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MICHAEL F. PALMER

B.A., M.A.

THE PROBLEM OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH

Ph.D. Thesis, 1973

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ABBREVIATIONS FOR THE

WORKS OF PAUL TILLICH

CB	-	The Courage To Be (London: Collins, 1962)
DF	-	Dynamics of Faith (Harper Torchback ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1958)
IH	-	The Interpretation of History, trans. N. Rasetzki and E. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936)
PE	-	The Protestant Era, trans. J. Luther Adams (Abridged ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957)
PERSPECTIVES	-	Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Thought, ed. C. E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1967)
RDI	-	'A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation', Church Quarterly Review, CXLVII, No.294 (January-March, 1949) pp.133-148
RS	-	The Religious Situation, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1967)
SHJ	-	'The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Christian Faith' (Lecture and discussion with Ernest F. Scott), Monday Forum Talks (Union Theological Seminary, New York), No.5, February 5th, 1938 (mimeographed) Pp.6
ST, 1	-	Systematic Theology, Vol.I (London: James Nisbet, 1953)
ST, 2	-	Systematic Theology, Vol.II (London: James Nisbet, 1957)
ST, 3	-	Systematic Theology, Vol.III (London: James Nisbet, 1964)
TC	-	Theology of Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964)

ABSTRACT

I. The aim of this doctoral thesis is to set forth and appraise Tillich's discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus. This problem incorporates two related questions: first, whether a continuity can be established between the history of Jesus of Nazareth and his biblical portrayal; and second, whether Christian assertions are potentially falsifiable by historical research. Tillich's position is characterized by an absolute rejection of any attempt to base faith and christological doctrine on the results of historical enquiry.

II. Our study opens with a detailed exposition of Tillich's semantic analysis of the term 'historical Jesus', and proceeds to examine the work of those theologians most responsible for the formation of his sceptical position. This survey prepares the way for an account of Tillich's notion of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. In Chapter Two, we consider the 'factual' side of this event, and show how the ontological concept of 'New Being' is employed to emphasize the historical reference of christological statements; and in Chapter Three, we turn to the 'interpretative' side of the event, and here analyse the function of the 'biblical picture' in Tillich's thought. The two succeeding chapters expand Tillich's argument to embrace his discussion of the epistemological character of faith and research, and his own attempt to resolve the question of whether the factual basis of Christianity can be assured by faith alone.

III. The underlying theme of our concluding chapter is that a fundamental inconsistency exists between Tillich's affirmation of the concrete, past-historical nature of the event portrayed in the biblical picture, and his subsequent refusal to make this event the possible object of critical enquiry. While he is surprisingly orthodox in seeking to retain faith's decisive relation to its historical basis, he compromises this connection by asserting that the christological claims of the picture are immune to research. Tillich's arguments are therefore significant precisely because they demonstrate the impropriety of claiming that the foundation of faith's portrait is historical while yet exempting it from the possibility of falsification through historical enquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, the Revd. Dr. J. Heywood Thomas, for his kindness and help during the preparation of this thesis.

CHAPTER I

PAUL TILLICH AND THE PROBLEM OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

I. The meaning of the term 'historical Jesus'.

The problem with which we are to deal in this thesis can best be approached by first examining briefly the meaning of the term 'historical Jesus'. Paul Tillich offers two analyses of this expression, the first written in 1938,[1] the second in 1957.[2] The second analysis, however, by virtue of its conflation of the ideas originally outlined in the earlier essay, properly belongs to a later stage of our discussion.[3] So, for the purposes of simply clarifying the nature of the problem of the historical Jesus, we start with Tillich's initial publication.

In his article of 1938, Tillich begins by saying that the phrase 'historical Jesus' is itself ambiguous: a conclusion since held by other scholars,[4] and one for which there is considerable justification since the expression has, our author continues, at

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[1] SHJ. In IH, Tillich refers to a lecture on the problem of the historical Jesus delivered in 1911. (Ibid., p.33)

[2] ST, 2: 123

[3] See below, pp.47-50

[4] Cf. James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus ("Studies in Biblical Theology", XXV, London: S.C.M. Press, 1959) p.26

least three possible definitions. In the first place, Tillich suggests, 'historical Jesus' can signify 'the objective events which happened around a man, Jesus of Nazareth, to whom the gospels refer in all their writings',[5] or rather, as he further explains, those events 'which could be photographed, phonographed, and perhaps "psychographed"'.[6] In other words, 'historical Jesus' can refer simply to everything that actually took place in the life of Jesus, to all that he did, said and thought. But since this connotation of the term is made irrespective of the question whether or not we possess, or are capable of possessing, any such knowledge, we may assume that it thus includes also all that must have happened to Jesus but of which we have no evidence: a meaning of 'historical Jesus' so broad and general in scope that it rarely merits inclusion in any analysis of that term. Normally the expression, in so far as it is used to refer to a knowledge of the actual facts about Jesus, is limited and defined in either one of two ways; and these, as we shall see, provide the second and third meanings of 'historical Jesus' cited by Tillich. For the moment, however, it is worth mentioning that this first definition is, nevertheless, not without significance. Above all, it performs the salutory task of reminding both the believer and the historian of the incompleteness and limitations of their knowledge when compared, for example, with all that has taken place in the past. No historical figure can be fully recovered or described: a fact particularly true of Jesus since not only are there comparatively few stories and sayings about him, but even those that we have are largely assigned to the last months of his life.

In addition to this preliminary understanding of 'historical Jesus', there is, Tillich tells us, another and more restricted inter-

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[5] SHJ: 1

[6] Ibid.

pretation of the term. In this its second sense, the expression refers to that account of Jesus given in the earliest Christian traditions. Whereas, therefore, the first definition of the phrase 'historical Jesus' denoted the objective events surrounding the life of Jesus of Nazareth, this second definition refers to 'the story of these events as it is told by the gospels including John and the later writers of the New Testament'.[7]

This important meaning of 'historical Jesus' - important not least because Tillich himself later depends upon a variant of it for the development of his own arguments[8] - appears to identify knowledge of the actual earthly Jesus with 'Jesus as he is biblically portrayed'. As it is normally encountered, this equation is upheld by drawing attention, first, to the New Testament as the chief source from which any knowledge of Jesus primarily proceeds, and second, to a special assessment of scripture which guarantees that the information derived from it is historically reliable.

Initially, therefore, this second definition of 'historical Jesus' evolves with the realization that what is known of Jesus is almost exclusively limited to what is said of him in the writings of the New Testament.[9] There is virtually no knowledge of Jesus which

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Tillich's use of this meaning will be dealt with in Ch.III, 'The Biblical Picture of Jesus as the Christ'.

[9] This restriction is not, of course, absolute; it is precluded not only by the first meaning of 'historical Jesus', which implied that the discovery of additional information about Jesus is always possible, but more particularly by the witness to him in pagan and Jewish sources. For a list of this evidence, see Günther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, trans. I. and F. McLuskey, with J. M. Robinson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960) pp.27-29; and for an appreciation of its importance, see: Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925); and Roderic Dunkerley, Beyond the Gospels (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957). Since, however, such evidence adds nothing of significance to what is already known of Jesus through the New Testament, it is important only in so far as it helps refute those theories, held variously by Bruno Bauer, Alfred

does not rely upon that biblical presentation of him which is based, Tillich writes, upon 'the immediate impression he made on his followers'.[10] And accordingly, just as no past historical event can be dissociated from the sources by which it is known, so the knowledge any man has of Jesus is, to this extent also, dependent upon the early Christian community's own memory of him as it is mediated to us through the biblical narratives.

The basic presupposition here is, of course, that in recording their experience of the 'immediate impression' Jesus made upon them, the authors of the gospels credited him with features he actually possessed. It is assumed, in other words, that a real correlation does in fact exist between the objective events concerning Jesus and the account of them preserved in the gospels. However, for our present purposes - and particularly in light of the later and final meaning of 'historical Jesus' - this is an assumption still more significant because it is sustained without recourse to any critical historical methods for establishing the veracity of the biblical texts. We find, therefore, that in the period before the development of such methods in the nineteenth century, the interpretation of 'historical Jesus' in terms of the 'biblical presentation of Jesus' was achieved not through any critical appreciation of the reliability of the relevant evidence, but rather through a specific conception of scripture which guaranteed its textual inerrancy, and which, consequently, ensured also the authenticity of the gospels' own memory-impression of Jesus. Such a view, held by both Catholic and Protes-

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Drews, J. M. Robertson and others, which reject the actual historicity of Jesus. A survey of this view since the Enlightenment is given by Maurice Goguel, The Life of Jesus, trans. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958) pp.61-69; and a critical discussion of it by H. G. Wood, Did Christ Really Live? (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

[10] SHJ: 1

tant alike right up to the end of the eighteenth century, depended pre-eminently on the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. This doctrine, as Heinz Zahrnt observes, stipulated that the Bible

> was endowed with a special metaphysical quality and thus marked off from the general field of literature. According to the orthodox understanding of Scripture, it was not developed and handed down like any other book; God himself dictated it, and the writers, stripped of almost all human individuality, served only as automatic instruments of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, just as God had seen to the writing of Scripture, so too he made special provision for its transmission, so that what he had dictated might remain for all time without error or falsification - his care reached right down to the pointing of the Hebrew text. Thus by virtue of its miraculous origin, Holy Scripture, like Jesus Christ, was figuratively speaking exempted from the universal heritage of original sin.11

The claim, then, that the 'historical Jesus' and the 'biblical portrayal of Jesus' are synonymous is thus maintained through the dogmatic assumption that the gospels, as canonical Holy Scripture, give information about Jesus which, due to the miraculous process of its beginning, is necessarily authentic; it is upheld, therefore, through a special assessment of scripture which recognized its content as unalterable truth, and which, accordingly, viewed literal historical exegesis as the basis for any exposition of scripture's meaning. Because the New Testament is divinely inspired in every part, it is a priori impossible that there should be any contradiction either between the gospels themselves or between the gospels and the events they record.[12]

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[11] The Historical Jesus, trans. J. S. Bowden (London: Collins, 1963) p.30

[12] For this reason, New Testament study of the gospels before the Enlightenment confined itself almost solely to the task of paraphrasing and harmonizing the four gospels. Schweitzer tells us that Osiander (1498-1552), in his Harmony of the Gospels, maintained 'the principle that if an event is recorded more than once in the Gospels, in different connexions, it happened more than once and in different connexions. The daughter of Jairus was therefore raised from the dead several times...there were two cleansings of the Temple, and so forth'. The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. A. Montgomery (2nd ed.; London: A. & C. Black, 1922) p.13.

This second understanding of 'historical Jesus' introduces us principally, therefore, to a particular theological position which assumes the Bible to be verbally inerrant, and consequently historically accurate: a position which, we should add, although dominant especially in Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy prior to the Enlightenment, is by no means unknown today.[13] By contrast, the third definition - to which we have partially alluded already - focuses, Tillich says, upon the 'result of the attempt of scholars to find out which elements of the reports of the gospels describe objective events...and, beyond this, which conclusions can be made beyond the fragmentary reports as we find them in the gospels'.[14] By this final use of the term, reference is being made to those methods employed by the historian for deciding and testing the authenticity of the biblical evidence about Jesus. Thus, in its last meaning, 'historical Jesus' refers neither to 'all that must have happened to Jesus in the past', nor to 'the portrayal of Jesus in the gospel narratives', but is, in its most circumscribed use, synonymous only with 'the results of the process by which the historian arrives at a knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth'. In this sense, writes James M. Robinson, the phrase

> is not simply identical with 'Jesus' or 'Jesus of Nazareth', as if the adjective 'historical' were a meaningless addition. Rather the adjective is used in a technical sense, and makes a specific contribution to the total meaning of the expression. 'Historical' is used in the sense of 'things in the past which have been established by objective scholarship'. Consequently the expression 'historical Jesus' comes to mean: 'What can be known of Jesus of Nazareth by means of the scientific methods of the historian'. Thus we have to do with a technical expression which must be recognized as such, and

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[13] See, for example, the views of the German pietist, Erwin Reisner, quoted by Gerhard Ebeling, 'The Significance of the Critical Historical Method for Church and Theology in Protestantism', Word and Faith, trans. J. W. Leitch (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963) pp.18-19

[14] SHJ: 1

> not automatically identified with the simple term 'Jesus'.[15]

When used like this, 'historical Jesus' is, in fact, a polemical expression with a history of its own; it points to the awakening of that highly problematical affair, 'the critical study of history', a concern which, begun in the latter half of the eighteenth century but developed most fully in the nineteenth, demands that we make

> a critical distinction between the tradition of history and the facts of history, between the picture that has been handed down of an event and the reality of the event itself. This attitude arose from the general revolution in the Western world's understanding of itself when it broke free of the authority of tradition and began to subject the tradition to examination in responsible historical research of its own.[16]

As these remarks suggest, the growth of 'critical history' is just one consequence of the new spirit of autonomy which pervaded all aspects of culture after the Enlightenment;[17] and, so far as the new historiography was concerned, the revolution which took place at this time began, R. G. Collingwood states, with the discovery that

> so far from relying on an authority other than himself, to whose statements his thought must conform, the historian is his own authority and his thought autonomous,

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[15] op.cit., pp.26-27. An enlarged version of Robinson's original work appears in German: Kerygma und historischer Jesus (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960); but the additional material is to be found in 'The Formal Structure of Jesus' Message', Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) pp.91-110

[16] Gerhard Ebeling, 'The Question of the Historical Jesus and the Problem of Christology', op.cit., p.290

[17] In his famous essay 'What is Enlightenment?', Immanuel Kant identified enlightenment with autonomy, and accordingly defined the Enlightenment movement in terms of man's freedom from the authority of tradition. See Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy, ed. Lewis W. Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949) pp.286-292.

> self-authorizing, possessed of a criterion to which his so-called authorities must conform and by reference to which they are criticized.[18]

The aim of the historian is, therefore, to apprehend the past as a thing in itself, or rather, in von Ranke's words, to discover 'how it actually happened' (wie es eigentlich gewesen ist), independently of what any or all of the sources might say.[19] Lord Acton tells how Leopold von Ranke began his career as one of the founding-fathers of the modern study of history through noticing that Walter Scott's picture of Lewis XI in Quentin Durward was incompatible with the original in the Memoires of Philippe de Commynes.[20] Such a contrast was typical: no matter how ancient or revered the source, its story could not be accepted until it had been validated by all the available methods of historical research.

When explained in the light of this background, it need hardly be said that the third definition of 'historical Jesus' is a distinctly modern interpretation, one which, by running counter to any argument that accepts tradition as a guarantee of truth, would have been unintelligible to earlier generations of Christian believers; it is the inevitable result of the growth of a more critical approach to the biblical material, and the product, consequently,

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[18] The Idea of History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946) p.236

[19] Ranke's celebrated phrase occurs in the Preface to his Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations (1824), which Fritz Stern has translated and included in his The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present (New York: Meridian Books, 1956) pp. 55-58. Stern points out, however, that Ranke 'meant this now famous phrase as a modest self-denial, feeling that history ought no longer to play the role of philosopher or judge; only later was it taken as a boast, as if history could in fact achieve this kind of exactitude' (Ibid., p.16).

[20] 'The Study of History', Lectures on Modern History (London: Macmillan, 1930) p.19. Quoted by D. E. Nineham, 'Some Reflections on the Present Position with regard to the Jesus of History', Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament (London: S.P.C.K. Theological Collections, No.6, 1965) p.2

of an increasing awareness that gospel statements can no longer be regarded as valid merely because they belong to what is assumed to be an authoritative source.

Defined in these terms, the phrase 'historical Jesus' is inextricably related to those techniques of historical research by which the historian establishes whether a particular account of Jesus is authentic or not; it is a shorthand term for 'Jesus as he comes to be known through historical enquiry', and is, for this reason, to be contrasted with any misrepresentations, distortions or fictitious accounts of him which may exist in the New Testament. If the use of a critical historical method allows the historian to see past reality clearly, he naturally assumes that the Jesus he speaks of is the 'historical' figure, namely, the true and real man, 'Jesus as he actually was'. In this way, the meaning of 'historical Jesus' in the third sense employed by Tillich coincides with the 'historian's Jesus'.

In his earliest published essay on the 'historical Jesus', Paul Tillich has, therefore, presented us with three possible ways of understanding that term. To rehearse them briefly again - the phrase may refer to all that occurred in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, even though such complete knowledge is impossible; to the picture given of him in the gospels, presuming that an actual correlation exists between the gospels and the events recorded by them; and to the scientific construction of the life of this man, based on the historian's own conclusions on the extent to which the gospels do in fact accurately describe objective events.

The problem of the historical Jesus arises with the third of these definitions, that is, it is an issue which emerges only

with the post-Enlightenment development of critical historical methods for assessing the reliability and authenticity of the biblical evidence about Jesus. Indeed, the problem itself has been aptly called 'a child of the Enlightenment',[21] since, as we have seen, prior to that period no-one appeared to doubt seriously that a reliable picture of Jesus could be drawn by a prudent and sympathetic harmonization or paraphrasing of the gospel data. But by contrast, in the final interpretation of 'historical Jesus', the emphatic application of the adjective 'historical' to the name of a certain figure of the past is required precisely in order to distinguish that actual historical person from any partially invented or even legendary reports of him which may be within the New Testament. This last use of 'historical Jesus' - unlike, for instance, the second definition of the phrase - contains, therefore, the important presumption that there may in fact be a discontinuity between the New Testament's witness to the history of Jesus and that actual history itself; it allows, in other words, for a distinction between Jesus himself and the statements made about him in the gospels, and, in so doing, militates against any dogmatic or metaphysical assumptions regarding either the self-evident validity of the biblical testimony or the immunity of Christian history from any kind of critical analysis. As Tillich remarks:

> "What about the historic truth of Christianity?"... This is a problem and a situation which has developed to its acuteness through the research for the 'life of Jesus' which has been going on for about 150 to 200 years. In the time before the start of this inquiry, the objective events and the Biblical reports were accepted as being identical. There was no problem about their identity. In reading the gospels,

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[21] Joachim Jeremias, 'The Present Position in the Controversy concerning the Problem of the Historical Jesus', The Expository Times, LXIX, No.11 (August 1958) p.333

> including John, everybody thought he was reading a historical report without any subjective interpretation. Therefore the problem of the 'historic' in our special sense did not emerge in the first 1500 years of Christian development; but then the criticism began and slowly continued in a very dramatic way.[22]

The problem here focuses upon the question of 'Jesus as he actually was', and is, for that reason, basically the question of Jesus himself. By attending to the scientific attempt to reconstruct what really happened in Jesus' life, the final meaning of 'historical Jesus' is concerned with what Emanuel Hirsch called the 'fateful question'[23] of the Christian community: Are the reports about Jesus as we find them in the New Testament, and particularly in the gospels, true or false? Do the gospel documents, for example, give a witness to the history of Jesus, his person, teaching and message, which is beyond question, or are they simply spurious? Is there a continuity between the Jesus confessed as the Christ in the New Testament and the Jesus of first century Palestine who preached and taught? What, in other words, is the connection between Jesus' <u>own</u> proclamation and the proclamation <u>of</u> Jesus? Does faith in Jesus as the Christ, as the decisive revealer of God's grace, originate with Jesus himself, or does it depend upon the faith of the earliest community of Christians? If the latter choice is the correct one, if faith in Jesus does rely upon the faith and testimony of the primitive Christian community, then the possibility cannot be excluded that Christianity itself began with a mere idea or myth. Again, in Tillich's words -

> Does not the acceptance of the historical method for dealing with the source documents of the Christian faith introduce a dangerous insecurity into the thought and

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[22] <u>SHJ</u>: 4

[23] <u>Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie im Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des europäischen Denken</u> (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1954), V, p.492

> life of the church and of every individual Christian? Could not historical research lead to a complete scepticism about the biblical records? Is it not imaginable that historical criticism could come to the judgment that the man Jesus of Nazareth never lived? Did not some scholars, though only a few and not very important ones, make just this statement? And even if such a statement can never be made with certainty, is it not destructive for the Christian faith if the non-existence of Jesus can somehow be made probable, no matter how low the degree of probability?24

All these various questions turn upon the problem of the historical Jesus, the issue raised by the emergence of critico-historical methods for dealing with the scriptural evidence about Jesus. If the gospel message proclaimed in the New Testament depends, as it manifestly does, on some reference to an historical person, then, according to the third meaning of 'historical Jesus', it entails claims which are capable of historical verification. In other words, if, as the biblical narratives stipulate, the life of Jesus, though endowed with a special spiritual character by disclosing the divine incursion into history, is nevertheless coincident with the lives of men, then the events of his life should be subject to the same type of critical analysis accorded the lives of other eminent figures of the past. But this in turn involves the theoretical risk that the biblical critic, employing, for example, historical methods upon the contentious question of the role played by the early church in determining the precise importance attached to Jesus in the gospels, may find the actual evidence for christological assertions either to be inconclusive, inadequate, or indeed, non-existent. In attempting, therefore, to establish by critical means whether or not the New Testament witness to Jesus is reliable, the historian presumes not only that a discontinuity may exist between the apostolic picture of Jesus the Christ and the earthly history of Jesus of Nazareth, but also implies thereby that the allegedly valid

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[24] *ST*, 2: 130

interpretations of Jesus' significance offered by the early church are in principle falsifiable by the techniques of historical science.

II. The development of the problem of the historical Jesus, and the growth of Tillich's sceptical position.

Some explanation must now be given of the development of the problem of the historical Jesus. This is particularly necessary at this stage in our discussion because, as we shall discover presently and as Tillich shall make clear, the actual progress of the effort to reconstruct a 'life of Jesus' by historical means, and, more especially, the criticisms levelled against this attempt in its later stages, largely account for the growth of Tillich's sceptical position, and thus determine the precise nature of the questions our author has to face when he himself comes to consider in detail the problem of the historical Jesus.

In his own history of nineteenth and twentieth century Protestant theology,[25] Tillich singles out several theologians whom he regards as the most important influences in the history of the Life-of-Jesus research. The list is not long: Reimarus, Strauss, Ritschl, Harnack, Schweitzer and Bultmann emerge as the chief if not sole protagonists. However, by recalling such names, Tillich does betray one tendency of his exposition which is common also in, and perhaps indebted to, Albert Schweitzer's classic history, The Quest of the Historical Jesus: that is, his excessive concentration on German theology - a general feature which, we might add, is hardly offset by Tillich's brief and passing reference to the existence of historical criticism in the English deistic movement.[26] And yet, though

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[25] Perspectives.

[26] Ibid., p.137

such a preoccupation may certainly be surprising in the work of a theologian so concerned with the varieties of cultural and religious expression, it becomes less so when regarded as the natural attraction to which a former student at German universities before the First World War would always be susceptible.

> If one studied theology in the first decade of this century at famous theological faculties within Germany, such as those of Tübingen, Halle, or Berlin, one identified the history of theology in the last four centuries with the history of German theology...It was our feeling that only in Germany was the problem of how to unite Christianity and the modern mind taken absolutely seriously.[27]

Before coming to the details of Tillich's narrative, one further characteristic should be mentioned. As his study proceeds, it becomes increasingly apparent that Tillich is frequently only secondarily concerned with the specific developments of historical criticism; often his chief intention is simply to delineate those changes in philosophical thinking which determine the attitude towards traditional and dogmatic accounts of Jesus. Thus, when concentrating upon the Hegelian presuppositions of Strauss' thought or the neo-Kantian premises of Ritschlian theology, his principal aim is to illuminate those prevailing philosophical outlooks by which the validity and importance of the biblical picture of Jesus are judged. In this respect, it is worth noting that Tillich, by opening his own account with the work of Reimarus, makes the problem of the historical Jesus arise in effect before the age of von Ranke had laid the foundations of modern historical enquiry. From this alone we may gather that for Tillich an awareness of a distinction between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history need not necessarily

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27, 'The Conquest of Intellectual Provincialism: Europe and America', TC: 160-161. This article appeared originally in The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America, ed. W. Rex Crawford (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953) pp.138-156

depend upon employing advanced techniques of weighing evidence and investigating the past; it may rather be, as in the case of Reimarus himself, a symptom of the emergence of historical consciousness after the Enlightenment, an expression, that is, of the new spirit of autonomy over against the acceptance of <u>historia sacra</u> as a self-evident and historically inviolable proposition.[28] Indeed, it is precisely this which gives 'historical Jesus' a double significance in Tillich's narrative: it is not only a term denoting critical investigation into the life of Jesus, but it is equally one which refers to those modulations of philosophical attitude which sharpen or hasten historical insight into the nature of the source documents of the Christian religion.

a) <u>The emergence of the problem: Hermann Samuel Reimarus and David Friedrich Strauss.</u>

Like Albert Schweitzer before him, Tillich therefore sets an exact date to the beginning of the attempt to extract the 'bare facts' about Jesus from the refractory elements of theological interpretation said to pervade the New Testament reports. It was, he says, Reimarus (1694-1768) who 'started this modern search for the historical Jesus'.[29] Between 1774 and 1778, he continues, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) 'published certain of Reimarus' fragments of research on the life of Jesus which he had conducted by applying radical historical criticism'.[30] The last and most important of these fragments, entitled 'The Aims of Jesus and His disciples', was written specifically to show that the earthly Jesus was in fact a very different figure from that portrayed either in the

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[28] See above pp.7-9

[29] <u>Perspectives</u>, p.71. <u>Von Reimarus zu Wrede</u> was the original German title of Schweitzer's <u>The Quest of the Historical Jesus</u>.

[30] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp.71-72

New Testament or in later Christian tradition.[31] 'I find', Reimarus says, 'great cause to separate completely what the apostles say in their own writings from that which Jesus himself actually said and taught, for the apostles were themselves teachers and consequently present their own views...'[32] Jesus' aim must be understood in the light of the Cry from the Cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These words, Reimarus maintains, cannot be interpreted otherwise than as an admission that Jesus' purpose had failed: that is, Jesus was a Jewish political Messiah who sought to establish an earthly kingdom and deliver the Jews from political oppression; but this was not achieved, as the Cry from the Cross plainly shows. However, the aim of Jesus' disciples was altogether different. Presented with this unexpected turn of events, with the sudden destruction of their dreams and the prospect of unemployment, they took matters into their own hands; they stole the body of Jesus, hid it, and then proclaimed the message of the Resurrection. By these fraudulent means, and by directing hopes towards a second coming of the Messiah, the disciples continued to gather adherents to their cause. The presentation of Jesus as the Christ was nothing less, then, than the creation of those whom Jesus had disappointed and almost ruined.

Reimarus' absolute distinction between the purpose of the apostles and what Jesus himself had considered his purpose to be had in Tillich's view a profound and lasting effect upon the subsequent history of the Life-of-Jesus research. By it, he writes, 'the whole intellectual climate was irreversibly changed. No theo-

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[31] 'Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger' (Brunswick, 1778). This seventh fragment, together with the sixth which deals with the Resurrection, has been translated into English. See Reimarus: Fragments, ed. C. H. Talbert, trans. R. S. Fraser (London: S.C.M. Press, 1971)

[32] Ibid., p.64

logian could thereafter approach the documents of the story of Jesus without being aware of the questions asked by Reimarus concerning the reliability of the Synoptic Gospels'.[33] As far as Lessing's contemporaries were concerned, however, this is an exaggeration. Though Tillich is certainly right to say that the publication of the fragments 'stirred up one of the greatest storms in the history of Protestant theology',[34] it was nevertheless a shortlived controversy, no doubt partly due to the widespread acceptance of the refutation of Reimarus' thesis by the famous Halle theologian John Solomon Semler (1725-1791).[35] To this we should add also that the studies on the 'life of Jesus' conducted by the Rationalists, studies which extended from the middle of the eighteenth century to about 1830 and which were broadly characterized by the attempt to explain miraculous events by natural causes, developed independently of the ideas promulgated by Reimarus. The early Rationalists, for example, men like Johann Hess (1741-1828) and Franz Reinhard (1753-1812), were not concerned, as their discussions on miracles might suggest, with Reimarus' questions about the validity of Christianity's origins; their only motivation in shifting the significance of miracles from their supernatural nature to their ethical teaching was the desire to bring Jesus nearer to their own time and within the boundaries of rational thought; and this they did by presenting him as the great teacher of virtue, the master of wisdom in whom religion and reason were harmoniously combined.[36] Even Heinrich Paulus (1761-1851), who repre-

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[33] Perspectives, p.72

[34] Ibid., p.71

[35] See Semler, Beantwortung der Fragmente eines Ungenannten insbesondern vom Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger (Halle, 1779)

[36] For a discussion of Hess and Reinhard, see A. Schweitzer, op.cit., pp.27-34

sents Rationalism in its most developed form, and who, with the single exception of the Virgin Birth, eliminated all traces of immediate divine agency from the gospel stories as either a misunderstanding of exegesis or as a misunderstanding of the reporters themselves, nevertheless firmly maintained the historical truth of the biblical narratives, and even arranged them in one consecutive chronological detail of facts.[37]

In fact, as Tillich indicates elsewhere,[38] it was over sixty years after Lessing's publication of Reimarus' work that the question which Reimarus had introduced, of whether the actual earthly Jesus and the Christ preached in the gospels were one and the same, was directly taken up again by another theologian, albeit in a modified form. It appears once more in Das Leben Jesu by David Strauss (1808-1874), published in 1835.[39] Throughout this epoch-making book there are innumerable references to Reimarus, although it was not until 1862 that Strauss properly acknowledged his debt with an account of Reimarus' significance which successfully established the latter's theological reputation in Germany.[40]

Strauss, Tillich says, 'drew out all the consequences from historical criticism when he wrote his Life of Jesus...It came like lightning and thunder...'[41] Certainly, in the history of the quest

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[37]See Paulus, Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums (Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1828)

[38]Perspectives, p.137

[39]Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet (Tübingen, 1835-6). E.T., The Life of Jesus Critically Examined, trans. from the 4th German edition of 1840 by George Eliot, with an introduction by O. Pfleiderer (2nd ed.; London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1906).

[40]See Strauss, Hermann Samuel Reimarus und seine Schutzschrift für die vernunftigen Verehrer Gottes (Bonn: Emil Strauss, 1862; 2nd ed., 1877). The same material is found in D. F. Strauss, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. E. Zeller (Bonn: Emil Strauss, 1877) 5: 229-409. A translation of sections 38-40 of this work is in Reimarus: Fragments, ed. C. H. Talbert, pp.44-57

[41]Perspectives, p.137

for the historical Jesus, his first Life is a turning-point - to such an extent, in fact, that some have suggested that the problem itself begins with its publication.[42] If Reimarus provides the simplest and most dramatic reasoning for the non-identification of the Christ of the gospels with the earthly Jesus, Strauss supplies the most comprehensive but no less pronounced argument for its adoption. For him, the connection between the biblical Christ and the actual man Jesus is destitute of all historical confirmation since the basic form of the New Testament narratives is not that of an historical report but that of a 'myth'. If, previous to Strauss, the application of myth had been confined to the stories of Jesus' entrance into and departure from the world, Strauss himself now included also all the stories prior to the baptism, the baptism itself, the mission of the seventy, the great majority of the miracles of 'healing' and 'nature', the transfiguration and the resurrection. None of these stories, he held, can properly be regarded as historical for in them all the mythopoeic process is at work; nor can they be considered as the reports of eyewitnesses since myths take a considerable time to develop. They arose, Strauss suggested, as messianic legends and myths that had become attached to Jesus because he was believed to be the Messiah of Jewish expectation.[43] His was not, therefore, a case of denying the existence

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[42] See Van A. Harvey, The Historian and the Believer (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967) p.9. Although Strauss' reputation undoubtedly rests on this first Life of 1835, a second appeared in 1864 in which he attempted to extract from the gospels a more positive picture of Jesus. See Das Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet (Leipzig, 1864). E.T., The Life of Jesus for the People (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879).

[43] 'In no case', Strauss writes, 'could it be easier for the person who first added any new feature to the description of Jesus, to believe himself its own genuineness, since his argument would be: Such and such things happened to the Messiah; Jesus was the Messiah; therefore such and such things happened to him' (Ibid., p.84). His treatment of the transfiguration is typical of this method (Ibid., p.545).

of Jesus but of saying that nothing historically certain could be known about him.[44] Dominated as they are by theological and apologetic interests, the biblical sources do not narrate what Jesus is remembered as having said and done, but what, according to faith, he must have said and done as the Christ.

As Tillich makes clear in his account, this conclusion, by which all efforts to construct a biographical picture of Jesus were denied, was not determined so much by an exact study of the relevant material, by questions of precedence or dependence among the gospels; it was based primarily upon an impression of the nature of the sources, formed through the adoption of certain speculative premises in the interpretation of myth, and according to which the problems of the historical trustworthiness of the records made little difference to the ideas embodied in them. As Tillich observes, Strauss was a convinced Hegelian, and thus subscribed to the 'view that even though the reports are not historically reliable, they do not for that reason lose their religious value. It does not matter if there is so much uncertainty regarding the biblical records of the life of Jesus, they may nevertheless have symbolic value'.[45] This conception of myth did not therefore renounce history; it was rather an interpretation of history in which the historical 'form' of an event was subordinate to the religious 'idea' expressed through it. Strauss accepted axiomatically that religious faith depends not upon facts but upon ideas, and that such ideas could be significant even though not mediated through visible phenomena. As Tillich continues, Strauss had already shown 'that the authors of the Gospels were not

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[44] In his own words, he sought 'especially to guard himself in those places where he declares he knows not what happened, from the imputation of asserting that he knows that nothing happened' (Ibid., p.92). We should add that he regarded the Messianic consciousness of Jesus as a fact (Ibid., p.284).

[45] Perspectives, p.137

those traditionally thought to be the authors. But more, he tried to show that the stories of the birth and resurrection are symbols expressing the eternal identity of what is essential in Jesus and God. This was felt as a tremendous shock'.[46] It appeared as if the object of faith had been completely changed. Instead of a sensible, empirical fact, the emphasis had been removed to a spiritual and divine idea, which had its confirmation no longer in history but in philosophy. The very reason, therefore, for which the Rationalists had researched into the 'life of Jesus' - to have access to and understanding of Jesus as a man - was here apparently neglected, while Strauss' actual indifference on this matter made it appear as if the man Jesus was in fact inaccessible and incomprehensible. In his attempt to separate fact from fiction, legend and myth in the New Testament, Strauss had thus arrived at a conclusion by which no continuity could be presumed between the biblical interpretation and its subject, between, that is, the biblical witness to 'Jesus as the Christ' and 'Jesus as he was in himself'. It is no exaggeration to say that this verdict, which again gave prominence to the question of the historical value and reliability of the New Testament reports of the Christ, ushered in a whole period of scepticism regarding the historicity of the gospel story. 'For decades later', Tillich says, 'scholars tried to refute Strauss' Life of Jesus, and, of course, there were many points in it that proved to be invalid in the light of more research. But the problem which Strauss raised to the fore in the life of the church could never be removed'.[47] Speaking of the post-Strauss period, our author later remarks that the crucial issue of this time 'was to gain certainty about the contents of the

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., pp.137-138

Christian message, after the critical movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had arisen. Everything fell under criticism. Everything was in doubt...So it was necessary to answer this fundamental question: Is there a way of re-establishing certainty in the religious realm?'[48]

b) The liberal Protestant solution: Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack.

As Tillich's previous remarks rightly suggest, Strauss' Life of Jesus of 1835 had a substantial effect upon the subsequent history of the Life-of-Jesus research, even though the immediate controversy which ensued after its publication was without significant results.[49] For if Strauss' own conclusions on the validity of the biblical sources had undermined any conservative defence of a literal interpretation of the texts and the Rationalistic explanation of miracles as misinterpreted facts, they simultaneously forced upon those who would reject them the necessity of ascertaining the historical value of each of the gospels. His opponents realized that, apart from a general distinction between the Fourth Gospel and the synoptics, Strauss himself had neither adhered to nor produced any precise theory on the nature and composition of the gospel material; they also recognized that no adequate refutation of his thesis would be forthcoming until this question - which Strauss had left unresolved - was finally answered; until, in fact, it had been decided through historical reasoning, and not philosophical argument, which of the gospels, or which strands of tradition in each of the gospels, did provide information sufficient for a 'life

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[48] Ibid., pp.209-210. For further details on Strauss' Life, see: Van A. Harvey, 'D. F. Strauss' Life of Jesus Revisited', Church History, XXX (1961) pp.191-211; Karl Barth, From Rousseau to Ritschl, trans. B. Cozens (London: S.C.M. Press, 1959) pp.362-389; and A. Schweitzer, op.cit., pp.68-120.

[49] Cf. Schweitzer, op.cit., pp.97-98

of Jesus'.

In defining more precisely the aims of this type of literary analysis, which were so largely designed to resolve the question of religious certainty posed by Strauss, Tillich concentrates upon the work of a band of scholars who, by virtue of a certain family resemblance in their critical and theological outlook, have come to be known as the 'liberal Protestant school'. It is true that on all the main historical issues dealt with by this movement - the priority of the synoptic or Johannine material, the questions of the content of Jesus' thought and his Messianic consciousness, the problems of eschatology and mythology - the solutions proposed were many and various; but, despite this, a basic pattern yet remains. Although still 'three-quarters sceptical'[50] in their attitude towards the gospel tradition, and while thus continuing to uphold the basic distinction between the earthly Jesus and all doctrinal presentations of him, the liberals nevertheless were convinced that assured results could be reached by the application of those methods through which, it was assumed, the past could be narrated 'as it actually was'. The hope, therefore, was to determine more exactly the primary and secondary elements within the New Testament sources, so that on the basis of these findings something historically positive could be said to support faith's affirmation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. This, in part, accounts for the liberals' dominant interest in the synoptic problem. As early as 1835 and 1838, Lachmann, Wilke and Weisse had pronounced their theories for the literary priority of Mark;[51] and increasingly, as the century advanced,

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[50] Ibid., p.307

[51] See Karl Lachmann, 'De ordine narrationum in evangeliis synopticiis', Theologische Studien und Kritiken, 8 (1835) pp.570-590; C. G. Wilke, Der Urevangelist (Dresden: G. Fleischer, 1838); and C. H. Weisse, Die evangelische Geschichte kritisch und philosophisch bearbeitet, 2Vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1838)

liberal scholars, like H. J. Holtzmann (1832-1910) and Bernhard Weiss (1827-1918),[52] depended upon the two-document hypothesis which this research proposed. This solution, put briefly, maintained that both Matthew and Luke had used Mark, that the non-Markan material employed by Matthew and Luke stemmed from a lost source, "Q", and that John, the most overtly 'theological' gospel, should only, if used at all, be utilized sparingly in any historical reconstructions. Thus, while "Q", composed of Jesus' sayings, came to be regarded as the primary source for Jesus' thought and intentions, the Markan outline (and not Matthew's, as previously believed) came to be considered the basis for a description or chronology of Jesus' life. Following this literary analysis, all that now remained, wrote Wilhelm Bousset in 1892, was to draw a 'life-like portrait which, with a few bold strokes, should bring out clearly the originality, the force, the personality of Jesus'.[53]

It was agreed, therefore, that the resolution of the question of certainty, which Strauss had raised to acuteness, depended solely upon an encounter with the historical Jesus Christ; that the gospel tradition about Jesus was more trustworthy than Strauss had supposed; and that, accordingly, the biblical sources, once stripped of their authors' theological interests and inten-

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[52]See Holtzmann, Die synoptischen Evangelien, ihr Ursprung und ihr geschichtlicher Charakter (Leipzig, 1863); and Weiss, Das Leben Jesu, 2 Vols. (Berlin, 1882), E.T., The Life of Christ, 3 Vols., trans. J. W. Hope (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883-4)

[53]Bousset, Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum. Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich (Göttingen, 1892). Quoted by Schweitzer, op.cit., p.242. The history of synoptic criticism during this period has been chronicled by W. R. Farmer in The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis (New York: Macmillan,1964).

tions, could be used to procure an historically secure foundation for present faith.

This being the case, it is all the more surprising to find that, despite his undoubted appreciation of the growth of refined historical techniques through the liberals' predominant interest in history, and though sensible of the significance of such methods in illuminating the nature of the biblical picture of Jesus, Tillich himself, in his own account of the liberal movement, makes little mention of their historical accomplishments. Instead his chief concern is to indicate the introduction of Kantianism into theology by the most influential liberals of this period, notably Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and his followers, and to show their theological reliance upon an understanding of Kant as the antimetaphysical moralist who rejected all transcendental reasoning about religion, and who, by limiting an awareness of the divine presence to the individual experience of the moral imperative and its unconditional character, deliberately restricted religion to what is capable of being practically experienced and translated into an ethical ideal of life. To the Ritschlian emphasis upon the importance of scientific historical criticism must therefore be added, Tillich tells us, their equal insistence that the 'divine appears through the moral imperative and nowhere else. The problem of truth was replaced by the moral answer. The function of Christianity is then to make morality possible'.[54]

If the first characteristic of Ritschlian theology is thus its use of objective historical scholarship, its second and no less distinctive feature is the disclaiming of all knowledge incomprehensible within a framework determined by the idea of the experience of the moral imperative as the one valid path to faith in God. This in

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[54] Perspectives, p.217

itself betrays a good deal of the liberal attitude towards the historical Jesus. The point which, for example, emerges immediately is that the 'metaphysical agnosticism' inherent within such a position necessitates a critical conception of the validity of the biblical presentation of Jesus. Ritschlian neo-Kantianism requires, in other words, the exclusion of all miraculous or supernatural imageries of Jesus - such as the dogmatic and mythical picture of him as the God-man - in favour of what came to be regarded as his purely human and historically perceptible attributes, namely, his teaching and religious consciousness. It was in accordance with this line of thought that Ritschl himself insisted upon an absolute disjunction between the authentic substance of Christianity and its alien accretions; between, in fact, the original message and function of Jesus and all those metaphysical considerations of his person which, like the Logos doctrine of the Alexandrian Platonists, tended to reduce faith to the level of assent to philosophical propositions.[55] His successor, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), the church historian of the Ritschlian school, was even more emphatic. For him, the whole development of the early church was a history of the gradual permeation of the Galilean gospel by Hellenistic ideas, the transformation of living faith into a creed to be believed.[56] Indeed, as Tillich points out, it was left to Harnack to give most precise ex-

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[55]See Ritschl, Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, 3 Vols. (Bonn, 1870-1874). E.T., The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, ed. and trans. from Vol.III of the 3rd German edition of 1888 by H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902) pp.193-194, 390-391, 437-439

[56]Hence Harnack's famous dictum, 'Dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel'. Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, 3 Vols. (Freiburg, 1886-1889). E.T., History of Dogma, trans. in 7 Vols. from the 3rd German edition of 1893 by Neil Buchanan et al. (2nd ed.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1894-1899) Vol.I, p.17. Cf. Perspectives, pp.219-222

pression to this basic liberal distinction between the gospel of Jesus and the gospel about Jesus. 'Not the Son', Harnack says, 'but only the Father belongs in the Gospel that Jesus preached'.[57] 'This', Tillich comments, 'is the classical formula of liberal theology: the gospel or message preached by Jesus contains nothing of the later message preached concerning Jesus'.[58] Following this view, the desired separation of the real from the legendary or mythologized Jesus could only be attained by eliminating from the apostolic picture all confessional statements made in the light of post-resurrection faith; and, to this extent, Tillich adds, the liberal 'return to Jesus' is also a movement 'away from Paul'. For Harnack's famous formula, by distinguishing between the original image of Jesus and all later interpretations of him, not only presupposes the reduction of the Gospel to the first three gospels, but requires also the exclusion from them of all Pauline influences - a requirement which, Tillich reminds us, reflects the earlier work of F. C. Baur (1792-1860).[59] He continues:

> Baur's theory of the conflict between Paul and Jesus is revived here in a more refined, modern way, namely, that Paul interpreted Jesus in a way which is very far removed from the actual historical Jesus...Only it is not Paul who is so much at the center of the discussion, but the early community, which existed before Paul. This early community, on the basis of the resurrection experience, produced the doctrines about Jesus, doctrines which cannot be found in the original message of Jesus himself. This original message is the message of the coming kingdom, and the kingdom is the state in which God and the individual member of the kingdom are in a relation of forgiveness, acceptance, and love.[60]

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[57] Das Wesen des Christentums (Leipzig, 1900). E.T., What is Christianity? trans. T. B. Saunders (London: Williams and Norgate, 1901) p.19

[58] Perspectives, p.223

[59] See Baur, Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien (Tübingen, 1847); and Perspectives, pp.138-139

[60] Perspectives, p.223

Liberal neo-Kantian convictions in religion thus augment the already prevailing scientific interest in the historical Jesus by restricting all meaningful statements made about him to those drawn from the historically perceptible existence and teachings of Jesus within the New Testament. This same tendency is further illustrated - though admittedly in a less obvious and more indirect way - when Tillich turns to analyze the role of the categorical imperative in Ritschlian theology.

> According to the Ritschlians, Kant has left but one window out of our finitude, and this is the moral imperative. The real basis of certainty is the moral point of view. We are certain of ourselves as moral personalities. This is not the experience of something mystical outside of ourselves; this is the immediate personal experience, or more exactly, the experience of being a person as such. Religion is then that which makes us able to actualize ourselves as moral persons. Religion is a supporting power of the ethical. These defenders of Christianity tried to save Christianity with the help of the moral principle, but in doing so they aroused the wrath of all those for whom the mystical element in religion is decisive. So here we have a religion argued for on the basis of the ethical experience of the personality. Religion is the help toward moral self-realization.[61]

Thus conceived, man, realizing that he is subject to an unconditioned categorical imperative, perceives within himself an absolute value, and thereby a standard by which he may judge the worth of the object of his concern as it aids or impedes his moral self-realization. The function of religion, as Tillich has mentioned elsewhere,[62] is, then, to encourage the moral life of each individual, while religious value is assigned to those objects which, coinciding with our inner moral convictions, practically further the moral unification of the human race in the universal-ethical Kingdom of God.

