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Chapter 1: A first introduction

1.1. Religion as an experienced reality

We begin immediately with a number of examples from the Bible where religion is perceived as a reality, first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament. We will see that it is always a more than ordinary experience, and for this reason the initiative always comes from Yahweh, His angels or Jesus, but not from the believer.

The Lord has spoken.

Genesis 28: 10/19.

Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.

Exodus 3:1-5: Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

1 Samuel 3; 1-9

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And word from the Lord was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well), and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, that the Lord called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay

down. The Lord called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him. So the Lord called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the Lord was calling the boy. And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The biblical text goes on to say that God makes himself known to Samuel and names him as a prophet. (*1 Samuel 3 : 19/21*)

Isaiah 6. (1) In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. (...). (5) Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (...). (8) Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

We also give some examples of the New Testament.

Matt. 3:16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

2 Peter 1:16/21 says on this subject: For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased", and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

In *Joh. 12: (44)* Jesus said, he proclaimed it: And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. (...). (12: 49) "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.

Acts of the Apostles 9; 3-18. As he (Paul, Saul) was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might

regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

A dream

Matth. 2:12: And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Matt. 2:13 : Joseph is warned in a dream to flee to Egypt to escape the infanticide ordered by Herod: Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." And further on in the text, we read that The Angel of Yahweh appears to Joseph in a dream. He announces Herod's death to him and leads him to the promised land.

Yahweh takes the initiative.

According to these few examples from the Bible, if these stories, in one way or another, are based on experiential reality - what the Bible wants us to hear - then, as we said at the beginning, one thing strikes us immediately is that the initiative comes from the Lord, his angels or Jesus. Not from the believer himself. That's how Jacob lived a dream. Moses heard that the Lord was calling him. Samuel also intends to call his name three times. Isaiah also heard the voice of the Lord. The magi of Bethlehem were warned in a dream not to go to Herod's house. Joseph is warned in a dream of imminent infanticide. And Saul heard the voice asking, "Why are you persecuting me?"

Also, among others, *Gen. 30:3, 31:11, 31:24, 37:5* and *Job 33:15/18* describe such testimonies.

The Bible

In fact, the Bible is a kind of library with a wide variety of texts of all kinds. Some of them have only historical significance, so they are no longer so important today. The Bible also contains many repetitions. But a number of texts, although they appear to be old in their inspiration and form of writing, still have a very real contemporary value.

Let's take *Job 33: 14/17* for example: "Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. "In a dream, a vision of the night. When sound sleep falls on men, While they slumber in their beds. Then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. That He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride".

According to the author, the divine meaning of such phenomena is that "man should reflect on his actions and thus put an end to his pride". But it seems that the author of this text notes that his contemporaries do not realize the divine value of such interventions. Perhaps ordinary people do not possess and develop all the qualities required to become aware of such dreams and visions. In this way, he moves somewhat away from the possibility of "hearing" such revelations and "seeing" such visions.

Apocalyptic

In this respect, we refer to the term "apocalyptic". According to the dictionary, it is defined as the set of thoughts and representations concerning the end of the world and the coming of the kingdom of God. The "*Revelation*" or "*Revelation of John*" is also the last book of the Bible and speaks of the end times. However, the much broader meaning of the Greek term "apo.kalupsis" refers not only to revelations concerning the end times, but also to revealing or communicating what is mysterious and which can only be perceived by paranormal mediators such as prophets. For common, non-clairvoyant people, such revelations are therefore inaccessible.

We see that the Greek term has a much greater meaning than the dictionary definition. An important work in this field is C. Kappler a.o. *Apocalypses et voyages dans l'au-delà*¹ (Apocalypses and journeys to the afterlife), especially because of the broad definition of "unveiling" and "revelation".

The apocalyptic reveals the Holy as far as it belongs to the "other world", in the descriptions of wonderful facts among other things. According to Kappler, there is also a close link between "apocalyptic" and "traveling to the afterlife" or "traveling to the other world". We will come back to this in detail.

If, suddenly, a vision or a voice appears and the initiative does not come from man, it is because there is a much more important action, and very different from the simple subjective imagination. In this case we are talking about the revelation of the apocalypse. The sacred shows itself. We are indeed confronted with religion.

1.2 What religion is not.

Incorrect definitions

Definitions of religion that approach faith exclusively from a psychological, economic or emotional, instinctive or philosophical point of view are therefore completely inadequate. Religion is described here from something that it is not. The religious experience itself is determined as an outsider and as a foreigner, without knowing and without having made contact with the real data. We reduce, we bring religion to something non-religious. In this context, the sacred, the holiness are simply denied, and because we have no personal religious experience, we simply generalize that it does not exist.

According to a strict logic this is a syllogism in which the prerequisite is not said. Transcribed this reasoning becomes: "Everything I don't feel myself doesn't exist. I myself have no religious experience, so religious experiences do not exist. But the statement "everything I don't experience doesn't exist" is an unproven statement. The whole reasoning is therefore a mere hypothesis, not conclusive evidence.

We have observed throughout history that the analysis of the sacred, the object of religion, has always wanted to rely on people who knew the subject: priests, seers, magicians... today, we rather want to hear it from university professors even if they do not believe, and preferably if they do not believe, because it is only then that they are truly "objective" as outsiders. People with religious experience are "suspicious". The religious man will wonder surprisingly how one can make authoritarian statements about something that one does not know from personal experience and in which one does not believe either.

Religion as a neurosis according to Freud

In *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*², (The Future of an Illusion) the Viennese psychiatrist S. Freud (1856/1939) describes religion as a neurosis. According to him, faith is a residue of an infantile phase. He believes that the believer is like a child who aspires to a loving father. The believer

projects these feelings into an imaginary being, and calls it his "God". This vision is developed in his *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*³ (Discomfort in Culture). Freud believes that religion is an illusion to which no reality external to man responds.

Religion as an opium according to Marx

It is obvious that K. Marx (1818/1883), a communist thinker, will involve religion in a kind of class struggle and pay particular attention to its economic context. In his *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*⁴ (On the criticism of Hegel's philosophy of law) he writes that religion is the opium of the people and that it prevents man from finding true happiness. Religion, according to Marx, is deluded by its promise to free people from their misery, and that is why it shows that it knows that man lives in poverty, but it does nothing for the social and economic causes that lead to this misery. On the contrary, it gives the possessing class a "good conscience" by teaching them "charity" and "good works" for a heavenly salvation. To the proletariat it promises a better existence in "a different world". In this way, religion consolidates the established social order with its misery.

Religion as a hallucination according to Leuba

H. Pinard de la Boullaye, *L'étude comparée des religions*⁵, (The Comparative Study of Religions), quotes a certain Leuba who says that the "visions" and "words" that some people who have the gift of clairvoyance perceive, are only visual or auditory hallucinations and therefore illusory perceptions. For Leuba, these so-called "religious" phenomena come exclusively from human biological and psychological needs. There are no religious needs per se. An opinion that still finds its supporters today.

