

Thou Art That Study Guide

Thou Art That by Joseph Campbell

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Plot Summary

Thou Art That by Joseph Campbell looks at the Judeo-Christian tradition in light of world mythology, showing how an over-emphasis on history and exclusivity rob the stories and the religions of spiritual power and relevancy.

Thou Art That opens with Joseph Campbell debating with a know-it-all radio personality the meaning of "myth." Myth means not lie, Campbell says, but metaphor. Many times he reiterates this, because the false meaning is deeply set in the popular mind. Mythology aligns individuals' consciousness to the mystery of the universe, helps societies perceive the mystery of time and space, validates and supports moral order in society, and carries individuals through life's stages and crises. Mystical traditions split in Iran, with Western forms (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) insisting that God and the world are not the same, seeking to submit human judgment to God's power, and requiring intermediaries. In the East, the "masks of God" are gone, because no categories can be attributed to a "Ground of Being."

When Yahweh declares himself "exclusive God," his followers become closed to universal spirituality, but when the story of the Jews is told, after the Babylonian exile, the writers edit the great Middle Eastern mythologies of creation, garden, exile, and flood, and apply to their heroes the myths at large in the human. The Exodus from Egypt forms a people united by a sense of being uniquely chosen, which becomes an ethnic religion.

From this legacy, emerges Christianity, like the older Buddhism and younger Islam, a "world religion" based on creeds. Looking back on Jesus' life in light of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, disciples attach the myths commonly associated with great kings and teachers. The Virgin Birth, the cave, visitations to the infant, the flight into Egypt, the child Jesus teaching in Jerusalem, the characteristics of the Messiah, and Jesus miracles all have parallels in other religious figures that cannot be incidental. The Last Supper and Judas' role in the betrayal, the Crucifixion, and end of the world all have mythological ties. Why Jesus has to die on the Cross has several classical answers, which focus on the historicity of Adam and Eve's fall and Jesus' particular crucifixion, overlooking the spiritual lesson that God comes down to humankind and takes humankind to himself freely and joyfully, with no negative psychological colorings.

That "the Kingdom of God is within you" is the perspective that Christians must adopt in light of the Space Age. There is no "up there" to which to ascend or be assumed. The Kingdom, as Jesus says in a Gnostic gospel text, comes unexpected and is everywhere. All religions should open up to the universality of the human spiritual experience rather than continuing to fight over dubious historical points.



Chapter 1, Metaphor and Religious Mystery

Chapter 1, Metaphor and Religious Mystery Summary and Analysis

During a book promotion tour, Campbell is interviewed by a radio personality, who declares that "Myth is a lie." Campbell contends that it is a metaphor, and they argue. Half of the people in the world contend that the metaphors in their religious tradition are facts and the other half contend they are lies. This separates believers from atheists. Mythology serves four functions. 1) Religious/mystical: individuals' consciousness is aligned to the mystery of the universe. Zoroastrianism and the Bible both depict a good world that falls. 2) Interpretive: through mathematics people perceive the mystery of time and space and reduce the gods to agents. Genesis reflects third-millennium BCE science, naïve for astronauts circling the moon to read in 1968. 3) Validation/support for moral order in society. As societies change, "mythic dissociation" occurs, leaving people unable to explain the order in their lives. 4) Carrying individuals through life's stages and crises.

Metaphors allow participation in the infinite, but being linked to a given historical period, cease communicating when times change drastically. Humans can look within, however, to biologically-rooted references to the unchanging mythologies and form new symbols in contemporary terms. Metaphors seem to describe the outer world of time and place, but really dwell in the spiritual life within. When they are misread as "denoting" historical facts and events, the deeper, connotative meaning or "spiritual core" is ignored. Scholars concentrate on the denotative meaning and theologians argue concrete articles of faith.

Mythology is often used to mean "other people's religion," and religion is a misunderstanding of mythology. When traditionalists impart imagery authoritatively and expect individuals to experience appropriate meanings, changes in the post-pastoral world cause miscommunications. Since life experiences still need expression, the old images, freed from "facts," can still point to ultimate truths and mysteries. Metaphors, like poems, allow people to make journeys they otherwise would not.



Chapter 2, The Experience of Religious Mystery

Chapter 2, The Experience of Religious Mystery Summary and Analysis

Mystical traditions west and east of Iran are radically different. Western religions (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) hail from the Middle East and insist that God and the world are not the same. These religions seek to submit human judgment to God's power. An intermediate institution is needed: for Jews, a covenant; for Christians, a mystical union of divine and human natures. Western religious culture is fragmented, causing alienation and estrangement.

Mythology's religious function is to awaken awe, humility, and respect for mysteries. By explaining "facts," scholars miss "the ineffable." The Brahmins' "tat tvam asi" ("that is you") says one lives a whole existence but cannot survey it at a glance. Such metaphysics are possible when the "masks of God" fall away. No categories can be attributed to a "Ground of Being," but point beyond to the experience of mystery. Jung sees formal religion as protection against experience. Preconceptions cut short experiences. Meditation can be discursive (using imagination) or ordered (transcending all concepts).

Meditating on Jesus, early Christianity utilizes symbols of Osiris and Set, Mithra, and Orpheus. St. Paul sees a parallel between the Tree of the Fall and the Tree of the Cross. Ancient art prefigures the elements of the Mass and the Trinity. Religion can be ethical or mystical - either pitting good against evil (the Christian West) or seeing them as aspects of a single process (the Chinese yin-yang). Campbell enjoys Japan, where people know nothing of a Fall. Shinto holds that the processes of nature cannot be evil, while in the West every natural impulse is sinful unless somehow purified. Not expecting mystery allows radiance to come.



Chapter 3, Our Notions of God

Chapter 3, Our Notions of God Summary and Analysis

The ultimate categories are being/non-being. God "means" nothing, because God is neither a fact nor a dream, but beyond conception. Westerners - and gods - must become "transparent to transcendence" when relating to the forms of everyday life. By saying, "I am God," Yahweh closes off this possibility for followers, for one is as one's god is. Religious metaphors must be understood by connotation, not denotation. The "End of the World" is a familiar theme in Judaism and Christianity, denoting a cosmic calamity, but in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says that the Kingdom cannot be expected but spreads on earth unseen. Jesus identifies himself with God as a metaphor for what all people are, like the Eastern gurus. Meditating on denotation is worship, not mysticism. Jesus and Mary ascend to "The Inner Reaches of Outer Space," a non-physical place. The Japanese say, "Individual, general—no obstruction." If a light bulb burns out, it is replaced, because it is not the "bulb of all bulbs." It allows consciousness of light as a vehicle. The heart awakens when one finds compassion and identifies with others.

There are several theories why Christ is crucified. God the Father is so offended that he demands so high an atonement that only the Son of God incarnate can effect it. Jesus is a security given to Satan's pawnshop, but proves too strong to hold onto. When Paul preaches in Athens and Jerusalem, he fails, but in Corinth he succeeds because his banking metaphor is familiar there. Abelard sees Christ's sufferings evoking compassion. The same mystery appears in the Arthurian legends of the Waste Land. Myths form cultures without reference to historicity. Medieval society is entirely based on "Fall and Redemption," and when its facts and rituals are questioned, it collapses, giving way to new dreams, visions, and expectations. Like dreams, myths are products of the imagination. Dreams can be personal or visionary, transcending, and universal.

Well-functioning mythologies in traditional civilizations provide individuals a sense of awe and gratitude for being in the universe. Every major mythological theme in the Hebrew scriptures exists in the Sumero-Babylonian complex, but are rewritten to support the claims of "patriarchal conquerors" over "matriarchal victims." Hinduism and Buddhism strive to bring individuals to identify with the mystery of being at the deep "thou" level, not distinguishing oneself from others. Nothing one can name is absolutely true. Oxymoron forms the "mystery of the Orient." Many Western mystics agree, but Judaism, Christianity, and Islam call it heresy. Creator and creature cannot equate. Jesus' blasphemous "I and the Father are One" results in his crucifixion - as does the Sufi mystic Hallaj's talk about the moth becoming one with the flame. Western religions are about relationships. For Jews, this means being born to a Jewish mother and being circumcised into the Covenant. Christianity insists that believers enter a relationship with Jesus, the Godhead's only incarnation, through baptism. In both cases, exclusive claims rely on miracles of dubious historical value.



