

CHAPTER IV

ON THE SOTERIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SYMBOL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Now I am revealing new things to you,
things hidden and unknown to you,
created just now, this very moment,
of these things you have heard nothing until now,
so that you cannot say, 'Oh, yes, I knew all this'.
Isaiah 48:6b-7

Another thing he said, 'What shall I compare the
Kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman
took and mixed in with three measures of flour till
it was leavened all through!

Luke 13:20-21

Should one turn to this chapter in hopes of finding the answer to the question of salvation, he/she will be disappointed. Both the character of this linguistic material and our situation as thrown Being-in-the-world precludes a new gnosticism, i.e., either a literal or a figurative explanation leading to a univocal meaning of salvation. On the other hand, both this religious language itself and the second-order reflection concerning the "how" of this symbol/language provide us in our epoch with new opportunities of understanding salvation and its meaning for us.

This new situation in terms of the text and the need(s) of our epoch, providing us with new opportunities of understanding, is not surprising. The tradition is, and has performed, this

function, and each epoch has confronted the task of understanding, over and over again in an analogous manner. That there is not one univocal meaning to salvation; that salvation/"turning" is an event in a particular individual's life experience and an individual's evolutionary or precipitous recognition of both need(s) and new possibilities of Being-in-the-world (including the level of community); that salvation/"turning," then, occurs at different "levels" of experience, i.e., at the ontic and the ontological; all this does not mean that we are left with no claims to make concerning salvation. We must avoid the danger of turning relativism into solipsism.

As indicated above (Chapter I, pp. 67f., especially pp. 70-71), Husserl's Phenomenology, Heidegger's Seinsfrage, Gadamer's hermeneutic theory focussing on das Spiel and die Wirkungsgeschichte, and Ricoeur's tension theory of metaphorical truth (which I have extended to symbol within the horizon of myth) do not result in a "pure solipsism" as a consequence of their affirmation of relativism. As Husserl teaches us, there is no denying the "truth" that meaning in the world is the unique, unrepeatable meaning of a particular consciousness. But consciousness is, on the other hand, always "consciousness-of." The "subject"/self is (as encountering life-world) "world," and does not create what it encounters. The passive syntheses of the life-world as the "deep background" of the individual consciousness are "operative" to the extent that they are "fulfilled," not creative, in terms of what is experienced in world. A tradition, then, (firstly, as the "deep background" of

the individual consciousness, i.e., the accumulated passive syntheses of the individual consciousness informing what is encountered) can be/in fact is both an affirmation of life-world (i.e., disclosive and illuminating of what is encountered and experienced in world) and (secondly, not as the "deep background" of passive synthesis, but here as the ineluctable and intractable that is the "objective" character of tradition) can be/in fact is a calling into question of the adequacy of the individual/community's understanding. Such calling into question, I wish to concur with Ricoeur, occurs most radically in symbols. "Symbols give rise to thought." symbols set in question and metaphorically announce the truth of "what is" as event, meaningfully constituted perhaps in the uniqueness of the individual's understanding, but resting upon conditions of possibility not created by the individual, e.g., the Being-of beings, Nothing, freedom, truth, etc. The symbol speaks "more."

The Symbol and Its Language

When one reads through the linguistic material constituting the primary material of the Christian tradition, one experiences not readymade answers but surprise, questions, and shock. It is valuable to look at this material carefully:

The Kingdom sayings:

Luke 11:20

But if it is through the finger of God that I cast out devils, then know that the kingdom of God has overtaken you.

Luke 17:20-21

Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was to come, he gave them this answer, 'The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, "Look here", Look there!" For, you must know, the kingdom of God is among you.'

Matt. 11:12

Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm.

The Lord's Prayer of Luke 11:2-4

He said to them, "Say this when you pray:
'Father, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come;
give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us.
And do not put us to the test.'"

The Proverbial sayings:

Mark 3:27

But no one can make his way into a strong man's house and burgle his property unless he has tied up the strong man first. Only then can he burgle his house.

Mark 3:24-26

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never stand.

Mark 8:35

For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

Luke 9:62

Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God'.

Mark 10:23b,25

'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'.

Luke 9:60a

But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead;'

Matt. 7:13-14

'Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.'

Mark 10:31

'Many who are first will be last, and the last first.'

Mark 7:15

Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean.

Mark 10:15

I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'

Luke 14:11

'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

(cf. Luke 16:15)

'You are the very ones who pass yourselves off as virtuous in people's sight, but God knows your hearts. For what is thought highly of by men is loathsome in the sight of God.'

Matt. 5:39b-41

'On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him.'

Matt. 5:44-48

'But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

The Major Parables:

Matt. 13:44-46 The Hid Treasure and the Pearl

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.'

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.'

Luke 15:3-22 The Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost (Prodigal) Son

'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them'. So he spoke this parable to them:

'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say "I have found my sheep that was lost." In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.

'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," she would say, "I have found the drachma I lost." In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

He also said, 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me". So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father

came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property--he and his women--you kill the calf we had been fattening."

'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.'"

Matt. 22:1-14 The Great Supper

Jesus began to speak to them in parables once again, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants. "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He despatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding". So these servants went out onto the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'

Luke 14:16-24 The Great Supper

But he said to him, 'There was a man who gave a great banquet, and he invited a large number of people. When the time for the banquet came, he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, "Come along: everything is ready now". But all alike started to make excuses. The first said, "I have bought a piece of land and must go and see it. Please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and am on my way to try them out. Please accept my apologies." Yet another said, "I have just got married and so am unable to come."

'The servant returned and reported this to his master. Then the householder, in a rage, said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame". "Sir," said the servant "your orders have been carried out and there is still room". Then the master said to his servant, "Go to the open roads and the

hedgerows and force people to come in to make sure my house is full; because I tell you, not one of those who were invited shall have a taste of my banquet."

Luke 16:1-9 The Unjust Steward

He also said to his disciples, "There was a rich man and he had a steward who was denounced to him for being wasteful with his property. He called for the man and said, "What is this I hear about you? Draw me up an account of your stewardship because you are not to be my steward any longer." Then the steward said to himself, "Now that my master is taking the stewardship from me, what am I to do? Dig? I am not strong enough. Go begging? I should be too ashamed. Ah, I know what I will do, to make sure that when I am dismissed from office there will be some to welcome me into their homes."

'Then he called his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, "How much do you owe my master?" One hundred measures of oil" was the reply. The steward said, "Here, take your bond; sit down straight away and write fifty". To another he said, "And you, sir, how much do you owe?" "One hundred measures of wheat" was the reply. The steward said, "Here, take your bond and write eighty".

'The master praised the dishonest steward for his astuteness. For the children of this world are more astute in dealing with their own kind than are the children of light.'

Matt. 20:1-16 The Workers in the Vineyard

'Now the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage". So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us" they answered. He said to them, "You go into my vineyard too". In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first". So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last-comer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first last.'

Matt. 21:28-32 The Two Sons

'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today". He answered, "I will not go", but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly sir", but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first' they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe him.

Matt. 11:16-19 The Children in the Marketplace

'What description can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place:

"We played the pipes for you,
and you wouldn't dance;
we sang dirges,
and you wouldn't be mourners".

'For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed". The Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners". Yet wisdom has been proved right by her actions.

Luke 18:9-14 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

He spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being virtuous and despised everyone else. "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, "I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like the rest of mankind, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get." The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." This man, I tell you, went home again at rights with God; the other did not. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

Luke 10:29-37 The Good Samaritan

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged

his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said "and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the brigands' hands? 'The one who took pity on him' he replied. Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same yourself.'

Matt. 18:23-35 The Unmerciful Servant

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed him ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me" he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you". But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

Luke 14:28-32 The Tower Builder and King Going to War

'And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, "Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish". Or again, what king marching to war against another king would not first sit down and consider whether with ten thousand men he could stand up to the other who advanced against him with twenty thousand? If not, then while the other king was still a long way off, he would send envoys to sue for peace.

