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## THE PLACE OF MYTH IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

By

THE REV. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT, M.A.

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THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE

22 DINGWALL ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY

# THE PLACE OF MYTH IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

BY THE REV. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT, M.A.

## SYNOPSIS

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There has been a revival of interest in Myth among archaeologists, psychologists, and theologians. Myth is a story, or way of thinking, that produces a katharsis through identification. In relating myth to historical fact some theologians regard the alleged facts as a hindrance, others as irrelevant, others as essential. The Biblical concept of the three-storey universe is important for the consequent teachings about God, heaven, the Ascension, and the Second Coming: it is valuable and necessary. Theologians should consider whether there may not be more of historical fact behind the story of the creation and the fall than is commonly allowed. Belief in Satan and evil spirits need not be discarded. It is vital to hold to the historical and objective facts of the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or Christianity becomes no more than the subjective Mystery Religions.

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## I

ANYONE who attempts to write on Myth is entering upon controversial ground. This is true, not only of Biblical interpretation, but of the concept of Myth in general. The battle which raged towards the end of the last century, between powerful exponents of particular theories of the origin of myths, died down for a time. The advances in the physical sciences threw a sense of unreality over mere fairy tales, with which myths tended to be lumped. Indeed, in the minds of many, religion itself assumed an air of unreality, inappropriate to a scientific age.

But for some time now there has been a rising interest in myth. This has partly come through the researches of archaeologists. For them the old myths have had a twofold interest. In the first place they have been sifted for the sake of the germ of historical truth that may underlie them. This was the interpretation of myth adopted by the Greek writer, Euhemerus, in the fourth century B.C. Euhemerus held that the gods of the myths were originally men, who had had a real existence. Similarly in his new book, *The Greek Myths*, Robert Graves finds historical origins for many of the classical myths that he records. Indeed, he writes in his introduction: "My aim has been to assemble in harmonious narrative all the scattered elements of each myth, supported by little-known

variants which may help to determine the meaning, and to answer all questions that arise, as best I can, in anthropological or historical terms" (Vol. I, pp. 22 f.).

The second interest that the myths hold for archaeologists is the light that they throw upon the culture and religion of the past. Myth is closely connected with ritual, and many of the old stories were recited during the great religious ceremonies: the recitation was not simply the telling of a tale, but was regarded as the word of power that made the ceremony effective. Much, for example, has been written in recent years on the Babylonian New Year Festival. During this festival the Creation conflict was re-enacted, and the Creation story was recited, the whole ceremony being designed to create a prosperous new year.

From another quarter also there has come a rehabilitation of Myth. Jung, with his Analytical Psychology, has pushed Myth to the forefront. He points to the basic figures and situations of the great myths of the world as the constantly recurring archetypal images of the Collective Unconscious of mankind. They express the movement of the human psyche towards wholeness, and may recur in the dreams of individuals to-day. All down the ages there have been certain ways of interpreting the phenomena of nature and of history, so that man in some way became inwardly one with them.

Two recent books have taken up this thought, though not simply with Jung in mind. Joseph Campbell, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, has traced the underlying structure of the myth of the hero who goes out on the unknown journey, finds supernatural aid to overcome in the test that confronts him, and returns successfully. The hero may be seen as Everyman, or someone with whom Everyman can identify himself. The other book is *The Golden Well*, by Dorothy Donnelly. This approaches the subject by way of symbolism, but again the author shows the unity of theme in the traveller who leaves his home, and returns with his quest accomplished.

There is a further aspect of Myth, that may be mentioned briefly, as we shall not have room in this paper to relate it to the Bible. This is the aetiological aspect, where the story is told to account for the origins of things. Some of these myths link up with the ritual recitals, but the majority are more of the nature of folk tales, the deliberate inventions of witty minds, and have little more relevance for this paper than the *Just-So* stories of Rudyard Kipling.