Religion as a drift according to Nietzsche

F. Nietzsche (1844/1900), a German philosopher, is known for his statement: "Gott ist Tot, Wir haben Ihn getötet", "God is dead, we killed him." By this, he means that the divine world no longer exists, that the transcendental world is now powerless and that nihilism - the negation of any high value - is introduced into the world. Nietzsche wrote this slogan in 1882 in his *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Happy Science). We give an excerpt: "Have you not heard of this mad man who, in broad daylight, lit a lantern and started running in the public square screaming all the time: "God is dead, we killed him". Are we not mistaken as if through an infinite nothingness? Isn't it colder? Isn't the night darker than before? How will we, the murderers of murderers, console ourselves? The most sacred and powerful thing the world has ever possessed has lost its blood under our knives."

Nietzsche is the philosopher of drift. These are the basis of almost everything man does. What man calls "the afterlife" is only a kind of superstructure in this life of wandering. For Nietzsche, there are no higher ethical values in themselves. The instinct of life conceives values. The one who has the strongest exaltation for life, the strongest, determines values in an autonomous and authoritative way. It all boils down to the will for power. The powerful man dominates others. The ideal man is a kind of 'Übermensch' for him.

H. Schoeps, *Over de mens*⁶, (About the man) quotes Nietzsche in his *Morgenröte* (Dawn): "The most important events find it difficult to access sentiment. For example, by the fact that the Christian God is dead, there is no longer heavenly goodness and guidance in life. There is simply no divine justice. There is not even any immanent morality. This is the terrible news that will still need a few more centuries before it is fully realized. And then it will seem that all the force will have disappeared from the substance. "For Nietzsche, life is driven by drift, and religion is not only useless, but even harmful to the image of man himself. Ludwig Feuerbach

(1804/1872) already underlined in his *Das Wesen des Christentums* (The Essence of Christianity), (1841) the relationship between faith in God and higher values: "The true atheist is the one who denies God. It is the one who designates the being of God: love, wisdom and justice, as non-existent".

Religion as an outdated stage according to Comte

A. Comte (1798/1857), a French philosopher, stated that science can provide an answer to all questions. According to him, people successively go through a religious, philosophical and scientific stage. People who are only "religious" are not yet ready for a philosophical or scientific use of their thoughts. They explain a lot of reality with unauthorized "divine" interventions. Those who think and philosophize on this subject are therefore a little more advanced than those who only believe. Explanations other than natural are excluded and, if possible, replaced by a more consistent clarification. For Comte, the apogee can only be found in true science, which, for everything, finds, or will find, a solid and well-founded explanation.

However, unlike Comte, it can be said that these three stages do not always take place diachronically, but they can occur synchronously and overlap. You can be a leading scientific researcher, while having philosophical and religious interest. Similarly, a religious person may just as easily engage in scientific and philosophical research.

Mircéa Eliade (1907/1986), *Traité d'histoire des religions*⁷, (Treatise on the History of Religions), also points out that evolutionism in the organization of religion is untenable. Everywhere, says the eminent religious historian, there is a "system" that includes both lower and higher dimensions of the sacred.

Religion: a mistake?

Freud, Marx, Leuba, Nietzsche and Comte all consider religion from their axioms, from their own preconceived ideas. They all agree that religion itself does not exist. If the believer thinks this way then, they say, he is totally wrong. One could, joining their critics somewhat, reformulate their thinking in this way: if religion is nothing more than an infant neurotic projection, a narcotic, such as opium, in order to perpetuate injustices, an emotion, an obsession with power or an outdated stage of development, then the criticisms mentioned above contain a solid foundation of truth. But then we are very far from what religion really is.

1.3. The sacred as an object of religion

Wisdom

We begin with a provisional definition of religion. In *the Bible, the book of Wisdom 6; 9/10* we read: "That you may learn wisdom and avoid faults, for those who observe holy things saintly will be recognized as saints". In other words, religion is wisdom, the vision of life's events. Especially a vision on "sacred" things. The attitude of the "wise man" is to give them their full meaning. "Wisdom" is the ancient or archaic term for "familiarity with the sacred". The Bible does not define religion as ecstatic or irrational behavior, as sometimes claimed. Or as we see in many extra-biblical religions. The Bible, on the other hand, argues that a person always maintains self-control. Religion confronts us with the other side, the sacred side of reality, and tries to confirm it through appropriate and ethically correct behavior.

The penetrating axiom, the principle par excellence for the believer is that there is something like "the sacred" and that it must be taken very seriously. It is the basis of the world and life. The origin of the term "religion" is said to come from the Latin "re.ligere". It is synonymous with "something", a high value, that always predominates. It is "something" that

we constantly want to confirm, unlike the Latin "neg.ligere", which means neglect. It can be compared somewhat with "re.spicere", respect, show respect, honor, and is opposed to "de.spicere", not respect, offend, ignore.

Secularized and de-sacralized cultures neglect the sacred. They believe they are able to understand all problems and solve them autonomously, arbitrarily, without a "superior" life force. That is secularization, so typical of our Western culture.

The "homo religiosus"

"The religious man is he who, during life, experiences the sacred directly as exceedingly, infinitely beyond the profane, and this according to information and the life force, or the "power" as a force for action. Religion is not seen here as an "abstract system of dogmas" or as "believing statements in the name of divinity" but as an experienced reality. This is exactly what F. Fénelon Spener (1668/1744), Ch. Dupuis (1768/1834) and many others have tried to clarify. (1744/1809), F. Schleiermacher (1768/1834) and many others have tried to clarify. The question arises: What is "holy"? Alfred Bertholet *Die Religion des Alten testaments*^[50] (The religion of the Old Testament) notices: "Heiligkeit bedeutet gesteigerte Kraftgeladenheit", (holiness means a higher force). This holiness is manifested, for example, in experienced forces and is revealed in descriptions of mysterious facts. "Additionally, we give a number of examples from the Bible, the Old Testament."

- *Exodus 3; 5*: Let us quote the last sentence of the text already quoted: Then said Yahweh (to Moses): "Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

- *Isaiah 65:5*: " Who say, `Keep to yourself, do not come near me, For I am holier than you!".

- *Ezekiel 22;26*. "Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

- *Ezekiel 44: 19*:"When they go out into the outer court, into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers; then they shall put on other garments so that they will not transmit holiness to the people with their garments.

- *Ezekiel 44: 23ss...* The priests enter the sanctuary of Yahweh and approach the altar. To respect the sacred nature of the rite and place, they put on their clothes automatically. "When they go out and go to the people, they will take off the clothes they have worn. They will immediately put on other clothes so as not to consecrate the people with their clothes. "According to this passage, the people apparently do not possess the high level of holiness of priests during their ritual acts.

- *Ezekiel 44:25*. "Priests shall not approach the dead, lest they make themselves unclean." In a number of cases and under conditions that may surprise us, modern and postmodern people, this is however permitted. It is believed that a corpse emits subtle matter and energy that is invisible to ordinary people. It penetrates the priests and "sanctifies" them, but here in a negative sense. They are impregnated with a harmful force that ruins life. This makes them unclean for the rites that Yahweh asks for. That is why there is a taboo on the sacred: it is only discussed in an overprotected setting. The sacred is dangerous if it is treated in an unskilled manner.