Luke 11:5-8 The Friend at Midnight

He said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him in the middle of the night to say, "My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine on his travels has just arrived

at my house and I have nothing to offer him"; and the man answers from inside the house, "Do not bother me. The door is bolted now, and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up to give it you". I tell you, if the man does not get up and give him for friendship's sake, persistence will be enough to make him get up and give his friend all he wants.

Luke 8:1-8 The Unjust Judge

Then he told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. 'There was a judge in a certain town' he said 'who had neither fear of God nor respect for man. In the same town there was a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!" For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Maybe I have neither fear of God nor respect for man, but since she keeps pestering me I must give this widow her just rights, or she will persist in coming and worry me to death".

And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now will not God see justice done to his chosen who cry to him day and night even when he delays to help them? I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?'

Luke 13:20-21 The Leaven

Another thing he said, 'What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.'

Mark 4:30-32 (Luke 13:18-19) The Mustard Seed

He also said, 'What can we say the kingdom of God is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which at the time of its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out its branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.'

Mark 4:26-29 The Seed Growing by Itself

He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come.'

Mark 4:3-8 The Sower

'Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow. Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found little soil and sprang up straightaway, because there was no depth of earth; and when the sun came up it was

scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away. Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no crop. And some seeds fell into rich soil and, growing tall and strong, produced crop: and yielded thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold.' And he said, 'Listen, anyone who has ears to hear!'

Mark 12:1-12 The Wicked Tenants

He went on to speak to them in parables, 'A man planted a vineyard; he fenced it round, dug out a trough for the winepress and built a tower; then he leased it to tenants and went abroad. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce from the vineyard. But they seized the man, thrashed him and sent him away empty-handed. Next he sent another servant to them; him they beat about the head and treated shamefully. And he sent another and him they killed; then a number of others and they thrashed some and killed the rest. He had still someone left: his beloved son. He sent him to them last of all. "They will respect my son" he said. But those tenants said to each other, "This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." So they seized him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. Now what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and make an end of the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this text of scripture:

It was the stone rejected by the builders
that became the keystone.
This was the Lord's doing
and it is wonderful to see?

And they would have liked to arrest him, because they realized that the parable was aimed at them, but they were afraid of the crowds. So they left him alone and went away.

The Symbol of the Kingdom of God: Shock

The reader is, of course, encouraged to seek out the relevant, exegetical literature both found in the tradition and contemporary to obtain a thorough analytical insight into the complexities of this linguistic material. The historical critical analysis of the life-world informing this language at the time it was originally spoken and found in the work of Joachim Jeremias and Norman Perrin (among many others) throws much light on the shocking character of this material.

One encounters this shocking character, however, simply in the reading of it: in the so-called kingdom sayings, where one might expect to hear about an apocalyptic, violent entrance of the kingdom on the horizon of history, one reads that, rather, the kingdom is being subjected to violence, that it is not coming with signs to be observed, that one is already "overtaken" by the kingdom. The Lord's prayer mentions nothing of "heaven" as either an after-life or as hinting that evil has been conquered; rather, the plea, the hope, is the coming of the fullness of the kingdom in everydayness (a granting of basic living necessities; forgiveness as acceptance of finitude, but not as correction of an ontological violation or stain, rather at the level of personal life-world; concluding with the hope that life will not put us under trial). The proverbial sayings challenge all forms of ontological dualism (which perceive reality as a struggle between lightness and darkness; good and evil; God and the devil) affirming "unity." But here the shock is perhaps most radical: we are not only told that the divine reality "causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike," but all forms of "social conventionality" are called into question: e.g., the first shall be last; leave the dead to bury the dead; the kingdom is to be accepted not through the rationality/order of adulthood, but as a child; virtue is condemned as an external judgment; to struggle to obtain "security" in life is judged to be the very path leading to the loss of life; humility is extolled; food laws, i.e., figuratively

all religious piety expressed in terms of conformity with social conventionality, are "reversed" (it is not the external form, but rather the internal disposition that determines "cleanliness"); when forced to go one mile, we are to willingly go two; we are to love our enemies; "it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it." The parables, however, are even more enigmatic than transparent. Supposedly saying what the kingdom of God is like, they offer more confusion than clarity. The kingdom is "hidden;" when one "finds" it there is every reason to celebrate the "exception" rather than order/rule; but celebration is not without form, i.e., perhaps the conventional rules are violated in terms of invitation as in the case of the Great Supper, but the guest without a wedding garment is thrown out "where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth;" the unvirtuous are rewarded; those who have done little work receive the same payment as those who worked "the whole day;" not the "formal," external qualities of righteousness are extolled, but rather humility and the recognition of self-limits; the neighbor is defined in such a way that the hearer has to combine "good" with what society has throughout the tradition defined as "heathen"/wicked; yet there is an extolling of "calculating" one's "resources;" a championing of persistence even at the expense of friendship; the kingdom grows "in spite of" human understanding, leavens the whole, begins as the smallest and results in the greatest, and, though there is not equal "growth" overall, there is always growth; and what is rejected can be the very keystone,

i.e., the judgment that "here" or "there" the kingdom of God is at work is not a "human" judgment according to human order and standard.

Hence, one does not have to read this material all that carefully to see that a) a literal reading leads to absurdity and b) reducing the figurative language to a dogmatic form of allegory or the reducing of the multiplicity of meanings to a univocal meaning "behind" the text is not acceptable. We are confronted here with a symbol evoking a myth/narrative that the divine reality operates in history, and this linguistic material is attempting suggestively to articulate a/the meaning(s) of this divine reality in terms of concrete human experience. By means of the myth and symbol there is a challenging of the human that can lead to an ennobling and elevating out of a call to "more;" a challenge to everyday human understanding and its drive to calculate, predict, manipulate and control.

". . . the hearers /of Jesus are challenged to say what cannot be said, to applaud what should not be applauded, to recognize in the reversal of human judgments and human situations the sign of the breaking in of God's Kingdom." It is in this way that the Kingdom comes.

The tradition has understood this language and symbol as a challenge of salvation, as a call to "turning," freedom. It is clear from the language itself that there is not a univocal meaning for this "turning," salvation: such always occurs in light of the self-understanding of each "hearer."

¹Norman Perrin, "Interpretation of a Biblical Symbol" in The Journal of Religion, 55, No. 3 (July 1975): 361.

Methodological Considerations

In an attempt to suggest a thorough and radical description of contemporary self-understanding, that might inform meaningfully an understanding of the call to salvation occurring in this language challenging us from our tradition, this project has turned to hermeneutic phenomenology.

To the extent that it is informed by the new discussion in hermeneutics, the position maintained here is that of a "recognition of the limits of method," but insistence upon its application (as historical criticism, structural criticism, literary criticism, and linguistics - see above, p. 76, n. 4). In addition, however, "method" is employed not at the expense of "truth" to avoid the dichotomy presented by Hans-Georg Gadamer. "Truth" is here understood in a more radical manner than adequatio intellectus et rei. Truth is to be understood in terms of two dimensions corresponding to the two "dimensions" opened up by the ontological difference. Truth is, then, the ontological event character of the Being-of beings, i.e., the revealing/concealing of the clearing that is the enabling of world. Truth is, in addition, the always "relative," more or less adequate (never absolute), result of the constituting of meaning in intentional consciousness; itself having an "event" character in that it is praxis, i.e., consciousness as consciousness-of is a constant checking out, fulfilling, of its constituted, accumulated meanings (noetic) in terms of the encountered (noematic). To the extent that the noetic is fulfilled in the noematic, we may speak of a relative, and adequate, truth.

