THE MEANING OF RELIGION

LECTURES IN THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGION

By the late

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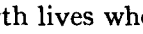
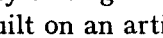
(Cf. the Minotaur in the Labyrinth which represented the realm of the dead.) At the Bouphonies, the Athenian festival in honour of Zeus, the bull of Zeus Chthonios was sacrificed. It is quite certain that by this act the bull of the earth was consecrated. In all the temples of the Mithra mysteries, the "altar piece" was the image done in relief of Mithra killing (i.e., sacrificing) his bull. The meaning of this is as clear as it can be. Mithra, the god of the earth's life, sacrifices himself in order to actualize through death his divine life. This was the mystery of Mithra, which was granted to his follower at his initiation.

Finally we should say something about the meaning of hills or the high places of the earth in the cultus of a great many peoples. The *bāmōth*, "heights," are among the Semites frequently the temple sites; in the Canaanite cultus they are the normal sites for altars. Among the Egyptians "the Height" was the name and the symbol of the temple; the dwelling of Osiris was called "the High Mountain," the earth mountain – the underworld. For the "height" is the place where the life of the earth reveals itself in vegetation; the underlying thought here is that rising or getting up is an image of life. *Cadaver*, the one lying down, is death; the earth lives where it is high. In Egypt  is the sign for high land (by being combined with  it is also drawn as ). This sign serves as base, foundation, and elevation for the earth gods Min, Ptah, and Osiris and indicates their ever newly arising life. Every Egyptian temple, as a matter of fact, is built on an artificial height (). The sign for this hill,  , is also the sign for ma-a-t, who is the order of life in the universal sense. This is the background of the sacredness of the *bāmōth*. Related to this is the notion of the hill of Creation, where life arose in the beginning. The earth height which came up out of the primeval waters was the place where the earth began to live. There life arose and from there it spread. The life of the cosmos is thus conceived as the life of the earth. The light myth is also connected with this notion of the creation of the world; from the (sun) hill the sun arose in the beginning. The Egyptian texts call the day of Creation "the day of the elevation of the earth (Book of the Dead 1 : 19). The height or hill as a sacred place is thus the place where the life of the earth reveals itself, the place of divine revelation in general. Here the

altar was built, the altar which according to Ancient belief was sacred because it represented the dwelling of God, the altar which itself was the image of the high place. (Cf. the horned altar in Israel, Greece, and Rome.)

This is also the religious meaning of the tumulus, the grave hill. Burial is an impartation of divine life, a sacrament which bestows the life of the earth on the dead man. Therefore the grave is the earth hill. Like burial in the treasury of the earth, this is an instance of the cosmic character of the grave.

Among all the Ancient peoples and even in Israel the notion of the hill of Creation is formulated in a remarkable way as the *omphalos*, the navel of the earth. The "navel" is the place where new life begins and the point from which it spreads. Therefore it is situated in the middle of the earth. Homer calls the island Ogygia *Omphalos tēs thalassēs*, the hill of Creation in the midst of the primeval waters. The omphalos is usually depicted as a hill, thus as a high place, or else as in Delphi as a hill-shaped stone, quite similar to the tumulus. The temple mountain in Zion and other hills in the Holy Land are called "the navel of the earth." The hill is the site of the temple because the divine powers of the earth there reveal themselves. So it can be explained why the omphalos is thought of as a microcosm. The dome-shaped hill,  , is also conceived as the image of the celestial dome but is nevertheless still called the "navel." These ideas are sufficient to explain certain connections in which the term "navel of the earth" occurs. At Delphi the omphalos is the site of the oracle, where Apollo resides as god of the oracle. At the omphalos one can come to know the life of the earth and of the cosmos. It is here that life arises – rising life is divine life. The Delphic oracle is also called the universal hearth, *koinē hestia*, the residence of Hestia or Vesta. The hearth fire is the life fire of family and world; the hearth is the point of communication between the underworld and this world (according to the Romans the Lares, the spirits of the dead, live in the hearth), and it is here that the resurrection of the family takes place. The hearth is the site of the mystery of life. The earth mother Vesta or Hestia is the virgin goddess out of whom life spontaneously arises; the virgin Athene Parthenos is likewise goddess of the earth.

Many mountains are worshipped as high places. Mt. Olympus on the boundary between Macedonia and Thessaly, was considered to be the home of the gods. The same was believed of a number of other "Olympoi." They existed in Mysia, Cilicia, Elis, Arcadia, Laconia, Galatia, and in Cyprus there were actually two. It is not far from the truth to say that there was an Olympus in each Greek state. The resemblance to the "navel of the earth" or the high place is quite clear. Olympus is the home of the gods. This is not because this ten thousand foot high mountain in Macedonia and Thessaly "sticks into heaven" with its peak and is surrounded by clouds; the small Olympoi are also the homes of the gods. Neither is it because it indicates the exalted nature of divine being. No, the mountain – here Mt. Olympus – is, like the omphalos, the place where the earth lives and therefore also the place where the cosmos lives. Just as in our linguistic usage the earth is "the world." When the earth came up out of the waters of chaos as the hill of Creation, the life of the world began. The omphalos is the microcosm, the world in miniature. On the world mountain dwell the gods; that is the home of divine renascent life. In the Avesta the sacred mountain Ushidarna is a mythical mountain far in the east, the home of blessedness and of the divine wisdom. It is also called "the fertile mountain." Babylonian texts often speak of fertility in connection with mountains, because the high place is the place where the earth lives. The notion that the home of cosmic life is situated in the east relates to the rise of light in the east. The mountain Ushidarna thus corresponds to the hill of Creation which is also involved in the light myth. It is always mentioned together with *khvarnah*, glory, the immortal nature of gods, men, and all creatures of Ahura Mazda. It rises "up into heaven," as does Mt. Olympus and also the omphalos. In modern Greece, an extraordinarily large number of peaks or high mountains are called *Hagios Elias;* Baedeker lists more than twenty peaks with that name. Naturally they owe their name to the ascension of Elijah, even though in II Kings 2 no mention is made of a height or a mountain.

It can thus be explained why there is sometimes a close connection between "mountain" and "temple" as homes of divine life. In Babylonia this thought is consistently carried through.

The Babylonian-Assyrian word *e-kur*, "mountainhouse," stands for the cosmic mountain, the "mountain of fertility" as the seat of the earth's life. It also means "temple"; the temple towers with their three, five, or seven steplike stories were the most important part of the temple. And then finally, this word also means "god." God reveals himself in his cosmic dwelling, that is to say, in the world process; it is in this that he is recognized. The temple is the image of God. How could God better be depicted than by means of the mountain, that part of the world in which His activity and life is most visible? The constructed temple is the image of the universe, God's real dwelling. Therefore it is called a "mountain-house," *e-kur*. This "mountain-house" is not only the image of the living earth, but also of the celestial mountain, just as Olympus can mean "the heavens." The stories of the temple towers correspond to the different planetary spheres of the heavens and indeed represent them. So too, the building is an image of the celestial dome. The earth and the heavens are corresponding realities; they exist in mutual relation. This idea of correspondence between the earthly and the celestial process is at the basis of the astrological view of the world. Therefore earthly places are situated in accordance with cosmic examples; Niniveh was drawn in the writing of the heavens; the city of Uruk is the image of the realm of the dead, etc. At these places God's activity and being can be seen. The earthly temple is God's image. In Egypt too the temple, as image of God's real dwelling, was built according to cosmic example. The entirely dark holy of holies in the back of the temple was the image of the realm of the dead, which is the home of absolute life. The temple gate was the point of transition from the other world into this. This is the "gate of the world in the east" mentioned in Egyptian texts; it is there that God appears in our world. The temple of Solomon, on the other hand, like the Greek temples, was not built according to cosmic example at all. During the period of the prophets in Israel and the Greek "enlightenment" the Ancient idea of deity had disappeared: "Behold heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built." (I Kings 8 : 27).

out of awe. Their "arbitrariness" was divine justice. They were the upholders of the universal law of life, the "harmonia of Zeus." And they were especially the gods of the underworld, the home of absolute life. The invisible "heavens," too, were that other world, either as paradise or as realm of the dead – in any case known only in or after death.

It is remarkable that the gods of this supra-ethical or demonic type are usually the most exalted in rank of all the gods in the pantheon; they are the universal gods. Thus in addition to Zeus and to Varuna, there is also the Babylonian supreme god, the "celestial" Anu. His children are the "Seven Evil Spirits" who are repeatedly called the "Sons of Anu," and his daughter is Lamashtu, the demon of the children's diseases. The "Seven Evil Spirits" prove to be closely related to the "Seven Gods" or "Great Gods" (*Ilāni Rabûti*). Seven is namely the totality, the summation of all divine attributes. The Seven gods are the cosmic rulers also conceived as the seven gods of the planets, who in their demonic sovereignty impose the spell and determine the fate which takes no account of human wishes or ideals. It is in connection with gods of this type that we encounter the most majestic and most profound conceptions of the Ancient religions. But all this completely escaped someone like Plutarch.

The Romans created a distinctive term to indicate the absolute character of these gods and the relation in which man stood toward them, namely "sacer," being sacred or holy. The double meaning of the term is noteworthy; it signifies divine disapproval as well as divine approval; if we look more deeply, we see, however, that the same reality is meant. Everything and every person which has come into contact with the divine is "sacer." The Sacra Via is sacred in the good sense; so too is the Pontifex Maximus, who is sacer. But he too is sacer who has left the human path of life, has departed from human relationships within which he could be punished, and has broken the divine commandments. Human measures, which are always of relative nature, stop at this point. He who touches the Ark of Yahweh goes outside the human sphere of life and becomes sacer; he dies. He who touches the king dies. Such a "homo sacer" has put himself outside the *jus humanum* and can be killed without punishment. According to Dionysius, the client who behaves unfittingly

toward his patron by breaking the family bond is sacer and is "consecrated to some god or other – usually a god of the underworld." [3] His execution is here a sacrifice, not a punishment. He who steals crops standing in the field or lets his animals graze in someone else's field is consecrated by death to the earth and grain goddess Ceres. His offence is no ordinary thievery, but transgression of the order of Ceres. She has determined in which way men can without danger make use of the divine gift of the riches of the earth; he who does it otherwise comes into direct contact with the holy without taking the necessary measures to prevent the fatal results of this contact. He who is consecrated or sanctified in this way is considered to be the sacrificial offering; that is to say, he is considered to be the representative of the absolute, divine life of the earth. His death is thus certainly not a punishment.

