

especially interested in pushing religion into the emotional corner. Scientists, artists, moralists showed clearly that they also were ultimately concerned. Their concern expressed itself even in those creations in which they wanted most radically to deny religion. A keen analysis of most philosophical, scientific and ethical systems shows how much ultimate concern is present in them, even if they are leading in the fight against what they call religion.

This shows the limits of the emotionalist definition of faith. Certainly faith as an act of the whole personality has strong emotional elements within it. Emotion always expresses the involvement of the whole personality in an act of life or spirit. But emotion is not the source of faith. Faith is definite in its direction and concrete in its content. Therefore, it claims truth and commitment. It is directed toward the unconditional, and appears in a concrete reality that demands and justifies such commitment.

III.

Symbols of Faith

I. THE MEANING OF SYMBOL

Man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate. This statement demands explanation in several respects. In spite of the manifold research about the meaning and function of symbols which is going on in contemporary philosophy, every writer who uses the term "symbol" must explain his understanding of it.

Symbols have one characteristic in common with signs; they point beyond themselves to something else. The red sign at the street corner points to the order to stop the movements of cars at certain intervals. A red light and the stopping of cars have essentially no relation to each other, but conventionally they are united as long as the convention lasts. The same is true of letters and numbers and partly even words. They point beyond themselves to sounds and meanings. They are given this special function by convention within a nation or by international conventions, as the

mathematical signs. Sometimes such signs are called symbols; but this is unfortunate because it makes the distinction between signs and symbols more difficult. Decisive is the fact that signs do not participate in the reality of that to which they point, while symbols do. Therefore, signs can be replaced for reasons of expediency or convention, while symbols cannot.

This leads to the second characteristic of the symbol: It participates in that to which it points: the flag participates in the power and dignity of the nation for which it stands. Therefore, it cannot be replaced except after an historic catastrophe that changes the reality of the nation which it symbolizes. An attack on the flag is felt as an attack on the majesty of the group in which it is acknowledged. Such an attack is considered blasphemy.

The third characteristic of a symbol is that it opens up levels of reality which otherwise are closed for us. All arts create symbols for a level of reality which cannot be reached in any other way. A picture and a poem reveal elements of reality which cannot be approached scientifically. In the creative work of art we encounter reality in a dimension which is closed for us without such works. The symbol's fourth characteristic not only opens up dimensions and elements of reality which otherwise would remain unapproachable but also unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality. A great play gives us not only a new vision of the hu-^man

scene, but it opens up hidden depths of our own being. Thus we are able to receive what the play reveals to us in reality. There are within us dimensions of which we cannot become aware except through symbols, as melodies and rhythms in music.

Symbols cannot be produced intentionally—this is the fifth characteristic. They grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being. Symbols which have an especially social function, as political and religious symbols, are created or at least accepted by the collective unconscious of the group in which they appear.

The sixth and last characteristic of the symbol is a consequence of the fact that symbols cannot be invented. Like living beings, they grow and they die. They grow when the situation is ripe for them, and they die when the situation changes. The symbol of the "king" grew in a special period of history, and it died in most parts of the world in our period. Symbols do not grow because people are longing for them, and they do not die because of scientific or practical criticism. They die because they can no longer produce response in the group where they originally found expression.

These are the main characteristics of every symbol. Genuine symbols are created in several spheres of man's cultural creativity. We have mentioned already the political and the artistic realm. We could add history and, above all, religion, whose symbols will be our particular concern.

2. RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

We have discussed the meaning of symbols generally because, as we said, man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically! One may ask: Why can it not be expressed directly and properly? If money, success or the nation is someone's ultimate concern, can this not be said in a direct way without symbolic language? Is it not only in those cases in which the content of the ultimate concern is called "God" that we are in the realm of symbols? The answer is that everything which is a matter of unconditional concern is made into a god. If the nation is someone's ultimate concern, the name of the nation becomes a sacred name and the nation receives divine qualities which far surpass the reality of the being and functioning of the nation. The nation then stands for and symbolizes the true ultimate, but in an idolatrous way. Success as ultimate concern is not the natural desire of actualizing potentialities, but is readiness to sacrifice all other values of life for the sake of a position of power and social predominance. The anxiety about not being a success is an idolatrous form of the anxiety about divine condemnation. Success is grace; lack of success, ultimate judgment. In this way concepts designating ordinary realities become idolatrous symbols of ultimate concern.