The hermeneutical situation is always one, then, of "being in the middle." Our reflections, and the call we receive to reflect, do not occur out of "thin air." We are the extremely complex Da-sein (There-Being) in the "clearing" within a temporal horizon. Within the complex movement and horizon that we are, however, we may speak of "poles" in our experience both calling us to reflection and offering us authoritative claims. These "poles" are our tradition, i.e., language (the past), and our contemporary experience (the present). I appeal here consciously to the "Revisionist Model" for contemporary theology outlined by David Tracy in Blessed Rage for Order, especially pages 43-56.

We are in the present not an isolated "now," to be sure, but a past-future-present that "comes toward us" and "leads us forward" - to employ metaphorical language. At no point are we a present understanding merely "correcting" past understandings. At no point, for example, are we able, or permitted, to claim possession of a "higher truth" that seeks either to destroy or to discredit the struggle to understand (and the claim of that struggle upon us) in/from the past. The dynamic understanding of the tradition presented here means that, as a theologian, it is extremely important that the struggle throughout the tradition to understand the metaphors, symbols, myths, stories, legends, etc., of our inheritance be taken extremely seriously, and when not "applicable" or "fitting" for today's understanding are at the least to be preserved: our struggle to understand tomorrow, or the need(s) of the future, insist that the multiplicity of

understanding deposited in our tradition be always available a) as challenge and b) as aid in the ever new, and, so long as there is human consciousness shaped by the trajectory of our tradition, never-ending struggle to understand.

The attempts at understanding the claim of salvation in our tradition, even if inadequate to our understanding in the present, are not, however, to be merely preserved, but to be understood, in addition, as challenge. It is not that Gadamer, Ricoeur, Husserl, Heidegger, et.al., now offer us the true "metaphysics" informing the understanding of Jesus in this language. Such an arrogant claim is as false as it is ludicrous. This symbol and language call us into question and suggest possible meanings which have a power precisely because there is a Wirkungsgeschichte, i.e., a tradition, between this symbol/language and ourselves. The situation is clearly, then, not a choice between the insights of hermeneutic phenomenology and the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus. Even when responses in the past are judged, on the basis of rigorous analysis of human understanding in the present, to be inadequate, they remain as challenge: have we understood radically enough?

We are, as suggested above, "in the middle" (see, in addition, the discussion in Chapter III, pages 194f.). Whatever reflections we have in the "present" can only occur because of the "past" calling us into the future. As "a middle" we are involved in a dialectical process in the sense that our understanding is a ceaseless process of testing the past in light of the

present and vice-versa. Our descriptions of the present human condition may, perhaps, appear to be taking place "isolated" from the past, but Gadamer reminds us of the Wirkungsgeschichte that totally penetrates all that we "are" just as Heidegger speaks of our "historicality:" understanding is historical.

In addition to the "everyday" meaning of understanding as "making-sense-out-of," I have attempted to present a more rigorous meaning for understanding through the analysis of Gadamer and the hermeneutical situation (see above, pp. 74f.), which itself calls on the discussion in §32 of Heidegger's Being and Time entitled "Understanding and Interpretation," and the analysis of "world" (see above, pp. 210f.). The analysis has stressed the "pre-encompassing understanding of totality" that is a projecting of possibilities which then are concretely realized in interpretation. Explicitly: this is not a passive subjectivizing outside-of, or along-side-of, world. Dasein (including intentional consciousness) "is" world. How is Dasein world?: through interpretive understanding which is a dynamic, active, event process of "hearing" and "application." Gadamer stresses that all interpretation is application. By concentrating on the question "How do we interpret/apply?, understanding as a primordial process as pre-encompassing and projecting of possibilities has come forth. This is possible, again, only when the question of the meaning of the Being-of beings becomes the focus of investigation. Understanding is the pre-encompassing projecting of possibilities enabled by the fact that we are Da-sein (There-Being). The Being-of

beings sets us primordially into understanding relationship as projecting possibilities to world, and we ontically work out our interpretive possibilities because of this primordial condition of possibility ontologically articulated by the metaphor of the Being-of beings. Theologically: God enables understanding; I believe, therefore I understand.

Following Ricoeur's use of the "real definition" from Leibniz, the analysis has concentrated on the question at each stage of "How?" "How" is it that we "are called to thought?" "How" is it that we are a "world?" "How" is it that we constitute meaning in consciousness? "How" do we "understand?" By concentrating on the question "How?," it has been possible to bring to consideration the conditions of the possibility of our Being-in-the-world within a temporal horizon. Again, this project has followed the "new beginning" epistemologically enabled by Husserl's Phenomenology and "ontologically" enabled by Heidegger's Seinsfrage. Their work in-forming the understanding of the hermeneutical situation in the reflections of Gadamer and Ricoeur are all united by their analyses being foremost directed by not the question "what?", but rather the question "how?"

It is in light of such an analysis of our contemporary self-understanding that this project has a specific symbol in a specific language from our Jeudo-Islamic-Christian tradition as the "primary" focus of its meditations. That the word primary is in quotation marks is meant to indicate, again, that at no point is it possible to encounter this symbol and language "purely" and

"disinterestedly" as an empirical object "in the past." Positivism is an illusion. Gadamer and Ricoeur teach us that, rather, our hermeneutical situation is "open-ended," i.e., the process of understanding occurs "on this side of the text;" we may not assume the luxurious position of being able to, or even of attempting to, understand the author "better than the author understood him- or herself;" there is no indubitability about our current understanding, rather there is only the process of trying to understand (in both senses of understanding). The text reads us just as much as, if not more so, than we read the text. The text (in this case, this specific symbol embedded in this language and myth) is part of a Wirkungsgeschichte that approaches us in all of its richness, and is not simply an isolated object in the past.

Therefore, the methodological illusion that we can begin reflection without presuppositions (and go directly without any mediation to the text) must be surrendered. Again, as Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us, we do not do away with presuppositions, we can only attempt to understand them and to see "how" they are functioning in the understanding process. This is as true for theology as it is for philosophy. It is not as if theology recognizes that it begins with (a) presupposition(s) and philosophy is free of presuppositions as Eberhard Jüngel wishes to maintain, see above, p. 123, n.1. Both philosophy and theology, as second order reflection concerning first order experience/language, have only the choice of clarifying or not clarifying their presuppositions as

adequately as possible in an attempt to understand "how" they are informing one's understanding. Hence, if there is a difference between philosophy and theology, it is only in terms of "what" (which primary experience, i.e., language) they take as their "object" of second order reflection, but never in terms of "how."

Theology/philosophy can make "symbol," as a general element in language, the object of its/their reflections in an attempt to understand "how" symbols function among the other elements, structures, and the event character of language. How free from presuppositions, i.e., how clear they are concerning the presuppositions present in their analysis (which in turn influence the attempt to understand the "how" of symbols), is, of course, equally an open-ended question. When the philosopher analyses a symbol, can he/she ever do so without the influence of the Wirkungsgeschichte of a tradition informing his/her understanding? The more we understand about understanding, the more clear it is that presuppositionless encounters are impossible. Hence, when the theologian attempts to understand the general functioning of symbols, does that mean that he/she does so "objectively" without actual, specific symbols informing the process of understanding? Not only may the theologian not claim to "know" from what "source" he/she has obtained an idea or insight with absolute certainty, the theologian must recognize that his/her "source" does not "know" from whence its ideas or insights come. A concrete example: Heidegger speaks of "the saving." Where does the idea of "the saving" come from? Heidegger quotes this phrase

from Hölderlin. Hölderlin is a poet educated as a theologian. When I, as a theologian, read "the saving," what am I reading, or what is reading me? Our whole tradition is both concealed and revealed in these two words, "the saving." It is an endless, even if enlightening, inconclusive process to attempt to trace the "whence" of an idea. The more fruitful question is, "how" does the idea contribute to our understanding? Heidegger articulates the dichotomy so:

Thinking itself is a way. We respond to the way only by remaining underway. To be underway on the way in order to clear the way--that is one thing. The other thing is to take a position somewhere along the road, and there make conversation about whether, and how, earlier and later stretches of the way may be different, and in their difference might even be incompatible--incompatible, that is, for those who never walk the way, nor ever set out on it, but merely take up a position outside it, there forever to formulate ideas and make talk about the way.