1.4. Opposite pairs

The Bible can be studied from a historical perspective. Modern and post-modern science constantly does this. But we can also try to immerse ourselves in a certain number of texts and look for the basic ideas. Then, through his reading, we will notice that they form a logical, coherent whole. From a limited number of intuitions, a number of "pairs" or "opposite pairs" can be identified. This makes it easier to understand Bible texts. We highlight, with some examples, some remarkable "pairs".

- Moses is on 'sacred' ground. Priests do not distinguish between the sacred and the profane. Their robes sanctify people. Apparently Yahweh makes a significant distinction between the "sacred" and the "profane". We will check this under 1.4.1.

- *Ezekiel 44* teaches us not to approach a corpse without the necessary precautions. This would release matter and energy invisible to the ordinary person who could harm him or her. Apparently, in addition to the common substance, there is also a kind of rarefied, subtle substance. The term 'hyle' comes from Greek and means "matter" or "stuff". On the one hand we are talking about a "hyclic monism", the existence of only one kind of matter, which everyone can observe. On the other hand, there is a "hyclic pluralism", the existence of several types of materials. We will see this under 1.4.2.

- The sacred is linked to the life force. In the Acts of the Apostles, Ananias laid his hands on Saul so that Saul could see again. This gives us the opposition "abundance of vitality" and "lack of vitality". Of course, it is not physical strength, but the remarkable energy associated with the "sacred". If religion is associated with such forces, then we speak of "dynamism" and "dynamic conception of religion". We will discuss this in more detail in 1.4.3.

- According to *Genesis*, Jacob lived a dream in which Yahweh addressed him. In *Exodus 3*, Moses saw an angel of the Lord and heard the voice of the Lord. Samuel and Isaiah also heard that the Lord has called them. In the *Acts of the Apostles*, Saul heard the voice of Jesus. Some people receive dreams and hear voices, while others are not aware of them at all. Here too, we can talk about a distinction between who is 'sensitive' and who is not. The extra-sensory perception or clairvoyance contrasts here with the ordinary sensory perception. We would like to clarify this further under 1.4.4. 'sensitive'. The extra-sensory perception or clairvoyance contrasts here with the ordinary sensory perception. We would like to clarify this further under 1.4.4.

We summarize what preceded. The sacred contrasts profane and hyclic monism with hyclic pluralism, dynamism with lack of vitality and extrasensory perception with ordinary perception with meanings known to all. We explain each of the four couples below in more detail.

1.4.1. Holy / profane

This world is divided into two spheres: profane or ordinary and sacred or holy. There are people who call themselves "saints". We think of priests, saints in the strict moral sense, many former kings. In addition, there are holy communities. Thus says the church of "the communion of saints". The inhabitants of heaven, the purgatory souls and the people of the earth, or members of a church and monastic orders can form a sacred community. There are sacred acts such as sacraments and rites. You also know holy things like temples and churches. There are sacred times. We think of the Sabbath, the lent, the Mohammedan Ramadan. Objects can also be sacred: a Bible, a Koran, the Vedas. There are holy and unholy people. The culprit, for example, is unholy. Many cultures speak of two kinds of magic, white or conscientious and black or unconscious.

The sacred

The Bible puts us on the way.

- *Gen. 2:1* states that the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day, thus making it a holy day”.

- *Leviticus 19:2ss...* says: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy". God is the primary source of all that is holy. The term "saint" (in Latin: ‘sanctus’) has a very high ethical value in Christianity. What is of Yahweh - places, times, people, objects - is also sacred through participation. The Lord is the first source of all that is sacred.

N. Söderblom professor in Upsala, writes in his *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens*⁸ (The Becoming of the Faith in God), that religiously speaking faith in God may well be important, but that the idea of "saint" as opposed to "profane", is much more decisive. Piety can do without an explicit belief in a divinity, but not faith in "something sacred".

The most common concept of 'saint' can be summarized as follows: "what is not being approached except under well-defined conditions." This is negative language. In a positive form it is said: everything that is so high and "different" - in the sense of "higher than" everyday life - that it is approached only with the necessary respect.

This may seem strange at first, but neglect or insufficient handling of the sacred, is not without danger". It is as if the Bible warns us that it concerns a very high energy. Before coming into contact with it, you must be well prepared for this "in your own depths". G. Van der Leeuw *Phänomenologie der Religion*⁹ (Phänomenology of Religion), indicates in example *II Samuel 6:7*, where a priest, Ozias (Uzza), "held by hand the ark of the covenant that was about to fall", and from this contact he did not survive. The ark was, according to the author, so strongly charged with holiness that the biological body could not withstand the contact of such high energy. We will come back to this later.", and from this contact he did not survive. The ark was, according to the author, so strongly charged with holiness that the biological body could not withstand the contact of such high energy. We will come back to this later.

In *1 Corinthians 11:27/32*, Paul emphasizes the consequences if, for example, the sacredness of the Eucharist is underestimated or ignored. He wrote:

"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world." Apparently, Paul means that if we are unworthy of communion, we can seriously, perhaps unconsciously, condemn ourselves in body and soul.

The sacred is always somewhat esoteric and occult and to this extent it is called a sacred "mystery". Whoever separates the mystery from the sacred mutilates the holy side of the very being, and the sacred, as it is given in its mystery, cannot penetrate it.

In this way, religion is not occasionally a day of celebration for those who really experience it. It is much more than that: in particular, it is a kind of force, rather hidden, that gives the believer the support he needs in life. Religion in its hidden and occult core seems far from simple. That it transcends everyday life will be discussed with determination.

Spirit / meat

The "holy / profane" couple is linked to the "spirit / flesh" couple. "Spirit" in the Bible means "life" and "divine life force". "Meat" means a life without this life force, a life that

resembles biblically more what is dead than what is alive. For the religious man, what is only "flesh" is substandard and stripped of all holiness. In the first definition of religion, we already had in *the Book of Wisdom*: "That you may learn wisdom and avoid errors, for those who observe holy things saintly will be recognized as saints.

This implies a choice: man can choose to do justice to holy things and avoid mistakes, or not to do so and make mistakes, but with consequences.

Galatians 6:7/8 expresses the consequences of this choice: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Let's read *Gen. 6:3*: "Then the Lord said, My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." God says very clearly that his "Spirit", his life force, saves from destruction while "the flesh", or morally inadequate life force, "causes" this fall. God, with his divine life force or "Holy Spirit", no longer considers himself responsible for those who ignore Him and His commandments in an unscrupulous way. Only those who possess a sufficient and powerful life force for God will be sufficiently prepared for the problems of life and thus solve them properly. In logical terms: Only "the Spirit", the essence of God's life force, sees the problem and the way of solving it, and sooner or later he can achieve this.

