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The academic year 1977-78 marks a special turning-point in the history of our Faculty of Theology. As from August 1st 1978, the Faculty of Theology ceased to function as one of the faculties in the University. This followed the changes which the Maltese Socialist Government introduced in tertiary education.

For over 200 years, the faculty formed part of the State University of Malta which in actual fact knows its very origin to the Jesuit 'Collegium Melitense' founded on the island in 1593. In 1927, the Jesuit College was granted the faculty of conferring degrees in Theology. Following the expulsion of the Jesuits from the island in 1768, the University of Malta was erected in November 1769 and together with the faculties of Law, Medicine and Arts it included the Faculty of Theology.

Already in July 1974, the position of the Faculty was put into question. At that time, the Socialist Government intended to amend the Education Act of 1948 and so appointed a Commission to study ways in which the Royal University of Malta could be restructured. The Chairman of the Commission was Professor Ralph Dahrendorf and had Profs. J.B. Butterworth and Profs. P. Streeten as members. The Commission argued that 'partly because of its origin, the University has always had a close link with the Church which has a special place in Malta ... With regard to the Faculty of Theology,' continued the Commission in its proposals with legislative implications, 'we subscribe to the view that it is in the interest of the community as a whole that a University should follow the pattern of many non-denominational continental universities and continue to provide training in theology within its precincts. Those aspiring to join the priesthood would as a result work in an environment which reflects contemporary society and would obtain a better understanding of its problems.'

In spite of this view, which was emphasized again and again by the *Students' Theological Association* and other educational bo-

dies in the island, the Government decided that the University should no longer provide for the teaching of theology. In this way, the faculty was expelled from the University and the local ecclesiastical authorities had to see how the faculty could continue to exist. As from October last, the Institution will have the status of a Canonical Faculty with authority to confer academic degrees recognised internationally. This was confirmed by the Holy See in a decree dated October 16, 1978 in which decree the Congregation for Catholic Education says: 'After more than 200 years, strenuous labours and devoted service for the good of the Catholic Church, this year the civil authorities stripped the juridical status which the Faculty enjoyed for over two centuries, although degrees, diplomas and other study certificates are still publicly recognised'.

This decree is a proof that the Faculty of Theology in Malta was of great service both for the Church and for the people of the country, attaining such a high degree of performance in teaching and research that it deserved continued recognition from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. While the controversy was going on, our Association emphasized over and over again that a University environment is extremely helpful for the development of a really creative theology and very useful indeed for the training of the priest. Perhaps now even more so as Malta is becoming a country open to new ideas and values that are challenging the traditional Catholic religiosity of our people.

Notwithstanding these changes and the student unrest in the past two years, the Association still offers the service of its review *Melita Theologica*. We apologize with readers for the delay in the publication of our review.

All correspondence and articles are henceforth to be sent to:
The Editor, *Melita Theologica*, c/o Mater Admirabilis College,
Tal-Virtù, Rabat, MALTA.

January 1979

THE EDITOR

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

In his film, *The Seventh Seal*, Ingmar Bergman, who has been doing with a movie camera what contemporary philosophers of religion are doing in page after page of learned treatises, tells the story of a knight who returns from the Crusades to find his native Denmark scarred by the black plague. He meets 'Death' in human form and engages him in a running game of chess while he searches for the meaning of his life and ponders the existence of God. In seeking to become certain that there is a God, the knight carries on an intellectual discussion with his squire who is just as certain that there is no God. The plague requires both knight and squire to perform various acts of compassion, but it is the squire who acts while the knight is too involved in philosophical speculations. He deviates from this task only very briefly to share a meal of strawberries and milk with their simplicity that he tries to hide them from the sight of death.

Towards the end of the film, Bergman's message becomes as clear as a bell. One of man's few certainties is his own mortality. His search for the 'one significant action', inspired by love of one's neighbour that would give his life a meaning must be performed within the context of his mortality and his search for God. Thus ultimate values must be placed in an act of benevolence, in appreciation of another person which may grow into a salvific and redemptive act of love. If the knight reaches any peace at all beyond death, it would be because of his love for the family, rather than as a result of his systematic and philosophic (and regrettably fruitless search) for certain knowledge of God.

The contemporary philosopher of religion finds himself in much the same sort of situation that Bergman's knight found himself. The problem of the philosopher of religion has become at once a problem of the existence, the nature, the knowledge as well as of the experience of God. The problem has become all the more complex in view of the many and varied issues which have arisen in the domain of theology, and which until not too long ago the philosopher of religion had almost taken for granted and the solutions to which he had questioned mainly for academic purposes. As a result, we are witnessing a universal search for a meaningful God. God has, as it were, suddenly become the object of research not

only among the leading philosophers and theologians of all faiths but as well among anthropologists, sociologists and not least among playwrights and film-makers.

An analysis of all the approaches to the problem of God is beyond the scope of this paper. I shall, however, submit a series of points marking some of the major trends in current thinking and belief and in the course of which make whatever specifications as may be necessary.

I – PRIMITIVE RELIGION

How the image or the idea of the 'divine' originated in our culture is not an easy task to determine. Looking back, however, one might possibly say that there have been, broadly speaking, three major streams which contributed towards the formation of the image.¹

The first stream is undoubtedly the bible which projected a creator, the one and only being responsible for law and order in the universe and who created all living and non-living things. Beyond the projection of a creator, however, what is of utmost importance about the bible is that it brought God down to earth and men of good will learnt that life is worthless unless they minister to their neighbour.

Then there is Greek metaphysics which conceived the universe as a hierarchical cosmos centred around the Platonic idea of the Good par excellence on the one hand, and the Aristotlean Pure Act or Substance, necessarily eternal and immutable and the object of human desire on the other. Despite the good intentions of Greek philosophy and the invaluable service it has performed throughout the centuries, God emerged from it as a Being placed so high up in the hierarchical order of creation that he became unreachable and, consequently, man today has lost contact with him and is now experiencing his absence in much the same way that a sick man experiences the absence of health.

There is yet another stream which has become the object of intensive and extensive research: primitive religion. Scholars, like Durkheim, Otto, Eliade, among many others, are discovering God and the very heart of religion in the primitive distinctions made in all ancient cultures between the sacred and the profane or between the holy and the secular.

Eliade, for one, argues that in the events that took place in pri-

¹Cf. W. Richard Comstock, 'Theology After the Death of God', *Cross Currents*, XVI (1966) 268-269.

mordial time (which, in passing, is what he means by 'myth'), primitive man all too soon became aware of the sacred and the profane. Through his experience of the sacred, primitive man understood his world to be a cosmos rather than a chaos and this discovery provided him with a 'fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation'. It provided him with his 'mecca' or 'temple' around which he began to organize the heterogeneous and seemingly scattered and shattered experiences that made up his existence into a meaningful *unum quid*, possessing order, integrity and coherence.²

All three streams, each in its own way and within its own framework, contributed towards the formation of the image of God in our culture: God is thus seen as the moral, metaphysical and sacred point of unity which gave man's world some meaning and value. But the currents and cross currents of the sixties, coming as they did with increasingly greater force, have demolished the traditional image of God. The role that the contemporary philosopher of religion is now assigning God is far different. It is not God who now gives man's world some value and meaning; on the contrary, it is man's existence and experience of life that today gives meaning to God.

Is God therefore no longer the one and only God, all-knowing, immutable, eternal, simple, infinite, perfect, omnipresent — the 'pure act' — that traditional philosophy had claimed he was? Has the new philosophy of religion reached the shattering conclusion that God is in fact no longer what traditionally we thought he was but something quite different and until we rediscover his nature he should be pronounced 'dead'?

II — THE DEATH OF GOD IN NIETZSCHE

Though the problem of God has, over the centuries, taken on different dimensions, the current trend may be said to have started with Nietzsche. Nietzsche may not have been the first philosopher to use the phrase 'God is dead', but he is clearly responsible for the concept today. For Nietzsche, God was a multifaced entity: with his death, as if with a single shot, many other related matters, as important for man as God himself, were dissolved into a dew.

Nietzsche was not after the death of God as such but with the rise of the 'higher man' in his philosophy he felt it necessary to

²M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. W. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1957), p.3.

proclaim God's death as an indispensable antecedent to the autonomy of 'superman'. In syllogistic form, his argument would probably be difficult to construct. His major premise could just as well be: 'If God is dead, then man is supreme', as it could be: 'If man is supreme, then God is dead'.

The God Nietzsche knew was incompatible with his philosophy. For one thing, it was a God essentially related to an 'other world', whether this 'other world' is construed metaphysically or supernaturally.

The eternal and unchangeable God he knew ran counter to his philosophy of progress and becoming: '... all this teaching of the one and the plenum and the unmoved and the permanent ... That is only a parable. It is of time and becoming that the best parables should speak. Let them be a praise and a justification for all impermanence'.

The God he knew was a creator and as long as man held this concept of God man could never become 'like unto him'. Man would be frozen, as it were, in the very same essence that God had originally given him.

The God he knew was the source of morality whose will determined good and evil: 'To look upon nature as if it were a proof of the goodness and care of a god; to interpret history in honour of a divine reason, as a constant testimony to a moral order in the world and a moral final purpose ... all that is now past'.

The God he knew was a merciful God, the God of pity, which in Nietzsche's opinion was an acknowledgement of weakness: 'Pity stands opposed to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality: it has a depressing effect ... Pity crossed the law of development, which is the law of selection'.

Finally, the God he knew was paradoxically unknown and unknowable. He was the God of mystery, unavailable to the scrutiny and analysis of human reason and he goes so far as to refer to him as 'a conjecture'³.

Thus the God Nietzsche had been familiar with was the God 'in whom man lived, moved and had his being', but with his death all the functions that he performed for man faded out of existence, as did all that provided meaning, importance and ultimate value to man and his world.

For good or ill, Nietzsche's philosophy freed man from religion, metaphysics and the sacred and God's dogmatic reality became in his philosophy a myth. What becomes of man, now that Nietzsche

³Cf. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *Joyful Wisdom* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1945), *passim*.

no longer allowed him to be the alpha and the omega of creation? Nietzsche unhesitatingly replies: 'It is only since he lies in his tomb that you have been resurrected. Only now the great noon comes; only now the higher man becomes Lord'. God's death did not leave man an orphan; on the contrary, with his death God bequeathed to man what man had been looking for since time immemorial: unlimited freedom and unbounded creativity. With God's death, a transfer of powers has come into effect. Man has become like unto God not merely as in the days of Eden with the power to *know* good and evil but to *make* good and evil, to determine and decree what henceforth should constitute and enhance man's noble life. In a word, the Nietzschean man became the final arbiter of good and evil.

At this point, I must enter a *caveat*. The death of God for Nietzsche did not necessarily mean that something had intrinsically happened to God himself. It simply meant that something had happened and is happening in the history of human consciousness: man is not a static being whose nature and forms of apprehension are immutable fixed, frozen or crystallized by either God or nature itself. On the contrary, man is a dynamic historical consciousness who has found himself inescapably caught between two points in the period of transition: from having been a religious man to becoming a secular man.

With God's death, the Nietzschean man has become fully conscious of the world around him: his attention is now focussed on a 'this-wordly' existence. Man, Nietzsche claims, has become 'of age' and needs neither religion nor the provident hand of god to guide him through the vicissitudes of life and of history. He must pave and pay his own way.

In brief, the truth of the Nietzschean antecedent (whichever major premise is selected) involves the truth of his consequent.

It is precisely on Nietzsche's conclusion that various historical accounts of such philosophers as Hegel, Eliade, Bonhoeffer and the interpretations provided by such contemporary philosophers and theologians as Altizer, Cox, Hemilton, Vahanian and, definitely not least, the Bergman films, converge.

III – BONHOEFFER'S RELIGIONLESS CHRISTIANITY

Indeed, time was when man's world of power, purpose, ultimate concern and dedication was divinely oriented. Now man's world is a profane landscape – like Bergman's bleak, black and white photography suggesting barrenness and desolation – that can at no point reveal even the faintest presence of the sacred in its secular

existence. The man 'who once piled his thoughts to the sky in these stones' now turns to an earth in perpetual movement without design or purpose and without sacred orientation and direction.

Bonhoeffer speaks of the death of religion and of metaphysics in an age and a world now understood without reference to an 'other world' and tries to lay the foundations for a religionless christianity. 'We are proceeding toward a time of no religion at all', he wrote from his prison cell in Nazi Germany. Like Nietzsche before him, he emphasizes the importance of secularism for modern thought: an age and a world without God and religion is essentially an age and a world of secularism, a process which, Bohhoeffer claims, has occurred in all the sciences. The hypothesis of God is just not required today to explain any of the facts of physics or biology:

God as a working hypothesis in morals, politics, or science, has been surmounted and abolished; and the same thing has happened in philosophy and religion. For the sake of intellectual honesty, that working hypothesis should be dropped, or as far as possible eliminated. A scientist or physician who sets out to edify is a hybrid.⁴

In its special issue on the Death of God, *Time* popularizes these reflections in the following terms:

The development of capitalism, for example, freed economics from church control and made it subject only to marketplace supply and demand. Political theorists of the Enlightenment proved that law and government were not institutions handed down from on high, but things that men had created themselves. The 18th century deists argues that man as a rational animal was capable of developing an ethical system that made as much sense as one based on revelation . . .

But the most important agent in the secularizing process was science. The Copernican revolution was a shattering blow to faith in a Bible that assumed the sun went round the earth and could be stopped in its tracks by divine intervention, as Joshua claimed. And while many of the pioneers of modern science – Newton and Descartes, for example – were devout men, they assiduously explained much of nature that previously seemed godly mysteries. Others saw no need for such reverential lip service.⁵

Bonhoeffer concedes, however, that man may still need God in

⁴D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: MacMillan, 1953), Letter dated July 16, 1944.

⁵'Is God Dead?', *Time* (Canada Edition), April 8, 1966.

the realms of anxiety, fear and guilt but in almost the same breath he adds that even in these areas the process of secularization is taking place and man yet find that the resources within him are more than adequate to help him cope with these phenomena.

The death of religion in Bonhoeffer has basically the same meaning that the death of God has in Nietzsche: it is oriented towards the 'other world', as a result of which this world is represented as something to be saved from. But paradoxically as it may sound, through his rejection of religion, Bonhoeffer is genuinely searching for God – at what he calls 'the centre of life', Jesus Christ, through whom and by whom 'life has a meaning for us'.

Understood in terms of conformation to Christ, Bonhoeffer's religionless christianity is redemptive and salvific. He is concerned above all both with the way in which Christ takes form within man's society as well as with his reconciliation to God through the person and the work of Christ. In a beautiful passage, he says:

Our coming of age leads us to a true recognition of our situation before God. God would have us know that we must live as man who manage our lives without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark: xv, 34). The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matthew viii, 17, makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering.⁶

I shall leave Bonhoeffer at that.

IV – THE RADICAL THEOLOGIANS

It would seem that man, the common man-in-the-street, possibly under the weight of this philosophical onslaught, has gradually worked himself into the position where he can claim that he has surpassed God and recognizes nothing that does not have its origin in man himself and nothing that cannot find ultimate fulfilment in himself.

Much to this effect, Eliade writes:

Modern non-religious man assumes a new existential situation he regards himself solely as the subject and agent of history, and he refuses all appeal to transcendence. In other words, he accepts no model for humanity outside the human condition as it

⁶ Bonhoeffer, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

can be seen in the various historical situations. Man makes himself, and he only makes himself completely as he desacralizes himself and the world. The sacred is the prime obstacle to his freedom. He will become himself only when he is totally de-mysticized . . .⁷

William Hamilton, one of the prime movers of the death of God movement of the sixties, lists ten possible interpretations of the phrase 'God is dead' in relation to the thesis originally proposed by Nietzsche and propagated, among others, by Eliade. In summary form:

(i) It might mean that there is no God and that there never has been. This position is traditional atheism of the old-fashioned kind.

(ii) It might mean that there was once a God to whom adoration, praise and trust were appropriate, possible and even necessary, but that there is now no such God. This is the position of the death-of God or radical theology.

(iii) It might mean that the idea of God and the word of God itself both are in need of radical reformulation . . . a new treatment of the idea and the word can be expected, however unexpected and surprising it may turn out to be.

(iv) It might mean that our traditional liturgical and theological language needs a thorough overhaul; the reality abides, but classical modes of thought and forms of language may well have had it.

(v) It might mean that the Christian story is no longer a saving or healing story.

(vi) It might mean that certain concepts of God, often in the past confused with the classical Christian doctrine of God, must be destroyed.

(vii) It might mean that men do not today experience God except as hidden, absent, silent.

(viii) It might mean that the gods men make, in their thought and action . . . , must always die so that the true object of thought and action, the true God, might emerge, come to life, be born anew.

(ix) It might have a mystical meaning: God must die in the world so that he can be born in us. In many forms of mysticism the death of Jesus on the cross is the time of that worldly death . . . and it is probably this complex of ideas that lies behind the German chorale *God Himself Is Dead* that may well be the historical source for our modern use of 'Death of God'.

⁷ Eliade, *op.cit.*, p. 203. Emphasis is author's.

(x) Finally, it might mean that our language about God is always inadequate and imperfect.⁸

These positions or attitudes towards the problem of God today may, for our purposes, be grouped under the following headings:

(a) *God's Non-existence*

There is at least one aspect of the problem of God with which philosophers of religion seem to be in agreement. That aspect is by no means concerned with God's non-existence. In fact, the philosopher of religion finds the concept itself of the non-existence of God totally incompatible with his philosophical research in that it denies the very object of his search.

By following up Nietzsche's philosophical excursions, the radical theologians did not mean to add more fuel to the fire which he initiated. On the contrary, it appears they tried to undo the Nietzschean knot and their concern was to search for newer ways to express God's reality and to make him more meaningful and acceptable to contemporary society.