The reason for this transformation of concepts into symbols is the character of ultimacy and the nature of faith. That which is the true ultimate transcends the realm of finite reality infinitely. Therefore, no finite reality can express it directly and properly. Religiously speaking, God

transcends his own name. This is why the use of his name easily becomes an abuse or a blasphemy. Whatever we say about that which concerns us ultimately, whether or not we call it God, has a symbolic meaning. It points beyond itself while participating in that to which it points. In no other way can faith express itself adequately. The language of faith is the language of symbols. If faith were what we have shown that it is not, such an assertion could not be made. But faith, understood as the state of being ultimately concerned, has no language other than symbols. When saying this I always expect the question: Only a symbol? He who asks this question shows that he has not understood the difference between signs and symbols nor the power of symbolic language, which surpasses in quality and strength the power of any nonsymbolic language. One should never say "only a symbol," but one should say "not less than a symbol." With this in mind we can now describe the different kinds of symbols of faith.

The fundamental symbol of our ultimate concern is God. It is always present in any act of faith, even if the act of faith includes the denial of God. Where there is ultimate concern, God can be denied only in the name of God. One God can deny the other one. Ultimate concern cannot deny its own character as ultimate. Therefore, it affirms what is meant by the word "God." Atheism, consequently, can only mean the attempt to remove any ultimate concern—to remain unconcerned about the meaning of one's existence. Indifference toward the ultimate question is the only imag-

inable form of atheism. Whether it is possible is a problem which must remain unsolved at this point. In any case, he who denies God as a matter of ultimate concern affirms God, because he affirms ultimacy in his concern. God is the fundamental symbol for what concerns us ultimately. Again it would be completely wrong to ask: So God is nothing but a symbol? Because the next question has to be: A symbol for what? And then the answer would be: For God! God is symbol for God. This means that in the notion of God we must distinguish two elements: the element of ultimacy, which is a matter of immediate experience and not symbolic in itself, and the element of concreteness, which is taken from our ordinary experience and symbolically applied to God. The man whose ultimate concern is a sacred tree has both the ultimacy of concern and the concreteness of the tree which symbolizes his relation to the ultimate. The man who adores Apollo is ultimately concerned, but not in an abstract way. His ultimate concern is symbolized in the divine figure of Apollo. The man who glorifies Jahweh, the God of the Old Testament, has both an ultimate concern and a concrete image of what concerns him ultimately. This is the meaning of the seemingly cryptic statement that God is the symbol of God. In this qualified sense God is the fundamental and universal content of faith.

It is obvious that such an understanding of the meaning of God makes the discussions about the existence or non-existence of God meaningless. It is meaningless to question the ultimacy of an ultimate concern. This element in the

idea of God is in itself certain. The symbolic expression of this element varies endlessly through the whole history of mankind. Here again it would be meaningless to ask whether one or another of the figures in which an ultimate concern is symbolized does "exist." If "existence" refers to something which can be found within the whole of reality, no divine being exists. The question is not this, but: which of the innumerable symbols of faith is most adequate to the meaning of faith? In other words, which symbol of ultimacy expresses the ultimate without idolatrous elements? This is the problem, and not the so-called "existence of God"—which is in itself an impossible combination of words. God as the ultimate in man's ultimate concern is more certain than any other certainty, even that of oneself. God as symbolized in a divine figure is a matter of daring faith, of courage and risk.