Logical reasoning

"That you may learn wisdom and avoid faults", we read in the *book of wisdom 6:2*. Likewise *Ecclesiastical (= Sirach) 37:16* says: "Every work begins with consultations and with every act is a preliminary plan". As a form of knowledge, religion is also open to a logical approach. This is far from irrational behavior, as is too often assumed. The statement "credo quia absurdum", "I believe because it is absurd" of the father of the church Tertullian (160/230), will never be a solid foundation of religion for modern man. If religion requires a belief in absurd things, then it provides no certainty, and it impoverishes the religious man in his own ability to perceive and reason. That is how this religion can confuse its supporters. It can then become a neurosis, an opium, an emotion, an outdated stage or whatever. But then it is far from what religion should be.

We prefer to focus on the logical reasoning that arises in the case of faith. Logic leads, among other things, to bringing axioms, the preconceived ideas we live by, to a better and more complete awareness. Then, from this, the necessary conclusions can be drawn. Once the axioms, the dispositions of religion have been established, there are the deductions: we think that the sacred revealed can be installed in a religious world and a certain vision of the world. From the saint perceived and filled with faith, come logical propositions about this sacred, the world and life. This can lead to various forms of worship. Religions then become much less a matter of 'faith' and much more a matter of 'proof'. In this vision, for example, it makes little sense to say: I believe and allow myself to be tortured for this belief, if necessary. Much more interesting, much more relevant are questions such as: what evidence, what logic, what coherence has the religion to which someone wants to adhere? What religious phenomena, what data do we have and what can we logically infer from them? So believing is no longer a blind and sometimes dangerous conviction, but rather an obvious one.

After all, it seems to us that a religion that is not logically responsible, especially in our modern world, does not stand up. Indeed, it seems much safer to examine the different religions at their true roots. What are the data? What are the questions? What are the solutions? This

gives us a firmer foundation and protects us from many avenues of error. Religions have to prove their worth, not by imposing their authority. That time is definitely over. Appealing to a blind faith and blind trust is asking for trouble.

A difficult evolution

Only the Spirit, the essence of God's life force, sees the given and desired destiny and can realize it sooner or later, as we wrote above about the "spirit / flesh" couple. This "sooner or later" indicates a very long time. The person who makes the right choices in life will gradually grow towards wisdom and "holiness" without too much detour. Anyone who makes bad choices will learn much slower and with a lot of damage. All this presupposes in man a radical and unusually difficult evolution to reach the domain of the 'holy' and of the 'spirit' from the 'profane' and the 'flesh'. We will come back to this a lot.

The profane

The profane means uninitiated, secular, non-ecclesiastical. 'Fanum' is the Latin word for "temple". Whoever stays outside the temple is profane. Our culture was much less profane than it is today. As already mentioned in the foreword, our last generation knew in its youth the last vestige of a stable Christianity that had existed for centuries. People believed that if they were baptized and had received the Confirmation or Chrismation and kept the commandments, they would then enter 'heaven' after death. These obvious certainties that once provided people with quiet serenity and sufficient self-confidence have lost much of their strength today. The horizons of life are much larger and less secure, the world and life itself are much more complicated.

Nominalism

Nominalism is linked to the profane. 'Nomen' in Latin means "name". For the nominalist, only the realities of "this side" exist. Ideas, as truly existing and objective "beings" in another higher world, have no real value. The content of the thought of a word is only a product of our consciousness. The consistent nominalist denies the spiritual in things. He remains a materialist and denies that there is a knowledge that exists independently of the thinker. He sees law, morality and religion as purely human and therefore subjective products.

It is different for the religious person. The name corresponds to an objective reality. For example, being outraged suggests that certain values are not respected. From a nominalist perspective, in which values are based more on agreement, contempt will be much more superficial than in the belief that true values transcend this world and should not be violated. Whoever does not have a value-sentiment in himself, cannot really experience indignation. Morality and justice come, for a religious person, from a different and superior world. For example, they are expressed through consciousness or, as in Christianity, through a series of commandments expressly received from God. Thus, for a religious man, pronouncing the name of a god will lead to the invocation of that god. For the believer, it is an objective reality. Nominalism indicates that a name is nothing more than an agreed sound. Modern philosophy and Western culture knew the Enlightenment and have since then been essentially nominalist. This is in contrast to all archaic, ancient and classical cultures. We will come back to this in detail.

Rationalism

Rationalism is linked to the profane. First, we distinguish between 'rational' and 'rationalist'. Both refer to data that are further studied by reason, by logical reasoning. The term "rational" has a rather neutral meaning. With the term "rationalist", the data are also subject to logical

investigation. However, with the following limitation: what cannot be scientifically understood does not exist for the rationalist. This includes that which surpasses science, such as the sacred, the soul and God. Paranormal and religious experiences can be worth a logical investigation for the rationally established scientist. This is not possible for the rationalist person. Given the latter's preconceived ideas, experiments that are not part of the difficult field of science can never be taken seriously.

Many people, including many scientists, argue, however, that in all realities there is something more than can be scientifically proven. A rationalist person will not agree with that. Against rationalism, it can be argued that intuition and feeling also play a role that should not be underestimated. How, for example, can we show that two people love each other? Any scientific evidence here will come across as artificial and won't convince anyone. And yet, for many, it is the foundation of their lives. For religious people, paranormal experiences can be particularly penetrating, even to the extent that the whole of their life is determined by them. If a religious experience has taken place, if someone has had a penetrating dream or heard an inner voice, this is an essential fact for him in which he wants to deepen himself with his intuition, but also with his reasoning, even though these data are not scientifically demonstrable. We will explain this in more detail (4.1.).

The Science

If we assume that 'only' that which is scientifically demonstrable exists, then we say that what is richer is poorer. This is what many religious and holistic thinkers think. This is called a 'reductive' view. This is shown in the use of the word 'only'. Reality is then only what can be verified repeatedly by the scientific research community, by the use of classical senses, or by a variety of specialized instruments. As mentioned, many of our lifestyles are non-scientific in nature, and thus, a child can grow up with the conviction that his parents love him and that they love each other, without this being demonstrated in a truly scientific way.

The natural sciences do not cover the whole of reality, but only a part of it. The whole reality encompasses much more than what is scientifically demonstrable. An ideological form of science presupposes that it encompasses the whole field of reality. A methodical form of science, however, affirms that its field is not the totality of reality, but that it is consciously limited to a part of it, namely that which corresponds to its preconceptions. In this case, the science is particularly precise, but limited.

The "Death of God theology"

In relation to the profane, there is also what is called "Death of God theology". We have experienced both the triumph of atheism and the breakthrough of a "Death of God theology" since the Enlightenment. As already mentioned, Nietzsche and with him many materialists have affirmed that God is dead. There is no god in this perspective to think and prescribe an ethical code of conduct, a Decalogue or a ten commandments, let alone sanction.

