

Word and Worship in Middle Eastern Religions

JOHN BOWMAN
University of Melbourne

When we speak of "mere words," we do not acknowledge the power of language. Primitive man did not and does not speak thus disparagingly of language. For him a word was always a charm which awakens power, either dangerous or beneficent. "Whoever asserts anything 'poses' and thus exerts some influence; but he also 'exposes' himself." Whether my words have charm I know not, but I do know that in speaking about this subject I expose myself. One still gives away something of oneself when one speaks. But it is not only the primitive who believes in the power of words, the preacher and the politician appear to cling to such a belief, and the businessmen who pay for messages on the radio, not to mention the admen themselves who dream up the slogans, find that whoever utters words sets something in motion. It could be that we have more in common with the primitive than we suppose.

Word and worship: it is difficult to know where to begin. With the higher or the more primitive religions? I dislike such patronizing classifications of different religions, for in any case there is much of the primitive in any religion. Either a blessing consists of mere words and is a redundant, primitive survival, or it does really attest to our continued belief in words as setting a power in motion.

If, however, we begin with names, we should find in them something which shows the close relationship between language and religion. I hasten to add that I understand religion in this context as man's attempts to come to terms with the world he is born into, must live in, and dies in. His attempts to come to terms with existence may take many forms. Paradoxically, he may eventually be driven to deny the reality of the material world, but he must adopt some attitude to it. On the other hand, even if he accepts the world as he finds it, the uncertainties of life, sickness, and death, famine and drought drive primitive man to seek to control his environment and existence. Finding the task too difficult, he creates nonhuman and superhuman agents of his misfortunes. But not all experiences of life are unpleasant, and in turn these have their patrons. To name a thing is, even with modern man, a step towards identifying it. In some cases it may lead people to think that by repeating the name, they gain an understanding of what they are talking about. For example, laymen speak glibly of atoms though they may know nothing about them, and there is much which even the atomic physicist does not know. But in repeating the word, we may begin to fancy we have power to use the atom as we wish.

Primitive man seems to have had no doubt that to give something a name was to have power over it. When Adam (Genesis 2:19, 20) gave the animals names, he had power over them. We may interpret the passage in Genesis by saying that Adam's giving names to the animals merely affirms the divine command (Genesis 1:28) that man have dominion over animals. Have it as

you will, name and power or power and name are closely associated here and elsewhere in the Bible. We could say that some names in the Bible express the nature or characteristics of its bearer, cf. Jacob (Genesis 25:26). As man has departed more and more from the outlook of the writers of the Bible, the connection between names and things has become more arbitrary. In Genesis, on the contrary, the names are nearly all significant. Adam's naming of animals implies at once his power of speech, setting himself apart from them, and suggests that his knowledge of their characteristics enabled him to suit the name to the nature. The fact is emphasized that man felt that his power of speech distinguished him from the rest of creation, and this in turn gave him a sense of power over the rest of creation.

When Jacob (Genesis 32:26) wrestled with a man at the brook Peniel, he would not let him go until he blessed him. The Being demanded to know (verse 27) Jacob's name—not out of mere curiosity, but to mark the encounter with the El. Jacob was to be given a new name—Israel. To know his new name was to know him as he had become. In Hebrew *yāda'* 'to know' means knowing at all levels, even at the most intimate. And Jacob himself as the result of the encounter received a new name, which in commemorating a relationship told the name and character of his antagonist. One could say that God, in calling His people into a new and close relationship with Himself, was giving them a new name. Abram becomes Abraham (Genesis 17:5); Sarai, Sarah (Genesis 17:15); Jacob, Israel (Genesis 32:28). So also the name was given the child at the time of circumcision, because then he enters into the covenant relationship to God (Luke 1:5-9; 2:21). In the New Testament it is the same; God's giving a new name implies His giving a new nature (Revelations 2:17; 3:12); Christ will give some new revelation of Himself hereafter to His saints, which they alone are capable of receiving, when He and they with Him shall take the Kingdom. Christians receive their new name at baptism indicating their new relation to God. They are baptized (cf. Matthew 28:19) 'into the name' (*eis to onoma*) of the revealed nature, into a living union with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in their manifested relations and offices toward men (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4).