The unfaithful Vestal Virgin, who is buried alive, has not committed a "transgression." She represents Vesta as Terra Mater; her consort is the god of the underworld (of the earth). By her death she has realized her mystical essence, with the result that she also becomes in reality the consort of the god of the realm of the dead. Her being buried alive signifies that she is identified for good with her goddess Vesta. Thus we even hear that the unfaithful Vestal Virgin Tarpeia was worshipped after her death. The Ancients always worshipped those who were killed because of religious transgressions. The Tarentine citizens, who had transgressed the divine institutions, were killed by the lightning of Zeus Kataibates; later their grave stones were placed before the houses of many Tarentine citizens and were worshipped with sacrifices to Zeus Kataibates. The death inflicted by Zeus was their consecration. Death by lightning always sanctifies. The oath breaker will be struck by Jupiter's lightning and be made sacred; being made sacred is never simply punishment. The divine "punishment" is destruction in this sense, that one is made sacred; he is removed to the divine sphere.

The sense of the absoluteness of the consecration also makes itself felt when men execute the death sentence. It is an infinite punishment, without any possibility of difference in degree, and therefore not comparable to other punishments. This fact has always forced its way into man's consciousness. When the death

tremely important, and Otto has been called "the discoverer of the Holy." But it would be just as true to say that he is the discoverer of the divine, or of religion, and this is simply absurd. People have been too impressed by the title of *Das Heilige*.

Thus in beginning to investigate the idea of sacred places, times and images, we do not take the concept "holiness" as our starting point. On the contrary, we shall try on the basis of the historical data to understand what the believers have understood by the holiness or sacredness of these objects. Why have they called certain particular places, times and images sacred or holy?

CHAPTER 19

SACRED PLACES

A. PLACES NATURALLY SACRED

We find sacred places in all the Ancient religions. Some places are dedicated to God and therefore withdrawn from ordinary intercourse and ordinary activities. They are thus inaccessible ground, *abaton* (sc. *pedon*). The Greeks even gave this as a name to the sacred place including Osiris' grave at Philae. Here is another instance, given by Pausanias.[1] In Phocis was a temple which might only be entered by those who had been invited by the goddess in a dream. Once a man attended the sacred rites who had no right to be there, but no sooner had he returned home and told what he had done than he died. In II Samuel 6 : 6–7, we read that Uzzah touched the ark of Yahweh and died immediately. He was not authorized to do so, and only those initiated, like the priests, may walk in sacred places or touch sacred objects. The ark was the place where Yahweh revealed himself; it was His sanctuary, His temple. For "holy" places do not belong to the finite world, but to the infinite, divine world. Whoever stays there unauthorized and unitiated, dies. This is not a "punishment," but simply a necessary consequence of the act. To die is to be torn loose from the finite world. He who touches the sacred place is by his death initiated into absolute, divine life. Only the "initiate," that is, he who has observed the ritual prescriptions, can even before his death come into direct contact with or possession of absolute life. Thus the initiates of the Eleusinian Mysteries were even during this earthly life in possession of an infinite existence. Whoever attends the Mysteries without authorization, dies!

But what is it, then, that makes a place "holy" or "sacred"? It is certainly not the fact that a sacred act is performed there, such as the utterance of a prayer, the swearing of an oath, or the

performance of a ritual purification. It is rather that this is the place where God dwells and where He reveals Himself. On the *abaton* at Philae was the grave of Osiris; that is to say, the place where he caused life to rise again. The ark of Yahweh was God's dwellingplace. The question then becomes: in what sense does God "dwell" in a place? When his "sacredness" is transferred to that place, what is the special relation between God and his dwellingplace or "temple"? How can the dwellingplace share in the attributes of its inhabitant? We must not be satisfied with sentimental explanations using the analogy of the impressions aroused by visiting a place where a well known or beloved personage has stayed and where his spirit is still present. These impressions are really memories of the past. But religion is concerned, not with a memory of what used to be, but with the present reality.

The clearest data point in quite a different direction than that of sentimentality; they direct us to the Ancient conception of divine nature, or the nature god. In ancient Rome there were no constructed temples, but many sacred places. Thus the spot on the ground which had been struck by the lightning or meteorite of Jupiter was fenced in by a low fence (*bidental, puteal*) and made an *abaton*, a sacred place. Sacrifices were offered there to Jupiter Fulgur, the god of lightning and rain, and consequently god of vegetation. The earth lives by means of rain; the *puteal* is the special site of this life of the earth. The place where the lightning and the rain have driven into the ground is the seat of divine power, buried by the lightning in order to rise again, *fulgur conditum*. It is impossible to make a separation between the place and the activity of the god, because the god only reveals himself in the life of the earth, and thus at this place. The *puteal* reveals the holiness of Jupiter; it represents the life of the earth, which is self-subsistent, divine life. On the basis of the Ancient conception of divine nature and the nature god, it is quite understandable that such a place is sacred. Another instance is the *nemus*, the sacred grove of Diana Nemorensis at Aricia on the Sea of Nemi. Diana is the goddess of the trees in the forest, of vegetation, and thus of the earth's life. Now in this sacred grove one tree was the most important, and a branch of this tree was the official staff of the priests of Diana Nemoren-

sis. In Virgil's *Aeneid*,[2] the myth relates that on the advice of Circe, Aeneas had broken off a golden branch of that tree before he descended into the underworld, and with it in his hand he went safely through the underworld. The "Golden Bough," the golden branch, is the branch of immortality; gold is imperishable. Aeneas held a branch of this tree because it represented the renascent life of the earth: the tree was the tree of life, a familiar idea in the Ancient religions of Greece, Egypt, Babylonia, and Israel. The grove of Diana with the tree of life in its midst was, like the "garden of the Hesperides," a "paradise," that is, the seat of the repeatedly arising and immortal life of the earth. Diana Nemorensis was its goddess. The grove was sacred because her divine life was revealed in and through it. The earth's life, that is to say, vegetation in general, was represented by paradise, a sacred grove. The grove was represented by a "tree of life" and the tree by a particular branch. In the third Homeric Hymn,[3] Hermes is celebrated, he with the golden branch, prosperity and riches, the immortal one: "*rhabdos olbou kai ploutou chruseiē akērios.*" The conception is quite clear and is quite similar to that of the sacredness of the *bidental* and *puteal*. It fits admirably in the Ancient view of nature; here the earth's life was localized, the life which repeatedly renewed itself by death and resurrection. But just because of this Ancient spirit, the sacred grove was not understood in rationalistic Roman circles, nor is it usually understood among our modern classicists, who blindly follow the classical writers. Otto Kern has written about the Roman sacred places: "How powerfully the dim light of a grove works upon the feelings of a religiously sensitive soul!" [4] And he quotes Seneca, "... the slim lines and the height of the trees, the mysterious gloom of the place, the wonder at the shadows, so thick and unbroken, calls forth in you belief in a divinity." Kern adds on his own initiative that at the founding of temples, therefore ,"beautiful trees were immediately planted around them," – and what is more, for the benefit of the priest – "namely fruit trees." With such sentimental and aesthetic tirades we come not a step closer to the religious reality. But this is a good example to illustrate the difference between the Ancient religious sense of nature and the modern aesthetic sense of nature. According to the former, the place is sacred and

thus divine, because through the manifestation there, the divine activity is seen which is inseparable from the sacredness of the place. According to the latter, the mysterious gloom causes a mood which could, to be sure, lead to a religious view, but certainly would not lead one to use the expression, "sacred place." All the Ancient, non-Classical peoples had this religious sense of nature. The nature gods are the beings who correspond to this religious sense. The plural of this polytheism is a consequence of the plurality of natural phenomena manifesting divine power. We of the modern age have almost entirely lost that sense and that religious view. The concept "nature" meant something different to the Ancients than it means to us. With our aesthetic view, even when sometimes religiously coloured, we confront natural phenomena as free and detached beings, but we make a distinction between nature and God, and confronting God we are not free.

Sacred places of this Ancient type are to be found in all Ancient religions. The sacred place of the West Semitic Baal was each naturally fertile spot, whether an oasis or the vicinity of a spring, and it was called "Baal's land".[5] There were likewise in the Canaanite and ancient Hebrew religion the "high places," the sacred sites of the cultus on which sacrifices were made. They were sacred, not because they were widely visible or would strengthen the impression of the elevated sacrificial rite, but because the height is the place where the earth lives and repeatedly comes to life again. It is there that sacrifices are made to the gods of the earth's life, the gods of fertility.

It is thus not correct to say that God's holiness is transferred to His dwellingplace; that idea would be entirely incomprehensible. The holiness of the place *is* the holiness of the god who is worshipped there; the god reveals himself in the nature of this place. It is true that the site is the "dwellingplace" of deity, the sacred grove, for instance, being the dwellingplace of Diana, but here "dwellingplace" and "deity" are very closely related concepts, with quite a different relation to one another than the relation between man and his dwelling.

Another group of sacred places which in this sense constitute "dwellingplaces" of gods are the many sacred grottoes, especially found in Greece, Asia Minor, and Crete. Why are they

sacred and places of worship? Once again the classicist essays an explanation which is based on aesthetic feeling. Otto Kern inquires as to the cause of this striking fact, and he thinks that he has found it and thereby come to understand the grotto cultus.[6] When once at Vari he had clambered up Mount Hymettos and reached the grotto dedicated to the nymphs, he came under the spell of "this loneliness of a grotto." He "was able to relive in this romantic solitude the magic of such a cultus." (This quotation is not from a travelogue but from *Die Religion der Griechen*, the chapter on "Religion and Locality.") It is demonstrable that grottoes were not sacred because of their romantic appeal. For in the Mithra cult a grotto was sometimes artificially constructed when no genuine grotto was to be found in the vicinity. A cultic room was built against the face of a rock wall. The two or three other walls were made by piling up boulders, and the "grotto" was finished. This proves that the mood was not the important thing. If scholars would only keep in mind that religion is not a mood; it is rather a vital concern! A grotto, or something which could pass for that, was necessary for the cultus, because a religious meaning was attached to it. What this meaning was we must learn from the believers themselves.

Which gods were worshipped there? In Greece especially the three Nymphs, and also Pan and Demeter; on the island of Crete the chthonic Zeus and Eileithyia, a chthonic goddess of birth; in Asia Minor Cybele, the *Magna Mater* (Great Mother). All of them are gods of the mystery of the underworld; they are the earth gods who cause life to rise ever anew. It is quite certain that the grotto represents the actual dwellingplace of these gods, which is the underworld, where the mystery of these gods is enacted. The sacred grottoes on Mt. Ida and Mt. Dikte in Crete were deep hollows. Numerous reliefs portray the three Nymphs, Charites, or Korai, with Hermes leading them out of the grotto. This is Hermes *Charidōtēs*, the mediator, the guide from the other world. Pan, the son of Hermes and Nymphe, is also the god of the earth's life. Demeter withdraws in a rage into her (sacred) grotto near Phigalia in Arcadia; this grotto too is the underworld. There she is found by Pan and brought back to earth, just as the three Nymphs are led out of their grotto. It is

for this reason that the typical sanctuary of the Mithra of the Mysteries was the *spēlaion* or *spelaeum*, the grotto, artificially constructed if necessary. For this Mithra was the god of the resurrection of the earth's life, and thus of human life. Sometimes the *spēlaion* is actually a room under the ground, as it is in Rome and Ostia. This certainly does not suggest any peculiar "loneliness of a grotto." Moreover the large grottoes were as a rule extremely damp, so that water seeped through the walls and the ceiling. Therefore it was the Nymphs who were especially worshipped there. They were water spirits; Aeschylus calls them *biodōroi:* by means of water the earth lives and comes to life anew. (Cf. the rain god Jupiter Fulgur, who was an earth god.)