The task at hand is understanding as we are underway "in the middle." This is precisely no static process where we step outside of the traffic for awhile to contemplate "pure ideas" or "truth." The simple dichotomy between change in experience and changeless ideas is an illusion. When the attempt is made to radically understand who we are as Dasein, then our "being in the middle" as the clearing on the way, where for however brief a time the meaning of world, i.e., of self, God, environment, and our responsibilities are "lit up," comes forth as event within a temporal horizon. We must get on with our understanding, tasks, and responsibilities underway.

¹Heidegger, What is Called Thinking?, pp. 168-169.

What can the present project's attempt at understanding, both of our contemporary situation in the world and of our tradition, contribute to possibilities of soteriological understanding for the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus?

Symbol, Language, and Salvation

In an attempt to understand the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus, it was necessary, in order to clarify the "how" of understanding presupposed in the very attempt to understand the symbol, to investigate the "how" of symbols as a general character in language. This is a possible enterprise, again, only because there are already specific symbols in our language. Ricoeur reminds us that in the most profound sense, "the symbol gives rise to thought." The imaginatio of the metaphor/symbol provides the shock that drives speculative discourse to search for the "ground" of the metaphor/symbol:

If the imaginatio is the kingdom of 'the similar,' the intellectio is that of 'the same.' In the horizon opened up by the speculative, 'same' grounds 'similar' and not the inverse.

Or again,

If, in the order of discovery, the speculative surfaces as a second-level discourse--as meta-language, if one prefers--in relation to the discourse articulated at the conceptual level, it is indeed first. discourse in the order of grounding.²

¹Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 301.

²Ibid., p. 300.

Husserl's Phenomenology suggests "how" we may most adequately describe the event of our encounter with this, or any, symbol. The description of intentional consciousness provided in Chapter III indicates the legitimacy of the "objective" claim in that consciousness is always to be understood as consciousness-of. The illegitimate objective claim is that of positivism, which views the objects as absolutely or indubitably given (there!), rather than as a series of "profiles" that are constituted as, at first, similar, then, as the same, in consciousness, i.e., ideas are constituted in the dynamic flow of consciousness, and are not "outside," "above," or somehow "eternal" beyond experience. The "object" is identifiable in terms of its "now" within a/our temporal horizon. What is to be indicated by this "a/our" is that all meaning, or the making-sense-out-of, occurs in particular consciousness, i.e., it is my, your, our particular, conscious experience. Hence, in the encounter with the "object," two "nows" are involved when the "object" is an "object" from the past. There is the particular now of the individual consciousness (what Husserl calls the "absolute now"), and there is the "past now" which determines/establishes the specificity of the "object." At the same time as we experience this sequential character to temporality, it is only because of the simultaneity of our temporal horizon (see above, pp. 13-21; 239-247) that a past "now" may become an object of our concern/investigation in the present "now." This suggests, in addition, the "working" of the intervening "time span" between the past "now" and the present "now" in our

concern/investigation of an object of the past. Hence, we can speak with Gadamer of a Wirkungsgeschichte or with Heidegger of a geschichtliches thinking as opposed to historicism and actualism (see above, pp. 287-288). We are, in the most primordial sense of the term, historical.

The complexity of our understanding situation, in terms of the sequential character and simultaneity of our temporal horizon, enabling the specificity of an object determined by a past "now" in the stream of "nows" to become the object of our concern in a present "now" (including the influence of the intervening "nows" between this past "now" and the present "now" of concern), must not lead to a dis-valuing of any element in the description, as I have stressed above. It is a consequence of listening to Husserl's careful analysis of temporality (remembering that the always and already presencing of the Being-of beings as the enabling of the sequential and simultaneity characteristics of temporality from Heidegger's analysis has here been presupposed in Husserl's analysis) and intentional consciousness, that I must avoid a discrediting of the importance of any element in the description of our encountering of an "object," because each encounter, then, is one of the "whole" (including temporality/Wirkungsgeschichte).

For example, in relationship to the present project: the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus is the "object" of the investigation. This object has its specificity in terms of a past "now," i.e., as occurring in a specific language at the beginning of our common era/Christian

tradition: 1) "How" this symbol functions in this specific language involves our need to be aware of the symbol's own "history," which we can only relatively adequately trace (as an ontic investigation) as a result of a historical critical study of the symbol's use in the tradition prior to its appearance in this language (This analysis will/does disclose both similarity and difference in the way it functions/discloses in the language of the historical Jesus.). 2) In addition, "how" this symbol functions in this specific language demands the careful investigation of the Sitz im Leben of its original occurrence in this specific language, i.e., in terms of its "world" as that of its "original" audience. 3) Further, the investigation is informed by the intervening centuries of analysis, interpretation, and application of the symbol, with or without its originating language, in our tradition. 4) Finally, however, our understanding of this symbol within this specific language will be informed by its ability to disclose meaningfully our experience in the present "now." All of these elements are occurring simultaneously when we encounter this "object" of this specific past "now" within its specific linguistic horizon.

Making the task in this case even more complex, however, is that the "object" of the present project is a symbol. Symbols in general, it was suggested above (see Chapter II, pp. 138-143), function with both a temporal and an ontological priority over all philosophical/theological reflection/description: a) temporally, as is indicated above, in that it is the symbol which gives rise

to thought, i.e., the split reference of the symbol forces reflection, and b) ontologically, because the symbol "intentionally" breaks open conventionality in an attempt within the horizon of linguistic conventionality to dis-close the "more," the "depth," of our experience by functioning not only in terms of a relational nature to other elements within language (as a mere apophantic "is"/"is not"), but by functioning precisely because of its referential character enabled by the copula, indicating the movement/event character of "what is" and breaking out of nominalism. In the case of a symbol, which the analysis shows to be a metaphor but functioning not at the level of the sentence, rather at the level of the narrative/myth, the "intentionality" of the symbol is that of enabling, elevating, and ennobling of the human.

The present project has attempted to emphasize the importance of all four of these elements contributing to our understanding of soteriological possibilities in the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus:

1) Norman Perrin's historical critical analysis of the symbol, as it appears in the tradition prior to its use in this language, has been presented along with amendments from Klaus Baltzer and Paul Hanson (see above, pp. 55-65).

2) The analysis has stressed what the reader, encountering this symbol in this originating language of our Christian tradition, has already noticed: the symbol and its language shocks! It calls worldview(s) into question. It turns "normal," i.e., conventional, expectations upside down. This is not only the

conclusion of the "hearer" today, it is perhaps even more "true" for the "original audience" as this is documented in the work of Perrin, Dan Via, Dominic Crossan, and Robert Tannehill, among many others.