The Decalogue or the Ten Commandments

The Bible, *Exodus 34:27*, tells how Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai from Yahweh saying: "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

Let us take the popular form that the elderly among us still know from their childhood years. "You shall have no other Gods but me. You shall not make for yourself any idol, nor bow down to it or worship it. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy. Respect your father and mother. You must not

commit murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not give false evidence against your neighbor. You must not be envious of your neighbor's goods. You shall not be envious of his house nor his wife, nor anything that belongs to your neighbor. "

O. Willmann, *Abriss der Philosophie*¹⁰ (Overview of Philosophy), also summarizes them. In the first three commandments, God is taken seriously as the omnipresent authority. Remember that this is the etymological meaning of 're.ligio', as opposed to 'neg.ligio', negligence. This serious taking is done internally, by real conviction (the first commandment), but also externally, in everything that is spoken (second commandment) and this in a certain liturgy (third commandment).

The following seven commandments are in fact a mixture of commandments and prohibitions. The traditional wording sometimes indicates counter-models; what should be avoided, which is taboo. The fourth commandment concerns respect for parental authority and respect for children. Do not continue to "sin", or violate what must remain inviolable, against the person (fifth commandment), against the family and home (sixth commandment), against everything that is available (seventh commandment). Do not commit any sin against the right to the truth (eighth commandment); do not desire sexual pleasure in a sinful way (ninth commandment) or do not desire the possession of others (tenth commandment).

Ethnologists claim that almost all archaic civilizations had or still have a similar code of conduct. Without contact with Christianity, they already have a law that stipulates that life must be respected. Thus, the Bible says, *Rom 2:14*: For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

R. Van Caenghem, *Over het godsbegrip der Baluba*¹¹ (About the concept of God of Baluba), gives the code of conduct of the Baluba, a Bantu people in Central Africa. This is one of their prayers: "Muidi Mokulu, exalted God, who knows all my goods well. You know it: I never steal, I never covet another man's wife, I never do violence to another man's daughter. If, however, anyone shows me the evil eye that You, Muidi Mokulu, exalted God, pursue him with Your avenging eyes."

In other words, what the Bible explicitly expresses is a structure that is specific to all peoples and places people on the path of conscientious behavior. The wording may differ, but in essence it is the same. There are also two versions in the Bible: *Exod. 20:1/17* and *Deut. 5:6/21*. This indicates that structure matters, not variety of wording.

In *Psalms 15 (14)* we find the same structure: O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the Lord; He swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5. He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

In more common language, we can rewrite it as follows: "Holy Trinity, who will treat you confidentially? Who lives in your presence? The one who tries to live impeccably, who acts like someone with conscience. Who inwardly accepts a certain truth. He lives without letting his tongue go. He who does not harm his brother or sister, does not harm his neighbor. Who doesn't take perjury. Who doesn't accept anything that harms an innocent person. Who rejects

the sight of those rejected by you. But who fears and honors, You Holy Trinity. He who works in this way will never fall thanks to You, Holy Trinity."

And *Psalm 119 (118)* 1/6 praises man who gives his life entirely to God and His precepts "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart. They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways. You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep them diligently. Oh that my ways may be established To keep Your statutes! Then I shall not be ashamed. When I look upon all Your commandments."

Of course, many things have been published on the Decalogue. However, the following: Fuchs, *Le décalogue? Connais pas!*¹², (The Decalogue? I don't know it!) notes that, because of the profound secularization of our society, young people have not even heard of the Ten Commandments. Something that according to this theologian indicates the religious and moral degeneration of our culture.

However, those who read the Bible openly notice that it is not the commandments and prohibitions that are central, but rather the divine life force, the integral "sacred" that is emphasized. There is obviously a connection between them. Whoever fulfils these precepts in his life also increases his life force, his "holiness".

Archaic' morality

The fact that non-Christian cultures also have an ethical code of conduct is also illustrated by Christian Dedet, *La mémoire du fleuve*¹³ (The memory of the river). Dedet knows both the West and especially Black Africa. He was born in Gabon to partly French and partly black parents. As he gets older, he looks at his life and thinks: "In the desert, I always have in mind that life is beautiful, full of good things. For a long time, I thought people were each other's brothers. Later, I realized that in Gabon there are as many unreliable people as in other places. But it is certain that if an impertinent African nigger catches you in his nets, he will be ashamed later. Because if you see him again, his head tilts down. He knows he's done you wrong. He invokes a soothing circumstance: he was in need. In the West, however, you see people who are not in need and have nothing against you, but who are trying to rob you. They are used to it. "Vice takes them" and "things are like that," they say. To which we would like to kill them with a gunshot. But then we think, "They're not even worth it". Today's world is killing black African culture. The priests, had the merit of talking about divine law. Who's talking about it now? Stealing and killing becomes normal. There is no more respect. It should be noted that it is the poor black African without education who tells the white man in his logic: "You shouldn't do something like that. It's not good. It's not for you."

A tragic atheism

As a result of the "theology of God-is-dead", there is, as already mentioned, no God to prescribe or sanction this code of ethical conduct. On the one hand, we see a "blissful atheism", a kind of secular morality that is free from the "yoke of God". Nevertheless, a code of ethics is still maintained on the basis of previous practical agreements. The society must remain "habitable". This code is then "autonomous", it is not based on anything objective except people themselves, and this is where she differs from the Decalogue

On the other hand, in addition to this "blissful atheism", there is also something like "tragic atheism". If God does not exist as legislator and judge, then there is no longer "higher authority" that allows us to know what we should do and leave. In whose name could we be judged? The

autonomous man prescribes his own commandments. In this way, he is condemned to freedom. His life is a gift, but also a far from simple task: to determine the values of life yourself. This leads some to experience an inner abyss and a void. If there are no standards that rise above man, if "moral values" are based only on an agreement, what is still essentially prohibited and by whom? In principle, anything is allowed.

As mentioned above, many nominalists with Freud, Marx, Leuba, Nietzsche and their followers deny any form of objective ethics and religion. For them, the religious man is a gullible and naive person who wrongly believes that reality is more than what physical nature shows us.

W.E. Hocking, *Les principes de la méthode en philosophie religieuse*¹⁴, (The Principles of the Method in Religious Philosophy), is completely opposed to this. He writes: "In religion one can see such a thing as a definite 'no'. Religious man opposes the threats of physical nature that want to dominate him, if not devour him. Religion is a decided and massive refusal, and what it refuses is that material powers hold the whole person in their grip. It is not the believer, it is the unbeliever who is naive to natural phenomena. The deepest realities belong to the realm of the invisible."

Hocking clearly states here that the material world does not have the last word. Whoever thinks that, according to him, is gullible and naive. For the religious man, there is a sacred world behind and above this profane world, and this sacred world has the last word. Those who enter into this religious world will gradually experience the consequences in this profane world".

We will study it in more detail in this book. Insofar we observed the distinction: "holy/profane".

1.4.2. Hylic pluralism / hylic monism

Now let us see if the Old Testament mentions a multiple materiality. *Ezekiel 44* showed us the danger of approaching a corpse without the necessary precautions. According to this point of view, a dead person releases harmful invisible matter and energy, which makes us hypothesize the existence of "hylic pluralism", of several kinds of "matter". Let us go a little further in this hypothesis.

The witch of Endor

We read *1 Samuel 28:3/19*.

Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. Saul had expelled the mediums and the necromancers from the land. The Philistines assembled, and came and encamped at Shunem. Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. When Saul inquired of the Lord's will, the Lord did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and interrogate her." His servants said to him, "There is a medium at Endor." So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, "Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you." The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the necromancers and the wizards from the land. Why then are you putting my life in danger in this way?" But Saul swore to her by the Lord, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." Then the woman said, "Whom shall I call upon for you?" He answered, "Bring back Samuel for me." When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!"

The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the ground." He said to her, "What is his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up; he is wrapped in a robe." So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me back?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, neither by prophets or by dreams; so I have summoned you to tell me what I should do." Samuel said: "Why then do you ask me, since the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy? The Lord has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you today. Moreover the Lord will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; (note: in the hell, Hades or the underworld, as described in *Numbers 16:30*)" the Lord will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

The Bible also mentions that King Saul lost the battle and was killed along with his sons. We note that the necromancer belongs to those who are mantically especially gifted. She "sees through" the true identity of the king and is even able to subject a deceased prophet to her power of appeal. She is an Elohim, a being with great mental power. God's call in political affairs was far from rare in Samuel's time. This was the time of the so-called old covenant, in which Yahweh ruled the Jewish people among many other peoples. And this until the new alliance. These two agreements with God, the old and the new covenants, are explained in more detail in the text (see Chapter 13).

From the earth

The above text states that the shadow of the prophet Samuel came up from the earth. This shows that the Bible assumes that there is still life after death and that we also have a consciousness and even a body, although this body is subtle and misty like a shadow. Moreover, this ghost is not in the higher or celestial spheres, but in a kind of underground world, in the depths of the earth. Even if it's Samuel, a prophet. This is the situation of the people in the Old Testament, before Jesus, after his crucifixion, "went down to hell". There, where Samuel rises from the underworld, Jesus will come down after his death. We will come back to this topic in detail (6.3.). It is an ancient experience that ghosts of the dead, having enough "spirit" or vitality, can tell the truth and predict the future. And this in accordance with Yahweh or even without him. But calling the shadows is, as Samuel himself says, disturbing their peace. It is strongly discouraged in the Old Testament.

We note the following with this text. The prophet Samuel clearly has a body and it is even dressed in a prophet's mantle. We call this type of body by its traditional name: "the subtle body". This is material, but a substance much lighter than the material that everyone perceives. The subtle body is not subject to a number of limitations that our physical body undergoes. Moreover, this subtle body could take on different appearances. We will come back to this later. This biblical text shows that in the Old Testament, there is also a subtle body next to the biological body.

We will also consider this in the New Testament.

The Transfiguration of Jesus

In Luke 9:28ff. Jesus took the apostles Peter, John and Jacob climbed a mountain to pray. "While He was praying, He changed His appearance and His clothes became brightly white. Suddenly, two men spoke to him. It was Moses and Elijah who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, of the end of his life in Jerusalem. Peter and the others saw his glory and also saw the two men standing with Him. This shows us that the body of Christ can change form. His glorified body is usually hidden by the biological body. Although it is not physically or biologically perceptible under normal circumstances, such a glorified body is equally real according to testimonies.

We are still witnessing the appearance of two men, Moses and Elijah. Unlike the prophet Samuel, among others, they do not rise from the earth but are there "the light". This refers to *Psalm 56 (55); 13*: "For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living."

Suddenly, he was in their midst.

John 20:19ff. he speaks of the beautiful glorified body of Jesus: "So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and *said to them, "Peace be with you."

Although the door was locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus suddenly stood in their midst. He showed them the wounds in his hands and at his side. Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.""

If we take the text literally, there is first of all the subtle body of Jesus that passes through material objects such as a wall or a door. Then He materializes this subtle body and makes it visible and tangible to everyone. When Jesus disappears again, his body becomes subtle again.

Paul, in *1 Cor. 15:42ff.* after Christ's resurrection, speaks of a new resurrection. " So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

These two examples show that the new life will also have a subtle body next to a biological body. Moreover, it is not located here in the sheol or the underground world, but elsewhere, where it rises in glory.

1.4.3. Dynamism / lack of life force

After the opposite pairs "holy / profane" and "hyclic pluralism / monohylism" we immerse ourselves in the opposition "dynamism / lack of life force". In the *Acts of the Apostles, 9:12*: "Ananias come in and lay his hands on Saul, so that he might regain his sight." This leads us to a dynamic conception of religion. In religious studies, "dynamism" means the idea that religion is essentially a transfer of energy, of vital force. The ancient Greek term "dunamis" and the Latin term "virtus" mean "energy". The Old Testament mentions a number of texts in which this vitality appears. Two examples:

Your mind

Genesis 6:3: "The Lord says: My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh". In other words: If you remove Yahweh, your Spirit (life force), all those who live will die. But if you grant your Spirit (life force), you create life." It is clear that the Spirit of God, who creates life, is synonymous with the term "life force".

We also mention *Psalm 105; 29/30*: "You hide Your face, they are dismayed. You take away their spirit, they expire and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are

created; And You renew the face of the ground". Once again, it is clear that the term 'spirit', who creates life, is synonymous with the term "life force".

Abisjag of Sjoenem

We read in the Old Testament *1. Kings 1: 1/4*.

Now King David was old, advanced in age; and they covered him with clothes, but he could not keep warm. So his servants said to him, "Let them seek a young virgin for my Lord the king, and let her attend the king and become his nurse; and let her lie in your bosom, that my Lord the king may keep warm." So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abisjag the Sjunammite, and brought her to the king. The girl was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and served him, but the king did not cohabit with her.

This biblical passage can be understood as follows: the king, a man of great stature, became old and could no longer warm himself up. In its time, as in all archaic cultures, the monarchy was still considered sacred. To govern his empire, he needed a much more subtle vitality than a normal subject usually possesses. His declining energy was therefore a threat to his administrative task, and thus his entire empire would suffer. His "shadow", the body of the soul that dominates its nervous system and biological body, falls for lack of. It is too much reduced and leads to deficiencies. Biological ageing is the sign of this hidden - occult - exhaustion of the soul and its vitality. This is evident, among other things, in what people sometimes call "the cold elderly". This loss of bioenergy is felt, as some would now say, in coldness.

The relationship between the sexes

A young and exceptionally beautiful girl like Abisjag has an almost intact life force. This manifests itself in a powerful and beneficial feeling or aura. Sleeping close to King David creates a subtle contact and thus a transfer of energy. Abisjag cared for the king. It's already a form of contact. But David did not "cohabit with her", which means in biblical language that he did not have sex with her, although she had slept with him. Not that the old monarch was so far from eros, but it is, in this case at least, a demonic-magical method of "revitalization" adapted within the framework of the bible

From a nominalist point of view, we can explain this psychoanalytically, but we could also say that it is a common sexual behavior. However, this is in contrast to the cultural context of the time. The first thing that applies is the communication of the occult and subtle life force. However, it is a fact that a certain type of particularly young women has an extremely strong life force. Beauty seems to be the bodily expression of this deeper life force that radiates so strongly from this type of woman. The visionaries see the great and brilliant aura of such a person, and the sensitives feel it in his soothing image. Abisjag must have been of this type. The whole palace will have been imbued with its powerful and subtle aura.

