplest way of making a rectangular church bigger is to make it longer, and this, of course, is what was most frequently done. Even in the larger Gothic churches, with elaborate buttresses supporting a stone vaulting, the span is usually less than 60 feet, and is at a maximum of 73 feet in Gerona Cathedral. The only alternative method of increasing span was by means a dome of brick or cut stone: the great central dome of Hagia Sophia has a diameter of over 100 feet.

But all is now changed since the discovery of reinforced and prestressed concrete and the extended use of metallic sheeting. Enormous spans can be achieved: double curvature 'shells' of concrete 300 feet across have been built in this country, and the Dome of Discovery (in steel and aluminium) had a diameter of 365 feet. Moreover, American and Continental engineers have shown that almost any shape (from simple domes to hyperbolic parabolas) can be constructed in thin concrete. And, at the same time, the plan also may be either a regular figure—square, octagonal, circular, elliptical, trapezoid, parabolic, quadrantal, U-shaped, or some combination of these—or completely irregular.

## *Symbolism and Worship*

In effect, this means that a church can be built on any plan, large or small, and that variety of slope or curvature can be introduced into floor, walls and ceiling with comparative ease. In particular, it means that every possible position of the altar-table may be tried out, and that every possible arrangement of the choir and congregational seating may be explored. Above all, whatever its position and setting, the altar-table should appear to be what it is—an altar and a table: its support should be visible and its coverings should not obscure its function as the centre both of a sacrificial offering and a shared meal. (The most remarkable of all modern church buildings is the pilgrimage chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut on a hill above Ronchamp: Le Corbusier's unique construction is almost as sculptural as it is architectural, and by the subtle interplay of the simplest forms (on a completely irregular plan) creates a remarkable atmosphere of worship—not only within, but all round the building outside.)

Similar considerations apply to the other major sacrament—Holy Baptism. Admittedly, there is an appropriateness in placing the font near the main entrance as a symbol of entry into membership of the Church. (It is, indeed, better to see the font first, rather than, as is sometimes the case in dual-purpose church-halls, a door labelled GENTS!) But symbolic considerations of this kind are often heavily outweighed when, as is quite usual in new housing areas, a number of infants are baptized in the course of the same service, each baby being accompanied by up to a dozen other people. In such circumstances there is everything to be said for having the font in such a position that the congregation is accommodated normally in the seats of the nave facing east. It is a perfectly reasonable arrangement that the font should stand on one side, balanced (as it were) by a combined lectern-pulpit on the other side. In this position the two major sacraments are brought into closer relationship, and the altar-table, font and Bible can all be seen together.

As in other matters, the theology of Baptism is confused at the present day. Clergy are uneasy in the current state of affairs when, all too often, babies with seemingly little more than a residential qualification and the fact of being human are, as it were, baptized indiscriminately. Some think that only the babies of baptized

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

communicants should be baptized, while others are concerned by the whole question of the baptism of *infants* and are inclined to think that while babies should be ritually received into the Church, their baptism should be delayed until they are old enough to give the pledges for themselves, thus reverting to an ancient practice in some parts of the Church of following Baptism immediately with Confirmation.

Others, again, are conscious that 'wetting the baby's head' is a poor substitute for immersion, and think that the priest should 'dip it in the water discreetly and warily' as the Prayer Book directs. For the primary theological significance of Baptism is really that of a death and a rebirth; it is only secondarily a ritual symbol of cleansing. Anyone who has seen a child baptized by immersion—up to the neck in warm water—and witnessed the joy of the infant in this fascinating bath, will feel even more uncertain of assuming, in the words of the permissive rubric, that 'the child is weak'—particularly in modern heated churches. At least, the font should be big enough for the immersion of young children: even though the Holy Spirit is commonly symbolized by a dove, there is every reason why the font should *not* look like a bird-bath. It really ought to suggest its womb-like function, but perhaps that is asking too much.<sup>1</sup>

The baptism by immersion of adults is another question altogether: however convincing the theory may be, the practice presents many difficulties in northern latitudes: certainly, the immersion of adults requires the immersion of heaters as well.

Concerning the pulpit and lectern, as has been already indicated, there really seems to be no need for both. To have a single pulpit-lectern might even be a salutary reminder to some clergy that their preaching ought to be based on the Bible. There is no particular sanctity in the familiar eagle of the lectern, and in small churches, at any rate, there is no need for the preacher to elevate himself 'six feet above criticism' in an elaborate pulpit—it is not a good thing at all for the preacher to be so much above the heads of his congregation. Another possibility is the designing of modern 'three-deckers', clerk's stall, lectern and pulpit in ascending 'steps':

<sup>1</sup> This symbolism is achieved in the baptistry of the church of Sacré-Coeur at Audincourt.



## *Symbolism and Worship*

the height of such an 'omnibus' could be well balanced by an appropriate front-cover, if symmetry were thought to be desirable.

Concerning the organ and the choir, one is tempted to say that they should be heard and not seen, for few members of the congregation wish to look at them throughout a service—however much the choristers may like to be seen. The choir is much more effective both in leading the congregational singing and in rendering its anthems if it is all together either within the original basilican type of 'chancel', or in a low gallery or on a raised platform at the west end or in a shallow transept. Good congregational singing without a choir can be achieved in some parish churches, but if a surpliced choir is unavoidable let it have plenty of processions so that the choristers can show their paces and their faces—provided, of course, the architect has left room for a proper procession and not forced everyone to creep round in single file like so many Red Indians. Another essential, often overlooked, is that the console of the organ should be near to the choir.

What is always puzzling about organs is that these instruments, designed to make a lot of noise, are usually enclosed in a special chamber from which the sound can hardly emerge—on second thoughts, perhaps the architects are right, for the organ is almost invariably too big for the church. Another delightful mystery are the large tin cigars which so often hide the grill through which the music comes: they bear little resemblance to the fascinating pipes which actually produce the sound: the latter are so full of interest in themselves that one wonders if they might not even be made into a colourful feature!

Enough has been said to indicate some of the theological problems which are in the minds (or which ought to be in the minds) of church authorities when they are faced with the problem of instructing an architect to prepare plans for a new church. There are other aspects of church building, of course, which are difficult to define, notably the problem of designing a church and its furnishings in such a way that what can only be called 'an atmosphere of worship' is immediately evident. By the arrangements of the forms and the lighting of the interior it is possible to create a sense of awe proper to a church, and through the external appearance of the building itself to stimulate a desire in the visitor to enter and worship.

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Building a church is not just another architectural problem: it is not too much to say that an architect should not accept the commission to build a church unless he is a practising member of the same communion and well versed in the liturgy which it is to serve. No doubt an architect can build a functionally satisfactory bank without any knowledge of the financial operations which it houses, but he is unlikely to build a House of God unless he shares himself in the worship. And church authorities, too, must be most careful in their selection of architects, and not just go the round of those who happen to practise locally: and having chosen carefully, and having given clear directives, they must give the architect freedom for his skill, remembering that he is a creative artist.

It is a salutary experience to compare what is going on in France in the matter both of new church building and of the reconstruction of older churches with what is happening in England.<sup>1</sup> Not only is the amount of French church building enormous, but a wonderfully full opportunity has been provided (notably by the Dominicans) for architects to use the new techniques and materials in contemporary designs, and for artists and craftsmen to express the ancient Christian themes in the idiom of present-day painting and sculpture. This is equally true of Switzerland and Germany.

It is a striking fact that a part of the Church which is so conservative in doctrine should actively sponsor the development of revolutionary art-forms, while another part of the Church, characterized by fluidity in doctrinal matters, should be so slow to recognize the far-reaching possibilities of the present in church building, furnishing and decoration. Even now, in England, there is an extraordinary preoccupation with the late-Gothic style, and certainly one can find little else in the stock of commercial church furnishers. By way of contrast, the Roman Catholic Church in France (and to a lesser extent elsewhere in Europe) appears to be undergoing a strange transformation. It clings to the ancient traditions of the Church, particularly in their medieval formulation, but by a renewed emphasis on the more primitive conception of

<sup>1</sup> This can easily be done by setting side by side *Églises de France Reconstituées* (Musée d'Art Moderne) and an English book *The Modern Church* by Edward D. Mills, Architectural Press, 1956.