Gurus and roshis are attracting young Westerners by saying universal symbols lie within themselves. When people cannot see it the way bishops did in the 4th century, they doubt their faith. Assenting to definitions of Trinity and Virgin Birth mean less than experiencing Christ within. Meister Eckhart says, "The best God ever did for Man was to be man himself." Earth is a "precipitation of space," which is "peopling" as apple trees "apple." Humans are Earth's sense organs and the deities are projections and products of human imagination. With social life changing constantly, moral law brings no security. People must assume responsibility for their actions and abandon categories of "non-chosen." Whereas Arthur's knights purposefully seek the Grail individually in the pathless forest, gurus take responsibility for their disciples' ways. Westerners yearn romantically for something that has never been, leaving individuals to their own adventures, hopefully to look back on having lived a "model human life" in the end.



Chapter 4, The Religious Imagination and the Rules of Traditional Theology

Chapter 4, The Religious Imagination and the Rules of Traditional Theology Summary and Analysis

When clergy cannot interpret symbols properly, they are unable to awaken people's hearts. Translating the Roman Catholic Mass into local languages and turning the altar dilute the mystery, turning the priest into an intermediary like Julia Child. Church is not about comfortable feelings. Symbols are constantly misread as concrete denotations, over which people fight rather than seeing the transcendent truth.

When characters are introduced to a narrative, things grow complex. The tragic emotions, pity and terror, break past appearances to rapture. Pity unites the mind with the human sufferer, while terror is a "static experience of the sublime" (Aristotle via James Joyce). The calamity of racial strife is not tragedy, for lack of a "secret cause." Martin Luther King, Jr., being assassinated after challenging death in public is a tragedy: his life course causes his death. Death is the fulfillment of life's purpose and direction. Jesus comes down saying "yes" to the Cross, and eyeless Oedipus is beyond fear of death. Going into the self allows such an answer to the metaphysical call.

Mythology is to spiritualize the place where one lives, but great poetry of the Bible is corrupted when metaphors are concretized. People besides the Jews believe in a "Promised Land." The Navaho assign mythological functions and values to every detail of their desert, so people can always meditate on the energy and glory that support the world. They do not need to conquer others, because it lies inside their hearts. Every human has a track to find and follow. By insisting on supernatural grace, Christianity indoctrinates rather than evokes salvation.

A Renaissance painting shows Isis enthroned between Moses and Hermes, whose views on transcendence and immanence are opposites. The Corpus hermeticum restores to the European mind a native mysticism suppressed since the 4th century. Jung suggests using "active imagination" to fathom one's creativity. If one roams through images, one discovers troubling things can either continue or stop short. Paul speaks of "visions and revelations" and hearing things that cannot be told - as the Hermetic tradition sees the divine transcending even the category of transcendence. Sri Ramakrishna, a Hindu saint opens conversations by asking if one wishes to speak about God with or without form.

It useful to see how various traditions illuminate one another. The Hindu god Shiva personifies the interaction of male and female pointing past things that cannot be told. Only the Semitic tradition requires absolute transcendence, perhaps because in the desert, gods are patrons of warring tribes. Others easily translate between Zeus into Indra, but no Jew can relate Yahweh and Jove. Mother Nature is difficult to resist, but

the Bible labels "abomination," the great Goddess whose mythology it appropriates and ruthlessly edits. Today, some Protestants are softening criticism of "Mariolatry," and Catholics since 1950 must believe in Mary as "Co-Savior." Victory will come over "patriarchal provincialism" when symbols are reawakened and reactivated.



Chapter 5, Symbols of the Judeo-Christian Tradition

Chapter 5, Symbols of the Judeo-Christian Tradition Summary and Analysis

The Flood story preserves both the "old-city mythology of cyclic karma" common in India, and one in which a vengeful Creator punishes the disobedient. The latter God decides to do something and it happens. The "procession of the equinoxes" takes 25,920 years to cycle through the zodiac. Dividing that by 60 yields 432, a number that links agricultural mythology with cycles of time and is found in Sumeria, Babylon, India, and Iceland. In the night sky, the human imagination sees a Great Mother whose womb holds all things. Festivals correlate with cycles of seasons and rules are in harmony.

In the second millennium BCE, a radical "great reversal" occurs as people disengage from an "overheated" world. In Persia, Zoroaster teaches that a God of Light, creates a perfectly good world that "The Deceiver," God of Evil, wrecks. After a final battle, Armageddon, Zoroaster will return and wipe out evil forever. Conflicting mythologies show diverse origins. Desert nomads see little reason to trust Mother Nature; Greeks re-blend male and female divinities, and India evolves a Goddess cult. Transcendence in the Upanisads means finding ultimate meaning deeper in one's being than thinking can go. Educated people, assuming that "myth" means lie, misread religious language. God is a symbol beyond naming, numeration, or categorization. Jesus dying, rising, and going to Heaven is religiously mysterious, but there is no place for him - or Elijah - to go "up there." Do believers, who insist on facts, or atheists, who know they are not facts, truly "get" the timeless and valuable message? The fragmentation of world mythology needs to end, for all talk about the same things.

By forbidding Adam and Eve one thing, God shows that he wants them out of the Garden. Why would God want the oneness of their life to turn into pairs of opposites? Once exiled, how do they get back? Jesus says recognize life without judging it and "consider the lilies of the field." By posting cherubim, God forbids re-entry, unlike Buddha, who invites people past guardians representing fear of death and desire for more of this world. Psychologically, this is a self-exile. In the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says that the Kingdom is spread, unseen, on earth.

Genesis contains two creation stories. In the older, like a Sumerian deity, God needs a gardener who is bored, so from him is removed a woman. The Upanishads show the transcendent splitting into male and female, transmute into all the other species and, when finished, saying, "the world is God." In Plato's Symposium, gods divide and separate doubled humans, while the Kabbala talks of marrying one's "other half." Dating after the Babylonian Exile, Genesis 1 has God creating by word alone. Egyptian equivalents turn the tongue and teeth into sexual organs.



In Genesis 12, Abraham the Hebrew leaves Ur for Canaan, circa 2000 BCE, opening the story cycles of "the Patriarchs." The Akkadian King Sargon, the first Semitic emperor, has the same legendary youth as Moses. The Tower of Babel turns the Mesopotamian ziggurat into a threat to God and proclaims the primacy of Hebrew over all languages. It is "vaguely remembered history" with legends grafted on, symbolizing ideas. Legend is common through the book of Joshua. Debating how the Red Sea or Jordan River divide is pointless, for they are mythological events. The purpose of the myth should instead be examined. Joseph enters Egypt through a dry well, and the People of Israel emerge through water. Ever since, every Jew for millennia has been Israel. Jacob and Esau follow the mythological themes of Osiris and Set. Infant exposure is a common myth (Romulus and Remus), but Moses is the only one adopted by a socially superior family and completely integrates in it. Exiling himself by killing an Egyptian abusing a Jew, Moses marries and works humbly as a shepherd until he sees the burning bush and finds his mission. None of this can be dated. The Jews leave Egypt with a destiny of their own. Judges is still clearly legendary (stopping the son), but history is found in Chronicles and Kings, which are based on royal chronicles, with considerable legend thrown in. The Bible's central myth is exile. Paul gnostically sees Jesus identify with God and reenter the Garden, but Christianity insists on a historical link between the earlier mythological event of the fall and the crucifixion.

Genesis and Exodus must be read not as strict history but rather for inspiration about spiritual foundations. A 17th-century Jewish philosopher says God is known not by contemplating the universe but the history of the human race. Judaism is a religion of participation, not identification. Hinduism is the opposite. When a yogi goes into the forest, he ritually breaks all caste rules. Judaism and Christianity stress too strongly the historical, which leaves young people open for Asian gurus' preaching. Campbell is raised a devout Catholic but rebels against literalism. Study shows him that organized religion must talk to children and adults in age-appropriate ways. He meets a Hindu at the U.N., who claims he finds no religion in the Bible. He objects to Martin Buber's talk about God hiding his face from people, because in India, people experience God all the time. Buber cannot see how they can be compared. Jung sees religion as defending against the experience of God. It is impudent to think one's way of understanding God is the way God is.