Indeed, the whole history of mankind, but more particularly the history of the 19th century, is being reinterpreted not from the standpoint of the non-existence of God (which may be said to be traditional atheism of the old-fashioned kind), but from the standpoint of the death-of-God as a necessary prelude to a new image of God. All significant events are, in fact, being reinterpreted as having been a preparation for man's coming-of-age and adulthood. The 19th century, says Hamilton, lived the reality of the death of God and now instructs us to do the same. He continues:

A whole series of themes in the 19th century deals, directly or indirectly, with the collapse of God into the world, and thus with the death of God. Goethe and the romantics spoke of the movement from transcendence to nature, and even Protestants were invited by some of their spokesmen at the beginning of the century to fling themselves on the bosom of nature to recapture a lost divinity. William Blake is singing mysteriously of the death of the transcendent God at the close of the 18th century, and in the French Revolution itself we can perceive the close connection between regicide and deicide. Hegel, as early as 1807, speaks elliptically of God's death, and the left-wing Hegelians like Strauss and Feuerbach make it much clearer — the attributes of God must be transmuted into concrete values. Karl Marx's own

⁸ W. Hamilton, 'The Death of God', in D.E. Hartsock, *Contemporary Religious Issues* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 8-9.

Marxism is in one sense an attempt to recover for the human community the values previously ascribed to God.

Ibsen and Strindberg knew the death of God, as did Victorian England. George Eliot found God and immortality impossible, duty alone irresistible, while the young Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* sang a song for a whole generation ...

And on our side of the Atlantic, Hawthorne rather quietly, and Melville with unforgettable force, laid the God of the Puritan tradition to rest. Perhaps the most unforgettable image of the dying God in our language is that of Ahab finally fixing his harpoon in Moby Dick's side, as the two of them sink together, both of them evil.⁹

As an immediate consequence of this historic event – Hamilton claims it happened in one sense with Jesus on the cross; in another sense in the Europe and America of the last century; and in a third sense, today, just now – the contemporary philosopher of religion has to strive, during this interim period of godlessness and religionless, to redefine and reexplain God's presence and reality. His task, therefore, is to formulate a new image and concept of God basing this image and concept on areas of human experience that indicate as clearly and unmistakeably as possible, the presence in life of something beyond and far superior to man.

To turn to Bergman for an illustration of these reflections: his characters move and live in an atmosphere of conscious absence of the divine and everything else around them. But however desolate, frustrated, alienated they may be, they seek nonetheless to become certain that there is something meaningful in this life and something fulfilling beyond death. And yet they go through their shattered journey of life with little communication with each other ('Why can't we be nice to each other?' says Eva to Jan in Bergman's film *Shame*), less with the surrounding world ('Our radio and telephone are broken down') and none with God. But it is perhaps in *The Silence*, rather than in any of his other films, that Bergman works out this idea more forcefully. *The Silence* is a brutal and oppressive commentary of hell on earth: the cold horror of human existence when God averts his face and there is no light at all. In this film, he portrays two sisters travelling in a strange country and are assigned to and confined in two adjoining rooms in a cavernous hotel in a strange city whose language is totally foreign. Displaced, alienated as they are, they cannot communicate with God or their neighbour and feel futile and lost, withdrawn into them

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

selves. It is the tragic solitude of beings who have lost or never set out to seek what Bergman is trying to communicate to the viewer, namely, that man needs a God much closer to home, a God within himself.

(b) *The Loss of the Experience of God*

Are we, therefore, speaking of the loss of the experience of God? On the surface, it would seem so. But there is a difference. Apart from the obsession to affirm man's maturity, coming-of-age or independence, possibly even metaphysically speaking, a reaffirmation of God's reality and presence is precisely what the Death-of-God movement had set out to achieve today and, paradoxically, it has been trying to achieve it through the loss of the experience of God. Its *raison d'être* is precisely to force scholars to undertake a long overdue reexamination of the problem of God and to make every man ask himself and answer for himself the question of God means to him personally.

Though their doctrine has been termed atheistic or at least bordering on atheism, the radical theologians are no more atheists than were the early followers of Christ who were invariably called 'atheists' and 'Christians': the former because they stopped believing in the gods of pagan antiquity; the latter because they started believing in a new god: Christ.

The moral, social, political and psychological upheavals of World War II may indeed have alienated man from God and from his fellowmen as well but it does indeed seem that the anguish, despair, torment that man experienced in the aftermath of war have been instrumental in helping him evaluate himself and his potential and in the process re-discover God — not on Tabor (where Peter discovered him), nor on Calvary (where the centurion saw the light) but on the road to Damascus, in the kind of sepulchral oblivion of the 19th century where Nietzsche found him. 'No, I think there quite probably is a God', says the director of the technological utopia in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, 'But he manifests himself in different ways to different men. In pre-modem times he manifested himself as the being described in these books. Now.... he manifests himself as an absence, as though he weren't here at all'

William Hamilton epitomizes Huxley's thought in the following words: 'We are not talking about the absence of the experience of God' — which is a negative position — 'but about the experience of the absence of God' — which is positive. It is the kind of experience of absence of God that Christ himself experienced on the

cross. Such absence, claims Hamilton, are we now experiencing.

If I may conclude this point with one of Altizer's key themes: the ultimate reconciliation of opposites. Altizer argues that man has lost the sense of the sacred which was so much alive in the medieval world. Instead of restoring all things in God, the Christian should in the present circumstances be favourable towards this 'secularization' because, Altizer argues, it is only in the midst of the radically profane that man will again be able to recapture an understanding of the sacred.¹⁰ The death of God and all that is sacred is a necessary prelude to a rediscovery of the sacred and the glorious resurrection of Christ, possibly the kind of awareness of who Christ really is that Schillebeeckx speaks of. To many scholars, in fact, the emergence of this new movement is a sign of spiritual health, a harbinger of renewal.

Like the biblical seed, perhaps even God must die before he can spring forth into life again. Must not grapes be crushed before they can produce wine?

(c) *The Lack of Adequate Language to Express the Reality God:*

Hardly any philosopher of religion today describes God in same vein as the mediaeval scholastics did nor can he attempt to demonstrate God's existence by pure reason alone, else he would have to use the old familiar but now obsolete terminology, involving Prime Mover, Prime Cause and so on – terminology which tends to make God more remote and more detached from this world than ever and which places God's attributes in philosophical compartments. Regrettably, traditional philosophy had overexposed God and it has now lost its character as a response to the problem of God as man sees it today. It is for reasons briefly outlined here that the philosopher of religion's first step has been to accept a complete, radical break from the traditional image of a transcendent creator 'way out there somewhere' and man 'way down here' and like East and West 'the twain shall never meet' – an image that broadly emerged from the Greek and Scholastic dualism of act and potency.

After dehellenizing God, i.e., abandoning or at least shelving all concepts of God derived from Greek and Mediaeval philosophy that are out of accord with the contemporary experience of man, the philosopher of religion now finds himself burdened with the task of providing precise meanings to the vocabulary employed in the study

¹⁰Cf. T.J.J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966); T.J.J. Altizer and W. Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).

of God, possibly guided and enlightened by the principles of analytic philosophy. This task aims at transmitting a concept of God and defining him in terms that can touch men's emotions and engage men's minds, from down here, immanently, not from way up there, transcendentally. It is probably this task that is capable of developing a vigorous philosophy of religion, the central theme and goal of which would be the existence and operations of a personal God making God-man relationships closer than they have ever been and committing man not merely to accept religion and faith blindly but to become a witness of God's love and providence.

With a theistic commitment of this kind, man can then proceed to eradicate the evil and injustice that plague our world: in other words, turn this world from the hell that hate and injustice have made it into the heaven that it should be. God's message will thus come to man not in what now appears to be the meaningless, obsolete, over-worked and bankrupt language of act and potency, but straight to one's heart, where the Kingdom of God is.

(d) *The Loss of the Existence of God in Christianity*

Hamilton, probably the most ethics-minded of the radical theologians, concentrates his efforts not so much on God as on Christ. He argues the awareness of God's death summons man more forcefully to follow Christ as the exemplar of conduct, which, in our day and age, means total commitment to the love and service of one's fellowmen. It was Christ who in the first place demanded this total commitment which cannot be separated from faith in Christ.

It is in this sense that Hamilton defines Christ not as a person or an object but as a place to be'. 'In the time of the death of God, we have a place to be', he writes, 'It is not before an altar; it is in the world, in the city, with both the needy neighbour and the enemy, in the midst of the negro's struggle for equality as well as in the emerging forms of technological society and not least in the arts and sciences of the secular world'.

Christ's own words, 'the kingdom of God is in thy heart', find here their fullest expression and deepest meaning. Hence man finds God not so much in his own daily struggle for survival and existence as in assisting his fellowmen's struggles for survival and existence. The knight, in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, delays implacable death long enough to accomplish 'one single meaningful action' towards his fellowman. 'The meaning of life', says Bergman, 'is life itself'.

Gabriel Vahanian, a sociologist of religion and a cultural historian with a primary interest in analyzing man's perception of God,

argues that God is known to man only in terms of man's own culture. To this effect, he declares, God is dead and will remain so until we become secular enough in structure and thought to proclaim him anew in ways that will fulfill the cultural needs of the times the spirit of which is irretrievably secular with all notions of transcendence and other worldliness rejected.¹¹

Secularized, scientific, empirical as man has become, he finds himself more at home with visible facts than with unseen realities, so much so that he would more readily consider God as a total attitude of oneself — a personal commitment — than talk of him in terms of transcendence and the beyond.

Harvey Cox reexplains the notion of the transcendence of God in the following manner: the one area where empirical man is open to transcendence is the future: man can be defined as the creature who hopes, who has taken responsibility for the world. Cox's theology is based on the premise that God is the source and ground of this hope: a God 'ahead' of man in history rather than 'out there' in space.¹² In Cox's view, among others, God operates in time and not, as it were, in space.

Again, this form of immanence which generates a theistic commitment is not without biblical foundation. The thought that 'the kingdom of God is within you' and that one works out his heaven and his hell in the context of his life is quite in line with the gospel account of the last judgment: 'As long as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'. And in fact we are witnessing today the rise of what is being termed an 'anonymous Christianity' or as Karl Rahner calls it an 'anonymous presence'. It is in the midst of such neighbouring activity that man discovers Christ and ultimately God. On the basis of this universal theistic brotherhood, man becomes all too soon aware of unity and relationships in the visible universe. A pattern is perceptible, an evolutionary pattern of growth and development not only in the physical order but as well in the order of consciousness. There is an indelible mark of order in the universe and a throbbing of eternal energy. Briefly, there's the mark of a Maker. How the making is done — by prime motion, causality, participation or otherwise — is of course another matter, but in this context the words of Teilhard

¹¹Cf. G. Vahanian, *Wait Without Idols* (New York: Braziller, 1964); *No Other God* (New York: Braziller, 1966); *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (New York: Braziller, 1967).

¹²Cf. H. Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: MacMillan, 1965).

de Chardin make profound sense if we could only understand their true meaning: 'God makes things make themselves'.

V – CONCLUSION

In their efforts, genuine though they be, to rediscover God and make him acceptable to contemporary society, the approach of the contemporary philosophers of religion have nonetheless disturbed not a few scholars who feel that the current trends are destroying what has taken over 2,000 years to establish, namely tradition, the lifeblood of the faithful, that body of doctrinal beliefs which one generation has handed down to another and which generation after generation have accepted, lived by and died for. It is a commitment to the authentic source of Western man's beliefs and culture.

There was a time when man found comfort in belonging to a predominantly Christian society in which the existence of an omnipotent and provident God gave meaning and hope to his life. In today's secular-minded culture which suggests the demise rather than the presence of God, or a peculiar presence through his absence, no such security exists.

In view of this, many scholars have become very much concerned about this matter, so concerned that it has prompted among others the British novelist, Graham Greene, to state that he would refuse to believe in a God whom he could understand. Karl Barth had long warned the faithful of this trend. "God is a 'wholly other' being", 'whom man can only know by God's self revelation in the person of Christ, as witnessed by Scripture. Any search for God that starts with human experience is a vain quest that will discover only an idol, not the true God at all'.

In my opinion, the Dutch Catechism, a philosophical-theological work, has the right approach towards the problem of religion and God and has provided thoughtful guidelines and directions. Starting with the fact of existence in which all men share and the meaning of life which all men seek, the Catechism leads the searcher through a comparative survey of the great religions of the past to discover Christ and his message. Through Christ, then, the search goes on towards the afterlife and God.

Notwithstanding these currents and cross currents, it is undeniable that the debate over God's death, over his absence or his presence through his absence, has brought a new vitality within religious thought and man is recovering a sense of faith in facing the future, inspiring him to participate more actively and more constructively, in shaping his destiny. Indeed God and religion have become determining factors in the 20th century.

It is an ill wind that blows no one any good and it may have been necessary, therefore, for the traditional image of God to give way to Nietzsche's and the Radical Theologians' image of a dead God to make the final synthesis possible, the emergence of God through Christ.

Indeed, the cry of Nietzsche's madman in *The Gay Science* 'I seek God! I seek God!' has ironically never been as true as it is today.

P.J. MICALLEF.

CULTURE AND RELIGION IN AMERICA

THE relationship between culture and religion has been an enduring problem in every age. However, the emphasis on the relationship of both and the prevalence of one over the other differed from time to time and from culture to another. This is due to the fact that culture and religion are complex human phenomena yet subject to the social milieu. Hence, it seems to the writer that for a possible better understanding one has to look for a definition of religion and culture. Then, one may look at them in different stages as they developed in time. In view of these stages one may see to what stage one's concept of the relationship of religion and culture belongs and how it could effect his personality.

DEFINITION OF RELIGION

According to E.O. James, 'the essence of religion in its rudimentary forms is to be sought in the recognition of a transcendent order and the elaboration of a technique to enable man to deal with the unpredictable and inexplicable elements in human experience whether individual or collective, in this world and beyond the grave'.¹ The transcendental order mentioned in the definition is highly debateable whether it is a real positive concept, that is a concept representing a reality or a negative concept created out of the limitedness or finitude of nature and then endowed with the positive qualities. Hence, I prefer to go along with Bellah and define religion as 'a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate condition of his existence'.² Hence, it seems to the writer that what should be our concern is the symbols as an intellectual human expression of the encounter with the ultimate as expressed in culture. This is also due to the fact that symbols are mostly tangible and intimately involved and evolved with culture. Then what constitute the ultimate concern will be left to the philosopher and what constitute the recognition of the ultimate concern will be left to the psychologist.

¹ James, E.O. *Comparative Religion*, Barnes and Noble, New York 1961, p. 56.

² Bellah, R.N. 'Religious evolution', in *Readers in Comparative Religion* edited by William A. Lessa, E.Z. Vogt p. 37. Same article is reprinted in *Sociology of Religion* ed. by R. Robertson. Penguin edition, Baltimore Maryland, 1969.

DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Hoebel defines culture as an 'integrated system of learned behaviour pattern, characteristics of the members of a society'.³ The culture as an integrated system grew out of man's biological needs.⁴ However, after culture comes 'into existence and becomes established as a tradition, culture exists and behaves and is related to man as if it were nonbiological in character'.⁵ Thus, culture becomes an integrated form of the human expression of being in the world and evolves as a form too.⁶ Since culture is an integrated form or system, any aspect of it such as religion should be studied in relation to the other parts of the system so that a greater understanding could be achieved.⁷ This is mostly true of religion whose symbols are a creation of culture and yet keep the culture alive. The extensive need of symbols in man to express his religious experiences may account for the durability of such symbols in culture.

THE EVOLUTIONAL STAGES OF RELIGION

According to Bellah, there are five stages, namely primitive archiac, historic, early modern and modern. He developed these five stages on the principle laid by Geerts that the general order of existence 'tends to change over time at least in some instances, in the direction of more differentiated, comprehensive and in Weber's sense, more rationalized formulations'.⁸ It seems to the writer that religious symbols as an expression of culture could be compared to the psychological growth of a person though the analogy is not perfect.⁹ Finally, one must keep in mind that in considering these stages, one must not expect a complete separation between them. One may find traces of the first stage in later stages.

Primitive stage of religion: The primitive stage of religion ap-

³ Hoebel, E.A. *Man in primitive world*, MacGraw comp. New York, 1958 p. 151.

⁴ Goldschmidt, W. 'The biological constant', in Hammond P.B. edi. *Cultural and social anthropology*, Macmillan Company, New York 1968.

⁵ White, L.A. 'The evolution of culture', in Hammond P.B. edi. *Cultural and social anthropology*, Macmillan Company, New York 1968.

⁶ White, L.A. *op. cit.*

⁷ Beale, A.R. and Sprangler, G., *Culture in process*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1967, p. 11.

⁸ Bellah, R.N. *op. cit.*

⁹ Bagby Philip, *Culture and History*. University of California, Press, Berkeley, 1963, p. 116.

peared in the upper paleolithic period when the Cro-magnon dominated the scene.¹⁰ For the first time, man found power 'to transcend and dominate his limitations by his capacity for symbolizations and thus attain a degree of freedom'.¹¹ The myth that came into being then, was not a fiction as Profs. Milinwaski points out or a theory about life but a reality to be lived. This could be easily seen if one sees the world not only as a place where material things are to be perceived, manipulated but also a material for religious experience.¹² In fact, the myth as a religious expression was intimately related to the features of the actual world. The primitive man identified himself in rituals with the objects of the myth they had created'. So, to obtain communion in this beneficent abundance it is necessary to become en rapport with the sacred species venerated, so that for the time being the human agent (i.e. the shaman or dancer) in all probability believed and felt himself to be the creatures he represented'.¹³ The religious cult had also a social effect, that of unifying the solidarity of the clan. Finally, in doing the rituals, emotions of hope and success followed. Later on, when man became an artist of the rituals, they performed them for the emotions sake.¹⁴

Archaic religion: Rituals and emotions cannot keep themselves untouched by intellectuality. Man began to interact the figures. He first objectified them and endowed them with power, control over the world. Later he dealt with them in a purposive way. At this stage, according to Whitehead, the myth explained both the rituals and the emotions.¹⁵ Thus the myth reinforced the hidden purpose of emotions. Religion then took the form of a cult to the objectified gods. Thus, the sacrifice began to be a means of communication between man and their gods. It also served as a means of expiation especially when the people felt guilty because something went wrong with the crops.¹⁶ At this stage, religion was still merged with the structure of the community. Leaders of the tribe were

¹⁰ Smart, N. *The religious experience of mankind*, Cadles Scribner, New York, 1969, p. 39.