The sacredness, and that is the divinity, of the grottoes proves to be the same as the sacredness or divinity of the underworld, conceived as the realm of the dead. How could the underworld better be involved in the cultus than by representing it as a grotto? In the underworld the mystery of resurrection takes place; spontaneous and absolute life makes the grotto the sacred place where divine energy reveals itself. If the grotto represents the underworld, the Ancients were right in considering it sacred.

B. SACRED CITIES AND COUNTRIES

So far we have considered instances of naturally sacred places of worship (not: places which were worshipped!). There are other similar categories, sacred islands, for example. All of them were places which because of their peculiar character and qualities revealed divine life. The category we now turn to, sacred or holy cities, is apparently quite different from the categories just discussed, but actually it is closely akin to them. They are not naturally sacred, yet their sacredness is represented in the same way.

There are a great many sacred cities. Perhaps the Ancient peoples considered every city to be sacred. This is certainly the case with all the cities of Greece and Italy, and, at the very least, for a large number of other cities as well; the data we have show this quite clearly. In Greece and Italy the cities were sacred because they had been founded with special ceremonial rites ap-

propriate to the occasion, and thereafter they were governed in accord with divine prescriptions. In this way the life and continuing existence of the city were brought into harmony with the universal and permanent divine order and removed from the transiency and finitude of this empirical world. Thus its continuing existence was as much assured as that of self-renewing cosmic life. That was the theory, and that is what we are concerned with here; the believers' faith is the religious reality. After the destruction of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C., the people shouted that they wanted to move to Veji and settle there, but Camillus argued that the city had been founded in accord with the divine order, that the gods had chosen the place and taken up residence there – with their ancestors. Although the city had been destroyed, it nevertheless remained the dwellingplace of the Roman gods.

If the ceremonial rites were neglected when a city was founded, it would necessarily perish, and people believed that history bore this out. This is what Pausanias writes about the experience of Epaminondas with Messene and what Herodotus writes about Dorieus, who without consulting the Delphic oracle and without performing the ceremonies founded a city with a Spartan colony in the most favorable region of Libya; shortly thereafter the city was destroyed.[7]

Therefore the city was in general a place in which self-subsistent, divine life revealed itself, as in the case of the *puteal*, the high ground, and the grotto; it was a sacred place. In Babylonia and Assyria this conception was expressed in different terms, in keeping with the Babylonian conception of divine order. Sennacherib says, "The plan of Nineveh was at its founding drawn in the celestial script, where its firm construction shines forth." The city is thus included in the eternal cosmic order to the extent that it is an image of the eternal order which embraces both progress and decay; it is imperishable, a sacred institution. The believers believed that practical considerations were not decisive in a city's construction; human insight is finite and does not lead to a permanent existence.

Among a number of peoples of Antiquity, this Ancient conception of the divine life and sacredness of the city was given a very striking and characteristic form. A large number of cities

god who imposes peace, for he conquers death by and in his own death. He is portrayed with a grimacing lion's head which suggests the wildness and the demonic in the government of the cosmos. A snake is wound around him three times or seven times and sticks its head out above the lion's head of *Zervan* himself. Destruction by the lion and renewal by the snake together express eternity. Sometimes the snake sticks its head even farther out, right into the lion's mouth: that which is destroyed renews itself. *Zervan* has four wings, four being the number of the principal directions and of the seasons, and two keys, which are perhaps his original insignia. They have the same meaning as the keys of Janus, *initium* and *exitus*, the divine changes, the transition. They are the Keys of Heaven, which Peter carries.

CHAPTER 21

SACRED IMAGES

A. THE RELIGIOUS MEANING OF THE IMAGE

What did the image mean in worship? Quite obviously something different from our modern "image." It is known that among the Ancient peoples, and also among modern peoples outside our civilization, a mysterious relation is assumed to exist between the image and the original; sometimes we should be inclined to say that the image replaces the original. In Egyptian tombs the dead man is depicted upon the walls, sitting before a sacrificial table. By means of the image he thus really has food and drink. This is identity, or in any case an irrational, mystical, or magical relation between the image and the original. Thus the temple is the image of the cosmic location at which and in which God reveals Himself; therefore the temple is sacred, just as the location itself is. The altar is the image of the high ground in which God reveals Himself. The image possesses the properties of the original and replaces it. All "sympathetic magic" is based on this conception of the image. One does the same things to the image that he wishes to do to the original; the effect is the same. The image of an enemy is injured or killed; the image of a god is fed and worshipped with ceremonial rites. Sacred history is often brought into an image; that is, it is played as a drama. The image of Osiris is made, buried, and raised again, and as such it is an image of vegetation, which manifests life. Greece, too, had such a "rite," the *drōmenon* or the *mimēsis*, for instance that of Demeter, Kore, and Hades, which was performed at Eleusis. It was a play, an image of the myth, but nevertheless it had entirely the same effect as that which it imaged. It is, at least with respect to spiritual reality, a repetition, a "reproduction" of that which has once happened. Of such a nature is the doctrine in the Roman Catholic liturgy

god; he carries out the will and power of that god, and his service is victory over death. This is expiation and purification of his mortal sin.

Expiation presupposes a transgression, not in the ethical, but in the religio-ethical sense. The transgression which puts man outside of life is an infinite one. The expiation is not achieved by means of good deeds and integrity, but by self-sacrifice, by the abolition of one's own existence – something entirely different from good works. Ethics becomes religion as soon as the infinite character of ethical life asserts itself and determines the person's attitude. The infinite, which includes both the moral offence and its abolition, is a dying to the finite. This is expiation in the religious sense. The same thought is expressed in the baptismal formula about purification by water: "to be buried with Christ (the Egyptians said, to drown with Osiris) in order to arise with Christ."

We meet here with the same type of purification as we find in the Mithra Mysteries. In them the purification is accomplished by the blood of the bull which represents the life of the cosmos: man dies with the god in order to rise again with him.

The character of ritual purification is always the same: it is impartation of divine life. One more example is the sacrifice of incense, which also occurs in the Old Testament. In Egypt and Israel, the smoke of burnt incense purifies a chamber (in a temple, for example) or an object (such as Israel's ark). And just as in the case of the washing with water, purification takes place not because incense has a decontaminating effect, but because it is the bearer of divine life. The Ancients believed that the divine being revealed itself in the pleasant fragrance.[7] The Greeks speak of an "ambrosian fragrance" (*odmē ambrosiē*),[8] and the Egyptians speak of the "divine fragrance of incense." Burning incense means in the cultus the supplying of divine energy; the sacrifice of incense actualizes the divine presence. Anointing with sweet smelling oil or ointment is likewise an impartation of divine power: Demeter anoints Demophon to make him immortal and holds him in the power of the fire. God reveals Himself in sweet smelling fragrance. The anointing of the king is both "purifying" and divinizing. In the Egyptian liturgy ointment is sacrificed to the gods; this corresponds entirely to the sacrifice of incense.

SACRAMENTS

The term "sacrament" has a remarkable history. It was taken over in early Christianity from Roman religion, taken over, indeed, with complete awareness of the meaning which it had there. The Roman concept *sacramentum* was found suitable for expressing a Christian idea.

The ending *-mentum* after a verb root indicates the object or act in which the concept contained in the verb is revealed or actualized. It is the bearer and representative of the concept of the verb: *medicamentum* (*medicor*), *ornamentum* (*orno*), *pigmentum* (*pingo*, to paint), *monumentum* (*moneo*, to commemorate) *detrimentum* (lessening, damage, from *detero*, to wear out or break down). Thus *sacramentum* is the means whereby sacredness, the state of being *sacer*, is actualized. For the Romans it was a technical term with a very special meaning: the oath sworn on the military standard by Roman soldiers. The early Christians knew this very well, yet they nevertheless took over the term. But how could an oath on a military standard be called *sacramentum*, and what meaning did the Christians attach to the sacred oath on the standard, the *sacramentum?*

The answer to the first question is to be found in the religious character of Ancient war. War served to maintain the divine order of life against its assailants. Every enemy who threatened the state represented the typical enemy of divine order: uncertainty and unreliability, something on which nothing could be built, deceit and death. Every war was therefore a holy war, God's war for the defense of the order of abiding life. The Roman way of declaring war shows this clearly: Jupiter Fidius, the god of reliability and firm agreements, declares war through the *fetiales* (the *pater patratus*). It is a *pium* (*justum*, or *purum*) *bellum;* only

should remember in this connection the remarkable myth of Pandora. Like Kore, the consort of Hades, she is the earth goddess who brings to men all the "gifts of the earth": the riches of the earth in vegetation, grain, etc. But Pandora "deceives" men; she brings as much misfortune and death to men as she does life. The meaning of this myth is that all the gifts of the earth are characterized by the divine life of the earth, by absolute life. Divine gifts which manifest the characteristic mark of a god are always sacred and thus dangerous gifts. Prometheus knows this; he does not accept the divine gifts, but sends them back to the gods. In the case of Pandora's gifts, men speak of deceit, because they are so shortsighted as to misjudge the true nature of life. When death reveals itself, they cry that they have been deceived; they had not intended to accept death along with life. They do not want death, although it is necessarily linked with life.

Applying this notion to sacrificial offerings, we see that all divine gifts, like those of Pandora, which are presented as offerings, are sacred and dangerous for men. Ritual prescriptions are repeatedly given concerning the precautions to be taken when for instance, sacrificial meat is to be eaten, so that eating this non-profane food would induce no misfortune. This is also true in Hebrew religion. In short, the mystical nature of the offering is present not only in cases when people speak (from the human standpoint) of "enemies of the gods." These instances only illustrate in especially lucid fashion what is true of every offering. "All gifts" (which is what *Pan-dora* means) of the gods are bearers of absolute life, and therefore also bearers of death. The myth of Pandora was, however, always mistakenly interpreted by the rationalistic Greeks to mean that woman had brought misfortune into the world.

The Egyptian sacrifice of the cosmic and human order of life, the Ma-a-t sacrifice, is also in this sense a mystical sacrifice, for Ma-a-t belongs, in the first place, among the gods in the underworld, the earth gods, Osiris, Ptah, and Min. Ma-a-t is herself the goddess of the earth, i.e., of death and life together.