On the basis of this appreciation of Christianity, it follows that the assertion of Jesus' uniqueness stems from an ethical judgment on his practical influence in serving as the pre-eminent 'exemplar' or

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[61] Ibid., pp.216-217

[62] See above p.25

'pattern' for our salvation; it arises from an awareness of the fact that through him, as the 'founder' of the perfectly spiritual and ethical religion, the idea of the Kingdom first received historical shape. The proof of Jesus' divinity, on this view, does not depend upon theoretical argument or mystical intuition into the nature of his person, but upon the admission that, as the archetypal image of the new humanity, his own personal purpose involved the same content as is contained in the innermost purpose of God himself, namely, the establishment of his Kingdom. Just, therefore, as knowledge of Jesus in himself is confined to what Jesus is for us, so his ultimate religious significance is known only by establishing his normative ethical value for our moral development towards the Kingdom of God.[63]

From the standpoint of this thesis, the absolute value that the believer ascribes to Jesus emanates neither from an awareness of certain transcendental attributes peculiar to him, nor, indeed, from a purely critical inspection of the details of the narratives. Even though research itself may militate against all metaphysical speculations about him, it is also part of the Ritschlian understanding of the imperative that the insight of faith toward Jesus, being dependent upon the practical postulates of the individual moral consciousness, is more than historical apprehension. This stipulation, however, while clearly requiring that the relation of

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[63] So Ritschl writes: 'This ideal, the true development of the spiritual personality, cannot be rightly or fully conceived apart from contemplation of him who is the prototype of man's vocation. Thus what in the historically complete figure of Christ we recognise to be the real worth of his existence, gains for ourselves, through the uniqueness of the phenomenon and its normative bearing upon our own religious and ethical destiny, the worth of an abiding rule, since we at the same time discover that only through the impulse and direction we receive from him, is it possible for us to enter into his relation to God and to the world' (op.cit., p.387). This same passage is quoted in B. M. G. Reardon's anthology, Liberal Protestantism (London: A. & C. Black, 1968) p.110.

the knowing subject to the known object cannot be defined simply within scientific limits,[64] does not, for that reason, depart from the liberals' emphasis upon the historical Jesus, or, as Tillich puts it, from their concern that 'the whole religious message, the message of Jesus...be described in historical terms'.[65] For if, subjectively, the revelatory character of Jesus' life is recognized as revelation through the impression of his moral influence upon us, nevertheless every form of influence exerted by him must, if it is to have objective worth, find its criterion in those historical traits of his temporal existence made available to the believer by critical study.

There are, so Tillich concludes, two sides to Ritschlian theology: 'objective, scientific research and the moral principle or experience of the ethical personality';[66] and both sides determine that the guarantee of religious certainty in the divinity of Jesus arises directly from an ethical judgment of value based on historical perception. Ritschlian thought thus reaffirms the fundamental liberal insistence that Christianity is a positive, historical faith, relying for its quality and character upon our apprehension of the earthly figure in whom it originated. The certainty of faith, even under the terms of the Ritschlian conception of the imperative, still rests upon the objective reality of

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[64]This, in part, explains why it is a dangerous over-simplification to define the liberal attitude towards the historical Jesus only in terms of its so-called 'positivistic historiography'. Indeed, the very classification 'positivistic' has been questioned by D. E. H. Whiteley, Journal of Theological Studies, XIII, No.2 (October 1962) p.392. Cf. T. A. Roberts, 'Gospel Historicity: Some Philosophical Observations', Religious Studies, I, No.1 (April 1966) pp.185-202.

[65]Perspectives, p.218

[66]Ibid., p.217

Jesus' life, preserved and accessible within the New Testament, and from which we may gather the ethico-religious significance of Jesus' actual existence.

c) The growth of radical historical criticism: Albert Schweitzer and Rudolf Bultmann.

This central appeal of the liberals to the 'Jesus of history', with their corresponding emphasis upon critical procedure, plays a quite decisive role in the formation of Tillich's own thinking on the problem of the historical Jesus. It is perhaps not inopportune to say here that the eventual collapse of the liberal attempt to discover even a minimum of reliable facts about Jesus represents for our author the end of the 'quest' as such, and thereby demonstrates finally the total inadequacy of all efforts to maintain the centrality of Jesus of Nazareth for faith in the name of historical science - a verdict which, we should add, appears to confirm and reinstate Strauss' historical scepticism.

Undoubtedly, Tillich's most important single conclusion on the failure of the liberal enterprise is that it was the consequence not of any post-Ritschlian resistance to historical criticism - he mentions, for example, the 'biblicistic' reaction of Adolf Schlatter, Hermann Cremer, and his own teachers, Wilhelm Lütgert and Martin Kähler[67] - but that it was the result, ironically enough, of the radical development of historical methods themselves.

> The increase of radicalism in historical criticism undercut the presuppositions of Harnack and the whole liberal theology. The presupposition of Harnack's What is Christianity? was that one can arrive at a fairly accurate picture of the empirical man, Jesus of Nazareth, guaranteed by the methods of historical science. One can arrive,

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[67] Ibid., pp.224-225

> that is, at a definition of original Christianity by deleting all the additions of the early congregations and of Paul and John. But it turned out that this was not possible.[68]

Although, as Tillich remarks, 'radical historical criticism began first with the Old Testament'[69] - he cites in particular the work of Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) and the Religionsgeschichtlicheschule[70] - it was nevertheless, he continues, within the area of New Testament study that this radical approach had its most acute impact; and here too, Tillich is equally precise in naming Schweitzer and Bultmann as the principal agents for its growth in this field.

He begins with Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). Tillich indicates that the radical character of his own standpoint on the problem of the historical Jesus has largely been determined by what Günther Bornkamm has called elsewhere the 'funeral oration' pronounced on the so-called 'Lives of Jesus' by Schweitzer in his famous book, The Quest of the Historical Jesus.[71] Thus Tillich, in essential agreement with Schweitzer, writes on the 'quest':

> The attempt was courageous, noble and extremely significant in many respects. Its theological consequences are numerous and rather important. But, seen in the light of its basic intention, the attempt of historical criticism to find the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth was a failure. The historical Jesus, namely, the Jesus behind the symbols of

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[68] Ibid., pp.225-226

[69] Ibid., p.226

[70] IH: 33.

[71] See Bornkamm, op.cit., p.13. In Perspectives, referring to the biblicism of the Lütgert type, Tillich adds: 'I myself experienced a real crisis in my development after I left Halle where this kind of biblicism was firmly established, and began independently to study the history of biblical criticism. It was especially in studying Albert Schweitzer's history of research into the life of Jesus that I became convinced of the inadequacy of the kind of biblicism in which the historical questions are not taken seriously' (Ibid., p.225).

> his reception as the Christ, not only did not appear but receded farther and farther with every new step. The history of the attempts to write a 'life of Jesus', elaborated by Albert Schweitzer in his early work, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, is still valid.[72]

Schweitzer, in his history of the attempts between 1778 and 1901 to reach what Jesus had actually said and done, had castigated particularly those liberal Protestant scholars who had maintained, like Harnack, that access to the historical Jesus could be reached by purifying the biblical narratives of their eschatological and apocalyptic elements. His own position, by contrast, was that the idea of the Kingdom of God in Ritschlian thought and in Jesus' preaching were two disparate things, the latter having to do not with an ethical message immediately applicable to the present age but with the very thing that the liberals wished to eliminate, namely, with the alien thought-world of Jewish eschatology.[73] Schweitzer went still further: not only is eschatology the primary source for an understanding of the Kingdom in Jesus' teaching, but 'thorough-going eschatology' (konsequente Eschatologie) the key to any appreciation of his life as a whole. Tillich summarizes this view as follows:

> Jesus considered himself as an eschatological, apocalyptic figure, identified himself with the Son of Man in the sense of Daniel. Here the Son of Man is an emissary of God standing before the divine throne, then leaving it to descend into the evils of this eon and to bring in a new age. Then Schweitzer goes on to describe the catastrophe when Jesus cried out from the cross, feeling that God had abandoned him. Jesus had expected that God in his power

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[72] ST, 2: 117-118

[73] This argument had already been advanced, though independently of Schweitzer, by Ritschl's son-in-law, Johannes Weiss (1827-1918). See Weiss, Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes (Göttingen, 1892); E.T., Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, ed. and trans. by R. H. Hiers and D. L. Holland, with a Foreword by Rudolf Bultmann (London: S.C.M. Press, 1971).

> would intervene to save him and the world, but to no avail.74

Thus Jesus is the product of Jewish apocalypticism, a visionary whose whole existence can be understood only within the context of the eschatological assumptions of his age and his own mistaken proclamation of the imminent end of the world. The dogmatic interpretation of Jesus, from which the liberals had so strenuously sought to release themselves, was not therefore simply a later addition, as they had believed, for Jesus himself had conceived his life in terms of an eschatological dogmatic. Accordingly, the Ritschlians' presentation of him as the teacher and exemplar of a universal ethic had not been achieved by an objective evaluation of the biblical data; it had been done by imputing to him their own individualistic ideals. The Jesus who emerged, in other words, was a modernization, reflecting the respective rationalist, socialist, or romantic presuppositions of each historian. The multiplicity and variety of these pictures of Jesus only confirmed Schweitzer in his suspicion that no single portrait was accurate.

> There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus. The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give this work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is the figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.75

In this way, Schweitzer's researches lent support to the view that the actual historical Jesus whom the liberals had sought was inaccessible, he being 'to our time a stranger and an enigma'.[76] Even, therefore, the most ancient and reputedly accurate sources are im-

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[74] Perspectives, p.226

[75] op.cit., p.396

[76] Ibid., p.397

pregnated with the religious themes and ideas of their own, and to us foreign, environment. Consequently, the records about Jesus are not historical accounts of his life so much as testimonials to what the earliest Christians thought about him.

Tillich admits that even if we reject Schweitzer's own apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus, we must confess that Schweitzer's history shows that 'we are in a position where we cannot know very much about the historical Jesus';[77] and though Tillich recognizes that the constructive-conjectural attempt of historical research to discover the facts of Jesus behind the gospel records was motivated by religious as well as scientific desires, he, like Schweitzer before him, attacks the intrusion of the historian's own 'religious or philosophical convictions or prejudices'[78] in his search for the empirical truth about Jesus.

> There is only one methodological procedure, and that is to look at the subject matter and not at one's own looking at the subject matter. Actually, such looking is determined by many psychological, sociological, and historical factors. These aspects must be neglected intentionally by everyone who approaches a fact objectively.[79]

In view of this failure of the 'quest' of the historical Jesus, Tillich tells us that some later liberal theologians, like Wilhelm Herrmann, 'tried to penetrate into the inner life of Jesus, into his relation to God, man and himself'.[80] But this position is rejected, for such conclusions can only be drawn from expressions

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[77] *Perspectives*, p.227

[78] *ST*, 2: 120

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] *ST*, 2: 143. See W. Herrmann, *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott* (Stuttgart, 1903). E.T., *The Communion of the Christian with God*, trans. J. Sandys Stanyon (2nd ed.; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906) p.235. Cf. Daniel L. Deegan, 'The Theology of Wilhelm Herrmann: A Reassessment', *The Journal of Religion*, XLV, No.2 (April 1965) pp.87-99

of Jesus' personality which are 'always questionable'.[81] Similarly, Tillich repudiates all efforts to reduce the historical Jesus to a picture of 'essentials', to develop a Gestalt 'while leaving the particulars open to doubt...'

> But this is not a way out. Historical research cannot paint an essential picture after all the particular traits have been eliminated because they are questionable. It remains dependent on the particulars.[82]

This methodological impasse, Tillich continues, has led others to confine themselves only to the 'words of Jesus'. Since few of these words refer directly to Jesus, they can be separated from any biographical context. 'Therefore, their meaning is independent of the fact that he may or may not have said them. On that basis the insoluble biographical problem has no bearing on the truth of the words rightly or wrongly recorded as the words of Jesus'.[83] Tillich goes on to say that usually these 'words of Jesus' are treated either 'as general rules of human behaviour' (thereby being refined interpretations of natural law or insights into man's nature), or they are made 'concrete demands'.[84] However, for Tillich the first attempt 'reduces Jesus to the level of the Old Testament and implicitly denies his claim to have overcome the Old Testament context',[85] whereas the second, closely associated with Bultmann's work,[86] though more profound than the first through

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[81] ST, 2: 143

[82] Ibid., p.119

[83] Ibid., p.121

[84] Ibid., p.122

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid. Tillich's criticism of Bultmann on this point will be discussed at length in Ch.III.

emphasizing the message that the Kingdom of God is 'at hand' (and so demanding decision for or against the Kingdom), nevertheless does not indicate how the requirement of deciding for the Kingdom can be fulfilled.

Although Tillich's criticisms of these theological attempts from Herrmann to Bultmann to overcome the dangers attendant upon the construction of a 'Life of Jesus' are important addenda for an overall picture of Tillich's position, it is still evident that his own radical assessment of the relevance of biblical research to faith stems principally from his reaction to liberal Protestant theology. As he explains, his viewpoint 'pertains only to liberal dogmatics, not to the historical accomplishments of the liberal theologians'.[87] Speaking of liberal criticism of the gospels, he writes:

> This is the greatness and at the same time the shortcoming of liberal theology. It is the greatness insofar as it dares to apply the historical method to the biblical literature; it is the shortcoming insofar as it tries to base faith on the results of historical research. That was what they tried to do. There is thus a positive and a negative side in this school.[88]

This is extremely important. It makes quite clear that the brunt of Tillich's criticism is not directed against historical methodology as such but rather at the incursion of the historian's own philosophical or historical prejudices when trying to discover the facts about Jesus. In many ways, our author's protest is against the lack, not the presence, of an objective method. Too often, the composers of the liberal 'lives of Jesus' were motivated by the subjective desire to see Jesus as the epitome of Victorian

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[87] IH: 33

[88] Perspectives, p.216

manners, eminently respectable and unmysterious, and, in consequence, totally inadequate to account for the faith in Christ.[89]

Tillich's attitude to liberal Protestantism can be seen best, however, by noting the impact upon him of the work of Rudolf Bultmann (b.1884), the second theologian to whom, after Schweitzer, he acknowledges a specific debt. In this respect, Tillich cites in particular Bultmann's Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition[90] as being determinative in the formation of his insights into the character of the biblical narratives.[91]

It may be suggested that Bultmann, perhaps more than anyone, demonstrated that it was the actual historical attainments of the liberal movement which validated Tillich's negative opinion of liberal dogmatics; for he indicated how the liberal evaluation of Jesus 'as he actually was' allowed the methodological procedures of historical analysis to judge dogmatic presuppositions. In a classic way, Bultmann's famous work on the synoptic tradition illustrated how the liberal picture of Jesus was superceded within liberalism itself. Since this book appeared before Bultmann's acquaintance with either 'dialectical' theology or Martin Heidegger, it is generally

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[89]Strauss' second Life of Jesus of 1864 is an example of this tendency. 'Here', Tillich says, 'he developed the typical world view of the victorious bourgeoisie, not of the great aggressive bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century, but of the positivistic materialistic bourgeoisie which had become victorious in the nineteenth century, and which he represented. This is characterized by a calculating attitude toward the world, a basic materialistic interpretation of reality, and moral rules derived from the bourgeois conventions...This had a lot to do with Gospel criticism, for from his bourgeois point of view Strauss eliminated the in-breaking of the divine into the human, of the infinite into the finite. The infinite was adapted to the finite. The image of Christ which Strauss and many later biographers produced was that of a domesticated divinity, domesticated for the sake of the untroubled life of the bourgeois society in calculating and controlling the finite reality' (Ibid., p.138).

[90](Göttingen, 1921). E.T., The History of the Synoptic Tradition, trans. John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963)

[91]IH: 33

recognized as emanating from within the liberal tradition. 'Rightly so', comments Walter Schmithals, 'in so far as Bultmann makes a historical critical investigation of the Jesus tradition without any dogmatic prejudices. Wrongly so, in that this book destroys any possibility of writing a "Life of Jesus", the beginning and the end of liberal theology'.[92]

It is the second aspect of Bultmann's work, mentioned by Schmithals, that clearly had the most immediate effect upon Tillich, for it dismissed finally the possibility of getting back to the historical Jesus, a fact which is indicated by the character of the biblical sources itself. Liberal theology had, as we have seen, increasingly structured its account of Jesus' personality upon St. Mark's Gospel, thought to be both the oldest of the gospels and historically reliable. Bultmann, using the 'form-critical' method,[93] started with the supposition that the synoptic gospels are all collections of small individual units, originally transmitted orally. The significance of this approach is not, as Bultmann states explicitly, that it identifies 'the individual units of the tradition according to their characteristics - aesthetic or otherwise', but that it recognizes that

> the literature in which the life of a given community, and therefore also the primitive Christian community, has taken shape, arises from quite definite needs and from expressions of the life of this community. The result is a quite

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[92] An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, trans. J. Bowden (London: S.C.M. Press, 1968) p.198

[93] The inaugurators of this method within New Testament studies are generally considered to be Martin Dibelius and K. L. Schmidt, the former with Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums (Tübingen, 1919), the latter with Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu (Berlin, 1919).

definite style and quite specific forms and categories.[94]

The discovery of the originally individual and pericopic composition of the synoptic gospels terminated the liberal 'Life of Jesus' movement. To admit that the synoptic account was constructed of individual traditions, inserted, moreover, into a gospel framework designed for that purpose at a later stage, simultaneously destroyed the liberal theological basis of the Markan framework, which was thought to belong not simply to the earliest stage of the tradition, but to the 'literary' tradition coming from the evangelist himself. No longer could the personality of Jesus be exposed within a context which now could lay no claim to ultimate historical reliability. The gospels are not to be read therefore as clear biographical outlines since behind the framework of each gospel lies the collective consciousness of the primitive Christian community, determined as it was by the practices, concerns and apologetic needs entailed in that community's situation. St. Mark's Gospel, far from being an historical document, is in fact Gemeindetheologie. In this way, Bultmann was radically critical of the old liberal quest for the historical Jesus.

> Insofar as the old quest sought...to reconstruct a picture of the life and personality of the historical Jesus, and in that way to provide historical legitimation for the existential decision of faith, Bultmann completely rejects that quest. In his view, such an effort is historically impossible and theologically illegitimate. The knowledge available to us through responsible critical analysis of the Synoptic Gospels simply is insufficient for the reconstruction of a picture of Jesus' character and inner development.[95]

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[94] Bultmann, op.cit., p.4

[95] Schubert M. Ogden, 'Bultmann and the "New Quest"', The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No.3 (July 1962) p.210. Cf. G. E. Ladd, 'The Role of Jesus in Bultmann's Theology', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVIII, No.1 (March 1965) pp.57-68

This conclusion is Tillich's also. Bultmann's stress on 'interpretative' character of the biblical narratives could only lead Tillich to assert that if Jesus said 'I am the truth', this truth may indeed be indistinguishable apart from the historical event of Jesus, but it could not be discovered by a methodological approach. Biblical criticism as exemplified by Bultmann had shown above all the impossibility of moving out of one's concrete historical situation into the situation in which one can meet the 'historical Jesus'. 'There is no way of meeting the "historical Jesus" (i.e., the product of historical criticism) because the Jesus of whom we have reports was from the very beginning the "Christ of faith".[96]

> For Tillich there is no possibility of getting behind the kerygmatic Jesus Christ, that is, the Jesus as he was received and interpreted and preached by the believing disciples as the Christ of God. It is inaccurate to speak of the 'historical Jesus' if we mean by that term the life of a person who stands behind the Gospels and can be extracted from those witnesses by historical research.[97]

This is a just appraisal of Tillich's position. The failure of the liberal 'lives of Jesus' and the abandonment of the quest of the historical Jesus - these are the legacies that Tillich inherited; and they determine his own negative assessment of the attempt made by historical research to find the Jesus of history. Despite the various criticisms levelled against Schweitzer and Bultmann, the methodological situation which they outlined has not changed. The result of the critical biblical approach is, Tillich

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[96] 'Realism and Faith', PE: 82. This article appeared originally in the volume of Tillich's collected writings, Religiöse Verwicklichung (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1929).

[97] James C. Livingston, 'Tillich's Christology and Historical Research', Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1966) p.43. Reprinted from Religion in Life (Winter 1966)

concludes,

> not a picture of the so-called historical Jesus but the insight that there is no picture behind the biblical one which could be made scientifically probable.98

III. Tillich's re-statement of the problem; and his second semantic analysis of the term 'historical Jesus'.

This brief history of the development of the problem of the historical Jesus has been presented in order to show that the application of historical methods to the biblical sources resulted in Tillich's view that it is impossible to recover anything historically certain about Jesus of Nazareth. The processes of historical science, once carried to their logical conclusion by Bultmann and his fellow form-critics, pronounced, as it were, their own bankruptcy by revealing that the gospels contain the early church's presentation of Jesus, not the historical Jesus. Tillich's inevitable reaction to the 'quest' undertaken by the liberals - a quest which had produced such a supply of 'lives' and biographies - was, as we have seen, an almost total scepticism as to the possibility of ever attaining an objective chronicle of Jesus' earthly existence. He puts his position in this way:

> Albert Schweitzer at the end of his dramatic book, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, put the alternative which he considered to be the result of Biblical criticism in the following words: 'Either consistent scepticism or consistent eschatology'. This meant that the mind of Jesus is either completely unknown to us or completely strange to us. No Christian theology can be built on either side of this alternative. And Schweitzer, whom many consider the greatest Christian personality of our time, did not even make an attempt.99

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98 ST, 2: 118

99 'The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development', Theology Today, VI, No.3 (October 1949) p.301

Tillich, for his part, does not hesitate to choose between Schweitzer's alternatives. The option

> that Schweitzer contrasted with his own is that of radical historical skepticism, represented by Wilhelm Wrede and later by Bultmann himself. Skepticism here does not mean doubt about God, the world, and man, but doubt about the possibility of reaching the historical Jesus by our historical methods. My own heritage has been this school of historical skepticism.[100]

We have suggested before that Tillich's adherence to this radical tradition - despite the fact that the tradition itself can be traced back through Bultmann to Strauss and Reimarus - is largely the result of the unsuccessful search for the 'Jesus of history' made by liberal theologians.[101] Here, two features of Tillich's assessment of this abortive attempt need to be re-emphasized.

First, he acknowledged that the liberal quest had been an historical failure because, as Bultmann had demonstrated convincingly, the kerygmatic nature of the gospels did not permit any separation between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma. Since the material of the gospels does not provide an historian's picture of Jesus but rather an account determined by faith's recognition of Jesus as God's saving revelation in the world, it was illicit to make the liberal distinction between the man Jesus and Jesus the Christ in order to confine attention to the allegedly recoverable 'historical Jesus'.

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[100] Perspectives, pp.226-227 (my emphasis). This is Tillich's only reference to Wrede (1859-1906). In his work Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien (Göttingen, 1901), Wrede had delivered two decisive blows against the liberal portrait of the historical Jesus: first, in his argument that the structure of Mark was dogmatically determined by a faith in Jesus' 'messianic secret'; and second, in his contention that critical study into the life of Jesus suffers from psychological conjecture.

[101] See above p.31

Second, Tillich accepted that the liberal enterprise had been a theological failure in that it had made the object of faith not God's revelation in Jesus Christ but rather a scientific reconstruction of the life of the man Jesus. The result, as Schweitzer in particular had shown, was the production of a figure shorn of its mythological and miraculous elements and animated only by the injection of the neo-humanistic presuppositions of liberal historians into that figure's portrayal. For this reason, Tillich rejected liberal theology whereby Christ was drawn 'into the realm of universal or highest humanity', and through which he became the pre-eminent exemplar of man's possibilities, 'a wave (the largest perhaps) in the stream of time, subjected to its arbitrariness and ambiguity'.[102] In the erection of biblical exegesis as the norm of faith, the liberals had replaced Christ crucified by the historian's Jesus.

Paul Tillich saw, therefore, in the collapse of the old liberal quest an opportunity once more to clarify the relationship between critical historical methods and the confession that Jesus is the Christ in a way that was theologically and historically appreciative, as the liberals had not been, of the specific character of the biblical accounts about Jesus: theologically conscious that the scientific approach could not extract from the gospel narratives a biographical picture of Jesus such as would substantiate faith and christological doctrine; and historically aware that the gospels are the devotional literature of the primitive church, concerned with the kerygmatic presentation of Jesus as the decisive revealer of God's salvation, and not the primary source-books for a history of 'Jesus as he actually was'.

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[102] IH: 261

At this juncture, it is worth noticing immediately that this determination to be both theologically and historically mindful of the particular nature of the biblical stories has been criticized, from the very beginning, for containing a basic confusion. How, it is asked, can the revelation of God through Jesus of Nazareth be presumed theologically imperative if, simultaneously, historical scrutiny of the constituent features of this person's existence is deemed to be either impossible or, in extreme cases, of no consequence? So, for instance, D. M. Baillie argued that Tillich, along with his so-called dialectical or neo-orthodox contemporaries, had over-reacted against the liberal emphasis upon an obtainable objective history of Jesus. 'There is no stability', he writes, 'in a position which accepts to the full the humanity of Christ but has no interest in its actual concrete manifestation and doubts whether it can be recaptured at all; which insists on the "once-for-allness" of this divine incursion into history, but renounces all desire or claim to know what it was really like'.[103]

Baillie urged, then, a return to the Jesus of history since, he maintained, an appreciation of Jesus himself is requisite to the Christian conviction that through his earthly person God was manifest. But Baillie's reasoning, Van Harvey tells us, was so balanced and sane

> that scarcely anyone pointed out that while he had argued that knowledge about Jesus was a necessity, it still remained to be established whether or not such knowledge was a possibility. Since there is no logical connection between theological necessity and historical possibility, the problem of the fragmentary nature of the sources remained.[104]

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[103] *God was in Christ* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948) p.28

[104] *op.cit.*, pp.12-13. The same point is made about Baillie by T. A. Roberts, *History and Christian Apologetic* (London: S.P.C.K., 1960) p.153

Tillich, it is true, does agree that the historian cannot discover the 'real Jesus' behind the kerygmatic 'Jesus Christ'. That 'there is no picture behind the biblical one which could be made scientifically probable'[105] is the presupposition of his whole discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus, formed by his early acquaintance with German biblical criticism. But if, for example, this assessment of the historical status of the biblical writings dismisses as a priori impossible any effort to arrive at a primitive kernel of St. Mark's Gospel, it does not discount, as Baillie would have us suppose, the material importance of Jesus' earthly existence. Tillich, no less than his critic, appreciates that to have no interest whatsoever in the Jesus of history is to surrender the reality of the Incarnation which 'occurs only once in time and space'.[106] He wishes, therefore, to assert the concrete significance of Jesus of Nazareth for faith and doctrine, but in a way that does not detract from the parallel assertion he would wish to make, namely that, given the 'fragmentary nature' of the sources, an objective history of Jesus' life is unobtainable. It is this important proviso - the inability to reach the historical Jesus by scientific means - which, writes Tillich, forms

> the background for my own attempt to answer the systematic question how we can say that Jesus is the Christ if historical research can never reach a sure image of the historical Jesus. The second volume of my Systematic Theology is an attempt to draw out the consequences for systematic theology created by this skeptical attitude to the New Testament generally and to the historical Jesus in particular.[107]

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[105] ST, 2: 118

[106] RDI: 145

[107] Perspectives, p.227

Thus far from ignoring, or failing to see, the contradiction of which he and his colleagues are accused, Tillich is in fact concerned with its resolution. He endeavours simultaneously, first, to preserve the kerygmatic proclamation that in Jesus of Nazareth God acted decisively, and second, to maintain an essential methodological scepticism as to the possibility of ever reaching the actual 'personality' or 'life' of Jesus. In conformity with this dual intention, Tillich does not, and indeed cannot, approach the problem of the historical Jesus in terms of the degree to which historical work into the life and teaching of Jesus can corroborate the messianic identification which is attached to his ministry. The question, as Tillich re-states it, rather is: How can this methodological scepticism, which is an essential element in all investigations into the facts about Jesus, be united with the assertion of faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ? This question does not annul the importance of the Jesus of history; but it does demand that the connection between Jesus and the statements faith makes concerning his person cannot be substantiated by historical research. As Tillich repeatedly emphasizes, the New Testament narratives cannot be regarded as sources for a 'life of Jesus' since the tradition itself was formed for quite different missionary and homiletic purposes.

Significantly, Tillich's sharp differentiation between the procedures of historical science and the historical assertions contained in Christian belief is supported by his second analysis of the term 'historical Jesus'. He notes that much of the confusion surrounding the quest for the Jesus of history would have been dispelled if more care had been taken over the precise meaning of the expression; and indeed, perhaps the most important conclusion that Tillich comes to from his survey of the ill-fated search for 'Jesus as he actually

was' is that the failure of this attempt would have been more easily recognized if it had not been 'for the semantic confusion about the meaning of the term "historical Jesus"'.[108] Here, however, instead of three possible definitions, Tillich restricts himself to two. First, 'historical Jesus' denotes the results of the historian's research into the character and life of him who stands behind the gospel reports; and second, 'historical Jesus' indicates that there is a factual element within, what Tillich calls, the event 'Jesus as the Christ'.[109] Thus, in this later semantic analysis, only two meanings are offered. The phrase can refer either to the historical evidence about Jesus which is the outcome of critico-historical research, or to the factual character of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'.

Tillich's notion of this event 'Jesus as the Christ', upon which the second meaning depends, occupies a central and quite determinative place in his theology, it being nothing less than his view of the event upon which the Christian faith is based.

> Christianity is what it is through the affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth, who has been called "the Christ", is actually the Christ, namely he who brings the new state of things, the New Being. Wherever the assertion that Jesus is the Christ is maintained, there is the Christian message; wherever this assertion is denied, the Christian message is not affirmed. Christianity was born, not with the birth of the man who is called "Jesus", but in the moment in which one of his followers was driven to say to him, "Thou art the Christ". And Christianity will live as long as there are people who repeat this assertion. For the event on which Christianity is based has two sides: the fact which is called "Jesus of Nazareth" and the reception of this fact by those who received him as the Christ.[110]

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[108] _ST_, 2: 123

[109] _Ibid._

[110] _Ibid._, p.112

The Christian message is therefore equated with the confession, first made by Simon Peter at Caesarea Philippi, that 'Jesus is the Christ'.[111] The strange structure of this phrase is intentional in that it rejects all liturgical and homiletic use of 'Jesus Christ' as a proper name. This form is discarded since it tends to unite two elements which are in fact distinct, namely that 'Jesus as the Christ is both an historical fact and a subject of believing reception'.[112] Consequently, as J. Heywood Thomas explains, 'Jesus as the Christ' is 'simply a shorthand expression for the assertion that there is a fact of which this event is the name and interpretation'.[113] In his more elaborate analysis of the second definition of 'historical Jesus', Tillich has thus concluded with the principle that there are two aspects to the event 'Jesus as the Christ', the first concerning a fact which has happened, the second pointing to Jesus' reception as the Christ. For this reason, he continues, the 'receptive side of the Christian event is as important as the factual side. And only their unity creates the event upon which Christianity is based'.[114]

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[111] For a more detailed account of the scene at Caesarea Philippi, see Tillich's sermon 'He who is the Christ' in The Shaking of the Foundations (London: Penguin Books, 1966) pp.143-150

[112] ST, 2: 113

[113] Paul Tillich: An Appraisal (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963) p.81

[114] ST, 2: 114. This insistence paves the way for the answer to the question, 'Would the destruction of mankind be a refutation of the Christian message?' Tillich answers that 'Jesus as the Christ is related to that historical development of which he is the centre...It begins the moment human beings start realizing their existential estrangement and raise the question of the New Being... the end is the moment in which the continuity of that history in which Jesus as the Christ is the centre is definitely broken' (Ibid., p.116).

Pausing here for a moment, we can see that Tillich's second semantic study of the term 'historical Jesus' differentiates more precisely between, on the one hand, historical investigations into the gospel reports about Jesus, and, on the other hand, the objective facts about this man as they were received and interpreted by the first disciples. In the second and, from the viewpoint of faith, more important meaning of 'historical Jesus', the event 'Jesus as the Christ' necessarily conjoins the objective facts about Jesus with their religious reception and interpretation. What we have, then, is a methodological distinction between the fact and the interpretation of that fact, the former identified with 'Jesus', the latter with the 'Christ'. In other words, to say that there is a factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' is to acknowledge also that this fact was interpreted as being of special significance, such as would warrant the title 'Christ'. Consequently, the combination of an individual name, 'Jesus', with the title, 'Christ', indicates that a certain man, who lived in Nazareth between the years 1 to 30, was received as a special figure with a special function, that is, as the Messiah - in Greek, Christos - 'the "anointed one" who has received an unction from God enabling him to establish the reign of God in Israel and in the world'.[115]

But undoubtedly the most important feature of Tillich's discussion at this point is that he concludes with the claim that 'historical Jesus', in this its second sense, 'raises the question of faith and not the question of historical research'.[116] This

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[115] Ibid., p.113

[116] Ibid., p.123

crucial proposition, as we first encounter it in Tillich's theology, is dependent upon a more exact assessment of the relationship involved between the fact of Jesus and the interpretation of him as the Christ. As Tillich explains:

> The foundation of Christian belief is the biblical picture of Christ, not the historical Jesus. The criterion of human thought and action is the picture of Christ as it is rooted in ecclesiastical belief and human experience, not the shifting and artificial construct of historical research.[117]

Tillich's argument, therefore, is that historical biblical enquiry can undermine neither the factual character of the assertion that 'Jesus is the Christ', nor the Christian message with which that assertion is equated, because 'Jesus is the Christ' is essentially an <u>interpretative phrase</u>.[118] The foundation of Christian faith certainly remains a 'believing confession vis-a-vis a fact',[119] but more specifically it is the 'Christ' (the interpretation) who provides this foundation. For present faith, the emphasis in the Christian religion lies not on a <u>fact</u>, the interpretation of which would be incidental to that fact's efficacy, but upon an <u>interpretation of a fact</u>, that which has created and conditioned the 'biblical picture of Christ'. It is upon this 'picture' or 'portrait', which is the product of the act of interpretation made by the first disciples in their reception of Jesus as the Christ, that faith is based. It is to this biblical presentation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, of which the Caesarea Philippi confession

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[117] <u>IH</u>: 33-34

[118] All those phrases which, like 'Jesus as the Christ', combine the two elements of 'fact' and 'reception' are called 'interpretative phrases' by Tillich (<u>viz</u>., 'Jesus who is called the Christ', 'Jesus who is the Christ', 'Jesus the Christ'). See <u>ST</u>, 2: 113

[119] J. H. Thomas, <u>op.cit</u>., p.78

is the centre, that the Christian believer aligns himself.[120]

Tillich's final examination of the term 'historical Jesus' has here issued in an argument which, initially at least, has much in common with the second of the three definitions proposed in 1938:[121] it too restricts faith's knowledge of Jesus to the biblical picture of him as the Christ. But Tillich's argument is not, however, a simple duplication of this early orthodox proposal, for it does not depend upon any dogmatic conception of scripture's verbal inerrancy, but upon an awareness of the intrinsic 'theological' nature of the sources; it arises, to be more exact, from Tillich's insight into the ever-present and necessary relation of 'fact' to 'interpretation' within the event which the portrait portrays and whose composite structure it reflects.

In order to appreciate this argument more fully - the first to be advanced by Tillich on the problem of the historical Jesus - we must now examine individually the two sides, the 'fact' and its 'interpretation', which are said to embody the central Christian event, the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. In the chapter which follows we shall be concerned with the first of these sides, that is, with the factual or existential aspect - the 'Jesus' element - which is received and interpreted. It is nevertheless important to notice beforehand that Tillich, when analyzing either of these two elements, maintains throughout that the necessary theological relation of the historical Jesus to the kerygmatic Christ is accomodated within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' in terms of the conjunction

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[120] Tillich's distinction between 'fact' and 'interpretation of fact' is due not only to the researches of Schweitzer and Bultmann into the nature of the gospel narratives, but also to the famous distinction between the two German words for 'history', Historie and Geschichte, first attributed to Tillich's teacher Martin Kähler. We have deferred any treatment of this distinction until Ch.III.

[121] See above pp.3-5

of the fact of Jesus and the interpretation of him as the Christ; and, equally consistently, he believes that this relation is not to be endorsed by historical analysis of that factual element which, he readily agrees, the Christ-event possesses. This may be put another way. Within the general scope of his argument, Tillich willingly admits a factual element within the event which is received and interpreted by faith (the second meaning of 'historical Jesus'); but he denies that recognition of its importance must issue in an immediate search for the historical characteristics of it (the first meaning of 'historical Jesus'). Such a denial derives, as we have partially seen already, from a precise analysis of the relation of fact to interpretation within the event 'Jesus as the Christ', and depends upon the resulting conclusion of that analysis, namely, that the stress in Christian faith is upon the interpretation of a fact and not upon that fact alone. It is this final judgment which in turn provokes the claim that the event reunifies the Jesus of history with the Christ of faith in a way whereby critical investigations into the biblical records about Jesus can neither corroborate nor devalue the assertions of faith concerning him.

CHAPTER II

THE EVENT "JESUS AS THE CHRIST"

Tillich's proposition that the foundation of Christian faith is the event 'Jesus as the Christ' contains very positive statements about the facticity of the historical side of the Christian message. The essential element of the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth is maintained throughout: 'Jesus as the Christ is both an historical fact and a subject of believing reception'.[1] Elsewhere, in his article on the Incarnation written in 1949, Tillich explicitly states that the Incarnation is

> an event with all the characteristics of an "event in time and space": namely, occurring "but once", unrepeatable, possible only in a special situation and in a special, incomparable, individual form, a subject of report and not of analysis or deduction.[2]

This excludes the view that the Incarnation is either the product of man's imagination or the creation of existentialist thought or experience.[3] As Tillich reiterates: 'the New Testament image of Jesus as the Christ is certainly not an "abstraction", but a

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[1] ST, 2: 113 (my emphasis)

[2] RDI: 133

[3] So Tillich writes: 'Christian theology is based on the unique event Jesus the Christ, and in spite of the infinite meaning of this event it remains this event and, as such, the criterion of every religious experience. This event is given to experience and not derived from it. Therefore, experience receives and does not produce'. (ST, 1: 52)

portrait of a reality which is presupposed and interpreted'.[4] It is with such remarks in mind that A. T. Mollegen can state that the first principle of Tillich's christological thought is that 'the Incarnation happened. Put bluntly, the Incarnational events were photographable. A sound-recording cinematograph could have captured the physical actions and words of a human individual who is the Christ';[5] and Tillich has accepted this as an accurate appraisal of his position.[6]

Tillich is at pains to point out, then, that the interpretation of Jesus as the Christ must be taken seriously as a report about something that happened objectively. But this condition notwithstanding, we have noted already that Tillich disengages himself from any critical evaluation of the alleged characteristics of this historical occurrence by, in effect, creatively reorientating theology away from its foundation on the fact of Jesus. This is the turning-point of his discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus, and it is in this connection that criticism has most frequently arisen. For in view of the stress upon the 'Christ' (the interpretation) as the basis of faith, and the consequent insistence that biblical research into Jesus' earthly existence cannot invalidate that faith, it is hardly surprising that some scholars, like Thomas O'Meara, have argued that Tillich's christology, despite our author's own

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[4] 'Interrogation of Paul Tillich', Philosophical Interrogations, ed. Sydney and Beatrice Rome (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) p.365

[5] 'Christology and Biblical Criticism in Tillich', The Theology of Paul Tillich, ed. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1964) p.231

[6] 'Reply to Interpretation and Criticism', Ibid., p.348

statements to the contrary, presents us with a 'Christ without Jesus'.[7]

As one might expect, Tillich has rejected this and such objections. 'Even a superficial reading', he writes, 'of the chapters of the second volume of Systematic Theology which deals with the "historical Jesus" should silence this criticism'.[8] And yet, even though the emphasis upon the factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' may be partly designed to withstand, or at least mitigate, any ensuing attack upon the separation between fact and interpretation, it is clear that doubt does still remain as to the importance Tillich is willing to allow to the factual dimension of the Christian event. For example, we must ask whether the functional stress upon the interpretative side of the Christian event has rendered the factual side of that event historically ambiguous. In other words, is the content of the gospel determined by Jesus who is the Christ, or by the faith of the Christian community which receives him as the Christ?

The problem which these questions raise is a vital one. They succeed in focusing our attention upon the difficulty found most frequently at the centre of Tillich's discussion of the historical Jesus. If the emphasis upon the interpretative side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' is designed to shield that event's historic al element from critico-historical analysis, then

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[7] T. O'Meara, 'Paul Tillich and Ecumenism', Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, ed. T. A. O'Meara and C. D. Weisser (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965) p.274

[8] 'Appreciation and Reply', Ibid., p.309

we must enquire whether or not the receptive side has indeed, as O'Meara alleges, engulfed the factual side to such an extent that the traditional location of God's redemptive act through the person of the man Jesus is obliterated.

The charge being levelled at Tillich at this point is really one of an inherent docetism, a heresy which is always implied when the kerygma is either overestimated to the apparent exclusion of the historical event or emphasized at the expense of the saving agent. Because the revelation, which is supposedly disclosed in the man Jesus, is discerned and proclaimed only in terms of his reception and interpretation as the 'Christ', the temptation is to underestimate the decisive role played by this man to the extent that finally the concrete reality of Jesus becomes irrelevant. This, in the opinion of Maria Sulzbach, is a temptation to which Tillich succumbs.

> In his Systematic Theology, he (Tillich) distinguishes between fact and interpretation. Though Jesus is the historical fact on which all interpretation of the Christian faith is based, it is of no major importance. Not Jesus, but the Christ as the interpretation of the 'fact', is the cornerstone of all Christian thought and faith.9

Sulzbach's comment that it is the interpretation (the Christ) of the fact (Jesus) which is the foundation 'of all Christian thought and faith' is correct. So much is clear from Tillich's statement that it was the Caesarea Philippi confession 'Thou art the Christ', and not the birth of Jesus himself, which saw the beginning of Christianity.[10] Sulzbach's mistake is to deduce from this the apparently parallel contention that the

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[9] M. F. Sulzbach, 'The Place of Christology in Contemporary Protestantism', Religion in Life, XXIII, No.2 (Spring 1954) p.211

[10] See above, p.48

fact of Jesus is of 'no major importance' - a conclusion which, incidentally, forms the premise for her ensuing statements that Tillich believes 'the humanity of Jesus is unimportant',[11] and that his christology is 'docetism in a modern garb' wherein the 'foundation of Christian faith and thought is the Idea symbolized in the man Jesus'.[12] But if Sulzbach is right, and if there is no real emphasis upon the significance of the facticity of the man who is called 'Christ', then it would be very hard to discover why Tillich should concern himself at all with repudiating any gnostic devaluation of the historical dimension of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', or why he should reject emphatically the argument that a docetic tendency is inevitable if historical analysis of that event is disallowed. Tillich's intention is to immunize the historical basis of christology from the radical historical methods employed by the biblical critics; but this aim is dependent upon his desire to guarantee, not devalue, the distinctly historical framework of the Christian faith. According to Tillich, the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ must be considered as a record of an event which had objective status; and it is this original occurrence which is historically basic to the biblical narrative in the sense that it is the necessary presupposition of its own interpretation. Such an insistence upon the composite nature of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' - upon the interdependence of the 'fact' of Jesus and the 'interpretation' of him as the Christ - makes clear that Sulzbach's characterization of Tillich's thought, by assuming a material distinction between the two 'sides' of the event, is, strictly speaking, impossible. There is no

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[11] op.cit., p.212

[12] Ibid., p.213

material distinction between these two elements, although Tillich is ready to allow, and himself employs, a formal distinction for the purpose of clarifying the structure of the Christ-event.

However, in order to arrive at a more conclusive answer to Sulzbach's criticisms, it is as well to examine Tillich's assessment of the historical elements of christology from a viewpoint other than that determined by the strictly formal construction of the Christ-event. In this connection, it is particularly important to see that Tillich's stress on the 'Jesus' element within the Christian message proceeds also on 'theological' grounds. Christianity, to repeat, concerns an event which has happened; but Christian theology also accords this event universal significance, and acknowledges that through it, and with its appearance, the conditions of existence have been transformed generally. The question, therefore, we should ask now is this: Does the message that Jesus is the Christ convey a particular interpretation of existence which would be impossible without the actuality of a personal life within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' of which 'Jesus' is the proper name? Tillich's answer to this type of question is determined by his crucial concept of 'New Being', to which we must now turn our attention. This is the term constructed precisely in order to interpret the event of Jesus as the Christ in terms of the advent of a new state of things, and indeed, in Tillich's christology, it is virtually synonymous with the title 'Christ'. In reply to the question "Where is the New Being manifest?", systematic theology answers by saying "In Jesus the Christ"; and this formula, we are told, is no more than a paraphrase of the ancient baptismal confession of Jesus as the Christ, that he 'who is the Christ is he who brings the new eon,

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the new reality'.[13] If 'Christ' is 'the name Christianity applied to the bearer of the New Being in its final manifestation',[14] then to call Jesus 'Christ' is to say that in him the new state of things, the New Being, has appeared.

