

EGO EIMI: KERYGMA OR EXISTENTIAL METAPHOR? FRYE, BULTMANN AND THE PROBLEM OF DEMYTHOLOGIZING¹

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The plane which is known to us, he intersects vertically, from above. Within history, Jesus as the Christ can be understood only as Problem or Myth. As the Christ he brings the world of the Father. But we who stand in this concrete world know nothing, and are incapable of knowing anything, of that point above, and the corresponding discerning of it from below. The Resurrection is the revelation: the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, the appearing of God, and the apprehending of God in Jesus.

Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*

The question of the relationship of sacred and literary (metaphorical) discourses is a question of the boundary *par excellence*. It has traditionally signified the ultimate boundary between the linguistic (human) and the non-linguistic (divine or extra human). But now it seems to rest more on the issue of historicity, particularly in modern critical discourses. As such, what is posited over against the sacred is not the metaphorical or the symbolic, but rather myth and the mythical. The struggle of sacred or religious discourse is not with its necessary recourse to metaphor or symbol, not even with metaphor's catachretic aspect, the relational function through which we use what is known to us, what is visible and observable (perceptually and logically), to explain or intimate what is invisible, unknown or unknowable. This is not quite the case, as I shall explain later, even if this catachretic relation (as integral to later religious worldviews as it was to the classical Greek mind, at least as explained in Aristotle's *Poetics*) is precisely that relation which is given to endless rhetorical play, as Derrida has sufficiently demonstrated in his work, notably in his essay "White

Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy” (Derrida 207-77). The struggle of sacred discourse is ultimately with the essentializing or objectifying effect of myth and its vicissitudes, particularly when attempting to achieve a genuine understanding of the divine within history. This is the case put forth not only in dialectical and liberal theologies, but also in the philosophy of existence and particular branch of New Testament theology known as Existentialist Theology.

132 The epigraphic statement by Karl Barth (1886-1968) is one of the most succinct expressions of the problem of myth as posited in modern theological discourse. Of the generation of theologians just after the First World War, Barth is considered to be one of its leading figures. His main contribution, at least inasmuch as it bears on the subject of this essay, lies in bringing the focus of theology back to the *Kerygma* or message, and away from the open influence of the speculative disciplines of the day and of historical criticism. That is, from St. Augustine on, Christian theology always borrowed freely from dominant philosophies and speculative traditions, while Barth insisted on the need for modern theology to go back directly to the revealed Word of God for its inspiration and explanatory categories. In many ways his work prepared the ground for the work of the next generation of theologians, notably that of Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) whose project of *Entmythologisierung* (Demythologizing) forms the point of departure for this essay.² The “plane which is known to us” referred to in the statement is of course the order of our existence, the world of human history, particularly as understood by the modern, post-Enlightenment man, and from within the strict nexus of cause and effect. This is also the implied notion of history itself in the following statement: “From within history.” On the view that God then “intersects” with this plane “vertically,” that is from a heavens up above, our world becomes a middle plane, as the counter place of a hell or a world of suffering and damnation is situated underneath us. Such expressions of a three-storied universe and of extra or non-human forces interfering freely with this world were understood by the liberal theologians, among others, to be fundamentally the manifestations of a mythical worldview. “For Barth,” however, as Mark Wallace notes, “the storied world of the Bible is not simply one world amidst a plurality of other literary worlds; as the Word of God written, it is the divinely chosen textual environment within which God in Christ through the Spirit is actively present to the reader today” (405). Bultmann was perhaps as much a kerygmatic theologian as Barth, in that both equally sought the *Kerygma* or revealed Word of God as the foundation of Christian theology (Cf. Macquarie 235). The problem and the challenge inherent in it for the modern believer and the modern theologian alike were, however, taken on more systematically by Bultmann. The project of *Entmythologisierung*, or Demythologizing the New Testament *Kerygma* or Proclamation, with which Bultmann’s name is associated, has been one of the most controversial in the history of modern theological debate.

The understanding of myth and *Kerygma* as explained and practised in Bultmann’s work and the proposed task of demythologizing the New Testament worldview, however, have far reaching implications not only for the modern believer (and even more

so for the modern theologian, who is the one primarily entrusted with the task), but also for the literary critic. The literary critic is entrusted by implication with the task of understanding and explaining the language of myth and metaphor, particularly as employed in sacred texts, its rhetorical operations, the possibility of an extra-literary voice speaking in and through this language, and the modes of response demanded of the reader by such a language.³ One such critic, who took it on himself to critique Bultmann's understanding of myth, the roles of metaphor and symbol, and the mode of response demanded by the kerygmatic voice, is the well known Canadian critic Northrop Frye. Frye, however, had equally set his own task, which was to study closely the literary as well the extra literary aspects of the Bible as a prelude to understanding its influence on Western verbal culture, particularly its literature.⁴ Bultmann's project, Frye's critique of it, the implications of their work on the ontological status of the language of myth and metaphor, and the underlying conceptions of history and subjectivity, form the subject of this essay. Though Frye's late work already began to receive critical attention by the late 1990s, mainly through established scholars such as Jonathan Hart, Robert Denham, A. C. Hamilton, Michael Dolzani, Alvin Lee, James Kee, Imre Salusinszky, and others, the precise conceptions of typology and kerygma and their role in his late phase have so far received little extended analytic thought (perhaps with the exception of Hart and Denham, who between them give equal attention to kerygma and typology). Even fewer have sought to take Frye's conceptions to task, notably Harold Bloom, Robert Alter and Linda Munk, their critiques, though, reflecting more their own critical persuasions and avowed or adopted disciplines than a more considered look into Frye's visionary (eclectic but largely Blakean) critical universe. Glen Robert Gill has come out recently with an excellent phenomenological study of Frye's conception of myth, *Northrop Frye and the Phenomenology of Myth* (2006), which culminates in an analysis of kerygma as the substantiation of metaphor and myth in Frye's late work and notebooks. Also, few Frye scholars have deemed it significant enough to look more closely at Bultmann's work, as the master himself, while acknowledging Bultmann's importance, had but dismissed his conclusions early on, retaining a formulaic kernel (distilled from more extensive references in the Notebooks) which served more as a stepping stone to his own views and critical and theoretical insights.

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But before I launch my discussion, and by way of defining my thesis and task more clearly, it is perhaps worth our while first to define briefly what I mean by the terms used in the title.

Kerygma is the Greek term generally used to describe the proclamation or message of the New Testament. It is also that which constitutes what is extra literary in the Bible, the prophetic or proclamatory aspect. For the Christian theologian, however, *Kerygma* is the word of revelation, the word of preaching. For the first Christians, the word of preaching was the eschatological event of the Kingdom of Heaven, but then, with the formation of the early churches, the emphasis shifted to the Person of Christ and the events of the Cross and Resurrection. The word of revelation is the

Spoken Word that proclaims, and in its act of proclaiming it commands in the hearer what it demands of him or her. It inspires faith, and it is in faith that it also finds its justification. *Kerygma* is thus a proclamatory mode of speech that is, as Frye would later draw its boundaries, non-rhetorical, non-metaphorical, and non-ideological speech. While Bultmann insists on the truth-nature of the *Kerygma*, Frye emphasizes its metaphorical basis, even as he argues that it is neither poetic nor rhetorical, but somewhere in-between. The difference, however, lies in their conceptions (ontological vs. epistemological) of the status of the imagery surrounding the *Kerygma* (Cf. *LN* 2:652-54; 701). This difference, moreover, informs their respective definitions of mythology, its nature, origin, and efficacy.

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As Jonathan Hart has elaborated in *The Theoretical Imagination*, "Frye's interest in language is more akin to the structuralist (and even post-structuralist) view that language is a concern in all writing" (1994 153). Comparably, when it comes to history and culture, structuralists and poststructuralists are more akin to mythographers, history lying not far behind the systematicity of the former and textuality of the latter (Cf. Hart 1994, 152-55; 193-204). Structuralists, like Lévi-Strauss, Todorov, Propp, Genette, all can perhaps be read as primary mythographers, considering myths (along with folk tales and fairy tales) as primary structures or prototypical forms for all narrative. Scholes, among those who have taken them to the task, also notes that one of the early modern scholars, André Jolles, had already observed that myths were primary forms of language, of thought as it is shaped in language, and as such they reveal a vision of an eternal reality in which the world is given meaning through the simple formula that all things are created and the world is given its meaning and purpose at source, owing to the divinity of its creator. As such a mythical consciousness emerges as akin to prophetic consciousness, not dealing with an event in time but with a world eternal manifesting in time (Scholes 42-45). Edmund Leach has also contended that the *kerygma* should be seen as the mythological message behind the stories in the Old Testament, whose arrangement along a historical access and chronology gives them a sense of destiny, and renders them different from *totemic* or primitive myths. Leach also notes Ricoeur's observation that among the early mythographers this fundamental contrast between *totemic* myths and the myths of civilized people is presupposed. This supposed fundamental contrast clearly rests on the historicizing approach. This holds true even with the second generation, notably Lévi-Strauss. In Leach's own words: "Thus, both in Judaism and in Christianity, the traditional hermeneutic has depended upon an assumption that the Bible constitutes a *sacred history*, the chronological access of which is fundamental. The theologian sees the Bible as a record of the working out the Divine Will through the processes of history; the significance of the mythological message (the *kerygma*) is inseparable from the recognition that the events occur in a particular historical sequence" ("The Legitimacy of Solomon: Some Structural Aspects of Old Testament History," in Lane 250).

Frye also makes many nods to Derrida and to poststructuralist thought. Frye's topos of inexpressibility, a gesture toward the non-linguistic, is an answer to Derrida's willingness to admit it only as an "impossibility" embedded in language and thought, perhaps even a projection of their rhetorical operations that expression may become

possible. Ultimately, Frye aims at a vertical lift out of the rhetoricity of language and the temporality of thought, though he does it through an existential leap which he demonstrates to be possible in the “copula” of metaphor (this *is* that) and the identificatory power of the imagination, itself most engaged and demonstrable in the mode of response to the kerygmatic voice, as I shall explain in the beginning of my section on Frye. When the kerygmatic voice engages metaphor, “language becomes an instrument of spirituality,” Frye quoting Valéry on Mallarmé, “which he [Valéry] explains as ‘the transmutations of desires and emotions into presences and powers that become ‘realities’ in themselves’” (WP 128). Frye’s conception as implied here is more Heideggerian than Derridean or de Manian, the deferred absences that are projected rhetorically or catachretically in the operations of metaphors of presence and speech are seen as realities: the experience of both Gospel and Person is the spiritual experience of verbal realities (Cf. Gill 194). In a more recent study on Frye, *Northrop Frye: Religious Visionary and Architect of the Spiritual World* (2004), Robert Denham argues at length how Frye’s theory of metaphor “is unique, based as it is on the principle of identity” (61; see also Hamilton 116). He further points out how “[i]dentity as both a principle of literary structure and a religious category is embodied in the anatomy of language that Frye elaborated in his two books on the Bible” (62). For that, however, Frye had to contend that myth itself is “the linguistic vehicle of *kerygma*” (GC 30). But this is not necessarily how a kerygmatic theologian may see it.

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For the word of revelation to acquire its full existential force, as Bultmann contended, it should not be surrounded by a language that crudely “objectifies” its nature. As the spoken word, which stands for the Word of God, and which reveals God’s act in history, it has to enter our historical self-understanding as a possibility of existence. On Bultmann’s view, a language becomes mythological or objectifying when it obscures what he saw to be an essentially inter-subjective relation between God and man. And since this relation was finally made available to us through God’s act in Christ, he set out to demythologize or reinterpret any such objectifying statement in the New Testament, stripping it down to its essential *Kerygma*. Bultmann’s acts of demythologizing, however, ultimately set out to reinterpret the view of existence (in the case of the New Testament, the first-century Jewish Apocalyptic and Gnostic worldviews), which he saw to be enshrined in the imagery. But then, as Frye was to argue, with the Bible as a whole in view, the actual operations of the imagery were undermined in the process. Though not necessarily antithetical, as I argue here, Frye’s vision is clear and is coming from the opposite direction. As Robert Denham notes, just as myth itself offers “the conceivable” in opposition to “descriptive truth,” myth being “the excluded initiative of ideology,” one “can see the close connection in Frye’s thinking between the religious initiative and the fundamental principles of literature: metaphor and myth” (Denham 64; for Frye’s own statements, see WP 22-23). Frye himself finally admits: “I think it is important to keep the word *kerygma*, but it has to mean not ordinary rhetoric but a mode of language that takes account of the mythical and literary qualities which cannot be separated from the Biblical texture. In short, a mode of language on the other side of the poetic” (WP 100-01).