¹¹ Bellah, R.N. *op. cit.*

¹² Smart, N. *op. cit.* p. 52.

¹³ James, E.O. *Sacrifice and sacrament*, Barnes and Noble, New York, 1962, p. 20.

¹⁴ Bellah, R.N. *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Whitehead, A. *Religion in the making*. Meridian books, Cleveland, Ohio, 1960, p. 23.

¹⁶ James, E.O. *Sacrifice and Sacrament*, op.cit. p. 34.

invested with the sacred power to whom or through whom a sacrifice was offered. At times the leader was obliged to renew his potency by some ritual.¹⁷ Hence, the individual and the group considered themselves as a divine cosmos. Struggles between groups were considered as struggles between different deities.

Historic religions: In the previous stages, the worldly things were invested with divine power; at this stage man began to feel the divine as transcendental. This meant that the highest value was beyond the empirical world. Hence, at the same time it implied some derogative quality for the empirical world. A new order of values came in. Though the hierarchical order of this world was still emphasized, the order itself was directed and influenced by the transcendental value. A dualism was developed between the earthly things and the other world. This could eliminate some of the tribal or national tributes invested with the highest value. However, as one would expect, the highest transcendental value continued to be vested with historical ideas. The said dualism was manifest in the dualism of civil ruler and religious ruler while in the first stages of religion they were one. Some persons who claimed to have direct contact with the transmundane established themselves as religious leaders. This was evident in the jewish religion. At the same time, the distinction between rural people as people with lower values versus the urban group who had higher values was developed. At times the balance between religious and political groups was hard to achieve and this could be seen through the conflicts the Religious leaders had with the political leaders of the time. Yet at times, according to Bellah,¹⁸ the historic religions legitimized and reinforced the existing social order. At this point, it would be necessary to distinguish between the priestly and prophets' leadership. The prophetic leadership has always been a reaction to some social way of life which was creating trouble. The priestly leadership, has always been considered conservative of the established way of life.¹⁹

Early modern religion: The new era of religion was brought by the protestant reformation. The dualism between this world and the other world and the hierarchical ordering between them was shattered. This was brought as Erickson points out through the initial

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 34.

¹⁸ Bellah, R.N. *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Wach, J. *Sociology of religion*, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960, pp. 348, 656.

disregard of Luther's obedience to the earthly father and by his rejection of the symbols used by which man thought that he would communicate with the Father in heaven.²⁰ Thus, a new and direct obedience as well as communication with the heavenly Father was opened. Thus, salvation is not achieved any more through the mediation of either church or community. Salvation has become a continuous process identical with the person's life. Out of these premises many social and religious conclusions were drawn which effected the social and church structure directly or indirectly. In this new religious approach, one finds a combination of worldliness and transcendentalism. This combination orients the individual to action within this world but it does not sanctify any activity by means of rituals or mystical union. This has lead in time to a great emphasis on the individual activism and responsibility. Moreover, with the doctrine of an unmediated relationship of the person to the sacred minimized the commitment to any institution. This opened a continuous road to a redefinition and reformulation of tradition of the structure of society with which tradition was often identified.

Modern religion: There is a question according to Bellah²¹ whether this period should be treated as a different period or a continuation of the early modern religion. This difficulty is due to the modern religious symbols. It seems to the writer that we have now an extension of the premises and conclusions of the previous period. We have symbols though different from the past but these symbols live shortly and are changing constantly because symbols require tradition to live long and that we cannot have. The very continuous change itself has become our tradition. This leads both the individual and society itself to a continuous search for standards of action both in religious and civil areas. Thus, while in the past the person could hold symbols for a long time because he had not rejected the rigid and stable puritanical concept of personality, in this period when even the concept of personality is constantly changing, there is no more room for any stability for symbols.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EVOLUTION OF BOTH RELIGION AND CULTURE

P. Tillich thinks that the basic principle of a religious life is the awareness of the 'ontological unconditioned'. 'Man' he says

²⁰ Erikson, E.H. *Young man Luther*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1958. The theme runs throughout the book especially in chapter III.

²¹ Bellah, R.N., *op. cit.*

'is immediately aware of something unconditioned which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically'.²² The call for awareness is as old as humanity itself though very often it is traced to Socrates. The awareness is a human quality of reflecting on one's activity and its relationship to what elicited that activity. But the individual becomes aware of himself and of activity through the social life as a medium. Yet the pattern of a social life is a reality as well as a symbolic expression of man's search for meaning. The search for meaning is based primarily on the unconditioned which is existence. This existence involves what is and what could not be. Hence, the unconditioned is a positive concept as much as a concept of existence. With the encounter of the unconditioned, man yearns for the ultimate. The concern for the ultimate has brought dynamism in both culture and religion. This dynamism in religion is even equated with the dynamism in psychology in the growth of personality.²³ Thus, we find that the search for the ultimate which is primarily a religious process creates culture which then in turn is used by man as a medium for the continuation of the process of search for the ultimate itself.

RELIGION AND CULTURE IN U.S.A.

Religion versus culture: The symbols resulting from man's search for meaning can be crystalized in a religion or culture in space and time. Then, religion would become as a ritual that is an institutionalized religious idea.²⁴ The same thing could be said about culture when it is localized in a place. Then, it becomes an American or Russian culture. It may happen then, that the search for meaning gets stagnated, and religion may lose its commitment from sight. Any religion which has not lost its commitment should be involved with the metaphysical question of evil, suffering and death which are part of the unconditioned reality on which religion is built. These problems as Slater points out²⁵ have been flushed

²² Tillich, P. *Theology of culture*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1964. p. 23.

²³ Pruyser, P.W. *Dynamic Psychology of religion*, Harper and Row, New York, 1968, p. 19.

²⁴ Luchman, T. *The invisible religion*, The Macmillan Company, 1967. p. 22.

²⁵ Berger, P. *The noise of the assemblies*, Doubleday, Garden city, New York, 1961, p. 48,

Slater, Philip. *The pursuit of loneliness*, Beacon Press Boston, 1971.

out from the American culture. There is even the tendency to use words which are misleading in interpreting the real situation. Take for example the poor people who are part and parcel of every society; to avoid the problem of poverty in a rich country, people tend to substitute the word poor by less fortunate or less privileged. This might take off some of the sense of guilt which otherwise might burden the mind of those who are better off. The problem of old age is also flushed out by sending old people to old homes. Some of them are never visited. So they die away from homes and unnoticed by the young generation. People want to hide death even in the last moment: they embalm the body to make it look as if the person is still alive. In spite of the fact that people try to put these and many other problems under the carpet and thus thwart the reality of life, such problems continue to exist. What people really do is fooling themselves by creating misunderstanding of life. If then, a religion which is based on the metaphysical truth is contrary to our culture one would wonder why the churches do not seem to have friction with the American culture.

Church pro culture: According to Wilson²⁶ religion instead of being the source of value for nationalism and patriotism, the reverse is true. Thus, to belong to a church and to go to church independently of what denomination it is, is coming from the fact that to be a good citizen demands that you have faith and attend some type of church service. This is most evident among the protestant denominations which according to Berger²⁷ may not be true of the catholic in spite of the fact that the catholic church has also been Americanized. Yet, according to some priest, with whom I came across, even among catholics, there are some who attend other denominations.

Historical development: That the reader could have better understanding of this problem, one has to look at it from the historical perspective and see how it happened. To begin with, the church alignment with the secular values in U.S.A. was not from the beginning. It came to be, through the same religious principles it embraces. The church had to understand and reflect the aspirations of the first settlers as well as their economic states. No other religion than the protestant religion whose origin and structure were based on man's ability to seek freedom from a social

²⁶ Wilson, B. *Religion in a secular society*, Penguin books, Baltimore Maryland, 1969, p. 113.

²⁷ Berger, P. *op.cit.* p. 48.

pressure and thus create an individuality that could help the first settlers in their struggle. However, Calvin's doctrine with the emphasis on the negative aspect of man as evil created anxiety as it widened the separation between man and his ideal self. To eliminate anxiety man created a frenzy activity which at the same time was needed by the situation of the locality and thus could justify it as a necessity.²⁸ In spite of the activity and the available riches not all could become rich. Class struggle could be more feasible in this country than in Europe. In Europe there could be little or no social mobility but here it was available and thus everybody wanted to have the best. Out of this approach resulted the present philosophy which dominate the country, namely the cut throats competition. In the meantime, religious dominations grew out of this strife. Hence, religion had eventually to justify 'the gradual acquisition of enhanced riches'.²⁹ Thus, the denominations began to stand for the social status of the person who embrace it. Churches then, were the voice of a specific community with certain status.³⁰ Now, the churches became the symbol for what they stood with no influential power.

The community life is at the present time shattered by the social and spatial mobility. The churches have become 'agencies of synthetic community life. They draw people together on a Sunday, people who otherwise would never be together though they may live next to each other. The custom of introducing coffee after church service or the meeting of the pastor at the entrance door, the shaking of hands during mass all introduced so that people could begin to know one another through these social meetings occasioned by the religious service. In spite of these external activities the churches have become bankrupt.

The churches embraced the values of the culture and left behind the transcendental values based on the unconditioned reality of which we spoke before. Yet our young people are fed up with culture and want something more meaningful. No wonder they feel disenchanted with the churches who support culture. However,

²⁸ Fromm, E. *The sane society*, a Fawcett Publication, Greenwich, Conn. 1967, p. 160.

Fromm, E. 'A social psychological interpretation of Lutheranism and Calvinism', in *Religion, Society and the Individual* by Yinger, J.M. Macmillan Company, New York 1968.

²⁹ Wilson, B. *op. cit.* p. 131.

³⁰ Wilson, B. *op. cit.* p. 139.

there is great paradox in this country. In England and in all Europe, the people do not attend the church when they feel disappointed, here they continue to attend the church but they feel it does not offer any ideation.

The paradox of the present religious stage: The reader is likely to assume that the present stage is the best according to the stages of religion mentioned above. However, the very instruments the people used to gain freedom made them slaves and still worse took away from the power of thinking and thus made them turn back in some way to the early stages. One would wonder how this could happen. By pushing for liberty the people had to create specific rituals. The very rituals have become the real thing and the reason for their creation was forgotten. The people feel overwhelmed and bound by these rituals. Yet we cannot see that we are not free because these rituals carry with them the connotation of freedom. There seem no end for the adoration of the golden idol we have created. As the Jews in the Old Testament while they were in the desert could not take the sense of freedom and returned to the slavery of the adoration of the idol so we too gave our freedom for the idols we have created.³¹ It seems to the writer that while the primitive man could enjoy his rituals and even used them to be emotionally involved, we had to subdue our emotions and we cannot even enjoy our own rituals. Our values are as worldly as those of the primitive man but while the primitive man conceived the world in a rather stable way, we are conceiving it as in continuous great motion. It is a view of life which has been sanctified by a religion and has then become sacred. Thus, in spite of our scientific inventions, the writer thinks that we are regressing to a primitive way of life in the system of values.

High statistics of church attendance and contributions registered in America by all denominations can in no way be considered as a diagnostic sign of a deep religiosity.

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³¹ Fromme, E. *Your sons shall be as Gods*, Fawcett publications, Greenwich, Connec., 1969, p.87.

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FRANCIS LEONARD CHIRCOP O.P.

LITURGICAL SYMBOLISM IN THE
BAPTISMAL HOMILIES OF
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTHOM AND
THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA

An appraisal and a comparison

ON account of the intensive missionary activity of the early Church and the changed situation brought about by the Constantinian settlement, the urgent need existed for an organization capable of coping with the increased number of persons asking for admission into the Church, so that only those worthy of membership would be accepted. There had always been an insistence that no one should be received into the Church unless he had first been fully instructed in the faith, but this instruction was originally more or less a private initiative. It was only later, perhaps after the great shock resulting from the large number of defections during the Decian persecutions, that instruction in the faith came under direct ecclesiastical supervision with the introduction of the catechumenate.

The Αποστολική παράδοσις of Hippolytus¹ gives the essential structure of the catechumenate in the third century, but this structure underwent considerable modifications during the following centuries until it fell into disuse when in Christian lands there were no longer any adult Baptisms and a new policy came into being with the wholesale conversions of the barbarian peoples.

Those who desired to become Christians had to be recommended by someone who was already a Christian, who vouched for their sincerity and intention of leading a true Christian life.² Once ac-

¹ The Αποστολική παράδοσις is today considered to be an ideal Church Order and not the description of the Liturgy of the Roman Church in the third century (Cfr. J.H. Hanssens, *La Liturgie d'Hippolyte*, Rome 1959). The work of Hippolytus had a great influence in the development of Liturgy, especially in the East.

² The structure of the catechumenate described here is an ideal one, for in practice things did not take place as described. Many enrolled themselves with the catechumens, but only with the intention of receiving Baptism on their death-bed or late in life, not wishing to bind themselves to a Christian way of life in their youth or early manhood, for fear of falling into sin after their Baptism and having to submit to the strict Penitential dis-

cepted, the person was inscribed among the catechumens and for three years he was instructed in the Scriptures and in the main principles of Christian life. During the whole of this period of instruction, the moral behaviour of the candidate was under constant observation.

After this period of preparation, the catechumenate entered into a second stage. The catechumen, now well prepared to live a real Christian life, at the beginning of the Lenten period, through his sponsor asked the Church to accept him among the *electi*, the οἱ μέλλοντες φωτίζεσθαι.

During Lent³ the *electi* daily received more detailed instruction in the faith, the contents of which were summarized in the *symbolum* or Baptismal Creed, which each candidate had to memorize and later repeat before the bishop towards the end of the instruction period (the *traditio* and *redditio symboli*). Daily instruction was accompanied by prayer and fasting and by frequent exorcisms till Easter Eve, when, after having renounced the devil and professed his faith in Christ, after having received the sign of the cross on his forehead, and had his whole body anointed with exorcised oil, the *electus* was baptised by being immersed three times in water. Coming out of the water he put on a white garment and was anointed with holy chrism, thus being able to partake for the first time in the Lord's Supper.

The second stage of the catechumenate, on account of its importance, was more or less directly supervised by the bishop himself, although the active and personal intervention of the bishop

cipline of the time. St. John Chrysostom and several other Fathers spoke harshly against this custom, but to no avail.

Parents enrolled their children when still infants and although infant Baptism was quite common towards the end of the second century (Cfr. Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 18,) many parents did not baptise their children when infants, but let them grow up to decide for themselves when to receive Baptism: this often happened when the father was a pagan as in the case of St. Augustine.

St. John in one of his homilies (*Adversus Iudaeos oratio*, III Pg. 48, 868) deplores the fact that many remain catechumens all their life, each year celebrating Lent but not Easter.

³ The enrolling of catechumens probably took place during the first days of Lent and daily instruction began regularly after the closing date of the enrolment, about thirty days before Easter; at least this seems to have been the custom at Antioch (Cfr. A. Wonger, St. Jean Chrysostome, *Huit Catecheses baptismales inédites*, Sources Chrétiennes 50, introd. Chap. 2, par. 7).

was not everywhere the same; at least this is what one concludes from available documents.

In Jerusalem in the 4th century, for example, the bishop daily instructed the candidates for Baptism in the basilica of the Holy Cross,⁴ and also daily addressed the newly baptised, during Easter week, in the church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁵ At Antioch, on the other hand, the bishop during the whole of Lent did not speak more than two or three times to the catechumens, probably on the occasion of the more solemn exorcisms.⁶

We cannot say that there was a fixed pattern of instruction, but a number of themes were continually recurring, namely the nature of Baptism, the symbolism of the rite, the Eucharist; other themes were the Creed, the Lord's prayer and true Christian life.

This paper is not dealing with all the themes forming the subject matter of the Baptismal homilies of the early Church, but is limited to assessing the value of the symbolical explanations of the Baptismal rites given by Theodore of Mopsuestia⁷ and St. John

⁴Cfr. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* and *Catecheses ad illuminandos*, 1-18, Pg. 33, 332-1060.

⁵In the conclusion of the eighteenth catechesis *Ad illuminandos*, Cyril tells the candidates for Baptism that from the second day of Easter, every day, after the assembly, they were to gather in the Holy place of the Resurrection for other instructions. Actually, there are only five mystagogical catecheses attributed to Cyril, which with a greater probability ought to be attributed to his successor John II (Pg. 33, 1065-1128; A Piedagnel - P. Paris, *Cyril de Jerusalem, Catecheses mystagogiques*, Sources Chrétiennes 126, Paris, 1966).

⁶St. John Chrysostom, from what has survived from his catechetical instructions, seems to have addressed the candidates for Baptism, on one occasion, four times: thirty days before Easter, ten days later, on Maundy Thursday and during the Easter vigil; on another occasion he addressed them twice, one at the beginning and one at the end of the instruction period. He addressed the Neophytes five times during Easter week on one occasion, but these instructions cannot be considered mystagogical catecheses in the strict sense of the word, for they are rather a series of moral instructions, a practical initiation to Christian moral life (Cfr. A! Wenter, St. Jean Chrysostom, *Huit catecheses baptismales inédites*, Sources Chrétiennes 50, Paris 1957, introd. Chap. 3, par. 2.)