3) This project has attempted to heed Perrin's warning that the symbol of the Kingdom of God not be reduced to a concept (see above, p. 55). The implicit judgment of this entire project is that this symbol has, for the most part, been "reduced" to a conceptual meaning by the various theologies of the tradition (e.g., as a literal claim "beyond" this life by Paul, Augustine, and Neo-Orthodoxy; the goal of the via negative of our mystical tradition; a philosophical principle by Aquinas; an evolutionary/revolutionary ethical/material kingdom on earth by 19th century German Liberalism, Liberation Theology, Marxist Christians, etc.). All such conceptualizations failed/fail to allow the symbol to be a symbol, and have maintained, and/or perpetuated, the illusion that we ought to, can, and do, know what the Kingdom of God means.¹

¹Given contemporary understanding concerning the universe, temporality, consciousness, Dasein, the divine reality as disclosed in the philosophical metaphor of the Being-of beings, linguistics (i.e., metaphors and symbols), such claims and quests for "absolute knowledge" or to know, or speak from the perspective of, divine intention, must be judged naive, presumptuous, and totally inadequate. This judgment, however, is not itself an absolute judgment on the basis of "superior knowledge." It is a judgment based upon an attempted careful analysis of our contemporary situation, which suggests that at "best" we come to a relatively adequate, i.e., meaningfully disclosive for our experience and understanding, position based upon as rigorous an analysis of "what is" (our linguisticity and Wirkungsgeschichte) in light of the question "how" as possible. Such conceptual reductions of the meaning of the symbol of the Kingdom of God must, then, be rejected in favor of a more disclosive, i.e., tensive, understanding. Perrin's own contemporary model of such a tensive understanding

The history of the interpretation/application of the symbol of the Kingdom of God in our tradition (a task going far beyond the possible limits of the present study) would demonstrate the contrary: that is, that the symbol has continually sprung the horizons of the conceptualizations, and remains a question much more than an answer. We will never cease, so long as there is human consciousness shaped by the wirkungsgeschichtliche trajectory that is our Judeo-Islamic-Christian tradition, to be confronted with the question: what is the meaning of the Kingdom of God?

There is here, in addition, a confirmation of the judgment enabled by hermeneutic phenomenology, that we are only engaging in an illusion when we apotheosize either the text or the "author" in the search for "authority" for our theological claims. The text (i.e., the symbol and its language in this case) is no absolute, objective object that we can reduce to a universal empirical meaning in the spirit of positivism. The "intention of the author," on the other hand, escapes our judgment, because it is an impossible judgment for us to make. We stand "on this side of the text" as Ricoeur wishes to stress. Understanding is an

is the American Social Gospel Movement at the beginning of the 20th century reflected in the work and writings of Walter Rauschenbusch (see "The Interpretation of a Biblical Symbol," p. 366). It must be equally stressed in this context, however, that my criticism here is in terms of "how" the symbol is understood by these theologies, and in no way is it a depreciation of the struggle by these theologies to respond meaningfully to concrete human/environmental/sexist/world needs. We not only have more honesty in our enterprise, when we approach not only this symbol but our tradition tensively, but theology becomes/may become a powerful force facilitating the response to needs in our world, when it understands itself and its task adequately.

open-ended process, and its authority is its disclosive power for experience, i.e., the experience of the "hearer"/"reader."

4) The symbol, its language, and myth(s) make a soteriological claim and can be redemptive only if they, then, speak to our experience as "hearer" today. They have performed this function meaningfully in past epochs. Can they/do they continue to do so today? They can and do continue to function soteriologically to the extent that they speak to our most rigorous attempts to understand our contemporary human situation and the need(s) of our epoch. The understanding of the meaning of this radical symbol and language (radical both because of its central role in our tradition, and radical because of its comprehensive claim/question) in any age/epoch by any individual/community, will be shaped by the level of understanding of that age/epoch/individual/community concerning our common human situation in relationship to the divine. The present analysis offers the insights gained by the philosophical description of our contemporary human situation in relationship to the divine enabled by the work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. These provide the "epistemological," "metaphysical," "hermeneutical," and "linguistic" understanding of "turning" and "freedom" informing the soteriological claims of the present project.

Symbol and Soteriology

The task of the present analysis has been to pursue self-understanding as radically as possible, as well as, the pursuit of the "how" of metaphor, symbol, and myth not in the quest of

the final, "correct" understanding of the meaning of salvation, but as an attempt to open up the possibilities of understanding for this symbol of the Kingdom of God in this originating language in relationship to the dynamic process of our tradition and our contemporary understanding of "who" we are.

Salvation involves a "turning" and a "freeing." It goes beyond the possible parameters of this present undertaking to engage in an analysis of the various models of salvation to be found in the tradition more than a) to cursorily point out Phenomenologically the model character informing all soteriological claims (that implicit to every soteriological claim is an understanding of God, the human condition/fault, and process of redemption, i.e., of the "turning" and "freeing" offered by the particular model); that is a concentrating on the "what" character of salvation, and b) to suggest with Perrin that the symbol of the Kingdom of God has been consistently reduced to a specific conception within each model, i.e., a specific "what," rather than allowed to remain tensive (open-ended in its meaning) throughout the tradition.

The foregoing analysis raises the question, then, what happens/would happen, when, out of an understanding of the "how" of symbols, we allow this central symbol of our tradition to function as a symbol? Is it then possible to speak of soteriological claim(s) (i.e., a "turning" and "freeing") that addresses rigorously and disclosively both the tradition and our contemporary human situation and understanding?

Remarkably, the symbol, as it appears in this originating language (which we can with relative certainty identify as coming

from the historical Jesus) rejects any literal reductionism or dogmatic allegorization confirming the judgment of hermeneutic phenomenology that the way to an authoritative interpretation is neither by means of an apotheosis of the author nor of the text. The symbol shocks! It shocked its original audience, i.e., its original life-world, and it continues to shock, i.e., it continues to stand in meaningful/disclosive relationship to life-world today. Such a tensive dimension of meaning cannot be adequately maintained, when the hermeneutical task today were to remain simply at the level: what did the symbol mean to its author, or what did the symbol mean to its original audience? These, of course, remain legitimate questions, but they fail to be adequate for us today a) because epistemologically they are unanswerable in any "final" sense; and b) these questions alone fail to allow for the tensive process of understanding in language, particularly announced in symbols.

This symbol, language, and myth(s) challenge conventionality; challenge all "ideologies," that attempt to reduce multiplicity to a transparent explanation of our common human situation; affirm the movement/event character of "what is" in and through conventionality and form; and suggest that the divine is present in (not outside of, or at either the beginning or end of) history. The symbol/language/myth(s) shock today! This shocking character breaks open conventional understanding of "what is" in a way that could transform "how" we understand God, ourselves, and our world. Above all, however, this is a dynamic, tensive understanding, and not a static explanation.

It is hoped, that the present project has indicated, that both a fresh encounter with this primary literary material at the "origin" of our Christian tradition, as well as, a radical attempt to articulate the "how" of our Being-in-the-world "epistemologically" (as intentional consciousness) and "ontologically" (in terms of the question of the meaning of the Being-of beings) demand attention to the movement, the event character, the possibility, i.e., the "hope" of our experience. What is thereby suggested, however, is not a "blind" hope either in terms of "progress" (see above, p. 22, n. 2) or in terms of confidence in the final victory of good over evil.

Having isolated the symbol, language and myth(s) challenging and informing its soteriological claim, the present analysis turned to as radical an analysis of our contemporary human situation as possible in an attempt to speak convincingly of the divine reality, the human situation, and the process of salvation.

The divine reality is not here understood as "over against" or "outside" of world. Rather, it is articulated metaphorically as the Being-of beings; the enabling of the conditions of the possibility for our being transcending Being-in-the-world, i.e., Dasein; the No-thing enabling possibility; the enabling of the clearing that is more primordial than truth as correctness; and the enabling of the hope seeking the growing of the saving power.

In the "forgetfulness" of the divine reality we encounter an ontological need of the human that has, by means of the forgetfulness, become a mere, and ever increasing, in-sisting on the

self-establishing of its security at the expense of existing in the clearing. This ontological need indicates at the same time its soteriological need: the challenge of the divine that the human and world are "more;" that the divine is an enabling of the human to surrender its insisting to move into the fullness of the clearing; that greater than actuality stands possibility; that in the "turning" Dasein radically and deeply encounters terror and anxiety, to be sure, but at the same time the very condition of its possibility; that the divine reality is this "calling out," the enabling of the risk, the call to future, the promise of "more."