## *Symbolism and Worship*

corporate worship may find itself forced into a twentieth-century 'reformation'. The recognition that France is itself a *pays de mission*, combined with the democratic climate of the age, underlies the present 'liturgical movement', aspects of which are to be seen in the appearance of worker-priests and a growing demand for the mass in the vernacular. The use of contemporary art-forms in church buildings to give expression to this renaissance of corporate liturgical worship is another step in this essentially missionary direction. 'Things done' will perhaps lead to a rethinking of 'things believed' in this traditionally independent field of Catholicism: perhaps it is even not too much to hope that we may see the abandonment of that attempt to explain an ineffable mystery known as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

It remains to be seen for how long the whole religious ideology of the pre-scientific age can be expressed in contemporary visual terms before such essentially modern artefacts themselves enforce a reconsideration of the world-view they are supposed to express. The realization in completely modern terms of the ancient symbolic things and actions is bound, sooner or later, to lead to the challenging of the present-day validity and relevance of the concepts symbolized. Then, in the realm of symbolism, there will be a strange struggle for existence, and, under the providence of God, no doubt the fittest will survive.

### 5. SYMBOLISM TODAY

Any discussion of the religious symbols which are, or could be, effective today must obviously start from the fact that the symbols of antiquity have lost a great deal of their appeal for modern literate man: at least such would seem to be the case when we remember that only some ten per cent of Britain's population regularly attend places of worship where they see religious symbols and participate in symbolic actions. The fact that books are written to 'explain' symbolism is itself evidence of the decline of their effectiveness. Christians are confronted in this scientific age by the two-sided problem of whether it is possible to recover an appreciation of the meaning and power of the current symbols, or whether many of them should be jettisoned and an attempt made to establish a new pattern of religious symbols of more immediate appeal to

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

modern man. This is all part of the problem of de-mythologization and of the even greater problem of re-mythologization. Psychologists are agreed that the human psyche needs symbols of some sort for its normal functioning, and if the Church does not provide an acceptable pattern, bringing forth out of her treasure 'things new and old', then a different pattern will be provided by non-Christian ideologies, nationalistic politicians and popular journalists.

The problem is extremely complex. At the root of it lies the fact that the relationship between man and his natural environment has changed profoundly during the past five hundred years or so, and is, indeed, still changing. The attitude of modern man to nature is fundamentally different from that of his forebears in the ages preceding that of modern science. A new dimension has been added to man's experience of himself and his environment with the development of the scientific method and the application of scientific techniques to himself, his surroundings and his traditions. And all this has happened since the writing of the Scriptures and the Church's historical statements of doctrine based upon them. Nature is ultimately enigmatic, but its immediate mystery has been stripped away. In his progressive understanding and mastery of natural forces, man has himself largely become 'denaturalized' at the level of ordinary consciousness and habitual behaviour. Urban man, in particular, is effectively cut off from intimate contact with practically all natural phenomena and the natural sources of his food, clothing and shelter. He does not see his babies born, and as often as not they are not born at home; water is something that comes from a tap and milk from a bottle; his house makes him virtually independent of climate, and electricity enables him to ignore the natural light changes of night and day; modern transport and communications vastly complicate his perception of distance; mechanical clock-time obscures the irregular rhythms of nature; and so on.

Very few people ever make a complete thing from beginning to end, starting from such substances as wood, metal or stone, grain or fibre, as these things occur in nature: such complexity has been reached in the division of labour that for most people their work consists in the repetition of a few operations at some particular stage in the production or distribution of manufactured goods.

## *Symbolism and Worship*

Many people, therefore, seek through their hobbies (such as gardening, carpentry, pigeon-keeping, knitting, sculpture, dressmaking) to find fulfilment of an underlying desire for a more intimate contact with nature and of a primitive urge to create something—even though this may be reduced to buying a 'kit'! Man has, so to speak, surrounded himself with walls of glass—they protect him from the immediate impact of nature, but through them he can see dimly the non-human natural world upon which ultimately he is dependent for his life and with which he knows it is folly to lose contact.

A diagnosis of this kind is commonplace. It explains why the symbolism and mythic patterns of antiquity have lost their general appeal at the conscious level, and also indicates the field from which new symbols are drawn. But while such an analysis of the human condition is all right so far as it goes, it usually does not go far enough. We need to remind ourselves that the modern attitude is to see the natural environment as a pattern of *things* to be understood and controlled by man for his own comfort or power, whereas, in contrast, the primitive attitude was basically *personal*, and natural processes were thought of as having some life of their own which could be well-disposed to mankind, indifferent or hostile. What is insufficiently recognized is that the mental and emotional responses which accompany the modern attitude to nature do not simply replace those which were characteristic of earlier mankind. Just as many childhood experiences are 'forgotten' by the adult though still present in his unconscious, so, in the evolution of the modern psyche many of the basic patterns which were established in intimate contact with nature are still there, however much they may be overlaid and hidden by the new psychic patterns generated by scientific technology and rational argument. Under the increasing pressures of a power-mechanized civilization, expressed constantly and effectively through various means of mass-communication, our relatively new attitudes to natural processes tend always to force into the unconscious the primitive and ancient attitudes. Nevertheless, as part of the functioning of our nervous systems, we 'inherit' some part of these older attitudes, together with the possibilities of response to the symbols associated with them. But there are signs that a reaction is beginning. The more recent discoveries

## *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

concerning matter and energy are making nonsense of a good deal of the materialism and rationalism of the nineteenth century, while the use to which the new knowledge has been put in the twentieth century has exploded the optimistic belief in 'progress' and the perfectibility of 'rational man' which seemed so sure before the turn of the century. There is a long road ahead, and the Bible may yet prove to be the best guide-book.

It is perhaps worthwhile to recapitulate briefly the changes which have occurred in man's attitude to nature since the end of the middle ages, particularly as these changes are reflected in the Church through the Reformation and the rise of Western Protestantism.<sup>1</sup>

Although differing considerably in some respects in their general view of man's relationship to the rest of the natural order, both the Hebrew-Christian and the Graeco-Roman traditions were able to accommodate within themselves the basic pattern of symbolism which had evolved as part of human consciousness from prehistoric times. Thus, the Church, which enshrined a synthesis of Graeco-Roman culture and Hebrew religion, gradually developed a pattern of sacramental worship which included the significant use of such things as water, bread, wine, oil, fire, incense, stone, wood and gold, and such symbols as the Fish, the Lamb, the Dove, the Tree, the Cross, the Serpent and the Boat. The sacramental practice was based upon a corresponding typological theology which emphasized belief in a just and loving Father-King God, the sacrificial death of his heroic Son, the indwelling of a Life-giving Spirit, and the mediatory power of a Virgin-Mother-Consort. Thus, many of the features of early near-Eastern and Mediterranean religion were integrated at a new level in the worship and religious philosophy of the Church. In the early centuries the Platonic tradition was dominant in the Western Church, and this, combined with the Hebrew view of nature as the instrument of God, led to the general acceptance of the idea that natural phenomena, both regular and rare, were providentially ordered to direct and control man's destiny in this world and to prepare him for the next. The re-entry of the Aristotelian tradition into Western Christendom

<sup>1</sup> For a full and most stimulating treatment of this and allied themes, the reader is referred to *Christianity and Symbolism*, Collins, 1956, by Dr F. W. Dillistone and to the sources quoted by him.