Chapter 6, Understanding the Symbols of Judeo-Christian Spirituality

Chapter 6, Understanding the Symbols of Judeo-Christian Spirituality Summary and Analysis

With the older Buddhism and younger Islam, Christianity is a "world religion," marked by having a creed. "Ethnic" religions such as Hinduism, Judaism, and Shinto are based on birth. Christianity believes in the Virgin Birth in the magnetic way that all great figures (e.g., Abraham Lincoln) attract legends. Historical accuracy is unimportant. The motifs of Jesus' life closely resemble Buddha's and the saviors of the Jains. Virgin births figure in Buddhist, Greek, Celtic, and American Indian cultures. In India, Vyasa is born of a virgin, herself born of a fish when her father is too busy to perform his husbandly duties and ejaculates into a leaf that a bird carries to the River Ganges. A fisherman finds a baby girl inside the fish that ingests the leaf. "Fishy-Smell" grows up to be a ferry pilot and is impregnated by a yogi, who restores her virginity. Awe, not biology, is the point of birth legends of great spiritual leaders.

The myth of the cave is also ancient and associated with the winter solstice. Mithra, Christianity's principle early competitor, is born from the Earth; Christmas is set on 25 December to counter his cult. The cave always indicates initiation and the "dark chamber of the heart" from which light emerges. Early Nativity art shows an ass (Set), an ox (Osiris), and the Magi (priests of Mithra) surrounding Christ's crib, symbols of the old recognizing the new. People of the third century could not miss the meaning. In Alexandria, where the old cult flourishes, boys depict a figure with an ass' head crucified, taunting a Christian classmate. A contemporary image shows Osiris' son, Horus, killing Set, his father's killer. Set has an ass' head. They tell the same story.

No room in the inn, the infant in exile, and the massacre of the innocents are all common motifs. Krishna is spirited across the river to escape death at the hands of King Kansa, who orders all boys under age two killed as a precaution. The Flight into Egypt repeats the history of the Jewish race and is followed by Jesus' 40 days in the desert. As a future world teacher, Jesus must manifest his wisdom from his youth, as the warrior Heracles slays serpents from his cradle. Mary and Joseph lose Jesus in Jerusalem and find him teaching the wise men. The nunc dimittis follows: having seen the savior, one can happily die. Compare Buddha's life: a yogi sees physical signs the boy will be a world king or world teacher. He chooses the latter and eventually abandons a life of comfort and seclusion. As Buddha finds and interviews the greatest teachers of his time, Jesus visits and is initiated by John the Baptist. The backdrop is the Maccabean Revolt, when Greek rulers try to force the Jews to harmonize with their religion. Instead, they revolt, and some establish a center at Qumran on the Dead Sea, anticipating a great apocalyptic moment and the advent of the Messiah.



Persians first develop the idea of a Messiah as herald of the end times, and the idea is conjoined to the Hebrews' ethnic Messiah. This is taught at Qumran, where John baptizes as a rite of second birth, and proclaims the coming of a Messiah and points directly to Jesus. Scripture adds a voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus beloved, and could signal the reception of the spirit, which Jesus gives up on the Cross. Such is the teaching of Nestorius. After seeing the greatest teacher, Jesus goes into the wilderness for the Great Temptation. He rejects political, economic, and spiritual temptations and achieves an awareness that is not specified as in the Buddha story, where the Earth Goddess declares Buddha a beloved son. The Christian narrative is evocative of the Orphic tradition's fishing for souls. Many of Christ's miracles repeat those of Elijah and Elisha, but Buddha, too, walks on water. A guru once admonishes a pupil for being late until he learns the river is uncrossable, so the pupil chants the guru's name and walks across; when the guru chants his own name and tries, he drowns. Jesus overcomes such "spiritual inflation" in the third temptation. Spiritually enlightened people can perform wonders.

Passover and Easter festivals coincide with the death and resurrection of Adonis on 25 March. The Patriarchs enter Egypt, and a people passes out through the Red Sea. Moses is not a hero but a guide and is not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Christians celebrate the emergence of a new thing through wisdom and pain. In Jewish and Jain legends, the hero figure has a counterpart with whom he reconciles. Judas is forever held apart. One could read the Last Supper as showing Judas as a "midwife of salvation" and Jesus' shadow - since one cannot have light without shadow - but Judas dies alone. Peter becomes the head of the church, like Ananda, Buddha's servant, precisely because he cannot get things right. In the Buddha story, a third key figure serves Buddha port (wine) and he dies of the meal. Pigs and boars figure in the Adonis, Osiris/Set, and Buddha myths.

Why does Christ have to die? One theory is that he thereby tricks the Devil, who has legal claim over man, and redeems man's soul. God fishes for the Devil with a line baited by Christ. A second theory holds that Adam and Eve's sin so offends the Father that he sends his Son to atone; not needing the merits, Christ passes them on to humans. Nailing people to crosses is commonplace in Jesus' day, but his particular crucifixion creates a vast mythology involving the redemption of humanity. The second person of the Trinity puts on human flesh and dies not for blasphemy but to redeem humankind. At Palenque, the Mayans worship the cross of a mystique savior-figure, Kukulcan, the "Feathered Serpent," who is said to be born of a virgin, dies, rises, and will come again. The coincidence has to be troubling to those who denotate myths. Further emphasizing the Eden/Calvary link, the Mayan cross has a quetzal atop the cross and a death mask beneath - medieval Christian legends cite the "Place of the Skull" as Adam's grave. An Icelandic myth has All-Father Othin allowing himself to be hung for nine days on Yggradrasil, the "World Tree," to acquire the "Wisdom of the Runes." On "the Holy Rood" perches an eagle and at its foot claws a dragon. Four deer craze around self-renewing Yggdrasil.

Yggdrasil and Christ's Cross are mandalas. Jung attaches to the four points the opposing pairs Sensation/Intuition and Feeling/Thinking. People gravitate towards one



point in each pair. Activation of the inferior "unattended functions" is perceived as a threat, and if they break through, the person goes "beside himself." The Christian puts Heaven above, Hell below, and the good and bad thieves right and left of Jesus. Jesus, the "form of God," humbles himself to death on the Cross in order that those who confess him are exalted (Phil. 2:6-11). Christ is unbound and saves, provided one lets go psychologically of the old self. The cross centers on Christ's head, not his genitalia as in circumcision. Jesus talks of the End of the World in future terms, without predicting. Churches still see the "nonevent" as approaching, instead of seeing that the spread of the Kingdom is causing this world to end now. One can say "yes" or "no" to radiant joy.



Chapter 7, Question Period

Chapter 7, Question Period Summary and Analysis

Editor Kennedy notes the frustration of trying to organize a generous Campbell question-and-answer session. Campbell is energized, eager to respond, and overflowing with insight. The "problem" of mythology today is that while it still evokes and directs energy, the images have become absurd and lost meaning. Once people realize the events are dubious, things fail. Then Freud muddles matters by claiming that myth is really about mother, father, and little boy. There are shattered mythologies all around that once gave society structure, and any of the fragments can still activate the mind.

The universal "Hero's Journey" motif applies to Moses and to Christ. In Galatians, Paul says that Christ redeems humankind from the "curse of the Law." Having the Law serve humankind rather than vice versa is an enormous transformation. Jesus transcends the law during his 40 days in the desert by rejecting the Devil tempting him with economic and political power and spiritual vanity. Having survived, Jesus preaches love. In medieval Europe, heroes feel a need for individual quests, finding in confession and Mass no test of character. Sir Gawain suggests the knights enter the forest separately, where no paths exist in search of the Grail. Western civilization overdoes external indoctrination.

Rebirth has two main images: the moon resurrecting by shedding its shadow like a snake skin, and the sun, bringing transcendent light back after passing "beyond the spheres." The insight of the "solar mystery" is that one is never born and never dies. Asian religions identify with the "void that is no void," something Western religions cannot do because Creator and creation cannot be identical. Jews have a covenant with God, and Christians believe in the mystery of Christ, true God and true Man. Strassburg's Tristan says suffering and bliss cannot be separated. God comes in love to endure the pain of Mankind, his beloved. This 13th-century idea is rendered in 14th-century paintings of the Annunciation, where the Christ child already holds a cross. The mysticism of battle is found throughout world literature. Some creatures survive because others die. "At-one-ment" is not a completed historical event but a personal relationship. Marriage is not a "long love affair" but an ordeal of sacrificing ego to relationship. Arranged marriages are the rule in most of the world. Love as sacrament dates only from the 13th century.