However, with the understanding of mythology in terms of the original meaning of *mythos*, or an order of words, Frye looks at images in a temporal order of meaning that has at its center the principle of typology. Typology in Frye's critical method also offers us a reinterpretation of time and meaning, of history (Cf. Hart 1994, 120-30). In his late phase, it offers us a rhetorical time that explains not only the ordering of narrative in the history of salvation but also the connection between this history, *Heilsgeschichte*, and the history of the world, *Weltgeschichte*. Typology was originally an exegetical method of interpretation through which both the Old and the New Testaments are linked on one temporal plane, which is basically a single narrative of God's acts in history. Images thus traverse this one "cyclical *mythos*," as Frye calls the Bible, and this is how he explains the functions of myth, metaphor and symbol. For Frye the literal basis of the Bible is both metaphorical and mythological, and this is where he fundamentally disagrees with Bultmann (cf. GC 30; 53; 56). Metaphorical relation is a relation of identity: Jesus *is* the light of the world. When the kerygmatic voice issues this statement, it is not to be understood simply as a statement of identity in the way we use it in literature (Cf. Denham 61-65). From the standpoint of faith, the image of light becomes a symbol of an attribute of Jesus in relation to the world. It is a catachretic expression of truth, of the "word became flesh" variety. From other stand-points, an attentive reader would begin to underline, or at least mentally note, lines or passages which have reference to light or its vicissitudes. The image of light then, and at this point it is only an illustrative example, would still, existentially, carry a sort of catachretic significance, intimating a certain intensity of experience. Any image in the Bible, in its function as symbol, opens up an ontological possibility for its object. The *Kerygma* and its initial reception in faith are recast in the literary terminology of a metaphorical situation in which the reader reenacts in the movement of reading the symbol's movement (as embedded in a typological relation) toward what it symbolizes. This movement is a movement toward identity with what is symbolized. The typological temporal movement as conceived here functions simultaneously as a model for engaging with Biblical imagery and symbolism and as a solution to the problem with the mythological, objectifying aspect, which Bultmann considered an obstacle to the reaching across, historically, of the kerygmatic voice into the present moment of personal experience.

Whether it is an extra human truth or a deeply human one, we more often than not have recourse to symbols when we speak of it, or when it speaks to us. Religiously, if the symbol thus understood were to replace or stand in for what it symbolizes, then we have a case of either literalism (the atrophying of a worldview, as Bultmann saw it) or idolatry.⁵ Neither can the claim of the symbol to truth, even from the side of the *Kerygma*, be received rhetorically or ideologically, because then it would reduce the *Kerygma* to a mere rhetorical statement, and it would cause the statement itself to lie open to all kinds of deconstructive reading. Whereas literarily, or metaphorically, if the symbol were to make the same claim on the meaning or nature of what it symbolizes, we then enter an anagogic metaphorical universe of the "as if" variety in which freedom of imagination is the rule. The intensity of the insight, analogically

achieved, would then depend on the intensity of the identificatory imagination at work. Viewing our engagement with the image or text or speaking voice from this point of view, Frye calls the experience “existential metaphor”: “The Bible expands metaphor into what might be called existential metaphor, the actual identifying of a conscious subject with something objective to itself” (*MM* 84, see also 226). And, especially in the late books and notebooks, he begins to see it as no less a powerful and relevant response to the kerygmatic voice than that of traditional faith. Bultmann, on the other hand, insists on an irreducible ontological status to the *Kerygma*, which has to cut across any statement informed by an antiquated worldview, to meet us in the present moment of self-understanding and in the form of an existential “encounter.”

BULTMANN: KERYGMA, MYTH AND DEMYTHOLOGIZING

Bultmann’s understanding of myth derives from the History of Religions school, with its focus on how myth presents the transcendent in terms of the immanent, of the un-worldly in terms of the this-worldly.⁶ In “New Testament and Mythology” (1941), Bultmann’s famous but controversial first expression of the problem and the task of *Entmythologisierung*, we find in a footnote one of his clearest definitions of myth: “Mythology is the use of imagery to express the otherworldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side. For instance divine transcendence is expressed as spatial distance.”⁷ To insist on the vertical imagery in this case is to “objectify” the transcendental nature of God’s act, it is to remove it from the realm of historical possibility, to seal it off from historical understanding, while claiming to fully explain or reveal its concealed nature. Instead of depicting the transcendental nature of God’s act in the world in the imagery of spatial distance, the transcendental nature of the act, Bultmann proposes, must be understood dialectically. God’s act in the world should be understood as at once transcendental while its true nature, that which the imagery of mythology objectifies, remains concealed beyond the bounds of historical understanding, thereby initiating a dialectical relation open to the decisions of a modern self-reflective nature.

What constitutes the problem, however, is not the use of images as such, but the worldview or understanding of existence, which the imagery suggests or embodies (*KM* 10-11).⁸ The understanding of mythology at work here, as Bultmann himself points out, is anthropological not cosmological, reflecting one of the many distinctions Bultmann makes against Greek culture and thinking in his works (first clearly articulated in his *Primitive Christianity*, 1956). Rather than dismiss all imagery from the Bible, as the liberals sought to do, the act of demythologizing as proposed by Bultmann seeks to reinterpret such imagery, that is, to strip the imagery down to the essential *Kerygma*, clearing the way for a direct encounter in the present moment of the modern believer’s or hearer’s self-understanding with the new possibilities of existence offered or revealed.

Perhaps the matter can be brought to focus in the light of Bultmann’s statement that “so many statements in the New Testament speak directly to modern man’s condition while others remain enigmatic and obscure” (*KM* 12). The obscurity to which

Bultmann refers here issues not from the kerygmatic source but from the statements and imagery enshrining it, which show some “curious contradictions.” Bultmann offers by way of example the observation that “the kenosis of the pre-existent son (Phil. 2: 6ff) is incompatible with the miracle narratives as proofs of his messianic claims” (KM 11), or, and this is where Bultmann sees the principal need for criticism, “sometimes we are told that human life is determined by cosmic forces, at others we are challenged to a decision. Side by side with the Pauline indicative stands the Pauline imperative. In short, man is sometimes regarded as a cosmic being, sometimes as an independent ‘I’ for whom decision is a matter of life and death” (KM 12). It should be noted, though, that the contradictions as seen here by Bultmann lie not in the meaning imparted (theological, exegetical?) but in the imagery used to convey it, which reveals the problem and the task it demands to be first and foremost hermeneutical.

138 The original 1941 essay, “New Testament and Mythology,” had a specific ecclesial and political context. It was delivered, as David Fergusson significantly points out, as a paper in two conferences of ministers belonging to the Confessing Church (Cf. Fergusson 107-108). Bultmann’s presumed intention was to distinguish between the Word of God and any historical phenomena, which he deemed insufficient criteria for theological truth. This insight was actually formulated in a companion essay, “The Question of Natural Revelation,” which initially appeared together with “New Testament and Mythology.” By the time the original essay appeared, Bultmann had already established his name first as a form-critic theologian, working under the influence of Bulcher (who was well known for his work on the Christian Parable) through his *Jesus and the Word* (1958). He was also established as a theologian through his formidable, two-volume study of the history, message, and meaning of the New Testament, *Theology of the New Testament* (1951). Following the so-called life-philosophers, such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Bergson, and the philosophy of existence, particularly Heidegger’s systematic explorations of the structures of Being, Bultmann understood historical reality primarily in terms of human possibilities of existence. “History,” Bultmann writes in his later essay, “On the Problem of Demythologizing” (1961), “is the field of human decisions. It is understood when it is seen as such, when we recognize that at work in it are the possibilities of human self-understanding—possibilities that are also possibilities of self-understanding in the present and that cannot even be perceived except in unity with present self-understanding. I call any such interpretations of history ‘existentialist interpretation,’ because, motivated by the existential questions of the interpreter, it asks for the understanding of existence that is at work in a given history” (“On the Problem of Demythologizing 1961,” in *NTM* 157).

What stands over against such a history must therefore be interpreted existentially so that it can be made intelligible to modern man. Mythological imagery, while it circumscribes the field of our perception and vision, does not allow what is ultimately imaged, i.e., God’s being, to stand freely or emerge out of itself (as subject). The problem with mythology is specifically with “the use of imagery to express

the otherworldly in terms of this world” (KM 10). “Hence, the importance of the New Testament Mythology,” Bultmann explains, “lies not in its imagery but in the understanding of existence which it enshrines. The real question is whether this understanding of existence is true. Faith claims that it is, and faith ought not to be tied down to the imagery of New Testament mythology” (KM 11). The problem with the imagery, moreover, is its “claim to objective validity” with regard to its content, the *Kerygma* of the New Testament. The task then is to rescue the understanding of existence presented to us by the *Kerygma* (in the person of Christ as the event of redemption) from the objectifying imagery that enshrines it, and is dictated by the first-century worldview of the first Christians, as well as by early Judaic and Gnostic eschatological visions (Cf. Macquarrie 1960, 129-53; 186-221).

Christian Eschatology, as a particular vision of history, imminent to our present as is the future, is Bultmann’s articulation of the nature of time as reflected in the Christian Proclamation—the literary counterpart for which is Frye’s typological emphasis. As Bultmann clearly and succinctly explains in *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, “eschatological preaching views the present time in the light of the future and it says to men that this present world, the world of nature and history, the world in which we live our lives and make our plans, is not the only world; that this world is temporal and transitory, yes, ultimately empty and unreal in the face of eternity” (JCM 23). The existential undertones here are unmistakable. “To exist is already to exist eschatologically,” as Ian Henderson sums it up (16). The view of existence ultimately implied in the imagery is either to exist inauthentically in an empty world and out of touch with one’s own authentic possibility, or to exist with Christ authentically and in the nearness of one’s own possibility (Cf. Henderson 15-20 and Roy A. Harrisville, “Bultmann’s Concept of the Transition from Inauthentic to Authentic Existence,” in Braaten and Harrisville 212-28). As Bultmann himself puts it: 139

It is the word of God which calls man away from his selfishness and from the illusory security which he has built up for himself. It calls him to God, who is beyond the world and beyond scientific thinking. At the same time, it calls man to his true self. For the self of man, his inner life, his personal existence is also beyond the visible world and beyond rational thinking. The Word of God addresses man in his personal existence and thereby it gives him freedom from the world and from the sorrow and anxiety which overwhelm him when he forgets the beyond. (JCM 40)

Bultmann’s view in this instance only begs one of the many aspects of Christian hermeneutics, distinctly Pauline, as Bultmann was all too aware but, as Ricoeur points out, one which also takes precedence among the moderns. In Ricoeur’s words, “Saint Paul creates this second modality of Christian hermeneutics [the first being that of allegory and typology] when he invites the hearer of the word to decipher the movement of his own existence in the light of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Hence, the death of the old man and the birth of the new creature are understood under the sign of the Cross and the Paschal victory” (“Preface to Bultmann,” in Ricoeur 1989 380). A hermeneutic circle, as Ricoeur notes, is already at work here:

“The kerygma is not first of all the interpretation of a text; it is the announcement of a person. In this sense, the word of God is, not the Bible, but Jesus Christ. But a problem arises from the fact that this kerygma is itself expressed in a witness, in the stories, and soon after in the texts that contain the very first confession of faith of the community. These texts conceal a first level of interpretation. ...The source of our modern hermeneutic problem, then, is this: the kerygma is also a Testament” (1989 382). The precise nature and implications of this hermeneutical circle become more evident in Frye’s literary and typological approaches to the texts of the Bible. For now, however, it is important to note that instead of understanding the events of this world, natural or historical, as types for which later fulfilling anti-types are spiritually projected, as in the typological interpretation, the fullness of time presupposes the end before the beginning of the new time. This end, reinterpreted existentially in terms of the present as emptiness, becomes repeatable.