⁷The catechetical instructions of Theodore of Mopsuestia are generally known as the 'Liber ad baptizandos'; they were discovered in the Mingana collection of manuscripts (Cod. Mingana syr. 561 now in the Sellier Oak Colleges' library, Birmingham) and published with an English translation as volumes V and VI of the Woodbrooke studies; A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*, Woodbrooke Studies V, Cambridge 1932, and A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia*

Chrysostom⁸ in their Baptismal homilies.

One might perhaps not expect any insistence on symbolism in the homilies of these two bishops who owed their formation to the school of Antioch, but, as both bishops state, symbolism belongs to the essence of Liturgy, because all liturgical actions are the 'unspeakable signs' of the divine realities.⁹

Symbolism seems to be out of place, and therefore misunderstood, in a technological age like ours, although we still perform in our daily lives several symbolical actions without being aware of them, but symbolism was native to the culture in which Chris-

on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, Woodbrooke studies VI, Cambridge 1933. The present paper deals mainly with the three homilies on Baptism, Chaps. II-IV of the second volume.

⁸ It seems that three series of catechetical instructions by St. John Chrysostom have survived:

(a) a first series, consisting of four homilies, one of which was published as *Ad Illuminandos catechesis I* by B.D. de Montfaucon, S.P.N. Ioannis Chrysostomhi opera omnia quae exstant vel eius nomine circumferuntur, Paris, 1733, tom. II pag. poulus — Kerameus, Varia Graeca sacra, Saint Petersbourg, 1909, p. VV-XXV and 154-183. The fourth homily (*Ad neophytorum*) belongs also to the third series. The first homily is also found in the Papadopoulos — Keramius collection and in this collection it corresponds to that found in the edition of the works of Chrysostom by the Jesuit Fronton du Duc, in 12 volumes, Paris 1609-1633.

(b) a second series, of which only one homily has survived, that published in the Montfaucon edition as the *Catechesis ad illuminandos II* (tom. II pag. 141-147) and reproduced in Pg. 231-240.

(c) a third series of eight homilies, discovered by A. Wenger in 1955 in a manuscript (codex 6) of the monastery of Stavronikita on mount Athos, and published in 1957 as vol. 50 of *Sources Chrétiennes* (a second edition with supplement was published in 1970). The third homily is identical with the fourth homily of the Papadopoulos — kerameus collection and with the Latin sermon *Ad neophytorum* published in appendix in Vol. II of Fronton du Duc's edition of Chrysostom's works. St. Augustine refers to the Latin translation of this homily in his *Contra Julianum* (1, 6, 21) for Julian of Eclanum had quoted in favour of Pelagianism Chrysostom's statement that the Church also baptizes infants although they have no sins (Cfr. *Clavis Patrum Craecorum*, II, 4460-4472, Turnout, 1974; A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catéchèses inédites, Sources chrétiennes* 50, Paris 1957, introd. chp. II)

⁹ St. John Chrysostom speaks of the need of the eyes of faith to see what is invisible to the senses (Cfr. catechesis II of the third series, 9-11).

'Every sacrament' says Theodore, 'consists in the representation of unseen and unspeakable things through signs and emblems. Such things require explanation and interpretation, for the sake of the person who draws nigh unto the sacrament, so that he might know its power' (Mingana, vol. VI, chp. II, pg. 17).

tianity developed, for the Greek mind had an excellent understanding of the nature and purpose of symbols.

Every religion creates sensible images or symbols of spiritual things. This is due to the fact that a religious man is compelled to make use of certain images or ideas, with which nature has provided him, whenever he wants to express something which is not of this world, but exists on a higher plane. Because all things which act by or through the senses can never convey, much less exhaust the spirit they are seeking to convey, all symbols and symbolical actions are always subject to limitations.

The sense character of the symbol serves also to hide the glory it seeks to express, so that it is revealed only to those who have been deemed worthy of seeing it. For it is a psychological law that the deeper and more moving the religious perception of a pious man becomes, the more such experience inclines him to guard it from the uninitiated, and his anxiety to do this is increased if there is any danger of profanation.¹⁰

This psychological law began to operate in Christianity as soon as the external circumstances appropriate to it came into being. The Christian message is addressed to all mankind, it has to be 'preached from the rooftops', yet, when Christianity, in the third century, became more popular and widespread, the *disciplina arcani* came into being and reached a full development a century later. Baptism and the Eucharist became 'the awe-inspiring mysteries', and the deeper meaning of the Christian rites was only revealed to the *electi* on the day of their Baptism and during Easter week.

In the third century the Church had fully adapted itself to the Greek surroundings in which it had grown, and exploited to the full the Greek passion for the mystery cults of the time, using the words and images of these cults, to explain Christian worship, which was now spoken of as 'the awe-inspiring mysteries'.

The term μυστήριον was only applied to Christian worship after the third century, although Christianity had always been designated as a 'mystery', but a mystery *sui generis*, something altogether alien to and different from the 'mysteries' of Hellenism. Christianity is 'the mystery hidden for ages in God'¹¹ and revealed to us in the fullness of time by Christ, it is a deed of God, the execu-

¹⁰ H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, English version, London 1963, Chp. I and III.

¹¹ Eph. 3, 9.

tion of the everlasting plan which proceeds from eternity, is realized in time and in the world, and will return once more to God, its goal in eternity; it is Christ himself, God's revelation in the saving action of His incarnate Son and the redemption and healing of the world. It is a mystery which, although proclaimed everywhere 'from the rooftops', remains incomprehensible to those who have no understanding for the things of the spirit, for it is no human wisdom that reveals it, but the Spirit of God, in the measure of our capacity to take the Spirit into ourselves.¹²

The saving action of the God-man, after his return to the Father, is continued in the Church, mainly through the Liturgy: one can therefore easily explain why μυστέριον after the third century came to designate Christian worship. Christ has returned to the Father, but He is still with us, for *we find him in his mysteries*¹³ where he renews *in mysterio* the salvific actions of his life on earth.

Liturgy and mystery are interchangeable:¹⁴ 'mystery' is the heart of the action of the God-man, the redeeming work of the risen Lord, through the sacred actions he has appointed; 'Liturgy' is the sacred action itself, the actions of the Church in conjunction with the saving action of Christ. For when the Church performs her exterior acts, Christ is inwardly at work in them, and thus what the Church does is truly a μυστέριον, an 'awe-inspiring mystery'.

In Baptism Christ demanded rebirth for entry into his Kingdom: 'unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God'.¹⁵ 'Spirit' or πνεύμα is the breath of God, from which supernatural life flows; it is God himself and his life dwelling in the baptised person, a 'new man', a completely new being, 'partaker of the divine nature',¹⁶ sharing in God's being. But the Lord says that the new man is to be born again in water, and here the mystery of worship arises, for in the realm of God's actions this birth from water can only be the exterior visible expression of the real birth 'of the Spirit'. Water here has no natural worth of its own, but only symbolic value, and this symbolic value is what the Lord says is absolutely necessary, for without the exterior act of the water bath we could not recognize God's act. The plain tan-

¹² O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship and other writings*, edited by B. Neunhauser, English version, London 1962, chp. 2, i.

¹³ St. Ambrose, *De Apologia prophetae David*, 5, 8.

¹⁴ O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, Chp. 2, iii.

¹⁵ Jh. 3, 5.

¹⁶ I Peter 1, 4.

gible action of plunging into water is the pledge of the reality of God's begetting; but it would be an error to think that it was enough to have a dumb dipping into water to have a picture of God's grace. Water alone has no capacity for that, it has to be complemented by something higher ... the Spirit ... but what is better suited to express the Spirit than the lightness and refinement of the word?¹⁷ 'Take away the word,' says Augustine, 'and what is water except mere water. Word comes to the water and the mystery is there.'¹⁸

Briefly, Baptism in essence is the simple sign of water and the word that draws its life giving power from Christ's death upon the Cross. Fundamentally this is St. Paul's doctrine in the letter to the Romans,¹⁹ and is also the main theme which continually recurs in the Baptismal homilies of the Fathers, who also insist on the eschatological character of the action. 'Baptism is a second birth,' says Theodore, 'because it contains the symbol of the second birth and because through Baptism we participate in symbol in this second birth ... when at Baptism I plunge my head (in water) I receive the death of Christ our Lord, and desire to have his burial, and because of this I firmly believe in the resurrection of the Lord: and when I rise from the water I think I have symbolically risen a long time ago ... all this is done in symbol and in signs ... (but) we do not make use of vain signs only, but of realities of Baptism ... (Now, through it) we only receive the symbol of the adoption of children, but ... thereafter, having been born afresh, risen from the death, (we) become also immortal and incorruptible ... we shall receive the real adoption.'²⁰

The simple water bath accompanied by the speaking of certain words could never express fully the whole mystery of the second birth, for, as we have remarked at the beginning of this paper, every symbolical action can never fully express the higher realities it indicates. This is why, in the short period of three centuries, the simple Baptismal rites of the Apostolic times, developed into a rich and solemn celebration, in which the apparently trifling and insignificant action with water accompanied by a few spoken words, was clearly indicated as being full of immense and

¹⁷ O. Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, chp. 2, iii.

¹⁸ *Tractatus in Ioanne* 80, 3.

¹⁹ Rom. 6, 3-11.

²⁰ A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, Cambridge 1933, chp. II, p. 51-53.

incredible consequences.

The Fathers therefore, ever aware, much more than we are, of the tension between the symbol and its meaning, between the slightness of the visible action and the awful power of the invisible reality, felt the need of explaining to the initiated the deeper meaning of the symbolical actions accompanying the water bath, so that the newly baptised would fully realize the power and the greatness of the mystery into which they had been initiated.

St. John Chrysostom shows a certain originality of approach in his explanation of the Baptismal mystery: he speaks of Baptism as a spiritual marriage between Christ and the soul, and considers the period of instruction before Baptism as the instruction of the bride, who is leaving her parents, her home and her country herself to a man whom she has never seen, or known, or heard, and who would be taking her away from her father's home. At this spiritual marriage the bridegroom brings his gifts, the blood he has shed for the redemption and purification of the Church, and the bride brings her marriage contract, the renouncing of Satan and the attachment to Christ.²¹

Theodore, on the other hand, in explaining the symbolism of certain actions, seems to ignore the true origin of the signs, and opens the way to a particular type of allegorical explanations which became very popular in the Middle Ages and were still popular till a few years ago in certain circles. The explanation of the deacon's ministry, of the deacon's stole²² and of the priest's vestments²³ are pure imagination, while his explanation of the

²¹ This explanation is given in Catech. I, 1-18 (A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostom, Huit catécheses baptismales inédites*, Paris, 1957, p. 108-118).

²² 'Was it not right ... that ... (the deacons) should represent as in an image the ministry of the angels?'

'... (they) represent the Likeness of the service of the spiritual messengers and ministers. They have also an apparel which is consonant with their office since their outer garment is taller than they are, as wearing such an apparel, in such a way is suitable to those who serve. They place on their shoulders a stole, which floats on either side, forwards and backwards. This is a sign that they are not performing a ministry of servitude but of freedom ... They do not place the stole on their neck in a way that it floats on either side but not in front, because there is no one serving in a house who wears such an apparel' (A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, chp. V, p. 84-86).

²³ 'The priest draws near to you ... clad in a robe of clean and radiant linen, the joyful appearance of which denotes the joy of the world in the future, and the shining colour of which designates your own radiance

action of placing the gifts on the altar recalls to mind the attempts, so popular in the Middle Ages and later, to find parallels of the various moments of Christ's passion in the rites of the Mass.²⁴

Both bishops are more or less in agreement with regard to the symbolical explanations they give of the Baptismal rites.

The need of a sponsor²⁵ for Baptism is explained with reference to the need of a guarantee when one incurs a heavy debt: man's debt with God is heavy, and when one intends paying this debt by renouncing the devil and uniting himself to Christ in Baptism, he needs someone to guarantee the sincerity of his intentions. Such a person should be fully aware of his duties and must act as a father in God, with affection and tenderness, helping the person he is sponsoring to lead a true Christian life, for otherwise any future infidelity of this person to his Baptismal promises, will recoil on him.²⁶

The sponsor presents the candidate to the priest for instruction. This is what usually takes place in human affairs, for none approaches the lord of the house to offer his services but goes to the head of the household and makes with him his engagements and contract of service. So also it is when we approach the house of God, the Church: 'we approach the Lord of the house through the priest who has been found worthy of presiding over the church'.²⁷

in the life to come, while its cleanliness indicates the ease and happiness of the next world (A. Mingana, o.c., chp. III, p. 45; Cfr. also chp. IV, p. 58)

²⁴ '... When the offering which is about to be placed (on the altar) is brought out in the sacred vessels of the paten and the chalice, we much think that Christ our Lord is being led and brought to His Passion ...' (Mingana, o.c., chp. V, p. 85)

²⁵ Sponsors were necessary in great centres like Antioch and Constantinople, for it was impossible for the clergy to know well all those who asked for Baptism. Theodore of Mopsuestia gives great importance to the sponsors during the period of preparation and during the Baptismal rite itself. St. John Chrysostom, on the other hand, in his homilies makes no reference to the presentation of candidates by their sponsors, but in *Catecheses II*, 15-16 (A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catecheses baptismales inédites*, Paris 1957, p. 141-142) he speaks directly to the sponsors and urges them to be worthy of their popular designation as πατέρας πνευματικούς (officially they are known as ἀνάδεχόμενος)

²⁶ This is Chrysostom's explanation of the duties of a sponsor (Cfr. A. Wenger, o.c. catechese II, 15-16)

²⁷ This is Theodore's explanation (cfr. A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism*

Once one is enrolled for instruction in the faith 'in the hope of acquiring the abode and citizenship of heaven', he starts a kind of lawsuit with the devil, who tries to prove by all means his right of ownership over him. But God, after hearing against Satan 'the One who was assumed', gives the sentence against the devil. This is Theodore's explanation²⁸ of the rites of exorcism which take place during the period of instruction. Chrysostom, on the other hand, sees exorcisms as being the continual endeavour of the candidate, who will be host to God in his Baptism, to clean his home and make it worthy to receive the Most High.²⁹

During exorcisms, all the candidates, without distinction of social status or rank, stand barefoot on sackcloth, with hands lifted in silent prayer. Both bishops see in this posture the symbol of man's captivity, from which Baptism delivers us.³⁰ Captivity to the devil is also symbolised by the posture of the candidate when he renounces the devil: he kneels, with bowed head but body erect (adds Theodore), while his hands are lifted in prayer. With such a posture he recalls to himself the situation from which he is being delivered, while worshipping God in heaven, from whom he expects his deliverance.³¹

and the Eucharist, chp. II, p. 33-34) of the candidates' presentation by their sponsors to the priest for instruction.

²⁸ Cfr. A. Mingana, o.c., chp. II, pp. 27-31.

²⁹ Cfr. A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catéches Baptismales inédites*, Paris 1956, cat. 11, 12.

³⁰ 'When the words of exorcism are pronounced you stand perfectly quiet as if you had no voice and as if you had fear and dread of the Tyrant, not being in a position to look at him on account of ... the fact that he had been for a long time the master of your servitude ... You stand with outstretched arms in the posture of one who prays, and look downwards ... and you take off your outer garment and stand barefooted in order to show yourself the state of cruel servitude in which you served the devil ... you stand on garments of sackclothes so that from the fact that your feet are pricked and stung by the roughness of the cloth you may remember old sin and show penitence' (A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, chp. II, p. 31-32)

'The words of exorcism are terrible and solemn,' says St. John Chrysostom, 'but the posture of the candidate is something altogether different: when they are on the point of being delivered from tyranny, by their posture they recall to mind their previous condition of servitude (Cfr. A. Wenger, *St. Jean Chrysostome, Huit catéches Baptismales inédites*, catech. II, 14)

³¹ 'These engagements and promises you make ... while your knee is bowed to the ground both as a sign of adoration which is due from you to

After renouncing the devil, the candidate receives the sign of the Cross with holy oil on his forehead, that part of the head, explains Theodore, which is placed above all the body, with which we look at one another when we speak to each other. The sign of the forehead means that one is stamped as a lamb of Christ, as a soldier of the heavenly king, and indicates that one now possesses great confidence. This is what Theodore³² has to say, but Chrysostom's explanation is deeper:³³ the sign of the Cross brilliantly shining on one's forehead will blind the devil, who will no longer dare to look at the newly baptized.

At this point Theodore mentions a rite which is not met with elsewhere. The sponsor covers the crown of the head of the candidate for Baptism with a linen stole: this, according to Theodore, symbolises the freedom one is achieving in Baptism, for only slaves and exiles go about bareheaded.³⁴

The Baptismal rites proper, celebrated during the Easter vigil,³⁵ began with the anointing with exorcised oil the whole body of the candidate, after he had taken off all his clothes. This anointing, according to Chrysostom, implies entry into heaven, as the body, fortified with the holy oils, is now invulnerable to the attacks of the devil.³⁶ For Theodore the taking off the clothes symbolises the immortality we acquire through Baptism, while the anointing shows that everything in us has been changed into incorruption.

God as a manifestation of your ancient fall to the ground: the rest of your body: the rest of your body is erect and looks upwards towards Heaven and your hands outstretched in the guide of one who prays so that you may be seen to worship God ... from whom you expect to rise from your ancient fall.' (A. Mingana, o.c. chp. III, p. 45.)