B. THE ALTAR AND THE SACRIFICIAL IMPLEMENTS

Everywhere we encounter the idea that the altar is a sacred object. It is quite remarkable that it is said in Exodus 29 : 36 f. that the altar is "most holy"; "whatever touches the altar shall become holy." A person who thus becomes "holy" must be ritually cleansed before he can return into ordinary life. Every day (or during seven days) the altar must be cleansed by a sacrifice of atonement, and it must be anointed: its holiness must be actualized. The sacredness of the altar is evidently of the same character as that of the offering; the altar did not become sacred just because it was utilized in the cultus. It was not a "table" or a stone object put down in or near the temple, on which the offerings were placed. The altar was taken up in the cultus because, as a bearer of divine life, it was sacred. It is the place where the god of the gifts is present; it is there that he gets back his gifts as offerings, and it is there that ritual sanctity is realized. When the offerings are some of the products of the earth, as is usually the case, the altar is the image of the place where the earth lives, where the god of the earth is at work. Therefore the altar is sacred or holy, just as the temple is sacred, since it is the place within which and in which God reveals himself, the image of God's actual dwellingplace.

The table form of the altar seldom occurs; when it is reported it is the symbol of the divine site of the offering. (Cf. the stone in the altar of the Roman Catholic Church.) In the grottoes of Pan the altar is not a table but a low, circular pile of stones or an ordinary stone; it is only a mound, a rise in the earth (*eschara*), but "rise" means here the "place where the earth lives." In this altar the god of the earth is present; he is also worshipped in a grotto. The altar is thus a temple in the temple or in the grotto. Such double representations or symbolizations of an important reality, one within the other, occur frequently.

This form of altar is also very common among the Semites, and sometimes its religious meaning is clearly indicated. Before the Arabs were converted to Islam, their altar was a crude stone set on end, a pillar, or pile of stones. Next to this altar the sacrificial animal was slaughtered; the animal's blood was spread on the altar, as it was in the temple of Yahweh. It was called

noṣb, and like the Hebrew *masseba* was an "upright stone." This altarstone or stonepile was God's dwellingplace, for it was there that the earth lived, or the Baal of the earth.[18] The upright position indicates life or resurrection. Jacob sets up a stone at the place where God reveals Himself to him (Genesis 28 : 22); he anoints it and calls it *Beth-el*, God's house. The stone is thus a temple, and by his anointing it, it becomes an "altar." Later he sets up an altar at the same place (Genesis 35 : 1, 7). Evidently "God's dwellingplace" is this upright stone or altar. (Cf. the *baitylos*, which means upright stone.) Nothing is said of an ordinary temple in the form of a real house. To the ancient Semitic way of thinking, temple and altar are identical. The typical altar is the earth altar, the rise in the earth where the god of the earth's gifts lives. Thus according to Exodus 20 : 25f, the altar must be made of earth or of unhewn stones, crude stone, in order to represent the earth itself. This is therefore like the Greek altar in the grotto. It can thus be explained why the ancient Hebrew site of sacrifice was on the *bāmā* ("high place"). The prophets protested against the worship of the god of the earth, not against the large number of places of worship, but against the idea of the "high place" in the earth which is involved in this worship. The ark of Yahweh is also such a "high place," although the unique exemplar of its type. In the prophetic proclamation the symbolism of the earth disappears.

In this connection we should also note the horns which were attached to the altar to indicate its character. We find them in Israel, Crete, Greece, and Rome, In Israel they were probably bulls' horns; this was certainly the case in Crete. In Greece and Rome they were usually rams' horns. The horns of the Cretan earth bull indicate the power of the earth god. (Cf. the representation of Yahweh in the form of a bull.) In Egypt, the expression, "horns of the earth," was actually used to refer to the extreme points of south, north, east, and west. The ram and the goat have the same meaning; Hermes Charidotes is also called *kriophoros*, he who brings the earth's blessing. On the island of Delos there stood the *bōmos keratōn* or *keratinos*, an altar built wholly of goats' horns, which was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world. Twice for seven days Theseus had performed the *geranos* dance around it. The altar was dedicated

to Ariadne, the chthonic Aphrodite, who had rescued Theseus from the Labyrinth. Like the labyrinth with the Minotaur, it was an image of the realm of the dead, out of which the rescue had really taken place. By means of the horns, the altar was identified with the living earth.

Sometimes the altar gained a cosmic significance in the broadest sense. In such cases it is an image of the universe, within which and in which divine life is revealed. Perhaps the largest altar which has ever been built is the Great Round Altar in China, near Peking. It is built up into three terraces, which represent the sky god, the heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and planets) and possibly the earth gods. The difference between temple and altar has here practically disappeared. We already have seen how the "temple" sometimes could be identical with the "god"; now it becomes apparent that the altar is sometimes identical with the god. Besides the upright stone (the *baitylos* or *masseba*), near Aleppo a very large and ancient altar has been found of Zeus *Bomos*.[19] There is also inscribed on it in Aramaic, Zeus *Madbachos*.

The many fire altars also have a meaning similar to that of the altars of the earth. The best known is the altar of Vesta or Hestia. In Vesta's temple on the Forum in Rome is the hearth where the earth's life is revealed as the energy of fire. (*Vesta Terra est*). The offering is the fire in this hearth; Vesta lives in and through this fire, and along with her lives the Roman people. Her altar or hearth is her temple, her real dwellingplace; it is there that her life is religiously realized by the maintenance of the fire.

Sometimes the cosmic significance of the altar fire is indicated in a peculiar but very lucid fashion. At Hierapolis, in Syria, on the upper course of the Euphrates, a fire burned on an altar which was so built in the middle of a pool that it seemed to be floating on the water.[20] The idea of the floating fire island occurs among many Ancient peoples. It is the point on earth which first appeared out of the waters of Creation, the point at which light arose. The fire on that altar was the life of the world. Delos, too, a small island of the Cyclades, was once, according to tradition, a floating island.[21] The myth relates that the divine child Apollo was born there. Apollo is here like the Egyptian Horus, who was born on the floating island of Chemnis near

Buto.) Delos rose up out of the sea so that Leto could bring Apollo into the world there. According to another tradition it was already a floating island. Part of the cultus on Delos was the maintenance of the eternally burning fire on the altar. The inhabitants of Lemnos, in the northern Aegean, renewed the fire on their island annually by bringing fire from Delos. During the nine days in which the ship was away to get the fire, all the fires on Lemnos were extinguished; when the ship returned bringing the new fire, "a new life" began.

Pliny also tells of a floating island.[22] In the land of the Sabines is the Lake of Cutilia (*Lacus Cutiliae*) on which there was a floating island, where – according to Varro – "the navel of Italy" (*Italiae umbilicus*) was located. According to Macrobius, Hades was worshipped there. The earth itself is also a floating island; it floats on the cosmic waters; the earth is a boat.[23] [24]

Yet the most important fire altars in Antiquity are the altar of Agni in India and the altar of Atar in the Avesta religion; both are conceived entirely in cosmic terms.

The altar is often linked with the grave. This is usually thought to be "very simple and easy to understand," and it is explained on the basis of the worship of the dead: the dead man receives his food at the place where he is buried, and thus the grave becomes an altar. Sacrifices to the dead give the impression of being much simpler than sacrifices to the gods. The sacrifice to the dead is food for the dead man, who like the living man needs food. As the dwelling of the dead man, the grave is comparable with the dwelling of the living man. Thus the grave becomes an altar and the altar to the dead is a grave. No other affinity is supposed between grave and altar than that between dining room and dining table. Yet it can be said with complete certainty that this was not the conception of the believers; it is a modern rationalistic explanation of an Ancient religious custom.

Like all sacrifices, the sacrifice to the dead is a religious rite, but, moreover, it is closely related to the religious meaning of burial in the earth. The idea held was that man lives the life of the earth and dies the death of the earth; the secret of human life is the secret of the earth's life. This is true for the dead as well as for the living. By his burial the dead man is fully initiated into the earth's life. Like the earth, he dies, and like the earth,

he triumphs over death and rises again with the earth. It is in this light that the Ancient sacrifice to the dead should be understood. It is all too often forgotten that a sacrifice to the dead is not the same thing as a meal of the sort which we have. The sacrifice to the dead is a sacrifice to the gods of the earth. For in the offering, the earth's life is offered to the gods or to men and actualized in religio-magical fashion. Thereby the life of the dead is actualized just as is the life of the earth gods.

In Egypt the typical sacrifice as far back as the Old Kingdom was the inedible papyrus reed, which, however, was the typical bearer of plant life: the reed marsh was paradise. The grave was not a house in the ordinary sense, but the image of the realm of the dead in which the dead man leads the divine life of the earth. The place on or near the grave where the offering is received is also divine, just like the offering itself. In this respect the sacrifice to the dead is quite comparable to the sacrifice to the gods on the altar: in both cases the sacrifice is offered at the place where the earth lives.

The Greek data are especially clear: the grave marker is used itself as an altar to the dead. It is set above the place where the dead person lies buried, and it represents the spot where the earth, and with it the dead person, lives. The grave altar is therefore the same as the altar for the god of the earth. The most familiar grave marker is the *tumulus*, a mound of earth above the grave. Why was a *tumulus* built there? Homer says that it is as a *sēma*, a remembrance, and this is also our modern idea of the significance of the tombstone. This is an entirely rationalistic explanation without the slightest religious basis. The Ancient Greek conception, however, was a religious one: the dead man lives in the *tumulus*, just as the god of the earth lives in it. By means of the mound of earth, the grave is made into the spot where the earth lives. The sacrifice to the dead was offered there, and was thus quite like the sacrifice to the god of the earth at his horned altar. This cosmic significance of the grave mound is evident from the fact that it is quite identical in form with the hill of Creation, the omphalos of the earth, where life arose in the beginning of time, and it is thus the typical site of the rising of life in the cosmic sense. Moreover, the omphalos was also a grave, namely the divine grave of Python or Dionysus (for instance at

Delphi). The snake is often drawn around the omphalos; it is the earth spirit, whether the dead man or Python.

Roscher [25] mentions another familiar grave marker, which again is a grave altar, a terraced mound, comparable to the *tumulus*, on which a stone (the tombstone or *stēlē*) is set up – it is thus a sort of double grave marker. The *stēlē* (from *stellō*, *histēmi*, to stand upright) is, like the *masseba*, a sign of the living earth god and his altar. Like Jacob's *masseba*, this *stele* was anointed. It was thus a sacred object ,and not only set up as a memorial. In the grave marker and the *tumulus*, the dead man lives the life of the earth. The fact that the grave stele often has the ordinary altar form, that of a low, broad, and upright stone, proves that it was indeed an altar to the dead, at which, as at the *masseba*, sacrifice was offered.