140 “Realized eschatology is demythologized eschatology,” as Ian Henderson notes, “and that is what we find, especially in the Johannine writings” (16). The demythologizing of this eschatological preaching had already begun in the New Testament itself, Bultmann argues, partially with Paul and then more radically with John. For Paul, the Holy Spirit expected at the time of blessedness has already been given, the present time of preaching being its domain and the future is anticipated in such manner. In Bultmann’s own words:

In the Jewish apocalyptic expectations, the expectation of the Messianic kingdom is, so to speak, an *interregnum* between the old world time..and the new age.. . Paul explains this apocalyptic, mythological idea of the Messianic *interregnum*, at the end of which Christ will deliver the Kingdom to God the Father, as the present time between the resurrection of Christ and his coming parousia (I Cor. 15:24); that means, the present time of preaching the gospel is really the formerly expected time of the Kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus is now the Messiah, the Lord. (*JCM* 33)

John’s vision, as Bultmann sees it, is even more radical; “the coming and departing of Jesus is the eschatological event... for John the resurrection of Jesus, Pentecost and the *parousia* of Jesus are one and the same event, and those who believe have already eternal life” (*JCM* 33; Bultmann quotes John 3:19, 12:31, 3:18, 3:36, 5:25 and 11:25f.). Having thus argued how the act of demythologizing had started as early as Paul and John, Bultmann then proceeds to argue how “mythology has been transported into history” (*JCM* 34). That the act of demythologizing had begun in the New Testament itself is not only its justification, but more significantly, Paul’s and John’s visions had revealed that Jewish eschatological expectations of such figures as the anti-christ and false messiahs are mythological. Historical worldviews are at stake here, and the act of demythologizing, he maintains, has to take the modern worldview “as its criterion” (*JCM* 35). It is no wonder then, as Carl E. Braaten has observed, that the debate had turned early on from mythology to history and to the perceived problem of a possibly dehistoricized kerygma, at least as far as the Lutheran establishment was concerned (Braaten and Harrisville 10-13).

In the New Testament, God's act in the world is God's saving act in Christ or the event of redemption (Cf. *KM* 22-43 and *JCM* 60-85; see also Macquarrie 1960, 240-43). This is the ultimate word of preaching, the word of revelation, and it is therefore at the center of the *Kerygma* of the Gospels. But "from within history," to go back to Barth's statement, this act is beyond human grasp, beyond historical understanding, that is. That is why the *Kerygma* is not to be argued or demonstrated but is simply received in the act of faith. Faith as evoked here, however, is not blind acceptance or belief; it is a special mode of human response to the word of preaching, a mysterious relation for which Bultmann has to account existentially. The historicity of God's act in Christ, however, is established in the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, the historical event proper of a man who lived among men and who died on the cross. As a historical event, the event of Jesus and the cross should seem to stand in no need of demythologizing. But, according to Bultmann, and as implied in Barth's statement, the historicity of this event, far from affording the insight into "that point above, and the corresponding discerning of it from below," still has to be existentially incorporated in the present of our historical existence. That is, it cannot stand "objectively" over against the subjective realm of self-understanding. In this sense it has to be demythologized, or "de-objectified," before it can authentically pass into our human self-understanding, and it does so, according to Bultmann's existentialist interpretation, in a present moment of existential "encounter." In other words, the historical event of Jesus has to pass, still historically, from a "once-and-for-all" event in the past into the status of a historic event, from a remembered event to an event that encounters us in the present moment. This distinction in the understanding of historicity between what is historical and what is historic, or between *Historie* and *Geschichtliche*, is one which Bultmann makes clearly and which he consistently employs in his interpretive method.

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The necessity of achieving a proper historical understanding of the event of Jesus and the cross, and the dichotomy of *Historie* and *Geschichtliche*, however, should not be confused with an inquiry of the "quest for the historical Jesus" variety (Cf. *KM* 35). Historical evidence, while of undeniable significance in itself, is of little crucial bearing on the event of Jesus as the Christ—a distinction whose gradual refinement reflects the growth of Bultmann's own scholarship and personal insight (Cf. Owen 114-16). What is at stake is not the act of furnishing historical proof for the existence of a man by the name of Jesus who lived and died on the cross. What is at stake, rather, is the understanding of God's act in Christ, both in its transcendental and in its concealed natures, as it figures into man's present self-understanding, for which the events of the Cross and the Resurrection are indispensable. This moment of revelation, the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, already announces the fullness of time in which the first Christians stood and in which the present day believer still stands. The Resurrection still constitutes such an engaging futurity. "In the terminology of Bultmann," as Ian Henderson puts it, "the mythological is there to show that the historical is also eschatological" (18; see also Macquarrie 1960, 58-101).

The precise formulation of this proposed act of reinterpretation is to be derived from the understanding of God's act in history primarily in terms of the event of redemption. In answering to the earlier attempts at explaining the *Kerygma* simply in terms of a body of ethical teachings and of Jesus as a teacher, Bultmann clearly delineates his position as follows:

But the New Testament speaks of an event through which God has wrought man's redemption. For it, Jesus is not primarily the teacher, who certainly had extremely important things to say and will always be honored for saying them, but whose person in the last analysis is immaterial for those who have assimilated his teachings. On the contrary, his person is just what the New Testament proclaims as the decisive event of redemption. It speaks of this person in mythological terms, but does this mean that we can reject the *Kerygma* altogether on the ground that it is nothing more than mythology? That is the question. (KM 14)

142 Bultmann's answer is in the negative, on the basis of the irreducible nature of the Christ-occurrence, an event the admission and contemplation of which perhaps offers the ultimate condition of possibility for a Christian theological surplus to the achievements of modern philosophies of existence (Cf. Ogden 64-76; 76-94). The *Kerygma*, as Bultmann already explained in detail in *Theology of the New Testament*, basically offers us a new possibility of existence:

Faith is nothing other than the answer to the *Kerygma*, and this is nothing other than the Word of God addressed to us, questioning and promising, directing and pardoning. As such it does not offer itself to critical thought, but speaks in concrete existence. That it never appears except as a theological exposition depends on this, that it can never be expressed except in a human language formed by human thinking. But that is precisely what confirms its kerygmatic character; for that makes it clear that the propositions of the *Kerygma* are not universal truths but are addressed to a concrete situation. They can therefore only appear in a form which is moulded by an understanding of existence (or the interpretation of such an understanding). And correspondingly they can only be intelligible for one who can understand the *Kerygma* as a Word addressed to him in his situation—and to begin with, it is understood as question and demand. Expressed differently, the *Kerygma* is only intelligible as *Kerygma* when the understanding of the self which it has awakened is understood as a possibility of man's understanding of himself in general, and so becomes the call to decision. (Vol. 2, 580-81)

For this possibility to become an *existentiell* possibility, or an ontic possibility in the concreteness of our historical existence, and Bultmann employs Heidegger's distinction here quite consciously, the statements of the *Kerygma* must be interpreted so as to speak to us in the present. Macquarrie cites the passage above, interpreting it as evidence that "Bultmann has advanced beyond the positions both of liberal modernism and of Barthianism," and goes on to explain how "He [Bultmann] has accepted Barth's correction of the older position in founding his theology on the *Kerygma* of the Christian revelation, and at the same time he has corrected the excesses of a kerygmatic theology in attempting to interpret the *Kerygma* in relation to man's contemporary situation" (1955, 236; see also 235-37). Even though Bultmann had

borrowed some of his conceptual terms from Heidegger and other philosophers of existence, his existential interpretation is not simply based on modern thought. It is based, it would seem, on the understanding of existence inherent in the New Testament *Kerygma* itself, which in the answering situation of faith still has a fundamental appeal to modern man.

In the context of his discussion of Gnosticism and its penchant for mythicization in *Work on Myth*, Hans Blumenberg clearly articulates the problem with reference to Bultmann:

In relation to man's interest in salvation, the cosmic procedure is only a transaction surrounding him, though its reliability does determine whether the event of the turning takes place, whether the recall arrives. This is because the myth has a nonmythical core, just as man, in the world, contains an unworldly deposit that at bottom has no need at all of instruction, but only of awakening, of the removal of deception, of self-discovery. It is possible to "demythologize" this myth only because it possesses a preexisting residue of form. What gives the Gnostic process its tendency to mythicization—the fact that it is almost entirely event, and only minimally doctrinal content—also exposes it to the conjecture that it could be demythologized. What Bultmann dissected out in his work on the New Testament, by considering it possible and undertaking to demythologize it down to the core of the "Kerygma," is not something that is always and everywhere possible to do to myths, but rather what is appropriate to the late-antiquity and Gnostic view of the world (187-88).⁹

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As Blumenberg judiciously points out here, the project of demythologization involves not all myths, rather what Frye would classify generally under "myths of concern" and what both Bultmann and Blumenberg see most crucially at work in New Testament and Gnostic discourses: the irreducible core of meaning, the message and divine insight proclaimed or deposited in man as his spiritual core, demanding each other in response, as Heidegger would thematize the relationship, and which is shrouded in mythically objectifying imagery. What is at stake here is the persuasion that the earlier historical worldview at work in the imagery, as a "once and for all" event can only reach us in our own present moment in a mode which demands an act, the act of faith in its doctrinal expression, rather than as an event which facilitates self-understanding. Again Blumenberg articulates the nature of such an event rather succinctly:

The finest and most concise expression of that ultimate quality as an event, the content of which cannot be conceptualized, is the Johannine Gospel's "*Ego eimi*." To say "I am he" presupposes that one speaks thus in a world of the most intense danger and expectation, in which it is entirely sufficient to indicate that now the time has come. The lot of him who has forgotten where he comes from is not instruction about what he has lost and what he stands to gain; instead what overtakes him is only the formal summons, which sets everything else in motion as though automatically. "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme..." (Awake, the voice cries to us...), but whatever else it cries is of no importance. The fundamental myth gives us to understand that nothing more than this is necessary or to be expected (188).

The strong sense of participation implied here, which Blumenberg discusses further, and which will shed light on Frye's grounding of myth and metaphor in "the principle of identity," is what constitutes the situation as an event, rather than an insight gained through "cognizance of the mythical apparatus," or the special knowledge or *gnosis* which makes the adherents stand apart, over against mere faith or *pistis*. Whether it is a special *gnosis* or a set of doctrines (traditional theology) or moral teachings (liberal theology), what is important here is the "event" itself. While a worldview and its expressions may be historically bounded, the "event" constitutes that which is existentially repeatable, hence the existential theological revisionist conception of God's "act" in history as an "event" (Cf. Henderson 13-14). "Christian preaching," as Bultmann explains, "is *Kerygma*, that is, a proclamation addressed not to the theoretical reason, but to the hearer as a self. In this manner Paul commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God (II Cor. 4:2)" (JCM 36). The implications for an inter-subjective participatory relation are clear here.

- 144 The task that Bultmann set for himself as a modern theologian is therefore to interpret the mythological to bring out deeper meaning (Cf. JCM 31). This deeper meaning is nothing other than the understanding of existence embedded in the *kerygma* and accordingly it poses the question of relevance to modern man, as primarily a question of self-understanding (Cf. JCM 30). Myth interpretation here, as Maurizio Ferraris notes, is closely aligned with "Realist Criticism,"

...that is, the move from the linguistic expression of the text (objectifications that are essentially inappropriate) to the *res de qua agitur*—to the "thing itself." The *res scripta* does not coincide with the *res de qua agitur*. This is the first issue that exegesis must make clear, so as to go beyond the historical forms of the texts to their substantial reality, which coincides with their existential reality. Since the most common type of linguistic objectification of the *res* of the text is myth, for Bultmann the first task of interpretation is *demythologizing*. This key word in Bultmann's hermeneutics is different, at least in part, from the reductionist efforts of rationalism, of the Enlightenment, and of historicism (189).

Unlike earlier theologians and Christian apologists, Bultmann did not simply seek out current conceptual or philosophical trends, with which he could align the Christian Proclamation in its theological expression. The task as he set it, and as Barth had urged before him, was to go directly to the kerygmatic proclamations. As Fergusson has succinctly put it, "Bultmann is primarily concerned with the nature of God's being rather than with the way, or ways, in which God is known; his project of *Entmythologisierung* is dictated by ontological, not epistemological, interests" (135). Bultmann's distinctive project is therefore to be situated between hermeneutics and ontology.