'You should see in this posture,' says St. John, 'your former captivity: the priest bids you kneel and lift up your hands ... to remind you from what you have been delivered and to whom you are attaching yourself,' (A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 18)

³² A. Mingana, o.c., chp. III, p. 46.

³³ A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 23. In this instruction St. John speaks simply of a sign ορθοχρυσός, but evidently he refers to a sign of the cross (Cfr. note 2. p. 146)

³⁴ A. Mingana, o.c., chp. III, p. 47.

³⁵ In the second instruction (A. Wenger, o.c., cat. II, 24) St. John Chrysostom states 'when night sets in'. According to this instruction it seems that the solemn rite of renouncing the devil and adhering to Christ took place on the Saturday itself during the day, but the third catechesis of the Papadopoulos-Kerameus series clearly states that this rite took place on Good Friday at three in the afternoon (cfr. A. Wenger, o.c., introd. Chp. III, 4)

³⁶ A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 24.

bility.³⁷

Immediately after this anointing, the candidate goes down into the sacred waters, burying the old man, to rise again as a new man, in the image of his creator.

While Theodore explains at length in one homily the symbolic meaning of all the actions that take place during Easter night, fully developing the meaning of the main action and giving a full explanation of the Baptismal words,³⁸ St. John Chrysostom very briefly refers to the main actions and to the concluding rites, simply explaining why the priest uses the impersonal form 'So-and-so is baptised'.³⁹ He preferred addressing the newly baptised on Easter morning, when the vigil had come to an end. With words full of emotion, he addresses the newly baptised as stars in the Church's firmament, urging them to face their spiritual combat, fully confident of winning in virtue of the blood of Christ, who is with them and in them.⁴⁰

³⁷ 'As when Adam was formerly asked and was in nothing ashamed of himself, but after having broken the commandment and became mortal, he found himself in need of an outer covering, so also you, who are ready to draw nigh unto the gift of Holy Baptism so that you may be born afresh and become symbolically immortal, rightly remove your covering, which is a sign of mortality ... you receive through your anointing the sign of the covering of immortality ... you are anointed all over your body as a sign that ... all our nature will put on immortality ... and all that is seen in us, internal or external, will undoubtedly be changed into incorruptability.'

(A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 54)

³⁸ A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 48-70.

³⁹ A. Wenger, o.c., catech. II, 26. The impersonal form, according to Chrysostom, clearly indicates the ministerial action of the priest: he acts as the minister of Baptism, he just lends his hand to God, for he has been ordained for such a duty by the Holy Spirit ($\tauην χειρα την \epsilon\alphaυτοῦ παρεχαί, ἐπειδη̄ εἰς τοῦτο πάρα τοῦ πνεύματος δεῖξαθαι$) by this action of immersing the candidate in the water he disposed him to receive the Holy Spirit ($δια τῆς μυστᾶς τῶν τελετῆς την τοῦ πνεύματος πάρα σκευαζον ἐπι φοιτησιν δεῖξαθαι$) St. John's theological precision on this point is admirable.

Theodore gives the same explanation: '(the priest) does not say "I baptize (so-and-so)", but "(so-and-so) is baptized" ... in order to show that as a man like the rest of men he is not able to bestow such benefits which only divine grace can bestow.' (A. Mingana, o.c., chap. IV, p. 59)

⁴⁰ In a high lyrical tone which Nicer falters throughout the homily, St. John Chrysostom expresses his joy and blesses God for the great gift of so many new stars in the Church's firmament. He speaks of the multiple graces of Baptism, of the spiritual armour which the newly baptised have received from God, and of the spiritual food to which they are now entitled, the blood of Christ which flows from His pierced side, sym-

After coming out of the water the newly baptised receive a white garment, which, Theodore says, denotes the new life, shining and radiant, in which the newly baptised are moving, now through symbols, until the time comes when the symbols disappear and the awful realities are present.⁴¹

Anointing with holy chrism follows, and this, according to Theodore,⁴² is an indication and a sign of the descent of the Holy Ghost in the same way he descended on Christ at his Baptism.

Baptism is immediately followed by the Eucharist: the newly baptised, says Chrysostom, coming out of the sacred waters are immediately led to the awe-inspiring table, the source of a thousand favours: there they partake of the Body and Blood of the Holy Spirit: they put on Christ, and as such, wherever they go, they appear as angels on earth, as brilliant as the shining sun.⁴³

This is the only reference to the Eucharist we find in the Baptismal homilies of St. John Chrysostom, but in those of Theodore and in those of other Fathers, the Eucharist was the theme of more than one homily, for the newly baptised could not be fully initiated in the awe-inspiring mystery of the Body and Blood of the Lord before their Baptism; but this theme is outside the scope of this paper.

The world in which Theodore and St. John Chrysostom lived seems to be a far cry from our world, and yet, perhaps, we might find in the homilies of these two bishops some message for our

bolised by the blood with which the Israelites smeared the lintel and the doorposts of their homes on the night when the avenging angel visited the houses of the Egyptians.

The same high lyrical tone is met with also in the fourth homily when he tells the neophytes of the great joy they have given to the Church who has given them a new life, and when he urges them to look up at St. Paul as their model for a true Christian life. (A. Wenger, o.c., p. 151-199)

⁴¹ A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 68. St. John Chrysostom speaks of a royal garment in Catech. IV, 3 (A. Wenger, o.c., p. 183)

⁴² A. Mingana, o.c., chp. IV, p. 68. There is no reference at all to this post baptismal anointing with holy Chrism in the baptismal catecheses of St. John Chrysostom.

⁴³ Cfr. A. Wenger, o.c. catech. II, 27. This is all that St. John Chrysostom has to say about the Eucharistic liturgy which immediately follows the Baptismal rite during the Easter vigil. He also speaks of the Eucharist with characteristic realism in Catech. III, 12-18 (A. Wenger, o.c., p. 158-162).

Theodore devotes two instructions (A. Mingana, o.c., chp. V and VI) to the Eucharist, considering it both as spiritual food and as sacrifice, and he speaks in detail of the Eucharistic liturgy and its symbolism.

times. The newly baptised whom they instructed renounced the false doctrines, the evil amusement and the sins of their times: today, as in the fourth century, the Christian has to face all kinds of sins and evil, and is increasingly allured by amusements he cannot countenance, and so, even today, we are in need of the deep faith of a Theodore and of the moving enthusiasm of a Chrysostom to help us witness Christ's Gospel in the world of today.

JOSEPH LUPI

L'ETRE NOUVEAU DANS LE CHRIST EST NOTRE SALUT

LA CHRISTOLOGIE DE PAUL TILLICH: UN ESSAI DE CHRISTOLOGIE POUR AUJOURD'HUI*

Avec cette deuxième partie, nous arrivons maintenant au coeur de l'oeuvre de Tillich. Toute la démarche antérieure nous prépare le chemin pour mieux situer la christologie dans son oeuvre. De fait, nous pouvons dire que l'ensemble de la théologie de Tillich vise à faire jaillir en pleine lumière la recherche de l'Inconditionnel par tout homme, et à montrer par la suite l'identité qui existe entre l'Inconditionnel et l'Etre Nouveau qui s'est manifesté dans le Christ. Avec une ardeur prophétique, Tillich déclare:

'Nous voulons vous faire part d'une expérience que nous avons eué: ici et là dans le monde, de temps en temps en nous-mêmes, il y a une nouvelle création, généralement cachée, mais quelquefois manifestée, et certainement manifestée en Jésus qu'on appelle Christ.'¹

Dans son Système, qui, d'une certaine façon couvre l'ensemble de sa pensée, 'L'Etre Nouveau en Jésus en tant que Christ qui est l'objet de notre Inquiétude Fondamentale', devient la norme même de toute théologie. Il nous reste à voir comment Tillich passe de l'inquiétude fondamentale à la démonstration du Christ comme celui qui est capable d'être l'Inconditionnel cherché par tout homme.

(a) *La recherche du salut*

La tragédie inhérente à la situation humaine vient du fait que l'homme, contrairement au reste du crée, est conscient de sa situation. L'homme sait qu'il est aliéné et voudrait donc retrouver son intégrité: le drame c'est que laissé à ses propres forces, il est incapable d'atteindre son intégrité. Sous-jacent à la description de la condition humaine, l'on peut

* This is the second part of this essay by Paul Zammit, S.J. The first part was published in the 1974 issue (XXVI, 1-2) of this review. Having treated of *The Human Condition in need of Salvation* in the first part, now the Author speaks of *Our Salvation as a New Being in Christ*.

¹ *The New Being*, P. Tillich, p.18.

sentir ce que Paul nous dit concernant la loi: d'un côté, l'apôtre voit la vérité de la loi, de l'autre il se sent incapable de l'observer. Luther, lui, a été induit par l'expérience à abandonner tout effort pour se sauver et à ne compter que sur Dieu. Dans les domaines différents de la vie religieuse, Tillich veut montrer l'inutilité de toute tentative de se sauver soi-même.

La RELIGION en général, nous-dit-il, est ce domaine de la vie où le pont se fait entre l'essence et l'existence. Partout l'expérience religieuse est considérée comme la rencontre dès à présent avec l'Esprit, qui est celui qui est capable de vaincre les ambiguïtés de la vie. En soi donc, tout acte religieux montre le désir qu'éprouve l'homme de s'unir avec l'Etre véritable. Mais tout acte religieux peut devenir ambigu et faux, à partir du moment où l'homme croit qu'il a une prise quelconque sur l'Etre. Le salut ne peut que lui être donné.

La déviation d'une bonne chose en vue d'obtenir le salut par ses propres moyens apparaît aussi dans le domaine de la Loi. L'expérience du Judaïsme est toujours parlante. En soi la loi est bonne et même divine, et pourtant dans la condition aliénée de l'homme elle devient ambiguë. La loi permet à l'homme de voir ce qu'il doit devenir, mais elle est incapable de l'aider à réaliser sa destinée. Dans ces mêmes conditions, elle devient même contradictoire: le plus grand commandement est celui de l'amour, mais l'amour est l'unique réalité qui ne peut pas être commandée. Devant une telle impasse, l'homme a un choix radical à faire: ou bien il se laisse aller au désespoir, ou bien il cherche un Sauveur. Tillich montre aussi comment la même situation se produit dans d'autres domaines de la vie religieuse, que ce soit dans l'ascétisme, le mysticisme et autres.

Il me semble intéressant de citer aussi le développement à propos de la vie ecclésiale. Dans son expression sacramentelle et doctrinale, elle est aussi ambiguë. De fait, les sacrements cessent d'être ce qu'ils sont si l'on considère qu'il suffit que le ministre accomplit le sacrement pour qu'il soit sauvé. Au contraire, les sacrements nous invitent à regarder le don gratuit de Dieu. D'autre part, la doctrine, surtout dans l'Eglise Protestante, risque de devenir moyen de salut pour soi. L'orthodoxie classique, par exemple, a érigé la doctrine en une espèce de statut sacramentaire, avec des conséquences assez regrettables. Tout a été ramené à l'obéissance à la parole de Dieu dans la Bible; mais comme le sens de la Bible n'est pas toujours évident, l'obéissance à

une école d'exégèse a remplacé l'obéissance à la parole de Dieu. Les erreurs dans l'Eglise catholique ont leur équivalent dans l'Eglise Protestante.

Tillich dénonce ainsi comme absolument inefficace tout effort de l'homme qui croit qu'il peut arriver au salut tout seul. A maintes reprises il affirme que les domaines examinés sont tous bons, mais qu'ils deviennent stériles s'ils sont employés pour se procurer le salut. Cet enseignement s'inscrit dans la tradition de l'Eglise concernant le salut. L'on se souvient comment, au cours de son histoire, l'Eglise a toujours condamné tout effort et toute doctrine qui prêchait que l'homme peut arriver tout seul à son salut. Un exemple notable fut celui des Pélagiens.

L'homme n'a qu'à choisir entre une situation sans issue et le désespoir qui en suit, et le salut offert par un autre. Tillich voudrait donc voir où se trouve cette unique possibilité de salut. Comment l'homme peut rejoindre son essence? Nous l'avons déjà atteinte d'une certaine façon dans la mesure où le désespoir ne nous a pas perdus, et où nous espérons encore. Nous possédons déjà un germe de salut.

(b) *Aspiration universelle au salut*

Malgré son aspiration au salut, l'homme est donc incapable de se sauver lui-même, parce qu'aucun moyen ne peut forcer l'Inconditionnel à se rendre. La seule attitude qui reste valable est celle de l'attente. Et comme en témoigne l'histoire des religions, cette attente est universelle.

L'analyse des données de l'histoire des religions nous révèle que cette attente de l'Etre Nouveau se manifeste sous deux aspects en général. De fait beaucoup de religions, surtout en Orient, attendent un salut *non-historique*. Il est intéressant de remarquer que dans ces religions, il s'agit surtout d'entrer en relation avec l'Etre afin de pouvoir être sauvé. Ce sont des religions plutôt mystiques, mais chez elles le salut ne change rien à la situation humaine, car le monde fini est nié. D'ailleurs, ce ne sont que des individus qui participent au salut. L'on voit ainsi que dans ces religions le salut n'est pas complet — le crée est nié, la société comme telle n'en profite pas et finalement l'histoire reste sans un but précis.

En revanche, les religions historiques, qu'on trouve surtout en Occident, attachent une certaine importance au monde créé. L'Etre Nouveau qui apparaîtra changera la réalité et son influence s'étendra à toute la

l'histoire de l'homme. Ce salut a été conçu sous trois modes différents: comme un salut progressif, comme le centre de l'histoire, et finalement comme la fin qui permettra l'accès immédiat à l'éternité. D'une certaine façon, peu importe sous quel mode l'Etre Nouveau apparaîtra — ce qui compte, c'est que la société humaine recevra un but pour son histoire.

Ainsi, nous pouvons dire que bien que l'attente soit universelle, un certain type d'attente correspond davantage à la réalité humaine que nous avons décrite au début. L'on se rappelle l'insistance de Tillich sur le lien qui existe entre la situation d'aliénation chez l'homme et le besoin analogue du salut dans la création. Cette idée nous la trouvons d'ailleurs dans la Bible (cf. ROM VIII 18-25). L'intérêt de cette attente historique réside surtout dans le fait qu'elle concerne notre monde et notre vie toute entière.

Ainsi nous voyons que le symbole du Messie n'est pas propre au christianisme, ni même au judaïsme. Il s'agit plutôt d'un symbole universel, quel que soit le nom qu'on lui donne. Il concerne surtout les religions historiques, car l'on attendait d'abord un roi qui apporterait la justice et la paix. Au fur et à mesure que cet aspect politique s'estompeait, cette royauté devenait plus symbolique. Or, d'après Tillich, le christianisme a pour tâche de montrer que ce symbole répond non seulement à l'attente historique, mais aussi à l'attente non-historique. Ceci permettrait au christianisme d'être universellement valable. Le christianisme primitif a utilisé d'autres symboles pour parler de l'aspect vertical de l'événement salvifique. Le Judaïsme lui fournissait des symboles apocalyptiques, tels que le 'Fils de l'homme'. Grâce à ces symboles, le christianisme, qui croit à un événement dans l'histoire qui est porteur de salut, a pu faire le lien avec les attentes non-historiques.

Ce travail de l'ancienne chrétienté pour exprimer l'universalité du salut donné dans le Christ peut être intéressant pour nous aussi. De fait, le christianisme doit encore rencontrer tant de civilisations qui attendent un salut transhistorique. Il suffit de voir le peu de résultats (appareils au moins) qu'a eu le christianisme dans les pays orientaux. Comment le christianisme peut-il agir pour qu'il fasse comprendre que le salut n'est pas hors de l'histoire humaine et ne concerne pas seulement les individus? Naturellement, l'on se heurte tout de suite à une vision du monde qui est marquée par la négation du réel. Tout d'abord il me semble que, dans cette situation, il y a déjà un salut, dans la mesure où l'on trouve la réponse à ce qu'on cherche. Tillich nous dit que

le salut est toujours un salut, même quand il n'est pas complet. L'Eglise d'ailleurs a toujours accepté que ceux qui ne croient pas au Christ sont sauvés s'ils sont de bona fide. Mais pour que l'homme puisse arriver à la plénitude de la vérité et du salut, c'est peut-être toute la vision de l'homme qu'il faut changer. Tillich affirme que c'est l'attente historique qui peut englober l'attente non-historique et non vice versa. Il faudrait donc pouvoir montrer la valeur de la société, de l'histoire et du crée. Telle sera la première démarche de l'annonce du salut.

LE PARADOXE

Or, avant de voir comment le christianisme rend compte du salut qu'il porte, il faudrait considérer le terme PARADOXE. Pour exprimer son message, le christianisme a recours au paradoxe. Le paradoxe est cette affirmation qui va à l'encontre de l'opinion, de l'attente, sans pour autant être illogique. Personne n'aurait cru, que l'Inconditionnel puisse apparaître dans le monde fini, et pourtant ceci s'est avéré possible. Quant à l'individu qui est pécheur et qui par conséquence se trouve séparé de l'Etre, personne n'aurait cru qu'il puisse être sauvé. Ce même paradoxe nous le trouvons aussi appliqué à l'Eglise. Cette société participe à toutes les ambiguïtés de la vie matérielle et spirituelle, mais elle est en même temps la communauté spirituelle bénéficiant du salut.

Cette doctrine concernant le Fondateur, les membres individuels et l'Eglise comme communauté spirituelle, suppose la foi. L'on demande au croyant de croire à une action de Dieu qui transcende la condition humaine. La logique purement humaine est incapable de se rendre compte de cet agir de Dieu; mais par la foi l'on accède à une logique transcendante. Ainsi, en parlant du salut l'on doit être prêt à entrer dans ce paradoxe.