So we see that the grave-altar or altar-grave of the dead man does not differ from the altar of the earth god. At the side where the earth lives, her products, her life, are given back to her, the divine provider. They are recognized as divine gifts, and their divine nature (and therewith also the life of the dead man) are actualized. Moreover, the dead, the ancestors, are the givers of the earth's blessings, of the fertility of the earth. It is the blessing of offspring which is here particularly in mind: human fertility, too, is a revelation of the earth's life. The Greek goddess of birth, Eileithyia, is an earth goddess. So we see even more clearly how close the sacrifice to the dead is to the sacrifice to the god of the earth. Offering a sacrifice to the dead is not the same thing as what we understand by "feeding," although the idea behind it is precisely that by means of this sacrifice the life of the dead man is actualized. When the sacrifice to the dead is performed in a *bothros*, a hollow, or in the opening of the *pithos*, we discern once again the idea of the site of resurrection.[26] In the same way *Pylos*, the gate of Hades, was considered to be the site of newly arising life.

During the Roman Empire a special form of grave altar was used: the fire altar for the "consecration" of the Emperor who had died. It is frequently engraved on the coins which were issued after an emperor's death. The horns on it prove that it is an earth altar, and thus the site where the earth lives. The earth's life is actualized here by means of the fire

sacrifice, just as it is in Vesta's hearth. But this site of the earth's life of fire is the tomb of the emperor, and this point is accentuated still further by the door which is engraved on the altar. In the fire the emperor thus obtains the divine life of the earth. Therefore the inscription is *Consecratio* (viz., of the emperor). The fire altar is thus the place where the emperor obtains the eternal, divine life of the earth. In other cases this altar has the form of a building in steps, a *rogus* or pyre, with the door of the tomb on one of the levels. On top of this altar lies the body of the emperor, which is there completely consumed. Like the step-shaped *tumulus* among the Greeks, this altar represents the "earth mountain." [27]

We shall now briefly note the analogous notion of the (grave) altar in the Roman Catholic Church.[28] At the present time in the Roman Catholic Church, the altar must be of stone, or at least contain a stone. In simple altars this stone is set in the center of the wooden altar board. The *sepulcrum*, an opening in the stone, must contain relics of a martyr. When the altar is consecrated, the bishop closes this opening. This altar-grave, for this is what it is, is repeatedly rubbed with ointment; it is sacred. The stone is the image of Christ and the altar is the dwellingplace of the holy martyr to whom the church is dedicated. The sacrifice of the mass is performed only above the relics of the martyr, who represents the Christ who has died. This usage seems to have begun, however, only in the fourth century.[29] Before that time there were *martyria*, grave-churches, but these were only outside the cities and never located in the basilicas of the cities. About the end of the fourth century, the grave of the saint became the most important treasure in the city churches. First it was still separated from the altar, but very soon the altar became the treasury for relics. The oldest Christian altar was an ordinary *mensa*, a table with four (or sometimes three) legs. Now the altar became a real altar-grave or grave-altar. The grave of the saint in the altar is the *confessio* (cf. *martyreō*, testify or confess). *Confessio* is thus metaphorically the site of witness or confession, the place where the religious relation is brought about.

The idea of the sanctity of the altar in the Roman Catholic Church is undoubtedly related to the mass conversion to Christianity in the fourth century. The Ancient conception was that

the (grave-) altar represented the place where the life of earth and men rises anew. The grave-altar is the place where the dead man has attained divine life, and where he seeks to further abiding life among men. This Ancient idea is elaborated in Christian fashion. As among the Ancient peoples, the altar became the image of the grave (cf. the stone with the *sepulcrum*), where the mystery of divine life is actualized. The sacrifice of the mass on the altar is the *sacrificium* (making sacred) of the incarnate Christ, of Christ in his visible form. Bread, the bearer of divine life, is the body of Christ. The sacrificial act is the consecration of the bread on the site of the divine life of the earth and of men (in this case, of the saints who have died with Christ). The Ancient cultus has been transformed into Christian cultus. In spite of the altar stone the cosmic orientation has been removed. This is how historical "borrowing" takes place. That which is borrowed is always, in its new context, something new and original.

The saints were consecrated by their death and have attained divine life, just as according to Greek belief, every dead person in the sacred tombstone or grave-altar (*tumulus* or *stēlē*) became a sharer in the divine life of the earth, and he brought to men the earth's divine life, fertility and prosperity.

This alteration in the earliest Christian conception of the altar, the table for the Lord's Supper, certainly points out the religious value of the Ancient idea of the altar.

The Basin for Libations

Not only the altar but also various sacrificial implements illustrate the religious meaning of sacrifice, which proves to be anything but an ordinary meal given to the god or to the dead man. Two kinds of sacrificial implements are the most common: the water basin for the libation and the basket for the vegetation sacrifice. Both are containers in which offerings are presented. Sometimes, however, they are very clearly made into "symbols" which manifest the divine nature of the offerings. That is to say, they come from God and are given back to Him; God lives in the offerings.

Especially in the Greek religion there is a large amount of

data concerning the basin for libations. It is noteworthy that the *phiale* is not always an ordinary sacrificial basin. Sometimes it is portrayed in the hands of the gods (Pluto, Dionysus, Triptolemus, Hera, Athene, Demeter, and Themis). A little silver image of Dionysus (or possibly of Pluto) with a *phialē* in one hand and a horn of plenty in the other makes it quite certain that they are symbols of water and vegetation, which is to say, of the divine life of the earth, in which God reveals Himself. Water is thought of here as a divine element of life, "water of life" in the cosmic sense. The *phialē* also has a related meaning in the ordinary libations made by men. Its form is in many cases very peculiar. There is a large round bump in the center of the dish, which is certainly not there for artistic or practical reasons. (There are many examples of this in the Leiden Museum of Antiquities.) The Ancients called these quite rightly "omphalos basins." Omphalos means navel, the navel of the earth. There is only one possible explanation of why an omphalos stands in the water of the libation. It is the *omphalos tēs thalassēs* (Homer), the "earth mountain" which arose from the waters of Creation, the site of the rising of the world's life. This form of the *omphalos phialē* thus serves in a special way to indicate and actualize the divine nature of water as an offering. This is not ordinary water; as a libation it is returned to the god or the dead man. Through the water the god or the dead man lives, just as he does in the offering of food, which is divine food.

We see again how far removed the "quenching the thirsty souls of gods" is from an ordinary meal, at least from a meal in our sense of the word. The sacrifice of food and drink cannot be conceived as a primitive cultic rite, as was done by the Hebrew prophets and is done by our rationalistic historians of religion. They belong to a completely different period than Antiquity, and they are entirely lacking in sympathetic historical understanding. Either they abhor all alien ideas as such, or they contrive a pity for them as something primitive and childish. Just let these haughty interpreters of offerings try to explain the *omphalos* sacrificial basin! They have never yet succeeded in doing so, but if they should do so, they would be liberated from the false notion that sacrifices of food and drink were ordinary meals.

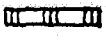
The sacrificial basin for water, the *phialē*, is an emblem of many gods and thereby manifests in the ordinary cultus the character of the libation, because water is a divine being. The "Water of Life" bears, however, divine insight as well as creative power. The divine wisdom dwells in the water which causes life to rise anew. The oracle dispensing Themis on the three-legged stool holds a *phialē* or a branch in her hand. By drinking the water from the Castalian spring, the Pythia (or Themis) at Delphi became inspired and was able to give oracles. The cosmic water from the spring (coming from the underworld) is the dwellingplace of the divine wisdom or order of life, which is revealed in the oracle. The basin contains a divine element; the water in it is from the gods. For this reason it is offered to the gods, and for the same reason it is their emblem.

The Sacrificial Basket

The basket has the same significance in food sacrifices that the basin has in libations. The basket, too, sometimes has a very peculiar and special form, in order to represent what is the natural and real bearer of the offerings, the living earth.

The simplest form of sacrificial basket is a "tray" on which the sacrificial food is put. In India there is the *barhis* or *vedi*, which is a mat of grass or straw. *Barhis* is etymologically related to the Avestan (ancient Persian) word *barsman*, a bundle of plants which represents vegetation or the earth's life, and which therefore is a sacred object in the Haoma sacrifice. The *barhis*, which is spread out on the ground so that offerings may be placed on it, also represents plant life. It is the sole altar for sacrificial meals; the gods descend to it in order to receive the offerings.[30] The same ideas occur in Egypt.  (offering) is bread on a mat of papyrus reed. There is also  , the mat by itself, or  , a roll of papyrus, but without any bread on it. Such "tablecloths" were never used at ordinary meals.

The actual sacrificial basket is in Egyptian  , an ordinary basket for sacrifices, in which the offerings are sometimes depicted. Yet like the offerings themselves, the basket is sacred, since it is the image of the true home of offerings, and thus of the living earth, their home in the depths of the earth,

where they are produced. Only in this way can we explain the sometimes quite irrational symbolic contexts in which  appears. Osiris arises from  . The king who presents offerings to the god is sometimes portrayed kneeling on  (sic!) but also on  , which makes possible a rational explanation. It is as if people wished to express the idea that the king performs the creative activities of the earth. At the site where the earth lives, he brings the life of the earth to God. There he recognizes and actualizes the divine nature of the offering. Here the religious meaning of sacrifice is indicated as clearly as possible by such a common sacrificial implement as the basket for the offerings. This is here not a "symbol," but a quite realistic illustration of the supernatural, mystical act which is performed with it. Because the offering represents the earth's life,  also means festival or resurrection. Thus it can also be explained why as early as the Old Kingdom the king's throne rests on a "rocker," the  . The throne is itself the rise in the earth to whose top the king climbs when he ascends his throne. The  underneath is a doubling of the "symbolism." Let no one say that this is an artificial alteration of something so understandable as the basket for sacrifices, for both the sacrificial basin and the sacrifice have a cosmic meaning. This basket or container occurs in the earliest period of the Old Kingdom. The basket is also depicted as  , meaning the sacred boat of the earth.

The same ideas can be found among the Greeks. The *kaneon* or *kanoun*, the reed basket carried on the head or arm, has this form:  . This basket, like the *phialē*, is sometimes to be seen in the hands of gods, of Artemis, for instance. In any case it is the image of the living earth. As a rule the basket very clearly has horns on both sides and a mound in the middle. It is noteworthy, however, that this mound is never drawn as an offering of fruit or grain, although "mound" corresponds in meaning to "offerings." A variation is the basket with three horn-shaped handles. This, too, must have a symbolic religious meaning, for how is one to take hold of a basket with three handles? The basket is triple, because the Greeks usually connected the number three with the underworld, just as the Semites

and the Egyptians with the numbers three and seven. In Egypt there was a triple water vase; it signifies the basket or vase of the earth. Therefore the sacrificial basket is by itself a sacred object, even if it contains no offerings at all. It is the earth itself and brings forth the offerings. And for this reason, again quite like the *phialē*, it is the emblem of the gods of the earth's life. It is very closely akin to Demeter's basket-chest, the *kistē mystikē*, which also was sacred as such, irrespective of its contents. The ark of Yahweh, too, was not a sacrificial object, but it was the Hebrew's sign of the earth. Yet the ancient Hebrews were similarly unconcerned about the contents of the ark; it was very probably empty.

