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God as Phenomenon

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This paper concerns itself with several approaches to a secular understanding of religious belief and deals briefly with the more or less explicit challenge they offer to the notion that there is in fact a God which communicates to man. This problem emerged for me as I encountered religious phenomenology and structuralism for the first time this year, and noted the obvious challenge they pose to traditional dogma. The answer I offer is one I really had not set out to achieve: a tentative acceptance of the results of these programs in the light of the system of Teilhard, the heuristic wealth of whose ideas I also began to appreciate this year.

My original intent led to a work which was about three times as long as the present one, but even less conclusive, and certainly less coordinated. I have reduced the paper to its present scope in an effort to do greater justice to the single area mentioned above, especially to concentrate upon the high god concept, several significant interpretations of religious expression by psychologists and sociologists, and the structural analysis of myth, and last to provide an exploratory venture toward an accommodation.

There are no significant terms utilized in the text which require special definitions not provided when they are introduced. Most terms can be found in a good dictionary. A special distinction might be remembered in the penultimate

chapter: methodological materialism, physicalism, or naturalism assumes that only what is material, physical, or natural can enter as data into an adequate scientific explanation of a phenomenon; ontological, or metaphysical materialism, physicalism, or naturalism assumes that only what is material, physical, or natural in fact obtains.

Since this is not a graduate level paper, I have taken the option to place all citations after the body of the text.

CHAPTER II

THE APPREHENSION OF THE SUPREME BEING

In the prefatory remarks to Structuralism and Christianity, Günther Schiwy calls upon Christian intellectuals to meet the increasingly critical challenge Christianity faces from the new, competing world-views which claim a basis in empirical science. He of course notes the challenge of Marxism in its more recent and critical expressions. But above all he notes a challenge from "structuralism."[1] This rapidly rising movement originated in France, largely because of the theoretical efforts of Claude Levi-Strauss. Structuralism is interpreted in many ways. The Freudian Jacques Lacan uses it as a psychoanalytic tool. Jean Piaget regards it not so much a philosophy as a methodology somewhat akin to conventionalism in mathematics. But its major proponent, Levi-Strauss, uses it as an anthropological tool to discover the true or fundamental meaning of myth and religious language. Herein, as one might expect, lies its greatest threat to Christianity.

Of course, the general study of comparative religions has often troubled the minds of many Christians. We may recall that Rudolph Bultmann felt compelled to renounce all that he felt was not unique to Christianity because of it, and to center his thinking on the kerygma and the Law-Gospel dialectic. His shock is not unintelligible, for many aspects of the Christian faith are found more or less explicitly in

other faiths as well. It is profitable to enumerate some of these.

Christians regularly pray to "Our Father who art in heaven." The supreme being as "primitives" have often understood it is also celestial in nature. The Ewe tribesmen say that "'where the sky is, God is too.'"[2] In these cases the high god is commonly titled with respect to his celestial status (the Selknamese high god Temaukel is called "The One Above" or "He Who Is in Heaven") or bears a name signifying the sky (the Chinese Tien, the Mongolian Tangri, the Indian Dyaus, Zeus, Ouranos, et al.). Mircea Eliade insists quite emphatically that a belief in a supreme celestial divinity is almost universal.[3] One might object that the Christian concept of heaven is somehow non-spatial in the common sense of the term. But Eliade stresses that the sky apprehension is a phenomenological one, creating a psychological state whereby

> "Most High" becomes quite naturally an attribute of the divinity. The regions above man's reach, the starry places, are invested with the divine majesty of the transcendent, of absolute reality, of everlastingness. Such places are the dwellings of the gods; certain privileged people go there as the result of rites effecting their ascension into heaven; . . . . when a man ceremonially ascends the steps of a sanctuary [!], or the ritual ladder leading to the sky he ceases to become a man . . . .[4]

As one might expect, sky gods are thought to manifest themselves in or utilize sky phenomena. They speak their will through thunder (cf. John 12: 27-29), punish with lightning, storms, and disease (regarded by contemporary primitives

and Europeans even down through Luther's day, as sky-borne) as in the Book of Job, where Satan is God's agent and the theophany is a storm, or send life-giving light and rain.

The sky suggests other attributes with which we are familiar: according to the Nuer in Nilotic East Africa, the high god is ubiquitous and invisible, as is the air or wind.[5] Such is the case also with Puru, the high god of the Saliva of Colombia;[6] and, especially among those divinities which are concerned with the moral order, this is considered corollary to a more important attribute: omniscience.

The breadth of the sky and its seeming all-pervasiveness combine with its clarity and luminosity to engender the feeling that "somewhere out there" even one's innermost thoughts are being scrutinized.[7] The aforementioned Nuer deity also sees and hears all. That which is regarded the best study of divine omniscience describes this attribute as

> . . . a visual omniscience . . . . according to the evidence it is mostly sky-gods and astral gods, or gods somehow connected with the heavenly realm of light, to whom omniscience is ascribed. . . .[8]

One may object that these references imply solar, lunar, or astral concepts of deity, unworthy of our concept of God as Lord over all the cosmos. While in some cases this is true, it is not always so simple. Very often (as in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John) the representation of God as luminous is an allegory for divine, spiritual light, the proper attribute of God. For example, the Desana, a small Amazonian tribe, are worshippers of Page Abe ("Sun Father"), the primordial

creator-Father in heaven who is not to be in any direct way identified with the sun we behold; rather, the sun is simply his representative luminary, a symbol of the perfect light.[9]

Most frequently, divine omniscience is spoken of in relation to the bad actions of men. Nyalich, the supreme being of the Nilotic Dinka, sees murderers and robbers. The Chief Up Above of the Tsimshian Indians marks those who abuse animals. Sexual offenses are also common objects of divine note among virtually all tribes.[10]

An obvious corollary of visual omniscience is universal hearing, a secondary amplification of seeing. Again Yahweh must share this phenomenon with many other supremacies, such as Temaukel, the Nuer deity, Ptah (Egypt), and the Mesopotamian Ea, called "Lord of the Ear."[11]

Divine omniscience also often involves knowledge of thoughts. Temaukel, Zeus, Tien, the Arikaran Great Manitou, and the Kachin supreme deity Karai Kasang are among the many who "see what men think." Especially among Yahweh, Zeus, and Tien the intent of this intimate insight is primarily to safeguard oaths and covenants.[12]

The power of the supreme deity's mentality is also typically related to assertions about the god's role as a creator. According to Van Der Leeuw, the usual supreme being creates "'by means of pure thought and will.'"[13]

Van Der Leeuw is strikingly corroborated in the creation story of the Colombian Witoto. Moma ("Father") had no parents, but came into being solely by power of the "Word." Yet

he himself personifies the Word. According to Eliade,

> Moma brought all that exists into being out of the "appearance" (naino) of a thing's "nonexisting substance." . . . In connection with his creative role, Moma refers to himself as Naimuema or "he who is or possesses what is not present (inexplicable, illusive)." In another myth, which complements the one above, it is related that Moma drew plants and animals out of his own body. [Konrad] Preuss was impressed by the remarkable similarity between Moma's creative activity by the "Word" and the prologue to Saint John's Gospel, but he felt that there was no reason to suspect a Christian influence.[14]