I. The New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

Tillich's argument for the reality of Jesus the Christ as the bearer of New Being occupies a quite distinctive, but yet quite characteristic position in his theology. Its peculiar significance arises from the fact that it evolves from, and is determined by, a perspective which is itself not wholly explicable in terms of the biblical witness to Jesus. For, in essence, this argument maintains that the totality of man's situation is best explained and resolved only in the context of God's redemptive act in the historical event of Jesus as the Christ. In other words, the argument employed here is one that moves from an analysis of the human predicament to God's act in the earthly Christ as its only solution. Here the question posed by the analysis of man's situation under the conditions of the 'old eon' or 'old being' necessitates the historical occursion of the Christ, the bearer of New Being, as its only answer.

It is true that this form of argumentation has precedents in the history of theology. We find it, for example, when Søren Kierkegaard asserted that the world is meaningful only if its telos is that subjectivity maximalized by faith in the historicity of the God-man.[15] It is evident also when Albrecht Ritschl argued that there is a 'necessary concatenation' between the dignity of man, his finitude

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[13] ST, 1: 56

[14] ST, 2: 102

[15] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. D. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944) pp.142, 178, 182, 185-9

and guilt, and the historical redeemer.[16] But in Tillich's case, the argument originates strictly with his use of an adopted theological method, the method of 'correlation'.[17] This method has as its aim the avowedly 'apologetic' concern to relate and adapt the Christian message to the modern mind without losing its unique character. The hallmark of any 'apologetic' theology, as against the 'kerygmatic' type,[18] is that it is 'answering theology'. 'It answers the questions implied in the "situation" in the power of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose questions it answers'.[19] Accordingly, the 'method of correlation' seeks to explain 'the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence'.[20] It recognizes both that man 'cannot receive an answer to a question he has not asked',[21] and that he 'has asked...in his very existence...questions which Christianity answers'.[22] As a result, the first distinguishing feature of this theological method is that it requires that the initial duty of the theologian, if he is true to his apologetic task, is to analyse <u>first</u> the existential situation from which the questions arise. This method, therefore, seeks a common ground between the one who asks and the one who answers by listening to the questions

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[16] <u>A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation</u>, trans. J. S. Black (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872) p.540

[17] <u>ST</u>, 1: 67

[18] If the 'unchangeable truth of the message (kerygma) over against the changing demands of the situation' is emphasized, then that theology is kerygmatic. (<u>ST</u>, 1: 4)

[19] <u>ST</u>, I: 6

[20] <u>ST</u>, 1: 68

[21] <u>ST</u>, 2: 15

[22] <u>ST</u>, 1: 73

the situation asks before answering them in terms of the message. However, to this Tillich adds that analysing the existential situation is principally the role of philosophy, philosophy here being described as 'that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object'.[23] Furthermore, our author continues, such an analysis reveals that the questions asked are essentially ontological ones, being questions of being and non-being, of ontological anxiety and the ambiguities of life. Consequently, philosophy must 'answer in ontological terms'.[24] Indeed, philosophy in general is identified by Tillich with ontology, which he defines as 'an analysis of those structures of being which we encounter in every meeting with reality'.[25] The second distinguishing mark of this method is, therefore, that it demands that the theologian, in first seeking the questions put by the situation, must work as a philosopher, and that, accordingly, he must phrase the answers given in Christian revelation in ontological terms if they are to be relevant to that situation.[26] In this sense, then, 'correlation',

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[23] ST, 1: 22

[24] Ibid., p.24

[25] Ibid.

[26] Theology, therefore, is fundamentally an ontological enquiry. 'This makes the division between philosophy and theology impossible, for, whatever the relation of God, world, and man may be, it lies in the frame of being; and any interpretation of the meaning and structure of being as being, unavoidably has consequences for the interpretation of God, man, and the world in their interrelations'. 'Philosophy and Theology', PE: 86. Cf. 'Relation of Metaphysics and Theology', Review of Metaphysics, X, No.1 (September 1956) pp.57-63. J. Heywood Thomas, in a series of articles, contends that this relation between philosophy and theology is nothing more than a tautology in the sense that 'if anything is theology then what makes it theology also makes it philosophy'. 'The Correlation of Philosophy and Theology in Tillich's System', London Quarterly and Holborn Review, Sixth Series, XXVIII (January 1959) p.52. See also 'Tillich on Philosophy and Theology', Union Seminary Quarterly Review, VIII, No.3 (March 1953) pp.10-16; and Paul Tillich: An Appraisal, pp.42-43. Cf. H. Veatch, 'Tillich's Distinction between Metaphysics and Theology', Review of Metaphysics, X, No.3 (March 1957) pp.529-533.

as R. P. Scharlemann has described it, speaks a 'theontological language';[27] the questions implied in human existence, and elaborated in ontological terms, determine the meaning and the theological interpretation of the answers as they appear in the classical religious concepts. So Tillich writes: 'In respect to content the Christian answers are dependent on the revelatory events in which they appear; in respect to form they are dependent on the structure of the questions which they answer'.[28]

As we have briefly described it,[29] this theological method bears upon christology in an extremely significant way.

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[27] 'Tillich's Method of Correlation: Two Proposed Revisions', The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No.1, Part II (January 1966) pp.93, 102. Tillich, in his 'Rejoinder' accompanying this article, accepts this formulation. (Ibid., p.184).

[28] ST, 1: 72. It is at this point that the difference between Tillich and Karl Barth is most instructive. Barth declares that revelation is in no way dependent upon man, and so emphasizes the 'Word of God' which stands over against the human situation and is thrown at it 'like a stone'. Tillich, while agreeing that the content of revelation is given to man as an objective reality and not produced by philosophical or theological reflection, maintains that revelation is dependent upon the cultural situation of the day, to which it must relate. No doctrine of revelation, which is divorced from man's reception of it, is therefore possible. This basic difference is presented in detail in Tillich's 'Die Uberwindung des Religionsbegriffs in der Religionsphilosophie', Kant-Studien, XXVII, No.3/4 (1922) pp.446-469. Accordingly, Tillich characterizes Barth's position as 'undialectical'. See 'Kritisches und Positives Paradox - Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Barth und Friedrich Gogarten', Theologische Blätter, II, No.11 (November 1923) pp.263-269; and 'What is Wrong with the "Dialectic" Theology?' The Journal of Religion, XV, No.2 (April 1935) pp.127-145. Cf. E. A. Dowey, 'Tillich, Barth, and the Criteria of Theology', Theology Today, XV, No.1 (April 1958) pp.43-58

[29] For more details on the 'method of correlation', see Tillich, 'The Problem of Theological Method', The Journal of Religion, XXVII, No.1 (January 1947) pp.16-26; Bernard M. Loomer, 'Tillich's Theology of Correlation', The Journal of Religion, XXXVI, No.3 (July 1956) pp.150-156; Guyton B. Hammond, 'An Examination of Tillich's Method of Correlation', Journal of Bible and Religion, XXXII, No.3 (July 1964) pp.248-251; and Jacob Taubes, 'On the Nature of the Theological Method: Some Reflections on the Methodological Principles of Tillich's Theology', The Journal of Religion, XXXIV, No.1 (January 1954) pp.12-25.

If the question-answer dialectic employed in 'correlation' requires that the answer contained in the revelatory event of Jesus as the Christ cannot be derived from the questions implied in human existence, it does acknowledge that man can receive that revelation and, moreover, express it <u>according to the way he has asked for it</u>. Thus the reception of the New Being is always conditioned by the 'old being', which is conquered and fulfilled by it. In this way, the philosophical-ontological form in which the question is put is ultimately related, and not alien, to the theological answer given in the Christian message.

If christology is treated on the basis of this correlation, then the Christian theological answer to the existential question, if it is to be made intelligible to the modern mind, must be interpreted in terms of those conceptual idioms or universal categories most appropriate to the form in which the question was asked. The Christian claim that a particular event in the past has universal significance, concerning and transforming the whole of being, must, in other words, be approached and defined 'ontologically'. Christology requires ontology, or, as Tillich himself puts it, the 'name "Jesus the Christ" implies an ontology',[30] for otherwise the event itself would be irrelevant to those questions asked by the human situation and exposed by ontological investigation. If, then, Christianity's claim to universality is to be upheld, the historical event upon which this claim is based must be explained in such a way that those conditions which characterize 'old being' are seen to be overcome with the appearance of 'New Being' in Jesus as the Christ. This

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[30] <u>Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955) p.76

event must be accepted as the ultimate manifestation of saving power in life and history, as the appearance of a 'new reality' or 'New Being', conquering those 'demonic' mechanisms which ontological analysis has shown prevail in personal and social existence.

This, of course, does not amount to an independent argument for the historicity of Jesus. To call Jesus 'Christ' because he is the bearer of New Being still presupposes his historical existence. Nor, indeed, was the 'method of correlation' constructed for this purpose; its aim is not to substantiate the truth of Christianity's historical claims in isolation from the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ, which is still accepted as the basic source concerning the events upon which faith is founded. 'Correlation' seeks rather to express the truth of the kerygma - namely, that Jesus is <u>actually</u> the Christ - in terms which are at once meaningful and appropriate to the contemporary situation. As we have seen, ontology is accordingly employed, thereby determining both the form of the questions which theology must answer and the form of the theological answers to those questions implied in the human situation.

It is precisely this <u>ontological</u> assessment of the <u>historical</u> significance of the Christ-event which makes Tillich's discussion of the New Being so vital to his argument for the actuality of the personal life of Jesus as the Christ. The answer given in Christian revelation must be ontologically appropriate to the ontological questions of existence, for only in this way can the dialectic of correlation be sustained. It follows, therefore, that the theological necessity of emphasizing the historicity of Jesus as the bearer of New Being depends upon the need to meet

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those requirements essential for transformation of the situation of 'old being', or rather, upon fulfilling those conditions which the situation stipulates are necessary for its own salvation. Ontology, in this sense, cannot prove the facticity of Jesus but it can demonstrate that the appearance of New Being, in an historical and personal form subject to the conditions of existence, is the only form in which an answer to the questions of existence could be given should that answer be possible. To this extent, ontology can show that the conjunction of an individual name, 'Jesus', with the title, 'Christ', is only appropriate if the name refers to a personal, historical reality through and with whom the new state of things, the New Being, actually appeared.

The force and scope of this quite specific use of ontology can be better appreciated if we now examine it as it practically applies to a particular biblical passage which itself seeks to express the theological importance of the historic event of Jesus as the Christ. Such a passage is 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49, containing as it does an interpretation of the doctrine of the Christ in terms of the historical manifestation of the Man from Above after Adam's fall. This is achieved, Tillich tells us, within the framework of Paul's mythological use of the three modes of time, here employed to exhibit the destiny of a divine being. There is 'first the heavenly man who before his coming is spiritual and immortal; then the physical man, Adam, who is subject to death and brought death into the world, is followed by the heavenly man who overcomes death'.[31] These three temporal stages indicate, therefore, Adam's state before the fall, Adam in the state of 'fallen-

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[31] RDI: 136

ness', and the appearance of the Christ as the Second (or Last) Adam. Christ is a 'new creature' inaugurating a new age or new creation; and this idea Tillich directly compares with his own conception of Christ as the 'New Being', the one who, by restoring under the conditions of existence the relationship which existed between God and man prior to the fall, effects a transformation of existence as radical as the fall itself.[32]

We have said that for each of the three stages mentioned in 1 Corinthians Tillich's theology offers an ontological reformulation. The first stage, Adam before the fall, can be dealt with briefly. It may be distinguished in terms of a fundamental Christian concept, Esse qua esse bonum est, which means, '"Being as being is good", or in biblical mythological form: God saw everything that he had created, and behold it was good'.[33] So here Tillich speaks of 'man's created goodness' or the 'goodness of man's created nature'.[34] Expressed in ontological terms, it is a state of 'essential being',[35] representing man in his essential nature, in unity with God. This is not, however, a stage of actual human development but rather a state of potentiality, without actualisation in any place or time; as such, it can be known neither directly nor indirectly. 'Therefore it is inadequate to ask questions concerning Adam's state before the fall; for example, if he was mortal or immortal...The verb "was" presupposes actuali-

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[32] See ST, 2: 137. For a comparison between Tillich and Paul at this point, see also David Hill, 'Paul's "Second Adam" and Tillich's Christology', Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXI, No.1 (November 1965) pp.13-25

[33] 'The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis', TC: 118

[34] ST, 1: 288

[35] ST, 2: 38

sation in time'.[36] Consequently, Tillich prefers the psychological analogy of the 'state of dreaming innocence' for the non-actualised, non-spatial and non-temporal character of the state of essential being.[37] 'Dreaming' anticipates actuality. So, while reality is certainly different from the images of a dream, a correspondence yet remains between them in the sense that 'the actual is present in the potential in terms of anticipation'.[38] 'Innocence' similarly illustrates that the state of essential being is one of non-actualised potentiality. It is characterized by the absence of experience, responsibility and guilt, which, when actualised, result in the loss of innocence.[39]

By contrast, Tillich's analysis of the second stage must be examined at some length since, in his view, the particular nature of the human predicament, here presented by Adam in the state of fallen-ness, necessitates the personal and historical occurrence of the Christ as its only remedy.

Tillich considers this stage in terms of the basic ontological distinction between 'essence' and 'existence', which has dominated the whole of Western ontological thought. Tillich also maintains that the duality of essential and existential being is reflected in the Christian theological contrast between the

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[36] ST, 1: 288

[37] ST, 2: 38

[38] Ibid.

[39] Tillich cites the growth of a child's sexual consciousness as an example of innocence and its loss (See ST, 2: 41).

'created' and the 'actual' world.[40] By asserting that existence is the fulfilment of God's creation, Christianity emphasizes the positive character of existence. The good, therefore, is not simply identified with the 'essential' since, in terms of creation through God, the created goodness of existent things derives from the essential structure of reality in which those things participate. But theology does contend also that the 'actual' world has 'fallen' from its created goodness, and does thereby acknowledge that split between the goodness of the 'created' world and the distorted existence of the 'actual' world which philosophy recognizes through its essence-existence distinction. If, therefore, 'essential being' refers to the 'created' world (Adam before the fall), then 'existential being' refers to the distortion of 'essential being' in the 'actual' world (Adam after the fall). Accordingly, the fall itself represents the 'transition from essence to existence',[41] from man in his essential nature to man in existence.[42]

The condition of fallen man, in which he is at odds with himself, the world and God, Tillich expounds initially in terms of the three 'marks' of estrangement: man in the totality of his being turns away from God ('unbelief') and elevates himself as the absolute centre of his world (hubris) in order that he might draw the whole of his world into himself ('concupiscence').[43]

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[40] ST, 1: 226

[41] ST, 2: 33

[42] For a full discussion and history of the meaning of the term 'existence', see Tillich's essay 'Existential Philosophy: Its Historical Meaning', TC: 76-111

[43] See ST, 2: 53-63

The existential situation is further characterized by the limitations of finitude: the anxiety of having to die, suffering, doubt and meaninglessness, temptation, despair and condemnation.[44] The fall itself represents, therefore, the transition from essential manhood to the existential estrangement of man in existence, wherein he is subject to the ambiguities, distortions and self-destructive structures of estrangement. But the fall is not, Tillich continues, a description of certain events which happened 'once upon a time' in the life of the first man, Adam. Neither Adam, nor human history as a whole, passed at a given moment from a state of essential being into a state of existential estrangement. The fall of Adam is rather a symbol for the human situation universally, and, as such, the meaning of the myth transcends the temporal setting of Adam's fall as it is narrated in the biblical story.[45] It points to the fundamental condition of man, namely, that 'man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being'.[46]

'Estrangement', then, is a term describing the actual ontological <u>state</u> of existing man, and indicates that the split between essential nature and actual existence is the basic reality of the human situation, a condition present in every living being and in every time. To exist, therefore, is to be estranged since the actual constitution of existence implies the transition from essence to existence. So 'creation and the Fall coincide in so far as there is no point in time and space in which created good-

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[44] See <u>ST</u>, 2: 77-90

[45] So Tillich speaks of the phrase 'transition from essence to existence' as a 'half-way demythologisation' of the myth of the fall (<u>ST</u>, 2: 33). It removes the 'once upon a time' element but still contains a temporal element.

[46] <u>ST</u>, 2: 51

ness was actualised and had existence'.[47] Just as there was no paradise in the past, so there will be no utopia in the future. 'Actualised creation and estranged existence are identical'.[48] As such, the transition is no isolated act but the universal state of man and his world. The state of estrangement is the only 'actual' state and it has never been otherwise. This is the transhistorical meaning of the fall, that which gives it 'universal anthropological significance'.[49]

> ...the transition from essence to existence is a universal quality of finite being. It is not an event of the past; for it ontologically precedes everything that happens in time and space. It sets the conditions of spatial and temporal existence.[50]

This, and similar passages,[51] seem to suggest, to use William Rowe's words, that '"to exist as a man" and "to be estranged from one's essential nature" are either <u>equivalent</u> or the second is <u>presupposed</u> by the first'.[52] The implication is that the process of actualisation of essence <u>inevitably</u> results in estrangement from essential being, for potentialities cannot be fully realized and essence is distorted in existence. The actualisation of that which is potential results in estrangement. To

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[47] <u>ST</u>, 2: 50

[48] <u>Ibid</u>.

[49] <u>ST</u>, 2: 33

[50] <u>ST</u>, 2: 42

[51] See Tillich, 'Psychotherapy and a Christian Interpretation of Human Nature', <u>Review of Religion</u>, XIII, No.3 (March 1949) where he writes on the fall: 'This almost unusable word points to a universal experience of mankind, namely, to man's split within himself, to his separation from and enmity toward other beings, and to the permanent threat of losing the ground and meaning of his life. The "Fall" is not an historical event; it is the permanent and universal transition from innocence to guilt in every human being'. (<u>Ibid</u>., p.265)

[52] <u>Religious Symbols and God</u> (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) p.203

exist, therefore, is to stand out of one's essential being as in a 'fall'.[53]

And yet, despite such statements, Tillich argues also that estrangement is not simply the universal tragic destiny of all finite being; it is in addition the result of individual moral freedom. The transition from man in his essential nature to man estranged in existence is mediated, our author claims, by 'finite freedom', of which man alone is the possessor. In this sense, man is responsible for his own predicament. 'It is finite freedom which makes possible the transition from essence to existence'.[54] Man is free not only by virtue of the fact that he possesses creativity and the powers of deliberation and decision, but also because he has the power of contradicting himself and his essential nature.[55] It is this final aspect of man's freedom which makes possible the transition of man as he was created to man as he actually is: 'Man is free even from

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[53]Tillich therefore avoids any Hegelian understanding of the dialectical expression of essence by existence. Man is in a state of estrangement from his essential nature. The way from essential to existential being is neither deductive nor logically necessary as it would be in essentialist ontology. By insisting that existence is 'estrangement and not reconciliation...de-humanisation and not the expression of essential humanity' (ST, 2: 28), it is the existentialists in particular who have aided the rediscovery of the classical Christian interpretation of human existence as it is depicted in the myth of Genesis 1-3: that man is created good but falls into sinfulness. Tillich also distinguishes between 'existential' and 'existentialist'. The former refers to an attitude of involvement, its opposite being detachment; the latter designates a philosophical school which is opposed to essentialist philosophy. (ST, 2: 29). Cf. CB: 123-126

[54]ST, 2: 36

[55]Tillich also defines freedom as 'that faculty of man by which he is able to determine his being through history'. 'Freedom in the Period of Transformation', Freedom: Its Meaning, ed. Ruth N. Anshen (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940) p.124

his freedom; that is, he can surrender his humanity'.[56] Even in the prior state of 'essential being' or 'dreaming innocence', of uncontested and undecided potentiality in which freedom and destiny are in harmony, man experienced the temptation to actualise his freedom. Even the state of Adam before the fall was charged with the possibility of tension and disruption, with the 'desire to sin', or, as Tillich calls it, 'aroused freedom'.[57] In terms of the biblical account, this is illustrated by the divine injunction not to eat from the tree of knowledge. It presupposes a 'kind of split between creator and creature, a split which makes a command necessary, even if it is given only in order to test the obedience of the creature'.[58] But when freedom is aroused, that is, when it becomes conscious of itself and tends to become actual, man is 'caught between the desire to actualise his freedom and the demand to preserve his dreaming innocence'.[59] Subjectively expressed, the dilemma is experienced as a double anxiety: 'the anxiety of losing himself by not actualising himself and his potentialities and the anxiety of losing himself by actualising himself and his potentialities...The anxiety of this situation is the state of temptation'.[60] Man must, and does, decide for self-actualisation, or else he would cease to be; and this occasions the transition from essential being, and

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[56] *ST*, 2: 36

[57] *ST*, 2: 40

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] *Ibid*.

[60] *ST*, 2: 41

entails the fall into sin.[61]

We can see that Tillich wishes to characterize estrangement as both tragic, arising from destiny, and moral, arising from freedom. He agrees that this interpretation of the myth of the fall of Adam, with its ontological bias, is not directly biblical: there is no explicit ontological thought in biblical religion; but, conversely, 'there is no symbol or no theological concept in it which does not have ontological implications'.[62] So it is with the story of Genesis 3. On the one hand, the myth of the fall emphasizes the tragic universality of existence, that estrangement is a condition of existence. The tragic element which involves the whole cosmos is not dismissed in the biblical story: 'the serpent represents the dynamic trends of nature; there is the magical character of the two trees, the rise of sexual consciousness, the curse over the heredity of Adam, the body of the woman, the animals and the land'.[63] On the other hand, the Genesis account, in the story of Adam freely choosing to disobey the divine prohibition not to eat of the fruit of the tree, stresses 'finite freedom' both as the compulsion and agent for

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[61]Cf. Tillich, 'The Nature of Man', Journal of Philosophy, XLIII, No.25 (December 1946) p.676. 'Theology, in dealing with man's nature as that of "finite freedom", shows that man's freedom drives him into a tragic estrangement from himself, from the other beings, and from the ultimate ground and meaning of his existence'.

[62]ST, 2: 13

[63]This leads to the important question of whether nature itself is implicated in the fall of man. Tillich rejects the idealistic separation of an innocent nature from guilty man, and justifies his claim to speak of a 'fallen world' by recent evolutionary theories and depth psychology (ST, 2: 47-48). He admits, however, that Schelling's philosophy of nature was the determinative influence in the formation of this doctrine. See 'Autobiographical Reflections', The Theology of Paul Tillich, p.4; and his doctoral dissertation, Die religionsgeschichtliche Konstruktion in Schellings positiver Philosophie, ihre Voraussetzungen und Prinzipien (Breslau: H. Fleischmann, 1910) p.133

man's contradiction of his essential nature, thereby indicating that individual moral responsibility participates in the creation of the universal destiny of mankind. Existence, therefore, 'is rooted both in ethical freedom and in tragic destiny. If the one or the other side is denied, the human situation becomes incomprehensible'.[64] The transition from essence to existence is the work of finite freedom, but since it happens universally in everything finite it is a condition of existence that man is estranged. While freedom is not eliminated, it is always in bondage to destiny. This is the tragic burden of the human situation: 'of man's freedom to contradict his essential nature, and of man's fate to stand under the servitude of this contradiction'.[65] This is the reason why, Tillich concludes, all ways of self-salvation must fail. The polarity of freedom and destiny means that 'no act within the context of existential estrangement can overcome existential estrangement'.[66] He points to the failure of all legalistic, mystical, sacramental, doctrinal and emotional ways of self-salvation within the history of religion.[67] It is a

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[64] ST, 2: 43

[65] RDI: 141. It should, however, be pointed out here that if, following Tillich, freedom is one of the basic elements in man's ontological structure, and if it is ontologically true that man is estranged, then the problem remains: how can the exercise of man's finite freedom responsibly decide whether to be estranged or not? In a similar vein, Reinhold Niebuhr has objected that Tillich's 'ontological speculations' have subtly shifted the emphasis in the biblical paradox of freedom and fate upon 'the fatefulness of sin rather than upon our responsibility'. 'Biblical Thought and Ontological Speculation in Tillich's Theology', The Theology of Paul Tillich, p.219. Cf. Eugene H. Peters, 'Tillich's Doctrine of Essence, Existence, and the Christ', The Journal of Religion, XLIII, (October 1963) pp.298-299

[66] ST, 2: 91

[67] ST, 2: 92-100

history of man's attempt to save himself and his failure to do so. All these efforts distort the way of salvation by identifying the saving power of the ultimate with human inadequacy and ambiguity, which are necessarily incapable of reuniting man and God or of healing the disruptions of man's state of estrangement.

It is precisely in the attempt and failure of self-salvation that the universal need for a 'New Being' is recognised universally. The quest for New Being is universal 'because the human predicament and its ambiguous conquest are universal'.[68] This is true not only of every religion but of every autonomous culture; here, too, the utopian expectation of a new reality is present, one which would conquer and replace the old and estranged reality.

We are thus led to the third stage to which 1 Corinthians refers, to the possibility of 'salvation'. This term, originally derived from the Latin salvus or salus meaning 'healed' or 'whole', alludes to the possibility of something, to a 'third', through which the cleavage between essential goodness and actual existence is overcome and healed.

> In this sense, healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself. Out of this interpretation of salvation, the concept of the New Being has grown. Salvation is reclaiming from the old and transferring into the New Being.[69]

'Salvation', therefore, refers directly both to the split between essential and existential being and to that through which

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[68] ST, 2: 100

[69] ST, 2: 192

the split is overcome. This stage is characterized by the historical manifestation of the Man from Above after Adam's fall, by the appearance of the Christ as the Second or Last Adam, the one who, in Tillich's terminology, brings the New Being or new reality. The Christian message declares that Jesus is the Christ and so proclaims that such is the place in which New Being is manifest. It is the Christ who brings the New Being, who saves men from the 'old being', that is, from existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences; and if, therefore, Christianity calls Jesus as the Christ the 'New Being', it confesses that with him, at every moment, essential manhood appeared in existence and under its conditions without losing its essential character, thereby creating a new reality in existence which has the power to transform existence.[70]

Already we have here an indication of Tillich's view that any theologically viable conception of Jesus as the Christ being the bearer of New Being must include that of his actual historicity. The confession that Jesus is the Christ must carry with it an admission that this particular individual was the New Being and that the being of Jesus, who is called 'Christ', is intrinsically that of New Being. It is significant that this emphasis is particularly apparent when Tillich seeks to maintain the Chalcedonian balance of humanity and deity within 'Jesus as the Christ',

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[70]The same idea may be expressed in different ways. The actual appearance of the New Being signifies the conquest of the situation 'under the law', the law of 'man's essential being standing against his existence, commanding and judging it' (ST, 2: 137). His appearance is also 'realised eschatology...in so far as no other principle of fulfilment can be expected' (Ibid.). Lastly, it is the 'end of history' in the sense that 'nothing qualitatively new in the dimension of the ultimate can be produced by history which is not implicitly present in the New Being in Jesus as the Christ' (ST, 2: 138).

for though the doctrine of the two natures used the 'wrong conceptual tools', it raised the 'right question':

> Any diminution of the human nature would deprive the Christ of his total participation in the conditions of existence. And any diminution of the divine nature would deprive the Christ of his total victory over existential estrangement. In both cases, he could not have created the New Being. His being would have been less than the New Being.[71]

So Tillich rejects as redundant the traditional and static assertion that Jesus as the Christ is the personal unity of a divine and human nature, and replaces it with the concept of 'Eternal God-Manhood',[72] which indicates in dynamic and relational terms that in Jesus the Christ the eternal unity of God and man has become historical reality.

However, this emphasis upon the necessary subjection of Jesus as the Christ to existence is developed most fully in terms of the only all-embracing 'paradox' of Christianity, which Tillich defines as that which 'contradicts the doxa, the opinion which is based on the whole of ordinary human experience, including the empirical and the rational'.[73] Paradox is not, therefore, irrational or absurd, neither is it reflectively or dialectically rational; but it is, in the literal meaning of the term, against man's self-understanding and expectations. In the language of Corinthians, the paradox is the manifestation of the original, heavenly man as existential man, or, as Tillich translates it, it is the 'appearance of the New Being under the conditions of existence, yet judging and conquering them' which is the paradox of the Christian message.[74] The manifestation of New Being over-

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[71] ST, 2: 164

[72] ST, 2: 170

[73] ST, 2: 106

[74] Ibid.

coming the contrast between essential and existential being is the paradox. It is New Being over against essence because it has actual reality; it is a fact, whereas essential being as such is potential and not actual. It is New Being over against existence because it is the appearance of what man essentially is under the structural forms of existence. Consequently, the 'newness' of the New Being, that which constitutes the paradox of the Christian faith, requires an irreducible existential dimension within the event 'Jesus as the Christ', for those who call him 'Christ' must assert the paradox that

> he who is supposed to overcome existential estrangement must participate in it and its self-destructive consequences. This is the central story of the Gospel. Reduced to its simplest form, it is the statement that the man Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.[75]

He it was who, as an actual, concrete human being, disclosed in a unique, final and normative way what the essential relationship between God and man should be under the conditions of existence. Thus - to repeat - it is the man Jesus who in a paradoxical assertion is called the Christ. Without this paradox the New Being would be an ideal and not a reality, and, as a result, incapable of conquering that existential estrangement which is the condition of existence itself. To this extent, the importance of the 'paradox' lies in its 'factuality'.

Two things are being said here. First, the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is above essential being because it is actual and not merely potential. Second, the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is above existential being because it brings essential manhood into existence. The New Being is 'new', therefore, in two

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[75] ST, 2: 112

respects: 'It is new in contrast to the merely potential character of essential being; and it is new over against the estranged character of existential being. It is actual, conquering the estrangement of actual existence'.[76] It is clear that neither of these two statements could be made without presupposing the historicity of the New Being as it appears in an actual life subject to the conditions of existence. New Being transcends essential being because it is essential manhood in existence; it transcends existential being because it is the actualisation of essential being. Consequently, in so far as his essential being is taken into existence and actualised in it, the being of Jesus as the Christ is 'New Being'. The life of Jesus of Nazareth, in other words, transcends both essential and existential being because in him the New Being has historical reality, because in him the New Being exists.

Tillich is concerned to point out, then, that the New Being has appeared in a personal life. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise, for the only being who has 'finite freedom' is a person, and only 'where existence is most radically existence - in him who is finite freedom - can existence be conquered'.[77] The manifestation of New Being does not, therefore, destroy freedom as a basic element in man's ontological structure, but it does what freedom under the conditions of existence cannot do, namely, it reunites the estranged. Accordingly, the paradoxical character of the being of Jesus the Christ is that, while possessing freedom under the conditions of time and space, the state of potentiality or essentiality became actualised through finite freedom, and,

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[76] ST, 2: 137 (my emphasis)

[77] ST, 2: 139

moreover, actualised against existential disruption.

It is important to note that it is in the light of this understanding of the paradox that, Tillich believes, the concepts 'Incarnation' and 'Mediator' must be appreciated. The paradox of the Incarnation is not that God has literally become man but that 'God is manifest in a personal life-process as a saving participant in the human predicament'.[78] This avoids the polytheistic connotations of divine beings transmuted into natural objects or human beings, which, Tillich adds, even the idea of the 'Spiritual Man' or the 'Man from Above' cannot totally avoid. For this reason, Tillich prefers the term 'Incarnation' in the Johannine sense of the Logos becoming flesh since it signifies not an actual metamorphosis or transmutation but rather the self-manifestation of God in the concrete and personal life of the man Jesus. In a similar way, the 'Mediator' is not a third reality between God and man, but is rather the one who represents God to man within the situation of estrangement.

> He does not represent man to God but shows what God wants man to be. He represents to those who live under the conditions of existence what man essentially is and therefore ought to be under these conditions...It is essential man who represents not only man to man but God to man; for essential man, by his very nature, represents God. He represents the original image of God embodied in man, but he does so under the conditions of estrangement between God and man.[79]

These remarks conclude Tillich's examination of the third and final stage to which 1 Corinthians refers. Throughout this analysis, it is clear that, whether discussing the classical 'two natures' doctrine in terms of one individual life manifesting

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[78] ST, 2: 110

[79] ST, 2: 108 (my emphasis)

the eternal unity between God and man or whether considering the concepts of 'Incarnation' and 'Mediator' in terms of the appearance of essential manhood in one historical and personal life, Tillich emphasizes consistently the basic christological requirement that the New Being can only appear in an actual man within the area of estrangement.

Such a view restricts the appearance of New Being to historical mankind. As we have seen, essential manhood can manifest itself within existence only in a human being (thereby being subject to the disruptive forces of estrangement), and as a personal life possessing 'finite freedom' (thereby being capable of contradicting its essential nature). In this respect, the assertion that Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of New Being is intelligible only in relation to the conquest of that disjunction between man's essential and existential nature which ontological investigation has shown to be the basis of the human condition. To this extent, therefore, the event 'Jesus as the Christ' is itself governed by the ontological relation between essence and existence, and, by the same token, interpreted in a way whereby those conditions, which analysis of the situation of 'old being' indicates are necessary for ontological healing to take place, are actually fulfilled. From this it follows that the title 'Christ' is appropriate to the man Jesus only if with him essential manhood actually appeared in history, was subject to the destructive conditions prevalent in the human situation, and released the power to transform existence by actualising his essential nature without estranging himself either from himself, from others or from God. In other words, the distinctive theological interpretation of existence which the gospel offers, namely that existence

has been overcome in existence by the undistorted manifestation of essential being under existential conditions, is viable only in so far as it is based upon the belief that the split between what man actually is and ought to be is healed in the one historical man, Jesus of Nazareth; and Tillich is quite emphatic on this point:

> If theology ignores the fact to which the name Jesus of Nazareth points, it ignores the basic Christian assertion that Essential God-Manhood has appeared within existence and subjected itself to the conditions of existence without being conquered by them. If there was no personal life in which existential estrangement had been overcome, the New Being would have remained a quest and an expectation and would not be a reality in time and space. Only if existence is conquered in <u>one</u> point - a personal life, representing existence as a whole - is it conquered in principle, which means "in beginning and in power". This is the reason that Christian theology must insist on the actual fact to which the name Jesus of Nazareth refers.[80]

This, let it be stressed again, does not amount to a separate argument for the historicity of Jesus, independent, that is, of the biblical account of him; but in so far as Jesus <u>is</u> the Christ, he must bring a new state of things relevant to, and at least communicable in terms of, the ontological state of existing man. Any other interpretation would be alien to the modern situation and of no actual concern for us. It is in this way that Tillich's <u>ontological</u> assessment of the <u>historical</u> significance of the Christ-event is so important to the problem of the historical Jesus. For while Tillich's theological method certainly presupposes the historical impact of the Christ to which the kerygma testifies, his apologetic concern prevents an exposition of what is accepted in the kerygma without producing reasons why it should be regarded as either coherent or necessary. Consequently, Tillich's ontological analysis of the structures of

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[80] <u>ST</u>, 2: 113-114

'old being' does not mean that the historicity of the Christ as the bearer of 'New Being' is the product of a conceptually necessary Christ. His use of ontology neither seeks nor is able to demonstrate either that Jesus was in fact the Christ, or that such a revelation, as it is proclaimed in the kerygma, did actually occur. The existential question, exposed by ontological investigation and circumscribed by the split between essence and existence, is not the source or guarantor of the revelatory answer formulated by theology. 'One cannot derive', Tillich writes, 'the divine self-manifestation from an analysis of the human predicament'.[81] But if, however, ontology cannot demonstrate that the answer <u>has</u> been given, the mutual dependence of question and answer in the dialectic of correlation does imply that the form of the question determines the form in which the answer <u>would</u> be given. It is on this basis that ontology, though providing no extra data to support the claim that New Being manifested itself in Jesus the Christ, does provide powerful warrants for the historicity of such an event <u>should it happen</u>. For what ontology can do is demand that the Christ who overcomes and fulfils the conditions of existence must be an actual one. It is to this extent that the event 'Jesus as the Christ' conforms to a prior soteriological principle demanded by the question-answer of correlation: the bearer of New Being must be accorded the same degree of reality as the actual conditions he is said to overcome. In this way, ontology can demonstrate that the interpretation of Jesus <u>as</u> the Christ is justified only in so far as it relates to an historical occurrence which is at least commensurate with the title given

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[81] <u>ST</u>, 2: 14

to it. To put this another way: the conjunction of an individual name, 'Jesus', with the title, 'Christ', is tenable only if that reality to which the name refers was an historical person, whose actual appearance was appropriate to the universal existential importance ascribed to him and signified by the title 'Christ'. This is the reason why Christian theology must emphasize first the actuality of a personal life within the event 'Jesus as the Christ', in whom the New Being, the new state of things, actually appeared.

II. The Biblical Witness to the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

We must conclude our discussion of the importance Tillich attaches to the facticity of the historical side of the Christian message - to the actual fact referred to by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth' - with an analysis of those features of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ which, Tillich alleges, mark his character as that of essential manhood actually participating in the disruptive forces of existence while yet remaining unconquered by them. It is worth noticing from the outset that Tillich insists that 'Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being in the totality of his being, not in any special expressions of it'.[82] So neither his words, deeds, sufferings, nor what is called his 'inner life', make him the Christ, for underlying them all is the very being of the New Being. 'They are all expressions of the New Being, which is the quality of his being, and this, his being, precedes and transcends all its expressions'.[83] The particulars of Jesus' life

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[82] ST, 2: 139

[83] Ibid.

do not, therefore, offer deductive proof that his being was the New Being, but they do confirm him as such by witnessing to a life which contradicts the life of estrangement.

In the course of our analysis of the concept 'New Being', we saw that Jesus as the Christ had to be subject completely to existence in order to overcome the estrangement of existence; and, Tillich maintains, the 'degree to which the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ stresses his finitude is remarkable'.[84] He has to die, and he is portrayed as experiencing the anxiety which accrues from the realization of this fact. He appears strange and homeless in his world; he is subject to bodily, social and mental insecurity, to loneliness, to uncertainty in judgment, risks of error, to the limits of power and the vicissitudes of life; above all, he feels that he has been abandoned by God. All these details belong to the description of the finitude of Jesus the Christ, and thereby express the reality of his participation in existence.[85] But to these aspects of his actual finitude, it is necessary to add his involvement in the tragedy of human existence and the ambiguity of tragic guilt. In so far as he made the Pharisees and the leaders of his nation inescapably guilty, Jesus was subject to the tragic element of guilt. Similarly, Jesus, in his relationship with Judas, is guilty to the extent that he is responsible for the guilt of the one who contributes to his own death.[86] In these ways also, the biblical picture demonstrates the consequences for Jesus as the Christ which result through his tragic involvement in existence.

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[84] _ST_, 2: 150

[85] _ST_, 2: 150-151

[86] _ST_, 2: 152-153

Besides these elements of finitude, the biblical picture stresses also the reality and seriousness of the temptations confronted by Jesus. Being finite freedom, Jesus the Christ encountered possibility, and 'possibility is itself temptation'.[87] The reality of the temptations, Tillich emphasizes, must be accepted seriously since without them Jesus would not represent the essential unity between God and man. But if this is acknowledged, our author continues, one is immediately presented with the problem of 'desire'. For example, in the discussion of the role of 'aroused freedom' in the transition from essence to existence, it was made clear that temptation is only serious because there is an antecedent desire towards that which has the power to tempt.[88] But if this is so, was there not estrangement even before the decision whether to give in to sin or not? In other words, does not the emphasis upon the reality of Jesus' temptations equally include an acceptance of actual desire on his part, and a conclusion that Jesus, like all human beings, was estranged from God? Tillich resolves these difficulties by showing the difference between 'natural self-transcendence, which includes the desire for reunion with everything' and 'distorted concupiscence, which does not want reunion with everything but the exploitation of everything through power and pleasure'.[89] Desire, therefore, is justifiable only when its object is unity with God. This was the desire of Jesus who resisted the sin of 'concupiscence' by rejecting the unlimited desire for food, knowledge and power. Through his unbroken unity with God, Jesus resisted Satan's temp-

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[87] ST, 2: 146

[88] See above, p.73.

[89] ST, 2: 147

tations. Jesus could have had the gifts of Satan, 'but it would have meant surrendering his messianic quality'.[90]

The character of Jesus as the bearer of New Being is one, therefore, in which the conflict between the essential unity of God and man and man's existential estrangement is overcome. This has already been confirmed by Jesus' victory over 'concupiscence' in the biblical story of his rejection of the temptations. But it is also evident, Tillich claims, in Jesus' victory over the other two 'marks' of human estrangement: 'unbelief' and hubris. There are no traces of 'unbelief' for even 'in the extreme situation of despair about his messianic work, he cries to his God who has forsaken him'.[91] Neither are there any traces of hubris for Jesus combines the acceptance of the title 'Christ' with the 'acceptance of his violent death, including the warning to his disciples not to make his messianic function public'.[92] 'Point by point',[93] therefore, the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ contradicts those marks of estrangement which Tillich elaborated in his analysis of man's existential predicament.[94]

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[90] ST, 2: 148. Tillich also deals with the problem of whether Jesus' rejection of his temptations was a matter of contingency. This idea is unacceptable, for if it were true 'the salvation of mankind would be dependent on the contingent decision of an individual man' (ST, 2: 149). The argument for contingency does not take into account the polar relation of freedom and destiny. If Jesus' decision against Satan's temptations was an act of finite freedom, then this freedom was a consequence of his destiny. The decision was both a result of free individual choice, and of the providence of God. In each case, the directing creativity of God is manifest.

[91] ST, 2: 145

[92] Ibid.

[93] ST, 2: 144

[94] 'This', Tillich adds, 'is not surprising, since the analysis was partly dependent on the confrontation of man's existential predicament with the image of the New Being in the Christ' (Ibid.).

In this way, the biblical account testifies to the fact that in the event of Jesus as the Christ, the New Being overcomes 'concupiscence', 'unbelief' and hubris. Jesus, who is called 'Christ', was sinless and good, but neither quality can be expressed in ethical terms; both are expressions of the New Being which overcomes estrangement. The life of Jesus as the Christ does not remove the negativities of finitude and anxiety, but accepts and transcends them in the power of union with God. The picture of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is not, therefore, one of a divine automaton, for it portrays a personal life subject to temptation and struggle. The anxiety of having to die is not removed, neither is his experience of homelessness, insecurity or loneliness diminished; rather 'he accepts the negativities of existence without removing them'.[95] This is achieved by transcending them in the power of his unity with God; and this 'is the New Being as it appears in the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ'.[96]

The New Testament picture of the New Being in Jesus the Christ concentrates, therefore, upon two basic characteristics: his total participation in man's existential estrangement and his victory over that estrangement. These represent the two basic relations of the Christ to existence, and, according to Tillich, they are further expressed and confirmed by the two central symbols whereby the biblical narrative expresses the universal significance of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. The subjection to existence is symbolized by the 'Cross of the Christ', and the conquest of existence is symbolized by the 'Resurrection of the Christ'. Both are mutually interdependent, for the Cross is the Cross of 'the one who

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[95] ST, 2: 155

[96] Ibid.

has conquered the death of existential estrangement',[97] and the Resurrection is the Resurrection of 'the one who, as the Christ, subjected himself to the death of existential estrangement'.[98] Significantly, and in view of this interdependence, Tillich maintains that they both must be 'reality and symbol. In both cases something <u>happened</u> within existence. Otherwise the Christ would not have entered existence and could not have conquered it'.[99]

The story of the Cross must be viewed, then, as the 'myth of the bearer of the new eon who suffers the death of a convict and slave under the powers of that old eon which he is to conquer'.[100] But this myth or symbol is based on <u>fact</u>, for 'without the factual element, the Christ would not have participated in existence and consequently not have been the Christ'.[101] However, it is impossible, and indeed unnecessary for faith to determine the actual nature of the historical reality beneath the often contradictory legendary reports of the Crucifixion, or to isolate the factual from the symbolic elements. All that is necessary for faith is the belief that Jesus was actually subject to the destructive consequences of existential estrangement.

> The only factual element in it having the immediate certainty of faith is the surrender of him who is

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[97] <u>ST</u>, 2: 176

[98] <u>ST</u>, 2: 177

[99] <u>Ibid.</u> (my emphasis). Other symbols corroborate the two central symbols of the 'Cross' and 'Resurrection'. For the 'Cross' Tillich points to the stories of Jesus' birth, his flight to Egypt, the threats against his life, the climactic events of Gethsemane, his death and burial; for the 'Resurrection', he points to the Virgin Birth, the transfiguration stories, the miracles, and the symbols of Ascension, the Second Coming and ultimate judgment. Both sets of subsidiary symbols signify respectively the subjection to, and conquest of, existence by Jesus the Christ. (See <u>ST</u>, 2: 182-190).

[100] <u>Ibid.</u>

[101] <u>ST</u>, 2: 178

> called the Christ to the ultimate consequences of existence, namely, death under the conditions of estrangement. Everything else is a matter of historical probability, elaborated out of legendary interpretation.[102]

The Resurrection must be viewed in the same way, that is, as fact and symbol, but with this qualitative difference: while the stories of the Cross probably point to an event which took place in the full light of historical observation, 'the stories of the Resurrection spread a veil of deep mystery over the event. The one is a highly probable fact; the other a mysterious experience of a few'.[103] The idea of resurrection is a familiar one, and it was almost unavoidable that it should be applied to the Christ. Nevertheless, in the case of the disciples, it was a real experience which made it possible for them to apply this symbol of resurrection to Jesus and so acknowledge him definitely as the Christ. This experienced event brought the certainty 'that he who is the bringer of the new eon cannot finally have succumbed to the powers of the old eon'.[104] It is this 'experience' of the Resurrection which, Tillich claims, is the decisive test of the Christ-character of Jesus of Nazareth. So, just as in the symbol of the Cross, a factual element is necessarily implied in the symbol of the Resurrection.