Thus the sacrificial implements illustrate the religious meaning of sacrifice just as clearly, and in the same way, as the altar itself. All these objects instruct us more reliably than most modern theories, which explain sacrifice as a gift to the gods. The form and use of the altar and sacrificial implements manifest the cosmic nature of sacrifice. By means of the sacrifice, the abiding divine life of the cosmos, of the earth, and of men in particular, is recognized and actualized. What comes from God is given back to God. The religio-magical act of sacrifice expresses faith in God's life. This sacred rite is just as supra-rational as faith itself.

C. THE SACRIFICIAL ACT

We need turn only briefly to the act of sacrifice and the way in which the sacrifice is offered.

Sacri-ficium was the consecration (or making sacred) of the offering, whereby the finite phenomenon of an empirical object that represents divine life was placed in the infinite sphere where it essentially belonged. It was the actualization of the permanent and autonomous (and thus divine) being of the object. This can take place by means of sacrifices in which there is no shedding of blood. In these sacrifices the consecration occurs by offering (Latin *offerre*) the ritual to God. This is the case with libations, and sacrifices of milk, vegetable produce, such as grain and meal, and ritually prepared cakes and loaves of bread. There were also sacrifices involving the shedding of blood. The consecration

took place by the killing of the offering, whether a sacred sacrificial animal or sometimes a plant offering. Death is a state of infinite being, or in a more positive sense, of absoluteness, of divinity. Therefore every act of slaughter, especially for the Semites, is an act of sanctification (*sacrificatio*), which must take place according to the proper rites. The Romans believed that Jupiter made men sacred by his lethal lightning. He consecrates a covenant, for instance, by "killing" it: *foedus fulmine sancit* or *foedus ferire*. Thus he actualizes the absolute and divine character of the covenant. A treaty can be concluded because the sacrificial animal, which represents the earth's life (the life which animates the treaty), is killed with Jupiter's stone (*fulgur*).

This consecration or sanctification may be achieved by the agency of the man who is offering the sacrifice. Nevertheless, it remains a divine act, for only God can make life absolute or grant absolute life. Killing the sacrificial animal has, we know, not only the negative effect of taking life, but also an equally strong positive effect, because God actualizes absolute life. Jupiter himself performs this double act of sacrifice when he kills someone with his lightning. The person who had been struck by lightning, whether because of a sin, or for any other reason, was considered a consecrated man and was worshipped as a hero. For this reason the man offering sacrifice performs a superhuman, religio-magical act by killing his offering.

This divine character of sacrifice may also be expressed as follows: the means whereby the sacrificial killing is done is itself divine. It is frequently evident that the way in which the sacrificial death takes place is of essential significance, and that it serves to make clear the divine character of the act. In some vegetation sacrifices this is unmistakable. The last sheaf of grain, in which the "grain spirit" or "rice mother" is situated, is burned. It is thus killed and sanctified by fire, for the grain grows by means of the divine energy of the earth's fire (Cf. Hephaestus.) Sometimes a figure in human form was burned, a figure which was made entirely of flowers and branches. After that the charred remains were buried all over the fields. Sometimes the intention of the act is even more clearly indicated. The offering is first immersed in water and "drowned," and thereupon consumed by fire. Water, too, is a vital element of

the earth. Fields, woods, and pastures live by means of warmth and water. The sacrifice is killed and thus made sacred by fire and water, and is thus transferred into the world of absolute life.

The way in which the offering is destroyed or consecrated indicates the nature of the god to whom it is dedicated. At Gades (Cadiz), there was no image of the god in the temple of Hercules, but an eternal fire burned upon the altar. At the festival of Hercules, his image was burned there. Nilsson [31] reports that a pyre was made in front of Artemis in Achaia and in front of Atargatis, the Syrian Astarte, at Hierapolis near the Euphrates. People not only placed all sorts of fruits on this pyre, but also edible birds, wild boar, deer, and wolf and bear cubs. All of these things were consumed by the fire. As in the case of the grain sacrifice, there is here a consecration by means of the essential element of these goddesses, the earth's fire. Frazer (IV, 339, Adonis-Attis-Osiris) also tells of a sacrifice to the god of the growing grain: shovels, spades, and other agricultural implements are "put to death." They are thus considered to be the divine means whereby the grain is induced to grow, for agriculture is also a mystery, a divine activity.

The sacred and quite special character of the killing of the sacrificial animal is also indicated in another way. Killing the sacrificial offering often has fatal results, such as disaster, decline, or death. In these cases, the sacrifice means a defeat for the sacrificer; he takes to flight. Thus the legend of the Athenian Bouphonia, at which the bull of vegetation was sacrificed, relates that the *bouphonos* took to flight when he had offered this sacrifice for the first time. Famine broke out and the sacrifice had to be made again with new and peculiar ceremonies. Killing the sacrificial animal is, indeed, necessary for the consecration, but divine death, too, is an actual death, with all its terrors, and it is feared as the defeat and downfall of everything that is known as life. The initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries is the most terrible consecration that man can undergo. When Kore is abducted by Hades, there is famine on the earth. Consecration by death thus has also a negative side, namely the abolition of finite life, even though this is done in order to attain absolute life. This flight, connected with famine and decline, does not

occur because God is enraged with the killing of what is sacred. This is not *hybris* – an act of finite man whereby he achieves his own downfall, but an act whereby absolute and divine life is actualized. Pandora, too, brings gifts which are feared. It is quite clear that slaughtering the sacrificial animal is a mystical act, which because of its sanctity is fatal for finite man.

D. THE AIM OF SACRIFICE

Sacrifices with Positive Effect

There are two kinds of sacrifices. There are those with the positive aim of actualizing in nature and among men abiding and self-subsistent divine life, and there are sacrifices with a negative goal, "atoning sacrifices" or "peace offerings" to ward off a dangerous sanctity and thus to cause the ill to cease.

Many examples have already been given of sacrifices for the perpetuation and strengthening of cosmic life. There are all the libations and vegetation sacrifices, and the great comprehensive sacrifices of Ma-a-t, Soma (Haoma), and the Avestan fire sacrifice. But now we shall consider positive sacrifice in the special interest of men.

The idea behind these sacrifices is that the divine life which is actualized by the sacrificial rite is imparted to man. Thus in a sense, the offering represents men; it sanctifies their life, or rather – a ritual link is joined between the offering and men.

The Roman sacrificer puts on the *filum*, made *ex lana hostiae*, from the wool of the sacrificial animal. In this instance the sheep represents various kinds of animals used for sacrifice, including the cow and the pig. It is thus that the offering and the man who brings it are bound together. The sacrifice is offered for the welfare of men. The sacrificer represents the men for whom he offers the sacrifice. He and the people he represents are consecrated. Thus a mystical link is made between the sacrificer, the offering which is sacrificed, and the deity.

The priest's *pileus*, a hat or cap made from the hide of the sacrificed animal, also had this meaning. The symbolism of the hat is also involved here: whoever sacrifices *capite velato*, with his head covered or hidden, is withdrawn from the visible world.

The most common way in which the connection between the offering and man is made recognizable is, however, the sacrificial meal. It is for this reason that Robertson Smith [32] says that the typical and original sacrifice is the communal sacrifice, i.e., the sacred rite whereby the abiding life of the tribe or community is actualized. Originally the sacrificial animal is the "totem" of the tribe (the sacred animal which is considered the bearer of the tribe's life) and thus the god of the tribe. Survivals of this notion of the totem animal in historical times are the unclean animals which may only be killed and eaten in the prescribed ritual manner, such as the pig, the dog, the fish, the horse, the dove, etc. The term "totem" is borrowed from the language of certain North American Indian tribes, among whom this form of religion was first observed. Later it was discovered among the inhabitants of Central and Southern Australia and among other primitive peoples. The tribal animal is ritually killed and thereafter eaten in a common meal. The participants in such a sacred (sacrificial) meal take the divine substance into themselves. Thereby they actualize and strengthen the divine nature of their tribal life; this is a communal sacrifice. It could be said that the god of the tribe or people is sacrificed and consecrated. By means of the sacred meal, people come to share in divine life. It is thus a sacrifice with an entirely positive effect and is in the direct interest of men. Its purpose is not to strengthen the divine life of the cosmos, but directly to aid man, and it therefore differs from the libation, which is in the interests of vegetation, and thus only indirectly in the interests of men.

In the main, this conception of Robertson Smith's about sacrifice is correct, aside from the unprovable and purely theoretical elements of his view, which include his totem theory, which is that every tribe, especially among the Semites, once worshipped a particular kind of totem animal as its special god, felt itself closely akin to this animal, even considering it to be its tribal ancestor. Equally disputable is his theory that the communal sacrifice, including the sacrificial meal for strengthening the tribe's life, is the original sacrifice, and all other sacrifices, such as the "burnt offering" (*holokauston* or *'ōlā*) must be secondary and have only become possible when the belief in a totem was weakened by higher civilization and agricultural life.

The religious significance of the sacrificial meal was first recognized by Robertson Smith, who saw that it was the cultic rite whereby the religious character of the society was repeatedly actualized; the social order was a sacred community. The family or gens, the *phratria* or curia, the *phylē* or tribus, the *polis* or civitas, – all of these were sacramental units with a special cultus, such as the *sacra gentilia*. They also all had their sacred meals, such as the *phyletika deipna*, whereby the sacred unity of these groups was sacramentally constituted and perpetuated. Thus the Athenian community was founded at the first *bouphonia* sacrificial meal. The Ancients believed that the communal meal signified a communion of life. When agreements were concluded, it was here again eating and drinking together which constituted the unity. According to the right of hospitality, the guest was also included in this fellowship; he could claim inviolability. Indeed every meal was a mystical renewal of life. By means of the sacred communal meal, all those participating came to share in the divine life of the consecrated sacrificial animal. Like the Roman *filum* or *pileus*, the sacrificial meal linked the sacrificer, the sacrificial offering, and God. It transferred the divine power of the offering to man.

When we bear this in mind, we can understand why the Hebrews considered the sacrificial meat to be a sacred, divine substance, in which man could share – provided he observed the ritual laws," so that eating the food may cause no misfortune." In Leviticus 7 : 15–20, it is prescribed that sacrificial meat must be eaten on the day it is slaughtered; sometimes it is still permissable to eat it the next day, but the third day it must be burned with fire. Anyone who eats of this meat after it has become "unclean" will be cast out from his people.

In contrast with Tylor's work, this book of Robertson Smith's, although published in 1888–'89, is still of value, especially because of his theory of the mystical character of sacrifice. It is one of the classic works on Ancient religions, admirable in its clarity and simplicity of presentation.