God is the basic symbol of faith, but not the only one. All the qualities we attribute to him, power, love, justice, are taken from finite experiences and applied symbolically to that which is beyond finitude and infinity. If faith calls God "almighty," it uses the human experience of power in order to symbolize the content of its infinite concern, but it does not describe a highest being who can do as he pleases. So it is with all the other qualities and with all the actions, past, present and future, which men attribute to God. They are symbols taken from our daily experience, and not information about what God did once upon a time or will do sometime in the future. Faith is not the belief in such

stories, but it is the acceptance of symbols that express our ultimate concern in terms of divine actions.

Another group of symbols of faith are manifestations of the divine in things and events, in persons and communities, in words and documents. This whole realm of sacred objects is a treasure of symbols. Holy things are not holy in themselves, but they point beyond themselves to the source of all holiness, that which is of ultimate concern.

3. SYMBOLS AND MYTHS

The symbols of faith do not appear in isolation. They are united in "stories of the gods," which is the meaning of the Greek word "mythos"—myth. The gods are individualized figures, analogous to human personalities, sexually differentiated, descending from each other, related to each other in love and struggle, producing world and man, acting in time and space. They participate in human greatness and misery, in creative and destructive works. They give to man cultural and religious traditions, and defend these sacred rites. They help and threaten the human race, especially some families, tribes or nations. They appear in epiphanies and incarnations, establish sacred places, rites and persons, and thus create a cult. But they themselves are under the command and threat of a fate which is beyond everything that is. This is mythology as developed most impressively in ancient Greece. But many of these characteristics can be found in every mythology. Usually the mythological gods are not equals. There is a hierarchy, at the top of which is a ruling

god, as in Greece; or a trinity of them, as in India; or a duality of them, as in Persia. There are savior-gods who mediate between the highest gods and man, sometimes sharing the suffering and death of man in spite of their essential immortality. This is the world of the myth, great and strange, always changing but fundamentally the same: man's ultimate concern symbolized in divine figures and actions. Myths are symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters.

Myths are always present in every act of faith, because the language of faith is the symbol. They are also attacked, criticized and transcended in each of the great religions of mankind. The reason for this criticism is the very nature of the myth. It uses material from our ordinary experience. It puts the stories of the gods into the framework of time and space although it belongs to the nature of the ultimate to be beyond time and space. Above all, it divides the divine into several figures, removing ultimacy from each of them without removing their claim to ultimacy. This inescapably leads to conflicts of ultimate claims, able to destroy life, society, and consciousness.

The criticism of the myth first rejects the division of the divine and goes beyond it to one God, although in different ways according to the different types of religion. Even one God is an object of mythological language, and if spoken about is drawn into the framework of time and space. Even he loses his ultimacy if made to be the content of concrete

concern. Consequently, the criticism of the myth does not end with the rejection of the polytheistic mythology.

Monotheism also falls under the criticism of the myth. It needs, as one says today, "demythologization." This word has been used in connection with the elaboration of the mythical elements in stories and symbols of the Bible, both of the Old and the New Testaments—stories like those of the Paradise, of the fall of Adam, of the great Flood, of the Exodus from Egypt, of the virgin birth of the Messiah, of many of his miracles, of his resurrection and ascension, of his expected return as the judge of the universe. In short, all the stories in which divine-human interactions are told are considered as mythological in character, and objects of demythologization. What does this negative and artificial term mean? It must be accepted and supported if it points to the necessity of recognizing a symbol as a symbol and a myth as a myth. It must be attacked and rejected if it means the removal of symbols and myths altogether. Such an attempt is the third step in the criticism of the myth. It is an attempt which never can be successful, because symbol and myth are forms of the human consciousness which are always present. One can replace one myth by another, but one cannot remove the myth from man's spiritual life. For the myth is the combination of symbols of our ultimate concern.

A myth which is understood as a myth, but not removed or replaced, can be called a "broken myth." Christianity denies by its very nature any unbroken myth, because its

presupposition is the first commandment: the affirmation of the ultimate as ultimate and the rejection of any kind of idolatry. All mythological elements in the Bible, and doctrine and liturgy should be recognized as mythological, but they should be maintained in their symbolic form and not be replaced by scientific substitutes. For there is no substitute for the use of symbols and myths: they are the language of faith.