Concerning the exact nature of this event and experience upon which the Resurrection symbol is based, Tillich examines three theories, all of which attempt to make the historical fact of Resurrection probable, and all of which are equally inadequate.[105]

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[102] *ST*, 2: 178

[103] *ST*, 2: 177

[104] *ST*, 2: 178

[105] The theories rejected are the 'physical', the 'spiritual' and the 'psychological'. See *ST*, 2: 179-180

His own theory is what he calls the 'restitution theory'.[106] This, he says, must be understood in terms of the negativity which is symbolized as having been overcome in the Resurrection stories: that is, not in terms of the death of an individual man, but in terms of the disappearance from present experience 'of him whose being was the New Being...and his consequent transition into the past except for the limits of memory'.[107] According to Tillich, the power of Jesus' being so impressed itself on the disciples as the power of the New Being that, following his death, they underwent an ecstatic experience in which 'the concrete picture of Jesus of Nazareth became indissolubly united with the reality of the New Being'.[108] Thereafter, the disciples experienced the individual life of Jesus as the one which death itself was unable to push into the past but which is present wherever the New Being is present.

> This event happened first to some of his followers who had fled to Galilee in the hours of his execution; then to many others; then to Paul; then to all those who in every period experience his living presence here and now. This is the event. It has been interpreted through the symbol "Resurrection" which was readily available in the thought forms of that day. The combination of symbol and event is the central Christian symbol, the Resurrection of the Christ.[109]

Tillich admits that his theory is only a probable one, but he maintains that it is most adequate to the facts and to the biblical accounts, particularly to the earliest source of 1 Corinthians. It does not, therefore, have the certainty of faith. Faith can only

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[106] _ST_, 2: 178

[107] _ST_, 2: 181

[108] _Ibid_.

[109] _Ibid_.

provide 'the certainty that the picture of the Christ in the Gospels is a personal life in which the New Being has appeared in its fullness and that the death of Jesus of Nazareth was not able to separate the New Being from the picture of its bearer'.[110]

Reviewing this discussion of the biblical witness to the New Being in Jesus as the Christ, it is evident again that Tillich is careful to avoid the charge that here at least he is offering some kind of proof that Jesus was in fact the Christ because the biblical presentation of him testifies to a life which at every point contradicts the life of estrangement. In no way does he intend to depart from his thesis that any attempt to probe behind the kerygma for an historical proof of its truth misunderstands the nature both of the kerygma and of faith itself. The fact, therefore, that the biblical picture depicts Jesus the Christ as the one who overcomes the 'marks' of estrangement does not add up to an objectively demonstrable argument that his being was New Being or that with him essential manhood actually appeared in existence, any more than, for example, the message of his resurrection enables one to search behind that message to prove the historical fact on which it is based. Easter, Tillich remarks, is not concerned with '...the historical demonstration that once a man, Jesus of Nazareth, rose from the grave'.[111]

But if it is one thing to reject outright any critical-historical attempt to get behind the kerygma in order to provide

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[110] ST, 2: 182. The certainty which faith alone provides will be discussed at length in Chapter V.

[111] 'Ostern', Hannoverscher Kurier, LXXIX, No.179 (April 17th, 1927) p.1. Quoted by A. J. McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964) p.170

a legitimation for it, it appears, on Tillich's view of the biblical picture, quite another to insist, for example, that the Cross and the Resurrection do indeed refer to incidents which actually happened within existence. However hard it may be to distinguish the precise nature of these symbols apart from the confusing mythological and legendary interpretations to which they have been subject, Tillich still finds it necessary to say that they are based on facts. The reason for this is not difficult to find: the kerygma, as the proclamation of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, could not of itself provide the criteria for overcoming existential estrangement. Existential ambiguity can only be overcome in the earthly existence of the personal life of him who is the bearer of the New Being. The statements faith makes concerning the person of Jesus, embodied in the kerygmatic presentation of him as the Christ, are meaningful, therefore, only if an essential correspondence is assumed between the biblical picture and the personal life to which it points. The symbols of Crucifixion and Resurrection are intelligible, then, only to the extent that there is a connection between them and the personal life of Jesus of Nazareth, who did overcome existence in existence. This does not imply an attempt to get behind the kerygma, if by that is meant a search for objective facts which would substantiate the claim that Jesus was actually the Christ, but rather a desire to show that those terms employed to express his universal existential significance are viable only if they correspond to that reality which has come to expression in the kerygma. Christology interprets Jesus <u>as</u> the Christ, but this interpretation is meaningful only in the light of his personal life, not in abstraction from it. As Tillich writes: 'The reli-

gious picture of the New Being in Jesus is a result of a new being: it represents the victory over existence which has taken place, and thus created the picture'.[112]

However much it may relate to and answer the questions implied in the human situation, the biblical picture of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is not, therefore, a portrait of a life deducible from an analysis of the needs arising from man's existential predicament. The statements made by faith, such as 'Jesus is the Christ' or 'Jesus is risen', are understandable from faith's point of view only in so far as they are intended to be statements about the man Jesus. Thus some actual correspondence must be presumed between the reality of Jesus and the biblical presentation of him as the Christ by faith. The 'interpretation' of the 'fact' of Jesus is constitutive of the kerygma, but if the difference between them is one of contradiction, then the kerygma itself is self-contradictory. If, for example, as Tillich has pointed out, the idea of 'Resurrection' is a familiar one, employed independently of Jesus and even before his birth, then clearly of itself it could not provide kerygma. But equally, if the name 'Jesus' is not to become totally arbitrary or incidental, then some appropriate connection must be assumed between the reality signified by that name and the desire to interpret it in such terms. Speech about Jesus cannot arise from an encounter with abstract historical fact but only through an encounter with a situation actually qualified by the earthly Jesus. It is only through reference to this personal reality that kerygmatic statements become intelligible as kerygma,

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[112] RDI: 146 (my emphases)

as the proclamation of God's act in the man Jesus of Nazareth. It is only as testimony to what is believed has actually taken place in the historical Jesus that the necessity of kerygma can be explained at all.[113]

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[113]For further remarks on Tillich's discussion of the Cross and Resurrection, see below pp.108-110, 151-152, 215-216.

CHAPTER III

THE BIBLICAL PICTURE OF JESUS AS THE CHRIST

In view of the preceding discussion of the factual side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', the first thing that must be said about the interpretative side, the 'biblical picture of the Christ', is that it is in no way intended to replace the earthly Jesus. The New Testament portrait of the man who lived two thousand years ago cannot supplant the actual fact signified by the name 'Jesus'. To suppose otherwise would be to deny both the historical claims about Jesus which the kerygma itself makes, and, more specifically, any kind of Incarnational theology in the Christian message. It would also render unintelligible the conjunction of name and title within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' since, Tillich argues, the actual historicity of the man called 'Christ' is presupposed in the meaning of the term by which he is thus described. As we have seen, the term 'Christ' implies, albeit paradoxically, that Essential God-Manhood (or essential manhood) has become historical God-Manhood through the Incarnation when it is applied to the man Jesus. Essential manhood can become actual only in existential man; and this is the irreducible humanistic element in the doctrine of the Incarnation, upon which the creation of New Being depends. If, therefore, what constitutes the 'newness' of the New Being is 'that it exists', or rather that it brings essential manhood <u>into</u> existence, then equally and by the same token, it is analytically true to say that its bearer exists.

The statement that Jesus is the Christ because he is the bearer of the New Being is viable, then, only to the extent that the historical reality of Jesus is admitted. It is the earthly Jesus who initiates New Being, and the interpretation of him found in the gospels recognizes and proclaims as much when it calls him 'Christ'.

A degree of independence must, therefore, be accorded the 'fact' of Jesus over against the interpretation of him as the Christ for only in this way can the stimulus necessary for the actual emergence of the kerygma itself be understood. It is the interpretation which must relate to Jesus if only because, by acknowledging him to be the Christ, the original disciples were confronted with, and recognized, a situation actually and only qualified by Jesus himself. The actuality of that upon which the biblical picture depends was an historical event which, the interpretation itself agrees, so changed the existential situation of men that the term 'Christ' was both warranted and appropriate. In other words, theological interpretation does not create the reality of the situation qualified by Jesus; rather, it is that situation which alone inspires the interpretation and is its criterion. The historical event of the appearance of the New Being, which Christians assert took place in the man Jesus, is the prius of the interpretation of him as the Christ, and no emphasis upon the biblical picture can reverse this relationship. The kerygmatic presentation of Jesus in the biblical picture of him as the Christ cannot, therefore, itself create New Being and thereby initiate the conquest of disruptive existence, if by that is meant that the picture can overcome existence by portraying a life deduced from an appreciation or analysis of the existential condition of man. To repeat - the conquest of estrangement can occur only with the

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appearance, in undistorted, personal and historical form, of essential being within the area of estrangement. It is the reality of this event which is the presupposition and criterion of all subsequent theological interpretations made of it. Here, the interpretation does not create its subject but is created by it.

I. Tillich's Critique of Rudolf Bultmann.

In seeking to make clear this relationship between the interpretation and that which it interprets, Tillich makes some interesting criticisms of Rudolf Bultmann's discussion of the continuity between the earthly Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma. This alone necessitates some mention of Bultmann's thesis. But it is particularly instructive to compare their respective positions for two other reasons. Not only does Tillich share with Bultmann certain common emphases in his approach to the problem of the historical Jesus and in his attempt to reduce historical risk; but, still more significant, his critical comments on Bultmann go some way in clarifying still further his own analysis of the connection between the kerygma and the event it portrays.

The most obvious similarity between Tillich and Bultmann lies, of course, in their general acceptance that, given the distinctive structure of the biblical sources, the validity of Christian faith and preaching neither is nor could be dependent on a detached estimate of Jesus. The gospels do not provide detailed information about the life of Jesus, his character and inner development. What knowledge is to be gleaned from a critical study of the synoptic gospels is simply inadequate for a biographical reconstruction of Jesus' life. As Bultmann remarks, we cannot know, for example, how Jesus himself understood his approaching death once it is admitted that the Passion predictions in the synoptic tradition

are all vaticinia ex eventu.[1] Both Bultmann and Tillich agree, then, that any attempt to base faith on a scientifically constructed portrait of Jesus is methodologically impossible: hence Bultmann's subsequent emphasis on the displacement of the historical Jesus by the proclaimed Christ and Tillich's insistence on the inseparable connection between the historical fact of Jesus and his reception as the Christ.

Furthermore, to this we may add that while, broadly speaking, both men employ existentialist categories for the development of their respective christologies in particular and for the clarification of the Christian faith in general, they carefully stipulate nevertheless that the substance of the gospel cannot be deduced from a philosophical doctrine of man. Bultmann, for instance, rejects any assumption that man can, by his own initiative and without the prior act of God, assume his own true nature or 'authentic being'. It is here, Bultmann says, that the existentialist philosophers part company with the New Testament by confusing 'a theoretical possibility with an actual one'.[2] They fail to see, as the biblical writers do, that man has lost that actual possibility with the fall and is incapable of releasing himself from his fallen state. Consequently, fallen man can be liberated from the despair which accrues from this predicament only by the redemptive act of God in Jesus Christ and in the proclamation about him.

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1. 'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. and ed. by C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964) p.23

2. 'New Testament and Mythology', Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, ed. H. W. Bartsch and trans. R. H. Fuller (2nd ed.; London: S.P.C.K., 1964) p.29

As we have already tried to show, Tillich would fully endorse this emphasis upon the unique act of God in Jesus the Christ as it is highlighted in terms of man's incapacity to realize his authentic nature by a deliberate resolve. 'Man', he writes, 'in relation to God, cannot do anything without him. He must receive in order to act. New being precedes new acting...Only a New Being can produce a new action'.[3] This betrays not only a similar concern to safeguard the distinctive revelatory character of the event of Christ, but equally an overall sympathy with Bultmann on the method of biblical interpretation to be used when discussing it. This is apparent not least in Tillich's desire to express, in those conceptual forms most adequate for an understanding of human experience, the gospel writers' own original concern to embrace and communicate a new comprehension of existence; it is evident also in his corresponding attempt to go beyond a literal and largely outmoded appreciation of the christological language of the New Testament. Thus Tillich does designate his purpose as being one of 'demythologising', if only in the sense that it is a 'fight against the literalistic distortion of symbols and myths. This is a necessary task of Christian theology. It keeps Christianity from falling into a wave of superstitious "objectivisations" of the holy'.[4] Accordingly, it is hardly surprising to find that Tillich attaches himself to the critical wing of the Theologie der Krise, of which, he agrees, Bult-

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[3] ST, 2: 92. See Ch.II, pp.22-23

[4] ST, 2: 176. Tillich agrees substantially with Bultmann's thesis regarding the mythological character of the biblical narratives. So he writes: 'Every literally understood myth is absurd, and therefore I stand completely on the side of the famous demythologising programme of my colleague and friend, Rudolf Bultmann'. 'Das Neue Sein als Zentralbegriff einer christlichen Theologie', Eranos-Jahrbuch, XXIII (Zurich: Rhein, 1955) p.263.

mann is the outstanding representative.[5]

And yet these basic and very real points of coincidence between Tillich and Bultmann should not blind us to the fact that, in the context of their discussions of the continuity between the activity of Jesus and the kerygma, one important difference persists throughout. This relates specifically to the status accorded the characteristics of the earthly Jesus as functionally necessary elements vital to an understanding of the kerygma, or, to put this another way, to the 'operative significance' possessed by the concrete being of Jesus of Nazareth for any coherent appreciation of the central revelatory event proclaimed by the gospels.

Bultmann - to summarize his position briefly - maintains that the gospels perform the necessary function of affirming that the Christ, the heavenly Lord proclaimed by the church in the kerygma, was the earthly Jesus. They are concerned only with the 'fact' of the historical appearance of Jesus, not with its historical form, manner or content. What meets us in the kerygma is Jesus as the Christ, as God's eschatological act of salvation; and all that is necessary for Jesus to be understood in this way is that the fact of his appearance should be proclaimed. Nothing, therefore, of theological importance need be known except that Jesus was born, lived and was crucified and buried. Only the 'that-ness' (the Dass) of Jesus is sufficient. Neither his character (the Wie) nor the content of his teaching (the Was) are capable of recovery and necessary for faith.

It is in relation to this theological devaluation of the importance of the historical 'form' of the earthly Jesus - for

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[5] See 'The Nature and the Significance of Existentialist Thought', Journal of Philosophy, LIII, No.23 (November 1956) pp. 739-748.

which, Bultmann contends, there are Pauline and Johannine precedents[6] - that he develops his position. Faith's appropriation of the kerygma is not only independent of what historical research may discover, since 'detached historical inquiry cannot become aware of what God has wrought in Christ, that is, of the eschatological event';[7] it is also not even partially determined by a 'reminiscent' historical account of what happened in the past. It is true that historically the first preachers of the gospel were dependent upon an actual knowledge of and personal acquaintance with Jesus of Nazareth; but this relation is not the form by which the New Testament proclaims Jesus as the Christ,[8] for here 'the Christ of the kerygma has, as it were, displaced the historical Jesus and authoritatively addresses the hearer - every hearer'.[9] The true way of making the historical fact of Jesus present is not, in other words, achieved through historical reconstruction or re-collection, but through the proclamation of him as the incarnate, crucified and risen one. This means that the 'salvation-occurrence

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[6]For Paul, see particularly 'The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul', Faith and Understanding, ed. R. W. Funk and trans. L. P. Smith (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969) pp.235-246. For John, see Theology of the New Testament, Vol.II, trans. K. Grobel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955) p.66. Here Bultmann writes that the author of the Fourth Gospel understands that Jesus 'reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer. And that amounts to saying that it is he for whom the world is waiting, he who brings in his own person that for which all the longing of man yearns... John, that is, in his Gospel presents only the fact (das Dass) of the Revelation without describing its content (ihr Was)'.

[7]Jesus Christ and Mythology (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960) p.80

[8]See 'New Testament and Mythology', p.38

[9]'The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus', p.30

continues to take place in the proclamation of the word. The salvation-occurrence is eschatological occurrence just in this fact, that it does not become a fact of the past but constantly takes place anew in the present'.[10] The contemporaneity of the fact of Jesus does not lie, therefore, in the historical effects of his work or in what research may discover about him. Jesus, as John, Paul and the New Testament as a whole understand him, is not meant to be the 'historical Jesus'.[11] The early church was not interested either in the objective historicity of the 'features' of Jesus or indeed in simply continuing Jesus' teaching; it rather presented Jesus himself as God's decisive act for men. He is the 'Word' and he is encountered 'in the Word of preaching at any given time'.[12] It is in this sense that the Word of the Christian proclamation and the history which it communicates are one.

While, therefore, it is correct to say that the significance of Jesus Christ for faith depends upon the kerygma which proclaims him as God's eschatological act of salvation, this does not imply a denial of the continuity between Jesus and the kerygma - a continuity which indeed is affirmed by the very insistence upon the Dass rather than upon the Was of Jesus. The fact that the Christ of the kerygma has, to use Bultmann's terminology, crowded out the historical Jesus does not purposely eliminate the significance of

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[10] Theology of the New Testament, Vol.I, trans. K. Grobel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1952) p.302

[11] This is true, therefore, even of the synoptic writers, for whom also the What of Jesus is secondary to the That. Even if they appear to bring us into historical contact with the historical Jesus 'that is only when they are read in the light of the historical problems which have arisen since their day, not when they are read in their original sense'. 'A Reply to the Theses of J. Schniewind', Kerygma and Myth, Vol.I, p.103. Cf. Theology of the New Testament, Vol.II, pp.125-127

[12] Essays, trans. J. C. R. Grieg (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955) p.288

the earthly Jesus, any more than it intentionally entails an absolute discontinuity between the preaching of Jesus and the kerygma of the early church. 'Faith', he writes, 'stresses the paradoxical identity of an historical event and the eschatological event. If the historical Jesus were eliminated, then the paradox would be destroyed and the kerygmatic Christ would be reduced to a mythological figure'.[13] In this sense, then, the actual 'What' and 'How' of the historical appearance of Jesus the Christ are not denied. What is repudiated is the assumption that the 'What' and the 'How', namely the specific characteristics of this event, have any christological relevance, or that they contribute in any way to an understanding of that event's revelatory character.

Tillich admits that Bultmann's argument is an ingenious attempt to avoid the 'historically impossible, namely, to sketch a "life" or a Gestalt of Jesus'.[14] It relies, he continues, upon making the 'words of Jesus' the historical foundation of the Christian faith; and this, Tillich concludes, Bultmann does by treating them not as the 'teachings of Jesus' but as the 'message of Jesus'.[15] This second way in which historical research restricts itself to the words of Jesus is

> more profound than the first. It denies that the words of Jesus are general rules of human behaviour, that they are rules to which one has to subject one's self, or that they are universal and can therefore be abstracted from the situation in which they were spoken. Instead, they emphasise Jesus' message that the Kingdom of God is "at hand" and that those who want to enter it must decide for or against the Kingdom of God. These words of Jesus are not general rules but concrete demands.[16]

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[13] 'Reply', The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, ed. Charles W. Kegley (London: S.C.M. Press, 1966) p.260. (my emphasis)

[14] ST, 2: 122

[15] Ibid., pp.121-122

[16] Ibid., p.122

Thus, as Tillich understands it, in Bultmann's approach one is faced not with the question whether to obey certain moral precepts laid down in the teachings of Jesus but rather with a demand for a decision for or against Jesus' message itself. By this means, Bultmann resolves the problem of the historical Jesus by using the 'immediately given',[17] that is, Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God and its conditions, and by identifying 'the meaning of Jesus with that of his message. He calls for a decision, namely, the decision for God. And this decision includes the acceptance of the Cross, by his own acceptance of the Cross'.[18]

But having given this brief résumé of Bultmann's position, Tillich then proceeds to criticize it severely as follows:

> But even this method of restricted historical judgment cannot give a foundation to the Christian faith. It does not show how the requirement of deciding for the Kingdom of God can be fulfilled. The situation of having to decide remains one of being under the law. It does not transcend the Old Testament situation, the situation of the quest for the Christ. One could call this theology "existentialist liberalism" in contrast to the "legalist liberalism" of the first. But neither method can answer the question of wherein lies the power to obey the teachings of Jesus or to make the decision for the Kingdom of God. This these methods cannot do because the answer must come from a new reality, which, according to the Christian message, is the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. The Cross is the symbol of a gift before it is the symbol of a demand. But, if this is accepted, it is impossible to retreat from the being of the Christ to his words. The last avenue of the search for the historical Jesus is barred, and the failure of the attempt to give a foundation to the Christian faith through historical research becomes obvious.[19]

This argument is a variant of that type of criticism which, like that offered by Paul Althaus, Günther Bornkamm and others,

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., pp.122-123

points to the extreme formlessness or abstract character of the historical event of Jesus the Christ as Bultmann describes it.[20] Tillich is saying that the division Bultmann makes between the being of Jesus and his words, and his consequent one-sided insistence upon the revelatory event as eschatological occurrence, as a present actuality encountered through the proclaiming Word, cannot avoid, if taken in conjunction with his strictures concerning the historical worth of the biblical picture of Jesus, the replacement of the singular character of the event of Christ by what is presently actual and calls men to decision; it cannot preclude, therefore, the inevitable dissolution of the constitutive significance for faith of the actual reality possessed by the earthly Jesus in favour of those subjectively valid impressions 'immediately given' and received through an encounter with the Word of preaching. The continual danger of this approach, to which, Tillich believes, Bultmann succumbs, is that the assertions made by the kerygma thus remain unrelated to that concrete situation which the event of Jesus as the Christ, identified as it is with the actual appearance of the New Being, radically and qualitatively transformed; they become, in other words, detached from their historical source, from that which alone makes them possible and meaningful. In this respect, Tillich would agree with Walter Künneth that revelation 'is not merely "address" _in actu_, but also communication of a _factum_, the message of a completed event of

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[20] See Althaus, _The So-called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus_, trans. David Cairns (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959) p.46; Bornkamm, 'Mythos und Evangelium', _Theologische Existenz heute_, n.s. XXVI (1951) p.18, quoted by Heinz Zahrnt, _The Historical Jesus_, trans. J. S. Bowden (London: Collins, 1963) p.89. Cf. also Hermann Diem, _Dogmatic: Its Way between Historicism and Existentialism_, trans. Harold Knight (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959) p.90.

salvation, in the past'.[21]

It is the New Being, then, the being of Jesus as the Christ, which must alone be the primary object of theological interest. It is tempting to say that this implies simply that Tillich agrees that the reception of Jesus as the Christ is viable only in the light of Jesus himself, only, that is, in the light of him whom the kerygma itself names as its criterion. To do this, however, would result in a dangerous over-simplification. For in view of what our author has already had to say about what must constitute the characteristics of New Being if it is to be recognized as such, and in view of the biblical portrayal of Jesus in a way in which such characteristics are met, Tillich clearly does not agree that the intelligibility of christology depends upon the simple admission that the 'bare fact' (das Dass) of Jesus was determinative in the formation of the primitive kerygma.[22] His discussion of the Cross is a case in point.[23] The Cross, whatever the historical circumstances may have been, is a symbol based on fact. On this, Bultmann concurs. For him also, the Cross is the central historical event which attests to the fact of Jesus' earthly existence; though still offered to us as an ever-present reality in the proclaiming Word, that Word itself, through which God now reveals himself in the Cross of the Christ as the God of forgiving grace, originated in a past historical event: the crucifixion of Jesus.[24] But, Tillich argues, to accept that the

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[21] 'Bultmann's Philosophy and the Reality of Salvation', Kerygma and History: A Symposium on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1962) pp.105-106

[22] See Ch.II, pp.29-42

[23] See Ch.II, pp.36-38

[24] See 'New Testament and Mythology', pp.35-38; Theology of the New Testament, Vol.I, pp.292-306. Cf. J. C. Weber, 'Jesus and the Kerygma in the Light of the Law and Gospel in Bultmann's Theology', Dialog, III, No.3 (Autumn 1964) pp.291-293

kerygma must presuppose the fact of the Cross of the Christ does not mean that the name of the crucified can be invoked apart from those concrete expressions or special qualities which compelled men in the first place to call the Cross the Cross _of_ the Christ. For Tillich, the Cross of the Christ _is_ the Cross of the bearer of the New Being who submitted himself to the destructive structures of old being. The Cross is the Cross of him who was actually subject to, and conquered, the ambiguities of existence. This is entailed in the meaning of the title 'Christ'. That the Christ should exhibit characteristics which confirm his being as New Being is necessary to his soteriological function. The proclamation of the Cross is meaningful, therefore, only in relation to the personal life of him who was crucified. It is not sufficient to say that this proclamation is the ground for overcoming existential estrangement, for the only ground is the presence of New Being in Jesus of Nazareth, mediated to us in the biblical picture of him as the Christ. If the kerygma _as_ kerygma is to be intelligible, then Tillich insists upon a necessary connection between the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ and the actual personal life to which it refers.

While, then, it may be self-evident that the kerygma demands the historical Jesus as its presupposition, it is equally clear that Bultmann has not, in Tillich's opinion, defined the nature of the continuity which he seeks to uphold. The necessity for it may seem obvious, but it is by no means obvious what is meant by this. If, as Tillich has pointed out, Jesus is understood only as pure _Dass_, which thus gives the kerygma no concrete expression apart from a crucifixion which itself has become bare fact, and if, therefore, the assertion of a close relationship between the Easter kerygma and the crucified Jesus remains a totally abstract statement which receives

no specific content in the 'kerygma theology', then it is difficult to see how Bultmann can speak intelligibly of this Dass at all, and how he can specify Jesus of Nazareth as the 'agent of God's presence and activity, the mediator of his reconciliation of the world unto himself'.[25] How can the Cross be preached and explained theologically as offering us a new understanding of ourselves and the possibility of 'authentic existence' if no reference is made to the character of Jesus' being as New Being, through which existence is qualitatively transformed? If the Cross is not viewed in intimate and comprehensive relation to that actual life of which it was the culmination, how can it be approached as a principle element in a new understanding of existence except through an arbitrary injunction to believe that here particularly God acted? Accordingly, Bultmann has not explained sufficiently why there must be a measure of continuity only between the fact of Jesus' Cross and the kerygma to the exclusion of equally important aspects of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ.

Thus Bultmann is formally correct to say that the conjunction of name and title is constitutive of the kerygma, although this alone is unexceptionable and indeed, Tillich would argue, contrary to the theological meaning of 'Christ' if the title is predicated merely of an abstract historical fact. He is also right to say that the kerygma embodies the meaning of Jesus for the primitive Christian community, but wrong, Tillich contends, in maintaining that this meaning is in its substance independent of those events which the biblical picture itself portrays. Finally, Tillich similarly acknowledges the importance of warning against attempts to get behind the kerygma in order to provide some kind of legitimation for it as a

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[25] 'New Testament and Mythology', p.44

focus of faith. But again, the need to emphasize the role and function of the historical Jesus vis-a-vis the kerygma depends not upon legitimatizing the kerygma prior to or even apart from faith, but upon maintaining the intelligibility and viability of the kerygma as kerygma: that is, as a particular interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth which ascribes to him ultimate existential significance, and which is occasioned not by the impact upon the first disciples of selected aspects of his life but by the impression made upon them by his person and work in its totality.

Carrying this line of thought one stage further, we can see from this how surprisingly orthodox are Tillich's intentions throughout his discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus. Primarily he desires to retain the decisive relationship that Christianity has to its historical basis, and which, he believes, was jeapordized in Bultmann's theology. It is for this reason that he insists that the coherence of christological thinking depends substantially upon the extent to which it can express what has actually taken place in Jesus the Christ. Thus the situation originally determined and qualified by the earthly man Jesus is necessary to any understanding of the kerygma itself and of the particular concrete form that kerygmatic statements possess. The unequivocal significance of the kerygma is not, therefore, that it contains and pictorially expresses certain ethical and religious principles derived from a particular view of reality, but that it reveals a special understanding of existence which is itself determined by the decisive appearance of New Being in the Christ, by what, in other terms, 'came to expression' in the person of Jesus the Christ. The existential and ontological form by which Tillich seeks to reinterpret the meaning of this event for us is not, then, designed to reduce its historical character to the level

of philosophical abstraction or general truth. On the contrary, it is intended to expose the contemporary relevance of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' which is otherwise obscured by the perplexing mythological and legendary elements that surround it. By this means it is possible to re-affirm today what was already the presupposition of the primitive kerygma, namely, that without the historical Jesus, and without the situation actually qualified by him, there could be no kerygma. No understanding of the kerygma, whether it be the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth for the early Christian community expressed in substantially mythological language, or whether it be the proclamation of Jesus as the Christ here and now expressed by ontological concepts more relevant to contemporary existential conditions, is possible without taking into account the actual way in which Jesus originally impinged on the human situation. The title 'Christ' is appropriate to the name 'Jesus' only if he to whom the name refers did actually exhibit a life which, at every point, contradicted the 'marks' of estrangement while yet being subject to the ambiguous conditions of existence. So, for example, stories, such as those dealing with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, his flight to Egypt, the early threat to his life by the political powers, his agony at Gethsemane, confirm that the picture of the Christ found in the gospels is of a personal life, subject to existence, in which the New Being appeared.[26]

II. Tillich and the 'Synoptic Jesus'.

This mention of the biblical witness to the New Being in Jesus as the Christ, to those features which mark Jesus' character as that of essential manhood participating in the disruptive forces of existence without being conquered by them, points us in another

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[26] ST, 2: 183

direction. What value does Tillich attribute to those biblical narratives which appear to attach most importance to the historical details of Jesus' life and ministry?

We remember that symptomatic of Bultmann's strong reaction against any move towards the 'Jesus of history' is his apparent disinterest in the 'synoptic Jesus', in that gospel tradition which most particularly connects the claims made by Christianity with an historical reality, with the concrete historical form of Jesus' life. This depreciation in importance of those characteristics of the earthly Jesus recorded in the synoptic accounts has been seen already in Bultmann's general contention that the synoptic writers were not in fact primarily concerned with the What of Jesus; but it became more evident with his isolation of the crucifixion from those events which led up to it in the career, words, and works of Jesus. By contrast, Tillich presents us with a different conception of the historical worth of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ - as, indeed, one might expect from the previous comparison with Bultmann. Tillich rather begins with the basic assumption that, despite the undoubted complexities involved in biblical study, there is an underlying unity between all the books. All unite in asserting that Jesus is the Christ.[27] 'This is necessarily so', he writes, 'because the New Testament is the book of the community whose foundation is the acceptance of Jesus as the Christ'.[28] For this reason, against the so-called liberal theology, there is, he continues, no substantial difference between the message of Christ given in the Gospels and Epistles. What difference there is between the synoptic account and the remainder of the New Testament (including the Gospel of John) lies in the former giving

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[27] ST, 2: 135

[28] Ibid., p.156

'the picture on which the assertion that Jesus is the Christ is based, while the latter give the elaboration of this assertion and its implications for Christian thought and life'.[29] But this distinction is not exclusive for it is one of emphasis not substance. In this sense, the 'New Testament witness is unanimous in its witness to Jesus as the Christ. This witness is the foundation of the Christian church'.[30]

The New Testament is, then, for Tillich the basic and original source for any knowledge of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. It is this fact, coupled with his insistence upon a fundamental homogeneity of interest throughout the Gospels and Epistles, which explains why Tillich is not limited to the Cross of Christ in his appraisal of what constitutes the significant historical elements in the apostolic picture of Jesus. Quite the reverse in fact, for he rather assumes that christology is concerned with the whole Christ of the whole Bible, that is, with the New Testament presentation of Jesus <u>in its entirety</u>. Tillich, in his systematic treatment of the impact made by the biblical picture of Jesus as the bearer of New Being, does not proceed, therefore, on the basis of critical or exegetical distinctions between the various and contrasting ways in which the confession of Jesus as the Christ has been interpreted.[31] He does not, in other words, view

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[29] <u>Ibid</u>., p.135

[30] <u>Ibid</u>.

[31] This does not imply that Tillich ignores the variety of interpretations which exist in the biblical picture. The principle a(contrast mentioned by him is that between the synoptic emphasis on the participation of Jesus in the negativities of existence over against the Johannine emphasis on his victory over them. The other differences referred to are those between the kingdom-centred sayings of Jesus in the Synoptics and the Christ-centred nature of his sayings in John, and their varying interpretations of the way in which Jesus places himself in the eschatological framework (<u>ST</u>, 2: 156-158). Tillich's point is that these divergencies do not in any way obstruct the impact made by the biblical picture of Jesus

the Pauline and Johannine interpretations as isolated and sufficient in themselves, any more than he can accept the possibility of a christology which takes no account of the historical bias evident in the synoptic accounts. If, for example, the Johannine tradition emphasizes that aspect of the biblical portrait which is concerned particularly with the '<u>victory</u> of the New Being over the conditions of existence',[32] then the synoptic tradition is its concomitant; it focuses predominantly upon the '<u>participation</u> of the New Being in the conditions of existence',[33] that is, upon the appearance of the New Being in historical reality, and thereby provides the second, and equally indispensable, aspect of the biblical picture of the Christ. We have seen before how Tillich incorporates this, essentially synoptic, stress in his explication of the term 'essential manhood'. Though dominated largely by Johannine and Pauline concepts (<u>Logos</u>, Second Adam), his discussion nevertheless concluded with the biblical witness to those 'concrete details' which 'confirm' Jesus as the bearer of the New Being, as the one who brings essential manhood into existence.[34] Though tempted, Jesus sins neither by unbelief, nor by <u>hubris</u>, nor by concupiscence; and though offering no deductive proof that the being

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for 'in all cases the substance is untouched. It shines through as the power of the New Being in a threefold colour: first and decisively, as the undisrupted unity of the centre of his being with God; second, as the serenity and majesty of him who preserves this unity against all the attacks coming from estranged existence; and, third, as the self-surrendering love which represents and actualises the divine love in taking the existential self-destruction upon himself. There is no passage in the Gospels - or, for that matter, in the Epistles - which takes away the power of this threefold manifestation of the New Being in the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ'. (<u>Ibid</u>., pp.158-159)

[32] <u>ST</u>, 2: 156 (my emphasis)

[33] <u>Ibid</u>. (my emphasis)

[34] <u>Ibid</u>., p.144. See Ch.II, p.32

of Jesus was the New Being, such attributes do substantiate the act of revelation in Jesus in a way which can inform and structure the pattern of faith. So Moody Smith writes:

> Tillich regards this kind of concretely historical (the Wie and the Was) portrayal to be theologically indispensable to the biblical picture and to Christology, understood as the explication of the answer to the question of human existence. In Tillich's view the development from the earliest kerygma to Paul to the second-generation church, which produced the synoptic as well as the Johannine gospels, is to be accepted, not uncritically, but nevertheless in its totality, as a necessary movement in the right direction. Tillich therefore agrees with the "early catholic church" which set the gospels at the beginning of the canon in giving particular emphasis to the fundamental significance of the earthly Jesus.[35]

Moody Smith makes one further point which should be mentioned here. The extent to which Tillich sees the primary significance of the biblical witness to Jesus as the Christ to be the conquest of estrangement within existence, in a personal life possessing finite freedom, is indicative also of the degree to which he has been influenced by the liberal picture of the historical Jesus. 'Such a conception of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ', Smith says, 'which is so largely informed by the synoptic gospels, and particularly by a certain estimate of what is historical or at least representative of historical reality, would have been unlikely prior to the modern period. It is deeply indebted to the modern effort to understand Jesus as a person and, therefore, to understand him historically'.[36] This is quite true. Tillich's theological interest in the 'features' of Jesus' life and ministry as they are enumerated in the biblical picture does certainly, for instance, reflect the liberal predilection for the first

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[35] 'The Historical Jesus in Paul Tillich's Christology', The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No.1, Part II (January 1966) p.141

[36] Ibid., p.140

three gospels. He agrees, of course, that, in the case of the liberals, such a preoccupation is too one-sided, and that criticisms may justifiably be levelled against the techniques and methods adopted by them for testing the reliability and authenticity of the synoptic evidence. But however correct these criticisms may be, the liberal emphasis does require that the concrete historical reality of Jesus cannot henceforth be a matter of indifference to the theologian since it is this which confronts him in the biblical witness to the New Being in Jesus the Christ. True, <u>that</u> Jesus died for us, was buried, and rose again is the decisive witness to the appearance of the New Being in him; and the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles provide us with the most important and elaborate treatments of its implications. But we are concerned with the 'synoptic Jesus' as well, with the realistic implications that the identification of the New Being <u>in</u> Jesus of Nazareth has for his life as a whole. In Tillich's theology, it is this insistence upon the concretely historical Jesus rather than upon his sheer historicity, the stress of the particular over against the abstract, which is essentially liberal in origin. And this debt Tillich readily acknowledges:

> Smith says that I am very dependent on the liberal Christology of the nineteenth century. If this means dependence on its emphasis on the Synoptics and the human picture of Jesus he is right; but this emphasis is present in all mystical theology and in the personal piety of Christians in all periods. Without it the Pauline-Johannine vision of the drama of salvation would be without a historical point of reference, or, more probably, it would never have come into lasting existence.[37]

It is a definite misinterpretation of Tillich's thesis to say, then, that he is uninterested in the concrete historical

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[37] 'Rejoinder' to D. Moody Smith, <u>The Journal of Religion</u>, XLVI, No.1, Part II (January 1966) p.193

reality of Jesus the Christ as it is portrayed in the apostolic kerygmatic traditions.[38] The biblical picture of the Christ is that of a figure who actually lived in history. Though independent of any objective, methodological appraisal of those 'bare facts' about him which the synoptics particularly incorporate, nevertheless faith does depend on the figure of Jesus in as much as the primitive Christian community does receive him as a cardinal element not only in its message but also in the creation of it. The biblical picture of Jesus the Christ does not, therefore, deprive faith of its historical basis since it is precisely this which is included in the kerygma as a fundamental constituent both of its formation and construction. Thus there is no other Christ than that inextricably linked to the man called 'Jesus', whose features the biblical witness presents. The Christian believer may not depend on the 'historical Jesus', the product of scientific reconstruction; but he does rely, however, on the assertion that in the fullness of Jesus' life, and not in certain aspects of it, essential manhood appeared within the area of estrangement; he does require the historical Jesus Christ, Jesus as the Christ in actual fact. 'Jesus the Christ' is not, in other words, to be identified with the 'historical Jesus', if by that term we are denoting the attempt to establish the objective facts about Jesus; it refers rather to the earthly Jesus <u>as</u> the object of faith and the content of the kerygma, to him whom the Christian community accepts <u>as</u> the

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[38]Some remarks by W. Norman Pittenger are relevant here. 'Nor is it fair to say', he writes, 'that Tillich gives up the actual historicity of Jesus and is concerned only with the total "biblical Christ", or the Church's understanding of the meaning of that which is asserted in the New Testament about the significance of Jesus, and in terms of which the story of his historic existence is conveyed. In fact, Tillich is in many ways (as he has said to me) a rather conservative New Testament scholar, and he believes that there is a more accurate portrayal of the man Jesus in the gospels than many extreme critics would allow'. See 'Paul Tillich as a Theologian: An Appreciation', <u>Anglican Theological Review</u>, XLIII, No.3 (July 1961) p.278.

bearer of the New Being.

III. Historie and Geschichte.

The distinction just mentioned, which hereafter determines Tillich's discussion of the biblical picture, depends largely on the difference that exists between the two German words for 'history', Historie and Geschichte, a difference which Tillich's teacher, Martin Kähler, helped to reveal and which Tillich himself absorbed in his semantic analysis of the term 'historical Jesus'.[39] Now, at this important stage in his argument, Tillich introduces it again and plays upon it with quite decisive effect.

These two words have been interpreted into English in a variety of ways, but the most common, since Kähler normally employed them in their adjectival form, is to translate historisch as 'historical' and geschichtlich as 'historic'.[40] By historisch Kähler meant the 'past-historical', the dead past established by an allegedly presuppositionless historiographical science. The word geschichtlich, on the other hand, he defines as follows:

> What is a truly "historic figure", that is, a person who has been influential in molding posterity, as measured by his contribution to history? Is it not the person who originates and bequeaths a permanent influence?...Thus, from a purely historical point of view the truly historic element in any great figure is the discernible personal influence which he exercises upon later generations.[41]

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[39] See above, Ch.I, p.52, n.120.

[40] This is the translation used by R.H.Fuller in Kerygma and Myth (see Vol.I, pp.xi-xii). The terms 'outer history' and 'inner history' are adopted by H. Richard Niebuhr in The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1962) pp.62, 76-77; and 'objective-historical' and 'existential-historical' by John Macquarrie in An Existentialist Theology (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955) pp.166, 171.

[41] The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964) p.63. Kähler's original essay, with the same title, was first published in 1892 (Leipzig: A. Deichert). A second edition of 1896 added three other essays, only the first of which is included in the English translation.

It is this definition which leads Käḧler to identify the 'historic' Jesus with the 'biblical' Christ, for when we ask what decisive influence Jesus had upon posterity there can be only one answer: 'According to the Bible and church history it consisted in nothing else but the faith of his disciples, their conviction that in Jesus they had found the conqueror of guilt, sin, temptation, and death. From this one influence all others emanate; it is the criterion by which all the others stand or fall. This conviction of the disciples is summed up in the single affirmation, "Christ is Lord"'.[42]

The real presence of the 'historic' Jesus is, therefore, actualised only in the effect caused by him, namely, in the faith of the apostles. This is the first characteristic of Christ's permanent influence: the evocation of faith from his disciples. The second characteristic, however, is that this faith was 'confessed', a confession which brought the Church into being, and upon which the believer's faith even now depends. With this in mind, Käḧler can proceed to his famous assertion that the 'real Christ', the Christ who has exerted such an influence in history, 'is the Christ who is preached';[43] and the preached Christ is precisely the Christ of faith. This means, in effect, that faith does not depend upon the bare report of historical facts, but rather that the foundation of the kerygma is the faith of, and initial proclamation of Jesus as the Christ by, the earliest Christian community. The event upon which the church is founded is this preaching and confession, and the only 'historic' Christ is the Christ of this proclamation. It is for this reason that the significance of the biblical narratives about Jesus is not to be seen

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[42] Ibid., pp.63-64 (my emphasis)

[43] Ibid., p.66

in the historical material contained in them; it resides in their testimony to the church's faith, or, to be more exact, in their witness to the earliest church's own witness to its faith in Jesus as the Christ. The sole avenue of approach to the 'historic' Jesus is, therefore, through the picture of the Christ preached by the church and given in the New Testament. There can be no access to the 'real Christ' which is not finally determined by the biblical kerygma. Thus, according to Kähler's thesis, there is, writes C. E. Braaten,

> no meaningful recourse to any purely objective facts about Jesus which discounts the living continuum of historical interpretation effected by him.
>
> Historical meaning is thus the key to an understanding of the truth and reality of the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth. This meaning has emerged in the consciousness of those who live in undisrupted historical continuity with the initial, creative, and personal thrust of Jesus Christ. All knowledge of Jesus, even that of his historical existence, is dependent upon those who remembered him for no other reason than that he acquired the meaning of Christ and Savior to them.44

Kähler's contrast between der historische Jesus (the so-called focus of historical-critical research) and der geschichtliche, biblische Christus (the content of the kerygma and the object of faith) provides us with the clue to Tillich's understanding of the biblical picture. When Tillich speaks of the 'fact' of Jesus vis-a-vis the interpretation of him as the Christ, he uses the word in the quite specific Kählerian sense, and implies thereby a particular assessment of the relation between history and the kerygma. The kerygma is directly related to Geschichte, to an historically significant event which did, and still does, exert a creative force both in each individual's life of faith and in the life of the church as

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44 'Martin Kähler on the Historic Biblical Christ', The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964) p.97. Cf. D.L.Deegan, 'Martin Kähler: Kerygma and Gospel History', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVI, No.1 (March 1963) pp.50-67.

a whole; but it is not related to Historie, to a past-historical event which can be resuscitated by historical analysis of the gospel narratives. This implies that any attempted historical reconstruction of the Jesus of history is not simply methodologically impossible but also theologically inappropriate. Tillich's argument for the 'irrelevance' of the 'historical Jesus' (the product of research) for faith and christological doctrine is not, in consequence, derived solely from an awareness of the historical unreliability of the gospels and the high improbability of ever achieving an objective historical appreciation of Jesus - however important such factors may be; it arises, in addition, from the realization that what is 'historical' (historisch) in the gospels cannot be deduced apart from and prior to faith since the history the gospels relate is inherently 'historic' (geschichtlich) in character. So, far from depending upon objective evidence, the Christian faith is not even concerned with any picture other than that of Jesus as the Christ. It is not even partially determined by what can be scientifically demonstrated; its only interest is in the kerygmatic portrait of Jesus the Christ presented by the primitive Christian community of believers. The data of christology are not, therefore, historical facts as such but confessions of faith regarding them.