In connection with the "Word" concept, Eliade also notes that at times the Australian concept of the "alcheringa" (or in short form, "alchera"; a Kaitish term for the Edenic, or primal age) is seen as a kind of Philonian mediation principle. Everything which truly exists now, which is really real, is thought to have come into being during the primal era, a "dream-time" which abides in creation even today as a kind of nous or blueprint.[15]

Although the sovereign god may often be represented as quite aloof from the everyday affairs of men, he as creator is typically considered the founder and guardian of the social, ritual, and moral milieu of the tribe, investing custom with an inviolable sacredness.[16] Pettazzoni explains that the cosmos with its social order will stand as the god has created it, if it is not thrown off-balance. Moral transgression does just that, by subverting the social order and returning the tribe and its setting to primitive barbarism and primordial chaos. Methods of divine punishment also involve temporary suspensions of cosmic order, such as lightning and storms, floods, and other cataclysms.[17]

"Fall" accounts are sometimes given as a reason for the introduction of distress or moral evil into the world and the subsequent alienation of the supreme being. Often among these the offense is somehow linked with a woman or women. For the Margi of Nigeria, a woman put out a dirty calabash, which infected the finger of one of the divine children, whereupon the high god withdrew in anger to a great distance.[18] For the Kumai of Australia, some traitor revealed the mysteries of the bull-roarer (a highly revered ceremonial device said to be able to reproduce the voice of the high god) to the women, whereupon Mungan-ngaua, the supreme being, killed nearly all the human beings, and soon afterward ascended to the sky.[19]

Certain native religions, especially among South American aborigines, also bear a distinct eschatological element. During an eclipse, the Brazilian Tupinamba pray to their otherwise largely ignored heavenly father Tamoi, imploring him not to destroy the world. After the Portuguese conquest the fear intensified, and generated a long series of milleniaristic movements in which the Tupinamba sought out the land of Tamoi, a paradise where there is neither death nor old age.[20] The Apapocura-Guarani, the Arikena, the Saliva, and the Yaruro also have remarkable eschatologies; and, of course, those of various ancient European and Near-Eastern cultures are known well enough to permit a bare reference.

However, in spite of the rather strong impression of deity one might receive from the aforementioned accounts,

celestial supreme deities by and large account for very little in the religious lives of those who acknowledge them. They tend to be regarded as quite passive, distant, and "removed in space and time, a static immanence rather than an active presence."[21] Such a divinity may be the cosmic creator and author of all life, but soon after this is accomplished he retires to a place or status at times even too inaccessible for worship: he becomes a deus otiosus. He is also often concomitantly borne in the minds of the reflective to the available rational extremes of exaltation and given a status of metaphysical perfection and/or beatitude superior to that of any other agent or entity.[22] Such is the God of Anselm and the Scholastic philosophers. Such, perhaps, is the source of skepticism. The tendency in our own culture during the present century affords a good example of supreme being receding into bare philosophical possibility.

Paul Radin points out that the truly skeptical mentality is not unique to classical and modern Western culture, nor is it likely that it has not clearly appeared in any age. His particular researches concern primitive cultures and beliefs still accessible in remarkably pure form in the early part of the present century, and of the "out-and-out skeptics," he notes that "Every ethnologist has encountered them."[23] After noting that African peoples are especially noted for their critical audacity, he cites a remarkable passage from Callaway's The Religious System of the Amazulu, in which a native asserts that nothing certain can be said about the Zulu creator god,

uNkulunkulu (since the initial u behaves like a shewa, this is actually the correct spelling). Even the chiefs, who are supposed to be his earthly manifestations, only speak ignorantly and with bewildering ambiguity. He then adds that the god is said to have given all things,

> "But so far as I can see, there is no connection between his gift and the things we now possess.
> "I say then that there is not one amongst us who can say that he knows all about Unkulunkulu [sic]. For we say, 'Truly we know nothing but his name; but we no longer see his path which he made for us to walk in. All that remains is mere thought about the things we like. . . ."[24]

Edwin James presumes that the loss of theistic efficaciousness which results from divine recession explains why "in modern times such movements as Deism . . . were short-lived and ineffective . . . while the cultus of the saints has never lacked its zealous votaries."[25] This significant comment introduces the concept of the mediator, a demiurge or culture hero who provides the more or less vital link between the transcendent supreme being and mankind. The Shilluk of Nilotic East Africa provide an example which combines what we might call "Mosaic" and "Messianic" (as opposed to more specifically "Christic") elements. In the alchera, the supreme being Juok shared his great house above the clouds with all humanity. But then the people ate of a certain fruit which made them sick, so Juok sent them away.[26] Because of his now almost impenetrable transcendence, he barely figures into the religious consciousness of the Shilluk people. But Juok saw humanity's plight and sent to them a demiurge, Nyikang. He gathered a people (the Shilluk, of course) and became their

first king. He then led them to the land they now occupy along the White Nile, brought greatness upon them, gave them their laws and customs, divided their land into districts, and sent rain upon it. He disappeared during a storm, but occasionally reappears in animal form; and his spirit abides in the reigning monarch. Whenever great need, sickness, or death occurs, he is called upon to intercede with Juok on behalf of his people.[27]

Although it cannot be easily understood without an understanding of the concept of totemism and the primitive notion of evil, another remarkable example is to be found in the Winnebago Hare Cycle. Hare is a demiurgic, totemic being who appears either in the form of a hare or, at times, in a far larger and more vague animal form. There is something of the element of a trickster about him (he is sometimes mischevious, sometimes the "fall-guy" for another being's plot), but his cosmological and soteriological characteristics are worthy of some note.

Within what appears to be a concept of a four-tiered universe, Hare is presently the divine ruler of the world in which we live. Earthmaker, the supreme deity, and Hare's grandfather, is the creator and general overseer of all of the worlds as well as the specific ruler of the high heaven. Wakdjunkaga, the primary Winnebago trickster figure (and also a beneficiary of mankind during the alchera), rules one of the realms of the dead. Third comes the earth, and the underworld is ruled by a demonic figure called "Bladder."[28] Hare

first appeared in this world during the alchera, when he was born of a young woman who"had not had sexual intercourse with anyone." As he grew up he began a career of destroying or neutralizing the evil beings which threatened humanity, and of providing humanity with some of the more important elements of Winnebago culture. In the course of his wanderings he found that a powerful demon, Chief Sharp-Elbow, had killed a friend of his. Upon killing Sharp-Elbow, he raised his comrade from death. Later, he killed and burned some particularly ferocious demons, tossed their remains into a stream where they became harmless fish, and said (in a passage suggestive of Genesis 3: 15), "'You tried to abuse people. From now on the people will call you fast-fish and when they step into the water you will nibble at their ankles.'"[29]

Even more striking is the succeeding episode in which Hare himself was killed by a monstrous ant. However, he was resurrected by the goddess Grandmother Earth, whereupon, by ruse, he in turn killed the ant. The ant's body then turned into the ants of common knowledge. "'You were trying to abuse human beings,'" Hare exclaimed in another passage oddly suggestive of Genesis 3: 15, "'and, for that reason, you will henceforth remain down there close to the earth and the people will tramp on you.'"[30]

Finally Hare finished his destructive work and provided food animals for humanity (not by creating them, but by asking for volunteers and bathing those which did so in fat). He also secured the horse as mankind's primary work animal. This

having been accomplished, all that now stands in the way of eternal life for man on earth is the smallness of the earth itself (should men not die, they would quickly crowd each other and bring upon themselves great suffering), and the fact that one day the earth will itself come to an end.[31]

As a rule, it is only when a culture disintegrates that people gain the courage to examine anew the religious and philosophical foundations upon which it is based. Consequently, the changes which occur often highlight some basic archetypes of religious consciousness. In recent years there has occurred a remarkable example of the supplanting of a receding supreme deity by a vigorous mediator figure which, although consciously patterned after the life of Jesus, may a fortiori provide us with an interesting suggestion of one of the possible dynamics which played a major role in the minds of the members of the Christian church of the first century.