## *Symbolism and Worship*

gradually led to a new interest in natural phenomena and the thirteenth century saw the beginnings of experimental scientific investigation in the newly established universities. At first progress was tentative and slow, but it gradually quickened as technical discoveries extended man's knowledge of his environment. Nature began to be studied for its own sake: glass was used not only for church windows depicting the miracles of the Bible and the legends of the saints, but also for lenses in telescopes and microscopes: mechanical clocks revolutionized man's attitude to time and opened up the enormous possibilities of machine-production: gunpowder revealed the energy inherent in natural substances and made controlled destruction possible on an unprecedented scale: the demonstration of the circulation of the blood established the foundation of a new attitude to living processes. Moreover, the introduction of the printing press with movable type made the communication of knowledge possible on a scale hitherto unknown, and this, combined with improved methods of land and sea transport, spread the new learning with ever-increasing speed. The discovery of oxygen and the general character of the chemical elements and compounds, the developments of iron and steel and the utilization of steam-power, and the invention of electrical apparatus, all furthered the process of controlling nature. Then by a combination of earlier discoveries came the oil-fired internal combustion engine, the aeroplane, and eventually the utilization of nuclear energy. The further development of recording and communicating devices (photography, radio, television) has, of course, carried the dissemination of new knowledge to even greater levels of efficiency. And, in the meantime, the comparatively recent discoveries in the field of reproduction and genetics, together with theories of evolution, have produced a new concept of man's place in the natural order. The contemporary picture is further complicated by the results of applying scientific techniques to the study of the Scriptures, by recent discoveries in the fields of archaeology and anthropology, and by the investigation of mental processes by psychologists.

The point with which we are concerned is that this new phase of 'evolution', in which man has contrived consciously to control his environment on a large scale and with considerable success, involves a new attitude to natural processes as a whole. Nature is

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

seen by modern man as a moving pattern of *things* operating within a self-contained system of 'laws'—a particularly complex 'machine'. Man sees himself as part of this pattern, in one sense: his characteristic self-consciousness is thought of as the end-product of an evolutionary process of variation and natural selection. But modern man also thinks of himself as standing apart from the pattern of nature in a new and different kind of way from that of the Graeco-Hebrew synthesis in classical Christianity; modern man finds it increasingly difficult to envisage himself as the object of care or punishment through God's providential use of nature as his instrument. On the one hand, modern man sees himself as the outcome of an automatic evolutionary process, and on the other hand, he sees himself as being in a position of knowledge and power to control the evolutionary process itself and to substitute human selection for natural selection wherever it may seem to be to his advantage. This is in fact what is happening: by the techniques of birth-control and death-control (techniques which are contained within the contemporary pattern of medicine, agriculture, transport and mass-communication), the process of natural selection can be by-passed or accelerated at all levels—plant, animal and human. The so-called 'balance of nature' can be shifted very considerably by human intervention, even though this mysterious 'balance' has a habit of swinging back again quite violently and sometimes unexpectedly so that immediate advantages lead to new problems in the future. (E.g. the continued use of powerful anti-biotics to begin with 'saves the lives', i.e. postpones the deaths, of many individuals of all ages, but may, in the long run, have a number of indirect effects such as the establishing of strains of anti-biotic-resistant organisms of disastrous power, the increase of population faster than the increase in food production, the raising of the average age of a population with the attendant problems of providing for old people and the 'complaints' they would not otherwise have had, the protection of socially undesirable genetic strains in mentally and physically handicapped families.)

This apparent digression can be brought to heel by asking the simple question: How does the traditional Christian idea of God and salvation through Christ, together with all its customary symbolism, accord with this modern evolutionary view of nature? A



view of nature, that is to say, as an automatically changing pattern of things which is now susceptible of considerable control and direction by man; a pattern which develops according to certain ascertainable rules, but from which things new and unpredictable do emerge from time to time. Opinion is much divided. Some theologians would say that the fundamental Hebrew-Greek-Christian belief in God as a loving Father-Creator eternally willing to save 'fallen' mankind through the sacrificial death of his virgin-born Son is virtually unaffected by the new knowledge. Others are extremely uneasy and are aware that the traditional expression of the Church's world-view lies in fragments before them: they realize that some of the pieces must be discarded, and they are confronted with the extremely difficult problem of trying to make a new pattern by fitting together a selection of the old pieces with the quite new pieces which have been produced in the last few centuries.

The nature of the problem may be illustrated by a brief consideration of the practical question of the design and decoration of the sort of church which is being built today, for architecture and its embellishment has a powerful effect as a visual aid or hindrance in the communication of doctrine.

## 6. THE DECORATION OF A MODERN CHURCH

The question of the decoration of a modern church is a question indeed. So, too, for that matter, is the question of what to do about the decoration of existing churches. As we have seen, in the embellishment of pre-Reformation churches there was a remarkably integrated 'jig-saw' of decoration—a most elaborate pattern into which every available item of information and mis-information could be fitted. Not only were the principal doctrines of the Church symbolized, or illustrated, in sculpture, glass, painting, metalwork, wood-carving, ivories, tapestries, vestments and illumination, together with many of the Biblical personages and events arranged typologically to show how the New Testament and the Church 'fulfilled' the Old Testament and the Apocrypha—not only this, but items from natural and unnatural history, classical mythology, legends of the saints, medieval romances, popular fables, incidents of daily life and astrological lore—all this found a place in the symbolic decoration of churches and cathedrals. Thus it is, in

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

France for example, one can see all sorts of animals (real and imagined), monsters and chimera, Alexander's Flight, the Carrying Off of Ganymede, the Tree of Jesse, the Wheel of Fortune, the Dance of Death, the Fables of Reynard the Fox, the Labours of the Months and the Signs of the Zodiac. Above all, in later medieval decoration is the prominence given to the Last Judgement and the cult of Mary—the Virgin-Bride-Mother who is the Queen of Heaven.

In England very little of this is left, and many would think that the Reformers, in their justifiable attack on idolatry, went too far in the destruction of visual imagery, and, further, that the 'restorers' of the nineteenth century destroyed more than they preserved of genuine religious value. There are signs, however, of a growing interest in church decoration—even in the Free Churches: increasingly visual elements are being introduced into church design as a whole, but often in a very disordered way. The underlying reason for the disorder is that the medieval 'jig-saw' has, as it were, been overturned, and many of the pieces are now lost or no longer usable. The new knowledge of the last three or four hundred years makes some of them obsolete: it would, for instance, be a very rash church-builder who set the signs of the Zodiac as an integral part of his design for a church!<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is worse than useless to go on using symbols (however beautifully designed and executed the work may be), if the symbols themselves require a long explanation, which nobody believes anyway, e.g. as a symbol of redemption the continued use of the Pelican pecking her breast to provide blood which will revive the fledglings she has killed [*Plate 16*]. Even the Lamb, the great New Testament animal-type of Christ, is, as we have seen, a highly complex symbol which can be apprehended only after a good deal of instruction, but, because of its integration verbally in the liturgy, is a powerful symbol which we cannot afford to lose.

The customary symbols of Christ Crucified and Christ Glorified must obviously have their place in contemporary church decoration, as well as many other of the traditional signs of his work and status, especially the Cross and the various emblems of the Passion, together with the monograms and ciphers. The great artists of the

<sup>1</sup> It has, in fact, been done recently in windows of the Church of St Karl, Luzern, and on the door of the Church of St Paul, Caen.

### *Symbolism and Worship*

day are once more being commissioned to design and execute works to enrich our churches and to stimulate our religious imagination and devotion. Outstanding among recent works are Graham Sutherland's *Crucifixion* (St Matthew's, Northampton)—a remarkably powerful painting, reminiscent of Grünewald, yet in a completely modern idiom [*Plate 15*]; Jacob Epstein's *Majestas* (Llandaff Cathedral)—an extraordinary figure which seems to be suspended between suffering and glory—the Christ who has overcome death, who shows his wounds, and who prepares for his ascending [*Plate 17*]; John Piper's windows at Oundle College depicting nine aspects of Christ's Messiahship; Lawrence Lee's *The Living Christ* (Christchurch, Port of Spain, Trinidad), which, in the difficult medium of glass, manages to communicate at once the humanity, the priesthood and the majesty of Jesus [*Plate 18*].