Bultmann's term, *Demythologizing*, may perhaps be placed on a trajectory of similar terms and concepts that have become current in the general trends of critical thought from the 1930s onward: Heidegger's *De-struction*, the Marxist concept of *de-alienation* (in part influenced by Hegel and later Kierkegaard) and its existential-

ist counterpart, the later related but more ideological concept of demystification and the more recent poststructuralist practices of deconstruction, followed by all varieties of debunking and undoing (of texts). Even though Bultmann's term remains in currency primarily in theological debates and seems not to have made it into other critical spheres, it is perhaps a variation on the more influential (also because of its later influence on Derrida's project) project of metaphysical destruction initiated by Heidegger, the task of de-structuring of the history of ontology outlined in his *Being and Time*, and during the phase in which Bultmann was under Heidegger's influence. The critical thrust of both concepts (as forms of practice) has to do with the very nature of language, but in the process they acquire serious metaphysical implications bringing them to bear on thought and thinking, metaphor and identity, myth and consciousness, but above all on self-consciousness. In short, they have serious bearings on man's consciousness of himself and of the world, of his own being in relation to Being and the divine, of his own existence in relation to the source and possibility of this existence. Ultimately, though, both Heidegger's and Bultmann's projects posit a universe of inter-subjective relations, of individual agency away from social relations and relations of power, which marks them from the Marxist concept of de-alienation and the later discourse-bound demystification, despite the fact that these latter two also aim at agency and the empowerment of the individual. On the other hand, as Destruction and Demythologizing work on the assumption of the power of the word, they still posit the possibility of non-linguistic forces at work in and through language and the linguistic, which marks them further from poststructuralist practices of deconstruction, as the latter admit the non-linguistic in the play of language only as an "impossibility" (Derrida) or a "forever unreachable anteriority" (Paul de Man), in the philosophical and literary critical spheres respectively.

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Heidegger's systematic investigations into the nature of Being were quite instrumental early on in Bultmann's project, although, as Gadamer crucially observes, for Bultmann "Greek philosophy...was the philosophy of the Hellenistic age, and his attention focused not on ontological foundations but on existential self-understanding" ("Martin Heidegger and Marburg Theology 1964," in Gadamer 206). As Ogden points out, however, Bultmann's is a certain notion of *existentiell* self-understanding, to be differentiated from Lessing's timeless "truth of reason" and traditional rationalism (66). The basic similarities between some of the main themes in biblical teaching and those in existentialist philosophy are summed up by Macquarrie as follows:

Individual responsibility before God—which Eichrodt well illustrates from the reiterated demands of the prophets for personal obedience to God, and their protest against the reduction of religion to a collective impersonal cult; man's fall from his true destiny into concern with the creature; his consciousness of guilt; the call for decision; the fleeting nature of man's temporal existence, and its termination by death. But these are remarkably similar to the main themes of existentialist philosophy. The responsibility of the individual confronted with the possibility of being himself and the possibility of losing himself, fallenness, guiltiness, resolve, temporality, death—these are prominent among the phenomena which such a philosopher as Heidegger considers to be constitutive structures of the being of man (1955, 19-20; see also 1960, 137-42; 191-98).

In fact, it is the elucidation of the affinities between biblical thought and existentialism that Macquarrie sees to be what distinguishes Bultmann from other theologians who simply appropriate contemporary conceptual tools for their work. Bultmann begins his task of existential interpretation by showing how earlier attempts, notably those of the liberal theologians, the allegorists and the History of Religion school, have in effect done away with the *Kerygma* itself. The liberals have basically rejected the worldview of the New Testament altogether as mythological; they have placed the emphasis on the teachings of Jesus, rather than on his person (Cf. Macquarrie 1960 159-169). Christianity becomes simply a set of ethical teachings and the figure of Jesus emerges as that of a wise teacher. For Bultmann, on the other hand, the task is to elucidate God's act in Christ. The *Kerygma*, as Bultmann sees it, lies not just in the message or the teachings of Jesus as the Christ; it is inseparable from the very Person of Christ, and the modality of the answering situation of faith here is that of inter-subjective relations. The possibility of a "New Life" or a "New Being," as Barth

146 for example understood the *Kerygma* to be, can only be a new life or a new being *in* Christ, just as faith in Christianity is not faith in general or in *abstracto* but faith in Christ.

Bultmann's project of demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation, through its many transmutations, ultimately offers a kind of existential hermeneutic by which two tasks are accomplished: a) the *Kerygma* of the New Testament is rescued from any surrounding mythifying or objectifying statements, so that we can hear the Spoken Word more clearly; and b) in so doing, the subjective nature of God's act in the world, God's saving act in Christ, is revealed to us in such a way that we can engage with it as subjects in history. The *Kerygma* then can reach us in our historical reality, which, according to Bultmann, is the process of our self-understanding, leading to a decision concerning our own possibility. What Bultmann sees as the fundamental truth of the answering situation of faith, the encounter through the Word with God's being through God's saving act in Christ and in the present of our own moment of self-understanding, a literary critic of Frye's caliber and persuasion sees also to be the function of literature, for which the Bible's structure and imagery, as a totality, offer the highest instance of the imagination: the Bible offers us a "myth to live by," which is also the function of what Frye calls "concerned literature." Concerned literature is that which offers us a message and inspires action. On this view, literature is always closely allied with the fundamental narratives, mostly mythical, which embody the ethos of a society or culture, and every society has them. Frye, however, seeks to preserve the fundamental role of myth, metaphor and symbol, from which the proclamatory voice is inseparable, and adds a temporal dimension to the experience of language operations—seeing Bultmann's view as one which insists on facts (Cayley 177-78), and which retains a "pre-Romantic notion of poetic language as a special-purpose rhetoric" (LN 2:701).

In response to a question about Bultmann's demythologizing project, Frye responds that it is impossible because "the Bible is a tissue of metaphors from beginning to end" (Cayley 177). More significantly, Frye confirms Cayley's statement that he (Frye) had said that any act of demythologizing "ends up remythologizing" (177) and goes on

to explain that this “can be shown in Bultmann himself, because that is really what he does. He knows, as any competent biblical scholar must know, that everything, for example, said in the New Testament has its roots in the Old Testament. That means that while what is in the New Testament may be historically factual, it’s not there because it’s historically factual. It’s there because it fits something in the Old Testament” (177-78). Bultmann’s project, however, as Frye surely must have understood it, was not about the unearthing of historical facts; rather it is about views of existence behind the language of myth and metaphor, which of necessity determine the expression of truth, insight or event.

The kerygmatic voice that is inseparable from its *mythos*, its fundamental story, as Frye sees it, introduces a certain temporality and a worldview which have to be accounted for from a historical point of view, not only in terms of the question of receptivity, but with regard to the presentation of a world in which extra-human actions are possible or certain values are at play which can only be accounted for in terms of some divine force. This is where the Bible stands behind Western literature and forms of verbal organization as their imaginative code, an insight which Frye articulates with reference to Blake frequently. The temporal dimension, or sequence of type and antitype, is the sphere where revelation operates, progressively, at once within our historical processes and, as Johannes van Nie clearly puts it, pointing to “an accompanying awakening into a realm of events that are not limited to history. This realm is the world of human imagination that William Blake (followed by Frye) equates with God” (“A Note on Frye and Philo: Philosophy and the Revealed Word,” in Donaldson and Mendelson 171). Frye’s perception of an insistence on facts on Bultmann’s part offers us a hint at their most fundamental difference: Bultmann mistrusts the language of the first century as limited by its world picture, hence historically irrelevant, even misleading, to the act of self-understanding of present day readers and believers, a view that ultimately reduces the role of language in general (as Ferraris has pointed out). The kerygma is ontologically differentiated from its expression in Biblical language and imagery, whether as the Word of God, as God’s act in history or as the Person of Christ. For Frye, on the other hand, the kerygma as revelation is inseparable from the language of metaphor as its vehicle and from myth as that which ensures its repeatability through the typological mode of thought. 147

FRYE: MYTH, SYMBOL AND EXISTENTIAL METAPHOR

In an address before the Stated Meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (5 December 1981), delivered around the time *The Great Code* was to appear in print, Frye offers the following succinct account (repeated almost verbatim in *The Great Code* and later in *Words with Power*, GC 29-30 and WP 100) of his approach to the kerygma and to Bultmann:

Poetic language is closely associated with rhetorical language, as both make extensive use of figures of speech. The Bible uses a language that is as poetic as it can be without actually becoming a poem. But it is not a poem; it is written in a mode of rhetoric,

though it is rhetoric of a special kind, called by the theologian Bultmann, among others, *kerygma* or “proclamation.” In a last effort to evoke the ghost of the referential, Bultmann says that to see this *kerygma* in the Gospels we must get rid of myth, which he regards as an obstacle to it. To a critic, however, myth means primarily *mythos* or narrative, more particularly the kind of self-contained narrative which is meant by the English word *story* in contrast to history. Such myth is the only possible vehicle of *kerygma*, and as every syllable of the Gospels is written in the language of myth, efforts to demythologize the Gospels would soon end by obliterating them.¹⁰

148 Immediately following this account, which contains Frye’s final insight (later to be further refined but never substantially altered), Frye asserts that “[t]he literal meaning of the Bible, then, if we are right, must be a mythical and metaphorical meaning.” The central insights encapsulated here are first expounded in the arguments, and even structural arrangement, of *The Great Code*, following the double-mirroring of chapters, which begin with Language, moving through Myth and Metaphor to Typology, only to retrace the movement back through to Language, in a quadrangular arrangement (familiar from Frye’s earlier work and throughout) in which the second chapters seem to fulfill their first counterparts almost as an antitype would fulfill its type—mirroring Frye’s conception of the autotelic nature of the operations of language and narrative. Frye’s nod to the state of contemporary literary criticism and theory, revealed in his formulation of Bultmann’s project as “a last effort to evoke the ghost of the referential,” is still consistent with his initial insight into Bultmann’s work as one that insists on facts. Such formulations on Frye’s part could only make sense, however, as references to the ontological status of the *kerygma*, as autonomous and separable from its expressions in language and worldviews; whereas for Frye the *kerygma* remains always as a “voice” and a “speaking presence” inextricable from its special modes of speech, which, as he has consistently maintained, can only be metaphorical and mythical at its basis.

In another theoretical nod, this time to Derrida, Frye would reformulate and expound on the problem in terms of absence and presence in another Address delivered only two years later:

In the New Testament the gospels record the words uttered orally by Jesus. Few if any scholars believe that the authors of the gospels were eyewitnesses, or rather earwitnesses, of the original utterances; they are recording after a lapse of time. The orthodox doctrine says that they were inspired to give a definitive transcription of what Jesus said. The critical principle involved is that the text is not the absence of a former presence but the place of the resurrection of the presence. Or rather, it is not a place but what Wallace Stevens calls a description without place, a description he identifies with revelation or apocalypse. In this risen presence text and reader are equally involved. The reader is a whole of which the text is a part: the text is a whole of which the reader is a part: these contradictory movements keep passing into one another and back again. The Logos at the center, which is inside the reader and not hidden behind the text, continually changes place with the Logos at the circumference that encloses both.¹¹

Several crucial insights, spread over Frye's late work, are compacted here. Frye conceives of the kerygma as a voice, a proclamatory voice, speaking in a special mode in the written language of the Gospels. In *Words with Power*, he admits some hesitation over his stated preference for the term "kerygma" to "apocalyptic" or "prophetic" (WP 100), having stated earlier in *The Great Code* that he could not think of a better term (GC 29). He further characterizes such a voice as presence, since what the voice proclaims are not simply the truths of faith but ultimately the person of Christ, revealed as both the Word and Act of God. Such a claim not only reveals Frye's conception as more phenomenological than ontological, it also lays his interpretative approach open to familiar deconstructive strategies. However, the order of Frye's own mind clearly reveals itself in the above formulations and in a series of quick strokes, answering not only to orthodox doctrine but also to Derrida and to Bultmann. In Frye's reading, the texts of the Gospels are revealed to be not only a place but the place of a resurrection, perhaps as the shrine of the creative power of the word or the body housing the quickening breath. But the place is the site in which the resurrection to take place is the resurrection of not just any presence or spirit but a single and singular presence and spirit—the word as Eucharist, Jesus Christ as the Word, the kerygmatic voice (Cf. LN 2:647). Any presumed past origins of this presence, however, are then immediately closed off temporally when the presence is explicitly stated as "not a former presence," which leaves its advent open in the direction either of the present, the present moment of reading, or in the future, or perhaps as a kind of simultaneity of presence beyond our time measures and coextensive or consubstantial with the text or with the experience of reading it. But then just as we begin to ponder the nature of this presence and of its peculiar manner of resurrection in a text that is also a place, the place is revealed no longer as place but as a "description *without* place" in the poetic phrase of Stevens. The place, the text, is revealed poetically as only its own description, perhaps then as a rhetorical operation of its own making, of a self-referentiality that is shot through with poetic insight. So far, Frye's insight—seemingly achieved poetically—stands fast in the face of Bultmann's reading, as no ontological differentiation is demonstrated between the being of the voice as a speaking presence and the mode of speaking, the testament to the voice which, to recall Ricoeur's insight, is hermeneutically itself a Testament.

