

avis, il s'agit là d'une digression, mais non pas d'un « hors d'œuvre » ; dans l'ensemble du *De doctrina christiana* cette partie me paraît très importante et être l'assise sur laquelle s'élève tout le bâtiment. La culture chrétienne trouve son fruit primordial dans une lecture compréhensive et sapientielle de la Bible, Ancien et Nouveau Testament.

Mais ce désaccord avec l'auteur ne diminue en rien ma grande admiration pour l'ensemble de son ouvrage et j'espère vivement qu'il trouvera encore la force et le courage pour achever au moins la troisième partie de son œuvre, celle qui sera consacrée à l'époque antidonatiste.

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Geo WIDENGREN, *Religionsphänomenologie*. Berlin, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1969, xv-684 S., DM 38,—.

The original Swedish edition of Widengren's *Religionsphänomenologie* appeared in 1945. A second printing appeared in 1953 and a third in 1969. The German edition is a fundamental re-working of the second Swedish printing. New pieces have been added on and ch. 5 is completely re-written. The work is intended as a handbook for students of the history of religion and of theology. For this reason relatively much attention is devoted to judaism and christianity. The material on Islam is also particularly rich.

The work was at the time written against the evolutionism which was then dominant in Sweden ; a trend which was losing its appeal in 1969. Although there is an enormous wealth of data treated in the book, one notices that the East Asiatic religions receive little attention.

As religious phenomenologist Widengren wishes to bring together the different appearing forms of religion in themes. It is here a question of a systematic synthesis, in contrast to the historical analysis which is the work of the historian of religions. But both have need of each other for their interpretation. There is the danger that in a phenomenological description the differences between the religions, of which each one forms its own coherent whole, will not be sufficiently recognised. The impression can be easily given that the meaning of the different forms is everywhere the same and that the religions therefore are not essentially distinct from one another. Although Widengren himself warns against this attitude (p. 210 : « *Der Sinn der Handlung kann wechseln und verschieden gedeutet werden, die Handlung selbst bleibt dieselbe.* »), one still asks if his manner of presentation escapes this objection. The religious phenomenologist stands open to another danger also. Agreements can be simply interpreted as historical dependence, and the classification of more important and less important phenomena may not be taken into account. Therefore Widengren himself in his first chapter pleads for the co-operation of phenomenologist and historian, although at the same time he underlines the impossibility of making the repercussions of this felt within the compass of a book.



(p. 1 : « ...in der Praxis jedoch müssen die Grenzen oft ziemlich fließend bleiben, und zwar deshalb, weil wir oft nicht imstande sind, ein Phänomen richtig zu klassifizieren, ohne gewisse historische Untersuchungen oder Vergleich anzustellen... Schon praktische Gründe verbieten eine solche Methode, die bei eine Spezialuntersuchung durchaus angebracht wäre, bei einer Darstellung der gesamten Religionsphänomenologie jedoch ins Uferlose führen würde. »).

As regards the content of the work : in the first series of chapters Widengren treats of the godhead and the divine. He starts from the position that religion is a given fact. The essence of religion consists in its faith in a god. Religion is not reduced to anything pre-religious. Invoking the definition of J. B. Pratt he says that « Religion is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies » (p. 3). In opposition to this he places magic, which denies just that religious extra-moment and thinks itself able to exert control over destiny. In this connection Widengren discusses the concept « mana », which he describes as an extraordinary force which goes out from a person and which in itself is neither religious nor magical (ch. 1). The taboo and the sacred belong to the sphere of the divine (ch. 2). The essence of the highest godhead is discussed (ch. 3) and the different sorts of religious faith : pantheism, which arises from the conception that the world is born of the godhead and forms his body ; polytheism, which comes from making the properties of the highest godhead independent ; monotheism (ch. 4). With this is joined the problem of evil (ch. 5). Then follow three chapters which consider myth (ch. 6), the relation between faith and myth (ch. 7) and rite (ch. 8). Rite and myth are seen in their relationship of mutual dependence. The forms of the rite are worked out in the five following chapters. Penance and prayer (ch. 9) ; sacrifice (ch. 10) in which the gift creates a closer bond between the giver and the receiver ; the cult place (ch. 11) ; the sacral kingship (ch. 12) ; death, burial and veneration of saints (ch. 13). The author then speaks of the subjects of myth : spirit and soul (ch. 14) ; eschatology (ch. 15) ; apocalyptic (ch. 16) ; gnosis (ch. 17) ; mysticism (ch. 18) ; the spoken and written holy word (ch. 19 and 20). Finally there is a chapter about the relationship between the individual and the group (ch. 21). The work concludes with a complementary bibliography in so far as this has not been given in the footnotes, and some registers (p. 638-684).