The indispensability of the biblical narrative is thus maintained in the following way. The Incarnation entails an event, the historical occurrence of which could have been photographed. This much we have seen in our discussion of the factual side of the Christ-event in the previous chapter. But no such photograph exists. All we have is a portrait, the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ', in which Jesus is regarded as the Christ, the Son of God,

the Logos. The acceptance and reception of Jesus as the Christ resulted in the collection of data about him, in which both the activity of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah and of receiving faith were manifest. Consequently, the picture we have before us of Jesus is one which presents Jesus as the Christ. 'Jesus as the Christ' is the assertion of faith, and this is the only picture we have of him. Christology is not, therefore, based on determinable empirical facts, for the New Testament writers were not interested in reporting merely factual data; this, indeed, was a secondary concern. They were interested only in transmitting a religiously significant picture of Jesus. 'The original picture which existed from the beginning', Tillich says, 'was of a numinous and interpreted character, and it was this which proved to have the power to conquer existence'.[45]

In other words, biblical criticism cannot effectually undermine Christian faith because the empirical truth of Jesus cannot be distinguished apart from the faithful appropriation of that fact, in which the recipient is quite as important as the fact itself. In this respect, the relation of fact to interpretation is as follows:

> The Christian fact is not formally dismissed. Interpretation must be interpretation of some actual fact else it is not valid interpretation but illusion. Yet, functionally speaking, "the Christ" (the interpretation) becomes the foundation of Christian thought and devotion.[46]

We can express the point being made here in another way. Tillich's christology depends on upholding consistently the interdependence of the 'fact' of Jesus and his 'reception' as the Christ within the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. If this is done, then the

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[45] RDI: 145

[46] R. C. Johnson, 'The Jesus of History and the Christian Faith', Theology Today, X, No.2 (July 1953) p.174

implications for the argument at hand are important. In the first place, it must be said that Jesus who is called the Christ was actually the Christ; in him New Being did really appear. Belief is not, therefore, based upon itself or a poetic creation but upon an objective, photographable, occurrence which is the presupposition of, and impulse behind, its own kerygmatic interpretation. Christianity depends upon the certainty that this isolated fact within time and space did actually happen. Such an emphasis upon a concrete historical fact does, of course, provide a common point of reference both for the believer and the historian: neither can remain indifferent to the central fact to which the Christian faith refers. However, in the second place, it must be said also that this identity does not mean that the relation that faith and historical science have to this fact is similarly identical. In contrast to the conclusions reached by historical research, the statements of faith, though including references to an historical fact, are nevertheless uniformly assertions <u>of</u> faith; they are assertions, that is, reached only by faith and not by historical observation. Accordingly, so Tillich's argument runs, the 'factual' side of the Christ-event is always maintained conjointly with the 'receiving' side; and, in consequence, it must be admitted that there can be no critical assessment of Jesus' significance which is independent of the way faith itself interprets him. Thus, for example, there can be no objective appraisal of the historical appropriateness of the interpretation to the earthly Jesus, if by that is implied a separation of the historical from the interpreted elements within the event 'Jesus as the Christ', since, indeed, Jesus is equally the Christ <u>because</u> he is the Christ for the believer.

The relation of fact to interpretation within the Christ-event therefore supports two claims: first, that Jesus is the Christ

for the believer who receives him as the Christ because he actually and historically was the Christ; and second, that Jesus is also the Christ because he is the Christ for the believer who receives him as the Christ. The mutual relatedness of these two assertions, which reflects the necessary association of the two elements which determine the structure of the central Christian event, explains why Christ is not merely 'the head of the Church'[47] but why he and his church are 'necessarily interdependent',[48] for without the believing reception of Jesus as the Christ, Jesus could not have been the Christ 'even if he had claimed to be the Christ';[49] it illustrates, moreover, why the New Testament, the original and basic witness to the Christ of the preached message of the disciples, is itself

> an integral part of the event which it documents. The New Testament represents the receptive side of that event and provides, as such, a witness to the factual side. If this is true, one can say that the New Testament as a whole is the basic document of the event upon which the Christian faith rests.[50]

Jesus the Christ as the ground of faith cannot, therefore, be segregated from the biblical witness to him, just as no historical fact can be disconnected from the sources through which it is known. This is the sense in which the biblical picture provides the functional basis of Christian thought. This basis is not a projection of faith, an imagined portrait produced by a handful of Jews. Rather, the kerygmatic presentation by the New Testament of Jesus as the Christ is itself founded upon the reality of the 'historic' Jesus, that is, the significance which faith ascribes to him, and to which the Bible bears witness, corresponds to the actual sig-

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[47] ST, 2: 114

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., pp.134-135

nificance of the being of the earthly Jesus. Fact and interpretation are thus inseparable; name and title are likewise strictly complementary.

But these conjunctions themselves imply that no knowledge of 'Jesus as he actually was' can independently provide a basis for a knowledge of him as the Christ; they endorse the conclusion that there can be no interest in Jesus himself which is distinguishable apart from faith's own perception and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ; and they complete the argument that the statements of faith regarding Jesus are attained only in connection with faith's own testimony in the kerygmatic acounts of him. These are the reasons why the appearance of the Christ, to which the New Testament bears witness, remains and will continue to remain unknowable in any scientific sense, and why the implications that the photographable nature of this event has for historical enquiry are reduced to unimportance and irrelevance. There can be no successful attempt to go beyond the biblical presentation of Jesus in order to supplement the religious picture with a photographic picture since, indeed, it is the presupposition of faith that the historian's Jesus is <u>not</u> the Christ of faith. It is the <u>a priori</u> of faith that Jesus, whom faith receives as the Christ, can be known as the Christ only by faith.

Tillich fully endorses this understanding of his position. First, it realizes the implications of the two-fold semantic distinction which Tillich made within the term 'historical Jesus'. If the factual character of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' is presented only within a situation of faith (which 'Jesus as the Christ' constitutes) then in this sense the question of faith is raised without reference to biblical criticism. Second, the coincidence of fact and faith within the biblical picture precludes historical research from finding the historical Jesus because in

order to do this research would have to separate two elements which are, however, inseparable, namely, the factual from the receiving side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. Consequently, the failure of the 'quest' is not a matter of the preliminary shortcomings of biblical research, which could, perhaps, be rectified at a later date, but is 'caused by the nature of the sources itself'.[51] Third, the essentially interpretative character of the biblical narratives does not imply the dissolution of the factual-historical element in the gospels for 'if the factual element in the Christian event were denied, the foundation of Christianity would be denied'.[52] This can only mean that a confessional statement, such as 'Thou art the Christ', must be grounded in the factuality of Jesus' earthly existence; and to be sceptical of the work of biblical research is not to deny this element, for the event 'Jesus as the Christ' would, as we have seen, be nothing without it.

Bearing these points in mind, it is hardly difficult to see the constitutive significance the biblical picture has for the Christian faith. It is not that through the picture we can know Jesus' personality, inner development and the course of his life; nor is it that an emphasis is placed on Jesus' consciousness of being the bearer of the Word of God to call men to decision in the last hour. It is seen rather in Tillich's stress on the mode whereby the fact of Jesus is apprehended. 'Jesus is the Christ' is a kerygmatic proclamation which has meaning only within a faith encounter-situation. From this, Tillich can develop his thesis that the historical-critical effort to discover the historical Jesus is of little concern for faith because from the beginning 'the basis

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[51] Ibid., p.118

[52] Ibid., p.123

of faith was a certain fruitful confluence of fact and mode of appropriation of fact - interpretation, and appropriative appreciation'.[53] As we have seen, this argument for safeguarding the Christian faith from being determined by historical criticism is the outcome of the basic semantic distinction drawn by Tillich within the term 'historical Jesus'. The only valid meaning of the term is that there is a factual element within the event 'Jesus the Christ'. However, in view of the distinction between the 'historical Jesus' of biblical research and the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ', Tillich can conclude that the presence of this factual element does not raise the question of historical research for the only 'historical Jesus' that exists is found within the biblical picture. This picture was formed in the situation of faith, and, as such, effectually precludes historical investigation from undermining that factual element which faith receives and to which faith responds. Behind the actual appearance of that reality which has created faith undoubtedly lie episodes and situations which the historian will be determined to recover; but, from the viewpoint just described, such attempts, however important they may be, are, in the final analysis, irrelevant for Christian faith and devotion.

IV. Appendix: The thesis of Thomas M. Dicken.

At this juncture, it should be said that this assessment we have offered of Tillich's discussion of the relation between 'fact' and 'interpretation' within the biblical picture does not remain unchallenged. In several important ways, it differs from an

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[53] R. E. Cushman, 'The Christology of Paul Tillich', The Heritage of Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of Robert Lowry Calhoun, ed. R. E. Cushman and E. Grislis (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) p.176

alternative view offered by Thomas M. Dicken;[54] and, before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to make some mention of it.

Dicken is similarly concerned with discovering precisely where Tillich locates the saving event of Christianity. 'Exactly where', he asks, 'in Tillich's terminology, is the locus of the New Being?'[55] He begins by pointing out that the usual conclusion reached by Tillich's interpreters lies with one of two alternatives, both of which correspond to the factual and receptive sides of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. In the first alternative, the essence of the Christian claim for Tillich, it is held, is an historical assertion about Jesus of Nazareth: 'it is not enough that Jesus is called the Christ - he must actually be the Christ'.[56] In the second alternative, the 'New Being is actualized not in Jesus of Nazareth, about whom we can know nothing with certainty, but rather in the faith of the Church which we know immediately'.[57]

We arrive again, therefore, at the familiar question asked of Tillich: Is the gospel located in Jesus as the Christ, or is it localized in the Church and its faith? Dicken believes that the two directions which are normally taken by commentators, and which are reflected in the very juxtaposition of such questions, miss an important element in Tillich's presentation which, if realized, would in fact obviate many of the difficulties which otherwise arise from them.

> Our thesis can be stated very simply. For Tillich, the New Being, the event on which Christianity is based, is "the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ". The phrase "the biblical picture" must be emphasized, because

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[54] 'The Biblical Picture of Jesus as the Christ in Tillich's Theology', The Journal of Religious Thought, XXV, No.1 (1968-1969) pp.27-41

[55] Ibid., p.29

[56] Ibid., p.28

[57] Ibid., p.29

the importance of this phrase is precisely what has been neglected by Tillich's critics. The biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ has an ontic status which is not reducible to either Jesus of Nazareth or the faith of the Church. In other words, "the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ" is not identical with "Jesus as the Christ", though there is a natural tendency to telescope the phrase in this way, and Tillich's critics have tended to do so. The saving event, the New Being, is the biblical picture per se, not Jesus of Nazareth or the Church. The biblical picture is the unity which has been created by fact and reception, by Jesus of Nazareth and the faithful response of his disciples. But it is not reducible to either of these.[58]

Only two points made by Dicken are of immediate concern for us. First, he maintains that even if Tillich does admit that it was the 'biblical picture' which created the Church, he would not deny that in some sense the early Church created the New Testament. From this, Dicken derives his significant conclusion. 'So we must suggest', he writes, 'that Tillich's meaning is that the "picture of Jesus as the Christ" created the Church, which in turn embodied this picture in the "biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ". Christianity was born with the picture of Jesus as the Christ, presumably at the time of Peter's confession'.[59] Taking this as an axiom of Tillich's thesis, Dicken proceeds to his second point: it is the 'biblical picture' itself which is the Christian saving event. 'If the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ is the event on which Christianity is based, then the biblical picture must itself be the locus of the Incarnation'.[60] The suggestion is, then, that while Tillich makes no kind of historical claim that existential estrangement was actually overcome in Jesus of Nazareth, he does agree that it is the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ which itself conquers the

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[58] Ibid., p.30

[59] Ibid., p.31

[60] Ibid., p.33

negativities of existence.[61] It is only <u>according to the biblical picture</u> of Jesus that we find no traces of unbelief, <u>hubris</u> or concupiscence in him; and this emphasis is not simply fortuitous since it is only <u>in the biblical picture</u> that New Being is manifest. This, Dicken argues, is exactly what Tillich means when he says that the 'paradox of the Incarnation is the picture of Jesus as the Christ, the picture of essential Godmanhood appearing in existence and under its conditions'.[62]

Perhaps the most direct way of assessing the validity of Dicken's analysis is to consider immediately the question whether Tillich would agree that the biblical picture possesses a normative value for the Christian faith. Initially, his answer appears to be quite precise and straightforward: the biblical picture presented in the New Testament depicts a two-sided event, the actuality of which is the basis of Christianity.[63] Expressed another way, the value of this picture for Christian belief may be said to consist in the fact that it portrays the founding of Christianity, that is, the moment when Jesus the Christ was received as the Christ. As it stands, of course, this reply is misleading, for Tillich is here making no suggestion that the picture chronicles the history of Christianity's origin. While, therefore, his very use of the word 'picture' may indeed presuppose some intimate relationship between the actual Christ-event and its biblical portrayal, recognition of this alone neither could nor does sanction any search for the objective facts about Jesus through scientific or historiographic analysis of those factual elements which, Tillich

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[61] <u>Ibid</u>., p.31

[62] <u>RDI</u>: 144

[63] <u>ST</u>, 2: 112

admits, the biblical picture contains. We have seen that this is precluded by the dual character of the event itself, which entails that no uninterpreted facts relating to Jesus are discernible apart from the way in which he was originally accepted by the disciples. The biblical picture is not, then, an historical document, interested only in recounting the story of a uniquely interesting person; it is rather, both in presupposition and intention, a 'confessional' portrait, giving the picture of him who is the Christ, the one who, accordingly, has a universal significance not explicable simply in terms of his own factuality.

The Christian faith is concerned, therefore, with Jesus as he is kerygmatically portrayed by the early Christian community of believers; it has no interest in any picture of Jesus other than the biblical picture of him as the Christ; it refers only to that picture created by, and mediating, the faith of the primitive Christian community when receiving Jesus as the Christ. If, then, the viability of the Christian position depends upon the actuality of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', and if the knowledge we have of it is derived basically from its biblical source, then clearly the biblical witness to the impression made by Jesus upon the first disciples is immediately endowed with a certain and quite unimpeachable epistemological significance for the believer.

Tillich's meaning appears to be this: for those not contemporaries of the event, Jesus as the Christ is encountered through the biblical picture's witness to the original encounter between Jesus and his apostles; and it is in this sense that the New Testament becomes part of the revelation it records, belonging to the substance of the event itself. As the only available account of that event in which Jesus was accepted as the Christ, the biblical

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picture of him in the New Testament properly belongs, therefore, to the receiving side of that event itself, and witnesses to its factual side.[64] For this reason, it is not merely that nothing could be known about the original event if it were not for its mediation through the picture created by those who were themselves involved in the event they describe; it is rather that, apart from this transmission of the first disciples' experience of accepting Jesus as the Christ, no event would exist to be known by those not eye-witnesses of its actual occurrence. The biblical picture, to conclude, originates with an event; but for those not contemporaneous with it, this event becomes significant, that is, becomes the event Christians assert it is, only through the significance ascribed to it in the biblical picture.

Tillich's evaluation of the biblical picture's role in conveying to us the original awareness of Jesus as the Christ undoubtedly does invest it with a normative authority for the faith of each individual Christian. The kerygmatic portrayal of Jesus in the New Testament is both the creation of and witness to his first reception as the Christ by the early Christian community; as such, it is the cause for the continuation and eventual acceptance of this particular interpretation of Jesus through and by succeeding generations of Christian believers. The only perceptible 'fact' of the Christ-event is the interpretation made of it in its apostolic proclamation in the biblical picture; and it is in this sense alone that the picture may be appropriately considered as the foundation of Christian belief.

But the question now is whether Tillich is implying by this that the picture <u>is</u> the saving event, the New Being. We

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[64]See above, pp.124-125.

must ask whether Tillich, as Dicken suggests, is wishing to infer from the statement that Christian faith depends upon the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' that this 'picture' is itself the locus of the Incarnation. The point at issue here is where Tillich intends to place the primal datum of faith. Is it the 'significance' attached to Jesus in the biblical picture of him as the Christ, is it the 'content' of this picture, that which portrays essential manhood present in the existential manhood of Jesus? Or is it rather 'Jesus as he is in himself', that is, Jesus in whom the New Being actually appeared independently of any subsequent assessment made of him?

In fact, neither question is in itself legitimate. During the course of this chapter, we have tried to show that both options, corresponding as they do to each side of the Christ-event, properly belong together and in balance. The biblical picture communicates to us the 'paradox' of the Incarnation; but, according to Tillich's own definition of that term, there can be no 'paradox' without the actuality of him who, in his own personal being, overcame existential estrangement. This is not simply an abstract statement about those requirements which must be fulfilled if the conditions of 'old being' are to be transformed - although this is certainly entailed in the meaning of 'Incarnation' or 'New Being'; it is, more exactly, a statement concerning the necessity of affirming a real correspondence between the biblical picture and the personal life to which it points. The intelligibility of the biblical picture as a picture of Jesus as the Christ is sustained only if Jesus did actually possess characteristics appropriate to the importance the picture ascribes to him and signifies by the title 'Christ'.

The original event of 'Jesus as the Christ' can, therefore, be encountered only in faith and through its biblical presentation; but no translation of the event in terms of kerygmatic efficacy and existential significance can be upheld at the expense of its objectively real and fully concrete character. We remember that it was precisely on this point that Tillich criticized Bultmann. Given that we are here dealing with an event which cannot be established historiographically, and given that our knowledge of it is dependent upon the kerygma, Tillich nevertheless avoids Bultmann's judgment that the event possesses no distinctive, independent character apart from the 'historical significance' (geschichtliche Bedeutsamkeit) attributed to it in the preaching of the early Church. To suppose, then, with Dicken that Tillich wishes to move from the premise that the biblical picture is the foundation of Christianity to the conclusion that it is therefore the saving event itself is to confuse two elements between which Tillich clearly distinguishes: the biblical picture belongs to the 'receiving' side of the event, and, as such, witnesses to its 'factual' side. The picture, accordingly, does two things. First, it hands down to us the universal importance ascribed to Jesus in the disciples' interpretation of him as the Christ; but second, it witnesses also to the disciples' own witness to the actual reality of Jesus as the Christ, namely, to the real appearance of essential manhood in him. Faith, in other words, is not simply faith in that which faith produced, anymore than the 'paradox' is the form in which the manifestation of New Being in the man Jesus is announced: if it were, Tillich, to be more accurate, should speak of an 'Incarnation of the biblical picture'. As well as being an interpretation of the meaning of an event, the biblical picture is simultaneously a witness to an actual occurrence, and thus refers back to

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an objective reality with which it is not identified.

When, therefore, Tillich asserts that the biblical picture is the basis of Christian belief, and that it is impossible to get behind the teachings of the Jesus proclaimed by the primitive Christian community to the teachings of 'Jesus as he actually was', he has by no means foreclosed discussion of the relation between the picture and the event it portrays. His concentration upon the picture's value as an expression of the early Church's faith over against its value in providing historical evidence about Jesus certainly severs the 'historical Jesus' (der historische Jesus) from the 'historic Christ' (der geschichtliche Christus); but it does not ignore the necessity of identifying the earthly Jesus with the Jesus presented in the biblical picture. Clearly, what is 'historic' (geschichtlich) is distinct from that which can be scientifically established and verified (historisch); but the former does not imply the exclusion of the notion of factuality.[65] It is true, of course, that faith's interest is not in the objective facticity of the saving event apart from its kerygmatic proclamation; but equally, the stress on Geschichte is not employed to reduce or neutralize the kerygma's role as 'witness' to an event independent of it but to which it is retrospectively related.

It is, therefore, the redemptive act of God in Jesus the Christ which is the prior datum extra nos, although perceptible to us only through the picture's witness to it. The criteria for overcoming existential ambiguity can only be provided by the earthly existence of the bearer of New Being, not by the proclamation of him. The New Being, after all, was not incarnate in the story of

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[65]This is implied already in Tillich's semantic analysis of the term 'historical Jesus'. The historian's Jesus is distinguished from the Jesus faith receives as the Christ; but this separation in no way impugns the facticity of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'.

this event or in the faith of its readers but, as the first disciples perceived, only in the personal reality of Jesus of Nazareth. The early Church did not originate with a response to its own kerygma but came into existence in the moment when Jesus was accepted as the Christ. If, then, the Christ-event is made presently actual through the biblical picture, this event yet remains that past event underlying and presupposed in all primitive Christian confessions. Indeed, in so far as the picture is paradoxical, it consists in just this fact: that he who was received as the Christ is now received as the Christ through the biblical picture.[66] It is in this sense that the picture, despite its various and contrasting expressions of the original experience of the Christ-event, retains an unconditional and universal validity for the Christian faith.

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[66]This becomes even more apparent in Tillich's discussion of the analogia imaginis, where the actuality of Jesus as the Christ is immediate and present as well as being historically indirect. See Ch.V.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF HISTORICAL ENQUIRY

AND THE NATURE OF FAITH

In the previous two chapters, we have been concerned with an analysis of the two-fold structure of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', with the interrelation between the 'fact' of Jesus of Nazareth and the 'interpretation' of him as the Christ. We have tried to show the extent to which the foundation of present belief - the biblical image or picture of the event - is the result and creation of this unrepeatable occurrence, and why, for that reason, it not only reflects but actually inherits that event's composite character. This much indicates that Tillich's denial that the historian can ever obtain an authentic biography or chronology of Jesus' life is prompted not so much by a diagnosis of the variety and often conflicting ways in which the story of Jesus has been treated and handed down, nor indeed by any equally valid awareness of the dangers of mistaking psychological conjecture for historical method, as by his fundamental insights into the basic structural complexity of the central Christian event testified to by the biblical picture.

Such considerations suggest that, on the basis of Tillich's thesis, an inevitable and mutual antagonism exists between the interests of theology and historical research: the latter, in attempt-

ing to discover who Jesus really was, seeks to distinguish between those self-same factual and interpretative elements within the picture which faith maintains are necessarily conjoined. But this is not the case, for according to the arguments so far adduced by our author, a rejection of any 'quest' for the historical Jesus finds support within both disciplines. Thus, for example, his attack upon the liberal 'lives of Jesus', when taken together with his evident sympathy for the work of scholars like Bultmann, makes clear that on critical grounds alone a biographical portrait of Jesus is considered unfeasible. In other words, Tillich agrees that the discovery of the fragmentary and homiletic complexion of the sources is in itself a powerful historico-scientific argument for the certain failure of such an enterprise. It is here, however, that critical findings coincide with theological interests. As we have remarked elsewhere, for Tillich any prospective construction of a 'life of Jesus' is not only methodologically impossible but theologically irrelevant.[1] Far from relying upon an objective estimate of Jesus, faith itself is not even partially concerned with the implications that the photographable nature of the Christ-event has for historical enquiry, its only interest being with that picture which presents Jesus <u>as</u> the Christ. Faith's concern, therefore, is with the portrait formed by faith. Nor, Tillich would argue, is this contention born of making a theological virtue out of an unfortunate scientific conclusion. It is in fact a profound insight into the proper nature of faith's relation to the Jesus of the gospels. It perceives correctly that it is the <u>a priori</u> of faith that the Jesus of the historian is not and cannot be the Christ of the believer.

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[1] See above, Ch.III, p.122

This appeal on Tillich's part to the two fields of theology and historical research for support to his opinions concerning the impracticability, not to say irrelevance, of a 'quest' for the historical Jesus is met again in the later stages of his thesis; and here too we find that the arguments advanced by him are, like their predecessors, all the more substantial because they proceed on the assumption that only a total attack on the attempt to discover the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth can remain true to what Tillich regards as a proper appreciation of the individual nature and scope of each discipline. But if, as we have said, his views up to this point have evolved primarily from an awareness of the structural union of the two elements within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' - a union ratified by scientific analysis and faith's understanding of the event - Tillich now seeks to reinforce his position at a still deeper, more fundamental level of argument. He considers accordingly the ways in which the very epistemologies of the two disciplines involved confirm his negative appraisal of any search for the historical Jesus. Both the areas of religious and scientific-historical knowledge are treated individually, the former issuing in a discussion of revelation and religious symbols, the latter in a discussion of the so-called 'probable' nature of historical enquiry to which we now turn.

I. The Nature of Historical Enquiry.

Tillich's consideration of the epistemological status of historical enquiry starts from the basic semantic distinction originally drawn by him within the meaning of 'historical Jesus', and is distinguished initially by his definition of the word 'historical'

within that expression.[2]

On the basis of what has been said so far, Tillich's primary use of the word 'historical' clearly relates to his earlier statement that the only '"historical" Jesus' is that apprehended by faith within the biblical picture. 'Historical' here refers only to the immediate certainty of faith - the interpretation of the factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' - and does not involve any type of historical investigation. Faith interprets this factual element for faith only, and thereby transfers it to the realm of faith. In doing this, faith determines the use of the word 'historical', for when employed in this way it can be known only through faith.

But as Tillich's analysis of 'historical Jesus' went on to explain, this first use of the term 'historical' is not to be semantically confused with that definition of it which denotes the historiographical methods practised by biblical critics. It is according to this second definition of the adjective that he develops his study of the nature of scientific-historical knowledge.

Tillich begins, however, by noting that if the attempt to give a foundation to Christian faith and theology through historical research has proved a failure, this does not entail the assumption that such criticism is irrelevant to Christianity. Thus, for example, we find him acknowledging that the 'historical approach to biblical literature is one of the great events in the history of Christianity and even of religion and human culture'.[3]

> Every historical research criticises its sources, separating what has more probability from that which has less or is

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[2] See above, Ch.I, p.48

[3] ST, 2: 124

> altogether improbable. Nobody doubts the validity of this method, since it is confirmed continuously by its success; and nobody seriously protests if it destroys beautiful legends and deeply rooted prejudices.4

Indeed, Tillich goes further and adds that the subjection of the biblical literature to this type of analysis is an expression of Protestant courage, of which Protestantism can justly be proud.[5] By way of illustration, he proceeds to define the relevance and influence of the critical historical approach in three ways:

> First, by giving an analysis of the three different semantic levels of biblical literature...; second, by showing in several steps the development of christological symbols; and finally, by providing a precise philological and historical understanding of the biblical literature by means of the best methods developed in all historical work.[6]

The three 'semantic levels of biblical literature' are described as 'the empirically historical, the legendary, and the mythological'.[7] The extent to which each differs from the other is found, David Kelsey suggests, 'in the extent to which historical fact-claims are made when each is used'.[8] This is a most helpful suggestion in explicating a statement that otherwise suffers from its brevity. If we accept Kelsey's reading, it is evident that these three levels are enumerated in a descending order of 'fact-claims'. Within the 'empirically historical' narratives, such a claim is essential; legends 'emphasize the universal quality of particular stories',[9] and myths are described elsewhere as 'symbols of faith combined in stories

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[4] Ibid., p.117

[5] Ibid., p.124

[6] Ibid., p.130

[7] Ibid.

[8] Kelsey, op.cit., p.90

[9] ST, 2: 175

about divine-human encounters'.[10]

Historical research has shown also how symbols develop, and in this respect it 'has given systematic theology a tool for dealing with the christological symbols of the Bible'.[11] First, symbols appear in a given religious culture and language; they are then used both as an expression and self-interpretation of their own existential situation; next, they are transformed in their appropriation by Christians to interpret the original revelatory event of Christ; and finally, they are distorted by popular superstition, supported by theological literalism and supernaturalism. Thus, the processes of biblical research can reveal what symbols are and how they are used. They can help the theologian to 'demythologize' the biblical texts, stripping the symbols of their literalistic connotations.[12]

This positive evaluation of the historical approach to the scriptural narratives makes quite clear that Tillich's otherwise negative assessment of the relevance of research to Christian faith does not move against historical study as such but rather at the injudicious extension of the claims of its exponents in the case of Jesus of Nazareth; and it is to support this distinction between what he considers to be the proper and legitimate scope of critical methods within theology that Tillich gives his most important characterization of historical research. Here '"historical" for the scientific view of things are those events which are verified within the limits of every historical verification by special methods of

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[10] DF: 49

[11] ST, 2: 125. Cf. 'Redemption in Cosmic and Social History', Journal of Religious Thought, III, No.1 (Autumn-Winter, 1946) p.18

[12] ST, 2: 125. The christological symbols of Son of David, Son of Man, Heavenly Man, Messiah, Son of God, Kyrios and Logos are cited by Tillich as exemplifying and corroborating the validity of the historical analysis of symbol. See ST, 2: 125-130.

research'.[13] The limitation of which he speaks is prompted by his view of historiography as that which 'can only lend probability'.[14] It is on this basis that Tillich asserts that historical methodology, so defined, is itself inadequate to serve as the criterion of faith.

> Historical research provided probabilities about Jesus of a higher or lower degree. On the basis of these probabilities, it sketched 'Lives of Jesus'. But they were more like novels than biographies; they certainly could not provide a safe foundation for the Christian faith.[15]

Such a statement does not annul Tillich's previous stress on the significance of the historical method in considering the trustworthiness, composition and nature of the biblical records, any more than, for example, the failure of the liberal 'quest' cancelled his opinions on the scientific accomplishments of the liberal movement. Yet it is still clear that whatever the success of this procedure, the historian 'never can reach certainty in this way, but he can reach high degrees of probability'.[16]

Tillich is saying that biblical criticism, like all historical enquiry, can only achieve probable results of higher or lower degree; and 'religious certainty cannot rest on a probability the degree of which changes with more enquiry'.[17] Thus, quite apart from the incursion of the historian's own prejudices or the scant amount of biblical records, 'probability' <u>as such</u> is inadequate as a basis for faith. To identify faith 'with the belief in the historical validity of the biblical stories' is, Tillich claims, 'a disas-

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[13] <u>The Bible and Systematic Theology</u>, an unpublished Ms., cited by A. T. Mollegen, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.234 (my emphasis).

[14] <u>IH</u>: 265

[15] <u>ST</u>, 2: 121

[16] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.120

[17] Mollegen, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.234

trous distortion of the meaning of faith'.[18] Certainly faith entails risk, but 'it is wrong...to consider the risk concerning uncertain historical facts as part of the risk of faith'.[19]

There is nothing new in this contention. Ever since Lessing noted a discontinuity between contingent historical truths and eternal truths of reason in his famous formula that 'accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason',[20] theologians unwilling to erect a christology upon the Jesus of research have pointed out persistently that recorded history can never serve as the basis of faith. Since historical judgments, by their very nature, never attain anything more than a degree of probability, they cannot be the media of revealed truth.[21]

Tillich wholly approves of this type of argument. Biblical criticism, he tells us, was 'suspect from its very beginning' because it appeared 'to criticise not only the historical sources but the revelation contained in these sources...Historical criticism seemed to undercut faith itself'.[22] This, however, is an erroneous judgment, and results precisely from the semantic confusion that

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[18] DF: 87

[19] ST, 2: 134. For further details on the 'risk of faith', see below, Ch.IV, p.196, n.142.

[20] On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power (1777), trans. H. Chadwick, Lessing's Theological Writings (London: A. & C. Black, 1956) p.53

[21] As Barth remarks, Lessing does not denigrate the importance of 'accidental truths of history', but seeks only to distinguish between the two classes of truth from which convictions arise - the point, indeed, that Tillich is also making. (From Rousseau to Ritschl, pp.136ff). Cf. L. De Moor, 'Problem of Revelation in 18th century Germany: with particular reference to Lessing', Evangelical Quarterly, XXXIX, No.2 (April-June, 1967) pp.66-74; No.3 (July-September, 1967) pp.139-151; No.4 (October-December, 1967) pp.205-215

[22] ST, 2: 117

Tillich seeks to overcome. In the first definition of 'historical' we are concerned with the factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ', which demands and requires the correlative apprehension by faith alone. In the second definition we are concerned with the historicity of the biblical narratives, which is always a matter of the degrees of probability reached by historical research. These two definitions are utterly distinct, and are never to be confused with one another. In the first definition, the 'risk of faith is existential', and does not imply the risk of historical judgment which is 'theoretical and open to permanent scientific correction'.[23]

> Here are two different dimensions which should never be confused. A wrong faith can destroy the meaning of one's life; a wrong historical judgment cannot. It is misleading, therefore, to use the word 'risk' for both dimensions in the same sense.[24]

Thus, in order to protect the kerygma while yet guaranteeing the importance and freedom of the historian, faith and criticism are placed in two dimensions, which, Tillich insists, must be kept separate. In one sense, of course, there is a similarity between the two dimensions, for historiography, no less than faith, involves an interpreting subject;[25] but this does not, however, provide the historian with the occasion to transform 'historical probability into positive or negative historical certainty by a judgment of faith'.[26] This would illegitimately confuse one dimension with the other by supposing that 'faith can guarantee the truth of a questionable historical

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[23] Ibid., p.134

[24] Ibid.

[25] Cf. DF: 86

[26] ST, 2: 120

statement'.[27] Faith cannot so guarantee historical facts because this is not faith's concern.

> It is not a matter of faith to decide how much legendary, mythological and historical material is amalgamated in the stories about the birth and the resurrection of the Christ. It is not a matter of faith to decide which version of the reports about the early days of the Church has the greatest probability. All these questions must be decided, in terms of more or less probability, by historical research. They are questions of historical truth, not of the truth of faith.[28]

In the light of this argument, Tillich can maintain that it is not faith's task to determine the character of the Pentateuchal narratives or the degree to which Genesis is composed of myth and legend rather than actual history.[29] These are not questions of faith, but are the concerns of problematical historical enquiry. Nowhere, of course, is this more evident than in the crisis reached when research investigates the biblical sources and so raises the dilemma which we have frequently described, namely, the question of the historical validity of the biblical image of Jesus who is called the Christ. But once again, Tillich's answer affirms that the investigations instigated by the historian have no implications at all for the certainty of Christian faith. Historical research, he says,

> has shown that in their narrative parts the Old and the New Testament combine historical, legendary and mythological elements and that in many cases it is impossible to separate these elements from each other with any degree of probability. Historical research has made it obvious that there is no way to get at the historical events which have produced the Biblical picture of Jesus who is called the Christ with more than a degree of probability. Similar research in the historical character of the holy writings and the legendary traditions of non-Christian religions

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[27] DF: 86

[28] Ibid., p.88

[29] Ibid., pp.87-88

> have discovered the same situation. The truth of faith cannot be made dependent on the historical truth of the stories and legends in which faith has expressed itself.[30]

The final sentence in the quotation above is perhaps the most important expression of Tillich's two dimensional theory, even if it appears highly perplexing. Faith cannot be shaken by historical enquiry even if the conclusions reached are critical of those traditions in which the Christ-event has been reported by faith! Now if, according to Tillich, 'historical truth is first of all factual truth',[31] are we to gather from this that a right understanding of the nature of faith results in the view that faith itself makes no historical, and so no factual, assertions about the man called 'Jesus'? This, at any rate, is the opinion of one commentator. Thus, William Rowe remarks:

> Tillich's reason for concluding that the skeptical results of historical research into the life of Jesus should have no influence on Christian faith is not that faith guarantees the biblical portrait of Jesus to be historically accurate. Rather, his reason for so concluding is that faith, when properly understood, makes no factual claims whatsoever about some man named 'Jesus' who flourished in the years 1 to 30.[32]

The point at issue, and the cause of the perplexity, is that Rowe's summary, if correct, disallows not simply the claims of critical historical methods upon faith, but equally prohibits any consideration of the factual <u>basis</u> of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' - a contradiction of the emphasis discussed in Chapter II. This, however, is not the case, and is a misreading of the argument Tillich is employing here. He does not deny that the actual concrete appearance of the New Being within our temporal order, which Christians assert

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[30] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.87

[31] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.86

[32] <u>op.cit.</u>, p.212

took place in Jesus of Nazareth, is the prius of the interpretation of him as the Christ, the necessary existential prerequisite for the truth of that confession. The distinction that Tillich is wishing to make is not, to be more exact, between the fact of Jesus as the basis of the event and its reception by faith, but between knowledge of the way in which that event took place and faith.[33]

The question whether the event 'Jesus as the Christ' in fact happened in the way it is reported to have happened exists in a dimension which cannot come into conflict with the assertion of faith that 'Jesus is the Christ'. Nor is this a contradiction in terms, but, as we have seen, a conclusion derived from the semantic analysis of 'historical Jesus'. It is all the more interesting to find, therefore, that Rowe, in the next page of his book, makes no attempt to determine which of the two senses of 'historical Jesus' is being used.

> Faith, on Tillich's view, cannot be upset by historical skepticism concerning Jesus, because faith in Christ does not imply or require the truth of any factual claims about the life, character, and activities of the historical Jesus. Thus the stories about Jesus which speak of his virgin birth, his sayings (the Sermon on the Mount, etc.), his deeds (the miracles), his death on a cross, and his physical resurrection are, when taken as reports of facts and events in history, not, for Tillich, matters of faith at all.[34]

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[33] It is true that, in one passage, Tillich appears to support Rowe's interpretation. Speaking of revelation, he writes: 'Knowledge of revelation, although it is mediated primarily through historical events, does not imply factual assertions, and it is therefore not exposed to critical analysis by historical research' (ST, 1: 144). However, as we shall discover in our discussion of revelation and religious symbolism, Tillich does not intend by this type of statement to impugn the objective reality of the revelation in Jesus the Christ, but is seeking to show instead that the factual-historical accuracy of the biblical witness is irrelevant to the truth of its meaning as a record of an actual revelation. The 'knowledge of revelation' communicated by the picture is not, in other terms, equatable with the 'historical truth' of the picture's assertions about Jesus. See below, pp.178-179, 183-186, 188-189, 194ff.

[34] op.cit., p.213

If, as is most likely, 'historical Jesus' is here referring to the results attained by the historian in his search for evidence about Jesus, then Rowe's remarks are correct. Whatever aspects of the biblical story the historian may be examining, faith cannot depend upon him for its authentication because faith is not an act of knowledge that either has a high or low degree of probability, nor is it trust in that authority which makes a statement probable for us. However, if faith does not affirm or deny what belongs within the dimension of historical enquiry, this does not imply, as Rowe supposes, the total absence of all factual claims within faith's own, well-defined working limits. Indeed, the distinction between the two meanings of 'historical Jesus' was drawn precisely in order to prevent this assumption. According to the second understanding of 'historical Jesus', the actuality of that upon which the event 'Jesus as the Christ' depends - its 'factual' side - was a physical occurrence which so changed the estranged condition of humanity that the term 'Christ' was appropriate to it. To call Jesus 'Christ' is, therefore, to make certain assertions about his actual existence, for if, as faith assumes, Jesus <u>was</u> the Christ, then through him Essential God-Manhood became actual in existential man. This is the irreducible 'factual' claim made by faith about Jesus, presupposed by its application of the title 'Christ' to him. Moreover, if it is the fundamental premise of Christian belief that this christological designation is valid, then the admission that Jesus was the New Being has realistic implications for the nature of his life as a whole. As we saw in the comparison with Rudolf Bultmann, for Tillich the attachment of the title 'Christ' to Jesus is meaningful only in relation to the totality of his being, not in abstraction from it.[35] To qualify as the New Being, Jesus had to exhibit these character-

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[35]See above, Ch.III, pp.108-112

istics which ontological analysis has shown must pertain within the being of the bearer of New Being. He had to enter existence and conquer it, had, that is, to experience the anxieties, temptations and guilts which determine the finite situation, while yet lacking any 'mark' or 'scar' which would show an estrangement from God; and to the extent that faith accepts the Christ-character of Jesus, it also agrees that these conditions were actually fulfilled by him. This, however, does not entail that faith's picture of Jesus is exact in detail, or that it provides independent evidence from which one may deduce the Christ-hood of Jesus. We remember, for example, that it was in this sense that Tillich regarded the Cross and Resurrection as symbols based on <u>facts</u>.[36] Here it was not a question of faith wishing to maintain the accuracy of the biblical accounts of how Jesus was crucified or how he rose from the dead, or even of it assuming that a cross and a resurrection figured in any real incidents within the history of Jesus. It was rather a case of faith believing in the factuality of that which is expressed in mythological and symbolic form within these accounts, namely, that Jesus the Christ experienced death under the conditions of 'old being' (the factual content of the symbol of the Cross), and that as the bearer of New Being he did not succumb to, but overcame, the powers of estrangement (the factual content of the symbol of the Resurrection). Faith's only claim, made within its own dimension, is, therefore, that the factuality of the event portrayed in the New Testament presentation of Jesus as the Christ means that a human individuality existed, and that the actual nature of his being was such as would support the significance ascribed to it in the biblical symbols of 'Cross' and 'Resurrection'. To put this in another and more general way - it is the basic assertion of faith that, if a photographic

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[36] See above, Ch.II, pp.90-91

record of all the words and deeds of Jesus did exist, this record, while perhaps contradicting the biblical image on points of detail, would not destroy but would confirm faith's assessment of their meaning as expressions of the New Being in him. This underlines Tillich's former distinction between der historische Jesus and der geschichtliche Christus.[37] The only continuity that faith requires and asserts between the picture and the Christ-event is that the existential significance that faith accords Jesus in the biblical portrait corresponds to the significance his being in fact possessed. The meaning of the event within this picture is not, therefore, deduced from any specification of a scientifically observed 'historical Jesus'; it is derived solely from the soteriological implications that Jesus has for estranged humanity as perceived by faith's recognition that in him the New Being actually appeared.

Bearing these remarks in mind, we may conclude that for Tillich a statement is 'historically true' if it purports to describe what in fact happened; and that to accept its truth is to adopt an hypothesis which, though tested by scholarly methods, is nevertheless corrigible with every new discovery made by them. We have seen also that our author does not equate a 'truth of faith' with the truth of an historical assertion of this kind, which is always questionable; nor, indeed, on the evidence of the preceding paragraph, does he make it equivalent to all those claims which could be made truthfully about the actual form taken by the life of Jesus of Nazareth. But these requirements do not, however, suggest that faith's statements about the 'factual' side of the Christ-event are mere invention; rather they imply that faith itself, by its denial of any scientific method's capacity to verify or falsify the 'interpretation' offered in the biblical

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[37] See above, Ch.III, pp.121-126.

picture, is not concerned with the 'historical truth' of its narrative of Jesus. The only claim that faith makes about the 'factual' side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' is that the picture it presents of it embodies the meaning that that 'fact' had for those who first called Jesus 'Christ'. Thus, when Tillich holds that faith does not depend on the 'historical truth' of its own biblical picture of Jesus, he is not saying thereby that faith includes no factual claims about Jesus, but that faith qua faith does not intend by its portrait of him to be empirically informative in the way that historical enquiry seeks to be. Faith cannot guarantee the 'historical truth' of its assertions, for that is not its concern; but faith can and must interpret the meaning of facts within the context of its confession that Jesus was the Christ. In so doing, it transfers the factual claims made about Jesus of Nazareth, which would otherwise be the interest of 'historical truth', into the dimension of the 'truth of faith'.

On the basis of this distinction between the 'truth of faith' and 'historical truth', we can see that Tillich does not view the problem of the historical Jesus in terms of any necessary antagonism between faith and historical enquiry as such, but in terms of a conflict between a faith and an enquiry each of which is unaware of its own valid dimension, and, consequently, of the legitimate ways it can employ the term 'historical Jesus'. Indeed, by his contention that the 'truth of faith' is not the sum total of all that could be known about Jesus, Tillich has placed the issue outside any 'historical-scientific' disagreement on whether certain events did or did not occur. The difference between the two dimensions is not 'factual' in this sense, but arises from the kind of attitude towards historical events which each dimension requires. Historical research, as

Tillich has already remarked, involves an interpreting subject;[38] and it is the presence of this element which is the principal factor in distinguishing 'historical truth' from 'scientific truth'. History, he adds,

> does not only tell a series of facts. It also tries to understand these facts in their origins, their relations, their meaning. History describes, explains, and understands. And understanding presupposes participation. This is the difference between historical and scientific truth. In historical truth the interpreting subject is involved; in scientific truth it is detached.[39]

According to this definition, historical enquiry thus takes on an 'existential form' since the frame of reference within which the historian evaluates the meaning of events will be consciously or unconsciously determined by his own frame of thought. The direction in which he asks the questions and the preference he gives to special types of answers about the meaning of historical events for human existence will, in other words, be governed by his own interpretation of human nature, or more precisely, by his own view of existence as formed within the life of the community to which he belongs.[40]

Tillich argues that it is because of this inevitable existential relation between the historian and his subject-matter that the dimension of historical study has been confused with the dimension of

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[38] See above, p.146

[39] DF: 86

[40] This conception of the nature of historical enquiry, as Tillich is the first to admit, owes much to the work of Wilhelm Dilthey. In RS Tillich writes: 'He (Dilthey) discovered the concept of "historical understanding" and applied the method of historical understanding with an unexcelled mastery. To understand means to enter into the nature of a strange, living structure. This concept is also fundamentally a polemical weapon, directed against the analyzing and generalizing method of the natural sciences which does not seek to understand but to explain' (Ibid., p.66). For an introduction to Dilthey's philosophy of history, see H. P. Rickman's anthology, Meaning in History: Wilhelm Dilthey's Thoughts on History and Society (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961).

faith. 'Since the truth of faith means total involvement, historical truth has often been compared with the truth of faith'.[41] This similarity does not, therefore, exclude tensions between the two areas, but gives rise to them. It is because the dimensions are so close at this point that conflicts arise. And yet, Tillich continues, he who seeks for that reason to identify 'historical truth' with the 'truth of faith' fails to realize the affinity that historical enquiry, despite its 'existential form', still retains with science. He 'forgets that in a genuine historical work detached and controlled observation is as much used as in the observation of physical or biological processes'.[42] This recalls the primary definition of 'historical truth', namely that it is 'first of all factual truth'.[43] While it is true to say, then, that, in terms of the application of his enquiry, the historian becomes, as it were, part of the enquiry itself, nevertheless, in terms of the chief purpose of his research, his main concern is to discover how something actually happened apart from his existential situation as the enquirer. 'Historical science' is not, therefore, a meaningless expression since 'historical truth', unlike the 'truth of faith', can be understood in a 'non-existential' way; it can be appreciated, that is, in the sense that the historian is an historian because he seeks to stand outside his enquiry, and so to adopt a point of view that is 'detached' from his own existential situation.

It is this degree of detachment when considering historical events that distinguishes the attitude of historical research towards

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[41] DF: 86

[42] Ibid.