This subtle energy can be given in various ways, for example by providing thermal energy. This energy, through the substance of the soul itself, "nourishes" the body of the hungry soul. But by far the strongest body-soul food is the relationship between the sexes. The courtier's council proceeds from this principle. The famous Sjoenamite was a young and beautiful woman, and obviously in this environment: she looked oriental. This means that the choice of ornaments would increase and strengthen its fine appearance. David was king and like all those who rule a kingdom, particularly eager for the subtle energy. Hence the long and difficult search for a young girl with a lot of energy. However, eroticism plays a subordinate role. Although such a "charged" creature eroticizes itself like Abisjag, eroticism is not central in itself. It's like

a channel for transferring life force. Anyone who sees only "sex" in this text misunderstands the original meaning.

As for the most beautiful attire, we can read in *Isaiah 3: 18/23*: "In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, finger rings, nose rings, festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses, hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils." All these "cosmetics", in the broad Greek sense of the word, strengthen the body of the soul or aura of the person wearing or using it.

The boy is resurrecting.

2 Kings. 4: 8/37 speaks of the prophet Elisha (Elisa) and the wealthy woman of the city of Sjoenem. She has a son. When he grew up, this child died. Elisha first sends Gehazi, his helper, to the dead boy to put Elisha's stick on the boy. Gehazi put the stick on the boy. But there was no sign of life. Elisha then went to the boy himself. He entered the room, closed the door and prayed to the Lord. Then he lay down on the bed where the boy was lying and laid down on the child. He put his mouth, eyes and hands on the boy's mouth, eyes and hands. Then he lay on top of him until his flesh warmed up. Then he walked up and down the house. He went back to bed on the boy. And this up to seven times. Then the boy sneezed and opened his eyes.

The child has risen again.

1 Kings 17:17:24 tells that the prophet Elijah lived with a woman. His son caught a disease that became so serious that he died. Then the woman said, "What should I think of you now, man of God? Did you come here to reveal my sins and kill my son immediately? Elijah replied, "Give me your son". He took the child from his arms, carried him to the room where he was staying and put him on his bed. Then he prayed to God to help him: "Yahweh, my God, you even bring misfortune to the widow whose hospitality I appreciate, by letting her son die? Then he threw himself upon the child three times, while he was appealing to the intervention of the Lord: "The Lord my God, I ask You that the soul of this child returns to him". And the Lord answered Elijah's supplication. The child's soul came back and he came back to life."

It is remarkable: acting on someone, face to face, Elijah and Elisha both do it as men of God. While praying, Elijah comes into intimate contact with God. Through this, he shares the Holy Spirit and the life force of God. He passes this on to the child who is inspired again. The woman then said to Elijah: "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord is true in your mouth".

So far, we have seen some samples from the Old Testament that illustrate the dynamism, the supply of life force. In the New Testament, let us also look for some examples of these forces.

Who touched me?

The subtle body of Jesus is generally not visible. But here again, his power extends. *Lucas 8: 43 ff.* tells: A woman who had suffered from the bloodshed for twelve years came to Jesus from behind and touched the hem of his garment. Immediately its flows stopped. But she didn't realize that Jesus was sensitive. Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" They all deny it. Peter said, "Master, it is the multitude that pushes and presses you." Jesus: "Someone touched me, because I felt that a power ('dunamis') came out of me".

Lucas continues: the woman became aware that she had been discovered and threw herself before Jesus' feet. She said why she touched him and how she was immediately healed. We emphasize that Jesus reasoned: He felt and knew that a force had come from him. So someone must have touched his clothing. His garment is indeed loaded with his high life force. Not

everyone feels it when someone touches their clothes and thus can absorb life force. Jesus felt it. This shows that He was "sensitive", and felt that a force had come from him.

Whoever touched him was saved.

Mark 6:56 also says: "Wherever Jesus entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured."

And further on, in *Luke 6:19* we read: "And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them al."

The miracles of Jesus

We give here an inventory of them. The New Testament tells of 32 miracles, 15 of which are physical healings. It concerns the most diverse evils, the "eternal miseries" of the people: crippled, lame, dumb, deaf and someone with a dried-up hand. In addition, there are incantations or exorcisms and resurrections. Lazarus is awakened from the dead, the son of the widow of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, and of course Jesus' own resurrection. Finally, there are the miracles related to the control of nature: the transformation of water into wine, miraculous fishing, two multiplication of bread, water and the calm of the storm.

In *Acts 19:11/12*, we read: " God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out."

We are already pointing out the suggested link between physical healing and evil spirits leaving the sick person. We have also just seen some samples from the New Testament that testify to a dynamism.

Religion is considered both in the Old and New Testaments as a subtle material force, which has an impact on the biological body. When a prophet or Jesus touches someone, it implies a transfer of power that makes, for example, healing becomes possible. G. Van der Leeuw, *Phänomenologie der Religion*¹⁵, (Phenomenology of Religion), also underlines this 'dunamis', this power. He writes: "We find in people and things the presence of a force that leads to effective results".

All these testimonies indicate that the Biblical religion is very 'dynamic'. The characteristic par excellence is the Divine vitality that is transmitted and leads to striking results. However, this opinion is strongly criticized by nominalists and rationalists. Not all believers agree with this dynamic vision. We will come back to this in a moment.

1.4.4. Extra-sensory perception / sensory perception

As the last opposite pair, we mentioned paranormal observation versus ordinary observation. The dynamism in religion, the subtle actions of force can be perceived by some. They are said to have a certain "sensitivity", they are sensitive or have a form of clairvoyance. A sample.

Prophecy

Num. 12: 6 notes that there is an "ordinary" prophet like Aaron. Yahweh said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings".

The Bible, *Genesis 28:13*, tells us that Jacob traveled from Bersabee to Haran and decided to spend the night in a certain place. He took a stone, put his head on it and fell asleep. There he had a dream. He 'saw' a ladder, from earth to heaven. The angels of God ascended and

descended. And the Lord stood immediately before him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your forefather Abraham and the God of Isaac. I give you and your descendants the land on which you lie down. Jacob woke up and said, "Truly, the Lord is here in this place, without my realizing it.

In *Num 12:7/8* Yahweh says: "Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

Apparently, there are degrees in friendship and cooperation with God. He lets his will be known through a dream when the man sleeps. But with whom He has a more intimate contact, He speaks "face to face". Hence also Moses' sigh in *Num. 11 :29*: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" Indeed, the word of Yahweh would then be directly accessible to all.

Jesus as the seer

We read *Joh. 2:23/25*: "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man".

This is one of the recurring characteristics of mediums: they "see" through the souls of their fellow human beings. This may seem strange to those who do not have a notion of "vision" and "clairvoyance", but Jesus turns out to be a "seer". The Gospels are full of clues about this. Jesus had prior knowledge of the things that were to happen. The Gospels mention this twelve times. He also constantly heard his Father's inner voice. He sees through people's thoughts. The prophets of the Old Testament were also visionaries. We illustrate this with some biblical texts.