What is peculiar about Frye's implied reversal moves is that the place-text, or its apparent status as a description without place, is not a function of its own rhetorical operation, not a projection of something that it itself has created, a typical move in a deconstructive reading. Rather it is the description that projects itself as place, or more precisely as something for which place is lacking or an exterior for which place is the interior: a description *without* place. This rhetorical self-presentation of a description still has to point in the direction of what it is describing, the singular presence that it is to help resurrecting. And yet again, just as we begin to ponder the nature of the rhetorical operations, at work in the description's self-presentation that is really a re-presencing, as perhaps primarily a hermeneutic act, the reader is

revealed as standing in a “place” equal to that of the text, a place that is not really a place, especially in the now of the risen presence: “In this risen presence text and reader are equally involved.” The experience of reading is revealed here in the mode of an encounter of equals that transpires in the nearness of the risen presence, a formulation of a thought which perhaps Bultmann would have consented with, especially as it potentially makes possible the historicity of the understanding to be gained from the experience of reading, now that it involves the present moment of the reader so crucially in the advent of presence, which then anticipates a future in which meaning or insight can meet its potential fulfillment.

150 In a further nod, this time to the possibly risen presence, Frye reveals the manner in which both text and reader are equal: “The reader is a whole of which the text is a part: the text is a whole of which the reader is a part: these contradictory movements keep passing into one another and back again.” The conscious (and perhaps even subconscious) operations of understanding and assimilation seem to stand equal to those of the description without place, in a relation of whole-to-part and a fusion of horizons. It must also be surmised that comparably this wholeness too is a wholeness without place but is revealed in “contradictory movements” passing back and forth between text and reader. But once again as we begin to ponder the possibility that the speaking presence that is risen is perhaps resurrected precisely in these contradictory movements, Frye surprises us (and his lecture audience to be sure) with another terse and highly suggestive statement: “The Logos at the center, which is inside the reader and not hidden behind the text, continually changes place with the Logos at the circumference that encloses both.”¹² The resurrected presence-*cum*-shifting content of description-*cum*-core of readerly self-*cum*-contradictory movements is finally named as the “Logos at the center” and is precisely located “inside the reader” while seen as lying only “not hidden behind the text.” This same Logos, however, is also the “Logos at the circumference,” with which it “continually changes place.” One can only surmise then that the center described here is presumably the constantly shifting center of the contradictory movements that now seem to have formed, or at the very least let show forth, a circle that is enclosing both text and reader and whose circumference in turn reveals the same Logos at the center—both center and circumference being perhaps further metaphors of a “description without place” (Cf. Hamilton 124), or the “single area of verbal recognition” named in *Words with Power* in response to the followers of Derrida (114). In *The Great Code*, Frye names the speaking presence directly:

The Christian Bible is a written book that points to a speaking presence in history, the presence identified as the Christ in the New Testament. The phrase “word of God” applies both to the Bible and to that presence. As long as we accept the referential meaning of the Bible as the primary one, and read the words only for their revelation of something beyond themselves, applying the same phrase to such different things is only a dubious syllepsis. But we saw that the Bible deliberately subordinates its referential or centrifugal meaning to its primary, syntactical, centripetal meaning. It is our only real

contact with the so-called “Jesus of history,” and from this point of view it makes good sense to call the Bible and the person of Christ by the same name. It makes even better sense to identify them metaphorically. (GC 76-77)

As should be clear, especially from the last statements above, the metaphorical identification of the person and the word is central not only to Frye’s own vision but, by extension, also to the special status of the texts of the New Testament. This metaphorical identification of the word and the “speaking presence in history” must also extend to us as the beings whose very nature it is to stand “in history.” This insight renders Frye’s project as perhaps also one of an ontological hermeneutics, almost akin to that of Bultmann’s, except for the one crucial difference at the heart of the respective projects, which also constitutes their point of departure: the conception of the nature and role of language. The attention to verbal order, to language as it offers a verbal experience that is exemplary in the literary forms, articulates the crucial difference in originating insight between Frye and Bultmann.

Frye’s rendition of the experience of reading the texts of the Gospels reveals his poetic approximation of the peculiar experience of engaging with the special mode of rhetoric of the text—which he will further describe in *Words with Power* as lying “on the other side of the poetic” (WP 101)—answering to the kerygmatic voice in a mode of response that is *demanded* by the voice and that is itself *without* place. But it is perhaps *with* time, a time conceived variously in *The Great Code*, *Words with Power* and *The Double Vision* as the movement of a symbol toward an identity with what it symbolizes or as typological time, in which the type-antitype relation stands as the model for the mythical-kerygmatic relation. This spreading of insight as a symbolic unit over a temporality of verbal experience, with which perhaps we can keep growing, is Frye’s answer to Derrida’s conception of the operations of *différance*. The Logos that is at once at the center and the circumference stands *at the line of its own possibility*, that of the non-linguistic, a possibility in which we are deeply implicated but which is not yet our own possibility. Our own possibility lies fundamentally with the temporal movement towards the potential of the insight achieved, which as a personalized or historicized movement also embodies a metaphorical relation of the “identity-with” type. These operations constitute what Frye has chosen to term “existential metaphor.” Frye explains:

The essential point here is that literary metaphor, which is purely hypothetical, grows out of an existential type of metaphor, as we might call it, where a subject does identify himself with something not himself, in an experience that has no further need for language, although it has also fulfilled the entire function for language. ...But when we pass from the language of metaphor into the identities that metaphor asserts, we have reached the kind of faith the New Testament is talking about: the hypostasis of the hoped-for, the elenchos of the unseen. (MM 226; see also 35; 84-85; 111-12 and WP 75-76; 78-79; 82)

While this conception of existential metaphor preserves the special status of the Kerygma, in agreement with Bultmann, it seeks to do so by laying “the ghost of the

referential” to rest while preserving the essential role of the language of myth and metaphor in the Bible, as redefined by Frye the critic.

Frye not only sees the mythical as at the heart of all literary modes of verbal organization but also sees it as the source of the “concern” character of literary forms. As he puts it:

To me myth is not simply an effect of a historical process, but a social vision that looks toward a transcending of history, which explains how it is able to hold two periods of history together, the author’s and ours, in direct communication. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to suggest a social vision of this kind, even within an ideology, without invoking some kind of pastoral myth, past or future. (WP 60-61)

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He conceives of myth not as a simple response to the natural world or an expression of extra-human forces but as the verbal expression of the defining force of a culture, an expression of identity in which “the real interest of myth is to draw a circumference around human community and look inward toward that community, not to inquire into the operations of nature.” Mythology is therefore “not a direct response to the natural environment; it is part of the imaginative insulation that separates us from that environment” (GC 37). Todorov has early on identified Frye’s conception of mythology with others’ conception of ideology, both offering verbal expressions of a culture, though Frye prefers mythology, as Todorov also notes, because the discourses it generates tend to be in narrative forms. Hence for Frye: “Mythology is a product of the imagination and an expression of the ideal, but so too is the world of culture; mythology is thus nothing other than the verbal expression of a culture” (Todorov 99). This definition of myth rests on the conception of literature as an order of words, autotelic and separate but analogous to the order of nature. As myth is understood by Frye in its original or basic sense as story or sequence of words, the entirety of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, according to Frye, is a *mythos* or a “totalizing form,” a narrative of creation whose climactic moment is also the event of redemption, the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, and whose example as *mythos* lies at the heart of almost all subsequent significant forms of literature. Since the first appearance of his influential, but also controversial, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye has revealed a mind that is bent on creating order or “totalizing form” out of seeming chaos, a chaos that is really but a complex aggregate of orders and regulated (almost always sequentially) movements of language (Cf. Michael Dolzani, “The Book of the Dead: A Skeleton Key to Northrop Frye’s Notebooks,” in Boyd and Salusinszky 21-26). Just as there is an order of nature, so literature is seen also as an order of words, whose regulating phenomena are the various forms of literary *mythoi*. Continuity, or repeatability, is seen as the function of form (or in this case, myth) and not content. Any other mode of verbal organization or order (e.g., history, mythology, religion, or the various forms of ideology) can therefore join the literary only by way of content, not form.

The view that the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, stands as a grand *mythos* is a view which almost every critic or philosopher of language or of history

considers at some point, whether in the form of a “pure language” or an “originating myth” or a pure redemptive “historical moment.” For Frye, however, every narrative form or mode of verbal organization must have a center, and for the Bible he develops the principle of typology as its center and principle of self-re-creation. The typological mode of reading, which emerges as also a narrative principle, implies a certain understanding of time and history. Just as Bultmann strove to solve the problem of historical relevance in relation to God’s act in Christ by positing the distinction between *Historie* (the event in the past) and *Geschichte* (the event as encounter in the present), so does Frye by positing typology at the center of the Bible’s mythological statements. It should also be noted here that just as Bultmann understands history primarily as the existential field of human decision, a subjective or inter-subjective plane of both insight and action, of faith and experience, so too does Frye. But for Frye, history is understood typologically, a species of time in narrative. In other words, history as a typological phenomenon of meaning-production and as the plane of man’s self-understanding emerges primarily as a verbal phenomenon. Just as the account of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be experienced simply as an event of *Historie*, while his self-revelation as the Christ must meet us in our own present time and address himself subjectively speaking to our self-understanding as an event of *Geschichte*, so too for Frye, the encounter in the present time, through the time of narrative, with the “meaning” of the narrative, or the revealed Word of God, presents a special case of the identificatory power of the imagination, the phenomenon which he terms “existential metaphor.” As a result, Butlmann’s notion of an encounter in the present moment is spread into a temporal experience of symbolic identity with the word and the revelation of meaning it offers through verbal experience. In place of Bultmann’s fundamental ontological hermeneutics, Frye offers the metaphorical relation in time of the typological mode as a relation of identity-with activated in the experience of reading the Bible ultimately as a mode of human activity. Bultmann’s eschatological view of history is therefore replaced with a “[t]ypology that points to future events that are often thought of as transcending time, so that they contain a vertical lift as well as a horizontal move forward” (GC 82).

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The identificatory power of the imagination, according to Frye, is not just an imaginative necessity which lies at the core of the poetic. It becomes also a cognitive necessity which shapes our understanding of religion (as well as of society and all that is human; cf. *WP* xxii-xiii, Hart 1994, 11-13, Denham 69-76 and Gill 182). At some point Frye even considered a “Phenomenology of the Imagination” (*LN* 1:20, see also Gill 13). This aspect of the cognitive necessity of the identificatory power of the imagination is clearly articulated in Frye’s later work: *The Great Code, Words With Power* and *The Double Vision*. In these late works, Frye clearly states his preference for a poetic, imaginative *thought*, as opposed to the conceptual, dialectic mode of thinking in which a clear subject-object distinction controls the forms of ordinary consciousness. Such a preference, in fact, undermines the earlier distinction made in the *Anatomy* between literature and religion, particularly in terms of their modes of

expression (the first being hypothetical whereas the second assertive). The theoretical framework, outlined in the *Anatomy*, which made such a distinction possible, however, is still predominant in the later work, though the emphasis is no longer on the distinction in discursivity as such, but on the primacy of the “unmediated vision.” That is, the emphasis is on the identificatory power of the imagination as the point of origin for both the poetic and religious visions.

154 In the *Anatomy*, Frye identifies three important regulating aspects of literature: repeatability (form), communicability (archetype) and the symbol as “monad.” This last aspect, of the symbol as monad, is reminiscent of Spinoza’s understanding of the relationship of the “whole” (or Frye’s presupposition of a “pure myth”) and its inexhaustible variations (Frye’s notion of the spectrum of literary history as a series of displacements of the original “pure myth”). Another important source, if not the most important one, for Frye’s critical method, is of course the Christian Bible. The Bible provides at least three major paradigms for the study of literature: 1) the idea of “myth” as “total form,” or a verbal structure with a beginning and an end and an organizing or shaping principle (i.e., Typology as developed in *The Great Code*); 2) the sequential movement of phases; and 3) *Apocalypse* or the revelation which literature provides through the power of the imagination to construct alternative models or visions (to the actual). These three paradigms are discussed in detail in *The Great Code*.