[43] See above, p.148

Jesus of Nazareth from that of faith. Any understanding of him, whether it be from the standpoint of critical enquiry or faith, will, to some extent, involve an interaction between him who assesses and that which is assessed. So much is entailed in the nature of both dimensions. But in the case of historical research, the level of this involvement is reduced significantly through its primary function of discovering not the meaning of facts but the facts themselves. In this respect, as Tillich has observed, certain questions asked of the historian 'can be answered in an "objective" way without necessary interference of negative or positive prejudices'.[44] The basic characteristic of 'historical truth', as against the 'truth of faith', is thus the fundamental priority of its 'non-existential form' over its 'existential form'. In the case of faith, however, the existential component is determinative. Here there is a total lack of any 'dissociation' from the object of faith, Jesus. This suggests, therefore, that the contrast between the two dimensions is not simply a contrast in emphasis but a difference in structure. The man of faith, unlike the historian, is incapable of observing Jesus dispassionately, for it is in the nature of his situation that he accepts the ultimate existential importance ascribed by faith to Jesus in its biblical picture of the Christ. The meaning that faith attaches to Jesus demands, in other terms, an a priori of valuation which cannot be provided by the function of critical studies, namely that Jesus, in both name and act, was the Christ. Faith, in this sense, assumes its own presence within the portrait to which it refers; and this, accordingly, determines the decisive difference in attitude between the two dimensions of historical enquiry and faith. In the former, any understanding of an

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[44] ST, 2: 120

existential relation to Jesus is placed in the background, whereas, in the latter, it is not only in the foreground, but what is actually aimed at and implied.

II. The Nature of Faith.

According to the analysis of the two dimensions of historical enquiry and faith so far presented by Tillich, the Christian believer neither does nor can frame the question of the truth of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' in the same way as an historian examining other historical incidents. From the viewpoint of present faith, the event originally attested to by the first disciples, and to which faith now responds through their portrait of Jesus the Christ, is not sought or met behind that picture, as if it were a reality discoverable through the biblical texts but finally dissociable from them by critical and detached evaluation of its importance; on the contrary, it is encountered only in the witness of the biblical portrait itself, and hence can be found only within that testimony. As Tillich has often remarked, within the area of faith the fact of 'Jesus' is inseparable from the meaning accorded it in the interpretative title 'Christ'. Indeed, within this dimension, the only history of Jesus is the history of Jesus as the Christ. It is in the nature of faith, therefore, that it accepts the meaning of Jesus' being as asserted in the biblical picture of him as the Christ, and that it thus recognizes the ultimate existential implications that his being had and has for mankind generally. Faith, in consequence, does not distinguish between two aspects in judging the validity of the event to which it refers, that is, between the question of the historical 'fact' as such and that fact's 'meaning'. On this basis, it is impossible for faith to sanction

any attempt to work out the significance of Jesus by an unprejudiced summary of all the historical and scientifically discernible effects he brought about in his own lifetime; for if it did so, it would not only contravene the original structural complexity of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', but would, more specifically, contradict its own attitude towards that event. This is the conclusion which, in the context of the two dimensional theory offered by Tillich, derives from the examination of those differences which are said to exist between 'historical truth' and the 'truth of faith'. Thus, quite apart from any realization of the preliminary character of scientific-historical knowledge, a proper assessment of the contrasting relations of the historian and the believer to Jesus of Nazareth has an equally terminal effect upon the issue of whether research can undermine faith's assertions about him. And yet, while this conclusion certainly strengthens Tillich's case for the impossibility of a valid resumption of a 'quest', it is not, for that reason, drawn from an intentional denigration of the critical point of view <u>per se</u>. It stems instead from his desire to establish clearly the boundary between, what he considers to be, two qualitatively disparate phenomena, namely, historical research and faith. Tillich does not, therefore, disparage critical study of scripture; but he does reject an historicism which regards its findings as essential to the validity of Christian belief, and which seeks thereby to impinge upon the dimension of faith.

By making such distinctions between the dimension of research and the dimension of faith, Tillich has gone some way in clarifying his understanding of, what we might term, the 'esoteric' nature of faith's knowledge of Jesus the Christ through the biblical picture. No statement, which purports to convey a knowledge

of Jesus as the bearer of New Being, can be made which either precedes or is isolated from faith's confession of him as the Christ within that portrait. We have seen that, for Tillich, this claim in itself represents a conclusive argument against the discovery of the empirical Jesus. It does not, however, reflect a comprehensive line of reasoning. In order for this to be achieved, our author adopts a final avenue of approach towards showing the exclusivism and invulnerability of faith's dimension, one which depends upon a still more exact appreciation of the distinctive character both of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' and of faith's assertions about Jesus within its picture of him. At the beginning of this chapter, it was said that Tillich's attack upon any 'quest' for the historical Jesus is all the more substantial because it draws support from a study of the two epistemologies involved within the areas of research and faith.[45] This indicates the direction that his argument is now to take. It is no longer the 'probable' form of historical enquiry which determines the necessary immunity of biblical testimony to critical analysis, but, conversely, the special and extraordinary type of knowledge that it is in the nature of faith to provide about Jesus. Indeed, if the complexity of this last argument is any indication, one may hazard a guess that it is primarily Tillich's view of the nature of faith, and not of historical science, which leads him to maintain that faith is independent of the preliminary results of gospel research.

This final approach thus runs parallel to Tillich's earlier discussion of the epistemological character of historico-scientific statements. It concentrates upon the singular epistemological

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[45] See above, p.140

status that faith's claims attain by virtue of the unique quality of the event to which they refer. In this respect, two factors stand at the centre of his theological doctrine of knowledge: a conception, first, of the 'revelatory' nature not only of the Christ-event but also of its biblical portrayal, and second, of the 'symbolic' form in which all such 'revelations' are expressed and communicated.

a) Faith and Revelation.

One of the most important features of Tillich's analysis of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' and its New Testament presentation is that both event and biblical picture are regarded as 'revelations'. This relation first emerges in his discussion of 'original' and 'dependent' revelations.[46] An 'original' revelation is one 'which occurs in a constellation that did not exist before'.[47] Thus, for example, Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi was original in that both sides of it - the 'objective' side (the manifestation of the revelation, the actual appearance of New Being in the man Jesus) and the 'subjective' side (the reception of the revelation in the acceptance of Jesus as the Christ) - are joined 'for the first time. Both sides are original'.[48] However, in a 'dependent' revelation, namely in one which is received by following generations of Christians, the focus is upon 'the Jesus who had been received as the Christ by Peter and the other apostles'.[49] Tillich concludes from this that there is a continuity of revelation and a continuous revelation, since in the

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[46] ST, 1: 140-142

[47] Ibid., p.140

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid (my emphasis).

original revelation the fact and the reception of the revelation are the two correlated elements, whereas, in the dependent revelation, these formerly distinct elements conjoin to form the 'giving side, while the receiving side changes as new individuals and groups enter the same correlation of revelation'.[50]

The biblical picture, by combining the 'objective' and 'subjective' sides of the original revelation of Jesus the Christ, functions, therefore, as the 'objective' side of a dependent revelation. In other terms, the character of the New Testament image of Jesus is synonymous with the fact that it incorporates the original witness to, and response towards, the revealing event. The gospel portrayal, that is, becomes the 'giving' side of a dependent revelatory occurrence because the original revelation - Jesus' actual appearance and his reception as the Christ by the first disciples - can only be 'dependent revelation within the Christian community'.[51] For this reason, writes Avery Dulles, the New Testament 'is not merely a collection of documents about revelation; it is also itself revelatory. The biblical writers were themselves involved in the revelatory events they describe; they wrote as witnesses to revelation'.[52]

We have said that, in Tillich's view, revelation entails a special and extraordinary type of knowledge, one which, according to the account he has already given of revelation, is applicable, therefore, both to the 'original' event, and to the 'dependent'

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Leon J. Putnam, 'Tillich, Revelation, and Miracle', Theology and Life, IX (Winter, 1966) p.365

[52] Avery R. Dulles, 'Paul Tillich and the Bible', Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, p.112

biblical picture, of Jesus as the Christ. The 'knowledge of revelation', Tillich maintains, is not ordinary knowledge, nor is it an addition of it.[53] Revelation, that is to say, is experienced in an attitude which contradicts that of ordinary cognition. More exactly, it is not bound to the epistemological subject-object distinction implied in all normal cognitive acts. In every act of knowledge, this basic separation is necessary, because 'in order to know, one must "look" at a thing, and, in order to look at a thing, one must be "at a distance"'.[54] But, in revelation, the fundamental schema of rationality, the subject-object structure, is 'superceded' and 'transcended'.[55] This means that 'knowledge of revelation does not increase our knowledge about the structures of nature, history, and man'.[56] It is independent, for instance, of the physicist's description of the natural structure of things, and has nothing to do with the psychologist's analysis of the dynamics of the human soul. In the case of the historian - in which, as we have seen, the relation of knower to known, of subject to object, is equally evident - 'the revelatory interpretation of history as the history of revelation neither confirms nor negates any of his statements about documents, traditions, and the interdependence of historical events'.[57] Knowledge

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[53]Tillich uses the phrase 'knowledge of revelation', instead of 'revealed knowledge', in order to show that the knowledge given in revelation cannot be separated from the revelatory situation in which it is received (ST, 1: 143n).

[54]Ibid., p.105

[55]Ibid., pp.121 & 124

[56]Ibid., p.143

[57]Ibid.

of revelation, consequently, is unrelated to either scientific or practical knowledge: it cannot interfere with or supplement them, and they, likewise, cannot interfere with or supplement it. Revelation, so Tillich concludes, 'can be revealed only in the situation of revelation, and it can be communicated - in contrast to ordinary knowledge - only to those who participate in this situation'.[58]

Further examination of two of the so-called 'marks' of revelation - 'ecstasy' and 'miracle' - reinforces this distinction between 'knowledge of revelation' and ordinary knowledge. 'Ecstasy' and 'miracle' are, respectively, the technical terms used by Tillich to denote the subjective and objective sides of revelation. Ecstasy is not over-excitement or enthusiasm. It is that state of mind 'in which reason is beyond itself, that is, beyond its subject-object structure'.[59] But ecstasy, Tillich insists, is not irrational or anti-rational: it rather 'transcends the basic condition of finite rationality, the subject-object of structure'.[60] To this extent, the ecstatic state is similar to demonic possession, for in both 'the ordinary subject-object structure of the mind is put out of action'.[61] Demonic possession, however, destroys the rational structure of the mind, whereas ecstasy affirms and elevates it, even though transcending it.

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., p.124. According to Tillich, the etymological root of the term 'ecstasy' - "standing outside one's self" - points to the extraordinary state of mind in which the mind transcends its ordinary situation (Ibid.).

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p.127

Essentially the same considerations determine Tillich's examination of the objective side of revelation, called 'miracle'. A miracle does not designate a supranatural happening which contradicts the laws of nature; but it is not, for that reason, identifiable with the natural structure of events. A miracle is a 'sign-event' which 'produces astonishment';[62] it is 'unusual' and 'shaking'.[63] Just, therefore, as ecstasy does not destroy the rational structure of the mind by which it is received, so the 'sign-event' does not destroy the rational structure of the reality in which it appears, even though it cannot be simply equated with that structure. Indeed, such is the correlation between 'ecstasy' and 'miracle', it is possible to interchange these terms. 'One can say that ecstasy is the miracle of the mind and that miracle is the ecstasy of reality'.[64] Tillich's final remarks on the two concepts are significant:-

> Since neither ecstasy nor miracle destroys the structure of cognitive reason, scientific analysis, psychological and physical, as well as historical investigation is possible and necessary. Research can and must proceed without restriction. It can undercut the superstitions and demonic interpretations of revelation, ecstasy, and miracle. Science, psychology, and history are allies of theology in the fight against the supranaturalistic distortions of genuine revelation. Scientific explanation and historical criticism protect revelation; they cannot dissolve it, for revelation belongs to a dimension of reality for which scientific and historical analysis are inadequate...It is independent of what science and history say about the conditions in which it appears; and it cannot make science and history dependent on itself. No conflict between different dimensions of reality is possible. Reason receives revelation in ecstasy and miracles; but reason is not destroyed by revelation, just as revelation is not emptied by reason.[65]

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[62] Ibid., p.128

[63] Ibid., p.130

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., pp.130-131

According to this understanding of revelation, it becomes clear that Tillich's discussion incorporates one further version of the two dimensional theory already advocated by him. Structurally, however, the present argument, if reaching the same conclusion, is different and more exhaustive. The two points which formerly determined the distinction between the 'truth of faith' and 'historical truth' do not, for example, immediately apply. In this case, the contention that faith is immune to critical research into the gospel narratives is not dependent either upon the epistemological status of historical enquiry, or, indeed, upon the differing attitudes of the believer and the historian towards the scriptural evidence about Jesus. Instead, the argument now relies exclusively upon the contrast said to exist between the knowledge provided in revelation and <u>all</u> types of ordinary knowledge - including, therefore, the knowledge gained from the verifying techniques of historical science. This absolute distinction centres on Tillich's claim that revelation, both in terms of its appearance in 'miracle' and 'ecstatic' reception, belongs to a different <u>dimension of reality</u>, one which is not determined by the subject-object form which otherwise governs the cognitive relation of the finite mind to all aspects of its environment and world. Why this should be so is indicated when our author turns to consider the last 'mark' of revelation, 'mystery'.

A revelation, Tillich writes, 'is a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way. This hiddenness is often called "mystery"...'[66] The distinguishing feature

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[66] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.120

of mystery is that it 'cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed'.[67] Initially, the reasons given for this view of mystery follow a familiar pattern of argument. 'Mystery characterises a dimension which "precedes" the subject-object relationship'.[68] As such, it is incapable of description or analysis in terms of the subject-object dimension to which both the processes of practical and theoretical enquiry, and the forms of normal discourse, are bound.[69] This does not imply that the revelation of mystery is without cognitive elements: it means rather that the revelation of the essentially mysterious entails 'the manifestation of something within the context of ordinary experience which transcends the ordinary context of experience'.[70] Even when revealed, mystery cannot, therefore, be reduced to the level of the normal cognitive approach, for (to use Marcel's distinction) while a 'problem' is in principle soluble, a 'mystery' is that which is in principle concealed.[71]

The crucial stage of this discussion is reached, however, when Tillich goes on to say that the genuine mystery appears only when

> reason is driven beyond itself to its "ground and abyss", to that which "precedes" reason, to the fact that "being

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[67] Ibid., p.121

[68] Ibid.

[69] Here too, Tillich argues that the derivation of the word 'mystery' - from muein, "closing the eyes" or "closing the mouth" - corroborates this understanding of the term (Ibid., pp.120-121).

[70] Ibid., p.121

[71] See Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existence (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952). For an analysis of Marcel's understanding of 'mystery', see John B. O'Malley, The Fellowship of Being (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966) pp.16-17, 24-59; and for a more general discussion of the concept, I. T. Ramsey, Models and Mystery (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

> is and non-being is not" (Parmenides), to the original fact (Ur-Tatsache) that there is something and not nothing.[72]

Two points are involved here, the one negative, the other positive; and they refer respectively to the 'abyss' and 'ground' of being and reason just mentioned. The negative or abysmal side of the mystery is revealed by the '"stigma" of finitude...which appears in all things and in the whole of reality', and by the '"shock" which grasps the mind when it encounters the threat of non-being'.[73] Now according to Tillich, finitude is 'being, limited by non-being'[74] - a 'dialectical' definition which requires that the problem of finitude, posed by the basic ontological question of why there should be something and not nothing, must be approached also in terms of this inescapable dialectical relation between being and non-being.[75] Non-being, that is to say, is not the absolute negation of being, but the negation of being within being, appearing as the 'not yet' and 'no more' of being. 'It confronts that which is with a definite end (finis)'.[76] With this in mind, Tillich can proceed next to a metaphorical description of being. 'Being', he says,

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[72] ST, 1: 122

[73] Ibid.

[74] The term 'being' in this context does not designate our physical existence in time and space, but 'the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning, and the aim of existence. All this is threatened; it can be lost or saved' (Ibid., p.17).

[75] For his dialectical understanding of non-being, Tillich appeals to the Greek philosophic concept of me on, to Augustine's notion of 'sin', to the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of man's creatureliness, and to the work of the modern existentialists, Heidegger and Sartre (Ibid., pp.209-210).

[76] Ibid., p.210

> is the power of being! Power, however, presupposes, even in the metaphorical use of the word, something over which it proves its power...What can that be which tries to negate being and is negated by it? There is only one answer possible: That which is conquered by the power of being is non-being.[77]

'Non-being', then, is that 'quality of being by which everything that participates in being is negated';[78] and 'being' is the power of being which overcomes non-being. This explains the relation between 'abyss' and 'ground'. Non-being is related to being only in the sense of resistance to it; but the ontological question raised by looking into the 'abyss' of possible nothingness can be answered only in terms of being. For this reason, the 'abyss' of being points dialectically to the 'ground' of being, which is the positive side of the 'mystery of being', to that which resolves the question of the continual ontological threatenedness of the finite situation. Consequently, the 'mystery of being' made manifest in the situation of revelation is called the 'power of being', or the 'ground of our being',[79] because it is that which ultimately determines our being or non-being by infinitely resisting the threat of non-being.[80]

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[77] Love, Power, and Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960) p.37 (my emphasis). Cf. Christianity and the Problem of Existence (Washington, D.C.: Henderson Services, 1951) pp. 30-31 (mimeographed).

[78] Love, Power, and Justice, p.38

[79] ST, 1: 122-123

[80] It should be mentioned here that Tillich's dialectical interpretation of 'ground' and 'abyss' (partially indicated by the German words, Grund and Abgrund) has puzzled many scholars. For example, J. Heywood Thomas, in 'Some Comments on Tillich's Doctrine of Creation', The Scottish Journal of Theology, XIV, No.2 (June 1961), argues that Tillich has made the '"nothing" out of which we come a something with fatal power', so that 'we are once more faced with Dualism' (p.118). On the other hand, Kenneth Hamilton, in The System and the Gospel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963), rejects this view, and cites Tillich's words that 'Non-being belongs to being, it

From the viewpoint of the discussion concerning 'knowledge of revelation', the most important feature of Tillich's analysis of 'mystery' is that he regards the revelation of it - the appearance of the 'power of being', conquering non-being - as the revelation of God as 'being-itself'. Thus, knowledge of revelation is essentially knowledge of God or being-itself. The concept of 'being-itself', he continues, 'points to the power inherent in everything, the power of resisting non-being. Therefore, instead of saying that God is first of all being-itself, it is possible to say that he is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being.'[81] The same point is made in Tillich's use of his famous phrase, 'ultimate concern'. 'Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately';[82] and 'our ultimate concern is that which determines our being or non-being'.[83] "God", therefore, is the 'name for that which concerns man ultimately',[84] being applicable only to the mystery revealed as the infinite 'power of being', 'being-itself'. Elsewhere, however, our author is even more emphatic.

The element of 'power', so understood, is the

> basis of Godhead, that which makes God God. It is the root of his majesty, the unapproachable intensity of his being, the inexhaustible ground of being in which

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cannot be separated from it' (p.194). Despite this, however, Heywood Thomas' point is a fair one, for if the only power of non-being is its resistance to being, then there is a dualism if both being and non-being are taken as co-eternal - which Tillich appears to imply.

[81] ST, 1: 261

[82] Ibid., p.123

[83] Ibid., p.17

[84] Ibid., p.234

> everything has its origin. It is the power of being infinitely resisting non-being, giving the power of being to everything that is.[85]

Revelation, therefore, is the appearance of our 'ultimate concern', 'being-itself' as the 'power of being' in which everything exists, actual in the creative process in all its forms. Put differently, it is the manifestation of that which is the necessary infinite 'quality' implied in and constitutive of the finite structure of reality, participating in all that 'is', and creating that in which it participates.[86] All the metaphors used by Tillich in his analysis of the meaning of God are interpreted with this connotation of 'power'. For instance, God is the 'ground of being' or 'depth of existence', that which is the supporting power of being in every conditioned actuality, its very root of being.[87] This means that 'everything finite participates in being-itself and in its infinity. Otherwise it would not have the power of being. It would be swallowed by non-being, or it never would have emerged out of non-being'.[88] God is also the 'abyss of being', that which cannot be 'exhausted by any creation or by any totality of them..;'[89] and this, in turn, implies that the 'being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside or above others'.[90] God, in other

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[85] Ibid., p.278

[86] Cf. 'The Protestant Principle and the Proletarian Situation', PE: 163

[87] See the sermon, 'The Depth of Existence', The Shaking of the Foundations, pp.59-70.

[88] ST, 1: 263

[89] Ibid., p.88

[90] Ibid., p.261

words, as the 'power of being', is not subject to the finite destiny not to be, but is above every being and the totality of being threatened by non-being.[91] As these remarks suggest, God thus has a positive and negative relation to everything existing, primarily indicated by the terms 'ground' and 'abyss'. Positively, all that has being is sustained by the 'power of being' that is God. Negatively, all that exists lacks the absoluteness of God's infinite power, so that, to this extent, his unconditionality stands over against the relativity of the whole structure of being. According to Tillich, the true meaning of the relationship, therefore, is that God is the power of being in all that is, acting as its creative 'ground', but at the same time transcending every finite being infinitely as the 'abyss' of being.[92]

If we relate what Tillich has said so far about the nature of revelation to his opening statements about the function

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[91]The view that God does not exist as a being accounts for the charge of atheism sometimes made against Tillich. In fact, he acknowledges that 'it is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it (Ibid., p.263), and means by this that both the assertions 'God exists' and 'God does not exist' are atheistic because both accept the premise that God could exist. It is then that the premise is judged in a positive or negative way. For Tillich, the possibility of God's existence or non-existence is inconceivable because the notion of existence itself is incompatible with the concept 'God'. John Hick, in 'The Idea of Necessary Being', The Princeton Seminary Bulletin, LIV, No. 2 (November 1960) pp.11-21, argues that this is another formulation of the distinction between the necessary being of God and the contingent being of man. Cf. Sidney Hook, 'The Atheism of Paul Tillich', Religious Experience and Truth, ed. S. Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1961)pp.59-64.

[92]In seeking to express this two-fold relation in terms of man's religious experience of it, Tillich adopts Rudolf Otto's terminology, and speaks accordingly of the encounter with the 'Holy' as tremendum and fascinosum. These terms signify 'the experience of "the ultimate" in the double sense of that which is the abyss and that which is the ground of man's being (ST, 1: 239). See also 'Die Kategorie des "Heiligen" bei Rudolf Otto', Theologische Blätter (Leipzig), II, No.1 (January 1923) pp.11-12. Cf. Otto, The Idea of the Holy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

of the event and biblical portrayal of Jesus as the Christ, we may conclude that, as 'original' and 'dependent' revelations respectively, each serves to reveal that which transcends them infinitely - namely, God as 'being-itself', overcoming the ontological threat of non-being - and that both act as 'sign-events' for those who perceive through them the self-disclosure of that which concerns us ultimately. Expressed more specifically in terms of the relation between the New Testament portrait and the Christ-event depicted in it, we may say that the revelatory character of the narratives is identical with the fact that it contains the 'ecstatic' response of those grasped by the mystery of being in the original 'miracle', the appearance of New Being in Jesus of Nazareth. For this reason, Tillich adds that it is even legitimate to speak here of 'inspired' writing, although he is careful to avoid any supernaturalistic idea of 'divine dictation'. 'Inspiration', he tells us, is the 'name for the cognitive quality of the ecstatic experience'.[93] The inspiration of the biblical writers thus consists in their acceptance and creative witness to the saving act of God in Jesus the Christ, through which that past event is continued and made available to those not contemporaries of it. In this way, Tillich concludes, the New Testament portrait of Jesus functions both as an expression of the 'ecstatic' (or 'receiving') side of the original revelation, and as the 'miracle' (or 'giving') side of a dependent revelation. It is both a document and an event, witnessing to that of which it is a part.[94]

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[93] ST, 1: 127

[94] Ibid., p.40

As a revelation testifying to a revelation, the biblical picture acts, therefore, not only as a record of the self-manifestation of God in Jesus the Christ, but itself transmits to us the reality of that divine disclosure.[95] In both cases - whether it be the original event or the interpretation of it in the scriptural witness - what is revealed in 'miracle' and received in 'ecstacy' is strict 'mystery', that which cannot be subject to an attitude or language bound to the subject-object scheme. The believer, that is, in his experience of Jesus as the bearer of New Being through the picture, encounters an actual revelatory happening, one which opens up to him a new dimension of knowledge, relative only to his ultimate concern and to the double relation of everything finite to 'being-itself'. More exactly, both event and biblical portrait act as the media through which the mystery of being, 'being-itself', manifests its 'creative' and 'abysmal' relation to us and to the structure of being as a whole. In calling this relation 'creative', we remember that Tillich is pointing to the fact that everything participates in the infinite 'ground of being'; and that, in calling it 'abysmal', he is pointing to the fact that all things are infinitely transcended by their creative ground. As we now shall see, it is this double characteristic of God - the mystery which appears in revelation as 'ground' and 'abyss' - which accounts for the important contrast between 'knowledge of revelation' and ordinary knowledge, and which therefore provides the reason why the significance attached by faith to the Christ-event and its biblical portrayal is not, and cannot be, governed by the conclusions of historical or philological research.

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[95]The view that the believer experiences the actual Christ-event <u>through</u> the biblical picture is developed fully by Tillich in his discussion of the <u>analogia imaginis</u>. See Ch.V.

We begin with the 'abysmal' side of God, since it is this which, Tillich maintains, makes revelation mysterious.[96] Alternatively, we may say that, in holding that revelation is the communication of that which is in principle inaccessible to the cognitive consciousness, Tillich is re-emphasizing the infinite qualitative distinction between the unconditioned and the conditioned, or, more precisely, the radical 'abysmal' character of God as the 'power of being', as that which infinitely transcends both the finite structure of being grounded in him, and that split between subject and object which is the precondition of all knowledge subject to that structure. Being-itself does not participate in non-being, and thus is 'beyond' or 'before' the contrast of subject-object which characterizes the finitude of man's cognitive reason. God, in other words, as the 'abyss of being' is not an 'object' of knowledge among other objects, for that which is man's ultimate concern cannot be found 'within the entire catalogue of finite objects which are conditioned by each other'.[97] This particular distinction between the unconditioned (or unconditional) and the conditioned is better expressed if we recall briefly the German translation of 'ultimate concern'. In the German edition of Systematic Theology, 'ultimate concern' is was uns unbedingt angeht, 'what concerns us unconditionally'.[98] In his 'Religionsphilosophie'

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[96] ST, 1: 173. Strictly speaking, of course, a separate discussion of the 'abysmal' over against the 'creative' notion of God is impossible, given the dialectical relation between them; but, for the purpose of clarifying their significance in the present context, such a division is unavoidable.

[97] Ibid., p.238

[98] Systematische Theologie, Bd.I, trans. Renate Albrecht et al. (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1956) p.19

of 1925, faith is defined as die Richtung auf das Unbedingte, as 'directedness toward the Unconditional'.[99] In both works, the meaning of the German word for 'unconditional' (unbedingt) explicitly excludes all sense of the limitation of das Unbedingte by being made into a 'thing' (Ding). God, accordingly, is not the 'object' of faith, if by that is meant that faith's concern is with a concrete object established in the temporal order. That which is man's ultimate concern is in no way dependent on man or on any finite being or concern, for the unconditioned cannot be equated with either a single form or with the totality of all forms of conditioned reality. As Tillich insists: 'Only that which is unconditional can be the expression of unconditional concern. A conditioned God is no God'.[100]

In this discussion of God as the 'abyss' of being, all objective thinking is thus ruled out, for, as that term signifies, what is under consideration is not an object which can be found alongside, above, or simply within 'things'. The notion of 'abyss' is rooted in an understanding of God which does not identify him with 'objective' being in any of these senses; and it was this, we remember, which provided the substance of Tillich's case against the 'blasphemous' arguments for the existence of God, namely that 'a God about whose existence or non-existence you can argue is a thing beside others within the universe of

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[99] Gesammelte Werke, Bd.I, ed. R. Albrecht (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959) p.331. 'Religionsphilosophie' appeared originally in Lehrbuch der Philosophie, ed. Max Dessoir, Bd.II: Die Philosophie in ihren Einzelgebieten (Berlin: Ullstein, 1925) pp.765-835. This important essay is now available in English in Tillich's What is Religion? trans. and ed. James Luther Adams (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1969) pp.27-121.

[100] ST, 1: 275

existing things'.[101] These conclusions do not, of course, prevent Tillich from realizing that, logically speaking, everything toward which the cognitive act is directed <u>is</u> considered an object, whether it be God, inanimate matter, the self or a mathematical definition. 'In the logical sense everything about which a predication is made is, by this very fact, an object'.[102] In this respect, then, the theologian cannot escape making God an object, just as he cannot avoid a tendency to use objectivating concepts when speaking of him. But, Tillich continues, the basic point to be grasped here is that this continual danger of 'logical objectification' is never merely logical: 'it carries ontological presuppositions and implications'.[103]

> If God <u>is</u> brought into the subject-object structure of being, he ceases to be the ground of being and becomes one being among others (first of all, a being beside the subject who looks at him as an object). He ceases to be the God who is really God.[104]

Notwithstanding the fact, therefore, that everything which becomes real within the cognitive realm enters the subject-object correlation, theology must always reaffirm the 'abysmal' character of God - the divine transcendence over the subject-object structure of reality - and, in so doing, 'remember that in speaking of God it makes an object of that which precedes the subject-object structure and that, therefore, it must include in its speaking of God the acknowledgement that it cannot make God an object'.[105]

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[101] 'Religion as a Dimension in Man's Spiritual Life', <u>TC</u>: 5. See above, p.171

[102] <u>ST</u>, 1: 191

[103] <u>Ibid</u>.

[104] <u>Ibid</u> (my emphasis).

[105] <u>Ibid</u>.

By applying these remarks to Tillich's previous statements about the revelatory status of the event and biblical portrayal of Jesus as the Christ, we can draw more specific conclusions about the type of knowledge gained by faith in its relation to these revelations. As we have seen already, it is part of the function of the event and picture that, <u>as</u> revelations, they should manifest God in his attribute of absolute concealment. But we may now go further and say that faith, whether it be in its original response to Jesus himself or in its response to him through the gospel image, thereby enters a situation, unique to the dimension of revelation, wherein the normal cognitive correspondence of subject to object is affirmed and denied simultaneously. It is affirmed because man is a centred self to whom every relation involves an object; and it is denied because God, as the 'abyss' of being, can never become an object for man's knowledge. Through its acceptance of the event and picture as media by which what is hidden is revealed, faith thus imputes to each a particular meaning which cannot be evaluated in terms of, or drawn into, the subject-object correlation because it is a meaning relative only to that which infinitely transcends that correlation and is not an element within it. In other words, the <u>a priori</u> of valuation implied in faith's attitude to Jesus and the biblical portrayal of him precludes any subject-object approach towards them because the significance that they have for faith is, in this instance, derived from faith's own perception of their manifestation of the 'abysmal' character of God. Here, no law and no category can be applied which is taken from an approach to finite being, since the structure of the content of revelation infinitely transcends the whole subject-object structure of reality. This is why the actual meaning faith ascribes to the 'original' event and 'dependent'

picture must, for Tillich, issue in a re-definition of the normal cognitive connection between subject and object, between the knower and the known. The 'abysmal' aspect of God recognized by faith through these revelations requires that faith, in this perception, leaves behind the totality of finite relations and enters a dimension which, in the categorical understanding of the word, contains no 'relation' at all. This important conclusion establishes Tillich's contrast between 'knowledge of revelation' and ordinary knowledge, and, accordingly, reinforces his distinction between the dimensions of faith and historical research. Revelation is the disclosure of that which remains hidden despite being revealed. It is the manifestation to the consciousness of that 'mysterious' side of God which, by his infinite power of being, transcends absolutely the whole finite structure of being grounded in him. Such, then, is the disjunction between revelation's 'mystery' and existent being that there can be no justification of the content of any revelation on the basis of a knowledge which is itself dependent on the finite form of reality. Thus, historical science - given the subject-object distinction as its own precondition of knowing - cannot impinge on the dimension in which faith lives and operates. In this present case, however, this is so not because of the preliminary character of its assertions, but because it is in the nature of the knowledge given to and received by faith in the situation of revelation that there can be no demonstration or verification of revelation except to and for faith itself. The dimension of faith, that is, involves a particular knowledge unavailable and unattainable outside a particular disposition of the human subject, evinced in his acceptance of revelation as the appearance of the 'abyss' of being within the natural order of being. This is the reason why any allowance made by faith for a

critico-historical evaluation of the Christ-event through an examination of its presentation in the New Testament would disaffirm the meaning that faith in fact attributes to both event and picture as revelations. It would contradict, in other terms, faith's own acceptance of them as expressions of the ultimate concern which transcends the cleavage between subject and object.

Historical enquiry cannot, then, devalue or undermine the knowledge communicated to and received by faith through revelations in the situation of revelation. Neither science nor biblical criticism can dissolve revelation because the structure of the content of revelation belongs to a dimension for which the subject-object structure of scientific and historical research is inadequate. This same conclusion is upheld in Tillich's discussion of the 'creative' aspect of God, to which we now turn. Here, however, we meet a different form of argumentation. The division set up between 'knowledge of revelation' and ordinary knowledge - and hence the separation made between the areas of faith and research - is not, in this instance, sustained by the <u>negation</u> of any identity between the finite subject and infinite 'object' in revelation, but by its <u>affirmation</u>. Tillich does not, of course, intend by this to impugn the radical transcendence of God as the 'abyss of being', but is referring instead to its dialectical counterpart, namely, to the creative side of God as the 'ground of being,' implied in and constitutive of all existent being, and by which reality resists non-being. The affirmation of an identity between the human subject and the divine 'object' of faith's knowledge depends, therefore, upon that immanent quality of God as the 'depth' of existence in which all things finite participate.

The way in which this emphasis upon the 'creative' aspect of God affects the relation between research and faith can be seen

best if we turn again to examine Tillich's use of the expression 'ultimate concern'. Up to this stage, the term has been employed chiefly to characterize the 'objective' side of faith, that to which faith is directed, namely, the unconditional and 'abysmal' nature of God as being-itself or the infinite power of being. And yet the meaning of the phrase varies in Tillich's theology, for it is used also to delineate the 'subjective' side of faith: the act of faith itself. Thus, for example, Tillich speaks of ultimate concern as the 'infinite passion...passion for the infinite' experienced by each and every individual in the totality of his personality.[106] It is hardly surprising to find, therefore, that this use of 'ultimate concern' has been thought highly ambiguous.[107] Does the phrase apply to an attitude of concern or to the object of that attitude? Does it refer to the individual's own acceptance of revelation in faith, or to the content of that received by faith through revelation? For our purposes, however, the significant point to be made here is that, elsewhere in his work, Tillich does resolve this difficulty by explicitly identifying the attitude of ultimate concern with its object. 'The ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same'.[108] Expressed in abstract language, this entails '...the disappearance of the ordinary subject-object scheme in the experience of the ultimate, the unconditional'.[109] Thus the term 'ultimate concern'

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[106] DF: 9

[107] See John Hick, Philosophy of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963) p.68. Cf. his 'Article Review' of Tillich's Systematic Theology, Vols. I & II, Scottish Journal of Theology, XII, No.3 (September 1959) pp.288-289.

[108] DF: 11

[109] Ibid.

unites the subjective and the objective side of the act of faith - the fides qua creditur (the faith through which one believes) and the fides quae creditur (the faith which is believed). The first is the classical term for the centered act of the personality, the ultimate concern. The second is the classical term for that toward which this act is directed, the ultimate itself, expressed in symbols of the divine. This distinction is very important, but not ultimately so, for the one side cannot be without the other. There is no faith without a content toward which it is directed.[110]

In Tillich's view, therefore, ultimate concern provides the place in which the subject-object dichotomy is removed. It is for this reason that he refuses to speak of 'knowledge' here, since that term 'finally presupposes the separation of subject and object, and implies an isolated theoretical act...'[111] That is to say, ultimate concern is not an expression of the attitude of one reality toward another, for the ultimate, being-itself as the prius of our own being, can be no object for us as subjects. There can be no self-affirmation of a finite being, and no interaction, therefore, between the human subject and any object, in which the 'ground of being' and its power of conquering non-being is not effective. Accordingly, Tillich adopts instead the word 'awareness', a 'neutral' term which may be defined as 'mystical' to the extent that it can be compared to the mystic's experience of the identity of subject and object in relation to God.[112] Hence, ultimate concern is the 'awareness' of the ultimate itself, the esse ipsum, which precedes all differences between subject and object, or, to use St.Augustine's terminology, of the veritas ipsa, the 'truth-itself'.[113] Thus, faith, as the state of being ultimately

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[110] Ibid., p.10

[111] 'The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion', TC: 23

[112] DF: 11

[113] See Tillich, 'The Problem of Theological Method', The Journal of Religion, XXVII, No.1 (January 1947) p.23

concerned, is not a matter of objective knowledge, of empirical research or rational inference, but is the immediate awareness of the presence of the unconditional element in ourselves and our world, the basis of religious experience. It is rooted in a 'mystical a priori', namely, in 'an awareness of something that transcends the cleavage between subject and object'.[114]

Following this analysis of ultimate concern, we may say that, for Tillich, the content of that which is received in the situation of revelation is identical with the structure of him who receives it: identical, that is, in the sense that what is received is the necessary quality implied in the being of the recipient. The implication of this understanding of revelation as the appearance of God as the 'depth' of being is, then, that faith receives and accepts that which excludes, by its creative power, any observer who is not himself conditioned by it in his whole being. The finitude of the human subject implies non-being, but is in fact more than non-being: it carries within itself the power of being, and this power of being issues from its participation in God as being-itself, the creative 'ground' of being. Indeed, the meaning that faith attaches to revelations as revelations implies this ontological relation. The revelatory significance perceived in, and ascribed to, certain elements of reality by faith entails faith's awareness that by them is manifested that infinite 'power of being' which is its own 'depth' or 'ground' of being.

In acknowledging both the event 'Jesus as the Christ' and its biblical portrayal to be revelations, the man of faith therefore recognizes that through them appears something which is identical with him even though it transcends him absolutely: something

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[114] ST, 1: 12

from which he is estranged by the finitude of his own existence, but from which he cannot be separated by virtue of his own limited power of being. Thus, in calling them 'revelations', faith not only announces its own witness to the manifestation of the 'creative' attribute of God through the Christ-event and its picture, but, in so doing, specifies the unique cognitive value of their meaning for faith. 'Knowledge of revelation' involves no 'knowledge' at all - if by that term one is referring to the capacity of the human subject to know the divine 'object' as distinct from himself. In revelation, our author writes, 'God remains the subject, even if he becomes a logical object'.[115] In the situation of revelation, the knowing subject is ontologically determined by that which is the logical object of his concern; and it is this relation that accounts for the fundamental difference between research and faith. The distinction between the two dimensions here consists in the fact that, whereas in historical science the act of knowing proceeds on the basis of the knower's initial and intended detachment from the object of his enquiry, in faith that which is known through revelation is the prius of the knower, the necessary presupposition of every being, and so, of every thought. 'God can never be reached if he is the object of a question, and not its basis'.[116] In 'knowledge of revelation', therefore, what

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[115] ST, 1: 191. An affinity with Karl Barth's theology is evident here. Thus Barth writes: 'The Subject of revelation is the Subject that remains indissolubly Subject. We cannot get behind this Subject. It cannot become an object'. The Doctrine of the Word of God, trans. G.T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1949) Vol.I, Part 1, p.438. For an analysis of Barth's position, see James Brown, Subject and Object in Modern Theology (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955) pp.140-167.

[116] 'The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion', TC: 13. It follows from this that God is also 'the presupposition of the question of God' (Ibid.) - an insight into the relation of our mind to the Absolute which is, Tillich adds, the essential truth contained in the so-called 'ontological argument'. The question

is communicated to faith is implied in, and precedes, every relation between subject and object, and thus involves no knowledge which is itself dependent on that correlation. The meaning given to the Christian revelations is drawn from faith's immediate and personal awareness in them of that quality of 'ultimacy' implicit in the structure of existence as a whole, of that which, by its infinite power of being, precedes and governs all practical and theoretical distinctions made between subject and object. This meaning is not, accordingly, an opinion either derived from, or accessible in terms of, the cognitive relation of subject to object entailed in the critico-historical approach.

With this discussion of revelation, we may conclude that it is in the nature of faith that, by its original response to the revelation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, and by its subsequent response to him through the biblical picture presented in the New Testament, faith enters a unique situation in which the epistemological contrast made by the historian between the knower and the known is no longer applicable. To summarize Tillich's position briefly, the reason why this should be so is as follows. Within the dimension of faith, the meaning given to these revelations <u>as</u> revelations originates with faith's own perception that through them appears God in his double characteristic of 'abyss' and 'ground'. It is a meaning, that is, relative only to that which, by its power of being as being-itself, both transcends and determines the subject-object scheme implied in not only historical judgments but in all normal cognitive acts. The distinction between historico-scientific knowledge and the knowledge communicated to the human consciousness by these revelations thus depends on recognizing two things: first, that what is revealed by the event

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of God <u>can</u> be asked because there is an unconditional element implicit within the very act of asking any question (<u>ST</u>, 1: 227-231).

and its picture is no 'object', but the ultimate, the absolutely hidden, that which cannot be approached by a form of knowledge appropriate to known or knowable reality; and second, that what does manifest itself through them is known, not by detached observation or evaluation, but by each individual's 'awareness' of its identity with that which is the 'subject' of his own finitude, governing the being or non-being of his own existence.[117] On both counts, therefore, faith's knowledge of the Christ-event and its biblical image as revelations is incapable of being subject to, or drawn into, the subject-object structure of historical knowledge. Faith is not an act of cognitive affirmation within the subject-object form of reality, and, as such, is not determined by the verifying methods of the trained historian. To suppose otherwise is to confuse the one dimension of knowledge with the other. So, Tillich concludes,

> Theologians need not be afraid of any historical conjecture, for revealed truth lies in a dimension where it can neither be confirmed nor negated by historiography. Therefore, theologians should not prefer some results of historical research to others on theological grounds, and they should not resist results which finally have to be accepted if scientific honesty is not to be destroyed, even if they seem to undermine the knowledge of revelation. Historical investigations should neither comfort nor worry theologians.[118]

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[117] With Tillich's translation of 'revelation' in this way, one is able to understand faith in terms of the ultimate itself, namely as man's concern about that which is revealed as the ultimate, and to understand the ultimate in terms of faith, namely as that about which man is ultimately concerned in the situation of revelation. This double possibility, which, Tillich maintains, preserves the ultimacy of the ultimate but which allows for a conception of the ultimate from the viewpoint of man's awareness of it in the depth of his being, constitutes for him a third and superior position 'beyond naturalism and supra-naturalism' (ST, 2: 5-9).

[118] ST, 1: 144

b) Faith and Religious Symbols.

The last aspect of Tillich's theological doctrine of knowledge with which we are concerned - his theory of religious symbolism - is an extension of his analysis of revelation; and thus, in so far as it reinforces the contrast drawn between the nature of faith and historical enquiry, it too relies on the differences said to exist between 'knowledge of revelation' and ordinary knowledge. Because of this dependence, the notion of 'religious symbol', despite remaining one of the most complex and pervasive features of Tillich's entire theology, has only limited additional use for the argument at hand.[119] Nevertheless, its importance for us is that, in underscoring the distinction already made between the finite media of revelation and what is revealed by them, the doctrine of religious symbolism details still more exactly the particular status of these media under the power of that which they express, the ultimate of being, being-itself. To clarify the point being made here - Tillich tells us that, because every person and thing necessarily participate in the infinite power of being, 'there is no reality, thing, or event which cannot become a

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[119]For further details on Tillich's discussion of 'religious symbol', see: R. F. Aldwinckle, 'Tillich's Theory of Religious Symbolism', Canadian Journal of Theology, X, No.2 (April 1964) pp.110-117; W. P. Alston, 'Tillich's Conception of a Religious Symbol', Religious Experience and Truth, ed. S. Hook, pp. 12-26; Bowman L. Clarke, 'God and the Symbolic in Tillich', Anglican Theological Review, XLIII, No.3 (July 1961) pp.302-311; John Y. Fenton, 'Being-itself and Religious Symbolism', The Journal of Religion, XLV, No.2 (April 1965) pp.73-86; Lewis S. Ford, 'The Three Strands of Tillich's Theory of Religious Symbols', The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No.1 (January 1966) pp.104-130; H. D. McDonald, 'The Symbolic Theology of Paul Tillich', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVII, No.4 (December 1964) pp.414-430; Michael Simpson, 'Paul Tillich: Symbolism and Objectivity', The Heythrop Journal, VIII, No.3 (July 1967) pp.293-309; and, both by Paul L. Holmer, 'Paul Tillich and the Language about God', Journal of Religious Thought, XXII, No.1 (January 1965-66) pp.35-50, and 'Paul Tillich: Language and Meaning', Journal of Religious Thought, XXII, No.2 (April 1965-66) pp.85-106. Rowe's Religious Symbols and God remains the only full-length analysis of Tillich's theory of religious symbolism.

bearer of the mystery of being and enter a revelatory correlation'.[120] He adds, however, that 'nothing has become the bearer of revelation by its outstanding qualities...'[121] While all objects thus have, in principle, an equal ontological status because all participate in being-itself, no element of reality can serve as the medium of revelation unless it manifests to the consciousness the mystery of being. No natural thing or process subject to the structure of being can become, therefore, a vehicle of revelation through what it is in itself, but only through its manifestation of that which is both implicit within and distinct from it as the 'ground' and 'abyss' of its own being and meaning. It is not, for example, the historical significance or personal greatness of the medium's individual characteristics that make it revelatory. This stipulation, in Tillich's view, avoids the danger of a 'natural theology' in revelation.