A prophet

Joh. 4: 16/19 tells us that Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman: Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

The reaction of the Samaritan woman shows that the concept of "prophet" can indeed be converted into "clairvoyant". Further on, we read: "The woman left her jug there, entered the city and told people: "Come and see. A man told me everything I did. Wouldn't he be "the Christ"? "Thus, we see that Jesus is building a kind of charismatic authority, not an authority like that of lawyers or Pharisees, but an authority that is based on clear knowledge.

In *Luke 22:8/13* we read that Jesus sent his apostles Peter and John first, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it." They said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" And He said to them, "When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. "And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' "And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there." And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. "

The humility of Jesus

It is clear that, as in miracles, Jesus knew as a clairvoyant what was going to happen. E. Mercenier, *La prière des églises de rite byzantin*¹⁶, (The Prayer of the Churches of the Byzantine Rite), points out that the Byzantine liturgy knows "The Saturday of Lazarus". In long prayers, she commemorates the wonderful awakening of Lazarus from the dead (*John 11:1/43*).

But what is striking is the fact that Mercenier mentions that Saint Andrew of Crete, in his odes, repeatedly insists on the humility of Jesus as a clairvoyant. Jesus' humility reminds us that He repeatedly forbade people to say who He really was.

Biblical preconceptions

The dynamic nature of a religion holds or falls with the sacred aspect. Religion can be defined as paying attention to everything that is sacred. Whoever perceives intelligences and powers, sees them, hears them, feels them, experiences them, is a "dynamic" person in the field of religion. The paranormal forms the structure that religion uses.

Even those who do not experience it, but who consider it true in others, also have a "dynamic" belief. We believe, for example, because we take tradition seriously, because we persevere in it and thus come to faith, or through the testimonies of contemporaries who have such experiences and who are trustworthy. Most people's direct perception of the sacred is too limited to be able to speak of personal experience.

As mentioned above: religion, taken dynamically, is the founding, instinctive and real life force behind the visible and tangible world. The attention of the religious man goes beyond the profane. He knows that the sacred develops there. The believer assumes that there is something sacred, and checks what results. Experiences and examples in the field of religion and the sacred confirm a number of hypotheses and refute others. Through many examples, religion, and therefore the sacred, becomes a fact.

Only a literary genre?

Religion bears witness to the sacred, where a paranormal force works. This is the striking feature of a belief where dynamism is central. However, not everyone agrees on this point. There is also a nominalist and rationalist conception of religion. For example, with R. Bultmann (1884/1976) a German Lutheran theologian, *Geloof zonder mythe*¹⁷ (Faith without myth), we speak of a "demythologization" of the Bible. We want a Bible that is in line with the needs of our rather nominalist and rationalist times. The paranormal side of the faith is contested and also the historical character of Christ's miracles. Some even contest his resurrection, his descent into hell and his ascension. These events are reduced to founding and fictional stories. Nothing more than that. Thus we read that according to Bultmann "some of the traditional beliefs must disappear such as the belief in paradise, hell, the "descensus ad infernos" or the descent to hell, the ascension, the second coming, the faith in spirits and demons, the belief in miracles, and the future mystical expectation... "And we read further that by this demythologization, inappropriate stumbling blocks are removed" and "that in this way we gain a lot".

Bultmann's critics therefore do not speak of "demythologizing" religious values, but of "liquidating" them. In addition, 2 Peter 1; 16 contradicts this nominalist view: "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty". If we reduce biblical miracles to a literary genre, many believers argue that we could just as easily argue that the god behind them is nothing more than a literary genre, just as unreal and just as powerless.

K. Deurloo, *Waar gebeurd*¹⁸ (What really happened) speaks the same way as Bultmann. Deurloo is a professor of ancient mythology in Amsterdam. He affirms that Bible stories are not historical facts but a "kerugma", a proclamation in the form of stories. As "telling examples" of his interpretation, he explains a number of Old and New Testament texts to which he does not refer as eyewitness accounts but as "literary works". However, he admits that a certain "reality" must have brought about very fierce dynamics, but he even contests the historical minimum. Thus, it seems that all Bible stories have no historical basis. For the believer, Deurloo

represents the typical modern discourse in its reductive form: what is more is presented as less. Attention is mainly paid to the psychological and sociological impacts and emotional "agitation" experienced by the believer.

Sperna Weiland, *Het einde van de religie (Verder op het spoor van Bonhöffer)*¹⁹, (The End of Religion, Further on the road to Bonhöffer) said that religion presents itself as an escape from this profane world, a momentum that leads in particular to an "introverted interiority". It is clear that this describes only one form of secular religion. The unilaterality of this vision clearly stems from the lack of real religious experience. Weiland's express reference to Fr. Nietzsche and D. Bonhöffer (1906/1945) are very revealing in this respect. Also for Bonhöffer, as for Bultmann, the Bible must be demythologized.

The question is whether, according to Bultmann, Deurloo, Bonhöffer and their kindred spirits, the factual data, the phenomena, are considered as the Bible gives them, or rather according to their own nominalist and rationalist preconceptions.

The French philosopher E. Renan (1823/1892), *Vie de Jésus*²⁰ (Life of Jesus), also argues secularly. He declares a priori that the miracles of the Gospel were invented by the evangelists themselves and that they were not inspired by the Holy Spirit. He writes: "These two denials are not the result of our biblical research work, they precede it. They are the fruit of an experience that contains no denials: miracles are those things that never happen. No intervention by the divinity has ever been proven."

Renan's honesty in writing his own secular premise leaves nothing to be desired in terms of clarity. His statement that his denial precedes the investigation is overwhelming. A judgment that precedes the investigation can only be a prejudice. This is how the lay person reasoned if he dared to formulate his axioms. Another more effective way of working could be to first inform yourself well about what religious of different religions themselves say about such miraculous facts, to test their claims as much as possible and only then to judge.

So far, we have outlined these introductory contemplations concerning the biblical religion and the religious man.

1.5. In short: the "homo religiosus"

Religion is essentially an experimental reality. The biblical religion knows a homo religiosus. This religious man experiences God, individually and intimately. We see this through examples from the Old and New Testaments. In this, God takes the initiative, so that all the definitions of religion that do not assume this, are, according to the religious man, unreal.

The essence of religion is sacred. It's the opposite of the profane. In connection with this, is the biblical couple "spirit / flesh". Growing in 'spirit' and 'holiness' implies a difficult evolution. 'Spirit' and 'holiness' lead us into the realm of a multiplicity of materiality and a dynamic conception of religion.

Some people are more sensitive than others to the experience of such forces. The higher stage is 'prophesying' with the clairvoyant perception or even the communication of such healing powers to others. We established this with a number of prophets and with Jesus. Those who are not religiously sensitive, but who take it as reality through testimonies, through logical reasoning and faith, also have a dynamic vision of faith.

However, not all believers agree with this view and some choose a more nominalist and rationalist form of religion.

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