Isaiah Shembe was the founder of the South African Church of the Nazarites. After a brief career as an ill-trained Baptist preacher, he broke away to form his own following in 1911, with the primary goal of revitalizing the moribund Zulu tradition. Convinced by personal revelations of his unique supernatural status, he plunged into a peripatetic ministry involving much faith healing and exorcism. He gradually usurped the position of iNkosi epheZulu, the abstract supreme deity now bereft of practically all cultic significance. He did so by adopting the divine titles uMvelingqangi ("He Who Was before Me"; cf. John 8: 58, "Before

Abraham was, I am.") and uNkulunkulu ("the Great-Great-One"), and preaching that while the Zulus were once taught of a god who could not see and had neither love nor pity for men, Shembe revealed in himself a god "'who walks on feet and heals with his hands, and who can be known by men, a God who loves and who has compassion.'" In short, he "brought the distant God into their midst." The "Black Christ" died in 1935; but he had maintained that although he might die one day, his essence would live on in his progeny. G. C. Oosthuizen establishes at length that the deification of Shembe can by no means be simply classified as one of many native Black reactions to

> the so-called pale white Christ of the white man . . . but it is an effort to have through him powerful contact with a world the Zulus fear they may lose as a result of the disruption of their society . . . . an intimate relationship with the supernatural world, which was such a real experience through the king before the white man came.[32]

Shembe's followers now claim that he rose again four years after his death.[33]

It would appear, then, that the typical approach to the anthropology of religion has established fairly well that there are certain recurrent themes in the fabric of religion throughout the world. We may argue that, while all of the other religions collectively duplicate the tenets of the Christian religion, none appear to contain all of its elements in its unique formulatory modes. Excessive reliance on this argument can become dangerously similar to that of the horseman who contended that his favorite horse must be the sole

member of an unique genetic variety of horse simply because no other horse was identical to his favorite; but it does perhaps allow us some of the benefit of the old Enlightenment argument that Christianity is the apex and consummation of all religious ideals and aspirations, to which we might add in faith that ours is that true religious expression to which God has been leading all men.

Others may object that the archetypal theory which expresses most of the data of religious ethnology is yet unproven. Indeed, it is not so much a fact that analysts doubt the existence of some relatively invariant psychic apparatus which generates, over the long run, a relatively uniform pattern of religious apprehension; it is just that no one as yet has devised an adequate scientific criterion for verifying and explicating its existence. Especially if humanity does constitute a single species, and if (as continued research seems to indicate) Homo sapiens has been prone to religious expression from the beginning, then it is conceivable to argue that all religions stem from the primordial faith of the first human community. This is at least as plausible as arguing that mankind as a species (or a genetically close cluster of species) emerged in several isolated settings at approximately the same time, a view held by some scientists which may serve to bolster the argument that religious behavior is an emergent natural property. However, the fact that a single-community theorist can consistently maintain the naturalistic position and ask whether the beliefs of the primal community might not

also be explained organically without the necessity of appeals for Divine guidance at a crucial juncture tends to vitiate such as the old Bible Storybook argument that those who are not now Christians have, via their ancestors or themselves, strayed from the faith already revealed to Adam and Eve.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF LIBIDO ALONE

Granted that a final verdict may not, from our vantage, be possible until all the major problems attending to the concept of human evolution are settled, many still believe that other approaches may render the discussion trivial and the possibility of genuine revelation nothing more than a debater's point.

Sigmund Freud illustrates one approach which seeks to explain religion in terms of a psychoanalytic approach. He regards religion as a form of neurotic behavior. Within this context he attempts to construct religion from concepts of the father-image and Oedipal guilt. Concerning the former, he notes first that the task of civilization is principally to defend its constituent people against the destructive forces of nature, which even in the face of the highest civilizations as yet remains unvanquished, still inflicting wounds under the name of fate. But in order to accomplish its task every civilization must impose some amount of privation on its inherents. Injured thereby in his self-regard, yet afraid of nature, and curious in addition, man demands an explanation. He gains this by humanizing nature, providing himself with a new avenue of reaction. His prototype within his memory which proves roughly analogous to the situation in which he finds himself is that of his parents during his early

childhood, especially his father. He had reason to fear his father, yet he was sure of his father's protection. Thus he projects upon the forces of nature a father-character, turning these forces into gods. As with the father of the helpless child, the gods must turn aside the terrors of nature, reconcile men to fate, and establish a system of morality. When it becomes apparent that his belief and correlated ritual do not solve all of his problems, he (if particularly intelligent) begins anew to autonomize nature, place the gods themselves under the rule of fate, and apportion to them as their proper domain the maintenance of the moral order. Gradually all divinities are condensed into one monotheistic father-image on whom all men focus with the intensity of a child's relation to his father. From thence man derives claims of favoredness and divine election.[1]

Anthropologists object on two accounts: Freud does not account for the extensive worship or the likely historical priority of the figure of the supreme goddess. One might posit them tentatively as projections of the mother-image in matrilinear societies, but even Freud confesses that in view of his following concept he cannot account for them.[2] In addition, Freud seems completely unaware that the dominant human tendency is to ignore, to be unable to relate to, the supreme being, and to let him recede into transcendent obscurity in favor of lesser but more vivid and personal religious objects, such as in the later Canaanitic emphasis of the storm god Baal over the supreme being, El.

But apart from these criticisms, what would prompt a man to adhere to Freud's concept of the God-Father? Prior to civilization, men led lives which, according to Thomas Hobbes, were "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." Not only was nature deadly, but men also killed eachother for the sake of anger, convenience or greed, and were just as readily killed for the sake of revenge or greed. To escape this cycle, societies were formed upon the rule, "Thou shalt not kill." Thus now, except for a few isolated areas where feuding persists, only nations behave in such a selfish or retributive manner. But to publish such a rational explanation for the murder prohibition would be to relativize it and deal a serious blow to the authority behind it. Thus we do not acknowledge that it is the work of men, but assert that such is the will of God. In this manner all laws are justified.

Thus far, Freud admits that he has made only a rational, and not an actual reconstruction, based on just one law. But religion is a neurosis (and, to Freud, a collective one at that); and the trauma which we must seek to explain this aspect of it is discovered in totemism: under the totemic system, Thou shalt not kill is a sanction which, according to Freud, was restricted to the protection of the father-substitute, and then gradually extended to others. The primal father was the original image of God. Under primordial social conditions in which a father kept a harem of all the women in the household, competition for the women was blocked for the younger men by the Pater familias. Incidentally, this condition is today at least formally observed by two or three aboriginal societies on the island of Borneo, and is apparently

the common circumstance among the higher primate species. Therefore, the younger men were forced either to abstain (unlikely), or perhaps to possess the women on the sly (as do the young men of the Mundugumor in Borneo), or to drive the father from his position of control. The problem is that sometimes when the last course is taken the father is killed in the process.