We may now look forward with a new and heightened sense of aesthetic anticipation to the completion of Basil Spence's cathedral at Coventry, not only for the interest of the building itself [*Plate 19*], but also for the promised excitements of Sutherland's tapestry *Christ in Glory* hanging behind the altar-table, Epstein's *Saint Michael* outside the main entrance, Piper's windows in the baptistery, the nave windows by Lawrence Lee, Geoffrey Clark and Keith New, and the engraved glass screen by John Hutton—a contemporary expression of the massed saints of a medieval west front [*Plate 20*].

In France, too, many well-known artists have recently been engaged in designing for church decoration in all its aspects: these include Matisse, Rouault, Braque and Léger. Two interesting examples of contemporary French decoration are to be seen in the window *Ecce Homo* by M. Rocher [*Plate 21*], and a fresco of the *Four Evangelists* by Franck Pilloton [*Plate 23*].

It is probably true to say that throughout Christendom a revival in 'religious art' is to be discerned. That is to say that church authorities are turning to artists of proved talent or genius and are inviting them to interpret in their own terms the essential persons, themes and events of the Christian religion. At last we seem to be extricating ourselves from the lazy habit of buying our church furnishings (ready-made to Victorian-Gothic designs) off the shelf in the commercial ecclesiastical-art shops and our vestments off the peg in clerical haberdasheries. These shops are not altogether to

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

blame for what they purvey, and there is reason to suppose that some of them, at least, would respond to a demand for better quality in design: but, so long as this demand is not forthcoming, they will continue to supply the mass-produced puerilities which their customers have come to accept as sacrosanct. Commercial interests must not be allowed to dictate taste in these matters. Equally, we must beware of the sometimes disastrous, though well-meaning, efforts of the do-it-yourself arty-crafty types in the congregation: the field of vernacular art is very treacherous, and much patience may be required to dissuade the oldest member of the Mothers' Union from knitting a chasuble. Artists of genius are rare and their work must generally be reserved for exceptional occasions; the solution of the problem lies in the direction of bringing together more effectively artists and craftsmen of talent with the architects and theologians concerned with the building and decorating of churches. In a recent broadcast, the Rev. Peter Hammond pointed to a way out of our present vicious circle of low taste:

'Perhaps our most urgent need in this country is for some kind of centre, where architects, craftsmen, clergy, ordination candidates, and all who are concerned with the building of new churches (as distinct from the preservation of old ones), could find opportunities for studying the principles and the disciplines of sacred art; and for studying them in the context of the Church's function in contemporary society, and not in an aesthetic vacuum. There are several such centres in France today, and the work which they have done, through conferences, periodicals, and so on, has been of incalculable importance in creating a new and informed body of opinion within the French Church.'<sup>1</sup>

Returning to our consideration of the problems of contemporary church decoration, we may note that a curiously neglected theme of traditional iconography is that of the Baptism of Christ. In many churches there is space near the font for an impressive mural of our Lord's own submission to the rite of spiritual rebirth at the hands of John: an excellent example by Hans Feibusch is to be seen in Chichester Cathedral [*Plate 22*], and it is to be hoped that others may be inspired to illustrate this event either on the baptistery wall, or in sculpture on the font itself. All too often the

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in *The Listener*, Vol. LVII, No. 1469.

## *Symbolism and Worship*

neighbourhood of the font is bedevilled (literally?) by the presence of little framed prints of the utmost vulgarity and sentimentality: it cannot be over-emphasized that sacred art at its best is sacramental in character, but this could certainly not be said of the bunny-cherubbed tarrantry which adorns those entirely superfluous resorts of the middle-aged which are optimistically known as 'children's corners'. The children know better. And they deserve the best we can give them in the way of interpreting religious themes, both traditional and contemporary. The traditional themes are well known, but what is to be the new pattern of symbolism appropriate to our present ways of thinking about nature and history?

The essence of the problem is that we moderns have not yet achieved a fully integrated world-outlook comparable to that which was built up in antiquity and which came to completion in the middle ages. There is a sense in which we know too much about our environment and ourselves. We certainly know too much about the earth and the solar system and the evolutionary process to be able to make direct use of the symbolism traditionally associated with the theme of Creation. Many clergy accept and preach an evolutionary doctrine of creation, but it is doubtful if there is any church where an attempt has been made to incorporate into the symbolic decoration elements from this pattern—the evolution of man and human society. But surely something of the sort might be attempted, using, perhaps, the ancient device of the branching tree as a basis for the illustration of the emergence of man from his pre-human ancestry.

A new sequence which might be introduced into church decoration is that of significant scientific discoveries: one can easily imagine a window which, instead of the legend of some obscure saint of the dark ages, traced the series of discoveries which has given us our new knowledge and control of our environment—from the telescope, the microscope and the printing-press to contemporary electronic devices. Further, the remarkable natural patterns which have been revealed by the telescope and the microscope could well be used as decorative motifs to indicate the wonder of the creation—from planetary systems and galaxies to chromosomes and snowflakes.

The medieval sequence of the Labours of the Months is an

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

excellent way of bringing daily activity into the church of a rural parish, and it is no bad thing to remind urban congregations of their dependence on land-workers, but in a church in an urban parish surely some attempt could be made to represent the Labours of the Towns. Apparently it was thought perfectly natural at one time to depict a man sticking a pig or treading the grapes as something which ought to be related to his religion: when these carvings were made there was nothing 'quaint' about them—they were entirely contemporary and ordinary, so why should we hesitate to have representations of a typist or a panel-beater? Nor need we forget the humour and wit and satire of some of the medieval art: it is a great mistake to confuse seriousness with solemnity.

Another series which could well replace the improbable legends of obscure saints would be that of incidents from the actual lives of saintly persons from the time of the Reformation to the present day: there are many Christian heroes whose stories are told in Sunday Schools, Bible Classes and sermons, but who are never honoured pictorially by the Church they served. Again, the Fathers of the early Church and the Doctors of the later Church are much neglected nowadays, though many of them ought to be considered worthy of some recognition in art.

The Stations of the Cross can be a great aid to devotion, but, in fact, devotion is often hindered by the use of crude mass-produced specimens of the stages in the journey: further, a revised version of the Stations is surely necessary—one which would reduce their number by eliminating the apocryphal elements from the series and by concentrating on the Scriptural incidents. A modern French plaque in copper by Jean-Pierre Pernot well illustrates the sense of anguish which can be evoked by a near-abstract treatment of one of the moments in the Passion [*Plate 24*].

Often in the middle ages, the ceiling of a church, particularly over the chancel, was decorated in such a way as to suggest the realm of heaven. Further, by the erection of a tester, baldachino or some other form of canopy over the altar-table and by the hanging of lights (particularly the twelve-light 'corona'), the peculiar sanctity of the Eucharist was emphasized. There are elements here which could well be kept in mind when the more subtle aspects of creating an 'atmosphere of worship' are being considered by church

## *Symbolism and Worship*

designers. Modern lighting and construction techniques, together with the modern understanding of the use of colour, open up many interesting possibilities: the real danger is that of over-dramatization—something which is alien to the English tradition.

To the pre-Reformation Church the world often seems to have been experienced very much as an 'either-or' black and white place: God or Satan—Heaven or Hell. But today we hardly know what to think about Heaven and Hell, or, at least, our thinking is so abstract that we are perhaps wise in this generation to leave the Last Judgement to our successors as a subject suitable for church decoration. If we were bolder we might ask abstract painters and sculptors to submit examples of their work on such themes. Incidentally, the idea of the Trinity is another subject which might well be given effective expression by subjective abstract artists—one never feels very happy about the two-bearded-men-and-a-dove or the three-faced man which is sometimes to be seen in religious art. When the Doom paintings from the chancel arch were removed at the time of Henry VIII, it was ordered that the decoration of parish churches should consist of the Royal Arms and the writing up of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. But we, today, who are so uncertain about the Doom and who have no taste for writing on the wall, think that there are perhaps symbols more suitable which might be used—if only we could think what they are! We are quite happy to have the Royal Arms displayed discreetly in churches of the Establishment, but we know that there are symbols which have a greater religious content than mere heraldry. The presence in modern churches of so many vast blank walls, decorated only by the apparently inevitable cracks in the plaster and stains from the radiators, is evidence of our dilemma. The chapel at Burghclere, built for and decorated by Stanley Spencer, shows on a magnificent scale what can be done when there is vision of the integration of the sufferings of humanity with the sufferings of Christ and an experience of the eternal life which we may hope to share with him [*Plate 25*]. (The fact that Mr Spencer's highly idiosyncratic art is not to the taste of everyone is neither here nor there: no artist is universally acceptable.)

