

Preface

Chaos may seem an unlikely source of creativity, but below its senseless surface lies a swirling depth of possibilities. Every person enters a world that is already filled with symbols, meanings, and stories. No-one starts with a blank canvas, rather, we find ourselves thrust into a matrix of narratives. Yet, something truly new is possible amid this chaos. Time is a space in which these stories can be reassembled, reinterpreted, and ordered in a way that gives particular meaning to my life.

Our stories can be more than a reflection of reality, they can transform experience, inspire new action, and in so doing, transform our reality. “And the word became flesh.” That is how the gospel of John describes the event in which divine ideas became tangibly real in the person of Jesus. Text, words, and ideas are not meant to remain intangible - they are searching for embodiment.

This book is a journey through thousands of years of symbols and narratives that point to the underlying reality of our existence. We follow the development of consciousness through the stories humans have told, beginning with myths that are older than the Scriptures. The Biblical text marks a definite progression in human awareness, and within the context of the Bible itself, ideas continue to develop.

The perspective given here might be new for many, but the aim is to provide more than simply an alternative interpretation of Scripture. Rather, I hope to show the connection between the inherent human capacity to create meaning, the depth of the text we have at our disposal, and the measureless gift of the Spirit of truth drawing us forward. An inexhaustible mystery lies enfolded in each of us. How it unfolds in your story is an unprecedented unique event. This living narrative reached a crescendo in Jesus. In him, we see the mystery unfolding in flesh and we receive an invitation to share in his consciousness.

Each of the chapters in the book is a progressive step in understanding and opening up human consciousness. Ultimately we want to receive the kind of unitive awareness, Jesus spoke of when he prayed: “I have given to them the glory you have given me, *that they may be one just as we are one.*”

The mysteries of time, self, narrative, and meaning are all intertwined. And our part in the mystery is more than passive explorers - we are invited to co-create. In Chapter 1 the metaphor of music is used to explore the nature of reality and the role we have in shaping it. How we give meaning to our life events is not always obvious - much of it is hidden from our awareness. Events gain meaning in

the context of a story and our individual stories gain meaning in the context of larger stories.

Understanding the processes by which we construct our stories and create meaning is of great benefit. Chapter 2 explores the fascinating relationship between the conscious and unconscious. That enigmatic part of us, that does not submit to the logic of time and order, can also be a rich source of new meaning. Jacob's ladder is a beautiful metaphor of the connection between the known and the unknown, the earthly and the transcendent. A healthy co-operation between the conscious and unconscious gives us the benefit of a story grounded in reality, yet open to astonishment.

As a child develops, so do the stories he or she tells. Humanity as a whole also developed through different stages of consciousness and this development can be traced in the way our stories evolved. The Genesis origin stories are for many the context in which they understand their own existence better. And indeed they are a rich source of meaning. An important discovery of 22,000 cuneiform clay tablets was made not too long ago. They contained myths similar, in many ways, to the Biblical narratives. Chapter 3 looks at these pre-genesis texts to gain insight into the development of the human mind and what they reveal to us about the Genesis texts.

The mythic symbols of the unconscious provides a new depth of meaning as we re-discover the wisdom of Genesis. Mythos is the unconscious subtext over which the Logos is written and creates a new context in which to re-read the Genesis origin stories. In Chapter 4 and 5 we begin the adventure of understanding anew the Yahwist origin texts of Genesis 2 and 3. We begin here because these stories are older than the Genesis 1 account. By reading them in this sequence we can better appreciate the development of

the story. These narratives are not simply concerned with ancient history. They are the narratives of every person's development. It is your story; your becoming; your genesis.

Talking animals and magical trees are completely absent from the Priestly source - the author of Genesis 1. An obvious development in thought has occurred. The conscious and unconscious enter into a more mature relationship in these texts and the results are beautiful! Chapter 6 explores how the writer of Genesis 1 re-imagines the beginning and the meaning of the present.

These alternative readings bring into question many of the popular concepts taught from these first three chapters of Genesis. For instance, the concepts of "original perfection", "the fall", and "original sin". These are either invalidated or completely re-defined by this radical new reading. The concepts of the fall and original sin profoundly influence the way people understand themselves. Transforming these concepts, therefore, transforms the meaning of our own stories.

In Chapter 7 we work through these implications and discover that some of the most original interpretations of Genesis, those of Irenaeus of Lyons, are surprisingly relevant to what we have uncovered. The aim, however, is not to give comprehensive theological arguments, but to introduce these alternatives. The appendix provides book recommendations for those who want to delve deeper into these themes.

Chapter 8 introduces another layer of meaning through the work of Rene Girard. We again look at myths but from a new perspective. And, in the light of this perspective, we discover how the Scripture subverts and converts the meaning of symbols and the message

of myth. The pattern of these stories are not restricted to ancient myths - they are reflected and relevant to our own life stories.

When such fundamental concepts such as origin, fall, and creation are redefined, they have profound implications for how we understand the person and work of Jesus Christ. If salvation is not a restoration of some imagined original perfection, then what is it? If chaos is not an evil outside of us, but a source of inexhaustible meaning within us, how does Christ help us transform this inner relationship? And, if the God of possibility invites us to co-create, how does Christ demonstrate this in a way that is relevant to our lives? The last chapter is a celebration of Jesus Christ in transforming our reality into something much richer and more open to unfolding beauty.