The analysis of intentional consciousness has indicated the finitude of consciousness as necessary for it to experience, to constitute meaningfully, world; the functioning of temporality as succession and simultaneity; the "here and now" of meaning; life-world as history/tradition/passive synthesis; praxis (active synthesis) at the foundation of conscious experience as the dynamic, continually testing, fulfilment (or non-fulfilment) of constituted meaning in light of the noematic, "objective" data; the unique, unrepeatable character of each individual; the subject-object correlation (not split) of the consciousness-of; the role of the "individuum" concealing life-world by standing forth as the "object" of circumspective attention, but itself enabled by means of the horizon of life-world as accumulated passive synthesis. Here I have followed a path of thought that speaks of "who" we are, as the human, that forces us to turn not to "what" but to "how," resulting in an appreciation of the uniqueness of each individual

as a specific event of constitution for the meaning of the divine, life-world, and human (i.e., "world").

In turning to Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor, the extending of this analysis to symbol, and incorporating Jasper's understanding of myth with that of Ricoeur's, it has been seen that the myth in itself is representative of the "ordering" within which the new meaning announced in the split reference of the symbol (metaphor) breaks open world ennobling and elevating the human. Myth is no more extra-ordinary than any other "ordering" whether it be the ordering of a scientific model or at any other level of life. The "extra-ordinary" of myth is its symbol(s). This is the point where the "is" functions in tension with the "is not;" not by abolishing the "is not" (the literal claim), but by including the "is not" while enabling new meaning(s) through the resulting "twist" indicating the fundamental movement/act/event character of "what is." Here temporality and the copula come forth with an originality within language itself (i.e., pointing beyond the "ordering" of conventionality, that is the lexical system, not by arising "outside" of that ordering/conventionality, but within it as its very condition of possibility); hence, in/through myth with its symbol/metaphor(s), the Being-of beings and time are announced in the original unity/difference of the ontological difference.

An analysis of the meaning of the divine reality in terms of the philosophical metaphor of the Being-of beings; of the human as intentional consciousness informed by an understanding of the ontological difference; and of the "how" of metaphor, symbol, and myth,

all stress the "priority" of movement/act/event over stasis/conventionality while at the same time affirming/enabling form/order.

Hence, the analysis shows that the linguistic material and its symbol at the "origin" of the Christian tradition, as well as a rigorous analysis of the conditions of the possibility of our Being-in-the-world, challenge the human to the "more" of possibility not at the expense of form/order but by means of, and through, them. Both the level and the extent of the challenge is/will be understood, of course, by each individual/community encountered by, and encountering, this linguistic material of the tradition according to their level (i.e., rigor) of understanding/imagination.

What is the soteriological significance of the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus? The soteriological significance is found in the multiplicity and movement of the symbol evoking the myth of God's reigning in experience making a claim upon the life/understanding/imagination of each individual/community encountering this linguistic material. The symbol is/evokes question and promise!

The language itself, as we have seen, warns against a literal understanding of the divine reality as a monarch ruling over/above a kingdom. Certainly the motifs of the drama of the Divine Warrior found in apocalyptic literature are absent in this language.¹ The symbol remains a question. The question places our self-understanding/imagination as an individual/community in question, and at the

¹See Paul Hanson's analysis of this Divine Warrior drama in The Dawn of Apocalyptic, pp. 299-313. Its Canaanite origin is identified on p. 98.

same time challenges us to (ennobles and elevates us to) what cannot be literally articulated, i.e., the "more."

This elevating, ennobling, enabling occurs, it is the claim of the present project, in terms of the two "levels" of experience pointed to by means of the "ontological difference." Concretely, the calling into question, elevating, ennobling, enabling, i.e., salvation, occurs in terms of a) the particular ontic needs of the specific individual/community "caught" (often understood precisely as a static situation) in the destitution, disasters, demonic, despotic exploitation, dilemmas, disappointments, discouragements, destruction, detainments, depression, murder and death of life. The "turning" enabled in such ontic situations is an awareness of the always and already presencing power of the divine reality within the particular situation enabling perseverance and engagement in the struggle against the limiting, or evil, of the situation, and for the elevating and cherishing of life under whatever depressing or debilitating circumstances (not as mere passive waiting on the part of the believer, but as enabling of action/praxis on the part of the individual/community).

On the other hand, or additionally, salvation occurs b) as the "call" of the symbol/myth(s), i.e., as the call of freedom in/through No-thing; the call to see the clearing, that is the human, as itself the enabling of meaning (including the meaning of the divine reality); the call from within the core of evil challenging us to new configurations of order (as well as confirming that we are not alone in the evil--the divine reality is intimately/

organically present here as well, and to be held as accountable for evil as for the good in world just as we); the call "out of the abyss" as possibility when the abyss in terror confronts us as the negation of all that is; the call to celebrate in worship, and in the concrete struggles of life, the presence of the divine in the midst (and not at the edge of, or outside of) life. The symbol gives rise to thought, and, as a consequence of the new understanding of the divine reality, the human and world that it enables, i.e., the salvation, "turning," "freeing," the symbol offers a salvation demanding application/praxis!

But what is salvation when evil is not eliminated? What is salvation that remains historical? This project suggests that all dualisms/multiplicity are equally part of the conditions of the possibility that we are world, i.e., that both the divine reality and experience have meaning. Hence, salvation (the soteriological event understood ontologically in terms of an understanding of Nothing, freedom and truth) is a "turning" of the human/Dasein that results in understanding the divine reality as intimately/organically present in all experience (phantasy, imagination, despair, terror, hope, evil, etc.).

With the question, "what is salvation that remains historical?", we reach the core of the present project which is an attempt to understand the divine reality by means of the philosophical metaphor of the Being-of beings. The divine reality and the saving are here thought as thoroughly historical (not to be confused with historicism and actualism, see above, pp. 287-288). The understanding

here defended is that the divine reality is "equally" (not in terms of a mathematical measuring, but in terms of presencing) present in good and evil. As suggested above, p. 314: "It is precisely because the divine reality is 'present' and 'absent' in all dualities that we are able to move beyond (to transcend) our being 'trapped' on one side of any polarity."

The divine reality is here presented as the "presencing" of multiplicity, i.e., as the enabling of the thrown "clearing" of Dasein's encountering of beings within a temporal horizon. The divine is, then, able to be spoken of as the "unity" in "multiplicity." These terms must, however, be understood metaphorically, i.e., tensively rather than literally/statically. To be avoided by the employment of the ontological difference in speaking of the divine presencing in experience is any simple static identification of the Being-of beings with beings. The Being-of beings is event (revealing/concealing); the enabling of the possibility of beings (and the clearing by means of which Dasein experiences beings and the Being-of beings meaningfully) as the "is" of the "between," as the "is"/"is not." Hence, the divine reality encountered in understanding (as a pre-encompassing understanding) is not a reality "outside" of experience (nor merely on the edge), but at the same is not to be simply "identified" with a static "state" of the sum of its parts. It is "in" but "more" (tensive). It is not separate from evil or the abyss, but what enables us to transcend all manifestation of evil/the abyss to reach a new configuration of possibility (evil and the abyss have been spoken of as the two terrifying

characteristics of the divine, see above, p. 312). The divine reality enables us, then, to go on; to continually take on the struggle against evil (despite its deep, complex and inextricable presence in "world") and with the terrifying of the abyss that threatens to reduce all meaning to nothingness. This is not because our tradition offers "one" objective claim that discloses the victory of the divine over evil/death. As we are reminded by Lessing, precisely because we cannot establish an empirical event in the flow of history as indubitable, the accidental truths of history can never be universal truths of reason, i.e., one event in history cannot be the "explanation" of all events (such a "positivistic" vision of history would destroy the importance of other events in history were "one" event the explanation of all). No, we need confirmation of the presencing of the divine reality in experience that is much more than "objective;" we need confirmation in our experience in the now of what "transcends" in world as well as coherence with the claims of our heritage of the presencing of the divine reality in experience (and not "more" or "less" in a/some experience(s)).