It is at this point that we may conveniently attempt to define and to classify Myth. Aristotle's words about the significance of the Greek Tragedy may perhaps be given a wider relevance. He spoke of the Tragedy as effecting the purging of pity and terror in the spectators. It is true that there has been some disagreement over the precise meaning of Aristotle's words, but I take it that, through his identification with the characters and the theme, the spectator experienced a moral katharsis

(or purging). In other words, the story became dynamic; it was not simply a tale, but it was Everyman's life. It is in this sense that we use the term *Myth*. The events of the narrative may be actual or fictitious, possible or impossible; but they carry overtones of reality that wake a response in the minds of the hearers. Myth transforms "I—It" into "I—Thou". In this sense Myth is necessary for the maturing of personality. I personally believe that a child who is deprived of fairy tales, in the sense in which the term is used of Grimm's *Märchen*, lacks something which is his inheritance. In the realm of ogres and witches he experiences a needed katharsis, a katharsis which probably owes much to the free working of his imagination as he hears or reads the story. It would be interesting to know whether Dan Dare, seen in strip cartoon form, can attain the honourable status of Myth.

One further preliminary point must be noted. This concerns the origin of individual myths. Here we have a difference of opinion between the Diffusionist School and those who regard the human mind as likely to express itself in similar types of myth at different periods and in different places. We cannot discuss this in detail. It must suffice to refer to Robert Graves (*The Greek Myths*) and Lord Raglan (*The Origins of Religion*) as examples of recent writers of the Diffusionist School; while Jung follows the belief of J. G. Frazer (*The Golden Bough*) that similar mythical ideas could arise independently.

## II

This somewhat lengthy introduction is far from being irrelevant to a discussion of the place of Myth in the interpretation of the Bible. The concept of Myth is very much to the fore in Biblical interpretation at the present time. Much of the discussion centres round the views of Rudolf Bultmann, and it would be possible to spend the rest of this paper in a consideration of his writings. But this would be to give too restricted a compass to the subject, for the problem goes far wider than Bultmann. There was a period when critical theories appeared to have taken the heart out of the Old Testament, bringing it down to a set of documents that might be used to illustrate the religious development of Hebrew thought. Then it was seen that one cannot separate the New Testament from the Old; that the New can only be understood in the light of the Old. So scholars began to turn afresh to the Old Testament as a book of revelation, though the revelation was not regarded as propositional, but as arising out of the historical experiences of the nation, in which the saving hand of God was to be seen. The original event might, or might not, have happened precisely as the narrator says; but basically there was something which was rightly interpreted in terms of divine intervention. The interpretation could often be spoken of as Myth. Thus C. D. Kean, writing of Biblical interpretation, says that "Myth is the

description of man's existence in terms of a story related to history but oriented toward eternity" (*The Meaning of Existence*, p. 149). And again, Myth is "a description of Existence, the importance of which is its revelation of the meaning of experience rather than the truth or untruth of the details of its story" (p. 115).

But Myth need not be confined to the Old Testament. There are scholars who are unconvinced of the historical truth of the Virgin Birth, the bodily Resurrection, and the Ascension, of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the concept of Myth enables them to keep the values of these alleged events while keeping an open mind as to their historicity. In fact C. D. Kean in his book just quoted rejects "Biblical fundamentalism, because no appreciation of mythology is possible if the myths themselves are literalized" (p. 150).

It is from this standpoint that we must try to understand Bultmann and others. Bultmann holds that the language of Myth in the New Testament is so frequently understood as literal fact that its real meaning is obscured to modern man. Through concentrating upon obsolete thought-forms, we may miss the essential encounter with God. Therefore we must try to express the reality of this encounter in terms that will produce in modern men and women the same experience of God as was enjoyed by the Church of the New Testament.

Now it will be seen that there are three approaches to the concept of Myth in the Bible. Two of them have already been mentioned. There is the radical view, which treats the terms of the alleged historical record as a hindrance to the understanding of the truth to-day; that is to say, on the occasions when we are concerned with Myth, we must shun any literal interpretation. There is the less extreme view, which holds that in mythical interpretation enquiry after literal truth is irrelevant; the interpretation does not depend upon the truth or falsity of the details of the narrative, though we may be sure that "something" happened; the whole story is not pure romance. As someone has said, the Hebrews turned the whole of their history into Myth.