In *The Great Code*, Frye takes it upon himself to “revive” the “so dead a language” of Biblical typology. Frye’s major interest in this work seems to be in the relationships between words and figures of speech as well as in the necessity of the existence of a “centre” for the Bible, or, for that matter, for any verbal structure that claims a totality for its order. By proving the existence of this centre, through the principle of typology, Frye does not only prove the totality of the Bible as a verbal structure, but also its originary aspect which carries it through to the verbal structures of Western literature. This last task is actually fulfilled not in *The Great Code*, but in its later sequel, *Words With Power*. The treatment of typology in *The Great Code* seems to be a highly integrated one, both in its expression and in its development. The presentation and development of the “principle” of typology in this book is similar in many ways to the development of “the notion” (*Begriff*) in Hegel’s *The Phenomenology Of Mind*, as Frye himself admits to be the case with most works of literary criticism. It starts with a unit of expression, or a symbol, and ends with a whole verbal structure in which the symbol has become a monad. Development here being a development in the expression and coherence of the elements involved in the principle of typology so that it becomes towards the end an operative whole which functions with a marked degree of completeness. Frye’s treatment thus starts with typology as professedly a specific form of rhetoric, a mode of thought, a revolutionary one at that, and ends with typology as a principle of unity that lies not only at the core of the Bible (or, more precisely, the Bible’s “capacity for self-re-creation”), but also at the core of his own book (Cf. Hart 1994, 116; 109-42).

This “capacity for self-re-creation” of the Bible originates in the centripetal aspect of its meaning (always manifesting in dialectical relation with its centrifugal aspect) which gives the Bible its “literary aspect.” For it must always be within view that Frye’s primary concern in *The Great Code* is with the literary aspects of the Bible that put it in line with all the verbal structures that we call literature. That is, those aspects of the Bible which make it both “literary” as well as “more than literature.” This centripetal or poetic meaning of the Bible, arising from the particular interconnection of its words (GC 61), constitutes its primary meaning as well as its centralizing sense of context. Thus, as he tells us, “wherever we stop, the unity of the Bible as a whole is an assumption underlying the understanding of any part of it” (GC 62). It is therefore important to follow as closely as possible Frye’s treatment of typology and, consequently, his ideas on time and history. For, rather interestingly, typology emerges towards the end of the book not only as a principle of order and unity in any verbal structure (including philosophy and history as well as literature), but also as a mode of thought which turns the understanding of the Bible, as I mentioned earlier, into an entire mode of human activity. 155

In the traditions of theology typological thinking originated in the idea that there is only One God, and it is this God that broods over the whole of history. Hence, and in conformity with “God’s redemptive plan,” the events and persons of the Old Testament can be viewed as both realities or actual events in history as well as prophetic signs the function of which is the foreshadowing of the persons and events of the New Testament. The ultimate fulfillment of this plan being of course the figure of Christ, as well as the Gospels. The Old Testament events and persons are considered “types” or shadows whose fulfilling realities or “antitypes” are the events and persons of the New Testament. In typological exegesis there are four essential elements that characterize it as a disciplined theological activity: the historical realism of both types and antitypes, the basic similarity between the two, the relationship between the two as one of shadow to reality; that is, the antitype of the typological reference must be a fulfillment, *a forma perfectiore*, of the type, and, finally, the divine relevance, or Christic correspondence of both type and antitype within the biblical theology of history. Another significant feature of traditional typology is that in the relationship between type and antitype the stress is usually on *res extensa* (the things) rather than on *verba* (the words), while the reverse is true in Frye’s treatment. This fact leads to yet another more important one, the fact that the whole notion of typology depends on a worldview, a theology of history that is uniquely biblical—for which Harold Bloom has severely criticized him, along with Erich Auerbach, seeing no imaginative gain in the attempt by these two notable critics to revive typology.¹³ The reason for this hasty review of the traditional view of typology is to show how Frye’s interpretation (within the overall frame of his work) will depart in many significant ways from this view, though it still functions as a general background to his carefully constructed arguments.

Frye starts his discussion of typology, in the first of the two chapters allotted to it precisely at the centre of his book (and possibly even of his “work”), by almost discarding this strictly theological view as somewhat a narrow one, deeming it to

be only a “typology in a special sense” (GC 79). With him typology acquires a much broader sense, particularly in terms of language and the order of words, which will eventually lead to a reformulation of the concept of history:

Typology is a figure of speech that moves in time: the type exists in the past and the antitype in the present, or the type exists in the present and the antitype in the future. What typology really is as a mode of thought, what it both assumes and leads to, is a theory of history, or more accurately of historical process: an assumption that there is some meaning and point to history, and that sooner or later some event or events will occur which will indicate what that meaning or point is, and so become an antitype of what has happened previously. (GC 80-81)

Most of the discussions in “Typology I” revolve around two major elements in his view of typology: typology as primarily a relationship expressed in a particular way of arranging words (the stress is thus on *verba*, rather than on *res extensa*) and, secondly, the hypothesis that the temporal aspect of this relationship forms the basis of both time and history. As the unifying principle in the Bible, typology is defined as a specific form of rhetoric or “concerned speech.” Thus, we find him declare: “I am concerned here with typology as a mode of thought and as a figure of speech. I say ‘and’ because a mode of thought does not exist until it has developed its own particular way of arranging words” (GC 80)—a definition which echoes André Jolles’s earlier definition of myth and confirms it as a mode of thought. Typology thus complements the three phases of language that are discussed in the first chapter of the book: the Metaphorical, the Metonymic, and the Descriptive. We notice that these are all figures of speech based on a binary system of relations whose major force lies in the nature of the “copula” connecting the predicate with the subject. A sense of progress can be traced here: we start with the basic formula “this *is* that” (Metaphorical), then move to “this *is put for* that” (Metonymic), then to “this *is like* that” (Descriptive), and then finally to the typological formula “this *foreshadows* that.” Yet, while typology shares in this basic principle of dualism, it departs in a significant manner from the other figures of speech. The two poles in the other relationships exist in an essentially simultaneous manner, while typology “is a figure of speech that moves in time: the type exists in the past and the antitype in the present, or the type exists in the present and the antitype in the future” (GC 80), hence the temporal aspect in typological relationships which, moving in time, lead us to Frye’s particular view of typology as a historical process. Also, as Robert Alter crucially notes, “[t]ypology enables his understanding of the Bible as a predominantly metaphoric book. If the narrative prose does not offer much in the way of metaphor on the microtextual level, metaphor may be conjured up from the settings and the material circumstances of the stories” (“Northrop Frye Between Archetype and Typology,” in Donaldson and Mendleson 141).

In the traditional view of typology as a strictly theological discipline, history is seen as essentially a divine plan in the mind of God, and thus *Weltgeschichte* is likely to mingle with *Heilsgeschichte*. God’s consciousness becomes a world consciousness.

With Frye history takes another form. The Bible, being the original source of history, has a historical myth (*mythos*) outside all conventional historical criteria (GC 65). Typology, as defined here, introduces a new concept of time: time is seen as a historical process that moves through language, a rhetorical time. The nature of the relationship between type and antitype, being vertical or ascendant in time, endows the Bible with a distinctive typological shape and structure that “makes its mythology diachronic.” For narrative as a structure is not, Frye denies, a “simultaneous structure, but a movement in time” (GC 63). The Bible, being thus a gigantic “frozen” myth, “has the quality of repetition characteristic of myth in all its contexts” (GC 48). Thus, and in view of language’s evolution in time, “what we are calling typology is a specialized form of the repeatability of myth” (GC 84). It is the feature of this repeatability and continuity that decides the meaning of history. Typology in this sense may well function as “a theory of history, or more accurately, of historical process.” This quality of repetition marks *Heilsgeschichte* from *Weltgeschichte* in which nothing exactly repeats. In *Heilsgeschichte*, the features of the repeatability of conditions are well known: it is either obedience, peace, prosperity and freedom, or disobedience, conquest, slavery and misery. Hence, *Heilsgeschichte* and *Weltgeschichte* can never meet, or even oppose, or else *Heilsgeschichte* would appear merely poetical (GC 58).

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As noted before, Frye argues strongly that priority in the Bible should be given to its mythical structure of historical facts and not to the historical content itself. The historical or biographical events in the Bible, among other constituents of its centrifugal aspect, are made secondary to the primary metaphorical meaning constituted by its centripetal or poetic aspect. This view gives rise to a specific notion of history best described, as he recommends, as “historical reminiscence” (GC 39). According to this notion, history is divided into two major components: the historical event itself, and the narrative’s own presentation of this event. Actual history is seen as particular, manipulated and limited in criterion of truth: “history makes particular statements, and is therefore subject to external criteria of truth and falsehood” (GC 46). On the other hand, the “universal” in history, that which makes for its perpetuation, is “what is conveyed by the *mythos*, the shape of the historical narrative” (GC 46). Frye cites the stories of Abraham and of the Exodus as examples of “historical reminiscence.” For example, what seems to survive throughout history is not the real Egypt of the Pharaohs, but the symbolic Egypt of the Exodus narrative. That is, what survives is the essential situation or what the Israelites felt in their bondage, so that after thousands of years African Americans felt the same and chose this particular analogy to express their own situation:

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell old Pharaoh
Let my people go. (GC 49)

Mythos does not just describe the specific situation, but also “contains it in a way that does not restrict its significance” (GC 46). At the same time, *mythos*, with its potential universality, “contains the destinies of those who are contemplating it” (GC 50). We find thus that historical truth lies in fact inside, and not outside, the narrative structure, yet in a manner that does not overrule *Weltgeschichte*. Frye then confirms that “by avoiding actual history and its criteria, it (*mythos*) sets the historian free to do his own job in his own way” (GC 50). This last pronouncement evokes to a great extent Hegel’s notion of “Reflective history” in the process of which our engaged reflections on past events make them rise before our mind in the form of a “present” that is the reward of our reflections. Thus, *mythos*, according to Frye, endows history with an added “dimension of the possible” and by so doing turns history into a mythical structure that can perpetuate itself through its power of repetition, though the actual historical event itself might diminish. The change of focus from the actual historical event to its *mythos* as the principal source of continuation and universality leads to Frye’s specific view of typology in the Bible. Such an understanding of Biblical typology leads, in turn, to the redefinition of history in terms of the relationship between the type and its fulfilling antitype. While, again, the nature of the relationship between the type and its antitype, being vertical and ascendant in time, endows the Bible with a distinctive typological shape and structure which “makes its mythology diachronic.” The diachronic nature of the *mythoi*, together with their repeatability, provides the source for the continuation of history. In *Words With Power*, however, Frye further notes that this vertical dimension of the cosmos; or what he calls “*axis mundi*,” does not exist outside the verbal world, and that it runs as a unifying principle in both the Bible and secular (Western) literature (Cf. Michael Dolzani, “the Book of the Dead: A Skeleton Key to Northrop Frye’s Notebooks,” in Boyd and Salusinszky 31-34).

The problem of historical relevancy is further clarified by Frye through his discussion of *Weltgeschichte* and *Heilsgeschichte*. *Weltgeschichte*, or the Bible’s historical realities—if anything historically true is in the Bible—is there “not because it is historically true, but for different reasons” (GC 40). Those reasons pertain to the spiritual profundities of the Bible, historical reality exists only to enhance the truth of these spiritual profundities. For, Frye asserts, “historical truth has no correlation with spiritual profundity, unless the relation is inverse” (GC 40). Therefore, the “literal” Bible of myth and metaphor contains the world of history outside itself. Still, the Bible, as Frye expresses it, continually “points to it (the outside world) because it grows out of that world, not because it regards it as establishing criteria for itself” (GC 228). Frye further asserts that “the structure of secular knowledge, so far as it bears on the Bible, is not only a rooting of the Bible in its human context, but a manifesting of the human struggle to unify its world” (GC 228).

As to Frye’s concept of time, we have noted before that time is mainly viewed in terms of language’s evolution, hence it is primarily a rhetorical time. However, Frye

acknowledges two “levels” of time: first, there is “time and space,” as pertains to the mind’s construction, and as being, for example, the original source of the cyclical vision of nature characteristic of pagan mythology. The second level, and the higher one, is time as eternity. These two levels of time may explain how typology manifests both a horizontal-move-toward as well as a vertical-lift-upward as it points to “future events that are often thought of as transcending time” (GC 82).