The soteriological claim of this present project, occurring out of the challenge of the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus and the consequent struggle to meaningfully understand for our experience of world now that soteriological claim, is the rigorously informed judgment, on the basis of a speaking of the divine reality in terms of the philosophical metaphor of the Being-of beings, that no matter how deep we

we experience evil/the abyss, nor how wide the horizon of our ontic experiencing either qualitatively or quantitatively (i.e., historically), the divine reality is always and already there as enabling condition of possibility. This is the saving, the promise (even when this possibility is "unexpected" or occurs in another region of "ontic" need than anticipated, e.g., as in the parable of the sower), and at the same time the disclosure of our responsibility as individual/community in world. The "letting be" of the Being-of beings is not mere "indifference" (see above, p. 300). It is the challenge to come fully into the "clearing" that is Dasein as transcending Being-in-the-world. This involves our active engagement, and is no mere passivity waiting on the "destining of Being." Such a destining is the danger, and is the terrifying, because it identifies the trajectory of the disclosing/concealing of the Being-of beings, but, again, it is, as well, the announcing of Dasein's/the community's possibility and responsibility. The saving is more primordial than the terrifying; is more primordial than the insisting quest for security that is the consequence of human belief that it can calculate, predict, manipulate and control out of confidence in the ordering of conventionality. The saving "breaks open" conventionality to disclose the movement, the event character, of "what is." Hence, the saving demands response. Not simply a way of understanding (in the everyday meaning of understanding as "making-sense-out of") the individual, but additionally the Other (as equally Dasein), world (involving an understanding of temporality and life-world) and the divine reality are included in the turning. The "old" "is"/"is not" the "new."

It is by no means self-evident, however, that the divine reality as "unity" in "multiplicity" (even if involving temporality, i.e., even if understood tensively/historically) is enabling of the saving. As indicated by the two ways of speaking of the terrifying above, there are two fundamental problems confronting the attempt to speak of the divine reality in terms of the philosophical metaphor of the Being-of beings, i.e., as intimately/organically in (as event, i.e., "is"/"is not") world: a) the problem of freedom versus determinism; and b) the problem of radical negation (evil and the abyss).

These problems have been addressed in terms of an analysis of Schelling's system or "fugue of Being." Schelling saw correctly that the question of freedom stands at the core of such an attempt to speak meaningfully of the divine reality as unity in multiplicity. Three problems, however, were identified in Schelling's attempt: 1) the very fact that it is a system, i.e., the attempt to give an indubitable answer rather than an understanding of the "fugue of Being" as a question (see above, pp. 283f.); 2) Hegel's observation that here we have no real appreciation for negativity (see above, pp. 281-283); and 3) the recognition that multiplicity is, for Schelling, in the end a "mere show" by means of which the divine reality is disclosed, i.e., what Schelling names as both the end of revelation and the terrifying in the divine (see above, pp. 279f. and p. 308).

Schelling attempted to remove the divine reality from evil by insisting that the human alone is the place where good and

evil occur. Here is where freedom is spoken of as "possessing" the human (rather than merely vice-versa), because such freedom to good and evil is necessary for the disclosure of the divine. Though it is a necessary freedom for Schelling, it remains free, because it is a choosing of good and evil. The divine remains distant from evil. Evil is the rebelling of the human into the insisting of the self over against the spirit of God and, more importantly, over against what is more primordial than God's spirit for Schelling, i.e., divine love understood as the primordial unity of the two principles of ground and existence enabling all that is. The entire revelation, according to Schelling, is the consequence of the divine desire/will to be disclosed, but this desire is not part of the divine nature--hence, Schelling keeps the divine distant from the consequent evil that the desire enables. It is, additionally, of no little importance that Schelling speaks of the threat of chaos (see above, p. 269) over against the divine creating, i.e., the chaos that can at any point break in and destroy order/conventionality.

This project, on the other hand, has attempted to think the divine reality as the primordial enabling of our thrown Being-in-the-world, hence, primordial to Being-in-the-world is, to be sure, movement/event/act breaking open order/conventionality--but not to Schelling's feared chaos, rather to "more."

Schelling's system is understood, then, to be inadequate, a) because it seeks to provide an absolute answer; b) because it does not radically appreciate the negativity (evil and the abyss) in the

disclosure of the divine reality; c) because it reduces multiplicity as, in the end, the mere occasion for the disclosure of the divine reality (particularity in itself has no real meaning); and d) because it perceives chaos, rather than movement/event/act, as primordial. Schelling's work remains important, however, because it attempts a) to think the divine reality in terms of the "fugue of Being" that b) understands freedom to be the central principle c) which more primordially possesses the human rather than vice-versa.

The present project has attempted, however, to go further in an attempt to think the divine reality in terms of the "fugue of Being" having freedom as its central principle which possesses the human (see above, pp. 289f.). Freedom has been thought as "transcendence," i.e., as establishing the unity of transcendence (p. 291) in terms of the abyss which enables the disclosure of beings (as well as of the Being-of beings), enabling understanding (as a pre-encompassing projection of possibility) by its (i.e., freedom's) projecting/world sketching with us (pp. 291-292). Hence, freedom is thought in terms of the three elements of possibility, base, and documentary evidence/substance, i.e., since freedom is the enabling of thrown Being-in-the-world, it is primordial possibility that establishes world and the ability of Dasein to point to "what is" in terms of its conventional everydayness (which is spoken of here in terms of these three elements, because world and Seienden are the complex event of the Being-of beings, beings, and Dasein). Freedom is seen, then, in terms of the primordial character of truth as the revealing/concealing of

what is, as the "letting be" that is no mere indifference, but what enables our engagement in world and challenges us with engagement. Hence, freedom/truth is/are to be thought as a revealing/opening that enables the dis-closing of the realm of things (as an over-against in the clearing that is the thereness of the Being-of beings, i.e., Dasein) as well as the transcending unity of the Being-of beings in the multiplicity of "things." The unity cannot be disclosed otherwise than through multiplicity (by means of the clearing that is Dasein's priority in the "order of things"), but the necessity of freedom is not determinism. The only necessity of freedom/truth is its/their possibility that world and the divine be dis-closed.

The terrifying of this disclosure, however, is no less real than the possibility it enables. Freedom possesses the human by enabling the conditions of the possibility that the human be thrown Being-in-the-world. At the same time, however, freedom announces the abyss and the terror that the nothingness over-against the something is the final "victor." This same abyss announces, however, the very possibility of world, and challenges us to seize our possibilities. Secondly, the terrifying of this disclosure is that there is no clear victory of good over evil promised by the presence of the divine unity in multiplicity. The divine reality, thought in terms of the philosophical metaphor of the Being-of beings, is the enabling of all multiplicity, and hence is radically/intimately/organically present in evil as well as good. Again, however, the terrifying discloses the saving:

"'But where the danger is, grows
the saving power also.'" ¹
Hölderlin

The terrifying announces the movement/event/act character of reality as more fundamental/primordial than conventionality/order. The divine reality in the midst of evil, again, is precisely what challenges us to transcend (to fight beyond) the manifesting evil to a new configuration of possibility for our Being-in-the-world.

In response to Schelling's system, where "what is" is in the end a "mere show" by means of which the divine reality is disclosed/announced/revealed, the present project understands the divine reality as intimately/organically "presencing" in "what is" (Being is always to be thought as the Being-of beings.). Hence, multiplicity is no "mere show," but is the "necessary," concrete struggle by means of which any and all meaning is announced. Without the concrete, without the particular, i.e., without history, the divine reality itself has no meaning. The reverse is, then, also to be claimed: each and every particular event has meaning (even when it is a disclosure of the demonic) because of the divine "presencing" calling us "forth," "out," to "more." Hence, the divine reality can be understood to be deeply committed to the destiny that is our historical Being-in-the-world just as we are. The divine reality is then understood as the power which enables us in the midst of the abyss and in the midst of evil to seek out new possibility and configuration for our Being-in-the-world. Contrary to Schelling, we are not alone with evil. There

¹Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 28.

is no "place" ("there") where we as Dasein (There-Being) could go, either into the depths, or the breadth and heights, of "what is," where the divine reality is not always and already there as "presencing" power. It is then possible to retrieve the powerful tradition in the Psalms which calls God to accountability, as well as ourselves, for the evil in which we find ourselves enmeshed. The danger, which is the destining of the divine reality, is, as well, a "calling out."