The third view has not been touched upon as yet. It is the view that the recorded events are both true facts of history, and at the same time pregnant with dynamic meaning, in the sense required by the mythical interpretation. To say that care for the literal sense kills the mythological significance is not borne out by experience. One might perhaps find an analogy in poetry. We sit on the cliffs and watch the sun sinking across the sea, and the words of Tennyson's poem rise in our mind as the myth of the close of life's day:

" Sunset and evening star,  
 And one clear call for me,  
 And may there be no moaning of the bar  
 When I put out to sea:

But such a tide as, moving, seems asleep,  
 Too full for sound and foam,  
 When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
 Turns again home. . . ."

It is because there is a real sunset and a real sea that the myth has meaning. The difficulty that some of us find with much modern poetry is that its myth is divorced from any literal reality that we know.

### III

It is now time to turn to some of the Biblical themes for which the concept of myth may be relevant. The most obvious of these is the so-called three-storey view of the universe. It is quite usual for writers on the Old Testament to produce a diagram of Hebrew cosmogony, whereby God sits in a place that is situated above the solid firmament of heaven, while Sheol, the place of the departed, is somewhere in the bowels of the earth. In the New Testament God is still spoken of as being "above", in the sense that Jesus Christ and the early Christians lift up their eyes to heaven when they pray. Moreover, when He finally departs from this earth, Jesus Christ ascends to heaven; and it is from the heaven that He is said to descend at His Second Coming. If modern scientific thought compels us to abandon this three-storey idea of the universe, what becomes of the Biblical teaching that is based upon it?

Before we are rushed into a snap decision, let us notice that several points are involved. First, how are we to think of God and His presence in relation to this world? Secondly, did Jesus Christ indicate to His disciples that He was passing to a new plane of existence by ascending upwards while they were watching Him? This is a matter of history. Thirdly, in what manner will He appear to wind up the present course of history? This is a matter of faith, instructed by revelation.

How, then, are we to think of God and His presence in relation to this world? Certainly the Bible uses the terminology of *Above*, but I see no reason to suppose that the descriptive language of the Bible indicates a belief in a substantial heaven that could be reached by a passage through a solid firmament and possibly through waters above that firmament.

If the scope of this paper allowed, it would indeed be well worth while to investigate the common assumption that the Bible does actually teach the view of the earth and the sky that many commentators assert. I personally believe that this is one of those things that each expositor copies from another without ever examining the matter for himself. It must suffice to point out that those passages which use "solid" language of the earth and the sky come in poetical sections; i.e. Job 26: 11 ("pillars of heaven"); Job 37: 18 (the sky is "spread out" and "strong as a molten mirror"); Proverbs 8: 27, 28 ("He made firm the skies");



Amos 9. 6 (" He buildeth His chambers in the heavens, and hath founded His vault upon the earth "). All these passages should be seen in their context, particularly Job 26: 11, where verse 7 states that " He hangeth the earth upon nothing ". The story of creation in Genesis 1 yields a perfectly straightforward interpretation if the firmament is regarded as the expanse of air above the earth, which supports the water-bearing clouds (vv. 6, 7), and in which the birds fly (v. 20), and in which the heavenly bodies appear (vv. 14-18). It is difficult to credit the Biblical writers with such lack of observation that they never connected rain with clouds, but supposed that holes were opened in a solid firmament to let the waters through. At first sight the use of the term " windows of heaven " in the Flood story (Gen. 7: 11; 8: 2) might seem to require a literal interpretation, but the other two uses of the term in 2 Kings 7: 2 and Malachi 3: 10 (and perhaps a similar phrase in Isaiah 24: 18) are so clearly metaphorical and proverbial, that the phrase may be taken in the same way in the Flood story.