In the Middle Ages there was the practice known in Jewish communities of a man who was dangerously sick changing his name in the hope that the Angel of Death, who summons people by name, would be baffled thereby. This *m^ešanneh šēm* or changing of name was known as early as TB *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a. The name *ḥayyim* 'Life' was usually the new name given. If several children had been born in a family and died, the next would be referred to as 'Alter'; the view being that the Angel of Death, not knowing the child's name, would not be able to seize it.

Many of the names of individuals in the Bible are theophorous, referring to or actually mentioning God by one or another of His names, using either the first or the last syllable of the tetragrammaton *YHWH*, or the name *El*. If the first part of the tetragrammaton *YHWH*, the element of the divine name in a person's name would be *Yo* like Jonathan or Jochebed, that is, 'Yo is glorious'. The second part *Yah* occurs in names like Jeremiah, that is, 'Yah shoots', or Raamiah 'Yah thunders'. With *El* as name of God we have names like Eliada 'God knows', and Raphael 'God heals'. *Adōn*, *Melekh* and *Ba'al* could also be used as names of God, as in Adoniram, Nathanmelekh, Eshbaal. *Ab* 'father' and *Ab* 'brother' could refer to God and we have names like Abijah or Ahijah. It has been well said that a whole theology could be deduced from the large number of biblical names referring to acts, actions and attributes of the deity. In noting carefully when and among what groups different theophoric names occur in the biblical record, we could perhaps see changing emphases in the conception of God.

We have mentioned some of the names of God used in names of individuals in ancient Israel. About the name of God itself something should be said, but in a paper like this an allusion or two must suffice. The most frequent name of God in the Old Testament (6,823 times) is the tetragrammaton YHWH. The name, according to Exodus 3 (E), was made known to Moses at Horeb. In Exodus 6:2-3 (P) it is said that the name was not known to the Patriarchs. But it is used by J, one of the documentary sources of Genesis, and according to that source was first made known to the antediluvians. As to its meaning, we can hardly do better than follow Exodus 3:14 where God is represented as speaking: "I am" *ehyeh* from *byh*, the latter being equivalent to *bwh*. The meaning would therefore be 'He is self-existing', 'self-sufficient', or 'He who lives', that is, the living God. It could, however, be a *biphil* form of *bwh* and mean 'He who causes to be', that is, the Creator. It is noticed that in later books of the Bible (for example, Ecclesiastes, Daniel and Chronicles) *Elohim* is used and YHWH does not appear, and in Psalms 42-83 *Elohim* is preferred.

In the earliest Rabbinic authorities the tetragrammaton is called either 'Name' or *šēm ham m^efōrāš* 'the distinguished name'. It was the 'name of God'. It was used only by priests in the Temple in saying the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:22-27, cf. Mishnah *Sotah* 7:6; TB *Sotah* 38).

Elsewhere (TB *Yoma* 39b) it is claimed that after the death of Simeon the Righteous the priests ceased to pronounce the Name. This authority states that this happened just forty years before the destruction of the Temple. The High Priest mentioned the Name on Yom Kippur ten times (Tosefta *Yoma* 2; TB *Yoma* 39b). According to the Amora R. Johanan the sages gave the key to the Name once in every sabbatical year. In Exodus 3:15, "This is my name forever," the word *l^e'ōlām* 'forever' is written without the *waw* and could be read *l^e'allēm* 'to conceal' (TB *Kiddushin* 71a) and was used in later times to justify the concealment of the actual pronunciation of the Name.¹ At some stage prior to the destruction of the Temple the exact pronunciation of the Name was lost. This was possibly because it had been a secret held by the high priests and in the period 180 B. C. to 70 A. D., when the old Zadokite dynasty of high priests was displaced, the *parvenus* who replaced them were not given the secret. This was probably not unconnected with the prohibition against pronouncing the Name. The twelve lettered Name was more likely to be taught, however, as surrogate than as an attempt to replace the tetragrammaton. The forty two and seventy two lettered name (TB *Kiddushin* 71a), however, becomes a mystery in its own right.