But however much our circumstances have changed since the Reformation, and however differently we think about the world

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

and our life in it in this scientific age, there are certain features which are constant. We are all born; we all sicken and die; most of us change from children into adults; many of us marry and become parents (though some reverse the order). It is possible, and indeed desirable, that these stages of normal development should be related symbolically and decoratively to the Services of Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, Healing and Burial which take place in our churches. (In the new Coventry Cathedral the idea of growth and development is symbolized by the different colours used in the glass of the windows, and also in their patterns which, to a large extent, are abstract in character, and which use natural forms and traditional symbols only in an allusive way.)

Quite clearly, there is still a strong demand in Christendom for the expression in art of the archetypal Mother-and-Child. This is a theme which has a perennial attraction for artists at all levels of ability: some produce no more than a pretty-pretty nursery decoration, and there are others who can provide historically accurate illustrations of some particular mother and child; but there are some who can cut through the external wrappings of time and fashion and confront us with the eternal wonder of motherhood and birth, and, amongst the Christian artists, very occasionally there is one who can lift a corner of the veil which cloaks the mystery of the Incarnation. Recent examples in sculpture include Henry Moore's *Madonna and Child* (St Matthew's, Northampton) [*Plate 26*] and Epstein's *Madonna and Child* (Convent of the Holy Child, Cavendish Square); while John Hutton's design for the *Virgin and Child* in the Coventry Cathedral glass screen also promises to be a powerful figure [*Plate 27*].

Of a different genre, but not without a haunting eloquence, is a work by Josephina de Vasconcellos which she has called 'Remember Hiroshima' [*Plate 28*]: it combines in one figure the person of Eve, the mother-of-all-living, with the person of Mary, the Queen of Heaven—for a moment this quintessential woman raises her protecting hands and challenges mankind to remember the vulnerable innocence of her children.

In Christian teaching today there is a tremendous emphasis on the importance of the Family: there is unlimited scope for murals, easel-paintings, glass and sculpture which would express and



## *Symbolism and Worship*

communicate this most intimate wonder of human relationships by representations of the Holy Family. One might suggest that to the age-old and powerfully archetypal figure of the Mother-and-Child it would not be inappropriate in our day and generation to add the figure of the Husband. The Coronation of the Virgin is not a subject which commends itself to many Protestants, but a group of Mary and Jesus *and* Joseph would provide a most valuable symbol today, especially as many people feel the need for a feminine element in the Godhead but are reluctant to admit the figure of our Lady and the Holy Child because of the doctrinal implications which they are disinclined to accept literally. But if the figure of St Joseph is added, those who believe literally in the virgin conception have lost nothing, while those who regard the traditions figuratively have gained a great deal.

It is clear that we need a new vision of the possibilities for contemporary worship and the use of symbolism—both ancient and modern. The new techniques and materials of the architects and builders, and the skill of the artists and craftsmen, must combine with the new movements in theology to reinvigorate the faith of our generation, and maybe, of others to come.

### 7. LITURGICAL SUBSTANCES AND SACRAMENTAL PRACTICE

Just as the essential pattern of human life is unchanging—birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity, senescence and death—so, too, are the essential substances which are part of that life or which minister to it—semen and blood, eggs and milk, wine and oil, water and wood, bread and fish, flesh and fruit, salt and honey, metal and stone. These 'life-substances', in one form or another, have been accommodated in the ritual actions of man as he has used them to become civilized. Most of them, in actuality or by symbolic substitute, still have a place in some part of the liturgical patterns of Christianity. Sacramental actions, whatever may be their specifically Christian signification, spring from the very source of consciousness itself. These primeval sacramental actions were refined in the cultic ideology of the Hebrews before they were further spiritualized by the words and actions of Jesus himself, and by the teachings of the New Testament writers about him. This

### *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

Biblical heritage is the basis of all Christian liturgical practice, and the elaborations of metaphysical doctrine should not be allowed to obscure the essentially biological and social nature of the ritual substances. Sacramental doctrine is an attempt to provide a rational philosophic account of actions which are ultimately derived from the non-rational responses of man to his own growing self-consciousness and environmental awareness. The appeal of sacramental action is primarily to the mental processes of the 'collective unconscious', and secondarily, for Christians, to the intuitive religious experience of the Biblical writers and of Jesus himself. The third stage, viz. that of trying to provide a metaphysical rationale for the ritual, very soon reaches the limits of logical categories. Anyone, for instance, who has tried to 'explain' baptism on purely rational grounds, or who has tried to compose a baptismal service which is immediately intelligible and intellectually acceptable as 'common sense' to the normal conscious mind, finds very soon how impossible is his task. There is present another mysterious factor which will not yield to logical analysis, but without which no rite can live.

Considerations of this kind should always be in the minds of those who seek to revise the services of the Church with the object of making them 'reasonable' to modern man while yet keeping them within the general liturgical tradition. The process of such revision requires tremendous care because of the inherent difficulty of 'satisfying' at the same time the conscious and the unconscious aspects of mental and emotional activity. Some parts of the Church stick to the liturgical practice and doctrinal formulations arrived at centuries ago, while another Christian body has virtually abandoned sacramental worship altogether: between these extremes are those within the 'reformed catholic' tradition who are seeking, through an intelligent twentieth-century approach to the problem, to provide orders of service which will appeal to the 'whole man' and also give expression to the primitive tradition. Such orders of service must not be contrary to 'reason' as we understand the term today, nor must they neglect the non-rational responses which can be evoked from the psyche of most people. The energies of the unconscious need to be released, and if they do not find one way out they will find another: if these psychic energies are not adequately provided for by organized religion the results may be

## *Symbolism and Worship*

disastrous either in individuals or in society. The Church is surely fulfilling a God-given function at a non-rational level if, for instance, it can bring 'salvation' to guilt-ridden individuals or combat the social evil of racial prejudice. Having made some such statement as that, one must immediately add that, at the same time, the rational element in Christianity must never be lost sight of. In this stage of Western civilization, with all its disconcerting new knowledge and new ways of thinking, there are obvious signs of a 'flight from reason' within the Church—a resurgence of obscurantism in both Catholic and Protestant circles. Those of us who appreciate the value of symbolic things and actions in providing for the needs of the whole man must always have a clear understanding of what it is we are doing or trying to do, and at all costs prevent a cult of irrationalism—that way lies idolatry. In its anxiety to avoid a superstitious regard for liturgical substances or religious imagery, Protestantism generally has underestimated the value of symbols to the psyche of most people, whereas the Catholic tradition very easily slips over into the treacherous realm of magic and fetichism. Somewhere a middle way must be found so that the ministry of the word and the ministry of the sacraments are indissolubly linked, and the idolatrous veneration of either book or bread is avoided.

Recent scientific study of substances and living processes has made them more mysterious than ever: increased knowledge of the sub-atomic order of action has made human existence even more enigmatic. But though the old materialism is meaningless, it does not follow that we can simply go back to the ways of thinking which preceded the scientific approach which gave rise to it. We must go forward, and, on our own new levels of understanding, we may well find that the ancient religious wisdom can have effective expression. Whatever the sciences may achieve in practice and theory, the basic biological and psychological facts of earthly existence are essentially unchanged; and however much we may be able to control and disturb the physical, mental and emotional life of individuals or peoples, the fundamental requirements of human life remain. These can still be symbolically expressed in the commonplace substances of traditional liturgical practice, and, by their cultic use, many of us are enabled to orientate our lives in the

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

direction of creative fulfilment. However, we are not all cast in precisely the same mould—there is great variety in ‘psychological types’—and there is no single simple pattern of symbolism to which everyone will respond. Nevertheless, the Christian Church is the guardian of a particular pattern which has proved of saving power to many: it now has the duty of examining this pattern and of expressing it in terms suitable to our own day.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Graham Sutherland's *Crucifixion* and Henry Moore's *Madonna and Child* are in St Matthew's Church, Northampton.