Now Freud asserts that religion involves not only wish fulfilment, but important historical recollections as well. Further, a human child cannot successfully complete his development without passing through a neurotic phase in which he is motivated by anxiety (usually involving fear of punishment) to tame his instincts by acts of repression. In just the same way, Freud theorizes, collective humanity in the process of civilization passes through analogous collective neuroses. Religion, "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity," also arose out of the Oedipus complex, the dominant neurosis of the developing child. This collective version of the complex originates in the (somehow) recalled image of the primordial patricide. "For men knew that they had disposed of their father by violence, and in their reaction to that impious deed, they determined to respect his will thenceforward." Pater plus patricidal guilt, raised from the existential to the universal, sums up Freud's concept of religion.[36] Freud follows in the wake of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau as one of the more recent of a long line of social contract theorists; but his concept of the dreaded father slain, then wistfully

recalled at large is the first major psychoanalytic attempt to describe the mechanism upon which the contract is based.

Of course, it is open to criticism. His patriarchal concept of society, as well as his distinct inability to conceive of a distinct psychology of womanhood, prevented him from developing a concomitant social Electra complex or whatever else would be needed to explain the rise of religion in matriarchies and in the consciousness of women. Secondly, anthropologists generally reject his Oedipal view on the rather conclusive grounds that there is no evidence to support the concept of a recalled primal father-slaying. Thirdly, a psychoanalytic approach to the social origins of religion depends on the use of concepts and theories which are themselves at best vague, needful of precise and testable explication, and by no means universally accepted. As Levi-Strauss put it, "'what is refractory to explanation can ipso facto not serve as explanation.'"[4]

Followers of Freud's notable and independently-thinking disciple, Carl Gustav Jung, have developed another basic explanation which, if refined carefully, have broader explanatory powers. For a Jungian the alchera represents a person in the womb, in a perfect incestuous union with the mother. The Fall constitutes expulsion from the womb, progressive divorcement from the blissful original condition, and a confrontation with the incest taboo. A person's sexual desire progresses outward socially in time, from the opposite parent as its object, to the opposite siblings, to opposite cousins,

et cetera, to completely unrelated potential sexual partners. The problem, then, especially in small societies, is to set an inner limit to endogamy. This is the overt function of the incest taboo. It structures society upon marriages of persons sufficiently unrelated to guarantee the constructive exchange of information and experience, and yet allows the marriage of persons sufficiently related to maintain social order and cooperation. The incest taboo also functions covertly, by causing a person to sublimate (not to repress or outgrow, as in Freudianism) the unsatisfied incestuous desires into adherence to a postulated system of spiritual entities and values, culminating in the essentially incestuous union with the divine cosmic parent (hence, for example, such concepts as Mother Church, the church as the Bride of Christ, or the mystical and sacramental union with God; and such phenomena as clerical celibacy and the erotic sermons of St. Bernard).[5]

Again, an obvious male bias in the development of this theory compels doubts about its accuracy, although it seems more amenable to the inclusion of the feminine psyche than does that of Freud. Obvious as well is the applicability of the criticism that such a theory, like that of Freud, is too undefined, uncorroborable, and narrowly shared to be likely to provide an adequate explanation for the social origins of religion. However, the Jungian approach here given is at least apparently more compatible with the evidence anthropologists provide; and one might say that, although "refractory to explanation," it is possibly somewhat less so than the

phenomenon it seeks to explain, so that the phenomenon may at least be divisible into several narrower and therefore more comprehensively analyzable complices. Even then, however, the resultant complices could be assumed to be so broad that they are rendered superfluous by means of more detailed independent researches. For example, the social implications of religion have been investigated also by Durkheim and his followers. The logical structure of religious mythology is being independently analyzed by certain structuralists. What is crucial, and unproven about both the Freudian and Jungian approaches, is the discovery of the way in which religion as a social phenomenon interacts with religion as a personal experience. But the psychoanalytic approaches have been heuristically fruitful enough to suggest that religious consciousness is in principle naturalistically analyzable.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL ORDER WITHIN

With respect to the sociological analysis of religion, the approach of Emile Durkheim has been the best known and most profitable. We shall specifically consider an even more portentious development upon the foundations Durkheim set down. Noting that beliefs must have definite proximate causes (they cannot persist in themselves and therefore must correspond to the believers' current experiences if they are to survive) and that one cannot know whether particular beliefs are generated by the same causes as identical beliefs were previously,[1] Guy Swanson sought to establish a theory which would embrace adequately any religion and its setting.

Durkheim previously theorized that the sacred is fundamentally notable for its dissociation from utility, that there is no common intrinsic quality of things regarded sacred which can account for such respectful regard, that sacredness must therefore be regarded extrinsic to any object considered so, that in this event the attitude of respect for sacred things is basically identical with that of respect for moral authority, that a religious object must therefore be worthy of moral respect, and finally that society must therefore be the real object of religious veneration.[2]

Noting critically that Durkheim failed to explain how spirits come to be considered unified and personified beings,

that he did not explain how some gods which represent massive natural forces can also represent a society which cannot control these forces, and that he failed to consider that not all supernatural forces are venerated (what about demons, for example?),[3] Swanson concluded that the origin of spirit concepts is in social relationships persisting across generations, that a spirit gains its identity in relation to a particular and organized social entity, and that where several spirits influence a given setting they are usually assigned purposes and significance as a function of their relationship to a specific social level.[4]

To test his theory, he selected fifty typical ancient or primitive religious cultures, categorized their beliefs, and analyzed their concomitant societies on the basis of "Sovereignty Levels." Swanson considers an established type of social organization to have sovereignty to the extent that it has original and independent juridical authority over some sphere of life. In other words, its power to make decisions in this sphere is not delegated from without, and cannot legitimately be usurped in its exercise of this power by another group. Thus, roughly speaking, families, villages, tribes, cities, states, and nations are sovereign organizations, while the guilds, professions, armies, educational institutions, et cetera which serve them and receive their authority from them are "non-sovereign groups."[5]

Among other phenomena, he analyzed the relation between belief in high gods and the levels of social organization.

Since the concept of high gods varies so greatly and never reaches a point of absolute monotheism (there always seem to be at least some angels, devils, and saints about), he admitted as his sole necessary criterion a specification of a god as the first cause of all subsequent events and the necessary and sufficient condition for the continued existence of reality.[6]

He discovered a definite positive correlation between belief in a high god and the presence of at least three types of sovereign social groups arranged in a hierarchy, such as kingdom, village, nuclear family. Were the king to personally administer to every village under his charge, the social structure of the kingdom would quickly break down, as it would locally were the village head to administer every family in his village. Of the nineteen societies having fewer than three types of sovereign groups, seventeen were found not to have causal monotheism (a high god). Of the twenty which were found to have three or more types, seventeen were found to possess a high god. The probability of such a great disparity occurring by chance was found to be less than .0005.[7]

Eleven societies were omitted due to inconclusive data about the nature of their ranking deity.[8]

Finally, Swanson discovered that high gods are much less likely to be otiose in societies which embody clearly the complex purposes these gods represent in purposive, communal, non-sovereign organizations serving the needs of the sovereign groups.[9] In other words, whereas high gods are

very much apt to occur in societies complex in sovereignty structures, the deity is likely to be otiose in societies affording few organized, non-sovereign communal services (educational and medical institutions, the military, etc.).