Transcendence is defined as moving beyond something. Saying God is transcendent means he is beyond the world. It can also mean beyond conceptualization, which eliminates names and forms. Learning to read poetry helps one experience transcendence. Art and music historians often find themselves grabbed by a piece. Ritual allows participation in a myth's enactment. Girl children become adults at the onset of menstruation, but since boys can never become a "life-body," they must be initiated by beatings and mutilations, on the theory "Women suffer and we must suffer,



too." Rituals stress homogeneity of experience among diverse individuals. Athens in the 6th/7th centuries BCE reduces to writing the stories of Greek religion and refers them to Athenian interests rather than the original cultic focus. In America, ceremonial rituals have broken down, and subgroups form separate mythologies. The Passover Seder meal, Hitler's mass rallies meetings, and the Catholic liturgy, all bring people to identify as a group.

Sacred space is set aside from secular uses and freed from everyday business for the contemplation of unity and mystery. Everything is symbolic and "transparent to transcendence." The earliest examples are cave paintings 30,000 years ago. "Sacred space is everywhere" applies only when one learns its discipline. The six-pointed star is a symbol of aspiration in India and Judaism, showing that duality can lead to unity. Medieval cathedrals are openings for God's energy to pour into time. The Gothic abandons classical architecture, where the outside alone is important, and concentrates on inner mystery. Chartres has the oldest Gothic sculptures. In the Second Coming, Christ is enthroned between images of the Virgin Mary. Around Christ are the four evangelists in a form reflecting the solstices and equinoxes in 2000 BCE. Christ is shown being born from, begetting, and sustaining Mother Universe. The Black Madonna shows the Holy Spirit as a dove much like the one attending Aphrodite's incarnation. Cleaning the windows at Chartres destroys the optics and the "Triune Face" is washed out by blazing light. All the medieval cathedrals are dedicated to the Virgin, who electrifies the community to erect them. The Middle Ages are based on the mythology of Fall and Redemption, which is mirrored in all art forms and in sacred space.

Kundalini means "the coiled-up one," referring to the spiritual energy on which most people sit most of the time. Yogis use breath control and meditation to uncoil this up the spine. It passes the genitals (sex), the navel (aggression), the heart (compassion), the throat ("ascetic austerity"), and the mind (beholding God). Anything below the heart is dangerous "kinetic energy." Trying to cure lust or aggression at their own chakra in psychoanalysis is hopeless. The heart chakra, the beginning of humanity, must be opened, so illumination and compassion can flow downward.

Many traditions have heavens and purgatories. Reincarnational systems center on the "eternal sphere," in which one's experiences reflect those of his or her lives in time. Hell belongs to those whose egos cannot open to others, and they are stunted for eternity. Only Christianity has such a permanent place. Other religions have a place of purgation, where the dead broaden their horizons to where they can accept the Beatific Vision. One's experience in heaven is related to the spiritual quality of one's life on earth.



Appendix, A Discussion

Appendix, A Discussion Summary and Analysis

Contrary to popular usage, myth is a vehicle of truth, not falsehood. Humans use it to tell the stories they want remembered, over fads. Myth is the language of religious experience. A "single underground spring" of religious experience nourishes all. Diverse traditions merely express a single experience differently. Myth lets people connect with the universe, validates social and moral codes, and helps people deal with the stages of life. Myths derive from a shared creative imagination, and each story helps recognize spiritual meaning through heroes going to unknown worlds, battling darkness, and returning with the gift of knowledge. The "Space Age" challenges literal interpretations.

The central truth of Easter and Passover is the call out of bondage, but it cannot be appropriated in a pre-Copernican view of the universe. Seeing their transcendent spiritual sense allows religious traditions to be seen afresh. Easter and Passover call people to an ill-defined new life, which makes them want to cling to the past. Space forces one to see that there are no horizons. The divided model of Heaven and Earth speaks to the old model, where Joshua stops the sun and moon to complete a slaughter. In light of seeing "Earthrise" from the moon, all theological notions based on that distinction are no longer valid.

Jung calls the Roman Catholic dogma of the Assumption the most significant religious document of the 20th century, pointing to its symbolic meaning, an opening for Mother Earth to the heavens. The widespread sense of apocalypse is a rejection of the new age. Self-hatred brings out delight in others' destruction. Apocalypse must be seen as the presence of the Kingdom now, unexpected. The Space Age demands that people move into new symbols and interpret the old ones spiritually. Ignorance, complacency, and exclusivity must pass away. The Kingdom lies in seeing the divine presence in everyone, enemies included. Seeking one's roots is understandable, but pulling back into in-groups is destructive. Common humanity is what matters.

Fascination with deliverance by powers "out there" makes no sense in a world where the Kingdom is everywhere. Films such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* do not deal with the future. By contrast, *2001: A Space Odyssey* deals with moving forward, beginning with the lone, curious ape from whom the human species evolves. Thomas Merton says symbols help awaken consciousness to the meaning of life and reality. When theologians talk about the Death of God, they are saying that the symbols of God are dead. Mysticism differs from religion, which must die to literal meanings in order to come alive. Many seek to have religious symbols speak to them directly, rejecting the idea that leaders long ago can force interpretations on them. Meister Eckhart once writes about leaving God for God, but people panic at the notion that all may have something in common.



Preachers explain symbols rather than let them speak for themselves, as in the reformed Catholic liturgy. Institutionalized religions insist that mythological signs be historical events rather than products of imagination addressing the psyche. Excessive literalism demythologizes the Bible and spiritual experience is lost. Mythology is "other people's religion" and religion is "misunderstanding of mythology." "Remythologization" shows the commonality of human spirituality. Easter should be a celebration of such a renewal, and the Crucifixion identified with God willingly participating in human trials and sorrows with rapture and joy, and a true crossing of humans to the divine and the divine to humans. To resurrect, one must be crucified. Emphasizing calamity forces one to assign blame, but being "unshelled" to be reborn is not a calamity.

Self-preservation is the second law of life; the first is that all are one. The Space Age shows this, and many religious institutions resist. Judaism, Christianity, and the Adonis mystery religion share common themes of longing for the renewal of nature in spring. The folk symbols of Easter, like the Easter Bunny, have roots in myths of the dying and resurrection of the moon. The chick sloughs off the shell and flies free of earthly bondage. It is a "playful, childlike reading of the Easter message." Arrogant, narrow people, unable to see the "poetry of existence," avoid the meaning of the moon landing, demanding economic payoffs from space. They are like the apes fighting in the opening of 2001, while one moves in awe towards the slab, seeing the future. Like all symbols, Earthrise points to places unknown. Humans live among the stars, with the Kingdom of God within them. Easter and Passover remind humans to let go in order to enter.



Characters

Joseph Campbell

The originator of the ideas that editor Eugene Kennedy has posthumously fashioned into a monograph, Joseph Campbell emerges as a media star talking about mythology after the New York Times Magazine publishes an interview in April 1979, which attracts the attention of Bill Moyers, who in 1988 airs on the PBS the series, *The Power of Myth*. This book results from Kennedy's piecing together what Campbell leaves behind in notes, interviews, and responses to questions following lectures. Campbell's personality is very much a part of the book, making him the most important figure.

Born in New York City in 1904, and raised a Roman Catholic, he becomes interested in mythology as a child. He is fascinated by American Indian cultures and drifts away from narrow, childish Catholicism. He specializes in medieval literature in college, in Europe is influenced by Picasso, Matisse, Joyce, and Mann, and studies Freud and Jung, who help him see the link between myths and the psyche. While teaching for many years at Sarah Lawrence College, Campbell helps translate Hindu classics, edits, and coauthors works. In 1949, he publishes his first original work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, dealing with "Everyman." He dies in 1987, and the next year through the PBS series, achieves mass fame. This book shows the breadth and depth of his learning and profundity of his compassion.