## INDEX OF SUBJECTS

- Abercius, 37  
 Abraham, 25, 98  
 Adam, 14, 88, 93, 113, 118 ff, 134, 215, 222  
 Adam and Eve, 117 ff, 141, 186  
 Adam of St Victor, 51, 165 f  
 Addleshaw, G. W. O., 247  
 Aesop, 16, 62  
 Alexander, 61  
 Allegory, 18 ff  
 Altar-table, 242 ff  
 Ambrose of Milan, 102 f  
 Anat, 114, 188 f  
*Anima*, 118  
 Animal sacrifice, 200  
 Animals, 204  
 Anointing, 159  
 Archetype, 73, 83, 84 ff, 91  
 Aristobulus, 29  
 Aristotle, 14, 58, 61  
 Artificial insemination, 152  
 Astrology, 107 ff  
 Augustine, 18, 61, 73  
  
 Baldachino, 244  
 Baptism, 101 ff, 140, 233, 235, 255 f  
*Barnabas, Epistle of*, 30  
 Basilica, 237  
 Beatus, 51  
 Bernard of Clairvaux, 51, 58  
 Bestiaries, 56  
 Birth, 100 f  
 Bisexuality, 113 f  
 Block-books, 51  
 Blood, 200 ff  
 Boat, 35 f  
*Book of Common Prayer*, 148, 247, 249, 252  
 Brain, 82 f  
 Branch, 175  
 Brandon, S. G. F., 218 f  
 Braque, 267  
 Bull, 75, 98, 194  
 Burgon, Dr, 33  
  
 Catacombs, 35  
 Cave, 103  
 Cave pictures, 95, 155, 176  
 Chancel, 245 f  
 Chaucer, 173  
 Chimera, 177  
 Church buildings, 232 ff  
 Church buildings, centrally planned, 238 ff  
 Church buildings, modern, 240, 249, 253 ff  
 Church of England, 48, 149  
 Ciborium, 244  
 Circumcision, 212  
 Clark, G., 267  
 Clement of Alexandria, 30 f, 134  
 Clement of Rome, 30  
 Collective unconscious, 82 f, 86  
 Constantine, 43, 50, 239, 242  
 Contraception, 149 f, 152  
 Corbusier, Le, 255  
 Corn, 189  
 Corona, 244  
 Covenant, 206  
 Cross, 36, 41, 198, 241  
 Cross, L. B., 91  
 Cyril of Jerusalem, 140  
  
 Darkness, 104 ff  
 Darwin, 13, 33  
 Davies, J. G., 243  
 Dead Sea Scrolls, 146, 223  
 Death, 215  
 Del Medico, H. H., 147  
 Dillistone, F. W., 262  
 Dix, G., 235  
 Dodd, C. H., 222, 228 f  
 Dove, 15, 35, 38  
 Dreams, 80 ff  
 Dualism, 99, 105, 189  
 Dürer, 53  
  
 Eagle, 57  
 Elephant, 57  
 Elijah, 15, 26

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

- Enkidu, 193 f  
*Enoch, Book of*, 16, 229 f  
Enthronement ceremonies, 69, 78,  
94, 96, 156, 159  
Epstein, 48, 109, 267, 272  
Etchells, F., 247  
Eucharist, 203, 234 f  
Eve, 117  
Evolution, 13 f, 124 f, 176, 269  
Eyck, van, 231
- Fable, 16 f  
Fall, 119  
Farrar, F. W., 29 ff  
Farrer, A., 91  
Father-son relationship, 212 f  
Feibusch, H., 268  
Fertility, 78, 96, 101, 143, 145, 178,  
187  
Fish, 35 ff  
Flesh-eating, 204  
Font, 102  
Fordham, F., 76, 82  
Frankfort, H. and H. A., 68, 75,  
77, 143  
Freud, 57  
Fundamentalism, 13, 20
- Gaster, Th. H., 147  
Gilgamesh, 193 f  
Golding, W., 77  
Good Samaritan, 23 f  
Grail, 243  
Graves, R., 131  
Gregory, 44  
Grünewald, 267
- Hadfield, J. A., 81  
Hammond, P., 268  
Handel, 28  
Hellenism, 220 f  
High Priest, 225  
Hippocrates, 196  
History, 67 ff  
Homily, 46 ff  
Honey, 58  
Honorius, 51, 165 f  
Hooke, S. H., 186  
Horns, 67, 177 ff  
Hot-cross bun, 112, 197
- Human nature, 120 f, 124  
Human sacrifice, 205, 209 f  
Hutton, J., 267, 272  
Huxley, A., 135 ff  
Hydrus, 56
- Iconoclastic Controversy, 42 ff  
Idols and idolatry, 42 ff  
Images, 43  
Infanticide, 209 f  
Instinct, 83  
Irenaeus, 89  
Isaac, binding of, 39, 199, 208, 211  
Ishtar-Astarte, 111, 172  
Isidore of Seville, 50, 90
- Jacobi, J., 86 f  
Jeremias, J., 20 ff  
Jesus, baptism, 15, 35, 97, 268  
Jesus, healings, 77  
Jesus, on marriage, 131, 134 f  
Jesus, origin, 153, 159  
Jesus, representations of, 40, 42, 44,  
52 f, 67  
Jesus, sacrificial death, 39, 213 ff  
Jesus, storm on Lake, 79, 93  
Jesus, symbols of, 37, 41, 57, 86, 116  
Jonah, 26, 35, 38  
Josephus, 109 f  
Joshua, 39  
Jung, C. G., 73, 84, 88, 91, 107,  
118, 162, 191, 198  
Justin Martyr, 36  
Justinian, 44
- Kingship, 97 ff
- Labour in the Vineyard, 21  
Labours of the Months, 63 ff, 179,  
269  
Lamb, 41, 111, 198 f, 202, 222, 224,  
227 ff, 232, 266  
Lambeth, 1958, 150  
Last Judgement, 65 f, 271  
Lazarus, 24  
Lee, L., 267  
Legend, 17 f  
Léger, F., 267  
Leonardo da Vinci, 115  
Leviathan, 38, 66, 94, 182