The radical criticism of the myth is due to the fact that the primitive mythological consciousness resists the attempt to interpret the myth of myth. It is afraid of every act of demythologization. It believes that the broken myth is deprived of its truth and of its convincing power. Those who live in an unbroken mythological world feel safe and certain. They resist, often fanatically, any attempt to introduce an element of uncertainty by "breaking the myth," namely, by making conscious its symbolic character. Such resistance is supported by authoritarian systems, religious or political, in order to give security to the people under their control and unchallenged power to those who exercise the control. The resistance against demythologization expresses itself in "literalism." The symbols and myths are understood in their immediate meaning. The material, taken from nature and history, is used in its proper sense. The character of the symbol to point beyond itself to something else is disregarded. Creation is taken as a magic act which happened once upon a time. The fall of Adam is localized on a special geographical point and attributed to a human individual.

The virgin birth of the Messiah is understood in biological terms, resurrection and ascension as physical events, the second coming of the Christ as a telluric, or cosmic, catastrophe. The presupposition of such literalism is that God is a being, acting in time and space, dwelling in a special place, affecting the course of events and being affected by them like any other being in the universe. Literalism deprives God of his ultimacy and, religiously speaking, of his majesty. It draws him down to the level of that which is not ultimate, the finite and conditional. In the last analysis it is not rational criticism of the myth which is decisive but the inner religious criticism. Faith, if it takes its symbols literally, becomes idolatrous! It calls something ultimate which is less than ultimate. Faith, conscious of the symbolic character of its symbols, gives God the honor which is due him.

One should distinguish two stages of literalism, the natural and the reactive. The natural stage of literalism is that in which the mythical and the literal are indistinguishable. The primitive period of individuals and groups consists in the inability to separate the creations of symbolic imagination from the facts which can be verified through observation and experiment. This stage has a full right of its own and should not be disturbed, either in individuals or in groups, up to the moment when man's questioning mind breaks the natural acceptance of the mythological visions as literal. If, however, this moment has come, two ways are possible. The one is to replace the unbroken by the

broken myth. It is the objectively demanded way, although it is impossible for many people who prefer the repression of their questions to the uncertainty which appears with the breaking of the myth. They are forced into the second stage of literalism, the conscious one, which is aware of the questions but represses them, half consciously, half unconsciously. The tool of repression is usually an acknowledged authority with sacred qualities like the Church or the Bible, to which one owes unconditional surrender. This stage is still justifiable, if the questioning power is very weak and can easily be answered. It is unjustifiable if a mature mind is broken in its personal center by political or psychological methods, split in his unity, and hurt in his integrity. The enemy of a critical theology is not natural literalism but conscious literalism with repression of and aggression toward autonomous thought.

Symbols of faith cannot be replaced by other symbols, such as artistic ones, and they cannot be removed by scientific criticism. They have a genuine standing in the human mind, just as science and art have. Their symbolic character is their truth and their power. Nothing less than symbols and myths can express our ultimate concern.

One more question arises, namely, whether myths are able to express every kind of ultimate concern. For example, Christian theologians argue that the word "myth" should be reserved for natural myths in which repetitive natural processes, such as the seasons, are understood in their ultimate meaning. They believe that if the world is

seen as a historical process with beginning, end and center, as in Christianity and Judaism, the term "myth" should not be used. This would radically reduce the realm in which the term would be applicable. Myth could not be understood as the language of our ultimate concern, but only as a discarded idiom of this language. Yet history proves that there are not only natural myths but also historical myths. If the earth is seen as the battleground of two divine powers, as in ancient Persia, this is an historical myth. If the God of creation selects and guides a nation through history toward an end which transcends all history, this is an historical myth. If the Christ—a transcendent, divine being—appears in the fullness of time, lives, dies and is resurrected, this is an historical myth. Christianity is superior to those religions which are bound to a natural myth. But Christianity speaks the mythological language like every other religion. It is a broken myth, but it is a myth; otherwise Christianity would not be an expression of ultimate concern.

obliterate please!