> Revelation through natural mediums is not natural revelation. "Natural revelation", if distinguished from revelation through nature, is a contradiction in terms, for if it is natural knowledge it is not revelation, and if it is revelation it makes nature ecstatic and miraculous...Natural theology and, even more definitely, natural revelation are misnomers for the negative side of the revelation of the mystery, for an interpretation of the shock and stigma of non-being.[122]

It is precisely this same affirmation and negation of the object's own concrete qualities which stand at the centre of Tillich's theory of religious symbolism. According to him, the form of the religious symbol is such that it simultaneously affirms the necessity of using material taken from finite reality in order

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[120] ST, 1: 131

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., p.133. Cf. 'Natural and Revealed Religion', Christendom, I, No.1 (Autumn 1935) pp.159-170. However, for an alternative opinion, see Lewis S. Ford, 'Tillich's Implicit Natural Theology', Scottish Journal of Theology, XXIV, No.3 (August 1971) pp.257-270.

to give content to the cognitive function in revelation, and negates the normal cognitive use of these finite materials by expressing that which both 'transcends' and 'precedes' the structure of being to which these materials properly belong. Here, the negation of the functional importance of the medium's specific characteristics in determining the revelatory significance attributed to it by faith evolves from the necessary denial that such characteristics are in any way attributes of what the medium reveals. The doctrine of religious symbolism advocated by Tillich is designed, in other words, to avoid the danger of subjecting the ultimate mystery of being to the subject-object structure of being from which the media of revelation are drawn; and, for this reason, the theory requires that no finite element can be regarded as a vehicle of revelation simply on the basis of a critical evaluation of its individual properties. If the contrary is the case, then the meaning of the object as a medium of revelation becomes self-contradictory, since, being now dependent on that which is capable of analysis or description, it is no longer related to our ultimate concern, being-itself. In this way, therefore, Tillich's notion of 'religious symbol' upholds the distinction already made between the dimensions of research and faith. It implies that the validity of the interpretation of an object as a revelation is not governed by any analysis of the correspondence between the meaning ascribed to the object and that object's own factual-historical mode of being; and this is in direct contrast to the process of knowing presupposed in historical science.

In all the various accounts Tillich has given of his theory of religious symbolism, he contrasts religious symbols with

'symbols' generally.[123] The function of 'symbols' may be summarized briefly in four propositions:[124]

1. Symbols are figurative, that is, they point beyond themselves to something for which they stand; they are 'self-transcendent'.
2. Symbols participate in the reality of that which they symbolize.
3. Thus symbols cannot be replaced arbitrarily or according to expediency; they grow and die, but are not invented or abolished.
4. Symbols open up levels of being and levels of the soul which symbols alone can open; they disclose dimensions of reality which cannot be experienced except through symbols.

The religious symbol, while possessing all these characteristics of 'symbol', has, however, its own special features.

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[123] In all, Tillich has written six essays on religious symbolism: 1) 'Das religiöse Symbol', Blätter für deutsche Philosophie (Berlin), I, No.4 (January 1928) pp.277-299. This has been translated and revised in Religious Experience and Truth, ed. S. Hook, pp.301-321; 2) 'Religious Symbols and Our Knowledge of God', Christian Scholar, XXXVIII, No.3 (September 1955) pp.189-197, and reprinted as 'The Nature of Religious Language' in TC: 53-67; 3) 'Theology and Symbolism', Religious Symbolism, ed. F. Ernest Johnson (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955) pp.107-116; 4) 'Existential Analyses and Religious Symbols', Contemporary Problems in Religion, ed. H. A. Basilius (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1956) pp.35-55, and reprinted in Four Existentialist Theologians, ed. Will Herberg (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, No.141, 1958) pp. 277-291; 5) 'The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols', Religious Experience and Truth, ed. S. Hook, pp.3-12; 6) 'God as being and the knowledge of God', ST, 1: 264-268.

[124] This summary depends on Tillich's own resume of his theory of symbolism in 'The Word of God', Language: An Enquiry into its Meaning and Function, ed. Ruth N. Anshen (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957) pp.122-133.

Religious symbols point to the deepest level of being which is not a level but the creative 'ground' in all levels; they are representations of that which is man's ultimate concern.

> They must express an object that by its very nature transcends everything in the world that is split into subjectivity and objectivity. A real symbol points to an object which never can become an object. Religious symbols represent the transcendent but do not make the transcendent immanent. They do not make God a part of the empirical world.[125]

The distinctive function of religious symbols is, therefore, to point to the ultimate level of reality, being-itself. That 'God is being-itself' is the only direct, non-symbolic affirmation open to theology, and is implicit in every religious thought about God.[126] For if, Tillich argues, the question, 'Is there a nonsymbolic statement about the referent of religious symbols?' cannot be answered affirmatively, then 'the necessity of symbolic language for religion could not be proved and the whole argument would lead into a vicious circle'.[127] A religious symbol is, in

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[125] 'The Religious Symbol', p.303

[126] ST, 1: 264-265.

[127] 'The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols', p.6. We should add here that the question of the non-symbolic status of the assertion 'God is being-itself' is one of the most perplexing issues in Tillich's theology, if only because he appears to have reversed his position at least twice. His non-symbolic doctrine, advocated primarily in ST, 1, differs from his earlier, pan-symbolist view that 'all knowledge of God has a symbolic character' ('The Religious Symbol', p.316). This change, Tillich says, followed upon Wilbur Urban's criticism that 'in order to speak of symbolic knowledge one must delimit the symbolic realm by an unsymbolic statement'('Reply to Interpretation and Criticism', The Theology of Paul Tillich, p.334). However, in ST, 2: 9, our author maintains that the only nonsymbolic statement is 'the statement that everything we say about God is symbolic. Such a statement is an assertion about God which itself is not symbolic'. Yet this position is not only closer to that which Urban criticized - namely that no positive, literal characterization can be made of God as the unconditioned - but is also self-contradictory. The statement that 'everything we say about God is symbolic' should, on its own terms, be symbolic and not the literal assertion Tillich

other words, symbolic because it represents that which is unconditionally beyond its own conceptual sphere, the ultimate reality implied in the religious act; and 'God is being-itself' is not symbolic because, as the fundamental and most abstract ontological concept, it points to no higher mode of being beyond itself. 'It means what it says directly and properly; if we speak of the actuality of God we first assert that he is not God if he is not being-itself. Other assertions about God can be made theologically only on this basis'.[128]

Thus, every statement about being-itself - other than the statement that God is being-itself - is symbolic. 'To speak unsymbolically about being-itself is untrue'.[129] The pivotal point of Tillich's argument here is that the ultimate level of reality to which religious symbols refer is not subject to the finite structure of reality and its limitations. God, as being-itself, is the ground of the ontological structure of being without being determined by this structure himself. 'Therefore, if anything beyond this bare assertion is said about God, it no longer is a direct and proper statement, no longer a concept. It

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wishes to affirm. From the standpoint of this thesis, to accept the view that 'God is being-itself' is a literal identity statement has, to use William Rowe's words, the important consequence 'that the ontological status of God and the ontological status of being-itself are not two different questions but one and the same' (op.cit., pp.30-31). This has been our own underlying position in the previous interpretation of Tillich's concept of 'revelation' (see above, pp.169-171). Cf. Wilbur M. Urban, 'Tillich's Theory of the Religious Symbol', Journal of Liberal Religion, II, No.2 (Summer 1940) pp.34-36; John Y. Fenton, 'Being-itself and Religious Symbolism', The Journal of Religion, XLV, No. 2 (April 1965) pp.73-86; and Lewis S. Ford, 'Tillich's One Non-symbolic Statement: A Propos of a Recent Study by Rowe', Journal of the American Academy of Religion, XXXVIII, No.2 (June 1970) pp. 176-182.

[128] ST, 1: 265

[129] CB: 175

is indirect, and it points to something beyond itself. In a word, it is symbolic'.[130] A statement is symbolic, that is, in so far as it uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about God; but since God, as the transcendent absolute, being-itself, is a reality beyond the subject-object structure of being, no element of being therein discovered can be literally applied to him. Accordingly, no literal assertion concerning the laws and structure of nature, the biological and psychological character of man, or the facts and processes of history can be identified with religious symbols. Conversely, religious symbols are immune to the criticisms of non-symbolic language, since they are not circumscribed by any law, process or fact concerning man and his world. Such criticisms are not only confusions of literal and symbolic language, but are, since language expresses reality, confusions also of the dimensions of reality to which these different kinds of language refer.

As a basic characteristic of all religious symbols, this non-literal form is evident in each of the various types of religious symbol. Briefly put, Tillich distinguishes between two classes of religious symbol, the 'primary' and the 'secondary', the former pointing directly to the referent of religious symbolism, being-itself, the latter supporting or artistically re-symbolizing the primary.[131] We shall be concerned only with primary religious symbols. These Tillich further subdivides into two levels: 'the transcendent level, the level which goes <u>beyond</u> the empirical reality we encounter, and the immanent level, the

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[130] <u>ST</u>, 1: 265

[131] 'The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols', p.8

level which we find within the encounter with reality'.[132] Primary-transcendent religious symbols consist in the central symbol of a 'highest' being to whom certain qualities are attributed (viz., personality, power, love, justice, etc.), and encompass also those symbols which characterize the divine actions (viz., creation, providence, judgment, etc.). Primary-immanent religious symbols, on the other hand, live in the realm of 'appearances of the divine in time and space',[133] and so include all events, things or people through which the unconditioned transcendent has been manifested. Thus, while this second type involves primarily those historical personalities who have become the object of the religious act (e.g., the Christ or the Buddha), it extends to every element of reality which has occasioned an awareness of the ultimate, whether it be, for example, the sacramental materials of the Lord's Supper, or even the Crucifix.[134]

Following this classification of the types of religious symbol, we may conclude that all the finite media of revelation, in so far as they are accepted by faith as the vehicles through which the absolute and transcendent appears within the natural order of being, are 'primary-immanent' religious symbols. Thus, both the event 'Jesus as the Christ' and its New Testament presentation, as the 'miracle' or 'giving' sides of original and dependent revelations respectively, belong in this category, it being a level of religious symbolism appropriate only to the 'manifestation of the divine in things and events, in persons and communities,

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[132] TC: 61

[133] Ibid., p.63

[134] Ibid., pp.64-65

in words and documents'.[135] Significantly enough, this suggests in turn that, as symbols of this type, the Christ-event and its biblical picture conform to the non-literal structure of religious symbols generally, and are, for that reason, independent of any empirical criticism. In the case of the original Christian event, this point is underlined when Tillich, speaking of those historical personalities that have become 'primary-immanent' symbols, both affirms their 'objectivity' and negates their 'rational objectivity'.[136] His acceptance of the necessary facticity of the figures regarded as media of revelation is, in other terms, contrasted here with his denial that any practical or theoretical process could establish their historical reality <u>as</u> media of revelation. This signifies 'that these objects that possess a holy character are not empirical, even if they can only be conceived as existing in the empirical order'.[137] That is to say, the personalities that have become the focus of a religious act are empirical to the extent that they belong to the subject-object structure of being; but they are not empirical in that the meaning attributed to them in that act cannot be validated within the subject-object schema of rationality.[138] This being so, then faith's picture, by claiming to be based on the actual revelation in Jesus the Christ, claims also to portray an event, the original nature of which precludes any judgment of its truth as a revelation on the basis of a critical assessment of its factual-historical mode of being. For the theory of religious

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[135] <u>DF</u>: 48

[136] 'The Religious Symbol', p.316

[137] <u>Ibid</u>., p.317

[138] This view, we remember, accords with Tillich's discussion of the nature of 'miracle'. See above, p.164.

symbolism indicates that while such 'primary-immanent' symbols have historical elements - in that the peculiarity of these symbols 'depends precisely upon their historical reality, their reality in the objective sense'[139] - they do not mediate any literal truth about themselves from which their meaning as symbols may be deduced. If the meaning of any element of reality as a 'primary-immanent' religious symbol depends on its revelation of the ultimate to the human consciousness, then the criterion of its truth as a symbol cannot be a non-symbolic comparison between its own individual qualities and the ultimate reality to which it refers. This is because the reality thus pointed to by the religious symbol transcends infinitely the structure of being to which every finite segment of reality, and every epistemological distinction between subject and object, are bound. It is, so Tillich remarks,

> the first step in the deterioration of religion when it identifies symbols with the world of finite interrelations which furnishes the material of the symbols - which are the material and not that which is signified. That which is signified lies beyond the symbolic material. This is the first and last thing we must say about religious symbolism.[140]

Since, therefore, no person or event which manifests the absolutely hidden can be equated with the mystery it reveals, so the truth of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' as a 'primary-immanent' religious symbol is not governed by any historico-scientific evaluation of the literal correspondence between the

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[139] 'The Religious Symbol', p.316. Tillich adds that it would be 'entirely contradictory to the religious consciousness if one characterized these personalities, or what they did and what happened to them, as symbols...The use of symbolism with regard to this world in which the holy is supposed to be really present would involve a denial of its presence and hence the destruction of its existence' (Ibid.).

[140] 'Theology and Symbolism', p.116

quality or character of its finite material (the man Jesus of Nazareth) and the revelatory significance ascribed to it by faith.[141] The importance of this symbol depends on its expression of the ultimate in its unconditionedness; but this requirement is not met if the conditioned reality which here serves as the vehicle of revelation is elevated to the dignity of the unconditioned. That which is perceived by faith manifests itself through the medium; but the medium is the agent and not the source of the manifestation. Hence revelation is not the communication of knowledge concerning the ultimate based on any analysis of the intrinsic properties of the medium. To suppose otherwise is 'idolatry', the substitution of the unconditioned by the conditioned, the attribution of divine predicates to a finite reality.[142]

This same pattern of argument is evident when we turn to consider the biblical picture as a religious symbol. The picture functions as a 'primary-immanent' symbol in that it conveys to present faith the original response and witness to the revelation of the ultimate in Jesus the Christ. For those not contemporaries of that event, faith's apprehension of the ultimate of being, God as being-itself, in the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth is here made available through the form of the biblical portrait, the language of which is the human expression of the state of

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[141] Although not directly linked to his doctrine of religious symbolism, this point is implicit in Tillich's contention that the revelation witnessed to by the biblical picture is the 'final revelation', namely, the revelation which contains the medium's own rejection of all ultimate claims for itself. See ST, 1: 147-153.

[142] This further explains the meaning of the 'risk of faith' (see above, pp.145-146). This risk is the tendency within faith to identify the religious symbol with the ultimate it reveals; it has nothing to do, therefore, with the risk of accepting uncertain historical facts. See TC: 60-61, and ST, 2: 134.

revelatory ecstasy originally experienced by the biblical writers. It is therefore correct to say that, according to Tillich, the particular category of symbolism to which the Christian event belongs, and to which the New Testament refers, is distinguished by the fact that it embraces at the same time historical and transcendent aspects: this event represents for faith's picture a manifestation of the unconditioned within the order of conditioned being. To this we should add, however, that since the ultimate stands, by its very nature, beyond the subject-object structure of being, the meaning of every statement about the unconditioned is in principle different from the meaning of every statement about the conditioned. We may conclude, then, that the distinctive feature of the biblical picture is that, in seeking to portray an event belonging to the class of 'primary-immanent' symbols, it simultaneously includes assertions about the concrete form of Jesus' historical existence which are fundamentally incompatible with its assertions expressive of his meaning as a religious symbol, namely, with those relative to faith's perception of the ultimate in him. This incompatibility derives from the different dimensions of reality to which each group of assertions refers. We remember, for example, that on Tillich's understanding of the Christ-event as a religious symbol, this event's manifestation of the ultimate reality lying beyond subject and object cannot be validated by a critical analysis of the finite characteristics of the medium through which that reality appears within the subject-object order of being. The biblical picture, as a revelation testifying to a revelation, contains this same symbolic structure. Thus, in similar fashion, the truth of the picture's statements regarding the biblical writers' own witness to the revelation in

Jesus the Christ cannot be guaranteed by any scientific-historical evaluation of the truth of its statements about the actual form of Jesus' earthly existence. The truth of a religious symbol, our author maintains, 'has nothing to do with the validity of factual statements concerning the symbolic material. However problematic the symbolic material in its literal meaning may be, its symbolic character and its validity as a symbol are not determined by it'.[143] It is, accordingly, a disastrous misunderstanding of the function of the biblical portrait as a religious symbol to identify the validity of the meaning it attributes to Jesus of Nazareth as the medium of revelation with the historical accuracy of its stories about him. Faith's portrayal of him as the Christ cannot, therefore, be falsified by historical research, even if such research criticizes the narratives in which the occurrence of the Christ-event is presented.[144] While the historian may be able to speak with scientific precision about the worth of the biblical picture as a report about an assumed revelation, he cannot speak of it as a witness to an actual revelation, and hence can contribute nothing to the knowledge of revelation mediated by it. In such a hermeneutic, writes Gustave Weigel,

> it is postulated that the Bible as a record of revelation does not teach history, for history is not a matter of ultimate concern...As a record of revelation, the Scriptures make no historiographic statements, and to look for such betrays a misunderstanding of their nature.

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[143] 'The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols', p.11. Elsewhere Tillich writes: 'The truth of a religious symbol has nothing to do with the truth of the empirical assertions involved in it, be they physical, psychological, or historical' (ST, 1: 266).

[144] This view goes some way in further explaining our author's attitude to 'demythologization' (see above, Ch.III, p. 101, n.4). For Tillich, myths are symbols of faith expressed in terms of events in time and space. The truth of myths depends, therefore, on their adequacy in expressing the revelations to which they point, and is not determined by the literal truth of

> If a historian uses the Bible as something less than a record of revelation, he is using a document of dubious trustworthiness, because any historiographic value in the books is completely irrelevant to the real significance of the reports. The Bible is a record of revelation and not the historiographic presentation of secular events. The symbolists make much of the meaning of history, but as theologians they ignore on principle any historiographic validity of the Bible.145

Tillich thus draws a distinction between the value of the biblical picture as a religious symbol and its importance as an historical document. It is symbolic by manifesting to receiving faith the original revelation in Jesus the Christ through the medium of its language, and is true only in so far as it incorporates the original meaning of the revelatory situation it is intended to reflect; but to the extent that it contains details of Jesus' life - what he did and what happened to him - its propositions are fallible, as certain as the evidence on which they are based. The significance of this portrait lies, in other words, in the meaning it attributes to the person of Jesus of Nazareth, but concerning whom it can make no definite, critically evaluable, judgments. This does not entail, however, that the non-literal form of the biblical picture either impugns the reality of Jesus as an actual individual or denies that his interpre-

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their empirical references. He thus agrees with Bultmann in the 'deliteralization' of myths, but denies that one can 'demythologize' (i.e., do away with myths altogether) since 'there are no substitutes for the use of symbols and myths: they are the language of faith' (DF: 51). So Tillich argues: 'Myth is more than a primitive world-view with which Bultmann wrongly equates it; it is the necessary and adequate expression of revelation. In this I agree with Barth, who for some questionable terminological reason calls it "Sage" (Saga)'. 'The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental Development', Theology Today, VI, No.3 (October 1949) p.306. Cf. Perspectives, pp.227-228. On this difference between Tillich and Bultmann, see Klaus Rosenthal, 'Myth and Symbol', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVIII, No.4 (December 1965) pp.431-432; and Robert H. Ayers, '"Myth" in Theological Discourse: A Profusion of Confusion', Anglican Theological Review, XLVIII, No.2 (April 1966) pp.204-211.

145. 'Myth, Symbol, and Analogy', Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, p.190

tation as the Christ implies certain claims about the nature of his being as New Being; it is rather designed to show that the truth of the christological importance ascribed to Jesus' being by faith is unrelated to any literal-scientific verification of the 'historical truth' of its assertions about him.[146] While the historian is at liberty, therefore, to seek the 'historical Jesus' in the scriptural witness to Jesus' life and work, his findings, so Tillich concludes, can neither confirm nor deny anything of relevance to the theological truth about Jesus revealed in the picture. For, according to the theory of religious symbolism, the pictorial presentation and consequent acceptance of this historical figure as a revelation raises this figure, as it were, to a dimension in which his actuality as the Christ derives from faith's perception of his relation to the unconditional transcendent and not from an analysis of his empirical form. The biblical portrait as a religious symbol is, in this respect, independent of any empirical criticism of its own empirical statements about Jesus of Nazareth; it speaks of history but not historiographically, since the meaning faith attaches therein to Jesus is relative only to its awareness through him of that which precedes and transcends the subject-object level of rationality to which historical science belongs.

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[146]This same point is made most forcefully in Tillich's later discussion of the historical accuracy of Jesus' name. See below, Ch.V, pp.213-217.

CHAPTER V

THE CERTAINTY OF FAITH AND TILLICH'S CONCEPT OF THE ANALOGIA IMAGINIS

Thus far, Tillich's discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus has brought him to the conclusion that the biblical picture cannot provide either trustworthy or adequate material for an historico-scientific reconstruction of Jesus' life and work which would be of relevance to christology. At the risk of oversimplification, we may say that the reasons given for the adoption of this position fall essentially into two forms of argumentation. The first has to do with certain critical observations made by Tillich into the special nature of the biblical sources, which correspond in turn to his own particular understanding of the structural character of the event to which these sources refer. While it is accepted that virtually all information about the career of Jesus is to be found in the New Testament, it is argued nevertheless that any attempt to create an 'historical Jesus' from this information firstly ignores the valid literary-critical conclusion that even the most ancient and reputedly accurate narratives are determined by, and impregnated with, the theological requirements and intentions of the communities in which they arose, and secondly, and still more fundamentally, betrays an ignor-

ance of the factual-interpretative nature of the event portrayed by them. As we have suggested before, here is a basic agreement with Rudolf Bultmann that, given the kerygmatic character of the gospels, no distinction can be made between the man Jesus and Jesus the Christ in order to discover the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth - an argument which is, we recall, later developed by our author in terms of the original and necessary conjunction of 'fact' and 'interpretation' within the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. There can thus be no legitimate encounter with a scientifically observed 'historical Jesus', for not only were the scriptural reports about Jesus constructed for quite definite missionary and homiletic purposes, but even the Jesus about whom we have reports was from the first the Christ of faith. In neither case, therefore, is the evidence given about the life of Jesus in any way dissociable from the context in which it is received, namely, from that situation presupposed, and witnessed to, by the biblical picture in which Jesus is confessed as the Christ.

The second pattern of argument is designed to complement the first since it seeks to show that only an absolute rejection of all efforts to find the 'historical Jesus' by critical methods can remain true to what Tillich regarded as the proper interests and functions of both research and faith. As we saw in the previous chapter, the argument employed here proceeds from an analysis of the preliminary and subject-object form of historical enquiry to the conclusion that, such being the relation between faith and the form of knowledge communicated and expressed in revelation and religious symbols, the validity of faith's acceptance of Jesus as the Christ cannot be determined by any scientific discovery of the actual manner or content of Jesus' earthly

existence. Indeed, Tillich goes further and rejects the view that at least a minimum of historically certified facts are essential to the veracity of faith's claims, insisting instead that the truth of the christological interpretation of Jesus is not equivalent to all those factual-historical statements which could be made truthfully about his life. The problem of the historical Jesus is not, on this line of reasoning, an issue circumscribed by the question of whether or not certain incidents narrated in the New Testament actually happened in the way they are reported to have happened. Faith alone is the necessary presupposition of any knowledge of Jesus as the Christ because this knowledge is relative only to faith's own perception of the ultimate in him. No historical science can govern the authenticity or inauthenticity of this claim because it is a claim born of the awareness of that which infinitely transcends the subject-object order of rationality to which historical science and all other forms of ordinary knowledge adhere. Biblical criticism cannot, accordingly, invalidate the meaning attributed to Jesus of Nazareth in the situation of revelation because the content of that in which an ultimate meaning is perceived by faith belongs to a dimension for which the subject-object structure of scientific and historical research is inadequate. Tillich also adds that this theological theory of knowledge, which denies the legitimacy of every human claim concerning the revelation of the ultimate of being in Jesus the Christ, parallels the Pauline-Lutheran doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone.[1] In requiring that faith's understanding of the

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[1]This connection is suggested by our author in the following passage: 'I managed to reconcile the doctrine of justification with radical historical criticism by developing an interpretation of the idea of justification that has been of the greatest

Christ-event must be released from all historicist objectifications of its meaning in terms of historical facts, this theory stipulates, that is to say, that the revelation of the 'mystery' of being, God as being-itself, in the Christian event precludes any view of it formulated on the basis of the preparatory acts of man. The division made between faith and all forms of ordinary knowledge, like the doctrine of justification, therefore destroys not only every false security in the 'historical truth' arrived at by the application of the critical-historical method: it also, and more generally, affirms the independence of the 'truth of faith' from the truth of any particular intellectual, scientific, or philosophical conclusion reached by the human subject.[2]

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importance to me, both personally and professionally. I applied the doctrine of justification to the sphere of human thought. Not only human acts but human thinking as well stand under the divine "No". No one, not even a believer or a Church, can boast of possessing truth, just as no one can boast of possessing love. Orthodoxy is intellectual pharisaism. The justification of the doubter corresponds to the justification of the sinner. Revelation is just as paradoxical as the forgiveness of sins. Neither can become an object of possession'. On the Boundary (London: Collins, 1967) pp.50-51. Here Tillich cites two early essays in which these ideas are developed: 'Rechtfertigung und Zweifel', Vorträge der theologischen Konferenz zu Giessen, 39 (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1924) pp.19-32; and 'Die Idee der Offenbarung', Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (Tübingen), N.F., VIII, No. 6 (1927), pp.403-412.

[2]An exploration of the epistemological significance of the principle of justification is, as Van A. Harvey maintains, a common feature among the dialectical or neo-orthodox theologians (op.cit., pp.127-159). In Tillich's case, however, his particular application of the doctrine to the problem of the historical Jesus most nearly reflects the work of his teacher, Martin Kähler. In his 'Foreword' to The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ (trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten), Tillich acknowledges the importance of Kähler's use of 'the principle of the Reformation to the situation of modern man between faith and doubt. He taught us that he who doubts any statement of the Bible and the creed can nevertheless be accepted by God and can combine the certainty of acceptance with the actuality of even radical doubt. This idea made it possible for many of us to become or remain Christian theologians' (Ibid., p.xii). To this our author adds that one other emphasis in Kähler's answer 'is

Taken together, these two forms of argumentation make clear that Tillich's assessment of the biblical picture as a biographical source for a 'life of Jesus' is primarily negative. They also suggest, however, that the kind of historical scepticism which Tillich demonstrates is, for the most part, more thoroughgoing and more acute than the scepticism of earlier theologians. Whereas, for example, the older Rationalist and liberal Protestant positions sought, by the removal of all miraculous or supernatural imageries of Jesus, to arrive at an historical Jesus who would remain a moral and religious guide or pattern, this later scepticism recognizes, on the one hand, the kerygmatic and fragmentary nature of the gospel evidence, and produces, on the other, epistemological reasons why no critico-historical statement about the past can impinge upon the 'truth of faith'.

In our opening chapter, we remarked that Tillich's objection to the liberal Protestant resolution of the problem of the historical Jesus appears to confirm, or at least give weight to, the radically sceptical conclusions of David Strauss which the liberals sought to overcome.[3] We remember that Strauss, unlike Reimarus before him, did not attempt to make any definite judgments on the real purposes of Jesus and his disciples, but was concerned to show rather the mythical structure of the sources, albeit on the basis of Hegelian premises. Now while it

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decisive for our present situation, namely, the necessity to make the certainty of faith independent of the unavoidable incertitudes of historical research. Finding the way in which this can be done for our time is one of the main tasks of contemporary theology' (Ibid.). Essentially the same points are made in Perspectives, pp.213-215.

[3] See above, Ch.I, p.31

is certainly true that Tillich equally upholds the view that the historian cannot penetrate the narratives to discover the empirical facts about the earthly Jesus, his scepticism on this point, unlike that of Strauss, does not extend either to a disinterest in Jesus himself or to a depreciation of the biblical picture's importance as a picture of the Christ-event. Indeed, the distinctive feature of Tillich's discussion is that it is not purely critical. For while insisting that historiography can neither give nor take away the foundation of Christian faith, he is nevertheless just as persistent in arguing that the biblical portrait provides this foundation for present belief, and that it is a picture of something that happened objectively. Tillich asserts a continuity between the picture and the original act of interpretation made by the first disciples in their reception of Jesus as the Christ; and maintains also that a necessary connection exists between the meaning attached to Jesus in the biblical testimony and the meaning Jesus' person possessed in itself. According to him, therefore, the significance initially ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth, and to which the New Testament now bears witness, corresponds to the actual significance of the being of 'Jesus as he actually was'. Behind Tillich's negative evaluation of the biblical picture's capacity to supply material sufficient for a biographical account of Jesus thus lies a positive view of its function in providing an authentic knowledge of that 'historic' (geschichtlich) figure. What we are given here is, in other words, no photographic reproduction of that life, but a portrait which witnesses both to the ultimate existential meaning of Jesus in the original apostolic interpretation of him as the bearer of New Being, and to the actual reality of Jesus as the Christ, to the real manifesta-

tion of Essential God-Manhood in him. As we have noted elsewhere, the intelligibility and validity of the kerygma as kerygma rests upon its correspondence with the reality of that event of which it is the result; and, to this extent, all statements made by the kerygma are a posteriori judgments about the Christ-event in its actuality and ultimate existential meaning.[4] For Tillich, therefore, the assertion that historical enquiry cannot affect the authenticity of the biblical image as a portrait of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' does not entail the refutation of the claim that Christianity is based on an actual occurrence from which the biblical picture was 'created': it does not destroy the connection of the Christian message to a definite point in history or its essential dependence on this historical substratum.

The juxtaposition of these negative and positive elements in Tillich's argument determines the final stage of his examination of the problem of the historical Jesus. For if, according to the preceding methodological and epistemological requirements, it is in the nature of the case that a negative conclusion will inevitably result from the application of historical-critical techniques to the biblical picture, how, we may ask, is it possible for Tillich to affirm positively the significance of Jesus of Nazareth for faith and christological doctrine? How, to be more exact, can this fundamental historical scepticism - which is accepted as a necessary insight into the status of all investigations regarding the facts about Jesus - be united with the parallel statements Tillich would wish to make: that the original Christian event contained a

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[4] See above, Ch.III, pp.97-99, 131-137

'factual' and personal side named 'Jesus', to which the title 'Christ' was appropriate; and that a real correlation exists between the New Testament portrait of Jesus as the bearer of New Being and the actual, past event on which Christianity is based? The reason why Tillich maintains that faith is independent of research as the final court of appeal concerning the truth of its picture is clear enough: the alternative is to involve faith in the doubts attendant on the preliminary character of biblical criticism. What is not so clear, however, is how he can argue that faith does not imply assent to certain propositions of a scientifically certifiable type while <u>simultaneously</u> insisting that faith does require some apprehension of Jesus' meaning through the form of the picture. How, in other terms, can the validity of this meaning be guaranteed without in some way taking account of the historian's conclusions about the life of him to whom this meaning is ascribed? Certainly, on the evidence of the following quotation, Tillich shows that he is aware of these difficulties. Commenting on the work of his teacher, Martin Kähler, he writes:

> What is the relationship between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith? Can we separate them? Must we accept the idea that Christ can never be reached by us apart from faith? Is there anything that can be done about the doubts produced by historical research into the biblical writings? Kähler himself did not believe that the two must be separated. For Kähler the Jesus of history is at the same time the Christ of faith, and the certainty of the Christ of faith is independent of the historical results of the critical approach to the New Testament. Faith guarantees what historical research can never reach. How can faith do this? What can faith guarantee? There lies the problem today, a problem which has been sharpened in the meantime by people like Bultmann and his whole school.[5]

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[5] <u>Perspectives</u>, pp.214-215

Tillich's discussion of the certainty of faith and his subsequent use of the concept of the analogia imaginis are designed to answer these questions. They seek to guarantee a continuity between the biblical portrayal and the reality of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' in a way whereby critical investigations into the New Testament record of Jesus' life can neither confirm nor disconfirm the truth of faith's statements about the meaning of his person. To this extent, they represent Tillich's own constructive attempt to resolve the basic historical problem of Christianity.

He begins, however, by first rejecting a deficient and misleading answer to the question of whether historical scepticism can affect the foundation of Christian belief. 'It is', he says,

> inadequate to point out that historical research has not yet given any evidence to support such scepticism. Certainly, it has not yet! But the anxious question remains whether it could not do so sometime in the future! Faith cannot rest on such unsure ground. The answer, taken from the "not-yet" of sceptical evidence, is insufficient.[6]

Elsewhere, our author is more specific and cites Emil Brunner as one theologian who subscribes to this compromise approach. According to sections of Brunner's book The Mediator, 'faith is confident that any conclusions of research which are unsatisfactory to it will themselves eventually be given up'.[7] This solution, Tillich continues,

> appears to me to be wholly unsatisfactory. A thing which cannot be accomplished today may be accomplished tomorrow. Faith, however, cannot await in fear and trembling the latest results of historical investiga-

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[6] ST, 2: 130-131

[7] 'Disciple and Critic of Barth', Christian Century, LI, No.49 (Dec.5, 1934) p.1555. Cf. Brunner, The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1934) pp.153-198.

tion. Brunner himself very clearly rejects such a thing in other parts of his book. It is possible for faith to be without fear only if it guarantees through itself all facts that are essential to it, and so protects itself from the attack of historical research. Another way would be for faith wholly to abandon research, because it has nothing to do with its historical facts. The first of these two methods leads merely to the isolation of a specific complex of facts over against all remaining facts, to the selection of a section of reality that is withdrawn from historical contact; in other words, to that which Brunner himself calls supernaturalism and which he seeks to avoid. The second method leads to the proposition that the actuality with which faith has to do lies on a level fundamentally different from that with which historical investigation deals. But once this is acknowledged - and I think that it must be acknowledged - then the uniqueness of the external fact is no longer decisive for faith, but what is decisive is the fundamental transformation of our historical existence by means of the Christian event. And in respect to the latter's actuality, nothing further can be said than this, namely, that it has produced the transformation of human, historical existence. This, however, is an expression of faith and of faith alone. The corollary of this idea is that the antitheses set forth by Brunner are not an adequate description of the Christian position. It is curious and yet easily understandable that Brunner, who is otherwise so clear and radical in his formulations, becomes obscure and conservative at this point. It indicates a compromise not based on his own presuppositions.[8]

In contrast to the position advocated by Brunner, there is, Tillich tells us, another possible answer to the problem of religious certainty. The sharp distinction drawn between the dimensions of faith and historical science does not result in the loss of the factual basis of christology because there is, he says, a final sense in which faith itself can overcome historical scepticism about the factual element in the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. This alternative solution proposes, in other terms, that

> the historical foundation of Christianity is an essential element of the Christian faith itself and that

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[8] 'Disciple and Critic of Barth', p.1555

> this faith, through its own power, can overrule sceptical possibilities within historical criticism. It can, it is maintained, guarantee the existence of Jesus of Nazareth and at least the essentials in the biblical picture.9

The factual basis of the central Christian event can, therefore, be assured by means of faith alone. Tillich, however, is the first to admit that this argument, which he has partly suggested already in his review of Brunner's thesis, is ambiguous. He proceeds, accordingly, to define more precisely what it is that faith can guarantee. That which is assured by faith is 'only its own foundation, namely, the appearance of that reality which has created the faith'.[10] Tillich identifies this reality with the New Being 'who conquers existential estrangement and thereby makes faith possible. This alone faith is able to guarantee - and that because its own existence is identical with the presence of the New Being'.[11] Faith, then, is the 'immediate (not mediated by conclusions) evidence of the New Being within and under the conditions of existence';[12] and, as such, it cannot be investigated or determined by the methods of historical enquiry. Referring to the Augustinian-Cartesian refutation of radical scepticism - which 'pointed to the immediacy of a self-consciousness which guaranteed itself by its participation in being'[13] - Tillich stresses equally that it is faithful participation, and not historical argument, which 'guarantees the reality of the event upon which Christianity is

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[9] ST, 2: 131

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

based'.[14]

It would appear that the argument here employed by Tillich revolves round the familiar two-fold structure of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', namely, its 'factual' and 'receptive' character. Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the new reality, the New Being, and he is received as such by faith. These are the two components that make the Christ-event the event it is. Now as we have also seen on numerous occasions, for Tillich the concept of New Being is itself intelligible only in so far as it includes the actuality of a 'personal' life in all its concreteness, since, it is held, the ambiguities of existence can be overcome only by the participation of the bearer of the New Being in existence. Existential ambiguity - which ontological analysis has shown characterizes the conditions prevalent under the 'old eon' or 'old reality' - can alone be conquered in the earthly existence of the personal life of him who is the bearer of the New Being in the totality of his own being.[15] It follows, therefore, that faith necessarily receives the 'personal' reality of the New Being when it accepts and receives 'Jesus as the Christ'. Consequently, to say that a man has faith entails that he has received that which <u>has</u> overcome existence <u>in</u> existence. In this sense, so the argument runs, faith does guarantee the historical basis of Christianity, for it guarantees that 'someone' conquered existence. But it does not ensure, Tillich adds significantly, that 'Jesus of Nazareth' is that 'someone'. While faith, in other words, may be able to affirm in this way 'a personal life in which the

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[14] <u>Ibid</u>.

[15] See above, Ch.II, pp.77-85

New Being has conquered the old being', it does not 'guarantee his name to be Jesus of Nazareth. Historical doubt concerning the existence and the life of someone with this name cannot be overruled. He might have had another name'.[16] This, our author agrees, is the historically absurd but logically necessary conclusion resulting from his appreciation of the preliminary or 'probable' epistemological nature of the critical-historical technique. The 'Jesus' element in the event 'Jesus as the Christ' indicates only the personal and factual foundation of that event: it is not, however, to be equated with the particular details concerning, or the particular incidents surrounding, the life of him who is called 'Jesus of Nazareth'. This important distinction immediately recalls the earlier semantic distinction made between the two uses of the expression 'historical Jesus: 1) to specify the fragmentary and hypothetical claims made about the character and existence of Jesus which have resulted from historical research into the biblical reports; 2) to denote the factual side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', the reality of which is not available to the tests of the critical method.[17] Following this division of meaning, Tillich recognizes the logical possibility of an historian concluding that the man 'Jesus of Nazareth' never lived; but he also admits that faith, even though it could not legitimately deny this conclusion on critical grounds, can nevertheless guarantee the appearance of the New Being in an historical and personal form <u>irrespective</u> of it.

> Faith cannot even guarantee the name "Jesus" in respect to him who was the Christ. It must leave that

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[16] <u>ST</u>, 2: 131

[17] See above, Ch.I, pp.48-50

> to the incertitudes of our historical knowledge. But faith does guarantee the factual transformation of reality in that personal life which the New Testament expresses in its picture of Jesus as the Christ. No fruitful and honest discussion is possible if these two meanings of the term "historical Jesus" are not clearly distinguished.18

As David Kelsey remarks succinctly, in this argument 'the fact <u>named</u> by Jesus of Nazareth turns out to be different from the fact <u>pointed to</u> by Jesus of Nazareth'.[19] In other words, whereas the fact 'named' is subject to historiographic examination - it being one of those details in the biblical narrative which could conceivably be false - the fact to which the name refers - the actuality of a personal life through which Essential God-Manhood entered existence and transformed it - is subject only to faith's apprehension of it. Since the relation between faith and the factual element which it interprets within the Christ-event is such that the interpretation does not acquire validity by understanding precisely the way in which this fact occurred, so the statement that 'Jesus is the bearer of New Being' does <u>not</u> assert an identity between the fact called 'Jesus' and the fact referred to by that name. For Tillich, we should emphasize again, the denial that the Christ received and proclaimed by faith <u>was</u> 'Jesus of Nazareth' is historically ridiculous; but the logical possibility that this was not his name is nevertheless an important exemplification of the principle that the truth of faith neither can nor does depend on the literal-historical truth of <u>any</u> detail of its picture of the Christ, even to the point of its naming of him. Faith cannot guarantee the empirical accuracy of the biblical portrait of Jesus as the Christ

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[18] <u>ST</u>, 2: 123

[19] <u>op.cit.</u>, p.93

since faith's nature is such that it does not contain detailed historical information about the precise manner in which the event occurred. But faith does, however, involve a certainty about the actual meaning of the event on which it is based and to which it responds: it does, that is to say, include certitude about its own foundation on the 'Christ'-event, and can thus assert the reality of a personal life in the past which, by its manifestation of Essential God-Manhood, conquered the estranged condition of old being. Essentially the same point of view is, we remember, suggested in Tillich's analysis of the Crucifixion and Resurrection as symbols based on facts.[20] Faith cannot ensure the accuracy of its biblical stories concerning the particular Crucifixion and Resurrection of a man 'Jesus of Nazareth'; but it can, for all that, guarantee the subjection to, and conquest of, existence by him who is called the 'Christ' - of which these biblical stories are the symbolic representations. This crucial distinction follows the line of argument already drawn by the theory of religious symbolism, namely, that the truth of the meaning ascribed by faith to the being of the Christ is independent of the literal truth of any aspect of faith's own account of his life in the biblical picture.[21] According to it, faith cannot guarantee that the Christ was named 'Jesus', that he in fact died on a cross at Golgotha or rose again on the third day; but it can nevertheless guarantee that he whom the picture calls 'Jesus' <u>was</u> the Christ, and that he therefore <u>did</u> surrender himself to the finite consequences of existence, and <u>did</u> overcome the death of

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[20] See above, Ch.II, pp.89-93

[21] See above, Ch.IV, pp.196-199

existential estrangement. It is the a priori of faith that these conditions were fulfilled by him whom faith receives and proclaims as the bearer of the New Being.[22] More exactly, faith's reception of the Christ entails its correlation with the 'giving' side of a revelatory event in which the disruptions of existence were simultaneously experienced and healed in one individual human life. Faith is the subjective response to that objective happening which fulfils those requirements necessary for the transformation of the situation of old being: its own existence is, in other terms, identical with the existence of essential manhood within the area of estrangement. For Tillich, these are analytically true statements concerning the nature of faith; and it is on the basis of them that faith can continue to assert the presence of New Being in the person portrayed by the New Testament, irrespective of his original name or circumstances. 'Whatever his name, the New Being was and is actual in this man'.[23] And yet, though photographable, no photograph exists of this event, for neither faith itself nor the probabilities of research can provide such a photograph. It is for this reason that historical science, while it may be able to bring to the fore certain critical doubts about the life of someone named 'Jesus of Nazareth', cannot thereby violate faith's dependence on the actual appearance of New Being in the person presented by the biblical picture.

> Faith can say that something of ultimate concern has happened in history because the question of the ultimate in being and meaning is involved...Faith can say that the reality which is manifest in the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ has saving power

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[22] See above, Ch.IV, pp.151-152

[23] ST, 2: 131

for those who are grasped by it, no matter how much or how little can be traced to the historical figure who is called Jesus of Nazareth. Faith can ascertain its own foundation, the Mosaic law, or Jesus as the Christ, Mohammed the prophet, or Buddha the illuminated. But faith cannot ascertain the historical conditions which made it possible for these men to become matters of ultimate concern for large sections of humanity. Faith includes certitude about its own foundation - for example, an event in history which has transformed history - for the faithful. But faith does not include historical knowledge about the way in which this event took place.[24]

Tillich's brief discourse on the name of 'Jesus of Nazareth' is perhaps the most extreme example of his own use of his distinction between the dimensions of historical research and faith. By it, our author makes clear that the non-literal form of the biblical picture - which here allows even the logical possibility that Jesus might have had another name - does not invalidate the ultimate existential significance faith attributes to the being of the person called 'Jesus'. Since the truth of faith's interpretation of Jesus as the Christ is independent of all critical judgments which either are or could be made by the historian, so the truth of such empirical conclusions is irrelevant to the meaning of the reality perceived by faith in and through the picture. Following this view, we may say that Tillich's discussion of Jesus' name is, therefore, an instance of his contrast between the contingency of the picture's factual-historical statements about the concrete form of Jesus' existence and the certainty of its assertions expressive of faith's perception of the ultimate in him. On the basis of this difference, one cannot infer from the conceivable inaccuracy of 'Jesus' as the actual name the possible inappropriateness of the title 'Christ' to the personal reality referred to by that name.