Dans sa situation d'être fini, l'homme est en train de se perdre, sans aucun espoir de pouvoir se sauver lui-même. Par une certaine logique interne, l'homme coupé de son essence, se perd tout seul. D'après le principe de corrélation, le Christ vient sauver l'homme. Il vient en tant que Médiateur. Naturellement, Dieu n'a pas besoin d'être réconcilié avec l'homme, mais c'est l'homme qui a besoin de Dieu. Cette vérité est assez souvent affirmée dans l'Ecriture. Le Médiateur n'est donc pas un tiers, il est plutôt celui qui représente Dieu auprès des hommes. L'histoire de l'Eglise nous montre avec quelle assiduité l'Eglise a combattu l'idée d'un tiers: que l'on songe à la lutte contre le gnosticisme.

Avant exclu toute idée de Médiateur qui serait un tiers, on peut affirmer que ce Médiateur vient révéler aux hommes qui vivent dans l'aliénation ce que peut être leur véritable nature. Nous aurons une meilleure idée du paradoxe chrétien tel que Tillich le comprend en citant le passage suivant:

'Le paradoxe du message chrétien n'est pas que l'humanité essentielle inclut l'union de Dieu et de l'homme. Ceci appartient à la dialectique de l'infini et du fini. Le paradoxe du message chrétien est que dans une vie personnelle l'essence de l'humanité est apparue dans les conditions de l'existence sans être vaincue par elles.'²

Nous reviendrons un peu plus tard sur l'idée qui est ici exprimée.

L'INCARNATION

Un autre terme qui a besoin d'être révisé est celui de l'Incarnation par lequel l'Eglise désigne le mode par lequel l'Etre Nouveau est venu vers nous. Tillich dit que la première question qu'on pose d'habitude à propos de l'Incarnation est celle de savoir *qui* est le sujet de l'Incarnation. Ici Tillich intervient en disant:

'Si la réponse est *Dieu*, l'on poursuit souvent en disant que "Dieu est devenu homme" et que ceci est le paradoxe du message chrétien. Mais l'affirmation que "Dieu est devenu homme" n'est pas paradoxale, mais une affirmation sans signification. C'est une combinaison de mots qui font sens seulement si les mots ne sont pas pris dans leurs sens.'³

La seule raison qu'il avance contre cet usage, c'est que Dieu ne peut pas cesser d'être Dieu. Or l'Eglise n'a jamais affirmé cela: en revanche elle a toujours dit que Dieu est devenu quelque chose qu'il n'était pas. Il y a déjà des siècles, que contre Nestorius, Cyrille affirmait que devenir n'est pas cesser d'être ce qu'on était avant quand il s'agit de l'Incarnation.⁴

Tillich ne serait pas trop enthousiaste non plus pour utiliser des termes comme le 'Fils de Dieu', l'Homme spirituel' ou l'Homme d'en

²S.T. II p.108.

³S.T. II p.109.

⁴*Quod Unussit Christus*, Cyrille d'Alexandrie, S.C. N° 97, 717cd. Toute la partie signalée ici est un inventaire intéressant des sens divers que l'on peut donner au terme *devenir*.

'haut'. Bien que bibliques, ces termes sont dangereux. Tout d'abord si l'on parle d'un être divin, sans aucun autre qualification, l'on risque de tomber dans le polythéisme. Un autre danger serait celui d'aligner le christianisme sur des simples attentes exprimées dans des mythes où des êtres supérieurs s'incarnent.

Mais là où l'expression chrétienne prend son ton, c'est sûrement dans la doctrine johannique: 'Le Logos est devenu chair'. En se tournant vers cette affirmation, Tillich se met dans la ligne de toute la tradition chrétienne, qui y a toujours trouvé l'expression du mystère de l'Incarnation. Nous suivons maintenant pas à pas l'analyse que Tillich fait de cette affirmation fondamentale.

Le *Logos*, nous dit Tillich, est le principe de la manifestation de soi de Dieu. Il l'est d'abord en Dieu lui-même. Mais il l'est dans l'univers et dans l'histoire humaine aussi. De fait, en tant que *Logos*, Jésus qui est le Christ est celui qui est pure relation entre celui qui parle et l'homme qui est interpellé. Il est la parole vivante par laquelle Dieu s'exprime.

Quant au mot *chair*, Tillich dit qu'il ne désigne pas une substance matérielle, mais une existence historique. Cette affirmation, me semble-t-il, doit être au moins complétée. Car, pour pouvoir participer vraiment à une existence historique, Dieu ne pouvait faire qu'une seule chose; à savoir, devenir homme comme nous. 'Devenir', nous dit encore Tillich, veut dire participer à l'histoire. Tout au long de la querelle christologique de l'Eglise ancienne, l'on a établi que, pour qu'il puisse vraiment participer à notre condition et la changer, le Verbe devait être un homme complet comme nous. L'argument classique retentissait: ce qui n'est pas assumé n'est pas non plus sauvé (Grégoire Nazianze, Origène). Donc celui qui est le Christ avait aussi une chair comme la nôtre et c'était là les suels moyens qu'il avait de changer notre condition. Pour mettre davantage l'accent sur cette chair que le Verbe a prise, Jean, dont Tillich revendique l'autorité, affirme de nouveau dans son épître:

'Ce qui était dès le commencement,
ce que nous avons entendu,
ce que nous avons vu de nos yeux,
ce que nous avons contemplé,
ce que nos mains ont touché du Verbe de vie;
car la vie s'est manifestée:
nous l'avons vue, nous en rendons témoignage'

et nous vous annonçons cette Vie éternelle.'

(I JN I 1-2)

Nous voyons bien comment ce témoignage affirme avec la même force et la divinité du Verbe, et le côté humain qu'il a assumé depuis son Incarnation. De la confession même de la venue de Jésus-Christ dans la chair, Jean fait le critère de la vraie foi — voir I JN IV 2, 3. Donc, il faudrait corriger l'affirmation de Tillich:

'Ceci n'est pas le mythe de la transmutation mais l'affirmation que Dieu s'est manifesté dans un processus d'une vie personnelle comme participant salutaire de la condition humaine.'⁵

Dieu s'est révélé en *devenant* homme. Et toute vie personnelle ne peut s'exprimer que 'dans' un corps. Ce que Tillich veut dire par cette manifestation dans une vie personnelle, nous aurons à le voir quand il parlera de Jésus historique. Le peu de cas qu'il fait de l'histoire de Jésus est, le moins qu'on puisse dire, inquiétante.

LE CHRIST

Le dernier symbole utilisé par l'homme pour exprimer l'attente de l'Etre Nouveau est celui du *Christ*. Alors l'on peut se demander comment il faudrait comprendre ce symbole par rapport à l'univers. Comment le Christ peut-il être le sens de tout l'univers? L'homme fait partie de l'univers et il sait très bien que son salut n'est pas possible sans celui de l'univers. En l'Etre Nouveau qu'on attend, l'on cherche le salut pour tout et pour tous.

La réponse à cette question la voici: le Christ serait l'homme essentiel qui apparaît dans une vie personnelle dans les conditions de l'aliénation. Si ce que l'homme doit être se manifeste, alors l'on peut dire que la vie de l'homme a un sens, un but à poursuivre. Par ce fait même l'histoire humaine est sauvée! Cette attente suppose l'apparition de la relation véritable entre Dieu et l'homme, qui existe depuis toujours. Dans le Christ apparaît ce que l'homme est essentiellement: devant Dieu il est un fils. Par le même mouvement, nous voyons quelle est l'attitude de Dieu envers l'homme — c'est que Dieu aime le monde.

RECAPITULATION

Essayons maintenant de ressaïsir le mouvement de notre démarche.

⁵S.T. II p.110.

La description phénoménologique de la condition humaine nous a révélé que l'homme est le seul être qui sait qu'il est aliéné. Cette conscience de sa situation montre en même temps qu'il garde un lui le 'souvenir' de ce qu'il était. C'est pourquoi, il aspire vers son salut. Cependant, nous avons vu, tous ses efforts pour se sauver ont été vains. Il doit donc attendre son salut d'un autre. Quand cet autre apparaîtra, ce sera le salut accompli.

Là encore nous voyons jouer la méthode de la corrélation. A la petite lueur au coeur de l'homme, correspond la Lumière apportée par le Christ. Nous quittons donc le domaine de l'attente pour voir celui de la réalisation.

LA REALISATION DU SALUT – JESUS EST LE CHRIST

L'originalité du christianisme réside dans le fait qu'il affirme que celui que tout le monde attendait est Jésus de Nazareth. C'est lui qui est le Christ, qui est donc le sens de l'histoire humaine et l'Etre Nouveau attendu par tous.

'Le christianisme, nous dit-il, est né, non pas avec la naissance de l'homme qu'on appelle Jésus, mais au moment où l'un de ses disciples a été poussé à lui dire: TU ES LE CHRIST;'⁶

La confession de Pierre à Césarée est donc le point central du christianisme. Tillich insiste beaucoup, et avec raison, sur la nécessité de cette reconnaissance. Il nous dit que dans cet événement, il y a d'un côté le fait de Jésus de Nazareth et de l'autre la reconnaissance de la part de Pierre du caractère christique de celui-ci. Ailleurs dans son livre, Tillich parle beaucoup de la *révélation*. Pour lui, il y a révélation quand l'homme fait l'expérience de l'Inconditionnel. La révélation suppose toujours deux pôles: celui qui révèle et celui qui reçoit la révélation. Si l'un des pôles fait défaut, il n'y a pas de révélation: ou l'Inconditionnel demeure caché, ou l'homme demeure coupé du fondement de son être. Ainsi, la confession de Pierre constitue la révélation type. Que le Christ apparaisse est la possibilité par excellence offerte à l'homme de rejoindre le fondement de l'Etre. D'un côté, l'homme fait l'expérience du vide qu'il porte en lui et de l'autre celui de la puissance de l'Etre et de sa plénitude. C'est cela que l'expérience de Pierre nous indique.

⁶S.T. II p.112.

Pierre a donc reconnu en l'homme Jésus celui qui est le Christ. Ceci est le point central de l'Evangile de Marc. Désormais le critère pour juger qui est chrétien et qui n'est pas, est constitué pas cette affirmation de Pierre. Cependant, si Jésus qui est le Christ est accepté par Pierre et par d'autres, ce même Jésus est simultanément rejeté parce qu'il est le Christ. Ici nous voyons surgir l'autre dimension du mystère – celui qui est le Christ participe à la situation aliénée de l'homme et succombe à son action destructrice. Voilà le paradoxe du message chrétien! Celui qui est censé détruire l'aliénation humaine, en tombe victime lui aussi.

Grâce à la révélation qu'il a eue et qu'il a accueillie, Simon Pierre a pu donner à l'homme Jésus de Nazareth le titre du *Christ*. Il importe donc, nous dit Tillich, de garder toujours devant les yeux que Jésus-Christ n'est pas un nom propre, mais que 'Christ' dans ce nom se réfère au symbole qui englobe toute l'attente des hommes pour l'Etre Nouveau. C'est pourquoi Tillich préfère ne jamais mettre les deux noms côté-à-té, mais utilise des phrases comme 'Jésus qui est le Christ', 'Jésus qui est dit être le Christ'... Dans un de ses sermons, Tillich reprend ce thème du nom du Christ; Il dit que le mystère du Christ ne peut pas être exprimé par des titres ordinaires. De fait, il fallait les événements qui ont suivi la confession de Pierre, pour que les sens du titre 'Christ' se clarifie: la souffrance, la mort, la résurrection. Lui, il voudrait garder dans toute son acuité le paradoxe du Christ, ainsi que le mystère qui l'enveloppe:

'Nos églises parlent de lui jour après jour, dimanche après dimanche, quelques unes plutôt en termes de roi politique de la paix, d'autres en termes de roi céleste de gloire. Ils l'appellent Jésus-Christ, oubliant, en nous faisant oublier, ce que cela veut dire: Jésus est le Christ. L'événement le plus incroyable et le plus impossible pour l'homme – (à savoir) qu'un rabbi juif errant est le Christ – nous devenu familier.'⁷

Tillich voudrait faire sortir les chrétiens de cette familiarité et leur faire sentir ainsi toute la force d'interpellation pour leur foi qui se trouve dans cette confession.

Il me semble que Tillich a raison d'insister sur ce qu'il y a de paradoxal et d'interpelant pour notre foi dans ce titre. Nous savons qu'au

⁷ *The Shaking of the Foundations*, P. Tillich, p.146, 147.

cours de sa vie le Christ a souvent défendu à ceux qui l'ont reconnu comme tel d'en parler. De fait il voulait écarter tout ce qu'il y avait d'ambigu dans cette attente messianique. La structure même des évangiles qui encadrent la confession de Pierre par les annonces de la passion confirme également ce que Tillich dit à propos de la participation du Christ à la condition humaine. L'évangile nous dit aussi que la seule fois où le Christ a accepté ce titre c'était à son entrée à Jérusalem (MT XXI 9) et que cela lui a valu la mort. Mais une fois ressuscité, on peut lui attribuer ce titre de Messie sans risque d'équivoque. C'est le titre le plus englobant. Parce qu'il est le Christ, Jésus est aussi le Seigneur (AC II 36,...). Parce qu'il est le Christ, il est aussi le Fils véritable (ROM I 4).

Donc, ce Jésus que Pierre et ses contemporains ont connu est aussi le Christ. S'il est le Fils de Dieu, le Seigneur, celui que tout homme attendait, il est aussi Jésus de Nazareth. Si l'Eglise a pris l'habitude de juxtaposer le nom Jésus et le titre de Christ, c'est que, pour elle, celui qui est Jésus de Nazareth est aussi le Christ. Et si cet homme a été reçu comme étant le Fils de Dieu, il l'a toujours été, dès sa naissance. Peut-être avec la distinction faite par Tillich, l'on risque de ne pas tenir compte de l'unité et de l'identité exprimées par le nom JESUS-CHRIST.

LE FAIT

Nous venons de voir que dans la révélation fondamentale qui est à la base du christianisme il y a un double aspect: un fait historique et l'acceptation de ce fait comme révélation par la foi. Cette correspondance est extrêmement importante, car s'il n'y avait pas eu reconnaissance de cet événement, celui-ci ne pouvait pas devenir révélation pour nous. Que l'un des côté tombe, et la révélation devient impossible. Voyons donc comment Tillich explique le rapport entre ces deux pôles de la révélation.

Une fois qu'il a montré l'importance de ces deux aspects de la corrélation, Tillich pose la question suivante: Qu'arrivera-t-il dans l'avenir, si la tradition qui aujourd'hui reçoit Jésus comme le Christ vient, pour une raison ou pour une autre, à se casser? Naturellement, la Bible affirme que celui qui est le Christ sera présent à sa communauté jusqu'à la fin des temps. La Bible affirme également qu'avant la fin du monde, le Christ viendra établir son règne. Devant de telles affirmations, Til-

lich nous invité à écarter tout littéralisme surnaturel devant des symboles eschatologiques. Par contre, il propose que l'on réponde à cette question, en disant que nous savons que pour nous l'événement de Jésus qui est le Christ est central du point de vue de l'espace et du temps. Pour d'autres mondes et pour d'autres temps nous n'en savons rien. Pour lui, Dieu peut avoir d'autres types de relations. Il est le centre de l'histoire *pour nous* dans la mesure où il comble l'aspiration à l'Etre Nouveau pour tous ceux qui participent à notre histoire.

Mais pour revenir à l'événement fondateur, Tillich va chercher les résultats de l'enquête sur le Jésus historique. Deux types d'écoles ont mené cette enquête: d'une part l'école employant la méthode analytico-critique, et de l'autre, celle qui se sert d'éléments constructifs et conjecturaux. La première méthode, qui finalement n'est rien d'autre que la recherche historique, essaie de déterminer ce qui est probable et d'écartier un bon nombre de légendes et de préjugés anciens. Dès le début, cette méthode s'est heurtée à beaucoup de méfiance, car elle semblait critiquer non seulement les faits historiques, mais aussi la révélation contenue dans les sources historiques.

L'autre aspect de l'enquête était bien plus important, car l'essai de construire la vie de Jésus était le motif qui animait cette entreprise critique.

'Ainsi commença la recherche du "Jésus historique". Ses motifs étaient religieux et scientifiques à la fois. L'essai était courageux, noble et extrêmement significatif à plusieurs égards. Ses conséquences sont sombreuses et plutôt importantes.'⁸

Et pourtant le résultat de cet effort a été l'échec. Non seulement l'on n'a pas fait surgir l'image de Jésus de derrière les symboles, mais au fur et à mesure que la recherche avançait, l'image du Jésus historique devenait de plus en plus obscure. Et l'on devait s'y attendre, car ceux qui ont parlé de lui dans leurs évangiles étaient des hommes qui l'avaient accepté comme le Christ. Pour eux, si cet homme n'était que Jésus, il n'aurait eu aucune importance dans leur vie. Quand l'on élimine tous les traits particuliers, à cause des difficultés qu'ils posent, l'on n'arrive même pas à établir les traits essentiels de la vie de cet homme. Encore une fois, nous sommes donc amenés à reconnaître l'originalité du christianisme qui n'est pas fondé sur les résultats d'une recherche

⁸S.T. II p.117.

historique, mais plutôt sur le témoignage d'hommes qui ont cru que Jésus était le Christ. D'ailleurs, si nous devions fonder notre foi sur des faits historiques bien établis, notre foi n'aurait jamais de fondement car nous n'en avons aucun.