This data seems to be borne out in at least two remarkable observations. Eliade notes that "As a creator, knowing and seeing all, guardian of the law [!], the sky god is ruler of the cosmos; he does not, however, rule directly, but wherever there are political bodies, he rules by his earthly representatives. . . ." Supportively, he cites a letter sent by Mangu-Khan to the king of France: "'Such is the order of the eternal God: In heaven there is only one eternal God and there is to be only one master on earth, Genghis-Khan, son of God!'"[10] Second, although he disagrees, Charles Long cites Robin Horton as believing "that the worship of the high god is related to size of the population and its active contact with the wider world. He states, 'We know that, in general, the lesser gods provide an interpretation of the special features of the microcosm formed by a limited population maintaining intensive social integration within a limited territorial area, whilst the high god provides an interpretation of the world seen as a whole.'"[11] A society reaching out is complex sovereignly and communally. It would be interesting to apply Swanson's methods and conclusions to some of the cultures treated herein as well as to religious belief patterns in modern societies. How, for example, could he explain skepticism if religious speculation increases (supposedly) as the society proliferates?

Some criticize such a sociological theory for not considering the moral creativity of the prophetic personality, which innovates beyond the established ethical code and urges others on to new and broader moral claims upon their lives. Granted that prophets do go beyond a mere yea-saying to the status quo, but they also innovate within a social context. Prophecy generally appears in times of crisis with claims higher and broader than the existing social claims, since the former are the only ones which can restore order to the respective particular situations. Further restriction can certainly not be seen as evidence against Durkheimian views. Also, the putative object and source of the prophet's dicta is generally supposed to be the same for those to whom he proclaims. But then, one might object, how does the sociologist explain tendencies toward proselytism and universalism? This is probably adequately explained by the observation that such phenomena are only very rarely observed in faiths limited to individual societies, but increase as religions spread beyond them into other societies and polities as well. Further, in aboriginal areas where religions do not greatly vary from society to society and the importance of faith is somewhat secondary to ceremony, proselytism is contingent only upon moving from one society to another; and the spiritual well-being or brotherhood of those of one society generally does not even enter into the considerations of those of another. Finally, the argument that such a sociological theory cannot adequately explain the socially detaching power of conscience

which is often demonstrated by people who responsibly dissent from overwhelming opinions. To an extent one could import the answer above to the charge concerning prophecy; or, he may also be a skeptic who so objects, and therefore relatively free from the socializing influence of religion. However, the question raised at the bottom of page twenty-seven suggests that such a response might play into the hands of the objector. But Swanson could add that religion generally socializes by instilling more general ideals for a social order rather than by attempting to apologize for a particular administration *per se*. When he who criticizes is finally heard, his message is usually that the particulars of his society are not congruent to the principles to which the society appeals as its moral *raison d'etre*.

It must be remembered, however, that the religious person, as any person, is both a psychic and a social being. Therefore, an adequate explanation of religious phenomena will likely have to involve elements of psychological and sociological explanation.

CHAPTER V

ON WHETHER THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

We may, of course, welcome the analyses of psychology and sociology for providing us with a collection of possible natural categories or avenues through which we may believe God to communicate his revelation to man. After all, Scripture abounds with social and psychological images and illustrations. But the initially mentioned structural analysis of myth poses a new threat, this time to the exegete: since all myths have the same form and purpose, their meanings can be established independently of and as well as (if not better than) they might be with the agency of functional or historico-critical parochialisms.

According to the structuralist approach, the myths of the Bible can no longer be regarded as safely isolated within a Judaeo-Christian or even a broader Semitic-Aryan tradition. This again is based on the strongly supported view that the religious phenomenology of all human groups is universally similar. According to Adolf Jensen, the outstanding mythic figures, "appearing in different myths under different names, are so similar from one people to another that one cannot help but regard them as mere variations on a single theme."[1]

The structuralist attempt to formalize the study of mythology may succeed in forming a usable criterion to demonstrate the conceptual unity of all myths of given kinds; but

it must be admitted that the overall methodology is, at the present stage, extremely involved and difficult. Proceeding upward on the complexity scale from a given kind of myth (in respective specific forms) to the overarching hypothesis would roughly cover the following course: for each specific myth of a given collection (for example, all creation myths), one must first divide it into its smallest complete units of activity or state. Levi-Strauss speaks of the smallest "sentences," although recent advances in structural linguistics necessitate a clarification, especially since no one now seems sure of what a sentence actually is. Most theorists conclude today that the structural function of any given myth is to resolve a conflict or apparent conceptual antinomy in the mind of its believer. On this point Levi-Strauss insists that the logic of mythical thought is not dissimilar to, nor is it any less rigorous than the logic of scientific thinking: the only really important difference lies in the nature of the material to which it is applied.[2] Therefore, the analyst must now group the units he has derived into categories of opposition. For our purposes let us say that we operate with the binary opposition "things must live or things must not live." Levi-Strauss and Edmund Leach consider this the basic conflict which religion tries to resolve; but how?

Resolution must come through mediation. This may be done directly (such as, perhaps, "there are some things which seem neither alive nor dead exactly, such as trees and plants. They are neither dead like the rocks, nor do they move about like

the animals. Thus they suggest a broader reality). But if the direct approach proves intellectually unsatisfactory, the problem may be attacked indirectly by the application of an apparently naturally mediated conflict as an analogue or covering model. The Pueblo Indians attempt this with a threefold distinction of agriculture (the means to life), war (the means to death), and hunting (the means to life for men, but the means to death for animals). This is significant when we realize that for aboriginal peoples each animal (especially if a member of an untamed species) is patterned after, and therefore participates in the reality of its divine, primordial form. For example, a divine buffalo would be said to participate in the deaths of any real buffaloes by reference to some alcheral myth wherein the divine buffalo renounces his life for the sake of the primal man or subsequent humanity. Such is the dynamic in the Hare Cycle, when the various creatures which volunteer to be food for mankind take baths in fat, thereby establishing the destiny of the concrete individuals of their kind forever. Divine sacrifice brings human life; therefore it is not without reason that the Pueblo focus their primary cultic activities upon hunting.

