



The Collapse of Concealment¹

IN THE PREVIOUS issue of *Outlook* we reviewed the ancient legends and myths surrounding Creation.² These myths imagined an ongoing pattern of violence between (1) the gods, with their uncreated agents dwelling in the sky above, and (2) the chaos of the “underworld,” with its created agents dwelling on earth.

These myths of the struggle between the “uncreated” and “created” were based on ideas developed in the early consciousness of mankind³:

Myths of the struggle between the “uncreated” and “created” were based on ideas developed in the early consciousness of mankind.

1. It was believed that the uncreated gods, with their uncreated agents or archetypes, existed apart from and above everything and everyone else.

This “uncreation” was therefore self-existent. Self-existence needed no one and nothing else. In fact, it required the exclusion of everyone and everything else that had been created.

2. It was assumed that Creation and the created order were profane, fallen and inevitably destined to death and extinction. Death and extinction could only be avoided or delayed by violent struggle against all death-dealing agencies and powers.

3. It was thought that mankind was somehow suspended between the uncreated order above and the created order below. In fact, mankind was seen as partaking of both divine “uncreation” from above and profane Creation from below. As a result, mankind itself was viewed as the fundamental and final battleground between divine “uncreation” and demonic Creation.

Identifying the assumption that man (male and female) is the battleground between “uncreation” and Creation helps to explain the pattern of violence involving mankind. As previously discussed, this violence is displayed in three

ways — through religious sacrifice, through war externally, and through law internally.⁴

For mankind to openly claim to represent both divine uncreated reality from above and demonic created reality from below is difficult if not impossible. Why?

1. Don't expect me to admit that I am actually a created beast derived from some "underworld" and that I shall return to the dust beneath me. That would threaten and destroy my dream of living forever.
2. Don't expect me to admit that I am actually an uncreated Being descended from the heavens and destined to return to the same heaven. If I should openly and publicly announce that I am really a god from above, I would be held up to derision, assault and even destruction.
3. Don't expect me to divulge my fears, resentment and violence over my apparently divided nature — uncreated and created — for that would unmask my questionable identity.

The fact is that man has always been a divided or schizophrenic⁵ being. Thus, for thousands of years we have been able to resolve our assumed divided identity only by concealing that identity from ourselves, from each other, and from all "powers" above and below.

The Concealment

Over time we have used various means to conceal our confused identity and the inevitable violence that accompanies that confusion.

1. Our first resort is to myths⁶ or legends in which we attribute the presence of both uncreated and created reality, with their subsequent mutual violence, to the gods themselves. In other words, we are not responsible for the existing confusion of human identity. The gods are.
2. If we become violently involved with others over our supposed uncreated/created identity, we attribute that involvement to our linkage with the gods — our religion (*re-ligare* = relinkage).
3. Finally, we hide our confused identity under the cover of existing power structures — economic, social and political.⁷ By using corporate power structures to mask individual identity and to exercise our violence, we are able to separate ourselves from any "action" that would disclose our created animality and our lack of uncreated self-existence.

Thus, for thousands of years our use of myth, religion and existing power structures has succeeded in concealing the confusion over our identity and in hiding our resulting use of violence. Nevertheless, the agencies of myth, religion

We have used various means to conceal our confused identity and the inevitable violence that accompanies that confusion.

and cultural power structures have also greatly advanced the development of civilization.

However, sometime before 500 BCE (before the Common Era) there was, for a period, a serious breakdown of the measures used for concealment. Although we do not know the exact circumstances leading to this breakdown, we do know the principal developments that occurred:

1. The level of violence escalated to a point where it could no longer be justified in the interest of preserving man's existence and identity. Unrestrained violence threatened the destruction of culture, mankind's identity with the gods, and the extinction of the human race.

2. About the same time, an obscure nomadic people called the Habiru (Hebrews) appeared and presented another view of man's nature and identity.⁸ They declared that there was only one God — YHWH — and that this God identified himself with mankind

An obscure nomadic people called the Habiru (Hebrews) presented another view of man's nature and identity.

rather than demanding that mankind identify itself as deity. In fact, YHWH himself had created the world and mankind. Furthermore, YHWH was not like other gods, who were self-existent and did not act. YHWH acted not only to create man but to enter into covenantal relationship with man. Still further, YHWH acted on behalf of the victims of violence. He liberated his people from bondage. He led them out of Egypt. He nourished them and safely brought them to the Promised Land. Such a God was totally unlike the mythical gods, who violently opposed Creation in order to maintain their own isolated self-existence.