## Index of Subjects

- Levy, G. R., 193  
Light, 104 ff  
Lion, 56  
Liturgical drama, 51  
Liturgical movement, 251 ff  
*Logos*, 71, 175  
Lucifer, 109, 119, 181, 190
- Male, E., 51, 167  
Marduk, 95  
Marriage, 147 f, 151  
Mascall, E. L., 90  
Matisse, 267  
Melchizedek, 28, 53, 67, 156, 223 ff  
Messiah, 15, 17, 27, 69 f, 134, 159,  
205, 208, 214, 216, 228  
Messianic Banquet, 31, 203, 208,  
232  
Mills, E. D., 258  
Mithras, 191  
Monsters, 60  
Moon, 197  
Moore, H., 48, 272  
Moses, 15, 26, 38, 67, 98, 178, 183  
Mother-and-child, 40, 44, 272  
Mother Earth, 36, 76, 78, 188  
Mother Goddess, 111, 131 ff, 156,  
158, 171, 185  
Motherhood, symbols, 85  
Mothering Sunday, 26  
Murray, M., 178 f  
Myth, 12 f, 74 ff, 126
- Neoteny, 121 f  
Neumann, E., 84 f, 155 f  
New, K., 267  
New Year ceremonies, 68, 78, 156,  
226  
Nicaea, Second Council of, 45  
Nicholas, 62  
Nicolas of Lyra, 19  
Nicoll, Allardyce, 52  
Noah, 35  
Nudity, 123, 139
- Oedipus, 208  
Opposite pair, 191, 195  
Origen, 32 f, 118 f, 130, 223  
Original sin, 119 ff
- Parables, 20 ff  
Parent-child relationship, 199, 208 ff  
Paul, cosmology, 105, 129  
Paul, interpretation of Christ's  
death, 218 ff  
Paul, male dominance, 133  
Paul, mysticism, 135  
Paul, sonship of Jesus, 160  
Paul, typology, 34, 89, 130, 164  
Pavlov, 196  
Pelican, 56, 266  
Pernot, J-P., 270  
Personal symbols, 86  
Peter of Troyes, 50  
Philo, 29  
*Physiologus*, 58  
Pilloton, F., 267  
Piper, J., 48, 267  
Pisces, 38, 191  
Pius XII, 121  
Plato, 19, 86  
Platonism, 72  
Pliny, 58  
Potter and pots, 93, 132 f  
Priest, 206  
Priestley, J. B., 138 f  
Prodigal Son, 24  
Puberty, 122 f
- Queen of Heaven, 111, 161, 168  
Quest, 193
- Raby, F. J. E., 165  
Racialism, 107  
Rahab, 38, 94, 182  
Ras Shamra, 157, 188  
Red Sea crossing, 79, 96  
Reformation, 42, 46 ff, 58, 247 ff  
Reik, Th., 128  
Rembrandt, 53  
*Report on Doctrine*, 1938, 163  
Ringgren, H., 157  
Robinson, H. Wheeler, 126 ff  
Rocher, M., 267  
Roman villa, 235 ff  
Rouault, 267
- Sacred marriage, 96, 114, 144  
Sacrifice, 198 ff, 206 ff  
Sarah, 25, 146

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

- Sargant, W., 196  
Satan, 77, 86, 99, 105, 119, 178,  
181 f, 190, 199  
Scientific attitude, 74, 260, 262 f  
Serpent, 181  
Servant of the Lord, 27, 71, 105,  
216, 219, 228, 230  
Sex, 113 ff  
Sexuality, 117, 127 f, 142 ff, 145  
Shadow, 191  
Shepherd, 98, 205, 211, 231  
Snake, 86, 98, 184 f  
Son of man, 27, 195, 216  
*Sophia*, 70, 114, 174 f  
Spencer, S., 271  
Stations of Cross, 270  
Suger, 65  
Sutherland, G., 48, 267  
Symbol, 84 f  
Synagogue, 233 ff  
  
Temple, Herod's, 109, 233 ff, 236  
Tertullian, 37, 130  
Tester, 244  
Tiamat, 95  
Tiger, 56  
Toplady, 103  
Tree of Jesse, 65, 168, 175  
Tree of Knowledge, 126 f, 180  
Trees, 170 ff  
Twins, 190  
Two brothers, 186 ff  
  
Type and anti-type, 25 ff, 34  
Typology, 50 ff, 89 f, 130 f, 199  
  
Unconscious, 73, 83, 86, 91, 93, 190  
Unicorn, 57  
Ut-Napishtim, 195  
  
Vasconcellos, J. de, 272  
Virgin Birth, 160, 163  
Virgin Mary, 18, 44, 87 f, 115, 138,  
142, 153 ff, 161, 164 ff  
Virgin Mary, cult of, 44, 48, 53,  
165 ff, 242  
Virgin Mary, symbols, 85  
Virgin Mother, 40, 78  
Virginity, 153, 163  
Vine, 116  
Virtues and vices, 62 f  
  
Water, 92 ff  
Watts, A. W., 115, 142  
Werblowsky, R. J. Zwi, 102, 133  
White, V., 73  
Wise and Foolish Virgins, 24  
Wise Old Man, 116  
Witchcraft, 178 f  
Wittkower, R., 60  
Womb, 102 f  
  
Ziggurat, 96, 144  
Zodiac, 36, 38, 63 f, 108 ff, 155,  
183, 191, 266

## INDEX OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES

<i>Genesis</i>				16.14 .. .. .	207
1.27 .. .. .	113,	134	16.21 ff .. .. .	207	
1.29 .. .. .	..	204	17.10-13 .. .. .	204	
2.17 .. .. .	..	129	23.9-21 .. .. .	207	
2.24 .. .. .	..	134	<i>Numbers</i>		
3.15 .. .. .	..	182	12.6 .. .. .	80	
3.22 .. .. .	..	129	17.8 .. .. .	58	
4.7 .. .. .	..	129	19 .. .. .	30	
4.8 .. .. .	..	182	21.6, 8 .. .. .	181, 183	
5.2 .. .. .	..	113	22 .. .. .	17, 109	
8.21 .. .. .	..	126	24.17 .. .. .	109	
9 .. .. .	..	107	<i>Deuteronomy</i>		
9.2 .. .. .	..	204	7.5 .. .. .	172	
9.4 .. .. .	..	204	9 .. .. .	97	
9.20-27 .. .. .	..	123	12.31 .. .. .	209	
10 .. .. .	..	107	16.21 .. .. .	172	
11 .. .. .	..	144	18.15 .. .. .	97	
12.14 .. .. .	..	146	21.23 .. .. .	219	
16 .. .. .	..	187	33.16 .. .. .	173	
16.2 .. .. .	..	158	<i>Joshua</i>		
17 .. .. .	..	212	2.18 .. .. .	30	
17.15 ff .. .. .	..	158	<i>Judges</i>		
21.4 .. .. .	..	212	6.21 .. .. .	198	
22 .. .. .	55,	199	9 .. .. .	17	
25 .. .. .	..	187	9.8-15 .. .. .	174	
25.21 ff .. .. .	..	158	11.29-40 .. .. .	210	
26.28-30 .. .. .	..	206	14.6 .. .. .	55	
29 .. .. .	..	187	16.3 .. .. .	55	
31.44-54 .. .. .	..	206	<i>I Samuel</i>		
32.22-32 .. .. .	..	97	14.2 .. .. .	174	
38 .. .. .	..	187	16.14 .. .. .	106	
48.13 .. .. .	..	55	22.6 .. .. .	174	
<i>Exodus</i>				<i>II Samuel</i>	
11.4-6 .. .. .	..	210	5.23 .. .. .	174	
12 .. .. .	207,	210	<i>I Kings</i>		
12.7 .. .. .	..	55	2.19 .. .. .	54	
12.29 .. .. .	..	210	8.12 .. .. .	107	
15.23 .. .. .	..	103	15.13 .. .. .	172	
24.3-8 .. .. .	206,	207	<i>Leviticus</i>		
25.31 ff .. .. .	..	173	14.7 .. .. .	207	
29.38-42 .. .. .	..	207			