The Samaritans used to wear phylacteries—not to be confused with the Jewish Tefillin, sometimes called phylacteries. Those of the Samaritans consisted of an oblong piece of parchment in seven columns. They were worn over the arm, the oblong being folded three times from each side to make a broad or a thin band. These phylacteries of the Samaritans were called *šēm hamm^efōrāš*. They were made up not only of the Name of God, though this frequently appears in them, but of words and verses from the Pentateuch—that is, the whole Samaritan Bible. A usual feature on them is a square with the alphabet written horizontally, vertically, and diagonally with all the letters of the alphabet, and called the "Great Name of God who is

1 In biblical times (cf. Ruth 2:4) the tetragrammaton was used in ordinary greeting: "YHWH be with thee," but with the medieval Cabalists the mystery of the Name and even of the surrogates is associated with miraculous powers.

Aleph and Tau" (cf. Alpha and Omega, Revelations 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). More sophisticated is a square in such Samaritan phylacteries with: "May the great name of God be multiplied" which can be read horizontally, vertically, diagonally, in effect continually multiplying itself. The Samaritans who wore such a phylactery put on the word of God and the power of God. This power resided in the acts or miracles described on them. One must not think of the biblical stories as only history or as myth. Those who told them and those who wrote them down regarded them not just as history, but as memorials of the mighty words of God replete with an ever-present power.

The Christian church has known schisms over the question of the proper dating of Easter. This concern for calendrical accuracy was absorbed from the old Jewish church which was itself divided between Pharisees and Sadducees, Qumran Sectaries and Samaritans, one of whose major points of difference was on the matter of the calendar, for example the date of Pentecost. Each party believed it was essential to celebrate the memorial of a feast, which in each case was a memorial of some mighty act of God, on the exact anniversary. Maybe they did not realize just why they wanted to do so. It was enough that the Torah had ruled thus. But there is good reason to believe that at an earlier level there was a conscious feeling that by retelling the story of the wondrous act of God at the anniversary of the sacred time something of the numinosity of the event was recaptured. Celebration is carried on in time. The divine act was at a definite time in the year; the given time becomes, because of the act, the best, the due time for its commemoration.

Time was never lost. In the ancient Middle East the days of the year come round again, each day in its turn. According to one interpretation of Job 3:3, Job, in cursing his day (that is, of his birth), does not want it to come up again among the days of the year. In fairy tales, time stand still when one says: "Once upon a time", and is eternally present. All the more so in religious observances of festivals of the acts of God, the stream of time seems to stop and the act is eternally present. The same phenomenon survives in liturgical time in the Jewish and Christian religions. The Babylonian New Year festival was the annual repetition of the unique primal and universal New Year celebration. That being so, it was considered all the more important that the festival was observed on the actual anniversary. To make sure, the Babylonian priests developed their science of astronomy. We have eclipses of the sun and moon recorded from the third millenium B. C. The Jewish Passover Seder reciting the tale of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt stresses that it is not an old, far-off tale. Compare the questions of "the wicked son" and of "the good son." It is emphasized that it was done for us and that not only in a real sense were we there but that we *are* there.

This brings us back to the sacred story and then to the sacred words. The words of the story recapture for us something of the original event. The early hearers of the story would have said the words were the vehicle of the wondrous acts which brought them to us. In fact, in the words the wondrous acts are continually alive, continually present, all the more when the day comes round when the events were first enacted. The question of sacred time cannot detain us further here. We are now concerned with the sacred word. It is my belief that all words written, if not spoken, were once sacred and that all literature was once sacred. Think of how many of the eight hundred and fifty languages in which the Bible is now published first acquired a written literature in the translation of the Bible. Some were even assigned an alphabet in order to permit a translation of the Bible in written form.

But was all language originally religious? It all depends on one's definition of religion and

how comprehensively the term is used. In English some swear words were originally religious. One is not thinking of "By Heaven," "Christ," or "Bloody" (By our Lady): all are words of power whose repetition absorbed the sense of power. And repetition has importance as can be seen in the litany and the repetition of the events of Jesus life, or St. Patrick's hymn: "Today, I arise invoking the name of the Trinity, the strong Name," Swear words referring to sexual prowess were probably religious in origin too, for religions are not always pure, as witness some of the sacred prostitution of Babylon, the worship of Kali in India and the Hermes of classical times. To talk about these things probably was fancied as giving the speaker the power. Perhaps smutty stories in smoking rooms are told by middle-aged gents for the same reason. In a sense they are being religious; for them the power resides in the word. But with Jesus' prohibition (cf. Matthew 5:22) against calling one's brother a fool there is a finer realization of what the word does to oneself. This is parallel to His stressing that only what comes out of man, that is, his words, makes him unclean (Mark 7:20).