Jesus Christ

The person for whom Christianity is named, Jesus is a Jewish rabbi, who seeks the leading wise man of his day, John the Baptist, accepts John's baptism, and goes into the desert for 40 days of self-searching. The Devil comes to him, offers him economic and political power and tries to puff up his spiritual ego. Jesus overcomes the temptations and begins his ministry of preaching. When he declares that he and the Father are one, he is arrested for blasphemy and crucified. Another rabbi, Paul of Tarsus, sees Jesus' point about being unshackled from the Law of Moses after having an experience when he hears the dead Jesus' voice. Gnostic sources of Jesus' life underline his teaching that the Kingdom of God is present in the world, unseen, and that he and God exist in all things. Notably, Jesus chooses the bumbling St. Peter to head his church.

Orthodox Christianity rejects this view and emphasizes the historical bases for its claims to exclusive truth. Universal myths are attached to Jesus' conception, birth in a cave, flight into Egypt, teaching the elders, and the great temptation. His crucifixion is made into a reversal of the Fall of Adam and Eve: one Tree healing the other. As the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human—the only way of atoning for the original sin. He either assuages the Father's fierce anger at having been disobeyed or tricks the Devil into giving up his hold on the human race.



Aristotle

The Greek philosopher whose view that "A is not non-A" requires Western religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - to insist on an utter distinction between God the Creator and his creation.

Buddha (Siddartha Gautama)

The central figure in the oldest of what Campbell calls the "world religions," the Buddha's life incorporates many of the mythological elements in Jesus Christ's life. His mother is referred to as a virgin. He is born from her side. He is prophesied to become either a great king or a great teacher and wants not to follow his father's path as a king. He lives in isolation from anything ugly until time comes for him to go out into the world. Buddha consults the wise men of his day before beginning to teach. Mother Earth proclaims him a "beloved son." Unlike the cherubim in Genesis that keep humankind from returning to paradise, Buddha invites people to pass through without fear.

Copernicus

The scientist who defies the Roman Catholic Church to affirm that the earth is not the center of the universe, but that it is one of many planets circling the sun. He thus begins the dissolution of the concept of a divided universe that allows Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, and Mary to ascend to the heavens. The moon landings in the late 1960s and early 1970s confirm Copernicus and force human beings to look beyond the literalism they have been taught.

Meister Eckhart

A medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart stresses the importance of the spiritual sense of myths like the Virgin Birth, claims that "the best God ever did for Man was to be man himself," and declares "the ultimate leave-taking is the leaving of God for God."

Sigmund Freud

The founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud in Joseph Campbell's estimation further blurs the understanding of myth by having everything relate to father, mother, and son. Campbell sees Freudians as unable to deal at the proper level with issues of sex and aggression.

James Joyce

The author of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. Joyce, through the hero Stephen Dedalus, defines pity and terror in ways that Joseph Campbell finds



critical to the proper understanding of narratives. Pity arrests the mind before suffering and unites one to the "secret cause." Terror, by contrast, breaks through to rapture. Dedalus undertakes a quest for his spiritual father, the unknown ground of his ego-system.

Carl Gustav Jung

The psychologist C. G. Jung has a profound influence on Joseph Campbell and is frequently quoted in this book. Jung declares that one of the functions of religion is to protect human beings against the exploding experience of mysticism. This leads Campbell to declare it is impudent to think one understands God the way God is. Jung's "circulation of the light" between the unconscious and conscious reminds Campbell of the Icelandic Yggdrasil, the Mayan cross at Palenque, the mandala, and the Cross of Christ. Campbell discusses Jung's "four functions," wherein sensation and intuition are a pair and feeling and thinking another. The two lines intersect. Jung holds that people favor one of the functions in each pair and lose control if anything activates the "inferior" functions. Campbell agrees with Jung's assessment of importance of the Roman Catholic declaration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, but insists it be freed of any sense of going physically "up there." It means that Mother Earth is returning to the heavens - as the 1969 moon landing demonstrate. Jung observes that UFOs demonstrate humankind is looking for visions and deliverance.

Thomas Mann

A great German novelist, Thomas Mann in *Joseph and His Brothers* brings out parallels between the Hebrew patriarchs Jacob and Esau and the Egyptian gods Osiris and Set, clarifying the mythological intent.

Mithra

The Lord of Light, born from Mother Earth holding a rock-hewn weapon, Mithra is the chief competitor to Jesus Christ in the early centuries of Christianity. Setting Christmas on 25 December is a move to counter Mithra's influence. The Magi who attend the Nativity are depicted as priests of Lord Mithra, and are there, along with symbols of the Egyptian gods Osiris and Set, to show the old faiths recognize Christ for who he is.

Moses

Moses begins his story with the myth of the infant exposure (precisely like Adonis, but also like Romulus and Remus), but is taken in by and identifies with the family of Pharaoh. Moses is an Egyptian name, not "pulled out of the water" as some suggest. Moses undergoes the "Hero's Journey," fleeing for his life after avenging abuse on a Jew by an Egyptian. He marries and works humbly as a shepherd until the day he sees the Burning Bush and receives his life's mission. He goes back to Egypt to rally a holy



people to make the Exodus. Moses is the guide to the heroes of the story - the Jews - not himself the hero. At Mt. Sinai, he receives the Ten Commandments, but breaks the tablets when he sees the people misbehaving. God furnishes a second set. Moses is not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Osiris and Set

Egyptian gods, Osiris and Set are still worshiped in Alexandria in early Christian times. Osiris is symbolized by the ox and Set by the ass. When Set kills Osiris, Osiris' son Horus avenges him, tying Set to a slave post and stabbing him. Osiris and Set in the form of their symbols attend Jesus Christ's birth in early depictions, along with the Magi, priests of the Lord Mithra, showing that the old gods recognize Christ for what he is.

St. Paul

The great, Christian apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is stoned in Jerusalem and laughed at in Athens before finding people who understand his metaphors of atonement in commercial Corinth. He writes to the Christians there about someone caught up to the third heaven who hears things "which man may not utter." This fits in with how the Hermetic tradition views God. Paul perceives in good Gnostic form what the young rabbi Jesus means by, "I and the Father are one" — for which Jesus is crucified. Paul writes to Philippi about Jesus being in the form of God but not seeking equality with God, but emptying himself to die on the cross. In return, God exalts him and all people worship him to the glory of God the Father. This says, Campbell believes, that Jesus transcends death as he transcends life. Finally, Campbell talks of Paul's writing to the Romans, confirming that the sinful body is destroyed in Jesus' crucifixion, so sin has no dominion over believers.

Vyasa

Called the Homer of India, Vyasa is a saint, born of an unusual virgin nicknamed "Fishy-Smell" for the manner of her conception. She is impregnated on a ferry by a yogi, who restores her virginity. At his birth, Vyasa tells his mother he will reappear when she needs help and promptly leaves. In the end, he does come back to end her suffering.

Zoroaster

A Persian prophet living either ca. 1200 BCE (making him Homer's contemporary) or 600 BCE, Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra) teaches that there are two gods, one good and the other evil. On the last day, after the "Reckoning of Spirits" (Armageddon), Zoroaster will be incarnate a second time, wipe out all evil, and usher in an eternity of peace, light, and virtue.



Objects/Places

Buddhism

A world religion similar to Christianity and Islam in that it has a credal base, Buddhism begins in the late 6th/early 5th century BCE, while the Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) lives 563-483 BCE. The earliest recordings of the myths are in the Pali canon, ca. 80 BCE. It is unlikely to have much historical value. Buddhism shares many myths with Christianity, including the Virgin Birth of their founders. Paradise is guarded in both faiths, but in Judeo-Christianity, the cherubim block reentry, while in Buddhism, people are welcomed past fear and desire. Zen Buddhism furnishes Joseph Campbell's favorite maxim, "Tat tvam asi," — "Thou art that" — the title of this work. One must find God within.

Christianity

The second world religion chronologically after Buddhism, Christianity begins as a reforming movement within Judaism, which is a strictly ethnic religion. A young rabbi accepts baptism from a member of the Essene brotherhood, faces temptations to wealth, political power, and spiritual egotism during a desert testing, and begins a public preaching ministry. When he proclaims, "I and the Father are one," Jesus is charged with blasphemy and executed. Followers, led by Peter, a fisherman selected because he so often misinterprets what is happening, proclaim Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven.