The positive aim of sacrifice, as far as man is concerned, is communion of life with God. But it is not only by means of the sacrificial meal that this is achieved, as Robertson Smith believes. The entire act of sacrifice, *sacrificium*, means a participation

in divine life. It is a religio-magical or mystical act which takes place outside the finite realm. The sacrificer (i.e., the one who offers the sacrifice, and not solely the priest), leaves the finite world, or "he steps out of the world of men and into the world of the gods." [33] This is an actual theoretical formulation of the meaning of participation in divine life at the sacrificial meal.

In the *Brāhmanas* this idea is presented at great length, especially when the preparation for sacrifice is described, what is called the *dīkshā*, the "dedication" of the sacrificer. This preparation, too, is part of the sacrificial act, and it is even made an essential element in it. The person who is planning to offer a sacrifice goes to the Brahman (the priest) with the words, "I, [states his name] wish to reach (or win) heaven [i.e., to pass out of this finite world] and to offer a sacrifice." First he must perform a number of rites whereby he brings about his separation from the finite sphere. He cuts his hair, his beard, and his nails. Oldenberg explains this in his *Religion des Veda* as the removal of the dead part in order to be able to enter absolute, divine life. Then there come the ritual purifications, with the same negative aim. Even rebirth is represented in the *dīkshā;* the sacrificer becomes a new man. A hut is built for him which is called the "mother's womb," and he sits in this wrapped in a black antelope's hide. This signifies the realm of the dead from which he will be reborn. In the same way, the Egyptian who would attain the resurrection of Osiris must be wrapped in the hide of a bull, thus taking the place of Kheper. There in the hut, entirely isolated, he is born to new life when the sacrifice begins. He has become a divine being. "For no one will I stand up, not even for the king." The entire period of several months he has fasted and lived solely on milk. "When there is nothing more (when he is thin), he is clean for the sacrifice." He then lives in a state of hypersensitivity, in ecstasy; the gods have then "entered him." It is understandable that *dīkshā* (or *tapas*) gives the sacrificer supernatural power. Only now is he ready and fit for offering the visible offerings; "he is taken up among the gods." The sacrificial animal is now killed and the sacred meal takes place. This means that one has now entered into a relation to God and has left the finite world. The idea at the basis of this *dkīshā* preparation is that he who offers a sacrifice must first sacrifice

himself. He must die, as the sacrificial animal dies. After the sacrifice, he takes off the *dīkshā* with the words, "I have carried out my vow ... once again I become a man; I descend from the world of the gods to the world of men." [34]

This preparatory initiation to the sacrificial rite thus indicates clearly the entirely positive aim of the sacrifice, which is to gain a share in divine life. In many religions such preparation is prescribed. In Israel it is especially the priest who is subject to such regulations. The ritual laws governing the sacrifice on the great Day of Atonement are so numerous and so stringent that they may well be compared with the *dīkshā*. According to Leviticus 16 and the Talmud, the priest must separate himself from his family seven days before the festival and observe all sorts of laws of purification, especially on the day just beforehand, and keep awake at night. An extraordinary sanctity is required for this festival. The Greeks performed the preparatory initiation for the sacrifice by having the sacrificer don the wreath. This wreath is the sign of his sacredness, the sign of victory, in the religious sense, over transiency and the powers of death. A dead person is wreathed with the same significance. In Egypt there is "the wreath of righteousness," i.e., of the divine order of life or immortality. (Cf. II Timothy 4 : 8, "the crown of righteousness," *tēs dikaiosunēs stephanos*.)

The positive effect of the sacrificial rite thus concerns human life, not the life of nature; it is man's sacramental participation in abiding, divine life. The various communal sacrifices with a sacrificial meal are certainly of this type. The different groups in society are religious units, which as such are time and again freshly established and actualized. Another example of this type of sacrifice is the so-called "oath sacrifice," which is offered at the conclusion of a covenant; this was the only connection in which oath sacrifices occurred among the Ancient peoples. In concluding a covenant the allies swear faithfulness to one another by means of the oath sacrifice. A sacred mutual relationship is hereby brought into existence which is independent of all fortuitous circumstances. The treaty is then embodied in the divine order of the cosmos and transformed into an absolute relationship. It is quite clear that this oath sacrifice displays the characteristic feature of the social sacrifice, in which a group of men (here the

two parties or allies) are constituted into a religious unity. The oath sacrifice moves the treaty from this world into the other, absolute world. It can be said that offering an oath sacrifice is the same as the *sacrificere*, the sacrificing of the treaty (*foedus ferire, kārath b^{e}rīth*). A treaty is a social reality par excellence.

Sacrifices with Negative Effect

The common term for sacrifices which have the aim of causing a misfortune to cease is "sin offering" (*ḥaṭṭā'th*) or "peace offering' (sacrifice of atonement). Both terms, but especially the former, are misleading. For we then unconsciously think of sacrifices occasioned by a particular offence for which pardon, forgiveness of sins, or remission of punishment is asked by means of the sacrifice. Such a motive can, to be sure, be the occasion of such a sacrifice, but it is only a particular application of the idea which is at the basis of every "peace offering," and even then the "sin" which must be atoned is not what we mean by sin.

The "sin offering" is essentially a sacrifice to cause misfortune to cease. In many cases the cause of the misfortune is unknown. God causes calamity without giving any justification of His action. Crop failure or sickness strikes a people even when it is not conscious of any offence; the divine motive remains unknown. Man confronts a sovereign god who, humanly speaking, acts at his own pleasure and caprice. The conception of the "demonic god" is not foreign to any religion. Man's finite life can be obstructed by God, or even abolished and destroyed. Gods leads man into death, out of finite life into infinite life. If God sanctifies man in a fashion which cannot be united with ordinary life, this is not a punishment for crimes and offences. The sacrifice of atonement serves to dispel this state of sanctity. This is the negative aim of all atoning sacrifices. Hubert and Mauss rightly speak of the sacrifice of "desacralization." It can be said, to be sure, that this sacrifice "causes the divine wrath to cease," provided we do not relate "wrath" directly to human transgression. Job was righteous, and nevertheless he was the object of divine wrath. Wrath in this context means simply: the feared Holiness of God.

How is this sanctity abolished or warded off by a sacrifice?

The answer is this: even when God grants sanctification by means of sacrifice, it is this divine activity as such which is recognized, accepted, and actualized (*sacrificium*). The special feature of the sacrifice of atonement is that the sacrifice is offered with the religious consciousness, the faith, that the misfortune caused by God is not simply misfortune, and that death is not simply death. Divine life or the divine will may mean death for man, but it is a death which brings with it absolute life. Death is conquered in newly arising life. The misfortune itself is sanctified by the act of sacrifice and is thereby no longer simply a misfortune. Like every sacrifrice, the "peace offering" is an act of faith, an act of confession. Not only that which sustains and furthers human life, but also that which obstructs it, is the work of God. The term "sin offering" or "peace offering" is correct, provided we interpret it in the Ancient sense of "sin," which is closely akin to the Ancient meaning of "misfortune"; that is, the state of death. To sin was to put oneself outside the laws of finite life. God can also make a man a sinner by plunging him into disaster.

A good example of the atoning sacrifice to dispel divine wrath is the *Ver sacrum* to Mars. Mars is the god of victory, both of cosmic and of human life. He is the god of spring (March). At times of great distress and misfortune people promise that they will sacrifice to him everything which is born the following spring (thus all those things in which Mars reveals himself.) Children, however, are not killed. But when they grow up, they are taken across the border to seek a new home: banishment is death. Thus they were dedicated to Mars.[35] This "offering" of young colonists was laden with the divine curse, which had been revealed in wrath and misfortune, but not in the sense of divine disapproval which we attach to it. They had been made sacred by the god and therewith were taken out of the finite world. This fact was actualized by their banishment. The divine character of the misfortune was recognized and thereupon realized by means of the cultic rite. It was said that children were guided by woodpeckers and wolves, the animals of Mars. This makes it evident that these children were not cast-offs. On the contrary, they were under the special protection and guidance of Mars. Mars guides through death those who are sacrificed to him. The

colonization, which is the founding of a new city, is their resurrection to new life. The peace offering is here quite clearly an actualization of the divine nature of the misfortune, and this means the actualization of death which is absolute life or resurrection. The demonic Mars is no less God of life than is a beneficent god. But though he is worshipped, he remains the god of life who is feared.

The *pharmakos* sacrifice, in which a man is sacrificed to Apollo, is extremely ancient. A *pharmakon* is a means of healing, and a *pharmakos* is a healer or saviour. When disaster had struck the city, such as crop failure or a contagious disease, the most miserable of all the inhabitants was elected as the so-called *pharmakos*. This man was fed for a long time, sometimes for a whole year, at the expense of the state on "clean foods," which are cheese and figs, gifts of the god of vegetation. After that he was adorned with branches and led outside the city where he was beaten with wild garlic plants and fig branches, and finally killed by stoning and burning. All this was done in order to "cleanse" the city. The religious meaning of these acts is clear: the *pharmakos* represents misfortune or the god of misfortune, the demonic Apollo, who as god of vegetation, is here also the god of crop failure. It is for this reason that he is festooned with branches and fed with clean foods. He has already been made sacred before he is sacrificed; he is the sacred offering in which the demonic god reveals his activity; he is the disaster which has struck men. As the definitive consecration, the *sacrificium*, he is killed by whipping, stoning, and burning. The misfortune itself is thus consecrated, i.e., recognized and actualized as a divine reality. But this indicates that divine death does not mean simply death. By the consecration the misfortune is translated into a higher sphere. Divine death is resurrection. It is also said that "the *pharmakos* takes away misfortune," which means that he is sent away like a scape goat on whom all misfortune and malediction is laden. We see that there is no mention of any offence here. Misfortune comes from the god, here Apollo, who sends both life and death according to his own inscrutable decree. The *pharmakos* peace offering has a negative aim; nevertheless it is clear that a very positive religious belief is at the basis of this sacrifice. In misfortune, too, the god of absolute life reveals

himself, the god to whom man entirely surrenders himself. Faith in Apollo is not shaken by calamity.