Invective is a word of consecration. The invective brings the person abused within the power of the evil deed or characteristic, as it is in primitive religions. Here thought is not only of the father of the deed but of the deed itself. A curse once pronounced is an expression of power that requires neither gods nor spirits to execute it. Even Greek tragedy knew the force of the *arai* which worked inexorably until its force was worked out. Likewise, blessing is not merely a pious wish but a direction of power—in this case for good. Isaac could not give the same blessing twice (Genesis 27:33, 38). The blessing which Jacob took in place of Esau could not be said again for Esau. It was beyond Isaac's power to recall it. The form of words, too, and how they were said was important. A *lapsus linguae* was felt to bring misfortune; cf. the statements in Mishnah *Berakoth* 5:3, 5 that the leader of prayer, if he make a mistake, is to be replaced by another and the whole prayer repeated, lest misfortune come on the community. The feeling that the words of blessing must be expressed in their set form and in the appropriate manner, would in turn influence prayer and eventually lead to a set and fixed liturgy. It would also result in the retention of the sacred words in the language in which first expressed, even when that language had become a dead language or at least was not the vernacular.

The oath is the word of consecration which delivers the person taking the oath over to the power by which he swears. One may feel like the Quakers that if one's word at any other time is *not* true, taking an oath will not make it more true, but to say this misses the point in the primitive attitude to oaths. The oath or words of the oath were felt not only to guarantee the truth of the statement, but to make it true. The exact repetition of the words of the oath administered by a duly accredited person not only *were* felt, but as I know from personal experience *are* still felt to have efficacy. Twice in my career on entering certain clerical offices I have had to pay for the privilege of having such administered to me by a lawyer; law is nearer to religion than is often realized. If name or even mention of a name evoked something of the personality which possessed the name, if words of blessing were vehicles of power, then the story of some wonderful act of the God or gods, if properly recited by those who guarded the words of the story, evoked the power described in that story. The words might be accompanied by the appropriate gestures but the words themselves could be enough. The myth certifies the ritual. It is the verbal presentation of some event replete with power. When one says 'myth' one does not imply that the sacred story is untrue. If we think so, we merely put ourselves outside the ranks of the worshippers in whatever religion we are considering, because for the worshippers it is actuality and reality, and the myth ensures that it is eternal reality.

Take for example the Persian passion play the *Taziya*, which occurs on the tenth of Moharram and retells the tragedy that befell on that day the family of Ali and culminating in the martyrdom of Husain. In 1971, I witnessed in Shiraz, Iran the whole celebration. For about a mile in Luft Ali Khan-e-Zand Avenue there were marshalled troops of young men clad in black who, before they took one step forward, whipped both right and left shoulders with a whip of chains. As they administered the first stroke they shouted "Hasan, Abbās" and with the second, "Husain! Husain Shāh!". The sidewalks were solid with onlookers. Beyond the bazaar, flagellants and supporters turned either right to the Wakili Mosque or left to the Shah Cheragh mosque. In the court of the mosques an awning was stretched. In the centre was set a platform surrounded with a scaffolding of poles and draped in black. From the poles hung colored lamps. At the back of the platform was the *tābūt* or model of the martyrs' tombs. In front of the *tābūt* was Husain's banner, sword and spear, and a tank of water representing the Euphrates; in front of that a movable pulpit. You could call this a miracle play, and yet it is more than that. It is an integral part of a religious service. It has points of contact with drama, but the Arabs like the rest of the Semites never developed the dramatic art. For example, one could not call the biblical Song of Songs drama, though it may have been recited by two characters at the New Year festival in ancient Israel to symbolize the divine marriage which was connected with the enthronement of the king. One could not call Job a drama; yet the Song of Songs and Job have a dramatic quality.