Little happens until another rabbi sees the light about God coming down in the form of man and accepting crucifixion in order to bring the world new life. It spreads rapidly among non-Jews. In the 4th century, it becomes the state religion of the Roman Empire and rivals such as Gnosticism and Mithra are suppressed. Christianity insists on the historicity of Jesus' life and constructs theories of why the Crucifixion is needed: to appease the wrath of God over Adam and Eve's disloyalty or to trick the Devil into releasing the pledge on them held since the Fall. Christian mystics throughout history have tried to point to the deeper spiritual meaning of sacred events but the weight of tradition has always fallen on the literal side. A non-practicing Roman Catholic, Campbell laments the reforms of the 1960s, claiming they leech the mystery out of the Mass. He joins C. G. Jung in applauding the dogma of the Assumption (1950), but specifies it is for non-literal reasons, allowing Mother Earth back into the heavens. He notes that Protestants are dropping their fierce opposition to "Mariolatry."

Corpus Hermeticum

Literary works thought to be roughly contemporary with Moses' legislation, the Corpus hermeticum contains many symbolic images in common with Christianity. It is translated in 1463, by Marsilio Ficino for the Cosimo de Medici, and the images become part of



Renaissance art. In the "hermetic" tradition, derived from Greek thought, divinity inhabits the substance of the universe, providing its very essence. This contrasts strongly with the Semitic view of complete transcendence. A 16th-century painter, Pinturicchio, portrays the Egyptian goddess Isis enthroned between Moses and Hermes.

Essenes

An ascetic community of Jews established to the north of the Dead Sea around the inflow of the Jordan River, the Essenes cut themselves off from the rest of Judaism during the Maccabean Revolt against Antiochus and efforts at Hellenization. John the Baptist is believed to be an Essene. In the mid-20th century, documents from this community are unearthed at Qumran, the "Dead Sea Scrolls." Among them is a writing that shows profound Zoroastrian influences, The Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, dealing with Armageddon and the end of the world.

Gnosticism

A movement named for the Greek term for knowledge, gnosis, Gnosticism describes the intuitive realization that mystery transcends speech. Religions must speak in metaphors. Along with Mithraism, Gnosticism competes with Christianity in the early centuries of the common era. In the mid-20th century, a cache of Gnostic writings, thought to have been destroyed, is recovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt. The Gnostic gospels shed light on some of Jesus' statements in the canonical New Testament. Jesus claims that the Kingdom of God is spread on the earth unseen and that he and God are in everything.

Grail

The quest for the Holy Grail, a key component in the Arthurian legends, is mentioned often by Joseph Campbell as an illustration of how Westerners seek to learn things on their own. Whereas in the East, yogis take spiritual responsibility for guiding their charges, in the Western legends, Sir Gawain suggests that the knights swear an oath to proceed into the dense forest individually, avoiding established trails. The quest for the grail satisfies a need to participate in religion subjectively and heroically, not just depending on the objective presence of the gifts in the Mass to save them.

Hinduism

Hinduism is a faith that transcends all social rules, while being classified as an "ethnic" religion for lack of a formal creed. When a yogi goes into the forest, he leaves behind his caste. Rituals emphasize that he is going past society. Hinduism appeals to young Westerners by comparing the importance of the past and the present. A devout young Hindi, who Joseph Campbell meets, studies the Bible but can find nothing religious in a



history of relationships. The book contains several stories to show common mythologies with other religions, like Vyasha's virgin birth and the original creation by word alone.

Judaism

An ethnic religion, Judaism is the heritage of anyone born to a Jewish mother. Males are expected to be circumcised into the covenant of Abraham, and there are other ritual obligations. Judaism has a long history of surviving persecutions based on the cohesiveness of Jews' shared history. Any Jew is all of Judaism. Celebration of the Seder meal at Passover reinforces this. "Hebrew" is first applied to the patriarch Abraham. Joseph goes down into Egypt and Moses leads out a holy nation unified and empowered by Yahweh. Moses accepts the Law on their behalf. They conquer Palestine as a "Promise" or "Holy Land." The Bible is written down after the Babylonian Exile, when the myths that fill the opening chapters of Genesis are absorbed. The Mother Goddess is transmuted into Yahweh, which props up a male-dominated society. The Hebrew scriptures contain elements of history only in Kings and Chronicles.

2001: A Space Odyssey

The only outer-space-related movie that Joseph Campbell finds thought provoking, 2001 opens with a pack of apes fighting over scraps of food, while a loner approaches a large object with awe and becomes the progenitor of the human race. The mysterious stone reappears on the moon as human colonization begins, and then free-floating in space. By contrast, Campbell finds movies look for an extraterrestrial savior old-fashioned, using established mythologies.

Yggdrasil

The "World Tree" found in the Icelandic Edda (specifically the Hávamál, verses 139-140 and 142), the Yggdrasil is All-Father Othin's means of acquiring the Wisdom of the Runes. Othin hangs himself on it for nine days, with an eagle perched above and a worm, Nithogg gnawing at its roots, and a squirrel, Ratatosk, running up and down communicating messages. Four deer graze around the Yggdrasil. Joseph Campbell points out remarkable similarities to a Mayan cross and to the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Zoroastrianism

A faith arising in Persia, Zoroastrianism preaches a God of Light, Justice, and Wisdom, Ahura Mazda, who creates the world perfectly good, and a "Deceiver," Angra Mainyu, a God of Evil, darkness, hypocrisy, violence, and malice, who introduces evil into this world. Until the last day, the "Reckoning of Spirits" (Armageddon), the world lives in this mixture of light and darkness. On the last day, Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra) comes in a second incarnation and restores peace, light, and virtue forever. The influence of this myth on Genesis is obvious. It also provides the background for the

The Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, a document found at Qumran in the mid-20th century, from the community that produces John the Baptist.



Themes

Transcendence

Transcendence can mean either going beyond a thing in time and space, or it can mean going beyond all comprehension, naming, and categorization. Its opposite is immanence. Iran marks a border between two broad ways of conceiving God. The religions spawned in the Levant, the Middle East, worship a transcendent God who is utterly "other" than his creatures. In Asia, God is experienced in creation. The difference is seen in an open-minded Hindu, who author Joseph Campbell meets at the U.N., who wonders at being unable to find any religion in the Bible. When Campbell objects to Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's talking about God hiding his face from human beings, saying that in India people experience God all the time, Buber cannot see how the two systems can be compared. Jung sees religion as defending against the spectacular mystical experience of meeting God directly. Campbell believes that it is impudent to think one's way of understanding God is the way that God truly is.

By declaring himself exclusively God, Yahweh obliges his followers to accept his transcendence. Aristotle's axiom that "A is not non-A" provides a philosophical base for this belief in the Hellenistic period from which Christianity emerges. Although Christianity is not an "ethnic" religion into which one must be born, its credo accepts the transcendent model. It posits that Jesus Christ is at once True God and True Man in a mystery, but its insistence on the historical uniqueness of the union requires elaborate explanations of how his death on the Cross affects redemption or "at-one-ment" between the transcendent God and fallen humankind. Campbell suggests focusing on the spiritual dimension of God loving his creation and entering into it, approving of Meister Eckhart's insight that, "The best God ever did for Man was to be man himself."

Ritual

Ritual is the means whereby human beings participate in the myths that underly their societies. Initiation rites are found everywhere. Girl children become adults simply by the onset of menstruation, and typically are isolated for a time to contemplate the change. Since boys can never become a "life-body," they must take their place in adult life through beatings and mutilations, on the theory "Women suffer and we must suffer, too." Rituals stress homogeneity of experience among diverse individuals, as in Papal audiences, where pilgrims are as one until they depart. When myths disconnect from the original cultic focus, they lose vitality, as when the Athenians in the 6th/7th centuries BCE reduce to writing, the stories of Greek religion. America has largely lost ceremonial rituals, but subgroups form separate mythologies. The most vibrant American ritual is now the picket line. Examples of rituals that unify people for various purposes are the Passover Seder meal, Hitler's mass rallies meetings, and the pre-Vatican II Catholic liturgy.



Insistence on the historicity of events acted out in ritual vitiates the transcendent, eternal meaning, resulting in disillusionment and lost faith. Raised a Roman Catholic, Campbell laments the liturgical reforms of the 1960s, in which Latin is replaced by vernacular tongues; Gregorian chant is abandoned, and the altar is turned to face the congregation. Campbell says this reduces the celebrant to a Julia Childs-like host. Preachers cannot let the rituals speak for themselves, bringing to the people the numinous sense, but spend time explaining symbols.