L'échec dans l'établissement d'une biographie de Jésus a conduit certaine théologiens à chercher du côté de son message. On cherchait l'*'ipsissima verba'*. Cette recherche a pris deux aspects. Le premier s'orientait davantage vers l'enseignement de Jésus. L'on considérait ainsi que son enseignement est plus sublime ou qu'il est une interprétation plus raffinée de la loi. Telles paroles appartiendraient aux genres la Loi, des prophètes ou de la littérature sapientielle. Dans cette situation l'on voit mal en quoi l'Ancien Testament a été dépassé par le Nouveau. Si, par contre, on cherchait les message de Jésus, l'on mettait l'accent sur le que ce message concerne le Royaume qui est là. Une décision est demandée aux auditeurs. Bultmann serait le plus représentatif parmi ces chercheurs. Dans le but de rendre l'Evangile plus acceptable aux hommes d'aujourd'hui, il entreprend une critique qui vise à démythologiser les textes. Comme Heidegger, il distingue entre l'existence inauthentique de l'homme dans le monde et la vie authentique qui naît d'une décision personnelle répondant à l'appel du Christ. Mais, dans ce cas aussi, Tillich souligne que l'on se trouve encore au stade de l'Ancien Testament. Rien ne montre comment nos aspirations seront comblées et qui nous aidera à les réaliser.

'Cette méthode ne peut pas fonctionner car la réponse doit venir d'une réalité nouvelle, qui, d'après le message chrétien, est l'Etre Nouveau dans Jésus qui est le Christ. La croix est le symbole d'un don avant d'être le symbole de la demande.'⁹

QUELQUES REFLEXIONS

Ici nous nous arrêtons un instant pour pouvoir peser les affirmations que nous venons d'exposer. Révisons d'abord ses vues sur l'enquête historique. En tant que démarche purement scientifique, la recherche du Jésus historique peut suivre son cours. Elle cherche à établir dans le cas de Jésus au moins des probabilités comme elle en établit pour d'autres personnages historiques. Mais d'après Tillich, que ses découvertes soient importantes ou insignifiantes, la foi n'est pas touchée

⁹S.T. II p.123.

par elles. Par contre la foi est concernée quand il s'agit de l'événement de Jésus en tant que Christ. C'est le seul événement historique garanti par la foi.

'La foi ne peut même pas garantir le nom "Jésus" dans le cas de celui qui était le Christ. Elle doit laisser cela aux incertitudes des connaissances historiques. Par contre, la foi garantit la transformation factuelle de la réalité dans cette vie personnelle que le Nouveau Testament exprime dans l'image de Jésus en tant que Christ.'¹⁰

Cette dernière citation est quelque peu exagérée. Elle met tout l'accent sur la transformation qui à lieu dans le croyant. Pour elle, c'est là que se trouve l'événement historique. Que la transformation au coeur du croyant soit un fait historique, personne ne peut le nier. Cependant, cette même transformation doit nous conduire nécessairement vers un événement historique, *extérieur* au croyant, qui a suscité la foi en lui. De ce deuxième aspect qui concernerait le côté incarnationnel de Jésus-Christ, Tillich fait peu de cas!

Il importe, de fait, que l'Etre Nouveau soit apparu réellement dans la vie, soit réellement devenu homme; autrement 'Jésus-Christ' ne serait qu'un symbole parmi tant d'autres que nous trouvons dans l'histoire des religions. Nous risquons de demeurer sur le plan des mythes, des aspirations humaines qui ne sont que des aspirations, *sans réalisation*. Tillich lui-même est conscient de l'importance de la facticité dans le symbole, mais cette facticité ne concerne que le croyant pour lui. Tout au long de son exposé christologique cette vision du fait fondateur de la foi est sans cesse présente. Il me semble que Kane a parfaitement raison quand il critique Tillich:

'Tillich's reaction to the claims of historical criticism concerning the Person of Jesus is somewhat strange. While accepting many of the conclusions of this school, he still says that "the attempt to discover the reality of this man, Jesus of Nazareth, behind the coloring and covering traditions which are almost as old as the reality itself... the attempt... to find the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth, was a failure.'¹¹

¹⁰S.T. II p.123.

¹¹*Three Christological Positions in contemporary American Protestantism*: N. Ferré, R. Niebuhr, and P. Tillich, Rome, 1959, p.36.

DISTINCTIONS FACHEUSES

C'est maintenant que nous voyons surgir les risques de séparation dans le nom du Sauveur. Nous avons déjà montré l'intérêt de la spécification que Tillich apporte au nom *Jésus qui est le Christ*, ou à d'autres formes parallèles. Cependant le phrase citée plus haut (*Systematic Theology* p. 123) montre bien que d'après l'auteur l'objet de notre foi n'est que le Christ, et que le Jésus historique finalement compte peu aux yeux de la foi. Mais si, comme le pressent l'auteur lui-même, l'Etre Nouveau a vraiment participé à la condition humaine, tout ce qu'il a fait revêt pour nous une importance capitale. Ainsi, en nous donnant certains renseignements, dont nous savons qu'ils sont souvent colorés par des descriptions légendaires, les premiers témoins voulaient nous aider à comprendre comment le Christ a vaincu l'aliénation universelle; Si le Christ n'avait pas été en même temps ce Jésus de Nazareth, il n'aurait pas pu participer à notre condition.

Pendant ces deux derniers siècles, la pensée exégétique et dogmatique a oscillé entre la recherche du Jésus historique et du Christ de la foi. Ce mouvement a beaucoup apporté dans la ligne d'une meilleure compréhension du message biblique. Il a sûrement permis à la foi au Christ de s'exprimer dans un langage qui répond aux questions de l'homme d'aujourd'hui. Mais il faut avouer aussi que ce mouvement d'oscillation comportait également le risque d'amputer la réalité du Christ Sauveur. En ne lisant la Bible que sous un seul angle, l'on se rendait imprperméable à toute la richesse du mystère du Seigneur. Tillich, me semble-t-il, n'a pas échappé à ce piège. Il insiste tellement sur le Christ, sur l'Etre Nouveau, qu'on risque d'oublier que ce même Etre Nouveau est apparu comme homme qui participe *pleinement* à la condition humaine. En plus, la position de Tillich quant aux 'ipsissima verba' semble confirmer la distinction qu'il opère dans le Christ entre ses paroles et l'Etre Nouveau.

Naturellement, ce que nous pouvons dire c'est que dans certains cas, grâce à nos méthodes d'analyse, nous pouvons établir une forte probabilité que telle ou telle parole ait été dite par le Christ lui-même. Que toutes les paroles du Christ aient été rapportées textuellement ou non, nous importe peu finalement. Ce que nous croyons c'est que les textes bibliques nous donnent une image de Jésus en tant que Christ et que c'est dans l'unité parfaite de Jésus et du Christ que réside notre salut. Et là Tillich a raison de dire que la science ne peut pas detruire

notre foi. Mais de l'autre côté nous ne pouvons pas rejeter les paroles du Christ et les actes qui nous sont rapportés dans l'Evangile.

Je voudrait citer ici un développement de Ratzinger¹² à propos de l'unité parfaite qui existe entre la personne du Christ et ses actes et paroles. Il montre tout d'abord que le Christ n'a jamais revendiqué pour lui-même le titre de Messie (*Christos*), mais que ce titre lui a été donné par Pilate. Un peu plus tard ce titre devient le sujet de sa condamnation, inscrit dans toutes les langues connues d'alors. Tillich, lui-même, nous avons vu, voit lui aussi un lien étroit entre la confession de Pierre et la participation du Messie à notre condition humaine. Ce titre de condamnation devient en même temps la confession de foi de l'Eglise. En tant que crucifié ce Jésus est le Christ, le roi. Par la crucifixion, le Christ se livre complètement aux hommes, de même que ses paroles étaient pour eux. Toute son existence, comme l'acte suprême de sa mort le montre, devient ainsi une parole. 'Il est parole, parce qu'il est amour.' La croix a permis aux croyants de voir que Jésus ne nous dit pas et ne nous fait pas seulement quelque chose, mais qu'en lui, message et personne sont identiques. De cette identité entre personne et parole, Jean tire la conclusion que ce Jésus est la Parole, le Logos. D'abord, l'on établit que cet homme est le Christ et par la suite l'on réfléchit sur les paroles antérieures à sa mort. Finalement, Jean relie les deux mouvements: il lit les paroles à partir de la Personne et il comprend la personne à partir des paroles. Au lieu d'être écartées, les paroles jettent une lumière sur la personne du Christ.

LA RECHERCHE HISTORIQUE ET LA THEOLOGIE

Nous continuons maintenant notre exposé en constatant les résultats de la recherche historique.

Tillich se félicite d'appartenir à une église qui a eu le courage de soumettre ses documents sacrés à l'analyse critique de la méthode historique. Aucune autre religion n'a eu ce courage! Le résultat de cette recherche a été l'établissement de trois niveaux sur lesquels l'on doit lire la Bible: à savoir: l'histoire empirique, la légende et les éléments mythiques dans les histoires racontées dans toute la Bible. Elle a également découvert les différentes étapes dans l'élaboration du sym-

¹² *Foi Chrétien hier et a aujourd'hui*, J. Ratzinger, Mame, trad., 2^o Edition, 1969, p.135-136.

bolisme chrétien. Finalement, cette analyse critique a fourni des instruments philologiques et historiques pour une meilleure compréhension de la Bible. Ces instruments sont dignes de la recherche historique contemporaine. Tillich a raison de se féliciter car le travail accompli par les théologiens protestants est vraiment considérable. D'autre part, il faut avouer que l'Eglise Catholique n'a pas été très enthousiasmée par ce travail, au moins dans ses débuts. Heureusement qu'il y a eu La-grange et son Ecole Biblique, parce qu'autrement, ce n'est que tout récemment que des théologiens catholiques se sont mis sur cette route.

Il serait donc intéressant d'accueillir les résultats de cette recherche concernant les symboles religieux. Il est même indispensable de bien voir en quoi consistent ces symboles et l'interprétation chrétienne qui leur a été donnée. Nous verrons les symboles sur cet arrière-fond des résultats obtenus par la recherche. Nous esquissons ici les résultats qui sont assez parlant en soi:

- 1° Les symboles naissent et grandissent dans leurs culture et language.
- 2° Ces symboles sont utilisés par ceux pour qui ils sont devenus vivants comme expression de l'interprétation de soi et comme réponses à leurs questions existentielles.
- 3° Ces symboles ont subi des modifications quand ils ont été appliqués à l'événement fondateur du christianisme.
- 4° Finalement ces symboles ont été transformés par la superstition populaire, qui à son tour a été aidée par le littéralisme et le supernaturalisme théologique.

A la lumière de ces principes, nous examinerons les symboles christologiques suivants: Fils de Dieu, Fils de l'Homme, Messie, Logos.

FILS DE L'HOMME

Ce symbole véhicule l'idée de l'unité originale entre Dieu et l'homme. Nous trouvons ce symbole déjà dans l'antiquité perse et St. Paul l'utilisera plus tard en parlant de l'Homme Spirituel. Le Fils de l'Homme exprime donc l'aspiration de l'homme à sortir de son aliénation et à trouver son unité avec Dieu qui lui est essentielle. Or le Christ est dit avoir revendiqué ce titre durant sa vie devant le Grand Prêtre. Ceci ne pouvait pas manquer de choquer ses auditeurs car l'on n'attendait qu'à la fin des temps la venue du Fils de l'Homme du ciel. Le Christ a donc

voulu être celui en qui l'homme trouve le sens, l'image originelle qu'il avait perdue. La déformation survient quand l'on fait du 'Fils de l'Homme' un être transcendant envoyé du ciel. Ce Fils devient donc un médiateur, moitié Dieu et moitié homme.¹³

FILS DE DIEU

Le symbole Fils de Dieu peut être étudié lui aussi sur l'arrière-fond de ces quatre étapes que nous avons établis. De fait, Tillich nous dit, l'ancien Testament ainsi que certaines religions païennes indiquent que l'homme en tant qu'homme peut avoir une relation de Père-fils avec Dieu. Mais cette relation a été perdue comme nous l'avons déjà vu. C'est pourquoi un acte de Dieu devient nécessaire pour rétablir cette relation. Le christianisme a appliqué ce titre au Christ. 'Fils de Dieu devient le titre de celui en qui l'unité essentielle entre Dieu et l'homme est apparue dans les conditions de l'existence.'¹⁴ En lui l'universalité de la relation homme-Dieu devient unique. Cependant, grâce à lui, on peut passer de cette unicité à l'universalité, car ceux qui participent à son être reçoivent le pouvoir de devenir fils de Dieu. Naturellement, nous ne pouvons pas projeter les structures humaines sur la vie divine et donc ce titre doit être pris lui aussi analogiquement.

A cette explication, j'ajouterais, que bien qu'il faille interpréter le titre 'Fils de Dieu' appliqué au Christ d'une façon symbolique, il faut aussi distinguer entre ce Fils et les fils qui nous sommes. Nous ne sommes pas des fils au même titre que lui. Lui, il l'est de nature, nous nous le sommes par adoption. D'après St. Paul, quand ce Fils est apparu parmi nous nous pouvions voir celui à l'image de qui nous avons été créés (ROM VIII 29). Tillich aurait dû insister davantage sur la primauté du Christ comme Fils de Dieu.

LE MESSIE

Le titre Messie a déjà été partiellement traité. Si nous jetons un re-

¹³ A propos de ce titre on a avantage à voir *Esquisse d'une Christologie*, W. Pannenberg, trad., Cerf, 1971, surtout la Première Partie. Pannenberg à mon avis exprime ceci très clairement. Il montre bien comment le Christ a revendiqué le titre de *fils de l'Homme* durant sa vie et comment la résurrection vient confirmer cette prétention. Par contre, Tillich se contente de la reconnaissance de la part des disciples. Voir aussi sa théorie de la Résurrection.

¹⁴ S.T. II p.126.

gard sur l'histoire d'Israël surtout, nous voyons que ce symbole revêt un double aspect. Sous son aspect historique, il vise le rétablissement du règne de Dieu dans l'Israël historique, et par la suite, dans le monde entier à travers Israël. Ceci est l'aspect prophétique. Un autre aspect est celui de l'apocalypse, où le règne de Dieu est repoussé à la fin des temps. Ce symbole, on le voit, surgit de l'aspiration de l'homme à un monde où règnent la justice et la prospérité. En appliquant ce symbole au Christ, le christianisme a accepté un paradoxe: celui d'un Messie qui est censé apporter une ère nouvelle, mais qui succombe à ses ennemis. Dans la quatrième étape, le symbole disparaît quand le Christ devient un nom donné à un personnage. Ce titre ne vise plus une fonction mais un individu qui a des puissances surnaturelles, et qui par son sacrifice volontaire permet à Dieu de sauver ceux qui croient en lui.

Il me semble que Tillich voit bien que la crucifixion constitue l'originalité de ce symbole chrétien. Peut-être faudrait-il ajouter que c'est surtout la Résurrection qui l'a fait Christ. Un texte aussi central comme ACT II 32 nous le montre. Le Christ en tant que Christ a montré que les voies de Dieu ne sont pas les nôtres. C'est donc celui qu'on a crucifié qui est le Christ, et comme le Christ l'explique lui-même à ses disciples, il fallait que le Christ souffrît pour entrer dans sa gloire. L'Ecriture insiste donc sur le fait que c'est l'homme Jésus qui a souffert qui est le Christ.

Encore une fois, nous affirmons, contrairement à ce que Tillich vouloir dire (voir 4^e étape), que le Christ n'est pas séparable de sa fonction. Son être et sa fonction sont les mêmes. Le Christ n'est pas un symbole, mais ce Jésus de Nazareth!

LE LOGOS

Ce dernier symbole surgit lui aussi des aspirations profondes de l'homme. D'un côté le Stoïcisme l'a conçu comme celui qui réunit des éléments cosmiques et religieux. D'un autre côté, Héraclite l'a conçu comme la raison universelle comparaître à la sottise de notre monde. Philon, quant à lui, insiste sur le mystère 'inaccessible'. Ce dernier voit dans le Logos le Médiateur entre Dieu et l'homme. Dans le christianisme, d'après le quatrième évangile, le Logos révèle le mystère de Dieu et réunit ce qui est éloigné de Dieu en étant une réalité historique dans une vie humaine. 'Le principe de l'auto-revelation de Dieu est qualitativement présent dans son caractère essentiel d'un être hu-

main individuel.¹⁵ En participant à la condition aliénée de l'homme, le Logos en détruit la folie. Par le paradoxe suprême de la croix, qui est la folie la plus inacceptable de l'homme, il révèle la folie de l'homme. En cet homme en croix, le Logos était présent sans restriction. La quatrième étape c'est le retour au mythe d'une métamorphose d'un être divin en l'homme Jésus de Nazareth.

La seule critique que j'adresserais à Tillich serait qu'il dit souvent 'présent' en parlant du rapport entre Dieu et Jésus-Christ. Or cette expression (que j'ai soulignée deux fois dans l'exposé), donne l'impression que Jésus était simplement habité par le Logos. Nul Ceci irait à l'encontre de l'affirmation 'Verbum caro factum est'. Ceci confirme également nos appréhensions quant à la doctrine tillichienne de l'Incarnation.

Tillich parle souvent du paradoxe chrétien. Ainsi parle-t-il de l'essence universelle de l'homme apparaissant dans la vie d'un individu unique. Mais Tillich ne montre pas assez le paradoxe suprême du christianisme, à savoir que Dieu est vraiment devenu homme en Jésus-Christ. Tillich se défend toujours contre une transmutation de Dieu en homme, ce que l'Eglise à toujours nié; mais il n'affirme jamais que, parce que Dieu aime l'homme, il est devenu homme comme lui. C'est pourquoi l'expression 'l'Etre Nouveau apparaissant en Jésus-Christ' que nous rencontrons souvent chez lui, reste floue. Naturellement, personne ne peut comprendre le comment de ce mystère, et pourtant la foi nous demande de le confesser.

Dans cette analyse des symboles, nous avons vu réapparaître la division dans le Christ. Nous avons déjà signalé ce danger plus haut.