In this review we would like to examine more closely ch. 17 about gnosis ; a subject with which Widengren, through his knowledge of the history of Iranian religion is particularly conversant, and also a subject of great importance in the context of this journal.

Indo-Iranian pantheism, within which God and world are thought of as one, acts as the background of gnosis. The higher element of man is a part of the spiritual Ego of the godhead and his body is a part of the divine body, the world. There is then a development from pantheism



to dualism, where the world is distinguished from the godhead. From divine body the world becomes divine attire, wrapping. An important problem here is how the original unity can still be conceived in a world of plurality. One sees the many either as appearance or as corruption of the One. In both cases a negative interpretation. From this arises the need for a redemption from this world. The way of redemption is through the insight, which frees man from the veil of ignorance, that man comes from the divine world and goes back there again. In this way man undergoes two births. Through the first he is thrust out of heaven and fettered to matter. Through re-birth he reaches again the heavenly paradise.

Two great trends in gnosticism are named, manicheism, which is located in a Iranian milieu, and Syro-Egyptian gnosticism which is more orientated towards christianity. What they have in common is a dualism between spirit and matter; God and world; light and darkness; life and death; good and evil. A new element is that the gnostics, in contrast with their Indo-Iranian origin, think of matter in itself as evil. In the Syro-Egyptian gnosticism one can recognise an effort to break through this sharp dualism by means of emanations, whereby matter is finally brought back to the divine. Evil came to exist in the divine sphere; through a mistake of the Demiurge the world is a mixture of good and evil. This mixture is true of the macrocosm — the world — as well as for the microcosm — man —. To the three elements in man : spirit (pure good), body (pure evil) and soul (mixture of good and evil) correspond three groups into which mankind can be divided.

In manicheism the Redeemer, who brings redemption to the souls which are sunk in matter, is also thereby redeemed himself. He is the sum of all redeemed. It is remarkable how this last aspect played a role in Augustine's teaching on the *Totus Christus*. The descent of the Redeemer to the world is two-fold : it has happened once, but it is also a process which is repeated every time a soul accepts the invitation to return to heaven. The Redeemer, as spiritual active principle of the godhead is also called the One Sent, Great Man or Original Man (*Urmensch*). Here the correlation between macrocosm and microcosm plays an important role. To the One Sent to the earth corresponds the Spirit, who forms a twin Ego with him. Widengren does not hesitate to see correspondences between this spirit and the Holy Spirit of christianity. When the Spirit and the One Sent meet one another, the One Sent becomes aware of his mission. Despite agreements, there is between gnosticism and christian thinking a great difference in their views of time. For the former, time, being bound to the cosmos, is something evil, it is a caricature of eternity. Gnosticism elevates Christ from time. He has come into time, but he is not a historical person. Otherwise he would have been clothed with a body, that is, with evil. A divine incarnation is considered impossible by gnosticism.

The references to Augustine are scarce. He is not mentioned in connection with manicheism. He is referred to in the treatment of



western mysticism, for which he laid important foundations, basing himself on Paul, Plotinus and Porphyry, although he was no mystic himself.

Finally some remarks regarding three interpretations : in relation to sacrifice are there not on p. 311 too easily connections made between different stories? On p. 321 the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit is too easily interpreted as a kingly anointing. We would prefer to call the pantheism of Eriugena, which is spoken of on p. 538-540, immanentism, and we would not underline the transcendence thought of Augustine at the cost of immanence. Although Widengren has treated many questions more fully and therefore more correctly in separate studies, we must express our admiration for the way in which he has brought together in the rather concise compass of a handbook so much material in such a comprehensive way.

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