This metaphorical use of words is an important consideration. Even that which we instinctively class as myth may be no more than metaphor. Thus the ancient Egyptians represented the vault of heaven in various ways. It was " the under-belly of a celestial cow, studded with stars, and providing the Milky Way along which the boat of the sun might make its heavenly course." On the other hand the god Horus " was imagined as a gigantic falcon hovering over the earth with outstretched wings, the coloured clouds of sunset and sunrise being his speckled breast and the sun and the moon his eyes " (*Before Philosophy*, by Frankfort, Wilson, and Jacobsen, pp. 55, 29). Quite obviously no Egyptian could really have supposed that the sky was a cow or a falcon, but the picture gave a metaphorical assurance of divine supply and protection.

Such metaphors are used perfectly naturally to-day. The language of psycho-analysis and analytical psychology is a case in point. We read of the Subconscious, the Super-Ego, the depths of the Psyche, the threshold of consciousness, and similar terms. A critical reader a thousand years hence might well think that the twentieth century held the idea of a three-storey solid mind, with doors and gates. We know how wrong he would be; but we would still maintain that these phrases are legitimate metaphors, and indeed almost essential metaphors, to translate non-spatial ideas into spatial and comprehensible language.

This is precisely what the Bible is bound to do with the Person of the Godhead and with heaven. Anyone who uses the prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ taught us must face the question. What do I mean when I pray: " Our Father, who art *in heaven* . . . Thy will be done on earth, as it is *in heaven* "? I am making an assertion, on the authority of Jesus Christ Himself, that there is a Somewhere where God is manifested and served perfectly; and that this Somewhere is not on earth. I am bound to have some pictorial concept of the relationship between this Somewhere and

this earth. Since Jesus Christ lifted up His eyes when He prayed (John 17: 1), and used the term "heaven" of this Somewhere, it would seem that He found the most helpful concept to be that of God as above. Alternative concepts, such as *Below*, *Around*, or *Within*, have a significance in certain connections; *Within* is the concept that is used of the Holy Spirit in the individual and in the Church (e.g. 1 Cor. 3: 16; 6: 19), but it is not used of the initial approach to God, nor of the approach in prayer; in this way the Biblical revelation steers us clear of pantheism. The concept of God as above, and of heaven as above, is necessary for man who has fallen, who knows that he and his fellows are not doing the will of God, and that he is accountable to a transcendent Creator, from whose fellowship his sin excludes him. The effect of the Gospel is to remove the barrier of sin, and to bring the believer in Christ into the heavenly Somewhere (Ephesians 2: 6), where he sets his mind upon "the things that are *above*" (Colossians 3: 1-4).

Bultmann and others see the necessity of insisting upon the divine encounter, and dread the idea of an "I-It" conception rather than the personal "I-Thou" relationship. Yet a true experience of God in Christ must begin, according to the Bible, with the already existing separation of God from man. God must be seen as the One who stands over against us, the One against whom we have sinned, the Supreme Fact of the Universe. If I understand him aright, Bultmann has no patience with this concept. He writes in one of his essays in *Kerygma and Myth*: "The invisibility of God excludes every myth which tries to make him and his acts visible. Because of this, however, it also excludes every conception of invisibility and mystery which is formulated in terms of objective thought" (p. 210).

Here we encounter a point of cleavage between Bultmann and orthodox Christianity. Both are at one in stressing the need for the existential experience of God, but orthodox Christianity still finds it necessary to speak of God objectively, and to present certain concepts of God-as-He-is, which are believed to be concepts of God-as-He-has-revealed-Himself, that is, in the pages of Scripture as well as in existential experience. If Bultmann is right in attempting to reduce the New Testament to the terms of man's experience of his own existence, then obviously the concept of God above and heaven above must go. But if it is right for us to have an objective theology which forms the ground of a valid subjective experience, as the New Testament professes, then the aboveness of God must remain as a permanent concept. The abandonment of this Biblical concept leads to the abandonment, that Bultmann makes, of the juridical and sacrificial terms in which the atoning death of Jesus Christ is presented in the New Testament. Yet these are terms that most Christians have found to be expressive of objective realities, and which have played a powerful part in the presentation of the Gospel to outsiders.