These historical developments included growing disbelief in myth and emerging faith in the declared presence of the covenantal God. Together, therefore, these developments eventually led to the abandonment of traditional myths and to the collapse of existing power structures.

At this time of world crisis, around 500 BCE, desperate efforts were made across the world to replace the myths, religions and power structures that had collapsed. These efforts were designed to re-conceal mankind's confused uncreated/created identity. In place of largely Egyptian myths, which claimed that male and female gods emanated from the Highest God down to this earth to dwell in the created bodies of mankind, the Greek philosophers translated these myths into what they called "philosophy" — the "love, study, or pursuit of wisdom."⁹ Philosophy simply rationalized Egyptian myths by declaring that uncreated female souls and male spirits descended from invisible, immovable gods to dwell in the minds of mankind. Eventually this so-called "pursuit of wisdom" (philosophy) led to the conclusion that uncreated reason, ideas and consciousness resided in the created bodies of mankind. This replacement of myth with philosophy, along with changes in the religious/power structures and the collapse of covenantal Judaism,¹⁰ led to the restoration of concealment of human identity and to relative stability in global culture.

In subsequent material we plan to address specific developments that occurred in the “axial age” preceding the advent of Jesus Christ and then examine subsequent developments in the Christian era. But we turn now to our own time. As this present blood-soaked century comes to a close, we are witnessing the collapse of so-called modern philosophy, religion and existing power structures. People everywhere have only a fading confidence in the “powers that be.” The millennial efforts to conceal our common confused identity are failing. Mankind is concluding that it has been deceived. Science is telling us that there is no internal explanation for the universe within the universe. There is no “Knower” within the “known.” Religions are fumbling and stumbling with their discredited rituals, liturgies, creeds and hierarchies — all far removed from the real world. Philosophy has been reduced to reflection on the meaninglessness of words. Existing power structures have been openly disclosed as incompetent, corrupt, unaccountable and self-serving. The prospect of uncontrolled and uncontrollable violence has polarized and virtually stricken mankind.

In this perilous situation we still ponder our true identity. Are we essentially uncreated entities that originated as souls/spirits in the heavens and are destined to return there? Or are we profane creatures endowed with consciousness but destined, like other animals, to extinction? For thousands of years we have tried to conceal these questions and their proposed answers. Today our efforts at concealment are collapsing.

The Revelation¹¹

Yet, in the face of this critical prospect, we may have profound hope. Such hope is born, not out of re-concealment, but out of revelation. Over against our age-long efforts for concealment, God has acted to advance the revelation of truth for mankind. Thanks to the survival of Christianity and the Christian church, the revelation of the gospel has been vouchsafed to us.

The essential truths of the God who created out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*),¹² of the God who accepted human self-limitation and self-condescension, of the God who is historically present and who acts, have been preserved. Despite all its distortions, inadequacies, misdirections, heresies and apostasies, Christianity has been a bulwark against global self-destruction. At the same time, Christianity and its foundation in Jesus Christ must be freed from captivity to myth, philosophy and cultural power structures, from complicity with violence, and from the ultimate deception of self-existence.

We are witnessing the collapse of so-called modern philosophy, religion and existing power structures.

Despite all its distortions, inadequacies, misdirections, heresies and apostasies, Christianity has been a bulwark against global self-destruction.

In view of the current world crisis, we urgently need to ponder the salvific nature and significance of the Christ event. Again, let us emphatically state that the gospel itself stands as the bulwark against the reign of uncontrollable violence and the apocalyptic collapse of this world. The revelatory power of the gospel alone can unmask the arrogant power structures and their determination to fulfill “mimetic” desire (the desire to *imitate* a supposedly self-existent God) and achieve self-existence through violence. The gospel alone can expose the age-old delusive phantoms of mythology, philosophy and religion.

What, then, is the “good news” of the gospel that has brought the collapse of the concealment of supposed self-existence, of delusive mimetic desires, and of violence? The “good news” of the gospel is the revelation of God’s and mankind’s human coexistence, purpose and peace. This gospel of Jesus Christ has a number of aspects:

The “good news” of the gospel is the revelation of God’s and mankind’s human coexistence, purpose and peace.