An especially characteristic instance in the Old Testament is the Naziritic vow, prescribed in Numbers 6. A person takes this vow "to dedicate himself to Yahweh" for a certain period of time. He abstains from wine and strong drink, lets his hair grow, and may not go near a corpse. "All the days of his separation he is holy to Yahweh." In this way he is withdrawn from ordinary life. But on the day that his Naziritic vow ends, he shall offer a "burnt offering" and a "sin offering." Why should be bring a sin offering? (*ḥaṭṭā'th*) He has done nothing wrong. Quite the contrary. No, he has been holy or sacred, by withdrawing from life like a man who has died. He has not been sacred in the negative sense; his sanctity implied that he was filled with divine power, and with this new power he returns to life, as soon as his fatal sanctity is terminated and his term as a Nazirite is ended. By means of the peace offering, in which the sacrificial animal is killed, first his separation from life, but later also his return to life are actualized. This is certainly a sacrifice of desanctification. Yet the Nazirite is not the same as he was before he undertook his vow; he has performed an act which remains significant during the rest of his life; it is meritorious for him. The peace offering at the end of his term as a Nazirite is the sanctification of his return to society as well as of his departure from it. "To be holy to Yahweh" is a death which includes resurrection within itself. The peace offering here signifies the actualizing of the divine character of death, which is separation from human society. This is the meaning of sacrifice, also in cases of ritual or other transgressions. In the same chapter of Numbers it is also said that the Nazirite must offer exactly the same burnt offering and sin offering if he should break his vow during his period as a Nazirite, as, for instance, when someone in his vicinity dies and he is made impure by contact with the body. The sacrifice abolishes the consequences of the transgression. Sanctity and impurity are very closely connected.

A Hebrew peace offering or guilt offering (*ḥaṭṭā'th*) of the same type is described in Leviticus 14:1ff, where the certification of healing from leprosy is treated. One of two living "clean" birds is killed above an earthen vessel in which there is "living

water" (RSV "running water"). Thus here again there is a consecration, a *sacri-ficium* of what is sacred. Death or misfortune is then brought to this sacred offering. After that the priest dips the second bird in the blood of the first. Finally he sprinkles the leper seven times with the bloody water and lets the living bird fly away. This can only mean that the leper and the living bird are both made sacred, but in different senses: the man by the blood mixed with the water of life. This sanctification means resurrection from death. The clean, living bird is by being sprinkled with blood made sacred in the absolute sense, and so it belongs no longer to this world. It is set free and carries away with it the dangerous sanctity.

We should note that this idea of deity does not exclude the sense of human guilt towards God. When the sovereign demonic god opposes human life, man knows that this finite life is condemned by the divine judge (and not by a human one), and he cannot justify himself or appeal to anything. Before God he is a guilty and "sinful "being. But this guilt has nothing in common with ethical guilt. The believer knows that in his insignificance before God he has no right to life. He knows that his insignificance does not consist only in his impotence, nor only in his ethical imperfection, but above all in his state of separation from God, his lack of sanctity and divine life. Only in this way can the sin offering be explained. The believer accepts and realizes the divine opposition to life, in the faith that even the condemnation of human life does not exclude resurrection.

All the "peace offerings" or "sin offerings" which we have mentioned were offered at unusual occasions, in times of severe distress, or at special dedications. Other sacrifices of the same kind were regularly offered to the sovereign god whose sanctity was sought, but also feared. We know of many clear examples of this. There is, for instance, the Ancient Indian bull sacrifice to the Vedic god Rudra, who is frequently lauded in the Rig Veda.[36] Rudra was the most feared of all the Ancient Indian gods, the demonic god of the life of young animals and of men. Like fire, he destroyed life, but also created it. The colour red was his characteristic. The handsomest bull of the herd was sacrificed to him. By feeding this bull certain foods they ritually cleansed it and made it a representative of Rudra, and as

Rudra it was worshipped. After that the bull was sacrificed in the middle of the night outside the village to ward off all misfortune from the cattle, but also to implore Rudra's blessing. It was a typical peace offering which was regularly made. When the aim of the sacrifice was to ward off the sanctity which was feared, its negative character was in the foreground, while the religious background was the belief in Rudra as the god of absolute life. However much he was feared, his sacred touch transformed misfortune into something which was not simply misfortune, for in it the mystery of divine life was actualized. The sacrifice in Greece to the Erinyes-Eumenides, where the sacrificers are dressed in red robes, has the same character as the sacrifice to Rudra.

There is certainly fear present in man's relation to the sovereign god, a fear which has arisen from a sense of one's own impotence and utter insignificance before God. But the man who has humbly recognized his insignificance before God has actually elevated himself above finitude. The Christian expression of this idea is that whoever confesses his guilt is righteous in the eyes of God. The peace offering is not made in order to make good certain transgressions, but in order to consecrate the misfortune. In the divine misfortune which overcomes man, his good fortune and salvation are also present.

After we have become acquainted with sacrificial rites which are either predominantly positive or predominantly negative in character, it is not difficult for us to understand the religious meaning of a number of instances of a somewhat divergent type. The ordinary act of sacrifice presupposes three factors: the man who is sacrificing, the offering which is sacrificed, and God. But in many cases the offering and the deity are so closely akin that the distinction between them has entirely disappeared. Frequently it is the god himself who is sacrificed. We have already pointed out that the offering represents God. When the offering is sacrificed (made sacred), its divine nature is recognized and actualized by the abolition (which mystically understood is a transformation) of its finite nature. This is done by killing it or presenting it to God, in recognition of its divine essence. The bread which is sacrificed is a bearer of divine life and reveals that life. Divine life is actualized, but this means that by

means of *sacrificium* the god is made a god, i.e., sacrificed. In the great and famous temple of the vegetation god Melkart, there was no image of the god but only an eternally burning fire. (The same was true in the temple of Hercules at Cadiz.) But once a year a large image of Hercules was made and burned. "No stranger might be present." Thus it was evidently a mystery rite. God Himself was thus sacrificed as the offering and was consecrated by the fire. In this way His divine essence was actualized.

The fire, Hephaestus, was the earth's life which was revealed in vegetation, and which was Melkart or Hercules himself. In the mother city of Cadiz, Tyre, Melkart was annually burned in effigy during his festival, and after his death in the fire, "the awakening of Hercules (Sandan)" is celebrated. This death of consecration was a transition into absolute life, into resurrection. According to Frazer, in Cilician Tarsus Sandan was depicted with a sheaf of grain or a bunch of grapes in his hands, as signs of vegetation. On the coins of Tarsus is engraved a pyre with the god in it, which certainly indicates that that was considered the most characteristic mark of this god.[37]

Some old Germanic customs in connection with the lighting of the Easter fires indicate similar ideas.[38] In these fires a human figure is burned. Sometimes he is called "Judas," but this name gives no clue to the real nature of this figure. According to Mannhardt the figure often consists of unthreshed sheaves of grain, sometimes covered with flowers. It is the grain spirit, the god of vegetation, who is burned and therewith sacrificed and consecrated. This is therefore the same type of sacrifice as the burning of Sandan: the god himself is sacrificed.[39]

The Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass also displays the same characteristic: on the altar the divine sacrificial death is again and again repeated and actualized. The bread is the body of Christ which is sacrificed and consecrated.

This meaning of the divine sacrificial death is indicated even more clearly when the human sacrificer disappears. The idea behind this rite is that God sacrifices Himself. But at this point the realm of cultus is left behind, and we enter the realm of religious myth or credal formulation.

There is a striking example of this in the Mithra religion, at least in the Mithra Mysteries in the Roman Empire. Even in

the Avesta, Mithra is the god who has appeared in our world. He stands alongside Mazda, the high, celestial, and hidden God, but Mithra "leaves the heavens" in order to do battle for the maintenance of Mazda's order of life in the turbulent life of the cosmos. With divine weapons in his hands "he goes out of the shining paradise, climbs into his guilded chariot, drawn by immortal horses" in order to defeat the enemies among demons and men and "in order to attain immortality" (an immortality different from that of Mazda). According to Plutarch he is the *mesitēs*, the mediator "because he stands between Mazda (heaven) and Ahriman (hell)." Mithra is indeed the god in the Roman Empire who unites within himself both infinity and finitude, both life and death. While doing battle he associates with the world "to attain immortality," i.e., to make the world and men immortal. This is his mediation, and the central idea or belief in the Mithra Mysteries (second and third centuries A.D. in the Roman Empire) is that he attains the goal of his mission in the sacrificial death which he voluntarily undergoes.

The Mithra of the Mithra religion in the Roman Empire is described to us as the god of the whole universe; in him the nature of God and the nature of the cosmos are united. He is *sol invictus*, the invincible sun, which reflects both deity and cosmos. But above all he is the god of the earth's life; his most important emblem is the bull of the earth. This bull is quite unmistakably depicted as the life and death of the earth: his tail ends in ears of grain, but his testicles are destroyed by the scorpion. He is the god of death and resurrection, in nature and among men. And in all the temples of Mithra, the most important cultic image is the relief of the bull which is killed or sacrificed by Mithra. It can be said with complete certainty that this signifies Mithra *Tauroctonus:* Mithra who sacrifices himself in order to give divine life to the cosmos and therewith to men. Divine death is victory over death; it is resurrection. This death also is shared by the believers, the worshippers of Mithra, the initiates. The suffering and the terror of death are sometimes clearly expressed in the portrayals of this scene: the face of Mithra killing the bull manifests very great suffering, comparable to the face of the dying Alexander.

In this case, the idea of sacrifice is, as it were, expressed quite

purely: sacrificial death is the actualization of divine life. God who sacrifices himself is the formulation of the thought behind every act of sacrifice. It is the actualizing of absolute life, which can only take place in death.

Here is another example of a god who sacrifices himself.[40]

> Nine nights I (Odin) hung on the tree, wounded by a spear, dedicated to Odin, I myself to Myself. I hung on a tree of which no one knows from which roots it grows ... I sought below and lifted up the runic letters, and I fell down from the tree.

The tree whose roots no one can show is the cosmic tree Yggdrasill, which is the bearer of eternal life. The roots are hidden in the realm of the dead; they are at Mimir, the spring of Wisdom, and the tree of life is the tree of divine knowledge. The tree of life is Odin, the god of the underworld and wisdom himself. Sacrifices to him are hung upon the tree, or pierced with a spear, or both. Here the "I have hung myself upon the tree as a sacrifice to Myself" is thus a self-consecration, a self-sacrifice; the offering is the god himself. "Death" on this tree is the actualization of absolute life, of which this tree is the bearer. In the "sought below and lifted up the runes," rune means "sign of mystery" or "mystery." The rune possesses magic power; the magic power of writing corresponds to that of the word. Whoever writes, whoever "cuts runes" in wood or stone, translates his thoughts into visible reality; he actualizes his will. There are many instances of a priest cutting runes in order to heal someone. The dying Odin thus brings superhuman or magic power out of the depths ("sought below") up into our world ("and lifted up the runes"). By means of divine death men have obtained power over death; they have gained health and salvation. Sophus Bugge thinks there is a direct influence on Christianity, thinking of the death of Jesus on the cross. The cross is indeed sometimes portrayed in the early Church as the tree of life. Yet this story is entirely in the spirit of the Germanic belief in Odin. Odin was actually the god of Yggdrasill, and the tree of life was actually the tree of knowledge, of the knowledge which is first attained in death – the runes come from the underworld.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS OF W. BREDE KRISTENSEN

N.B. Book reviews and articles in newspapers or popular magazines, etc., are not mentioned.

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