Before leaving the question of the three-storey universe, we must notice the other two points that we mentioned. The Ascension can be briefly

discussed. The detailed account of it occurs in Acts 1, and the author, St. Luke, has repeatedly been vindicated for his historical accuracy. There is no alternative tradition of how Jesus Christ brought the period of resurrection appearances to an end. All that is said in the Epistles about the heavenly session and the return from heaven presupposes something equivalent to an ascension. Jesus Christ showed His disciples that His risen body was now removing to a new plane of life, and that His presence *with* them was shortly to be exchanged for His presence *in* them by His Holy Spirit. All this is meaningless for those who reject the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and who regard the resurrection appearances as visionary. But since to the Jew the word *resurrection* meant bodily resurrection, it is clear that the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ formed part of the earliest Kerygma, while it is equally clear that the appearances on earth of the risen Lord are regarded as having come to a sudden end at His exaltation or ascension. It is difficult to deny the historicity of Christ's ascent upwards in the light of the Biblical evidence.

But what of His Second Coming from above? The picture that the New Testament presents is of a descent from the sky, and, if we may believe St. Luke, the angelic messengers compared the manner of the Second Coming with the manner of the Ascension (Acts 1: 11). I cannot myself see that there is anything unscientific in such a conception, except on the ground that science has no place for any divine winding-up of the present world-order. Bultmann and others transmute the Biblical eschatology into the present realization of the eternal kingdom. This is certainly one strand of teaching which is well-defined in the New Testament, and which has been held by Evangelicals for a very long time. But Evangelicals have not thereby ceased to look for the final breaking-in of the kingdom at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, any more than St. John in the Fourth Gospel and in the Epistles dismisses the idea of the Second Coming (e.g. John 5: 28 f.; 14: 2 f.; 21: 22 f.; 1 John 3: 2 f.).

What form will the final winding-up take? For this we are either dependent upon speculation or upon revelation. Speculation may either be rigidly scientific, and may calculate the probabilities of the gradual cooling of the sun and the consequent extinction of life on this planet, or the possibilities of Hoyle's theory of continuous creation: or speculation may be semi-theological and look for a gradual permeation of the world by Christian ideals without committing itself to any final irruption by God into world history. Or we may accept the Biblical picture as essentially true, and suppose that God has revealed the manner in which He will next appear on earth.

Here a comparison with the First Coming is instructive. There is sufficient in the Old Testament to indicate that a perfect Messiah would come, that He would have divine attributes, and that He would be born of a woman. Now what could be more unscientific and more in need of being demythologized than this? Surely one must translate the predicted

incarnation into other terms, and hold that the words mean no more than that the presence of God would be realized in a new way. Yet the Christian holds that the prediction was literally fulfilled. This analogy would not hold good for Bultmann, because it is not at all clear what he holds about the incarnation. But many Christians who accept the incarnation as a fact of history, spiritualize away the historicity of the visible appearing of Jesus Christ from heaven at the end of the present age. Yet very few seem to have thought the matter through and stated even approximately what they suppose will happen, so that we might judge whether their version is a reasonable transmutation of the Biblical picture and any more likely than an appearance from heaven.

One is tempted to conclude this consideration of heaven as above by trying to think how one might describe it in more scientific terms. Occultists and spiritualists describe it in terms of vibrations and wave-lengths, or in terms of denser and less dense matter. Possibly one or other description is correct, but I do not think that it is more helpful for devotion. Even if I found myself praying "Our Father, who art on a higher vibration", the only meaningful term in the description would be the word "higher".

The conception of Sheol as *below* can be dealt with briefly. The *belowness* of Sheol is a valid concept based upon two facts: (1) The dead person is buried in a grave below the surface of the earth. (2) The dead person (in whatever form) is no longer *on* the earth, nor is he in heaven *above* in the place where God manifests His presence directly. It should be noted that after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the equivalent term *Hades* is used of the state of death without any downward adjective. The believer at death departs to be with Christ (Phil. 1: 23), and is brought with Jesus from heaven above at the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4: 14).