Similarly, is the annual retelling of the story of the death of Husain dramatic and the eclipse of the hopes of the house of Ali. The latter, in the opinion of half of the Muslim world, should have been the true successor of Muhammad, and his son Husain—their vicar of God—is held to have died a martyr's death at Kerbela. The very patriarch Jacob of the Old Testament is made to testify to Husain's greatness. In the *Taziya* Gabriel says to Jacob: "Peace be to thee, thou wise prophet. The incomparable God, sending thee salutation, says: 'What thinkest thou, O afflicted one? Is thy Joseph more precious than Muhammad's dear grandson, before whose eyes all his companions were first slain, and his own body being riddled with arrows, he was afterwards most cruelly done to death, and his corpse thrown on the ground?' " To this Jacob answers: "Oh may a thousand ones like me and my Joseph be the dust of his feet! May the curse of God rest on Yazid and his party, who cruelly murdered that Imam! Come, O Gabriel! Show me the plain of Kerbela, for God's sake!" Gabriel answers! "O Jacob, may Gabriel be a ransom for thee! May I perish for thy name thou manifest messenger of God! Come and peep through my fingers. Behold there the land of Kerbela." Jacob replies: "Declare to me, O messenger of the glorious Lord, part of the sad occurrences at Kerbela, for thy speech has greatly grieved me: it has rendered my eyes like the river Jaihun." At this Gabriel begins to unfold the sad tale: "Alas, the tyranny of the cruel spheres! Who can hear the sad things done at Kerbela! Injustice and oppression, hatred and enmity shall attain to their perfection in that plain of trial as regards the descendants of God's prophet. One shall hear no cry from that holy family but for bread and water. Their sad voices shall reach the very throne of the Majesty on high. Their tears shall saturate all that field of battle. The children of that king of religion shall subsist on the tears alone of their own eyes."²

Lane-Poole rightly saw that through the early part of the recital and reenactment of the sad events at Kerbela, the object is to foreshadow the great sacrifice by examples of lesser sufferings.³ Everything leads up to the crowning act of Husain's life. When Zainab, Husain's sister, asks Husain as he sets out for Kerbela why the slaughter must take place, he answers: "The

helpless people of the Prophet of God have no rock of salvation to fly to for a refuge except Husain. They have no advocate with God on the Day of Judgment except Husain. The way of salvation is shut up against them on account of their manifold sins, and except Husain, none can make a proper atonement or propitiation for transgression. Who could save the people of God from the wrath to come, seeing the kingdom of faith has no other king but Husain?"

Various recitals recapture the atmosphere of the battle. Husain eventually dies. Before Shimar beheads the wounded Husain, the latter says, "O Lord, for the merit of me, the dear child of thy Prophet: O Lord, for the sad groanings of my miserable sister! O Lord, for the sake of young Abbas rolling in his blood, even that young brother of mine that was equal to my soul, I pray thee, in the Day of Judgment, forgive, O merciful Lord, the sins of my grandfather's people, and grant me, bountifully, the key of the treasure of intercession."⁴ With that Husain dies. The *Taziya* eventually ends with Muhammad saying: "Permission has proceeded from the Judge, the gracious Creator, that I should give into thy hand this key of intercession. Go thou and deliver from the flames everyone who has in his lifetime shed but a single tear for thee, everyone who has in any way helped thee, everyone who has in any way helped thee, everyone who has performed a pilgrimage to thy shrine or mourned for thee and everyone who has written tragic verses for thee. Bear such and all with thee to paradise."⁵

Husain responds: "O my friends, be ye relieved from grief, and come along with me to the mansions of the blest. Sorrow has passed away, it is now time for joy and rest; trouble has gone by, it is the hour to be at rest and tranquility." The sinners (entering paradise) call out: "God be praised! by Husain's grace we are made happy, and by his favor we are delivered from destruction. By Husain's loving kindness is our path decked with roses and flowers. We were thorns and thistles but are now made cedars due to his merciful intercession."