Exclusivity

Campbell divides religions into "world religions" based on credos and "ethnic religions" into which one is simply born. Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam are of the former type and are theoretically open to anyone who accepts their doctrines. Hinduism, Shinto, and Judaism are examples of the latter. Exclusivity is found in all faiths, as believers emphasize the historic marks that make them the "true faith." Those who depart from orthodoxy are branded heretics and persecuted or killed.

The burden of this book is to show how the principle figures and events in the Judeo-Christian Bible are pictured in the same way as the principle figures in other religions. The accounts in Genesis of creation and fall come from Assyro-Babylonian myths, but are edited to make the creator not a Goddess but jealous Yahweh. The Hebrew patriarchs and Moses conform to common myths, and the later Kings liberally mix legend into documentable history. Christianity begins as a reform movement within Judaism, which has been influenced but not taken over by Hellenism. The new faith, which St. Paul conceives as universal, allowing through Christ, both True God and True Man, to return to the Father, competes with Mithra and Zoroastrianism. Remarkable parallels exist between Jesus' story and those of Mithra and Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra). Early Christian art portrays Mithra and the Egyptian gods Osiris and Set acknowledging the newborn Christ.

Later Christians are less accommodating and adopt the view that there is "no salvation outside the church." Campbell does not dwell on the divisions and bloody conflicts among various Christian bodies over the ages but suggests there have been plenty. No fan of the changes in the Roman Catholic liturgy after Vatican II, he does not dwell on the opening to other faiths, but does laud the 1950 doctrine of Mary's Assumption as an way for Mother Earth to be joined to the heavens - if understood symbolically rather than historically, which the moon landings have shown is a passé notion. Fear prevents religious people from facing the fact of the commonality of their beliefs, so they reinforce their in-group identity. They ought rather to be seeing that all humans are one.



Style

Perspective

Author Joseph Campbell has, since 1949, been dealing with the theme of "Everyman." An Irish Catholic, who is captivated by American Indian culture as a youth, Campbell studies Arthurian romances at Columbia University, then Asian philosophies in Europe, and finally Freud and Jung. All these influences find their way into the pages of this book, a posthumous tribute by editor Eugene Kennedy. In his foreword, Kennedy explains that Campbell leaves behind a great body of unpublished materials on Judeo-Christianity. Campbell's approach to mythology helps to lessen the damage being constantly inflicted by institutional religious leaders insisting on literal, historical accuracy and missing the spiritual truths that are the essence of myth. This leaves religion itself an easy target for popular lecturers such as Carl Sagan.

It is Kennedy who decides to publish this book and makes the selection of materials. He explains sources and methodology in the endnotes. The book is clearly aimed at an educated, open-minded audience. Inflaming fundamentalists seems to have been Campbell's intention during lectures, hoping to make them think, and those who allow themselves to read this book should find the argumentation sufficiently gentle to at least appreciate Campbell's point: that exclusivity is wrong-minded and destructive. Kennedy observes that after his death, Campbell receives a lot of harsh criticism for some of his theses. Because it is a compilation of often ad-libbed materials, the text is at times vague, as Campbell paints across a canvas so broad that few but he can take it all in. For anyone willing to let Campbell make his point, it is a rich and valuable book to read.

Tone

In *In Thou Art That*, editor Eugene Kennedy pulls together the late Joseph Campbell's ideas on Judaism and Christianity as they relate to the universal mythology of humankind. Much of it is based on Campbell's sharing of his vast knowledge with audiences in question-and-answer periods after lectures. Campbell is a pioneer and partisan of an uncomfortable and unpopular cause: helping Western civilization realize that by insisting on the exclusivity and historicity of their religions, they are vitiating the eternal meaning of those myths. From the point of view of his vast learning, acquired over a lifetime (a brief biography is included at the end of the book), Campbell speaks objectively. Fundamentalists would claim he is highly subjective, prejudiced, and wrong. It helps that Chapter 1 opens with Campbell debating myth as lie or metaphor with a radio personality.

Editor Kennedy in the foreword describes how he hopes to capture some of the dynamism of Campbell's spoken work in written form. Kennedy leaves in many asides on favorite Campbell topics that break the train of thought and create a detracting repetitiousness. He misses some misprints or misstatements, the worst being



counterbalancing Philistines rather than the Pharisees to the Sadducees. Doubtless if Campbell had prepared this text it would have been tighter. As it is, the book should bring to Western readers many insights into Judaism, Christianity, and how they relate to the universal myths of the world. The mass of information speaks volumes in supporting Campbell's thesis that humans must become tolerant and forward-looking rather than retrenching in in-groups and defending their own turf.

Structure

Thou Art That is a compilation of writings about religious metaphor, focusing on the Judeo-Christian tradition, produced some 14 years after Joseph Campbell's death by Eugene Kennedy. The editor's ten-page Foreword explains why he has undertaken to pull together Campbell's thoughts on the subject and helps the reader enter the proper frame of mind to accept the richness of Campbell's thought. The chapter notes, which follow the body of the text, besides giving bibliographic references, explain how Kennedy pieces together each of the chapters. A short bibliography and index follow.

The body of the book consists of seven numbered and titled chapters. Chapter 1, "Metaphor and Religious Meaning," discusses "The Meaning of Myth," "What Myths Do," "Metaphor, the Native Tongue of Myth," and "Metaphor and Mystery." Chapter 2, "The Experience of Religious Mystery," discusses "Symbolism and Religious Experience" and "Experiencing Mystery." Chapter 3, "Our Notions of God," discusses "Elements of Our Experience of the Mystery of God" and "Symbols: Out of Time and Place." Chapter 4, "The Religious Imagination and the Rules of Traditional Theology," discusses "Imagination and Its Relation to Theological Inquiry." Chapter 5, "Symbols of the Judeo-Christian Tradition," discusses "What Kinds of Gods Have We?," "Genesis," and "Abraham, Father of the Jewish People." Chapter 6, "Understanding the Symbols of Judeo-Christian Spirituality," discusses "The Virgin Birth," "The Cave," "The Infant," "Flight into Egypt," "The Child as Teacher," "The Messiah," "Miracles," "The Last Supper," "Judas," "Crucifixion," "The Cross," and "The End of the World." Chapter 7 is a question-and-answer session. Finally, an eighth chapter, designated an Appendix because it is a 1979 interview between Campbell and Kennedy, is a reprint of an article, "Earthrise—The Dawning of a New Spiritual Awareness," that helps launch Campbell's mass-media fame.

Doubtless if Campbell had written a book from scratch on Judeo-Christianity in relation to universal human mythology, his own work would have been tighter, the asides (however charming) fewer, and the argumentation tighter. For all its flaws of repetition and occasional obtuseness, *Thou Art That* is a valuable, mind-opening work. It proceeds from a discussion of what myth is and how it operates to precursors of Judeo-Christian myths, noting parallels in other religions, looks in some detail at the major events in the life and death of Jesus Christ, and ends with an examination of how the Space Age necessarily changes how humans view their spiritual heritage.

Quotes

"If, as has happened in the contemporary world, all of the backgrounds of the images of our religious heritage have been transformed, as occurs when we find ourself in a world of machines rather than in a world of pastoral life, these changed images really cannot and do not communicate the feelings, the sentiments, and the meanings that they did to the people in the world in which these images were developed.

A system of mythological symbols only works if it operates in the field of a community who have essentially analogous experiences, or to put it another way, if they share the same realm of life experience." Chapter 1, Metaphor and Religious Mystery, ps. 8.

"There are two orders of religious perspective. One is ethical, pitting good against evil. In the biblically grounded Christian West, the accent is on ethics, on good against evil. We are thus bound by our religion itself to the field of duality. The mystical perspective, however, views good and evil as aspects of one process. One finds this in the Chinese yin-yang sign, the dai-chi.

We have, then, these two totally different religious perspectives. The idea of good and evil absolutes in the world after the fall is biblical and as a result you do not rest on corrupted nature. Instead, you correct nature and align yourself with the good against evil. Eastern cults, on the other hand, put you in touch with nature, where what Westerners call good and evil interlock. But by what right, this Eastern tradition asks, do we call these things evil when they are of the process of nature?" Chapter 2, The Experience of Religious Mystery, pg. 16.