Hence, any ontical configuration of "what is" that threatens or negates the turning (soteriology) is to be fought, for it diminishes the realizing of possibility and the disclosure of the divine reality and world. By what criteria do we judge what is to be "fought?" Certainly, whatever criteria employed are relative to the adequacy of our understanding. Such relativity demands the temperance of humility and tolerance while at the same time demanding that our understanding be as radical and comprehensive as possible. At least such criteria as the following emerge out of the above analysis/understanding: a) any threat to temporality as either sequence or simultaneity; b) any threat to annihilate the individual and his/her life-world; c) any threat to "world" ("world" here understood as the complexity of the Being-of beings, beings, and Dasein, i.e., including the divine "presencing").¹

¹Problems already arise with these criteria. For example, without a tradition we cannot understand (Gadamer's Wirkungsgeschichte, Heidegger's historical thinking). This suggests, and insists upon, the preservation of tradition (temporality), even those elements that do not "fit" our understanding and need(s) in our current situation. A tradition may have "demonic elements in it, however, which negate the other two criteria suggested here.

These criteria cohere with the primary affirmations of the divine presence in experience and of the life (i.e., worth) of each individual that have informed our tradition since its "origins." This, however, out of the fullness of the tension of the "is"/"is not" of the copula, and not simply because of a simple identification of the divine reality with a literal/static/apophantic "is" as either "this worldly" or "other worldly." Since the divine is articulated tensively in terms of the symbol of the Kingdom of God, the historical struggle of concrete human experience in all of its complexity and ambiguity; the struggle with evil in all of its forms; the struggle with, and terror of, negation in its radical announcement as the abyss, are meaningfully engaged. The symbol functions out of the surplus of meaning, i.e., because of its "more" and "depth," enabling, elevating, and enobling the human.

This, again, is in contrast to the reduction of the symbol to a specific conceptualization having a specific, universal, and absolute claim to all of history; in contrast to our understanding of the meaning of the Christian faith as a "call to decision" (as the unifying thread running through the multiplicity of kerygmas in the New Testament to the very neglect of the richness of the

Such negation must be fought in "the past" as well as in the present and future. Hence, the preservation of tradition meant here is not an uncritical, passive acceptance of our inheritance. As in all situations, we are challenged by our tradition to make a critical (and informed) response. We cannot assume "progress" in understanding as the thrust of tradition (see Gadamer's and Ricoeur's judgments concerning progress in understanding above, p. 22, n. 2).

of the tradition's articulation of faith); in contrast to our apotheosizing the text or its author(s); in contrast to a theology with one presupposition which is not allowed to be brought into question subject to the principles of human thinking; in contrast to a theologizing that maintains itself as Christian because of (a) literal "objective" claim(s). Here the symbol functions, rather, as a symbol, engaging the imagination and seizing its possibilities in light of the "real" world (the experienced world) with all of its contradictions, suffering, exploitation, pain, hopelessness, depression, destruction, murder and death. The symbol challenges us to see "more" deeply, to understand "more" primordially, to struggle "more" radically. At the same time the symbol speaks of the divine presencing that is closer to us than we are to ourselves enabling us in the midst of evil, and over against the feared abyss, to engage the concrete reality/need(s) of our experience. We are not alone: God-is-with-us.

In response to Norman Perrin's questions, then, (see above, Chapter I, p. 65): 1) is this symbol and language alive, dead, or dormant, and 2) is the salvation history myth which mediates its claim to speak of the "inner meaning of the universe and of human life," is this myth alive, dead or dormant?; this project responds that this symbol, within the ordering of this/these myth(s), remain(s) not only alive, but may be understood as challenging us with, and an an enabling of, our salvation at the ontic and ontological "levels" of our experience in the world. It sets the human in question in a most fundamental and comprehensive

manner; it forces the human to recall what is forgotten in the midst of everydayness and conventionality; it points to reality as more primordial than what merely "objectively is," that we have come to see in terms of its being accessible to us in the sense of our calculating, predicting, manipulating and controlling for the sake of our "security," i.e., as in-sisting. The symbol and myth(s) are a way of calling us to think anew the No-thing, freedom, and truth that are the condition of the possibility that we "are" and are yet "more." The symbol calls us into the clearing as a temporal horizon. Hence, the symbol and myth(s) are a call to take up our responsibilities by responding to our experience of "what is," and to attempt to organize our lives out of this "prior" understanding (not to organize that we might be able to understand).

The symbol at the core of this teaching material is one possessing extremely deep roots in the myth(s) of our tradition, and this language employs the symbol and myth(s) in all of their suggestiveness and surplus of meaning to "force" the hearer/reader to call his/her world into question to seek ever anew understanding of who we are in world. John Dominic Crossan views the functioning of the parables in a similar manner:

When reality is seen as parabolic, as images projected on the white screen of chaos, the question of John Giraudoux in Tiger at the Gates comes forcibly to one's attention:

Helen: If you break the mirror, will what is reflected in it cease to exist?

Hector: That is the whole question.

There is, however, another and yet deeper question, and this is the question of Jesus. What is it that

breaks mirrors? What can we experience in the sound of their breaking glass and what can we glimpse in the cracks of their shatterings?

A similar understanding is found in the work of Robert Tannehill:

This language is concerned with nothing less than how we as selves are constituted. The self it addresses is no tabula rasa but is already deeply structured. Therefore, a new structure can arise only by attacking the old. Furthermore, the extremeness of the attack makes clear that the problem is deep and pervasive, not a problem which can be overcome through a few adjustments in behaviour but which affects our very selves and which can be overcome only when a₂ new image of the self takes root in the imagination.

The striking metaphor does not make out a single path which all must follow but sets the imagination going, helping the hearer to view his own par₃ticular situation in the light of new possibility.

Whether the "new possibility" unfolds in terms of the variety of specific needs in the ontic life-world of the individual/community or out of the ontological struggle of the individual with the darkness, the evil, the abyss in life, the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus remains both challenge to, and enabler of, salvation both ontically and ontologically, when we concentrate on "how" this symbol functions as a symbol within the horizon of its mythical claim that the

¹John Dominic Crossan, In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, Pbu., 1973), p. xv. I would say, rather than "the question of Jesus," the question arising in this linguistic material. It is also interesting that the "more primordial" reality here appears as "the white screen of chaos."

²Robert C. Tannehill, The Sword of His Mouth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 116.

³Ibid., p. 138.

divine reality is committed to, and present in, history, i.e., the concrete life-world experience and need(s) of the individual/community. By concentrating on the "how" of this symbol in this language, we are confronted with salvation not merely as a passive event, occurring to us, but as an event of enabling our seizing the new possibility within the specific context of our life-world. Salvation evokes our assuming our responsibility in being the event, where evil is named and continually fought to be overcome, as well as, the clearing where the meaning of the divine reality/unity in multiplicity is more radically and primordially announced and named than any evil or abyss.

We then may understand the soteriological possibilities enabled by the symbol of the Kingdom of God in the language of the historical Jesus to be an appeal to the imagination of the individual/community, an appeal to the movement/event/act character of all "that is," an appeal to the seeking out of projecting possibilities informed by our pre-encompassing understanding that sets us, by means of the divine reality, always and already in relationship to the divine, to world, to the Other in community. Only then may we speak of decision informing our faith. The decision of responsibility out of our new understanding of the role of the divine and of ourselves in world.