IV.

Types of Faith

1. ELEMENTS OF FAITH AND THEIR DYNAMICS

Faith as the state of being ultimately concerned lives in many forms, subjectively and objectively. Every religious and cultural group and, to a certain degree, every individual is the bearer of a special experience and content of faith. The subjective state of the faithful changes in correlation to the change of the symbols of faith. In order to analyze the manifold expressions of faith, it is useful to distinguish some basic types and then to describe their dynamic interrelations. Types as such are static, standing alongside each other. But they also have a dynamic element. They claim ultimate validity for the special aspect of faith which they represent. This creates the tensions and struggles among the different types of faith within every religious community and among the great religions themselves.

Here it must be stated clearly that types are constructions of thought, and not things to be found in reality. There are no pure types in any realm of life. All real things participate

faith is actual in works. Where there is ultimate concern there is the passionate desire to actualize the content of one's concern. "Concern" in its very definition includes the desire for action. The kind of action is, of course, dependent on the type of faith. Faith of the ontological type drives toward elevation above the separation of being from being. Faith of the ethical type drives toward transformation of the estranged reality. In both of them love is working. In the first case, the *eros* quality of loves drives to union with the beloved in that which is beyond the lover and the beloved. In the second case, the *agape* quality of love drives to acceptance of the beloved and his transformation into what he potentially is. Mystical love unites by negation of the self. Ethical love transforms by affirmation of the self. The sphere of activities following from mystical love is predominantly ascetic. The sphere of activities following from ethical love is predominantly formative. In both cases, faith determines the kind of love and the kind of action.

These are examples describing a basic polarity in the character of faith. There are many other possible examples. Lutheran faith in personal forgiveness is less conducive to social action than the Calvinistic faith in the honor of God. The humanist faith in the essential rationality of man is more favorable for general education and democracy than the traditionally Christian faith in original sin and the demonic structures of reality. The Protestant faith, in an unmediated, person-to-person encounter with God, produces more independent personalities than the Catholic faith and

its ecclesiastical mediation between God and man. Faith as the state of being ultimately concerned implies love and determines action. It is the ultimate power behind both of them.

4. THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH AND ITS EXPRESSIONS

In our description of the nature of faith we have shown that faith is real only in the community of faith, or more precisely, in the communion of a language of faith. The consideration of love and faith has pointed in the same direction: love is an implication of faith, namely, the desire toward reunion of the separated. This makes faith a matter of community. Finally, since faith leads to action and action presupposes community, the state of ultimate concern is actual only within a community of action.

The problems arising from this situation with respect to faith and doubt have been discussed. But the creedal expressions to which this discussion referred are of secondary importance, and there are more fundamental expressions of the ultimate concern in a community of faith. As we have seen before, all expressions of ultimate concern are symbolic, because the ultimate cannot be expressed in nonsymbolic terms. But one must distinguish two basic forms of symbolic expression—the intuitive and the active; in traditional terms—the mythical and the ritual. The community of faith constitutes itself through ritual symbol and interprets itself in mythical symbols. The two are interdependent: what is practiced in the cult is imagined in the myth, and con-

versely. There is no faith without these two ways of self-expression. Even if nation or success is the content of faith, rites and myths are connected with them. It is well known that totalitarian systems have an elaborated system of ritual activities, and that they have a grasp of imaginative symbols, which, however absurd they may be, express the faith underlying the whole system. The totalitarian community expresses itself in ritual activities and intuitive symbols in a way that has many similarities to the ways an authoritarian religious group expresses itself. However, in all genuine religions there is a protest against the idolatrous elements which are accepted without restriction by political totalitarianism.