"When Yahweh says, 'I am God,' he closes off that possibility. When your God is transparent to transcendence, however, so are you. That which is of the transcendent is the same in the god as in yourself. If the god opens to transcendence, you are one with what you call 'God.' Thus the god image introduces you to your own transcendence. This may be somewhat hard to grasp. But when the god closes himself and says, 'I am God,' he closes you, too, because this says you are just a fact and so the relationship, in these terms, is between you and the fact that is no fact.

That is why, to appreciate the language of religion, which is metaphorical, one must constantly distinguish the denotation, or concrete fact, from the connotation, or transcendent message." Chapter 3, Our Notions of God, pgs. 18-19.

"However, it is the mystery, also, of many of our own Occidental mystics; and many of these have been burned for having said as much. Westward of Iran, in all three of the great traditions that have come to us from the Near Eastern zone, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, such concepts are unthinkable and sheer heresy. God created the world. Creator and creature cannot be the same, since, as Aristotle tells us, A is not not-A. Our theology, therefore, begins from the point of view of waking consciousness and Aristotelian logic; whereas, on another level of consciousness—and this, the level to which all religions must finally refer—the ultimate mystery transcends the laws of dualistic logic, causality, and space-time." Chapter 3, Our Notions of God, pgs. 26-27.



"Who, for example, wants Abraham's bosom? Who ever heard of man giving birth to a woman, as Adam to Eve? There is in all of this symbol making and storytelling a deliberate campaign of seduction, turning the mind and heart from the female to the male - that is to say, from the laws of nature to the laws and interests of a local tribe. Again, as I have already suggested, it is surely a bewilderment to the psyche to have to respond to images that say one thing to the heart and are presented to the mind as programming another, opposite meaning. This paradox produces a kind of schizoid situation, and undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the prosperity of psychoanalysts today is this tangling and short-circuiting of the symbolic imagery through which the conscious and unconscious systems of our minds were to have been held in touch." Chapter 4, The Religious Imagination and the Rules of Traditional Theology, pg. 42

"I said that God exiled Adam and Eve from the Garden, but actually they exiled themselves. This story yields its meaning only to a psychological interpretation. If you explain it as an historical event that occurred at some distant time back there, it seems ridiculous. There was no Garden of Eden as a concrete place. To believe so is to misunderstand and misconstrue the metaphoric language of religion. You cannot even find a date for the idea of it. In the evolution of the species, did it arise with Homo erectus, when the human brain measured 1,000 cubic centimeters? Or did it come later with Neanderthal man, or just prehistoric with Cro-Magnon? When did this notion come?

This idyllic spot is not an historical fact. The Garden is a metaphor for the following: our minds, and our thinking in terms of pairs of opposites - man and woman, good and evil - are as holy as that of a god.

Let us look around this Garden now that we stand imaginatively within it.

What is the tree of immortal life? Even after examining in depth the rabbinical discussions of the two trees in the Garden, it remains something of an enigma." Chapter 5, Symbols of the Judeo-Christian Tradition, Summary and Analysis, pgs. 50-51.

"I had a very interesting experience in this regard. A young Hindu at the United Nations had read some of my books and some of the books of Heinrich Zimmer about Hinduism that I edited. He was a very religious Hindu. One day he said to me, 'When I go to a foreign country, I want to study their religion. I bought myself a Bible. I can't find any religion in it.' It had to do with the history of God's relationship to a people, and for a Hindu that didn't say a thing. And he wasn't able to read the message out of it.

Now, the counter-story to that is the brief but interesting dialogue I had with Martin Buber when he was in New York in 1954. He was lecturing at Columbia and I raised my hand and said, 'There's a word being used here this evening that I don't understand.'

He said, 'What's the word?'

I said, 'God.'

'You don't understand what God means?' he replied.

I said, 'I don't know what you mean by God. You've told us that God has hidden his face, that we are in exile. I've just come from India, where people are experiencing God all the time.'

And do you know what Buber said? 'Do you mean to compare?' There you have revealed two sides of looking at the idea of God." Chapter 5, Symbols of the Judeo-Christian Tradition, Summary and Analysis, pgs. 59-60.



"The answer, therefore, to our question as to why the crucifixion of Jesus holds such importance for Christians implies a complex of essential associations that are not historical at all, but are rather mythological. For, in fact, there never was any Garden of Eden or serpent who could talk, nor solitary pre-pithecanthropoid 'First Man' or dream like 'Mother Eve' conjured from his rib. Mythology is not history, although myths like that of Eden have been frequently misread as such and although mythological interpretations have been joined to events that may well have been factual, such as the crucifixion of Jesus.

Let us therefore examine further the mythological aspect of this symbolic form. Those familiar with Germanic myth and folklore will recall that in the Icelandic Edda (specifically the Hávamál, verses 139-140 and 142) is told that All-Father Othin, to acquire the Wisdom of the Runes, hung himself for nine days on the world tree, Yggdrasil." Chapter 6, Understanding the Symbols of Judeo-Christian Spirituality, pgs. 78-79.

"Marriage, as I said, is not a love affair; it is an ordeal. If you think of it as that you will be able to go through with it. The ordeal consists specifically in sacrificing ego to the relationship. And ego is always coming up, you know, saying, 'Oh, poor me. Nobody's doing my typing for me,' and that sort of thing. By the way, I know one great scholar who went through three wives until he got the one that would not only do the typing, but could do it in Greek and Latin as well." Chapter 7, Question Period, pg. 92.

"Christianity is the only religion that has the idea of a permanent condition called Hell. A mortal sin is regarded as an offense that condemns a person to Hell. Other religious systems view the Hell idea more as Christians do Purgatory - that is, as a transit of purgation. One dies so bound to a limited system of values that one cannot possibly open to the transcendence of the Beatific Vision of God in that condition. Purgatory is a pedagogical place and the ranges of Heaven are spread out according to the possibilities of one's spiritual realization.

When I was a little boy, I asked the nun who was my teacher, 'If I go to Heaven will I have the same experience as Thomas Aquinas?'

'Well,' she said, 'Your cup will be full, but it will be a little cup.' This was not a bad answer." Chapter 7, Question Period, pg. 100.

"CAMPBELL: The divided model allowed us to think that there was a spiritual order, separate or divided from our own experience. Think of how we spoke about things according to that old model. Everything was seen from earthbound eyes. The sun rose and set. Joshua stopped both the sun and the moon to have time to finish a slaughter. With the moon walk, the religious myth that sustained these notions could no longer be held. With our view of earthrise, we could see that the earth and the heavens were no longer divided but that the earth is in the heavens. There is no division and all the theological notions based on the distinction between the heavens and the earth collapse with that realization. There is a unity in the universe and a unity in our experience. We can no longer look for a spiritual order outside of our own experience." Appendix, A Discussion, pgs. 105-106.



"CAMPBELL: What has always been basic to resurrection, or Easter, is crucifixion. If you want to resurrect, you must have crucifixion. Too many interpretations of the Crucifixion have failed to emphasize that. They emphasize the calamity of the event. And if you emphasize calamity, then you look for someone to blame. That is why people have blamed the Jews for it. But it is not a calamity if it leads to new life. Through the Crucifixion we were unshelled, we were able to be born to resurrection. That is not a calamity. We must look freshly at this so that its symbolism can be sensed.

St. Augustine speaks of going to the cross as a bridegroom to his bride. There is an affirmation here. In the Prado there is a great painting by Titian of Simon of Cyrene as he willingly helps Jesus with the cross. The picture captures the human participation, the free, voluntary participation we all must have in the Easter-Passover mystery."

Appendix, A Discussion, pg. 112



Topics for Discussion

Why might people use "myth" as a synonym for "lie?" How does Campbell argue against this? Do you find his approach valid? Support your answer with examples.

How would you describe Campbell's attitude towards psychoanalysis?

How does Campbell use artifacts from Guatemala and Iceland to make his point about appreciating the connotative or spiritual meaning of the Crucifixion?

Eugene Kennedy says in the foreword that Campbell is taken to task for saying the reformed Roman Catholic Mass reduces the celebrant to a Julia Child's role. Discuss Campbell's reasoning and comment on whether critics are too thin-skinned.

How do the Arthurian legends support Kennedy's views on the difference between European and Asian religions?

How does Campbell expect witnessing "Earthrise" to change human perspectives? What alternatives does he see?

How does fish symbolism tie faiths together according to Joseph Campbell?