It matters not that this bears no historical relation to the rather undistinguished son of Ali who blundered to his death at Kerbela. The *Taziya* with its few pathetic props and its wordy speeches full of wholesome praise rendered by a few individuals is *not* a play. Lane-Poole called it "one long recital of woes, one long river of tears."⁶ He added: "There is no attempt to individualize characters. They are all alike and talk alike. It is plotless, characterless, full of reiteration, of a length unbearable, and must be judged by other than literary standards." But it is in its associations, in its references to the fiery memories of religious persecution that its strength lies. The associations it evokes are, however, powerful enough to overcome all its dramatic defects. These sad recitations are a sacred thing to the Shi'is and produce a frenzy of enthusiasm. The associations evoked are only as powerful as the words of the recital—words which are not of any literary worth. The words immortalize the vicarious atonement wrought by a Husain that never was, but they make it real for millions of Shi'is all the same. But even with the recital of Husain's martyrdom, the words of the recital are not Holy Writ. The Qur'an itself is the uncreated Word of God in Arabic, even for Shi'is. It should be realized however

2 Cf. S. Lane-Poole, *Studies in a Mosque*, 2nd ed. (London, 1893), 232-33.

3 Ibid., 233.

4 Ibid., 245.

5 Ibid., 246.

6 Ibid., 251.

that in Islam there is no personified Logos doctrine as in Christianity. There is nothing like the Christian belief in an incarnate Logos that appeared in historical actuality, the very 'Word' by which all things are held to have been created, took flesh and dwelt among men full of grace and truth (cf. John 1:14). That in Islam Jesus can be called the *kalamu'llah* (cf. Sūra 4:169) does not mean anything more than it shows Islam's indebtedness to Christian terminology just as Islam's referring to Jesus as *masih* (the Christ). We are not in this paper discussing either the development of the personified Logos doctrine nor of the apparently hypostasized *memra* (or Word) which may have existed in some Jewish circles in the last one or two centuries B. C. Great care has been taken in not reading into the term *memra* in the Targums more than was intended. Because of the dislike of anthropomorphism in the biblical record, the word *memra* was there substituted for the divine name. Another reason for the substitution may have been fear of using the divine name. In the Qur'an, Jesus was created by a word (cf. Qur'an, Sūra *Miryam* 19:35). He was the word thrown into the womb of the virgin Mary (Sūra 4:169). Any power that resides in God's word in creation, Islam would say, is God's power derived or delegated from Him. It is not just a new revelation following after the revelation of the *Taurat* to Moses and the *Injil* to the Christians and completing these; though such a claim is understood to be made in the Qur'an Sūra 61:6, where Jesus' promise according to the Gospel of John of the sending of the Paraclete (John 14:26) is said to have been fulfilled in Ahmad, that is, Muhammad. But also in the Qur'an, while *Taurat* of Moses (cf. Sūra 32:23, 46:12) and *Injil* of Jesus (cf. Sūra 19:31; 4:169) are accredited divine revelations, the revelations of the Qur'an to Muhammad is a restatement of the unchanging Word of God (cf. Sūra 3:2), in plain Arabic language (Sūra 26:195). The Qur'an claims (Sūras 12:11; 10:37) not only to attest to the previous revelations but also explain properly the revelation to which they witness. All the prophets of God had been Muslims (cf. Sūra 3:78, 79). Abraham was a Muslim, as were also Moses and Jesus. The matter is the more difficult to controvert in that *Muslim* in its primary and nonspecialized sense does mean anyone resigned to the will of God. But to return to the point at issue, the Qur'an as the Muslim would hold is not only far from being just a holy book in Arabic made up of discourses and poetic utterances by Muhammad, but the very revelation of God's word, the prototype of which existed eternally before God, and from which at the initial revelation (Sūra 96) to Muhammad, Gabriel made him read.

That there are utterances abrogated in the Qur'an presents no difficulty to faith (for example, Sūra 2:105, 119, 145). Already in Muhammad's lifetime the Qur'an or parts of it were recited as God's revelation. After his death it was gathered, the canon closed, and the text fixed finally by the caliphate of Uthman. In the case of the Qur'an we have no doubt that its words are those delivered by Muhammad, though not in necessarily that same order. There are no textual variants, because only one text was allowed to survive. It was felt to be different from other sayings of Muhammad which, though treasured as the Hadith or traditional literature, was subject to criticism and sifting.