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

<i>I Kings—cont.</i>				4.12-16	..	..	..	145
17.12	..	..	..	55	5.3	..	..	140
18.19	..	..	..	172	7.6-9	..	..	145
19	..	..	..	97				
<i>II Kings</i>				<i>Isaiah</i>				
3.27	..	..	..	209	1.11-17	..	..	211
4.32-37	..	..	..	55	5.1-7	..	..	116
18.4	..	..	..	183	6.2	..	..	181
23.5, 11	..	..	..	107 f	7.14	..	..	156
					9.2	..	..	106
					11.1	..	..	175
<i>Job</i>					14.12	..	..	109
3.8	..	..	..	95	14.29	..	..	181
26.12 f	..	..	..	94	24.27	..	..	202
33.15 f	..	..	..	80	25.6-8	..	..	203
38.31 f	..	..	..	108	27.1	..	..	94
					30.6	..	..	181
					45.6 f	..	..	106
<i>Psalms</i>					51.9 f	..	..	94
2	..	..	..	144	52.13-53.12	..	..	71
2.7	..	..	..	159	53.7	..	..	228
22.14	..	..	..	201	53.10	..	..	229
23	..	..	..	205	54.5	..	..	99
46.7, 11	..	..	..	157	60.1-3	..	..	105
65.7	..	..	..	93	61.1	..	..	159
72	..	..	..	69, 144	62.4 f	..	..	99
74.12-14	..	..	..	94	64.8	..	..	132
77.19	..	..	..	93	66.12 f	..	..	133
80.14 f	..	..	..	116				
84.5 f	..	..	..	193				
89.9	..	..	..	93	<i>Jeremiah</i>			
89.10	..	..	..	94	3.14	..	..	99
89.20, 26 f	..	..	..	159	4.4	..	..	212
91	..	..	..	193	6.20	..	..	211
92	..	..	..	57	7.18	..	..	108, 111
102	..	..	..	56	7.30 f	..	..	209
104.5	..	..	..	13	16.16	..	..	36
106.9	..	..	..	79	31.31-34	..	..	212
107.23-30	..	..	..	79	44.15-19	..	..	111
107.29	..	..	..	25				
110	..	..	..	144, 156	<i>Ezekiel</i>			
110.4	..	..	..	226	1.5-14	..	..	177
139.12	..	..	..	106	8.8-12	..	..	177
148.3-5	..	..	..	108	8.16	..	..	108
					10.14	..	..	177
<i>Proverbs</i>					16.20 f	..	..	209
8.22-30	..	..	..	70	29.3	..	..	94
					34	..	..	205
<i>Song of Songs</i>					34.11 f	..	..	205
1.16-2.1	..	..	..	144	34.23 f	..	..	205
2.3-6	..	..	..	145	34.31	..	..	205
3.11	..	..	..	54				

*Index of Biblical Passages*

*Ezekiel—cont.*

39.17-19 .. .. . 202  
47.12 .. .. . 170

*Hosea*

2.16, 19 .. .. . 99  
11.1 .. .. . 28

*Joel*

2.28 .. .. . 81

*Amos*

7.4 .. .. . 94  
8.9 .. .. . 104  
9.3 .. .. . 94, 95

*Micah*

6.7 .. .. . 210

*Zephaniah*

1.7 .. .. . 202

*Zechariah*

3.8 .. .. . 175  
9.9 .. .. . 25

*Malachi*

4.2 .. .. . 108  
4.5 f .. .. . 213

*Wisdom of Solomon*

2.24 .. .. . 182

*Ecclesiasticus*

24 .. .. . 166  
24.12-19 .. .. . 175  
25.24 .. .. . 185

*Matthew*

1.18 .. .. . 103  
1.23 .. .. . 157  
1.25 .. .. . 161  
2.1-11 .. .. . 108  
2.15 .. .. . 28  
12.39 f .. .. . 26, 35, 38  
21.28-31 .. .. . 190  
24.19 .. .. . 31  
28.3 .. .. . 105

*Mark*

4.11 f .. .. . 20  
4.41 .. .. . 93  
6.51 .. .. . 93  
10.6-9 .. .. . 131  
10.7 f .. .. . 134  
12.25 .. .. . 135  
15.33 .. .. . 104  
16.2 .. .. . 105  
16.18 .. .. . 183

*Luke*

1.7 .. .. . 158  
1.17 .. .. . 213  
1.78 .. .. . 108  
2.32 .. .. . 106  
2.35 .. .. . 168  
3.16 .. .. . 102  
4.18 .. .. . 159  
4.25-27 .. .. . 26  
10.18 .. .. . 109, 182  
15.11-32 .. .. . 190  
17.26-30 .. .. . 26, 35  
18.29 f .. .. . 135  
22.53 .. .. . 105  
24.26 .. .. . 218  
24.27 .. .. . 26

*John*

1-2 .. .. . 71  
1.4 f .. .. . 106  
1.32 f .. .. . 101  
3.1-8 .. .. . 101  
3.14 f .. .. . 26, 184  
3.19 .. .. . 106  
6 .. .. . 31  
6.60 .. .. . 201  
8.12 .. .. . 106  
8.44 .. .. . 182  
9.5 .. .. . 106  
12.24 .. .. . 189  
13.30 .. .. . 105  
19.32-37 .. .. . 231  
19.34 .. .. . 201  
21.1 ff .. .. . 35

*Acts*

2.46 .. .. . 216  
3.17 f .. .. . 217  
3.21 .. .. . 217

*Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*

<i>Acts—cont.</i>				3.13 .. .. .	222
5.15 .. .. .	191	3.28 .. .. .	135		
5.30 .. .. .	176	4.22-5.1 .. .. .	26		
7.51 .. .. .	212	4.26 .. .. .	131		
8.26-38 .. .. .	219	6.12 .. .. .	222		
8.32 .. .. .	228				
13.47 .. .. .	105	<i>Ephesians</i>			
26.18 .. .. .	105	4.22 .. .. .	140		
26.23 .. .. .	105	5.2 .. .. .	207		
28.3 ff .. .. .	183	5.14 .. .. .	108		
		6.12 .. .. .	105		
<i>Romans</i>					
1.3 f .. .. .	160	<i>Colossians</i>			
1.20 .. .. .	164	2.14 f .. .. .	221		
3.24 f .. .. .	222	3.9 .. .. .	140		
5.9 .. .. .	222				
5.12-21 .. .. .	221	<i>I Thessalonians</i>			
5.12 f .. .. .	129, 130	2.14-16 .. .. .	222		
5.14 ff .. .. .	25, 89, 222				
5.17 .. .. .	89	<i>I Timothy</i>			
6.3-5 .. .. .	101	2.12-14 .. .. .	185		
6.4 .. .. .	238				
8.3 .. .. .	221	<i>Hebrews</i>			
8.32 .. .. .	221	1.1-4 .. .. .	223		
16.20 .. .. .	182	2.14 f .. .. .	224		
		2.18 .. .. .	224		
<i>I Corinthians</i>					
1.24 .. .. .	222	4.15 .. .. .	224		
2.2 .. .. .	222	6.20 .. .. .	28		
2.7 f .. .. .	221	7.3 .. .. .	156, 226		
5.7 .. .. .	222	7.17 .. .. .	226		
10.1-4 .. .. .	26	8.1 .. .. .	224		
10.6-11 .. .. .	34	8.4 f .. .. .	72		
11.8 f .. .. .	133	9.7 .. .. .	225		
11.21 .. .. .	234	9.8 .. .. .	226		
15.3 .. .. .	218	9.9 .. .. .	225		
15.22 .. .. .	89, 215	9.11 ff .. .. .	214, 225		
15.25 .. .. .	129	9.22 .. .. .	226		
15.26 .. .. .	221	9.22-28 .. .. .	72		
15.36 .. .. .	189	9.28 .. .. .	224		
15.37 f .. .. .	189	10.19 f .. .. .	72		
15.45 .. .. .	89	10.25 .. .. .	224		
15.47 .. .. .	89	11.17-19 .. .. .	199		
		12.2 .. .. .	224		
<i>II Corinthians</i>					
5.16 f .. .. .	219	<i>I Peter</i>			
		1.18 f .. .. .	228		
<i>Galatians</i>					
1.11 f .. .. .	220	2.24 .. .. .	176		
1.15 f .. .. .	220	3.18-21 .. .. .	34		
		5.8 .. .. .	56		

*Index of Biblical Passages*

<i>II Peter</i>					5.9	..	..	..	..	230
1.19	..	..	..	109	5.12 f	..	..	..	..	230
					6.9	..	..	..	..	244
<i>I John</i>					8.10 f	..	..	..	..	109
1.5	..	..	..	106	9.1	..	..	..	..	109
					12.1	..	..	..	III,	162
					19.9, 17	..	..	..	..	202
<i>Revelation</i>					20.1-10	..	..	..	..	95
3.1	..	..	..	III	21.1	..	..	..	..	94
4.6	..	..	..	236	21.9	..	..	..	131,	162
4.5	..	..	..	III	22.1 f	..	..	..	..	170
5.6	..	..	..	III, 230	22.16	..	..	..	..	109











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