It is interesting in this regard how Frye identifies typology with causality (normally opposed one to the other) as both being forms of rhetoric that move in time. Yet, the temporal order of typology, Frye argues, is reversed in causality. The order in causality is normally cause first and then effect, but in the process of history (particularly in the predescriptive period, i.e., before Hume) historians are confronted with a mass of effects that require explanations, or meanings or causes. “These causes,” Frye argues, “are the antitypes of effects; that is, revelations of the real meaning of the existence of the effects” (GC 81). However, there is still one major difference: causality relates fundamentally to the past which can be subjected to reason, observation and systematic knowledge. Whereas typology relates to the future, hence, he says, it is also normally related to faith, hope and vision (GC 82). This explanation curiously contrasts with Auerbach’s view of figural interpretation (meaning typology) as presented in *Mimesis*. Auerbach views the relationship between the type and the fulfilling antitype as both being “linked neither temporally nor causally—a connection which it is impossible to establish by reason in the horizontal dimension... It can be established only if both occurrences are vertically linked to the Divine Providence” (73-74). Frye admits that causes have to be on the same temporal plane as their effects (or else they would not be genuine causes) and that typology always points to “future events that are often thought of as transcending time” (GC 82). But, he further argues that these future events “contain a vertical lift as well as a horizontal move forward.” The two movements, combined, reveal the nature of typology as being “essentially a revolutionary form of thought and rhetoric” (GC 83). Therefore, in Frye’s view, “causality and typology are rhetorically similar in form, and typology might in fact be thought of as an analogy of causality, a development of Aristotle’s formal and final causes” (GC 81). However, as Jonathan Hart points out, there are differences between typology and causality: “Whereas causality is founded on reason, observation and knowledge, moves on the same temporal plane and relates to the past, typology is connected with faith, hope and vision, points to a transcendence of time and relates to the future” (Hart 1994, 126).

It is perhaps a matter for contemplation how Frye’s idea of typology as an analogy of causality might resolve the problem for Auerbach which presents itself in the form of the question: “how to reconcile the figural interpretation with the conception of an uninterrupted historical sequence of events” (Cf. GC 85-86 and Auerbach 75-76). This very problem of a “continuation of history,” as Frye significantly points out, has led the Christian establishments to allegorize the law and force through a “spiritual” interpretation as a “compulsory means of understanding the Bible.” Thus, it was inevitable that they identified typology with allegory. This is how the structures

of the doctrines of Christian theology eventually became the antitypes “of which the stories and maxims in the Bible, including those of the New Testament, are types” (GC 85). Frye thus argues, justifiably, that typology is not allegory, and he does so on the grounds that allegory only finds its true meaning in a conceptual or argumentative translation but is itself only a story-myth; whereas the Bible deals, to a great extent, with real people and real events. The rationale behind this tendency on the part of the doctrines is the Church’s fear of a transcendence of its authority within history. For, as Frye points out, “the full thrust of the New Testament goes in two directions: into the future and into the eternal world, the two things coinciding with the Apocalypse or Last Judgment” (GC 85).

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As the notion of a One God in history is central to the traditional view of typology, so is the notion of a “centre,” according to Frye, to all narrative structures that claim to have a total order that is complete in itself. Thus, in his *Anatomy Of Criticism*, Frye sees the Bible as mythically “a single archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse.” He sees it also as a “total cyclical mythos.” These statements lie at the background of Frye’s discussion of typology in the second chapter; “Typology II.” The sequential aspect of typology presented in this chapter comes as an attempt to search out a centre, or a core, for the Bible considered as a verbal structure with definite literary aspects to it.

In “Typology II” Frye introduces a new dimension to the traditional view of the content or story of the Bible as a story of “revelation.” The process of revelation, according to him, seems to follow a definite sequence or dialectical progression that proceeds from creation to apocalypse. This sequence comes in seven major phases (the number “7” being itself suggestive of many things, e.g., the seven days of creation, or a completed circle). These phases constitute the new dimension that typology takes: “this sequence is another aspect of Biblical typology, each phase being a type of the one following it and an antitype of the one preceding it” (GC 106). These seven phases in fact demonstrate the phases of the unfolding of the Word of God into human existence.

The first phase, Creation, demonstrates how the world came into existence through the Word of God: “the forms of life are spoken into existence, so that while they are made or created they are not made out of something else” (GC 106). Creation thus seems to come all of a sudden, *ex nihilo*, and it is made to pass “through articulate speech (another aspect of the *Logos*), conscious perception, light and stability” (GC 108). This manner of coming into existence of the world implies that we participate in creation as we speak, and that creation is ultimately “not the natural environment with its alienating chaos, but the ordered structure that the mind perceives in it” (GC 225). The second phase, or Revolution, starts with the burning bush episode in the Old Testament and thereby sets an unprecedented design through the fact that a community of revelation begins to exist and is established through God by having a contract with Him. This contract endows the community with a certain identity, defined by Frye as a “revolutionary vision of human life as a casting off of tyranny

and exploitation” (GC 225). The third phase, or Law, indicates how the legal vision, or law, is made manifest in a community through a “ceremonial, moral, judicial code that keeps a society together,” and thus shows how a people are created by their law. The law here, it is worth noting, is not natural law, neither is it a social law, but a law that is given to a community of revelation which is further crystallized through this law, and its books made books of law. The fourth phase, or Wisdom, propagates a conception of wisdom in the sense of an integrated continuous life, as the law is further individualized, or embodied, in wise men. It is worth mentioning here how wisdom is understood in terms of time as potentiality, for what is right in the wise man is primarily encoded in the past and yet faces the future in the form of prudence. The fifth phase, or Prophecy, demonstrates the specific crystallization of law and prophecy in the person of the prophet. Revolution, which was before specific to a community, is now further individualized in the person of the prophet himself. Thus, prophecy becomes the “imaginative vision of man as somewhere between his original and his ultimate identity” (GC 225). Prophecy is therefore, like wisdom, related to a potentiality that faces the future. It is obvious that the first five phases develop out of the Old Testament.

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The last two phases, Gospel and Apocalypse, which develop out of the New Testament, acquire a new dimension peculiar to them. Both phases, to quote Frye, “speak of a present that no longer finds its meaning in the future, as in the New Testament’s view of the Old Testament, but is a present moment around which past and future revolve” (GC 225). In Gospel, the metaphorical relation between man and God is reversed; man no longer stands in front of an objective power that is somehow “there”: “Man has an infinite energy behind him,” Frye demonstrates the nature of the changed metaphor, “that is now available to him: a God who is invisible because he does the seeing” (GC 134). Gospel shows how to regain entry to Heaven not through a corpus of words, but through a way of life that starts with (a realization of) descendance, then goes through a process of *metanoia*, a turn of knowledge toward an enlarged vision of the dimensions of human life, and then finally to the ascent or resurrection. This is the model of life for every individual in the community. This model may also provide a typological interpretation of such works that deal with the progress of the soul as Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, for instance. This model life is not, however, attained by simply adopting the law, for “the gospel is a different kind of individualizing of the law, founded on the category of prophecy” (GC 131). The final and most important phase is Apocalypse, or Revelation. It is the vision of the ultimate present moment that reveals the inner form or meaning of “all that is happening now.” This apocalyptic vision “contains the total meaning of the Scripture, and may break on anyone at anytime” (GC 136). Though Apocalypse marks the end of the Bible, what is ended here is only the legal vision or the law which loses its grip on us as the creator-creature, divine-human antithetical tension vanishes in us. Only then a new beginning takes place, and a new life. Therefore, Apocalypse is considered “the antitype of all antitypes, the real beginning of light and sound of which the first

word of the Bible is the type" (GC 138). It is in this sense that Frye's statement that the Bible is a "total cyclical mythos" can be understood.

The dialectical process implied in this "sequential" feature of typology results in the expanded vision of the historical event into being a type of the redemption of the world by Christ. After all "The Christian Bible," Frye commends, "is a written book that points to a speaking presence in history, the presence identified as the Christ in the New Testament." Whereas with the seven phases we reach the articulation of typology as a principle of unity that provides a justification or a "tentative explanation of why the material in the Bible is as it is" (GC 204). The sequence of the phases, as Frye himself points out, is closely linked to "one of the most striking features of the Bible: its capacity for self-re-creation. The way that the Pentateuch is constructed, with its different narrative strands woven together, forms, among other things, a highly self-conscious retrospective view of the early history of Israelite culture" (GC 225). Thus, typology, inasmuch as it is a principle of order and unity, stands not only
 162 at the core of Frye's own book, but also at the centre of the Bible itself. And, inasmuch as typology is a mode of thought, it turns the understanding of the Bible into an entire mode of human activity that is fundamentally imaginative:

The *kerygma*, or proclamatory rhetoric, of the Bible is a welcoming and approaching rhetoric, addressed by a symbolically male God to a symbolically female body of readers. Coming the other way is the body of human imaginative response, as we have it in literature and the arts, where the language is purely imaginative and hence hypothetical. Here the imaginative product seems to be symbolically female, the daughter of a Muse. Yet perhaps it is only through the study of works of human imagination that we can make any real contact with the level of vision beyond faith. For such vision is, among other things, the quality in all serious religions that enables them to be associated with human products of culture and imagination, where the limit is the conceivable and not the actual. (GC 231-32)

These conclusive insights, to *The Great Code*, in which Frye sums up his view of the *Kerygma* and of the relationship between the Bible and literature, thereby illuminating the *and* in the subtitle of the book, are among his clearest and most straightforward statements on the subject. This same *and*, however, will reappear more crucially in *Words with Power*, where kerygma reappears and is taken beyond its initial conception in *The Great Code* as that which lies on the other side of the poetic, itself placed between the rhetorical and the kerygmatic. Kerygma in *Words with Power* takes metaphorical identification "a step further and says: 'You are what you identify with'" (WP 116; Denham 66). As Denham points out, quoting Frye, "we enter the kerygmatic realm when the separation of 'active speech and reception of speech' merges into a unity (118)" (66). This *and* is perhaps the anti-type which fulfills the first *and* in the subtitle of *The Great Code*, which leads Denham to translate it into what Frye means by the "spiritual." This counterlogical idea of the separation of active speech and reception of speech merging into a unity is also Frye's metaphor for the Word and the word of revelation, as I demonstrated in my reading of the key

passage from Frye's 1981 Address earlier, and is perhaps to be extended to include the language and modes of the sacred texts of the monotheistic traditions. It is perhaps also the ultimate "counterhistorical myth" (LN 2:695), to quote one of Frye's expressions for the kerygma in the *Late Notebooks* (1982-1990).