The life of faith is life in the community of faith, not only in its communal activities and institutions but also in the inner life of its members. Separation from the activities of the community of faith is not necessarily separation from the community itself. It can be a way (for example, in voluntary seclusion) to intensify the spirit which rules the communal life. Often he who has withdrawn into temporary seclusion returns to the community whose language he still speaks and whose symbols he renews. For there is no life of faith, even in mystical solitude, which is not life in the community of faith. Further, there is no community where there is not a community of faith. There are groups bound together by a mutual interest, favoring a unity as long as the interest lasts. There are groups which have grown up naturally as families and tribes, and will die a natural death when the conditions of their life disappear.

Neither of these two groups in itself is a community of faith. Whether a group comes into existence in the natural way or in the way of common interest, it is a transitory group. It must come to an end when the technical or biological conditions of its existence vanish. In a community of faith these conditions are not decisive; the only condition of its continuation is the vitality of its faith. That which is based on an ultimate concern is not exposed to destruction by preliminary concerns and the lack of their fulfillment. The most astonishing proof of this assertion is the history of the Jews. They are, in the history of mankind, the document of the ultimate and unconditional character of faith.

Neither the cultural nor the mythological expressions of faith are meaningful if their symbolic character is not understood. We have tried to show the distorting consequences of literalism, and it often happens that in opposition to literalism, myth and cult are attacked as such and almost removed from a community of faith. The myth is replaced by a philosophy of religion, the cult is replaced by a code of moral demands. It is possible for such a state to last for a while because the original faith is still effective in it. Even the negation of the expressions of faith does not negate the faith itself—at least not in the beginning. This is the reason one can point to a nonreligious morality of a high order and can attempt to deny the interdependence of faith and morals. But there is a limit to this possibility. Without an ultimate concern as its basis every system of morals degenerates into a method of adjustment to social demands,

whether they are ultimately justified or not. And the infinite passion which characterizes a genuine faith evaporates and is replaced by a clever calculation which is unable to withstand the passionate attacks of an idolatrous faith. This is a description of what has happened on a large scale in Western civilization. It is concealed only by the fact that in many representatives of humanist faith, moral strength was and is greater than in members of a religiously active community. But this is a transitory stage. There is still faith in these men, ultimate concern about human dignity and personal fulfillment. There is religious substance in them, which, however, can be wasted in the next generation if the faith is not renewed. This is possible only in the community of faith under the continuous impact of its mythical and cultic symbols.

One of the reasons why independent morals are turned against their religious roots is the distorted meaning which symbol and myth have received in the history of religion, including the history of the Christian churches. The ritual symbols of faith have been distorted into magic realities which are effective like physical forces, even if they are not accepted in an act of faith as expressions of one's ultimate concern. They are loaded with a sacred power which works if man does not resist its working. This superstitious interpretation of the sacramental act arouses the protest of the humanists and drives them toward the ideal of morals without religion. The rejection of sacramental superstition was one of the main points in the Protestant protest. But histor-

ical Protestantism removed through its protest not only cultic superstition but also the genuine meaning of ritual, and of the sacramental symbols. In this way Protestantism, against its will, has supported the trend toward independent morals. But faith cannot remain alive without expressions of faith and the personal participation in them. This insight has driven Protestantism to a new evaluation of cult and sacrament in our period. Without symbols in which the holy is experienced as present, the experience of the holy vanishes.

The same is true of the mythological expression of one's ultimate concern. If the myth is understood literally, philosophy must reject it as absurd. It must demythologize the sacred stories, transform the myth into a philosophy of religion and finally into a philosophy without religion. But the myth, if interpreted as the symbolic expression of ultimate concern, is the fundamental creation of every religious community. It cannot be replaced by philosophy or by an independent code of morals.

Cult and myth keep faith alive. No one is completely without them; for no one is completely without an ultimate concern. Few understand their meaning and their power, although the life of faith is dependent on them. They express the faith of a community and produce personal faith in the members of the community. Without them, without the community in which they are used, faith would disappear and man's ultimate concerns would go into hiding. Then would come the short hour of independent morals.