This covering process may continue indefinitely, with the next major development being the importation of a value calculus. Now the analyst must gather all the data from all the myths in the class with which he is dealing into a large, multidimensional permutation group and abstract for that class. After this he must finally correlate the classes. He may

derive a cognitive significance for any level of his analytical process, but as he rises higher in the process the derived content is increasingly generalized until he can at last abstract a representative formula for the analysis of myth. Nothing short of a data processing laboratory will be satisfactory in handling the entire process, but Levi-Strauss believes that the fundamental analytical instrument for all mythology will correspond to a formula of the following type:

$$fx(a) : fy(b) \cong fx(b) : fa\text{-}Iy$$

where, given two terms (a and b) as well as the functions of the terms (fx and fy), a relation of equivalence is asserted between two situations when the terms and relations are inverted, under the following conditions: 1. one term must be replaced by its contrary, and 2. an inversion must be made between the function and the term value of the two elements. The ability to derive such a formula would be highly significant in view of Freud's assertion (general opinion to the contrary notwithstanding) that it takes <u>two</u> conflicting traumas to produce a neurosis. This would mean that one could generate sociological and psychological correlatives of this hypothesis and perhaps be able to subject it to verification under laboratory conditions.[3]

Edmund Leach has attempted to illustrate the structural hypothesis on a limited scale by an analysis of the Biblical creation accounts in his widely noted essay "Genesis as Myth."[4] At the outset he postulates that there are two basic antinomies functioning: the contingency problem (life/non-life)

and the sociological problem (we/they, defining the social structure of Israel on the basis of allowed sexual relationships: externally, by the limits of exogamy; internally, by the limits of incest). He acknowledges that it may be possible to use other criteria (indeed, he himself depends heavily upon standard psychoanalytical conceptions); but he accepts the structural hypothesis as the most universal, adding in effect that early attempts at data differentiation in a new science often appear to beg the question. A summary of his analysis follows.

The first of three major segments centers about the creation days of Genesis 1. On the first day (1: 1-5) heaven and earth are distinguished, as are light from darkness, day from night, and evening from morning. On the second day (1: 6-8) the waters are separated, the water of fertility (rain) being placed above the earth, and infertile (sea) water being kept below. The waters are mediated by the firmament. On the third day (1: 9-10) the wet sea is divided from the dry land, and the two are mediated by vegetation, which lives off the land, but needs water. Vegetation is sexually neutral, its seed being in itself (1: 11-12), in contrast with the clear bisexuality of animal life. With this day, creation as a static or dead entity is complete. To this is opposed the dynamic or living aspect, beginning on the fourth day (1: 14-18). Mobile celestial bodies are placed in the firmament, so that now light and darkness (as will life and death) become alternates. On the fifth day (1: 20-22) the seagoing fish are opposedly made

with respect to the birds which fly above the earth; but as life these forms also mediate the fertile and infertile waters, with the birds mediating the sky and the earth as well. On the sixth day God first creates the cattle, beasts, and creeping things (1: 24f) in opposition to the grasses, cereals, and fruit trees of the third day; but the allocation is not direct, for only the grasses go to the animals (1: 29f). The rest, including flesh not from anomalous beasts (such chaotic creatures as water creatures without fins or animals and birds that eat flesh) can be eaten by man (1: 29f). Finally, man and woman are created simultaneously (1: 26f).

The second major segment again introduces the creation of the heaven-and-earth opposition, the static earth being mediated to the dynamic heaven by a fertilizing mist drawn from the earth, thus blurring the distinction between life and non-life (2: 4-6). Living Adam is then formed from the dead ground as an indigenous, infertile being (2: 7). The animals are also thus formed (2: 19). But the garden is fertilized by a river flowing out of Eden, the fertile east; hence again the river bears life to death (2: 9f). The infertile plants are also produced, but so is the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Parenthetically, since structuralists ideally prefer to deal collectively with all the elements of all recensions of a myth, it is perhaps not out of order to note that the parallel account in the pseudepigraph of Jubilees reinforces Leach's interpretation of Adam and the garden as infertile with the assertion (3: 15) that Adam first spent

seven years in the garden guarding it and protecting it from the (fertile) birds and beasts and cattle.[5] Fertile Eve is then formed from a rib of infertile Adam (Genesis 2: 22f). Now, according to Leach, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is really also the tree of death, standing in opposition to the tree of life; but it is also the tree of the knowledge of sexual difference. The diversity outside the garden is exemplified by the division of the Edenic river and the diversity of the animal life (cattle, birds, and beasts). Inside the garden things are unitary and self-sustaining. Life exists eternally by itself. But Adam is lonely and needs a partner. The animals won't do since they are of a different kind; therefore Eve, of Adam's own substance, mediates the difference between man and animal. Finally the serpent emerges in chapter three. It is an anomalous entity of phallic significance which induces Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of sexual difference, thus making death inevitable. It is not dissimilar to the Sphinx in the Oedipus myth, which is the permissive key to Oedipus' act of incest. Adam and Eve are expelled from the eternal garden of static being into the diverse, fertile world; and for the first time pregnancy and reproduction are available to man (4: 1).

In the final major segment the Cain and Abel account is plunged into a metamorphosis of sexual allegory and emerges as as an account of how God now prefers the fertile to the infertile. From the remainder of Genesis a value system is derived which supports Israel's right to an exclusive existence apart

from other, worse peoples. Finally, Leach adds a few more thoughts about the curse of the serpent (Genesis 3: 15): the enmity is to be between the serpent's seed (which he regards as semen, symbolic of sexuality and diversity) and that of the woman (her male child). He will bruise the serpent's head (Leach feels that this might be a charter for circumcision), but the serpent will bruise his heel. Since lameness, staggering, or foot impairments are a common characteristic of the heroes of autochthony myths (Oedipus, for example, means "Swollen-footed"), the right of Israel to exclusion is set down. We might again parenthetically note that in Jubilees 3: 31 the (exclusive, self-contained) Jews are admonished not to uncover their bodies as do the Gentiles, who in so doing imitate the (fertile, diverse) animals.

The pseudepigraphal Book of the Life of Adam and Eve includes some other interesting contributions to the complexion of the account. In chapter fifteen Eve states that she had been given dominion of the female creatures in the west and south, while Adam had been given control of the male creatures in the east and north. To bring about the fall, the devil sought out Adam's creatures, finally approaching our aforementioned phallic symbol. Further, it is not the fruit of the tree itself which effects the fall; rather, the devil, within the serpent, pours out over the fruit "the poison of his wickedness, which is lust, the root and beginning of every sin" (19: 3). Then, as soon as Eve eats the fruit she is aware of her nakedness, and all the leaves of all the trees in the west and the south

(save for the fig) fall to the ground (20: 4). This is the close of the alchera and the end of its concomitant (if sterile) eternity.

Virtually all primitive societies have roughly similar concepts of a primal time quite different from the present age. During this time, intermediate divinities shape all familiar objects, often out of amorphous or monstrous hulks of stuff.[6] According to Jensen,[7] these intermediate forming beings disappear at the close of the alchera (whatever happened to the serpent?), mortality replaces immortality, the ability to propagate comes about, and there emerges some vague concept of continued existence after the end of life (note Abel's blood, Genesis 4: 10). The primordial time ends with a fall account, occasioned either by a killing or the onset of sexuality (always closely linked with mortality).[8]

In the case of the primal myth of the South American Desana, the high god himself causes the fall, by committing incest with his daughter. As a result she dies, and creation is thrown into disarray. Her father resurrects her by fumigating her with tobacco smoke, and restores order to the creation by proclaiming the first social law: the incest prohibition.[9]

We must note again that the difference between the two ages is a difference in order, from an eternal, perfect, Parmenidean oneness to a temporal, mortal, imperfect, Heracleitean flux; from Plato's realm of being to his realm of becoming. And, according to many religious cultures, the

Parmenidean aspect never completely departs, but in some way "hangs over" the Heracleitean aspect like an informing logos, and can even be partly actualized again by cultic ritual.[10] Again, it is during the alchera that the basic principles of social order are set down, always in close relation to kinship regulations. A fall is necessary to set the wound-up clock of the cosmos into motion. What may we infer from all this?