Other religions have sacred books of written words. One thinks of the Vedas of Hinduism, the Avesta of Zoroastrianism, the Buddhist Tipitaka; but only Judaism, Christianity and Islam have one holy book respectively. These three religions are known as religions of people of the book. It could be that the concept of holy books came from India and had an influence on the Jewish community exiled in the Persian empire. It was after the return from exile that the full canon of the Old Testament began to develop. Before 200 B. C., as we see from the Greek prologue to Ben Sira/Ecclesiasticus, the canon was then practically as it is now, though

it was not finally fixed in Palestine till after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. When the Samaritans separated from Judaism in the fourth century B. C., the Torah was the entire holy writ. In Japan the Buddhist Tipitaka, which can be as many as seven thousand volumes, is arranged in rotating cases in Japanese Buddhist Temples. The act of turning the case is regarded as study of the holy writ and is a meritorious action. In Samaritan worship there is the use of the Qataf or digest of the law. At one time the entire service consisted of the reading of the law. Later, when hymns were introduced, instead of excluding the reading of the whole law, a word from each paragraph was selected so as to give the essence of the law. Then, on festivals the Samaritans used special Qatafs from the Torah, repeating one name, or one word, much like the liturgical use of a concordance. But by repeating that name they recalled the action or situation of divine import in which it occurred and took the virtue of the personality and his action to themselves. I have seen Samaritans run their hand over the holy page and then draw their hand down over their face to receive the *baraka*. Samaritans tend to bibliolatri but did not believe as did the Muslims that the Word of God (in the Qur'an) was eternally of God's essence and had no beginning. In Islamic belief the Qur'an is God eternally speaking and was not even created by God. This did not pass unchallenged in Islam, for example, by the Mutazilites, but the orthodox opinion prevailed that "whatever lies between the two covers of the volume of the Qur'an is the Word of God." It is, however, not fair to say that this means that the paper and the ink in the volume concerned are uncreated.

Rabbinic Judaism with its tradition of the oral law was saved from such a form of bibliolatri. Roman Catholic Christianity with its dual tradition of the Church and the Bible has similarly escaped the bibliolatri which has affected certain branches of Protestant Christianity.

The written word, though it perpetuates the spoken word and apparently makes it more permanent, raises the problem of interpretation. Even the Qur'an has not escaped this, though by refusing to allow translation of the Qur'an to be used in worship, it has been spared the engrafting of the theological views held by the translator; for even translation is an interpretation. The reading of the Bible was originally a communal act of worship, cf. Nehemiah 8 where Ezra reads the law to the people of Judah. I would maintain that the declaiming of the stories of the Bible to recall again the acts of God was the act of worship before there was a Bible. Even when there was a Bible it was read publicly. Private study does not replace communal reading and worship.

In this paper nothing has been said of sermons in worship; sermons are commonly called preaching the word of God. Many are the words of men. However the sermon has a long and distinguished ancestry going back to the early Synagogue where it was common to have a *derush* or exegetical discourse on the law after the statutory Sabbath prayers. Could it be that the ancestry of the sermon is even more distinguished and goes back to the teachings of priest and prophet before there was a written Bible? Some men speaking from the heart and full of conviction have felt that the words they spoke were the words of God. Others have had greatness thrust upon them: witness Paul and his letters.

The mystic has sometimes felt that he spoke divine words, unintimidated by the claims made for the written word. For example, the Muslim Sufi al-Hallaj, on hearing the Qur'an recited, said: "I also could say such things." Word of God or word of man, the gift of naming things was truly a great tool. It set man above the animals, and with it he ventured to depict God and have God speak in his language.

Confession of a faith in a creed is not only confessing God but confessing oneself. It shows

one's attitude to the world as much as to God whether (a) as negation of the reality of the world as in Buddhism or (b) as testament to the worthwhileness of the body as in Christianity, or (c) as affirmation of belief in the resurrection of the body after death, also affirmed by Islam and Judaism from which it derived.

But even religions that deny the worthwhileness of the world believe in the power of the word. There is Gnosticism with its emphasis on knowing the names of the guardian angels of the celestial spheres through which one must pass to be free of the body. There is Zen Buddhism with its solving the Koan, for example, the hen in the bottle and how to get it out without smashing the bottle. On the positive side there is the word of consecration of the priest in the Roman mass, the power of the word which claims to bring Christ to the altar under the accidents of bread. This is surely the great example of the belief in words of power in worship.