#### IV

The greater part of this paper has been occupied with the one subject of the three-storey universe, because this is the point with which all discussions of myth begin and on which so much else depends. In the concluding portion we must briefly note a few other very relevant points.

I should like to have filled the whole paper with a discussion of the Creation story. Here also I am sure that we must beware of being too ready to speak of myth. We have too few theologians who have tried to think out the relation between the opening chapters of Genesis and what is actually known about modern man. I notice that in the new book by Carleton S. Coon, *The History of Man*, agriculture and domestication of animals is placed at about 6000 B.C., and L. Dudley Stamp in *Man and the Land* (p. 108) says that the grasses from which wheat first came into existence are found in south-west Asia and in Turkestan. The Garden of Eden would not be so far away, and the record there is concerned primarily

with plants that are good for food. I believe that Sir Richard Paget has tentatively dated the beginnings of speech at about 6000 B.C. Is there any evidence that the man-like creatures before this date had spiritual capacities? Cave paintings, even if one or two are interpreted as being of sorcerers, and the staining of the dead bodies with red ochre, are no evidence for the worship of God or gods.

Suppose it is true that God made a new beginning with a man and a woman with moral and spiritual capacities in the region of the Upper Euphrates, round about 6000 B.C. Why should not a true tradition have been transmitted of actual events, including a test, which was given a sacramental form in the eating, or not eating, of a specified tree? By eating of this sacrament man would indicate that he wished to be his own arbiter of right and wrong. In the light of such evidence as is available, I am most reluctant to regard the story of the creation and fall of man as myth. I hope that this is not an obscurantist attitude, but if the historical and anthropological evidence is strong enough to disprove the Genesis record as a story of essential fact, it should be strong enough to offer an alternative suggestion of where the first modern man and woman appeared, and how sin came into the human race.

May we admit mythology in the records of Satan as the serpent and the dragon? Inasmuch as dragons do not exist in fact, obviously the dragon picture is mythological. Now dragon myths occur in the folk-lore of many nations, and the dragons are almost always evil, and usually hostile to the gods. The Mesopotamian creation story introduces Tiamat, the primeval chaos, as the dragon goddess, against whom the gods fight. In the Old Testament there are allusions to Leviathan (who, as Lotan, occurs on the Ras Shamra tablets), the dragon-serpent, and Rahab (e.g. Isaiah 27: 1; 51: 9; Psalm 74: 13 f.) and, while it may well be that the words that the Biblical writer uses are common coin of several ancient stories, we ought to press behind the stories, and ask whether the pagan religions may not themselves be preserving a primeval truth that underlies the Biblical conception of the fall of Satan and the warfare between Satan and God. Again we are back with the problem of how to translate spiritual realities of one order into the language that can be grasped by the ordinary mind. The Bible teaches the qualities of Satan by depicting him as the subtle serpent and the serpent-like conglomeration of certain destroying creatures. The character of Satan as an unseen being, if it could clothe itself without disguise in a physical form, would be serpent-like and dragonish.

But again we cannot find any common ground with Bultmann, who states categorically: "It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of daemons and spirits" (*Kerygma and Myth*, p. 5). Bultmann gives no indication that he has ever investigated the case for demon-possession. Admittedly the

belief has fallen on evil days, and demons are now equated with autonomous complexes, but it is extremely probable that, when the first enthusiasm for the explanations given by psycho-analysis and analytical psychology has passed away, there will still remain a residue of hard fact which can best be explained by accepting the Biblical conception of the real existence of good and evil spirits. For a consideration of some of the evidence one can refer to Dr. J. L. Nevius's book, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*, and to the more recent theological discussion in Victor White's *God and the Unconscious*. I have dealt with the subject myself in a recent book, *What is Man?* Incidentally Bultmann is wrong in implying that the Bible suggests that all illness is ascribed in the Bible to demons. Jesus Christ did not always heal by rebuking and casting out a demon.