Jensen notes that a notion of God is always grounded in the disposition of the believer.[11] Perhaps if one should mediate the ontological (life/death) and the sociological (we/they) elements he would arrive at a pretty accurate understanding of the nature and function of authority within the particular social system considered. Life and death within the social setting are controlled by the vested authority. The God model of a religious culture both reinforces and reflects the social model within which it is situated. The Desana Page Abe himself initiates the fall in a relatively free and endogamous society. The crucial question to ask of Genesis 2-3 is: why did Yahweh allow the presence of such a dreadful tree or such a "subtle" creature? Perhaps the answer is that he is a suzerain, given to all the whims, arbitrariness, and authoritarianism of the typical suzerain. Could it be that even in its most oppressed hours, the Hebrew mentality still favored an authoritarian social order such as obtained under the kings or the Maccabees?

However, before structuralism and its ancillary methods can be accepted widely and without serious reservation, there

are a number of very serious operational problems which must be solved, several of which are mentioned by Lessa and Vogt.[12] The first, which we have already touched upon, is the problem of dividing a myth into its smallest complete units. This becomes a special problem in dealing with native languages. Are the shortest possible units in Zuni coincidental with the shortest possible units in English? At present, the most promising hope for resolving this problem is to be found in the researches of structural linguists such as Noam Chomsky. Briefly, Chomsky believes that genuine semiotic units of all sizes in all human languages can be described relationally by means of an algebra of recursive functions. Thus language formation in all human languages differ only in surface structure (specific combinations of phonemes, morphemic orders, et cetera). In fact, he believes that the ability to linguicize is due to an inherent organizational property of the central nervous system, shared by all men because all men have evolved along the same line. If his theory is correct, this would add profound support to the previously discussed thesis that Homo sapiens emerged in a single population rather than in several isolated ones. Indeed, Chomsky feels that were mankind to encounter equally intelligent beings from other star systems, only insights of the kind a true genius could produce would be able to crack the communications barrier, and subsequent communication would probably have to be channelled through computers, since the organic systems for structuring communication within the kinds of intelligent beings, being products of

evolution under different conditions, would certainly be supportive of efficient behavior under those different conditions, and would therefore likely generate markedly different modes of language formation describable by quite different mathematical operations.[13]

The second problem involves the question concerning whether two or more structural analysts working independently would be likely to arrange the smallest complete units of the myth in question (assuming these units are established for all concerned) in even closely similar, much less identical patterns. This question is closely related to, and probably can not be answered independently of the third problem: how can an analyst move from the basic units to increasingly general themes? As of yet the structuralists have not demonstrated that they can generate their own hermeneutical criterion. They may never, because the situation the structuralists face is not too dissimilar to the circumstance which first confronted mathematical logicians in 1931 when Kurt Gödel demonstrated conclusively that no logistic system sufficiently powerful to supply the foundations of basic arithmetical systems can, by its own logical operations, demonstrate its own consistency. As we have seen, Edmund Leach is constrained to rely on concepts borrowed from psychoanalytic theory, and to import wholesale the sociological conclusion that myths of the alchera refer to social relations.

One might add (as many have) another objection specifically to the Leach attempt: it does not at all take cognizance

of the probability that Genesis 1 to 3 and following is a compilation from different sources. However, Leach could note, with most exegetical authorities on Genesis, that in all probability the contributing sources themselves comprised complete creation accounts. He may assert, for example, that if the Yahwistic creation account (Genesis 2) is followed by the Yahwistic fall account (Genesis 3), and if the Priestly creation account (Genesis 1) can reasonably be linked, let us say, with the angelic fall of Genesis chapter six (apparently laundered by the Genesis redactors, but dealt with at length in such pseudepigraphs as Jubilees and I Enoch), then he may assert that the two sources are roughly parallel. Thereafter he would only have to cite the structuralist thesis that it is the redundancy of parallel structures, not the uniqueness of surface detail, which is important to establish the essential meaning of the accounts. In a similar manner, he does in fact assert, all four Gospel accounts have the very same meaning, in spite of flat contradiction in detail.[14] However, it remains to be seen that this approach does not in fact beg the question.

CHAPTER VI

REFLECTIONS

Despite the many objections which might be raised against structuralism or any other attempt to discern an adequate naturalistic explanation of religion, it seems that the endeavors of such disciplines do appear to advance our knowledge somewhat; and not a few Christian scholars have thanked one approach or another for providing a key to important new theological insights. Yet it must be said that every advance made by any of the empirical disciplines necessarily strengthens the position of every philosophy which gives prominent emphasis to the empirical theory of knowledge. Nor can Christian theology effectively avoid their challenge by a retreat into outdated dogma.

In a recent class presentation I referred to some problems concerning the usual statement that God rules the world by law, and concluded that we would perhaps do better to interpret all law as theoretical or hypothetical constructs and turn instead to a view of Divine rule by orders of creation. At that time my primary concern was one of making our usual views of Divine regulation more intelligible in a contemporary non-theological setting. This, it seems to me, is essential if the modern Christian is to comprehend the depth and substance of his faith and not dichotomize his semantic and therefore intellectual life into two largely mutually

opaque and disjuncted segments, shifting into one for an hour's worship on Sunday and for scattered devotional periods of a few minutes each during the week, and into the other for the remainder. It is also essential if he is to communicate his faith intelligibly and coherently to, and defend it before a thoughtful secularist. But the order of creation approach has, it seems to me, an important implication; and it indicates an important problem.

The implication is that God, as we know him, must be assumed to govern the universe by what we've come to recognize as natural process, and that even his specific interventions are indirect and seemingly unobtrusive. It is conceivable that a metaphysical naturalist, especially one willing to entertain the possibility of parapsychological phenomena, could regard as true every empirical assertion the Bible makes and still find no reason to believe. The most spectacular miracles could be explained as the result of normal processes disrupted and dissipated by intervening processes which (who knows?) might be just as ordinary.

To suggest a slight possibility, it is well-known that women under the age of twenty-one and above the age of thirty-five are more likely to abort a fetus or bear a child with genetic abnormalities. Suppose that in the genesis of the ovum, at the point of nuclear division, one of the homologous X chromosomes undergoes only an incomplete disjunction so that by the second meiotic division the unfavored daughter cell of the first division would produce two polar bodies in which

process an incompletely disjoined lower right arm, as it were, of one X chromosome would break off and be taken with the other complete X chromosome into one polar body, leaving the other, in effect, with a Y (male) chromosome. Suppose that this body should somehow attach to, and be absorbed into, the new gamete from the favored daughter cell of the first division. Then a parthenogenesis would occur which would produce a male child. Thus Jesus' virgin birth could be explained as an extremely unlikely, though completely natural process.

And, of course, Leslie Weatherhead is almost notorious for attempting to produce suitably naturalistic explanations for the Resurrection and Ascension which would be plausible to the minds of today's cultured despisers.

Certainly if the empirical assertions of the Bible are all true, then at the times the events they posit occurred, they would have been empirically explicable in principle. Our naturalistic friend may therefore only feel constrained to say that what the Bible asserts about God's nature and activity, being largely congruent with the empirical assertions, would seem worthy of acceptance because the facts are affectively persuasive; however, they could not be rationally demonstrable. Which brings us to the problem: how can God (generally deemed a "Spirit") influence matter?