As one of the privileged editors of editions of the Collected Works of Northrop Frye, Denham has had unique access and lists in his recent work, *Northrop Frye: Religious Visionary and Architect of the Spiritual World*, almost all the key instances of the uses and discussions of kerygma in Frye's late works and notebooks. Instead of replicating some of the references and insights, one particular paragraph is perhaps worth quoting in its entirety. It follows his discussion of Frye's use of kerygma in *The Great Code* and *Words with Power*:

In *The Double Vision* Frye says about Kerygma only that the New Testament's myths to live by and its metaphors to live in are a transforming kerygmatic power 'coming from the other side of mythical and metaphorical language' (18). The word kerygma does not appear in either *The "Third Book" Notebooks* (1964-72) or the notebooks on romance (1944-89), and it appears only twice in the notebooks for *The Great Code*. But in the *Late Notebooks* (1982-90) there are more than 160 instances of the word kerygma, an indication of the energy Frye devoted to searching for the other side of the poetic during the last decade of his life. In fact, kerygma as *on the other side* of the poetic or as *beyond* the imaginative gets emphasized in the notebooks, and never satisfied with the point at which he had arrived, Frye even wonders at one point, "What's on the other side of kerygma?" He soon answers the question: "the world of words as seen by the Word" (LN, 1:343). Otherwise in the *Late Notebooks*—and it is an extensive otherwise—kerygma is said to announce a world beyond speech (LN, 2:715) and to be the purloined-letter archetype ("the verbal message everybody wants to kidnap but can't get hold of") (LN, 1:219). It is the transformation of Kierkegaard's "aesthetic" category (LN, 1:251); it combines the counterhistorical myth and the counterlogical metaphor (LN, 2:695); it is spiritual rhetoric (LN, 1:306, 403) and revelation (LN, 1:342); and it serves as a new context for the Logos in John's gospel (LN, 2:647). In the kerygmatic universe the gods and spirits of myth have been transformed into God and Spirit (LN, 1:270). The "kerygmatic breakthrough always contains some sense of 'time has stopped.' The sequential movement has become a focus, or fireplace. In intensified consciousness the minute particular shines by its own light (or burns in its own life-fire)" (LN, 1:290). (Denham 67-68)

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Denham then goes on to discuss what Frye calls in the *Late Notebooks* "higher kerygma", which is seen as akin to Buber's "Thou" (LN 1:209) and has the sense of complete "otherness" (LN 1:271) (Denham 68-69). Above all, there is Frye's enigmatic riddle, for which Denham provides a visual schema: "In descriptive writing the verbal content (not what we usually think of as content in that connection) is syntactic prose. When this content turns into form, a content of metaphor reveals itself within. When *that* becomes form, myth (order, narrative, time, quid agas) becomes the content. When myth becomes form, kerygma becomes the content" (LN 1:269). Denham sees here a similar *Aufhebung* to Frye's discussion of phases, sequences and modes in the late works, one in which excluded initiatives emerge out of earlier phases. What

is significant here is also Denham's relevant insight that "Kerygma is too discontinuous to assume a form itself, except in the provisional form it takes in sacred texts (*LN*, 1:269)" (Denham 68). This riddle, however, indeed offers a "description without place" of kerygma, one which offers a typology of forms as the identity of personal experience, the movement of both symbol and reader toward an identity with what is symbolized in the particular language-experience of sacred texts. Further close analysis of the key instances in the *Late Notebooks* will, however, be hoped to resolve the key issue here over the "discontinuity" of form that marks kerygma. Perhaps one key lies in the nature of "seeing" in Frye's answer to his own question about what lies on the other side of kerygma: it is the being-seen by the Word that unifies on the other side; on this side, the encounter is a type of intersection (to echo Barth's statement above) and is always in some Bergsonian present moment but perhaps with the promise of futurity not only as continuity or duration but also as contiguity.

164 Neither Bultmann nor Frye consider the Bible to be a work of literature. They both agree, however, on the importance of taking its language of myth and metaphor seriously, albeit for different reasons. As a theologian and a believer, Bultmann separates the *Kerygma* from its imagery, even as he excludes the possibility of reaching any definitive formula or understanding of it. The *Kerygma* of the New Testament engages human understanding in an open movement of unending possibility, but is never exhausted by this movement. Bultmann's understanding of God's relation to man is conceived in the existential terms of inter-subjective relations. Any statement of such a divine-human relation is deemed mythological if it objectifies either the relation or God's being. God's act in the world is first and foremost a revelation of God's being, and what is at stake is the ontology of this revelation, not the epistemology of the act. While Bultmann does not deny the role of metaphor, he presupposes a fundamental rift between the image and its sacred object. He considers this rift, however, as the result of a no longer historically tenable view of existence, the first-century worldview which the imagery enshrines. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while Bultmann focuses on the New Testament, Frye considers the entirety of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, as the complete narrative of creation. This narrative is both historical and cosmic, and its climactic moment is also the event of redemption, or God's act in the world, which not only links the Old Testament with the New, on the level of language and narrative sequence, but also the history of the world with the history of redemption, or *Weltgeschichte* with *Heilsgeschichte*.

More fundamentally, as I argue here, the difference ultimately hinges on the conception of time and the historical—eschatological or typological? The identificatory power of the imagination is Frye's equivalent to Bultmann's answering situation of faith, both answering the message and equally offering, in Bultmann's words, "the demand of and the gift offered by preaching" (*JCM* 40). For Frye, however, the mythical-kerygmatic relation stands for the ultimate type-antitype relation (*WP* 105). The Preacher has to go through the layers of metaphor and expound them as the "way" to the kerygma, not to reinterpret them or transmute them, but to engage with them

(WP 100; LN 1:269). Frye's conception of kerygma is primarily as a mode of speech, a speaking presence in history that is encountered in the written word, that is also Christ (GC 76). The answer to the call of the kerygma as conceived theologically and as demanded by faith is not different from the imaginative experience by which we move with a symbol in a relation of identity-with toward what it symbolizes.

Between Bultmann's existential theological approach and Frye's archetypal mythical (formal) approach, what is seen to be fundamentally at stake in the nature of sacred discourse is the ontological status of the language of myth and metaphor, the indispensability of which to the *Kerygma* or sacred message (as spoken word or voice) they both equally acknowledge. The *Kerygma* issues from a transcendental, extra human source, but whether it enters history as God's act in Christ or human language as the Spoken Word, the issue as perceived from our limited human standpoint becomes one of metaphor: existential and literary. It is existential because God's Being, both Frye and Bultmann maintain, should not be perceived "objectively," that is, God's Being cannot be posited as an object over against our subjective being and self-understanding: on our historical plane, God's act in Christ reveals both as Ultimate Subjects.¹⁴ One important aspect of Bultmann's project of Demythologizing is its interpretive acts of "de-objectification," in the sense of de-objectifying mythical statements surrounding the *Kerygma* in order to reveal God's inter-subjective relation with human beings (understood as an "encounter" in the present moment; cf. Owen 14-19, also the fourth chapter on "Encounter and the Word"). Frye's own term for this encounter, which he expands to include the encounter with all forms of narrative, particularly those which contain a message of social concern, is the more literary sounding "existential metaphor." Existential metaphor, as we have noted, is a special case of the metaphorical relation of an "identity-with," which describes the relation a reader might have with the text's centripetal force. This relation is different from, but somewhat based on, the literary case of the metaphorical relations of objects within the language of the text: this object *is* or is *like* that object, God's act in Christ is the Spoken Word in history, or in the totalizing mythos of the Bible, but it is also the archetype of all speaking voices. 165

Between Bultmann's and Frye's positions, the question to be posed could perhaps be phrased as follows: is the image of the Spoken Word, or the figure of Jesus, intrinsically identical with the essence of the Spoken Word, or the Christ of God's act, or are they ontologically other? Bultmann's answer is that they are different: the image taken by itself is metaphorical and can only end up objectifying God's Being, and Jesus the man alone becomes only an exemplary figure, as the emphasis is shifted from his Person to his teachings, which is what the Gnostics and the liberal theologians have propounded, at the risk of taking the Christ out of Christianity. Christianity then becomes but another mode of pious living or another body of ethical teaching. Hence, mythological imagery and statements have to be existentially reinterpreted or demythologized. Frye, on the other hand, and in response to Bultmann, insists on the necessity of the metaphorical base of the *Kerygma*. While the language of meta-

phor and the mythical universe it presents are our entry point into the *Kerygma*, the *Kerygma* itself remains as the speaking voice in a distinct mode of rhetorical speech that is extra literary, issuing somewhere between the rhetorical and the poetic. Frye started out as an archetypal or formalist critic, and Bultman as well started out as a form-critic theologian, but both seem to have eventually moved away from epistemological considerations of language's operations (literary or otherwise) to an ontological orientation based on existential modes of self-analysis.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 *Ego eimi*: "I am he," the reference is to the basic message or *Kerygma*, as understood by certain modern theologians like Barth and Bultmann, of the Johannine Gospel. See the quote from Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth* below. Sections of this article were first delivered in the form of a lecture on Frye's conception of existential metaphor in the lecture series organized by the Committee on Comparative Poetics, now part of Harvard's Humanities Center. The lecture was delivered in the Fall of 1996 at the invitation of Professors William Granara and Gregory Nagy of Harvard, for whose generosity and insight, which they liberally extended to a newly-arrived junior colleague, I'm deeply grateful.
- 2 For a good overview of twentieth-century Christian Theology, see Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jensen, eds. *A Map of Twentieth-Century Theology: Readings from Karl Barth to Radical Pluralism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).
- 3 H. B. Owen, one of Bultmann's first serious and earnest readers, lists the need for a "closer inquiry into what may be called the symbol's existential mode of operation" among his (mainly positive) criticisms of Bultmann's project. See his excellent and near comprehensive study of *Entmythologisierung, Revelation and Existence: A Study in the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (Cardiff: University of

Wales Press, 1957). Owen's study is indispensable for the understanding of the problem of myth from a theological point of view, particularly in the works of Bultmann.

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- 4 My discussion of Frye's work and critical method will primarily focus on his later work, especially *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* and its sequel (though Frye qualifies the relationship in his Introduction) *Words with Power*. Indeed, beginning with his work on Blake, *Fearful Symmetry*, and largely owing to it, through his *Anatomy of Criticism*, and throughout the rest of his career, the relationship between the Bible and western literature seems to occupy Frye's thinking. This focus carries itself through his last work, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion*. Citations from these and other works in the text will adhere to the abbreviations that have become standard for the Collective Works, e.g., *GC*, *WP*, *FS*, *AC*, and *DV*, respectively, followed by page number.
 - 5 For an excellent study of idolatry, particularly in relation to representation and myth, in the monotheistic tradition, I refer my reader to the study by Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry*, trans. Naomi Goldblum (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1992). The study focuses primarily on Judaism, but I refer my reader in particular to the second and third chapters, "Idolatry and Representation" and "Idolatry and Myth."
 - 6 This understanding of myth, as Ernst Lohmeyer has first pointed out, seems to have initially been taken for granted by Bultmann, without much scrutiny as to its truth or applicability to the New Testament revelation, see Ernst Lohmeyer, "The Right Interpretation of the Mythological," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (124-37). It is perhaps worth noting that Lohmeyer, taking the approach of what he terms "scientific theology" (which he considers complementary to "believing theology"), seeks to eliminate the opposition between myth and history. On Lohmeyer's view, both myth and history have equally to be subjected to the theologian's truth-searching gaze, both being "complementary aspects of the same truth" (135). Ian Henderson's conclusions illustrate Lohmeyer's fundamental insight (see in particular the chapter titled "Can We Dispense with Myth?" (50-56).
 - 7 Bultmann's famous essay "New Testament and Mythology," like A. Harnack's *What Is Christianity?* and K. Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans*, is considered a turning point in modern theological debate. The essay and a series of responses to it, as well as Bultmann's replies, have appeared in two volumes in German in 1952. My references will be to the shorter English edition, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, henceforth quoted in the text as *KM*, followed by page number. The statement quoted above is from the footnote on page 10.
 - 8 See also Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, henceforth quoted as *JCM*, followed by page number, and the two later essays "On the Problem of Demythologizing" (1950) and "On the Problem of Demythologizing" (1961), included in Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament & Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (see especially 99-100; 155-56).
 - 9 For extended discussion on the nature of myth in the context of theological response to Bultmann's project, see in particular the contemporary critiques included in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (ed. Hans Werner Bartsch), Ian Henderson's *Myth in the New Testament*, and John Macquarrie's *The Scope of Demythologizing: Bultmann and his Critics*, the latter offering a detailed philosophical and theological exposition of Bultmann's project.
 - 10 The Address was first published in the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 35 (Dec. 1981): 32-41, and later reprinted under the title "The Double Mirror" in *Myth and Metaphor* (see MM 232).
 - 11 In an address delivered in the MLA annual meeting (27 December 1983), first published in *PMLA* 99 (Oct. 1984): 990-95 and reprinted under the title "Literary and Linguistic Scholarship in a Postliterate World" (MM 25-26).
 - 12 The curious intimations first of St Thomas Aquinas' aesthetics of whole and part, which perhaps have to do with the order of what Umberto Eco has once termed "an aesthetics of chaosmos," and then of medieval scholastic definitions of God are unmistakable here.

- 13 Cf. Linda Munk's critical reading equally of Frye's typology, following and citing Bloom and others, and of Bultmann's indifference to the Old Testament, in her article "Northrop Frye: Typology and Gnosticism" (in Donaldson and Mendleson 151-63). In the same volume, Robert Alter offers a classic critique both of traditional typology and of Frye's treatments of it from the point of view of a Hebrew scholar (Cf. "Northrop Frye between Archetype and Typology" 137-50).
- 14 The question of "Person" and "Personhood" in the history of Christian theological debates is rather complex and problematical, especially as it enters the dogmatic creeds of the different churches. The statement above is better read in the terms of existential philosophy.