The last subject with which we can deal is that of the Person and Work of Christ. Bultmann holds that the language of the story of the coming of Christ in the New Testament is based upon "the contemporary mythology of Jewish Apocalyptic and the redemption myths of Gnosticism" (*Kerygma and Myth*, p. 3). What Bultmann objects to as mythological is the idea of the pre-existing Son of God, who comes down from heaven and dies for man's sin and then rises again. Here the orthodox Christian feels that he must either be true to the Biblical presentation, or renounce the claim to be a Christian. Jesus Christ is the pre-existing Son of God, and the wonder of the Christian faith is not that some man, however holy, lived and died, but that God Himself became incarnate; in giving His Son, He gave Himself. This cannot be renounced in favour of an existential experience of the Divine.

Not so long ago it used to be argued that because other religions had myths of a dying and rising saviour-god, Christianity was equally a mythical religion. But Christianity, from New Testament times, has stoutly maintained that its truth lies in its history. Jesus is really divine; He really died; He rose physically from the dead on a definite date. The other saviour-gods had no such real existence, nor did they profess to have. Often they were personifications of the dying and renewed year, but in union with them the worshippers somehow shared in their renewal. Jungian psychology has shown how powerful are the symbols that man finds in the world around. It would seem that again and again the human race has found its longing for renewal partially met in the death-and-life interpretation of the cycle of the year, and of the sun and the moon. The Christian claims that Jesus Christ in His actual death and resurrection fulfilled historically and objectively the mythical and subjective longings of the Gentiles, just as He fulfilled the types of the Jewish Law.

But to hold to this uniqueness of Christianity, one must hold to the historicity of the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Bodily Resurrection, and the objectivity of the Atonement. It would seem that

Bultmann, in brushing aside the facts in favour of the experience has brought Christianity again to the level of the Mystery Religions. One says this in spite of his statement: "I would not call dying and rising again with Christ a subjective experience, for it can occur only through an objective encounter with the proclamation and the act of God which it mediates" (*Kerygma and Myth*, p. 112). One can only say that Bultmann has his own idea of Kerygma, and is determined to maintain that at all costs. When he writes, "I cannot accept 1 Cor. 15: 3-8 as kerygma" (p. 112), he makes it clear that we must choose either Bultmann or the New Testament; we cannot have both. For here is the rehearsal of the objective facts of the Gospel which paves the whole of the New Testament. May it not be fair to say that for the New Testament conception of faith Bultmann has substituted the technique of suggestion, whereby ideas are accepted without reference to the adequacy or inadequacy of the grounds of acceptance?

## V

*Conclusion.* In our definitions of Myth we saw that a story or picture was mythical if it produced an inward katharsis, by giving us an "I—Thou" relationship with gods or powers or situations. In this simple sense the Bible is full of myth, and so is every religion and culture. But man is so made that he cannot finally be satisfied by experience alone if that experience cannot be grounded upon objective truth. Initiation into the Mystery Religions can never be as satisfying as initiation into the crucified and risen Christ. Salvation through Analytical Psychology leaves us staring into a dark void as we query whether the archetype of God as an experience of the psyche has an objective reality beyond itself.

Since, then, Myth is so subjective a term, it is wise to use it as little as possible in interpreting the Bible. Biblical religion, and Christianity in particular, is meaningless unless it is both experienced and also grounded upon precise historical and factual bases.

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NOTE ON BOOKS

This paper has deliberately not concentrated upon Bultmann, since Bultmann represents only an extremist position. But the book of essays, *Kerygma and Myth* (S.P.C.K., 1953), gives several of Bultmann's essays and essays by other writers in criticism and appraisal of them. A shorter statement will be found in *Myth in the New Testament*, by Ian Henderson (S.C.M., 1952).

The following are particulars of other books mentioned in this paper. in order of mention:

Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Penguin, 1955).

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