FOI – HISTOIRE

Laissant de côté le problème historique comme tel, nous tournons notre regard maintenant vers le rapport entre la foi et l'Histoire. Tillich demande: est-ce que la recherche historique peut aboutir au scepticisme? A cela il répond qu'il convient d'écartier comme non valables deux réponses. La première est celle qui dit que ceci n'est pas encore arrivé: ceci ne prouve rien. La deuxième réponse est celle qui dit que le fait historique est une partie essentielle de la foi et que par conséquent la foi serait toujours en mesure de vaincre tout scepticisme à ce sujet.

¹⁵ S.T. II p.129. (C'est moi qui souligne).

Mais alors, l'on se demande: qu'est-ce que la foi garantit? Ici nous citons sa réponse en entier car elle est importante:

'... la foi ne garantit que son fondement, à savoir, la manifestation (appearance) de cette réalité qui a crée la foi. Cette réalité est l'Etre Nouveau, qui vainc l'aliénation existentielle et rend ainsi la foi possible. C'est la seule chose que la foi peut garantir – et ceci parce que sa propre existence est identique à la présence de l'Etre Nouveau. La foi elle-même est l'evidence immédiate (non pas média-tisée par des conclusions) de l'Etre Nouveau dans et sous les condi-tions de l'existence. C'est précisément cela qui est garanti par la nature même de la foi chrétienne.';¹⁶

Cette citation jette une lumière considérable sur le problème qui nous occupe. Tout d'abord nous voyons que le contenu de la certitude de la foi se ramène à une forme extrêmement mince. L'attention est en-tièrement tourné vers le croyant. Le seul événement affirmé n'est fi-nalement que la reconnaissance de sa propre foi. La foi est sûrement quelque chose d'extrêmement personnel; mais elle est plutôt une ré-pONSE personnelle à un Dieu qui normalement nous interpelle par la communauté croyante.

La position de Tillich fait donc abstraction de l'Eglise en tant que communauté porteuse de cette foi. Reliée à travers tous les siècles par une tradition vivante d'enseignement et de vie, l'Eglise peut garan-tir une interprétation juste du mystère de la foi. Tillich, lui, accepte dans la Bible le témoignage de la première communauté à propos de cet événement, mais il fait abstraction de la suite. Nous reconnaissions là le principe protestant de la *sola fide*. Ici tout semble dépendre de l'acceptation par la foi. Bien que Tillich insiste sur le fait historique, ce fait est plutôt la foi du croyant qui existe. Chaque chrétien doit ain-si faire sa propre expérience et la reconnaître comme authentique.

Naturellement, tout le monde serait d'accord avec Tillich qui dit qu'il est impossible de reconstruire une vie du Christ point par point. Ceci vaut d'ailleurs pour beaucoup de personnes qui sont plus proches de nous. Tillich ne nie pas que Jésus ait existé, mais il affirme que de ce Jésus nous n'avons pas de documents précis. Je crois que Til-llich fait une comparaison très intéressante quand il dit que le portrait que nous avons du Christ dans l'Ecriture est comme les portraits de

¹⁶S.T. II p.131.

style impressionniste. Pour réaliser un tel portrait, le peintre doit participer à la vie de son modèle. C'est pour quoi il peut laisser de côté certains traits, pour mettre davantage l'accent sur la réalité profonde de son modèle. Je trouve cette image très adéquate pour décrire le genre évangile.

Tillich lui-même dit que nous n'avons pas de photographie de Jésus, bien que, si cela avait déjà existé, Jésus eût pu être photographié. Reste aussi vrai le fait que Jésus qui est le Christ est mieux représenté dans un langage symbolique. Mais, quelque fois, Tillich donne l'impression que pour lui le fait et le symbole s'excluent réciproquement. En revanche, l'affirmation chrétienne à propos de Jésus-Christ vise à traduire dans un langage qui reste toujours inadéquat le mystère de cet homme, qui en même temps *est* Dieu et qui par sa présence, par son action, par son enseignement, peut nous sauver si nous l'acceptons. Les évangélistes ont accueilli cet homme comme le Christ, et ils voulaient nous donner un portrait de lui qui rendrait dans la mesure du possible l'image de son originalité.

L'ETRE NOUVEAU DANS JESUS QUI EST LE CHRIST

Pierre a reconnu en Jésus de Nazareth l'Etre Nouveau vers lequel tout le monde aspire. Il est donc temps maintenant de voir comment ce Jésus qui est le Christ est le porteur de l'Etre Nouveau.

Si nous partons de l'expression *Etre Nouveau*, nous voyons qu'elle s'enracine dans la Bible elle-même. Paul insiste sur cette idée: pour lui, le Christ serait cet être nouveau qui apparaît dans le monde pour détruire la vieille créature. Il est le nouvel Adam qui offre le salut à l'homme (I CO XV 22.44-49). Grâce à lui, ceux qui participent à la foi qui s'exprime dans le baptême deviennent une créature nouvelle. (2 CO V 17; GAL VI 15). Tillich explique à son tour que 'nouveau' est à comprendre en deux sens. Cet être est nouveau dans la mesure où il actualise ce qu'il y a de potentiel dans l'être essentielle; et il est aussi nouveau par rapport à toute l'aliénation qui existe. Cet aspect de nouveauté peut être mieux saisi si l'on prend la Loi: elle nous montre ce qu'est l'essence de notre être: or dans cet Etre Nouveau, qui est l'union éternelle de l'homme et de Dieu, apparaît la fin de la Loi. De fait il est la réalisation de la Loi. De même nous pouvons dire qu'il est la réalisation eschatologique dans la mesure où il montre ce que l'homme deviendra à la fin des temps. Par le fait même il est le Sens vers le-

quel s'achemine toute l'histoire humaine. En tout cela, nous voyons que Tillich est bien d'accord avec la doctrine traditionnelle de l'Eglise.

Or l'Etre Nouveau apparaît dans une vie personnelle. Ceci, nous dit Tillich, ne peut pas être autrement. Sous-jacente à cette affirmation peut se trouver l'idée chrétienne que pour sauver l'homme, Dieu a fait le pas extrêmement inattendu de devenir comme lui. Mais, à ce sujet, l'on sent que pour Tillich, le fait que Dieu est venu parmi nous comme une personne humaine ne signifie pas que Dieu soit une personne. Nous avons déjà remarqué qu'il reste sur une idée de Dieu qui est trop philosophique. Il ne semble pas s'apercevoir l'originalité du Dieu de la Révélation qui se montre à nous comme un Dieu personnel. Son idée de Dieu reste trop ontologique. Déjà dans l'Ancien Testament Dieu se présente sous un visage humain et quand dans le Nouveau la Révélation atteint son but, Dieu apparaît comme une personne. Dans son magnifique étude sur Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament E. Jacob dit:

'Le Dieu de l'Ancien Testament a toujours un visage humain, et les anthropomorphismes, aussi bien que les autres moyens qu'il choisit pour exprimer sa présence et son action, sont autant d'ébauches de l'incarnation.'¹⁷

Déjà dans l'Ancien Testament, Dieu se préparait pour devenir homme!

Mais, si l'on prend au sérieux les expressions de Tillich, l'on voit qu'il ne peut pas arriver à un tel résultat, car pour lui l'homme Jésus n'est que le porteur de l'Etre Nouveau. Il ne l'est pas lui-même. Jésus n'est qu'un médium à travers lequel l'Etre Nouveau s'est révélé. La seule différence c'est qu'un Jésus l'Etre Nouveau est apparu dans sa plénitude.

Conscients de ce manque d'union véritable dans la personne de Jésus, nous continuons à nous demander comment Jésus qui est le Christ peut-être l'Etre Nouveau. D'après notre théologien, 'Jésus en tant que Christ est le porteur de l'Etre Nouveau dans la totalité de son être, (et) non pas dans l'une ou l'autre expression de son être.'¹⁸ Ainsi tout en admettant l'importance de ce que le Christ a dit et fait, Tillich affirme que ce qu'il est dépasse infiniment ce qu'il dit. 'Son être, qui

¹⁷ *Le Dieu Vivant*, E. Jacob, Foi Vivante, Delachaux et Niestlé S.A., Neu-châtel, 1971, p.6.

¹⁸ S.T. II p.139.

est appelé "la Parole", s'exprime aussi dans des paroles. Mais, comme la Parole, il est plus grand que toutes les paroles qu'il a dites.¹⁹ Quelque chose d'analogique peut être dit à propos de ses actions. Son agir a laissé transparaître l'Etre Nouveau qui était en lui. Mais ce qui est demandé au croyant c'est plutôt *de participer* à son être et non de l'imiter. Ses actions ne doivent donc jamais être prises en soi, sans référence à son être. Finalement, l'on ne doit pas non plus séparer de son être sa passion et sa mort. En prenant sur lui les souffrances et la mort, Jésus qui est le Christ a pu participer entièrement à la condition humaine, tout en supprimant l'aliénation inhérente à cette condition. De fait, ces preuves suprêmes n'ont pas réussi à détruire son unité foncière avec Dieu.

Quant à savoir si l'on peut avoir un aperçu de sa vie intime, Tillich pense que cela est impossible. Déjà, pour une personne ordinaire, cela est difficile: ce serait encore plus difficile dans le cas de Jésus qui est le Christ quand on tient compte des documents uniques et de la personne singulière dont il s'agit. Tillich réduit toutes les affirmations du Nouveau Testament à un point de vue ontologique, excluant ainsi toute description psychologique. Pour lui, tout ce que l'Evangile nous dit sur la psychologie de Jésus vise tout simplement à le montrer comme porteur de l'Etre Nouveau. Si l'on prenait l'angoisse de Jésus avant sa mort, Tillich dirait que les évangélistes voulaient montrer que le Christ a participé à notre finitude et l'a vaincue. L'on dirait que le caractère humain de ce que le Christ a éprouvé est tout à fait négligé.

Cette puissance de Dieu qui se révèle est ce que Tillich appelle *la grâce*. Pour lui, chaque fois qu'il y a révélation, il y a le salut. Le problème de l'homme étant ontologique, et Dieu étant défini ontologiquement, comme l'Etre en soi, il suffit que cet Etre se manifeste pour que l'homme trouve sa consistance en lui. Participant à sa puissance d'être, l'homme peut désormais résister lui aussi aux puissances du néant. Pour Tillich donc, si l'on se perd dans le psychologisme et dans le réalisme, l'on ne conçoit plus correctement la grâce.

LA PARTICIPATION A LA CONDITION ALIENEE DE L'HOMME ET SA CONQUETE PAR JESUS QUI EST LE CHRIST

'Dans tous ses détails concrets, l'image biblique de Jésus en tant que Christ confirme son caractère de porteur de l'Etre Nouveau ou de

¹⁹S.T. II p.140.

celui en qui le conflit entre l'unité essentielle de Dieu et de l'homme et l'aliénation existentielle de l'homme son vaincues.²⁰

Nous arrivons ici au point où se joue notre salut. De fait, il s'agit de rendre compte de la façon dont nous sommes sauvés. Il faudrait montrer comment celui qui est le Christ participe pleinement à notre condition sans pour autant perdre son unité avec Dieu. Or, nous ait Tillich, la Bible affirme que celui qui est le Christ n'a jamais perdu l'unité avec Dieu en dépit de tous les conflits. Ainsi, Jésus en tant que Christ trouve une harmonie parfaite en lui-même et entre lui-même et le monde. D'après les évangélistes, il n'y a en lui aucune trace d'aliénation. Ayant son centre en Dieu, il ne pouvait pas vivre dans l'incrédulité; en dépit de sa haute mission, il n'a pas de trace de hubris en lui. Finalement, nous le voyons vaincre la concupiscence dans le désert.

Contre une tendance monophysite qui pendant des siècles a accablé l'Eglise, Tillich sent qu'il importe de bien montrer la réalité des tentations du Christ. Ceci est une donnée biblique. De son côté, l'Eglise a toujours essayé de montrer le sérieux de ces tentations, même si elle n'a pas toujours eu le succès voulu. Si l'on accepté la réalité de ces tentations, l'on se demande à quelles conditions la tentation peut devenir sérieuse? Et comme l'une des conditions est le désir, on peut se demander également si le désir ne constitue pas déjà un état d'aliénation. Or, dans la condition actuelle de l'homme, l'on est déjà poussé vers le mal avant d'agir. Devant l'homme s'ouvrent plusieurs possibilités et l'homme doit choisir. Cette poussée en avant devient tentation dès le moment où elle n'est plus freinée. L'interdit pose les conditions dans lesquelles l'action doit se dérouler normalement, les désirs peuvent être satisfaits comme il faut. En soi, le désir n'est pas mauvais (le fruit était bon à manger). Dans le cas d'Adam, le désir a été mal satisfait, dans le cas de Jésus, il rest toujours uni à Dieu pendant toute sa vie.

Ce qui est mauvais, c'est de choisir des objectifs qui seraient à côté de Dieu et qui ne seraient pas adressés à Dieu. D'après Tillich, cette possibilité s'est présentée à Jésus aussi. Mais, si les tentations étaient réelles et si Jésus leur a résisté en tant que liberté finie, l'on peut peut commencer à soupçonner que notre salut soit une question de contingence. Pour y répondre, Tillich fait appel à la polarité de la liberté

²⁰S.T. II p.144.

et de la destinée. La liberté de Jésus était une liberté finie et sa victoire sur les tentation venait de sa liberté humaine. Mais il ne faut pas oublier que la liberté est orientée par la destinée.

'La liberté sans la destinée est pure contingence, et la destinée sans la liberté est pure nécessité. Mais la liberté humaine, et par conséquent, la liberté de Jésus en tant que Christ, sont unies à la destinée et ne sont donc ni contingence ni nécessité.'²¹

Or la Bible affirme et sa liberté finie et sa destinée. Cet homme est le point central de toutes les révélations. L'on affirme sa naissance au sein d'un peuple, mais aussi sa destinée divine et tout ce qui lui arrive montre l'enjeu de ces deux pôles. Ainsi notre salut n'a rien de contingent, car toute son action se déroule sous la providence divine. Cette providence divine assure sa destinée, comme elle le fait dans le cas de chaque homme, sans supprimer la liberté de celui-ci.

L'homme qui est le Christ porte donc en lui les traces de la finitude humaine. Tillich montre comment toute la vie du Christ porte les traces de la finitude: ses soucis et son angoisse devant sa mort. Quoique l'on affirme qu'il est la Vérité, sa science ne dépasse pas celle des hommes de son temps. Quant à la relation avec soi-même, il devait chercher son identité. L'élément tragique présent dans toute vie humaine, nous le trouvons aussi dans la vie de celui qui est le Christ. Il suffit de penser à ses heurts avec les autorités de son peuple, qui étaient loin d'être la personification du mal. Un autre exemple est la trahison de Judas. Ainsi l'image biblique de Jésus qui est le Christ est loin d'être celle d'un automaton divino-humain. Au contraire il est un être fini comme nous. Mais cette finitude ne réussit pas à rompre son union avec Dieu. Au contraire, elle l'enracine davantage dans l'être divin. Ainsi, par exemple, l'insécurité croissante dans sa vie l'enracine davantage dans de lieu transcendant.

Cet examen nous permet d'établir trois faits qui sont toujours attesté par l'Ecriture: tout d'abord, nous constatons son union avec Dieu que rien ne pouvait briser. Cette union se traduit dans une majesté et une sérénité contre les puissances de l'aliénation. Finalement, nous contemplons cet amour qui se donne et qui représente tout en l'actualisant l'amour divin qui assume l'auto-destruction existentielle.

²¹ S.T. II p.149.

QUELQUES REFLEXIONS

Cette section concernant la victoire de l'Etre Nouveau sur l'aliénation existentielle est dans son ensemble assez heureuse. Elle a le grand mérite d'insister sur l'aspect kénétoïque de l'Incarnation qui souvent a été laissé de côté. Dieu a réellement pris sur lui toutes les limites humaines – allant même jusqu'à subir la tentation. Cependant rien n'a pu séparer le Christ du centre de son être. Pour une fois dans notre monde, quelqu'un est apparu qui grâce à son union avec Dieu a montré aux hommes ce qu'est leur essence. Cette révélation suprême, reconnue par l'homme comme telle, est notre salut.

Puisant dans l'image biblique de celui qui est le Christ, Tillich montre comment sa liberté a fonctionné. Cette liberté est une liberté finie qui avait à se réaliser dans une histoire. Elle s'exerce aussi dans un monde fini, où elle se heurte à des difficultés et des ambiguïtés. Mais grâce à son enracinement en Dieu, elle se développe toujours en harmonie parfaite avec le destin qui lui est prescrit.

Tillich montre très bien comment grâce à l'union avec Dieu, le Christ peut rejoindre tous les hommes et entrer dans un rapport de liberté avec le monde. Le P. Sesboüé²² montre bien comment en tant qu'homme, le Christ vit sa liberté comme une parfaite obéissance au Père. Ainsi, il devient le modèle de l'homme libre. Quant à ses rapports avec les hommes 'la liberté du Fils développe ses racines dans une relation de fraternité parfaite et universelle, et donc sans limites.' Cette liberté du Christ devient par le fait même une puissance de libération. 'Par rapport au monde enfin, l'humanité du Christ, parfaitement spiritualisée et affranchie de toute convoitise individuelle, respectant souverainement la noblesse et la fin du monde, exerce sur lui la perfection de la puissance royale à l'image de Dieu.'²² Donc en Jésus qui est le Christ apparaît dans notre histoire ce qu'est l'unité éternelle entre Dieu et l'homme.

PAUL ZAMMIT, S.J.

²² *Traité de l'Incarnation*, B. Sesboüé, Lyon-Fourvière, 1968-1969, p.101.