To say that God is mind and that mind is not material but obviously influences matter (for example, in decision-making) is inadequate. The rise of cybernetics and its application to computer technology, as well as the increasing

ability of computers to simulate human thought by autonomously gathering and interpreting information, employing stored information, solving problems in a spectacular fashion, and even approaching human thought with analogues of creativity, fatigue, overload, and confusion begin to suggest that the concept of a special status for what is commonly regarded as mental activity is unwarranted. Further, electrochemical experiments upon the nervous systems of animals and men have indicated that minds may be changed by independent physical means. The discovery of such chemicals as phobophobin (a chemical first isolated in the nervous tissue of rats and which in significant quantity induces fear reactions) only adds to the ever-increasing evidence that mind appears to have its basis in matter. The explanation that mind is wholly immaterial energy lost its force when Einstein discovered that matter and energy are interchangeable states of the same "thing." Idealists have cited his discovery as supportive for their position, but it seems to support naturalistic ontologies as well.

Even though behaviorism, central-state physicalism and the topic-neutral strategy have been hard-pressed to deal adequately with such factors as introspective awareness and especially paranormal phenomena such as telepathy or clairvoyance, which fact renders metaphysical materialism as yet unproved, these factors may tentatively be described as emergent properties of special kinds of material complices.[1]

Without further ado, it may nonetheless be pointed out that , however seriously we may have to regard the results of

methodological physicalism and methodological behaviorism, they will probably never be able to fully explain or control the natural world. The logistic structure of our laws changes with every new scientific revolution. If there is a point beyond which it is impossible for man to observe (especially as Heisenberg has noted in his explanations of the principle of indeterminacy), then our best equations and most perfectly formulated laws are but approximations useful to a point.

But if God is not mind, we have basically two other options. We may refer to him vaguely as Spirit and postulate that spirit is a kind of substance apart from the physical substance with which we presume to be acquainted, but can influence physical substance while yet remaining, of itself, totally unintelligible to the analytic efforts of entities constructed of physical substance. Or we can say that since God created the universe from nothing except that it was a kind of projection of Divine Word or Will; therefore we seem to be constrained to conclude that the universe is at base of the same substance as God himself since Divine Word or Will can hardly be of a substance different from that of God himself.

John A. Wheeler, a Princeton University cosmologist, theorizes that the basic level of the physical universe as we seem to know it is to be found on a scale of distances twenty powers of ten smaller than the scale of the nuclear structure of an atom. Were we able to view matters on this scale, we would see that pure space itself fluctuates at random like a foam. This assumption is necessitated by observations in the

field of quantum electrodynamics which demonstrated that the electromagnetic field, which transports electromagnetic radiation across empty space, is always fluctuating; and by the inference that the same is true for the gravitational field as well, corroborated by the observation of gravity waves by Joseph Weber of the University of Maryland. At this level, the physical aspects of space appear to be constantly in a "jiggle-jaggle fashion" emerging from and entering apparent nothingness. The ultimate physical level is the realm of complete indeterminacy. But Wheeler reasons further that the stage upon which the space of our universe deploys cannot be space itself: it must be situated in a larger arena. Since gravitational collapse draws the spatial features of very large areas into a small point, as is evidenced by the "black hole" phenomenon recently discovered by astronomers (and the existence of which was predicted by Wheeler himself), and since theorists predict that the universe itself will eventually have to undergo a gravitational collapse, Wheeler theorizes that the stage of our four-dimensional universe is probably a hyperspace of infinite dimensions. Any single point in this "superspace" represents an entire three-dimensional universe at a moment. Nearby points are slightly different three-dimensional universal moments. The history of our universe appears as a track in this superspace, this realization of all possible worlds. Physical phenomena which seem to pass into nothingness are actually entering into a different universe.[2]

Wheeler's view is similar in some respects to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's "theory of creative union." Defining matter and spirit "not as two separate things, as two natures, but as two directions of evolution within the world,"[3] he theorizes that God willed to create spirit, that is, complete, conscious organic unity (the omega state) from a state of complete and undifferentiated multiplicity (the ultimate of materiality) by a series of successive unifications of the multiple into organic unities of higher and higher consciousness. Christ, then, appears in his system to be the universal tendency of attraction and unification which reached a crucial point of inevitability in the life and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Unitive persons who die in faith individually are metamorphosed into the being of God, as will occur in the omega state when humanity will be forced to make a unitive decision of the then single cosmic consciousness to accept God or reject him. Then the unitive portion will immediately be translated into the dimension of union with God, while the individuals objecting will find themselves in a hell of multiplicity increasing toward nothingness.

I am not clear about whether to call Teilhard a pantheist or not. He claims that what differentiates pantheism from his doctrine of "pan-Christism" is the tendency of adherents to the former to set the universal center below the level of consciousness rather than above it, as its apex and guide. Further, it is not clear whether absolute multiplicity is nothingness or what approaches it. If it is the former, the

universe is a creation out of being, if you will, which is a part of God. If it is the latter, Teilhard may be read as upholding a doctrine that matter is coeternal and coexistent with God. In either case, the action of God is seen as a definite part of physical process.[4]

There are many points which must be explicated in the system of Teilhard. It contains many apparent contradictions, at times seems almost deliberately obscure, contains scientific mistakes, and almost completely disregards Scripture. But his striking proximity to some of the views I have cited and his definite attempts to utilize scientific concepts in an apologetic way suggest that his work is worthy of careful consideration by the Christian who feels severely the pressure to renounce God imposed upon him by metaphysical naturalists.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have noted some interesting data from the study of the phenomenology of religions which parallel in certain ways various aspects of Christian belief. We have then noted and evaluated somewhat some important attempts of psychoanalysts and sociologists to interpret the nature of religious belief. We then dealt at some length with structuralism, its promise, and its problems. In spite of the advance of methodological naturalism, I ultimately suggest that this development does not necessarily portend the necessary abandonment of the Christian faith. Christians will need to be flexible and adaptable in their confrontation with the challenges posed herein, but the core of our faith need not be abandoned.

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CHAPTER II

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10. Pettazzoni, God, 8.

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13. Pettazzoni, "Supreme Being," 61.

14. Eliade, "South American" II, 247f.

15. Mircea Eliade, "Australian Religions: An Introduction," History of Religions, VI, 3 (February, 1967), II, .209. Hereafter, for the sake of convenience, the equivalent term "Alchera" will generally be used in place of "primal age" or "dream-time."

16. James, Sky God, 3, 5.

17. Pettazzoni, "Supreme Being," 63f.

18. William D. Reyburn, "African Myths," Practical Anthropology, XVI, 5 (September-October, 1969), 194f.

19. James, Sky God, 8f.

20. Eliade, "South American" II, 237.

21. Pettazzoni, "Supreme Being," 60.

22. James, Sky God, 8f.

23. Paul Radin, Primitive Man as Philosopher (revised edition; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957), 375.

24. Ibid., 379-381. Closing internal quotation mark omitted in text.

25. James, Sky God, 9.

26. Reyburn, "Myths," 195.

27. James, Sky God, 10f.

28. Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 53.

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33. Ibid., 30.

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