In his incarnation —

1. God as Jesus Christ continued his own journey of “becoming” human.
2. In his manifestation as human, he recapitulated mankind’s historical pilgrimage within the created order.
3. In retracing mankind’s steps, he experienced all the vulnerability of nature. He encountered all the delusive, deceptive and self-concealing mythologies and philosophies, which justify self-existence, and he bore the animosity of the power structures, which exercise violence.

In his death —

1. Jesus, the human manifestation of God, fully and finally terminated his own self-existence. The cross marks the death of the self-existent God.
2. The human Jesus proleptically¹³ achieved the “death of death” for mankind and the created order.
3. The human Jesus uncovered the concealed nature and purpose of myth, philosophy and the power structures, which exercise violence in the interest of self-existence.

In his resurrection —

1. Christ arose from the grave as the Adamic Father of unbrokered¹⁴ human coexistence — of relationality marked by mutual compassion and peace.
2. Christ proleptically inaugurated a new humanity — not out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) nor out of the old (*creatio ex vetero*), but rather out of his own human kind (*creatio ex sui generis [humanus]*).¹⁵

3. Christ proleptically inaugurated and irrevocably promised a new created order with a new history involving the open, collaborative partnership of and with the new humanity.

Conclusion

Today we are witnessing the final collapse of the concealment of mankind's self-deceptive identity. As a result, mankind's limited humanity is being disclosed. In this situation, uncontrolled, apocalyptic violence and self-destruction of the old order can be avoided only through the revealment of the gospel. Together, then, let us proclaim and eagerly await the imminent appearing of the Human One. Let us welcome the One who alone can end the violence, concealment and self-deception of mankind. Let us herald the One who alone can end both our animality and our delusions of divinity by recreating us in the image of his own full and true humanity.

Endnotes

1. See Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997).
2. See "The Mythical Battle Against Chaos," *Outlook* (Prequel 1998.5).
3. Our use of the term "mankind" (male and female) is based on the conviction that our "species" has yet to reach its full potential as human beings. This potential will be realized at the imminent *parousia*, when the Human One will creatively transform us into his own image.
4. See "The Mythical Battle Against Chaos," *Outlook* (Prequel 1998.5).
5. Schizophrenia: "A mental disorder . . . characterized by a breakdown in the relation between thoughts, feelings, and actions . . ." (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "schizophrenia").
6. "The root of the Greek word for myth, *muthos*, is *mu*, which means 'to close' or 'keep secret.' *Muo* means to close one's eyes or mouth, to mute the voice, or to remain mute" (Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, p. 33).
7. See George E. Mendenhall, "The Suzerainty Treaty Structure: Thirty Years Later," in Edwin B. Fermage, Bernard G. Weiss and John W. Welch, eds., *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 87.
8. See *ibid.*, pp. 90-92.
9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "philosophy."
10. See David Noel Freedman, "The Formation of the Canon of the Old Testament: The Selection and Identification of the Torah as the Supreme Authority of the Postexilic Community," in Fermage, Weiss and Welch, eds., *Religion and Law*, pp. 323, 324.
11. Revealment: "The act of revealing; disclosure, revelation" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "revealment").
12. *Ex nihilo*: "[L. *ex* out of + *nihilo*-, ablative of *nihil* nothing.] Out of nothing" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "*ex nihilo*").
13. Proleptic: "Of, pertaining to, or characterized by prolepsis or anticipation, anticipative, anticipatory . . ." (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "proleptic").
14. The principle of self-existence requires that God maintain separation, immovability, unapproachability and impassibility by excluding relationships with all else. Being devoid of relationship, God cannot act personally but can exercise his powers only through the action

of a surrogate agent or broker. This is inferred in traditional Trinitarian doctrine, in which God the Father acts through Jesus as a surrogate agent or broker. “Unbrokered” human coexistence implies that God the Father, abandoning self-existence, himself acts personally *as Jesus* to establish human coexistence (see “From the House of Bondage” *Outlook* [Prequel 1998.3]).

15. *Ex*: “[a. L. *ex* out of . . .]” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “*ex*”); *sui generis*: “Of one’s or its own kind” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “*sui generis*”).

Copyright © 1998 Worldview Publications