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[24] DF: 88-89

Despite its possible inaccuracy on matters of historical detail, faith can, so Tillich argues, guarantee by its own power and within its own dimension the real transformation of existence in the life portrayed by the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ. As we shall see presently, this position - which thus stipulates that the very existence of faith certifies its own basis on an event that <u>is</u> the Christ-event - is further clarified and extended by Tillich's later use of the <u>analogia imaginis</u>. But before dealing with this concept, it is worth pausing here for a moment to indicate that a special problem arises from the preceding argument, one which, indeed, the <u>analogia imaginis</u> is specifically designed to resolve. The nature of the problem originates from the clear circularity of the position so far advanced by our author. According to Tillich, faith cannot ensure the exactitude of the biblical picture's narrative concerning the historical conditions under which the New Being appeared in Jesus the Christ - and even, therefore, that 'Jesus' was his name; but it can nevertheless guarantee an actual correlation between the meaning faith attaches to the person called 'Jesus of Nazareth' in its picture and the meaning faith first attributed to him in the original event 'Jesus as the Christ'. Faith, in other words, recognizes Jesus to be the bearer of New Being through the medium of the biblical portrait; but it interprets him in this way only on the basis of that initial interpretation made by the first disciples which is incorporated within the portrait. Present faith thus involves a knowledge of Jesus dependent on faith's original knowledge of him as the Christ: it relies, that is to say, on the personal reminiscence of those for whom the man named 'Jesus' acquired the meaning of Christ. This clearly shows the circularity of

the argument employed. The event 'Jesus as the Christ' becomes a reality for present faith through faith's expression, in pictorial form, of its own original experience of this reality. To this extent, the biblical image of Jesus the Christ is the creation of faith's actual perception of New Being in the man called 'Jesus of Nazareth': it is, following the Kählerian thesis, the result of faith's recognition of the impression this man exerted upon those who encountered him within the situation of faith.[25] It is here, however, that the problem becomes evident. Jesus as the Christ is known by faith only through the apostolic memory-impression which created faith's portrait; but, according to Tillich's previous remarks, the truth of the picture's empirical statements about Jesus' life is irrelevant to the truth of those claims it also makes about his ultimate significance as the Christ. This being the case, then how is it possible for him to assert a continuity between a figure of the past in which the New Being in fact appeared and the New Testament presentation of Jesus as that person? As we have noted before, Tillich admits that any rejection of this identity implies a radical docetic idealism which has no foundation on that historical reality which is the prius and criterion of christology. While the biblical picture is certainly the basis of contemporary belief in Jesus as the Christ, nevertheless the assurance of the essential facticity of this Christ remains a necessary and irreducible feature of faith's own understanding of the event it depicts.[26] But again, how can this viewpoint be sustained if no concrete characteristic of the Christ's actual

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[25]See above, Ch.III, pp.119-121

[26]See above, Ch.II, pp.57-58, and Ch.III, pp.97-99

existence, or if no single detail of the conditions under which he lived and worked, can be historically verified by faith? As George Tavard points out:

> It is not enough to state that the original fact is the Apostles' interpretation of Jesus. For how can we accept an interpretation if we do not know what is to be interpreted? How can we share the Apostles' interpretation if we choose to doubt the identity of whom and what they interpreted? 27

Put differently, the problem may be said to stem from Tillich's juxtaposition of two, seemingly incompatible, arguments. On the one hand, he subscribes to the view that the kerygmatic interpretation of Jesus as the Christ is unintelligible apart from an appreciation of the way the earthly man called 'Jesus' transformed existence in the totality of his being. According to this position, the biblical interpretation has, therefore, realistic implications for the nature of this man's life as a whole, since the title 'Christ' is appropriate to the name 'Jesus' only if he to whom the name refers did actually exhibit a life which contradicted the 'marks' of estrangement at every point. And yet, on the other hand, Tillich maintains equally that the validity of this christological interpretation cannot be guaranteed by the 'historical truth' of those biblical stories which are said to 'confirm' the absence of such 'marks' in the man 'Jesus of Nazareth'. But if this is so, then it is difficult to see how our author can justify his claim that the picture <u>is</u> an image of the Christ-event, that it is in some way analogous to its subject and not an idealistic reconstruction of a life deduced from an analysis of man's estranged predicament. On the basis of his division between the dimensions of research and faith, how can Tillich

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[27] G. H. Tavard, <u>Paul Tillich and the Christian Message</u> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962) p.109

demonstrate, first, that the New Testament does manifest to faith a fully concrete, past and personal, reality with which it is not itself identified; and second, that the reality thus revealed is the Christ-event, the existentially independent presupposition of the portrait through which it is now manifested and made presently actual to Christian faith?

Tillich is well aware of the importance of these questions. For him, the historical reality of the New Being's appearance in existence entails the actual presence of certain concrete features in the life of him through whom it appeared. He rejects, therefore, Søren Kierkegaard's argument that 'it is sufficient for the Christian faith nakedly to assert that in the years 1-30 God sent his son'. 'Without the concreteness of the New Being', Tillich adds, 'its newness would be empty. Only if existence is conquered concretely and in its manifold aspects, is it actually conquered'.[28] However, notwithstanding this claim, if historical research is unable to provide a concrete picture of Jesus the Christ, how can faith maintain that its foundation is not an abstract historical fact but rather a concrete encounter with a real figure whose individual characteristics inspired faith's picture of him as the New Being? If, in other words, all that can be said about the factual basis of Christian faith is that a personal life existed, then the final problem, as Tillich himself states it, is: 'How can the New Being who is called "the Christ" transform reality if no concrete trait of his nature is left?'[29]

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[28] ST, 2: 132. Cf. Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936) p.87

[29] Ibid., p.131

It is in answer to this question that Tillich introduces his concept of the analogia imaginis, wherein he claims an analogy between the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ and the concrete, personal life from which the biblical picture has evolved. 'There is', he writes, 'an analogia imaginis, namely, an analogy between the picture and the actual personal life from which it has arisen. It was this reality, when encountered by the disciples, which created the picture'.[30] Thus, as A. T. Mollegen expresses it, the New Testament confession of Jesus as the Christ 'means not only that a human individuality existed, but that he was such as supports the Biblical picture'.[31] Faith, that is to say, can guarantee not only the factual basis of Christianity, but also an actual personal life whose concrete characteristics were such as to give rise to the biblical picture. We have seen already why the first guarantee which faith provides is not open to historical criticism: the only factual element which exists is found within the biblical portrait; it is therefore known and guaranteed by faith alone, and not by the approximations of historical knowledge. We must now ask how it is that faith can also guarantee the analogia imaginis without in some way involving the verifying processes of critical research.

The analogia imaginis represents the last stage of Tillich's discussion of the relevance of biblical criticism to christology. By it, he seeks to assert 'the unity of a historical existence and the kerygmatic witness while at the same time claiming immunity from any form of historical test'.[32] Tillich

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[30] Ibid., p.132

[31] A. T. Mollegen, op.cit., p.234

[32] James C. Livingston, op.cit., p.48

himself is adamant on this point. The analogia imaginis is independent of biblical research because the analogy itself is not determined by the adequacy of its historical representation of the actual life portrayed in the biblical picture of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. The significance of the analogy lies rather in the continuance of the 'transforming power of the New Being'[33] between that picture and that event. It is this 'transforming power' which vindicates the analogy, so that the theologically important character of the biblical picture does not reside in its historical detail concerning the man called 'Jesus of Nazareth', but in the power which it mediates.

> The power which has created and preserved the community of the New Being is not an abstract statement about its appearance; it is the picture of him in whom it has appeared. No special trait of this picture can be verified with certainty. But it can be definitely asserted that through this picture the New Being has power to transform those who are transformed by it.[34]

Tillich's argument, therefore, is that, despite the unreliability of the biblical narratives - an unreliability which extends, we remember, even to the naming of Jesus - the biblical portrait of Jesus as the Christ is nevertheless analogous to its subject because the 'transforming power of the New Being', which the first disciples encountered when they met Jesus and which led to them calling him 'Christ', is similarly encountered by present faith through the medium of the picture. In this sense, so the argument runs, there is an analogy between the personal life of him who was received as the Christ and the New Testament portrait through which the New Being is now received. None of

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[33] ST, 2: 132

[34] Ibid.

the traits of the image of Jesus to which this portrait refers can be verified beyond any reasonable historical probability. All that faith can guarantee - and this is implied both in the disciples' original interpretation of Jesus and in faith's later acceptance of this interpretation through the New Testament's presentation of it - is the immediate encounter with a personal life that has grasped and transformed the faithful; and 'no historical criticism can question the immediate awareness of those who find themselves transformed into the state of faith'.[35] In his published conversations with students, Tillich clarifies the point he is making here.

> STUDENT: Suppose, somehow or other, science could come and expose St.Paul, Christianity, and all these things as just a big hoax. My understanding of your theology would be that this would in no way invalidate Christianity as a religion.
>
> DR. TILLICH: Now what do you mean by "a big hoax"?
>
> STUDENT: If they could prove that Christ, or Jesus never existed.
>
> DR. TILLICH: Oh, then he had some other name! That wouldn't matter. I want to say that if we were able to read the original police registers of Nazareth, and found that there was neither a couple called Mary and Joseph nor a man called Jesus, we should then go to some other city. The personal reality behind the gospel story is convincing. It shines through. And without this personal reality Christianity would not have existed for more than a year, or would not have come into existence at all, no matter what stories were told. But this was the great event that produced the transformation of reality. And if you yourself are transformed by it, you witness to the reality of what happened. That is the proof.[36]

According to this view, the analogia imaginis is therefore independent of historical enquiry because it is confirmed by each individual's participation (in faith) in the 'trans-

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[35] Ibid., p.131

[36] Ultimate Concern: Dialogues with Students, ed. D. Mackenzie Brown (London: S.C.M. Press, 1965) pp.146-7 (my emphasis).

forming power of the New Being'. This experience of the New Being's power is based on the actual encounter with the new reality which was and is mediated through the event 'Jesus as the Christ'; and it thus includes 'the affirmation of the event and of the way in which it is continuously effective, namely, through the biblical picture, however the event came empirically into existence as fact and in its interpretation'.[37] In this respect, Tillich's use of the analogy undergirds and evolves from his earlier position that faith can, of itself, guarantee the factual basis of Christianity. If the power of New Being can be actualised only in and by an historical individual whose being exhibited no 'mark' of estrangement, and if this power is made apparent to faith through the biblical picture of Jesus the Christ, then there must have been an actual person whose concrete characteristics correspond to the meaning attributed to Jesus in that picture, even though 'Jesus' might not have been his name. While faith cannot therefore guarantee the empirical factuality of the concrete biblical material, it can, by this means, ensure that this material is an adequate expression of the transforming power of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. 'Only in this sense does faith guarantee the biblical picture of Jesus'.[38] If faith implies response to him who, as the bearer of the New Being in existence, has the 'power' in him to conquer existential disruption and ambiguity, then to say that a man now has faith through the biblical portrait of the Christ entails that this portrait is a sufficient and satisfactory expression of the New Being's transforming

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[37] 'Interrogation of Paul Tillich', Philosophical Interrogations, ed. Sydney and Beatrice Rome, p.366

[38] ST, 2: 132

power, and so, in turn, of the reality of the New Being's bearer upon which this power depends. It is faith's present experience of the healing power mediated by the picture that guarantees the New Testament's adequate representation of a past life in which old being was actually transformed into new being. Again, our author is quite emphatic on this point:-

> If I am asked: "Does Christian faith guarantee that the synoptic picture of this man is guaranteed as historically correct - including his name?" I would say "No!" If I am asked: "Does Christian faith guarantee that this picture is an expression of the bearer of the Spirit who, through this picture, creates and recreates human beings spiritually?" I would say "Yes!"
>
> If the Christian faith can guarantee as much as this it does not need to call for the support of human work, namely, historical research. And it does not need to be afraid of it. Suppose the bearer of the Spirit had another name than Jesus and did not come from Nazareth, and the New Testament picture of Jesus is essentially a creation of Mark (as has been said), then "Mark" was the bearer of the Spirit through whom God has created the church and transformed (in terms of "in spite of") many in all generations, somehow including myself. Then this "Mark" has expressed the inner events he has experienced in the symbolic image of the Christ story. All this is an historically absurd but logically necessary consequence of the attempt to liberate Christian faith in its very center from the bondage to scholarship. Theology, of course, is very much in this bondage, and it is the glory of scholarship that it has produced the question of the "historical Jesus". And insofar as theology has an indirect influence on the formulation of faith, it has influence on the life of the church. But there is one point where faith cannot be influenced by scholarship: the state of being grasped personally by the personal bearer of the creative Spirit through the message of Bible and church through his living picture. For without this picture the assertion that God has sent his Son to die for our salvation is an intellectual statement which could be accepted only by an act of wilful subjection to authority. But this is far away from what faith means.39

Tillich compares his use of the analogia imaginis with the analogia entis, which he describes as not 'a method of

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39'Rejoinder' to D. Moody Smith, The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No.1, Part II (January 1966) pp.192-193

knowing God', but ' a way (actually the only way) of speaking about God'.[40] He maintains that these two analogies are comparable to each other because in both cases 'it is impossible to push behind the analogy and to state directly what can be stated only indirectly, that is, symbolically in the knowledge of God and mediated through faith in the knowledge of Jesus'.[41] It appears, then, that historical investigation cannot get behind the biblical picture to discover the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth because the <u>analogia imaginis</u> does not provide the means for such an approach.

> This "picture analogy" is, like the analogy of being, not a way given to man whereby he may "naturally" or empirically know the Christ, but a way through which he may speak about the one who makes himself known through that picture.[42]

Thus, just as 'symbol' is the determinative form through which God is cognitively approached by means of the <u>analogia entis</u>, so faith is the form through which a knowledge of Jesus as the Christ is mediated through the <u>analogia imaginis</u>. Consequently,

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[40] <u>ST</u>, 2: 132

[41] <u>Ibid</u>. Tillich often refers to this equation of the <u>analogia entis</u> with 'symbol'. Cf. <u>ST</u>, 1: 266; 'Reply to Interpretation and Criticism', <u>The Theology of Paul Tillich</u>, p.239; 'Reply' in Gustave Weigel's 'The Theological Significance of Paul Tillich', <u>Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought</u>, p.23. In a letter to Weigel, cited in Weigel's 'Contemporaneous Protestantism and Paul Tillich', <u>Theological Studies</u>, XI, No.2 (June 1950), Tillich writes: 'I speak of symbolic knowledge and mean by it exactly what St. Thomas means with <u>analogia entis</u>'(p.201). However, J. Heywood Thomas argues that, in omitting many ontological distinctions made by Aquinas, Tillich 'is quite wrong when he says that he means by symbolic knowledge what St. Thomas meant by analogy'. <u>Paul Tillich: An Appraisal</u>, p.198. In holding this view, Heywood Thomas largely follows Edward O'Connor, 'Paul Tillich: An Impression', <u>Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought</u>, pp.25-41. For an extensive comparison between Tillich and Aquinas, see Donald J. Keefe, <u>Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich</u> (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971).

[42] A. J. McKelway, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.159

it is faith's reception and experience of the 'transforming power of the New Being' which alone vindicates the analogy between the individual existence of the bearer of the New Being and the biblical portrait of him. It is not substantiated by the 'historical truth' of the correspondence between the details of the picture and the form originally taken by the Christ-event. The biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ is, that is to say, analogous to its subject, not because it provides information about what 'actually took place', but because the power encountered through it by faith here and now is the same power mediated by the man called 'Jesus of Nazareth' to those who first acknowledged him to be the Christ. While there is therefore no certainty in the accuracy of the New Testament's narration of past happenings which can go beyond probabilism, there yet remains an absolute certainty in the <u>analogia imaginis</u> on the part of those who experience, through the medium of the picture, the transforming power of New Being in their own being. It is, in other terms, the power thus mediated which guarantees the picture <u>as</u> an image of the Christ for those who are themselves consciously aware of their own transformation by it. So Tillich concludes:

> The assertion that the New Testament portrays Jesus as the Christ is a matter of immediate awareness. It is actually a tautology. There is no possible doubt, conjecture, alternative to this assertion. It is logically completely different from statements about the actual occurrence of some events told in the New Testament. These statements are more or less probable or improbable and never can become certain. The stories concerning the foundation of Rome in a book which has come to us under the name of Livius are largely improbable. But that the book which I have in my hand tells these stories is a matter of immediate awareness.43

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43 'Interrogation of Paul Tillich', <u>Philosophical Interrogations</u>, p.365

Tillich extends his analysis of the analogia imaginis to include a refutation of the claim that, since the biblical picture is not an empirical description of an historical person, then it must be a work purely of the imagination. It is not, he says, in the 'idealistic style of art'[44] whereby we would have to interpret the 'New Testament picture as the painted projection of the experiences and ideals of the most religiously profound minds in the period of the Emperor Augustus'.[45] It is not an imaginary picture but a 'real picture'.[46] The word 'real' here points to the necessary 'reality' of the bearer of New Being, for, as we have noted already, according to Tillich the experience in faith of the 'transforming power of the New Being' must presuppose an individual life in which the ambiguities of existence were overcome. Faith also, then, guarantees the so-called 'realism' of the biblical portrait, since the personal reality to which it refers must have existed independently of the picture. A picture imagined by Jesus' contemporaries 'would have expressed their untransformed existence and their quest for a New Being. But it would not have been the New Being itself. That is tested by its transforming power'.[47]

> The biblical picture of Jesus is that of a unique event. Jesus appears as an individual beside others, but unique in his destiny, in every single trait of his character, and in his historical setting. It was just this concreteness and incomparable uniqueness of the "real" picture which gave Christianity its

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[44] ST, 2: 133

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

> superiority over mystery cults and Gnostic visions. A real, individual life shines through all his utterances and actions. In comparison, the divine figures of the mystery cults remain abstract, without the fresh colours of a life really lived and without historical destiny and the tensions of finite freedom. The picture of Jesus as the Christ conquered them through the power of a concrete reality.48

Thus, the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ, through which the 'transforming power of the New Being' is received, is neither a photograph nor an imaginary work. It is a portrait of an individual who existed <u>apart</u> from his own pictorial presentation. If present Christian faith is that condition of man in which the New Being's transforming power has been encountered through the biblical picture - even though the original manifestation of New Being remains unknowable in any photographic sense - then, conversely, the statement that a man now has faith entails that the picture mediates this power and that its image of the Christ is, for that reason, analogous to the 'reality' of him in whom this power first appeared. If the portrait of New Being in Jesus the Christ had been the creation of existentialist thought or experience, then, Tillich asserts, 'it would be as distorted, tragic and sinful as existence is itself, and would not be able to overcome existence'.[49]

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[48] <u>Ibid</u>., p.174

[49] <u>RDI</u>: 146. It is, therefore, the 'power' it mediates which guarantees the biblical picture as an image of the 'real' Christ. We should add here that a similar pattern of argument is followed by Martin Kähler in his <u>The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ</u>. He denies that 'such a realistic picture of the sinless One could be a poetic creation' (<u>Ibid</u>., p.79), and later maintains that the 'historic' (<u>geschichtliche</u>) Christ is encountered 'within a tradition which possesses the inherent power to convince us of its divine authenticity'(<u>Ibid</u>., p.122). It is this power which not only makes the reality of the Christ 'directly accessible', but which also renders any differentiation of the 'historic' from the 'biblical' Christ impossible (<u>Ibid</u>.).

For Tillich, therefore, the theological significance of the biblical picture is that it mediates to faith the transforming power of New Being in him to whom the name 'Jesus of Nazareth' refers. This, according to the concept of the analogia imaginis, confirms the New Testament portrait as a portrait of that past and personal reality in and through which Essential God-Manhood appeared, despite the fact that it can provide no historically certain information about the man thus regarded as the original bearer of New Being.

The position advanced above is, as we shall see, sustained in the concluding phase of Tillich's discussion, which is in part designed to explain still further what is implied when the 'picture analogy' is used in relation to the gospel records of Jesus the Christ. In this final section, our author concentrates upon a comparison between the form of the scriptural image and a particular style of art. The biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ, if it is neither a literal nor an imaginary picture, is, he writes, an '"expressionist" portrait'[50] - the adjective 'expressionist' referring to 'the predominant artistic style in most periods of history - rediscovered in our period'.[51] Exactly what Tillich intends by this description may be gathered from his analysis of those universal characteristics which are, he maintains, implicit in every work of art. In his early and important lecture of 1919, 'Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur', - the first essay published by him after the First World War - Tillich suggests the presence of a triad of elements in all cultural creativity: namely, 'content', 'form' and 'sub-

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[50] ST, 2: 133

[51] Ibid.

stance' (or 'import').[52] Content - called elsewhere 'subject matter'[53] - is drawn from the inexhaustible multitude of encountered objects: it denotes the external factuality of objects and events. Form, the decisive component in any cultural creation, makes the artistic product what it is through the use of certain materials such as sounds, words, line and colour. The third element, substance, is that which, by its spiritual power, gives form significance or meaning.

> By content we mean something objective in its simple existence, which by form is raised up to the intellectual-cultural sphere. By substance or import, however, we understand the meaning, the spiritual substantiality, which alone gives form its significance. We can therefore say: Substance or import is grasped by means of a form and given expression in a content. Content is accidental, substance essential, and form is the mediating element.[54]

Any cultural-artistic entity that exists must, therefore, have form, and every form has a subject matter; but within and beyond both there is a meaning-import. Within this conceptual triad, however, content or subject matter is of least importance. Form, Tillich continues, can lose its necessary relation to content because the latter can itself recede in the face of the preponderance of the substance. By this means, form can acquire a quality of detachment from content, being now relative to substance alone: it can become, that is, form in a 'paradoxical sense by allowing its natural quality to be shattered by the substance'.[55]

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[52] Philosophische Vorträge der Kant-Gesellschaft, No.24 (Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1919) pp.28-51. E.T., 'On the Idea of a Theology of Culture', What is Religion? pp.165ff.

[53] ST, 3: 63

[54] 'On the Idea of a Theology of Culture', p.165

[55] Ibid., p.166

The various relations which exist between the elements within this tripartite arrangement determine Tillich's ensuing classification of the major typologies of art. Though each element appears in every work of art, normally only one predominates. Thus, for instance, there are within the visual arts 'naturalistic' styles, according to which the primary task is the representation of the objectively real; other 'impressionistic' styles in which both the content of the artistic creation and its expressive power are subservient to such formal properties as shape and light; and 'expressionistic' styles in which the artist seeks to expose the inner significance or import of his subject matter rather than to picturize its external appearance.[56]

Of these three types, Tillich regards the third, expressionism, as theologically the most important. While admitting that every style can include the artistic expression of man's ultimate concern - for the ultimate, as the unconditional 'abyss of being', cannot be limited to any specific finite being or concern[57] - he maintains nevertheless that it is the expressive element alone which is 'essentially adequate to express religious meaning directly, both through the medium of secular and through the medium of traditional religious subject matter'.[58] The reason for this is that expressionism, as de-

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[56]See RS: 85-93. Tillich introduces further stylistic classifications in his essay, 'Religiöser Stil und religiöser Stoff in der bildenden Kunst', Das neue Deutschland (Gotha), IX, No.9/12 (February-March, 1921) pp.151-158.

[57]See above, Ch.IV, p.175

[58]'Protestantism and Artistic Style', TC: 73. A critique of other, so-called 'religious art' is contained in 'Kult und Form', Die Form (Berlin), V, No.23/24 (December 15, 1930) pp.578-583.

veloped particularly in the late nineteenth century onwards, possesses a religious character which is independent of its choice of subject. Here, in other words, it is not the material element, the content of the artistic creation, which is decisive for the discernment of theological significance in any work of art, but the substance-import which comes to expression in it. The existential meaning perceived in a thing is not governed by the naturally given appearance of the subject portrayed. Following this view, Tillich can claim that it is 'not an exaggeration to ascribe more of the quality of sacredness to a still-life by Cézanne or a tree by van Gogh than to a picture of Jesus by Uhde'.[59] It is this relative disinterest in the objective adequacy of art that makes the expressionistic style most appropriate for the expression of the ultimate concern of a human group or period, since the ultimate itself is not bound to any special form of things or experiences. This, in turn, accounts for the dominance of the 'expressive element in the style of all periods in which great religious art has been created...'[60]

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[59] RS: 89. In 'Religiöser Stil und religiöser Stoff in der bildenden Kunst', p.156, Tillich adds that 'it is possible to see in a still-life by Cézanne, an animal picture by Marc, a landscape by Schmidt-Rottluff, and an erotic picture by Nolde, the direct revelation of an absolute reality in these relative things. The world-import, experienced in the artist's religious ecstacy, shines through the things; they have become "holy" objects' (trans. J. Luther Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion, p.81).

[60] 'Protestantism and Artistic Style', p.74. For further details on Tillich's analysis of the relation between artistic styles and religion, see: 'The Four Levels of the Relationship between Religion and Art', Contemporary Religious Art (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1952) pp.1-16; 'The Nature of Religious Art', Symbols and Society, ed. Lyman Bryson et al. (New York: Harper, 1955) pp.282-284; and 'Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art', Christianity and the Existentialists, ed. Carl Michalson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956) pp.128-147.

In the light of these aesthetic considerations, it is hardly surprising to find, therefore, that Tillich calls the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ an 'expressionist' portrait. For according to this particular style of art, a painter, he says,

> would try to enter into the deepest levels of the person with whom he deals. And he could do so only by a profound participation in the reality and the meaning of his subject matter. Only then could he paint this person in such a way that his surface traits are neither reproduced as in photography (or naturalistically imitated) nor idealised according to the painter's ideal of beauty but are used to express what the painter has experienced through his participation in the being of his subject. This third way is meant when we use the term "real picture" with reference to the Gospel records of Jesus as the Christ.[61]

As this passage makes clear, the validity of the biblical picture as a 'real picture' is, in conformity with the expressionistic style of portrait painting, determined not by the objective accuracy of its biographical content - by the correspondence between the historical information it provides and the actual life of the man it interprets as the Christ - but by its effective mediation of that 'power of New Being' originally perceived in the being of this individual by those who created the scriptural image.[62] Those subsequently transformed by this power through the picture can thus certify the truth of the ultimate meaning therein ascribed to the person pointed to by

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[61] ST, 2: 133

[62] On the basis of this position, David Kelsey calls the biblical picture a 'verbal icon': a term used to denote the picture's artistic form and its function as the medium through which the transforming power of New Being is experienced (op.cit, pp.107-113). The word 'icon' is, however, misleading in this context, since it tends to suggest that the theological value of the picture is relative to its own being in itself rather than to that which is expressed through it. Further reference to Kelsey's analysis will be made in Ch.VI.

the name 'Jesus of Nazareth', even if they cannot guarantee the objective factuality of the picture's content. As John Clayton explains:

> Just as it is not content or subject matter which makes a piece of art a medium of religious meaning, it is not the specific content which makes the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ a medium of the power of new being. This then is the significance of the aesthetic model employed by Tillich in his analogia imaginis: it is intended as a means of holding together the claim that the foundation of Christian faith is historical and the claim that that foundation is in principle unfalsifiable. For falsification of any aspect of the specific, factual content...of the biblical picture would not entail the falsification of the picture itself, as long as 'power' continued to be mediated through it.[63]

Again we can see here that the determining factor within Tillich's concept of the analogia imaginis is that the picture should express and communicate the transforming experience of participation in Jesus as the bearer of the New Being. That is to say, our knowledge of Jesus is not dependent upon knowing simply the historical facts about him, but is occasioned only by faith's acceptance and experience of the 'transforming power' of his being, which is the New Being. Following this, our author can assert that, while 'in terms of historical documentation we do know many people better than Jesus', yet 'in terms of personal participation in his being, we do not know anyone better because his being is the New Being which is universally valid for every human being'.[64]

It is by this means, therefore, that the factual basis of the Christian faith is appropriated and certified by faith

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[63] John Powell Clayton, 'Is Jesus Necessary for Christology?: An Antinomy in Tillich's Theological Method', Christ, Faith and History, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) p.154

[64] ST, 2: 134

itself. We know that Jesus as the Christ lives in the biblical picture by virtue of the analogia imaginis: the power of the New Being is expressed in and through the picture. We know also that the actual figure, referred to by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth' and called the 'Christ', lived apart from the biblical picture: the transforming power now experienced by the faithful must have a correspondence to the real life of him whose power it was to overcome existence in existence.

With this treatment of the analogia imaginis, Tillich concludes his discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus. For him, the question whether historical research can erode the factual basis of Christianity is resolved by his radical reappraisal of the nature of faith in relation to the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. Faith, in one crucial sense, enables contemporaneity with a past happening. This does not imply participation in the historical details of Jesus who is the bearer of the New Being, but rather the immediate, existential awareness of the 'power of New Being'. This power, originally mediated by Jesus to the first disciples, is now expressed through the biblical picture of him as the Christ. In this way, 'we can say that we know nobody as well as Jesus';[65] and if faith can do this, then clearly there is no need to have the event 'Jesus as the Christ' corroborated by critico-scientific research. Certainly faith cannot know everything about this event - not even that Jesus was called 'Jesus' - but it can guarantee that which is sufficient and necessary for christology, despite the scepticism engendered by biblical criticism. Faith can certify that the transforming power of the New Being, which

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[65] Ibid., p.133

is expressed through the scriptural portrait and experienced in faith by succeeding generations of Christian believers, evolves from the reception of the man 'Jesus' as the Christ by the original disciples. Consequently, this picture is not one created by an 'hypothetical description of what may lie behind the biblical picture',[66] but is based on a concrete, human individuality, whose actual characteristics were such as to support the christological interpretation ascribed to him. This, in essence, constitutes the analogia imaginis.

In view of this argument, Tillich can reiterate the fundamental principles of his thesis. However much research may indicate the unreliability of those New Testament narratives upon which the historical claims of Christianity are based, the factual foundation of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' can be, and is, affirmed. It is assured by faith itself. For this reason, therefore, the historical basis of the Christian religion - the appearance of Essential God-Manhood in a personal life subject to the ambiguities of existence - is guaranteed within a dimension which, at the same time, immunizes that basis from any type of historical examination.

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[66] Ibid., p.132

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION : A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

During the course of this thesis, we have seen that the history of the problem of the historical Jesus is coextensive with the post-Enlightenment development of scientific-critical methods for assessing the veracity of the scriptural evidence about Jesus of Nazareth. We have noted too that while, to put it briefly, the problem may originate with the strictly historical question of the continuity between Jesus and the New Testament picture of him, with the matter of whether the gospels can be accepted as a kerygmatic tradition which incorporates an authentic image of the earthly Jesus, it extends also to the more theological issue of the degree to which faith's affirmations are dependent on, or independent of, the findings of historical research. In terms, however, of contemporary replies to the question, 'Can we reach the Jesus of history through critical analysis of the biblical representation of him as the Christ?' modern scholarship provides complex, and at times disconcertingly ambivalent, answers. Broadly speaking, there are those who, for example, continue to affirm the significance of Jesus on lines reminiscent of the old liberal Protestant quest for the historical Jesus, even though they remain sceptical of the liberal attempt to

reconstruct the real Jesus by means of an objective critical method which would establish his religious or moral superiority and absoluteness. Thus M. S. Enslin maintains that 'while we cannot write a biography, we can know the man, can see him engaged in a life-and-death struggle, in the midst of real men, enemies and friends alike...'[1] There is then another group of scholars - largely composed of those directly or indirectly influenced by the work of Rudolf Bultmann - which believes that, while the liberal Protestant approach was both naive and illegitimate, a 'new quest' is possible, distinguished from the old by its procedures and objectives. So James M. Robinson, though critical of the original quest's application of 'positivistic historiography' to the gospels,[2] nevertheless still holds that 'a new quest cannot take place without the use of the objective-philological, comparative-religious, and social-historical research indispensable for historical knowledge'.[3]

Although a detailed exposition of the present state of biblical research into the problem of the historical Jesus lies beyond the limits of our study, such contributions, however

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[1] The Prophet from Nazareth (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) p.14. Cf. Enslin's 'The Meaning of the Historical Jesus for Faith', Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No.3 (July 1962) pp. 219-233. A continuity with the old quest is also upheld by W. D. Davies, 'A Quest to be Resumed in New Testament Studies', Christian Origins and Judaism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962) pp.1-17. Davies prefers 'to advocate resumption of the old quest on a new level, because the recovery of the intention of Jesus and his understanding of existence...is inseparable from the recovery of what He did and said' (Ibid., p.16).

[2] A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.35

[3] Ibid., p.96. Cf. Robinson's 'The Recent Debate on the "New Quest"', Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No.3 (July 1962) pp.198-208; and his review of Enslin's The Prophet from Nazareth in Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No.1 (January 1962) pp.46-48.

briefly they may be described,[4] return us to the basic theological issue found at the centre of the problem. Whatever the new criteria of biblical scholarship, it appears, as Harvey and Ogden have suggested, that a profound difficulty remains in separating completely and successfully any new quest from the old;[5] and that to acknowledge the importance, even residual importance, of the historical Jesus for faith is to pose yet again the unsettled, but nonetheless crucial, theological question of the extent to which New Testament criticism can affect christology by examining the one historical fact to which christology is inextricably linked, namely, the fact of Jesus of Nazareth. How, in other words, can it be consistently maintained that the event of Jesus the Christ is the foundation of Christian faith when research has eroded away any total belief in the historical reliability of those biblical narratives which tell of this event?

The subject of our discussion, Paul Tillich, stands with those theologians - amongst whom we may number Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten and Karl Barth - who contest the legitimacy of <u>any</u> resumption of a quest for the historical Jesus.[6] This

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[4]For a source book of views of leading contemporary authorities, see Harvey K. McArthur (ed.), <u>In Search of the Historical Jesus</u> (London: S.P.C.K., 1970).

[5]See Van A. Harvey and Schubert M. Ogden, 'How new is the New Quest of the Historical Jesus?' <u>The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus</u>, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964) pp.197-242

[6]See Gogarten, <u>Demythologizing and History</u>, trans. N. Horton Smith (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955); and <u>The Reality of Faith</u>, trans. C. Michalson <u>et al</u>. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press,1959). For references to Barth's work on the problem of the historical Jesus, see Joseph C. Weber, 'Karl Barth and the Historical Jesus', <u>The Journal of Bible and Religion</u>, XXXII, No. 4 (October 1964) pp.350-354.

third group seeks, accordingly, to resolve the theological problem research has created by, in effect, reorientating the verification of christological claims about Jesus away from any reliance upon the historian's reconstruction of the past made on the basis of the documentary tradition. Its members admit that the Christian faith must be understood historically and not metaphysically, that the reality which underlies Christianity had an objective-historical status which is the necessary presupposition of its own biblical interpretation; they argue, however, that the historical character of this occurrence is to be sought not in a scientific substantiation of the actual details of its 'bare factuality', but in the original event's meaning, significance or intentionality as expressed in the gospels by those who first encountered it. This acute scepticism about, or lack of interest in, the quest does not imply, therefore, 'docetic leanings or an intentional diminution of the importance of the earthly Jesus, but rather a refusal to allow Christology to be dominated by the changing results of historical research'.[7] On the view adopted by these theologians, the historicity of Jesus is considered only in relation to the ultimate existential interpretation of him as the Christ. Consequently, every objective, impersonal, critical assessment of the reality of his existence is rejected as misleading and illegitimate. Following this line of argument, faith is not concerned with the Jesus of history produced by historical science, but with the Jesus of the 'kerygmatic witness and proclamation' or 'biblical picture' which attest to God's divine action in him. Thus, under the terms of this hermeneutic, questions of historical-factual truth are distinguished from questions of theo-

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[7] D. Moody Smith, op.cit., p.132

logical truth. While the critical method can therefore help to make vivid the concreteness of the Christ-event, or to expose the essential kerygmatic nature of the sources and uncover the various strata in the development of the gospel tradition, it can say nothing about the event's ultimate meaning as a revelation. For the meaning that faith perceives in Jesus, and which it communicates to present belief through the New Testament narratives, does not belong in any way to that realm in which scientific research aims to discover truth. According to this school of thought, the historical Jesus of the biographers is not, in other terms, the Jesus whom scripture presents as the Christ: he is not the Christ of faith.

Before entering into a detailed evaluation of Tillich's argument, it is useful to remind ourselves briefly of some of the reasons which have induced him and his neo-orthodox colleagues to adopt a position which is, on the evidence of the preceding paragraphs, so clearly at odds with the views of other participants in the debate on the historical Jesus. Foremost among them is, of course, the reason already mentioned: the desire to secure for faith's factual-historical foundation a total immunity from critical investigation. As we have just seen, this in itself suggests that the refusal to make faith subject to research is not intentionally docetic. For these theologians, therefore, a quest for the historical Jesus is not only inappropriate, since the gospels do not have the kind or amount of historical information needed for a biography: it is also irrelevant precisely because it is the creation of historicism, because, that is to say, it necessarily restricts any theological appreciation of the reality of Jesus' existence to that sphere of

history which can be established by critical methods.[8] Close to this motive is the equally familiar neo-orthodox aim to refute any search for the 'objective' ground of faith or for the 'real actuality' of the founding event of Christianity. Several factors have contributed to the development and strength of this position. One has been the reaction, seen primarily in the work of Bultmann and other form-critics, against the liberal overconfidence in the historical reliability of the Markan framework. Another has certainly been the influence of the Enlightenment controversy about history and revelation and the celebrated argument that the movement from history to revelation is a <u>metabasis eis allo genos</u>. From this has grown an increasing awareness that historical knowledge, since it is concerned with the past, can achieve at best an approximate knowledge; and that the writing of history, far from being a verifiable science, is an art containing an irreducible element of subjectivity. But perhaps the most important factor, largely contributed by the neo-orthodox themselves, has been the application to epistemology of a radical conception of revelation, according to which faith must relinquish any wish for a security founded on objectifying knowledge. For a movement so conscious of the infinite qualitative difference between the reality of the human existential situation and the reality of God's transcendence, no divine incursion into history for our redemption could be appropriable or calculable in terms of the subject-object antithesis implicit within all historically demonstrable knowledge. It was this rediscovery of the revelatory significance of the historical in Christianity which led, probably more than any other factor, to the total repudiation by the neo-orthodox school of a quest for the historical Jesus as a search for the so-

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[8] See above, Ch.II, pp.54-59

called 'facts of our salvation'.

In common with the position adopted by his neo-orthodox contemporaries, Paul Tillich's analysis of the problem of the historical Jesus begins also with the recognition that the nineteenth century liberal quest was incapable of supplying, in the earthly man Jesus of Nazareth, a cause adequate to account for the emergence of the community of New Being. During our study, we have noted that this conclusion is, for Tillich, supported by a number of arguments, not least among them being the form-critical view that the only Jesus we know is Jesus as the Christ and Lord of the community of faith, and his own elaborate distinction between the dimensions of faith and research, according to which religious certainty cannot rest on the probabilities of biblical enquiry. The task before him, therefore, was to demonstrate how the Jesus of history could be reunited with the Christ of faith. We have seen that our author's solution is determined, in the first instance, by his use of the expression 'historical Jesus' to refer to the presence of a factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' rather than to the historical evidence about Jesus produced by the historian.[9] It is this redefinition which, by asserting the necessary conjunction of 'historical fact' and 'believing reception', allegedly overcomes the problem of historical scepticism. For according to it, Tillich recognizes that an 'objective' quest for the historical foundation of Christianity is in principle misconceived, if not impossible, since the only historical event of which we can speak lies within the community of faith. 'If the Christian faith', he writes,

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[9] See above, Ch.I, pp.47-53

> is based even on a 100,000 to 1 probability that Jesus has said or done or suffered this or that; if Christianity is based on possible birth-registers of Nazareth or crime-registers of Pontius Pilate, then it has lost its foundation completely. Then the historical event, that a new reality has appeared in mankind and the world (a reality which is reflected in the picture of Jesus as the Christ), has become a matter of empirical verification, ideally through a competent reporter, armed with a camera, phonograph, and psychograph. Since such a reporter, unfortunately, was not available in the year A.D. 30, we have to replace him by more or less probable conjectures. But this is not the historical character of Jesus as the Christ. It is regrettable that one of the greatest events in the history of religion - the radical criticism of the holy legend of Christianity by Christian theologians, which destroyed a whole system of pious superstition - has been abused for the purpose of giving a pseudo-scientific foundation to the Christian faith. The historical foundation of theological method does not mean that the theologian has to wait, with fear and trembling, for the next mail which may bring him a new, more critical, or more conservative statement about some important facts of the "life of Jesus" according to which he has to change his faith and his theology. But it does mean that his theology is determined by the event of the appearance of the new reality in history, as reflected in the <u>full</u> biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ and as witnessed by all biblical writers and by the whole tradition of Christianity.[10]

Initially we may say that this argument concerning the question of the christological place and function of the concrete historical fact of Jesus appears very alluring. The insistence that it is the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' on which contemporary belief is based, and that the historical details of Jesus' life play no decisive role in determining the present faith of Christians, certainly leaves little incentive to probe 'behind' the New Testament portrait to discover the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth. Similarly, if all that can be said about the factual foundation of the truth of faith is that a 'personal life' existed through which New Being appeared, and if biblical research can achieve only a proximate knowledge, then, on this view, it could never be

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[10]'The Problem of Theological Method', pp.21-22

proved conclusively that this so-called 'factual foundation' did or did not exist. In this way, the whole problem of the critical validation of the historical correspondence between the biblical picture and the existence and personality of Jesus is resolved. The question of the unreliability of the scriptural sources need not be raised, and the scepticism engendered by historical-scientific study is done away with. For faith, it is held, can guarantee by its own power not only the personal reality of the New Being but also an actual continuity between that reality and the biblical presentation of Jesus as the Christ.

When we consider this position, we are struck immediately by the positive content of Tillich's analysis. Undoubtedly, modern critical research into the gospel narratives is very different from what it was in the nineteenth century; and Tillich, by taking the entire kerygma into account, is at one with the present biblical standpoint. The positive significance of this is extremely important, not least in containing, as Cameron points out, 'a refreshing and valid emphasis upon Christology as living existential faith rather than arid theoretical speculation'.[11] Nevertheless, there are grave dangers, as well as assets, in accepting this argument. For if it is the biblical picture, and not the past reality of Jesus, that is of central importance for Christian faith today, then are we not in danger of surrendering the affirmation 'the Word became flesh', and of discarding finally the salvation-history of God's activity in the man Jesus of Nazareth? As Cameron continues:

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[11] Bruce J. R. Cameron, 'The Historical Problem in Paul Tillich's Christology', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVIII, No. 3 (September 1965) p.257

> If...existential participation in the Christ as known through the biblical picture is the authority for the truth of faith to the exclusion of historical truth, the insignificance of historical fact in Tillich's Christology would seem difficult to deny. If the historical truth of the biblical material is not even partly that which guarantees the truth of faith, of what significance is the historical basis that Tillich claims for his Christology? If faith is more than historical probability, is it therefore completely independent of the truth of history?[12]

It is at this point that a large question mark must be placed over Tillich's discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus. This, indeed, has been done in a series of interrogations by John Baillie, Gordon Kaufman, Allen O. Miller, Albert Outler and D. Moody Smith.[13] Baillie's acute remarks are representative of their criticism.

> Tillich appears to imply that Christian faith would not be affected by however great a degree of skepticism regarding the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet he makes the idea of incarnation central in his understanding of the Christian faith. But surely the idea of incarnation is a false idea if no incarnation actually took place on the level of ordinary history. Or to put it otherwise, how can Christ be 'the center of history' if he was not himself a real historical person, but only an idea? An idea can indeed be the center of a system of ideas, but only an actual historical figure can be the center of <u>history</u>.[14]

As we saw in our second chapter, Tillich does, of course, insist that the name 'Jesus' denotes an historical individual, and that 'Jesus as the Christ' is eternal God-manhood appearing <u>in</u> existence. In this respect he cannot be accused of the naive hermeneutical position of the liberals who did not take sufficient account of the relation between the historical reality of Jesus and the biblical picture of him as the Christ,

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[12] <u>Ibid</u>., p.262

[13] 'Interrogation of Paul Tillich', <u>Philosophical Interrogations</u>, ed. S. & B. Rome, pp.357-409

[14] <u>Ibid</u>., p.363

but who instead substituted the picture for the reality. Nevertheless, Tillich has not, we suggest, taken the implications of this historical emphasis seriously enough, and consequently continuing doubt and perplexity remain concerning the degree of importance he allows the historical dimension in Christianity. His semantic analysis of the term 'historical Jesus' is certainly significant, and is, by its distinction between fact and interpretation, useful in overcoming some of the confusions which arise when the New Testament critic investigates the historical foundation of faith. And yet, despite Tillich's emphasis on the factual side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', this semantic distinction also requires that he cannot substantiate his claim historically. Thus, however much he may stress a 'personal life' in which essential manhood has appeared, he can provide no single historical <u>instance</u> of this actually happening. If research for an historical Jesus is irrelevant to the christological interpretation of Jesus' being as New Being, then how can it be simultaneously maintained that the biblical picture of the Christ is not the product of the imagination? To this extent, Baillie's criticism is appropriate. Our author is overstating his case when he holds that historical enquiry is irrelevant to the assertion that 'Jesus is the Christ', since otherwise it is difficult to see why Jesus is a reality and not an ideal category. If this conclusion is alien to Tillich's theological intentions, then, to avoid it successfully, something more should be said concerning the historical Jesus.

Tillich's opening reply to this type of criticism is dependent on his conception of the kerygmatic character of the scriptural sources. It is impossible to penetrate behind the

gospels, and so discover the 'real Jesus', because the historical Jesus exists only in the kerygma. The earthly Jesus cannot be examined critically apart from his reception as the Christ by the first disciples. The biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ can be understood only as a document of faith and not as a source of strictly historical value. What Tillich calls the 'necessary interdependence'[15] of historical fact and receiving faith within the Christian event means, therefore, that no material difference can be established between the message given by Jesus and the message given about Jesus, or rather, to put the matter another way, that faith itself - that is, the faith of the community created by its participation in the power of the New Being - is the sole datum of knowledge we have of Jesus as the Christ. As Tillich sees correctly, it was this conjunction of fact and reception which doomed to failure the original quest of the historical Jesus.

Our concern with this analysis of the structural form of the New Testament picture does not evolve from Tillich's premise - by now hardly contested - that the gospel image is kerygmatic, but from the conclusion he draws from this premise, namely, the sharp distinction made between the dimension of faith (to which the portrait belongs) and the dimension of historical research. In this connection, two primary questions must be asked and answered. First, does the failure of the original quest of the historical Jesus mean that we can never know anything of Jesus through biblical enquiry? And second, does the methodological failure of that quest mean that it is logically impossible for historical knowledge to serve as the basis of Christian faith?

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[15] ST, 2: 114. See above, Ch.III, pp.125-128.

I. The Use of the Biblical Picture as an Historical Document.

The first of these two questions centres on our author's assertion that, since the historical Jesus exists only in the kerygmatic picture of him as the Christ, the factual foundation of Christian belief lies outside the dimension occupied by New Testament research. This argument revolves round the supposition that to admit the kerygmatic nature of the gospel portrait is to deny its use as an historical document, and results, as we have seen, in the view that 'there is no picture behind the biblical one which could be made scientifically probable'.[16] The uncertainty of this judgment has, however, been shown in the work of a number of New Testament scholars engaged in a 'new quest' of the historical Jesus.[17] Hans Conzelmann has stated their position clearly:

> It is still being argued that the intent of the Gospels is not to offer historical records; therefore, they should not be used as historical sources. Again, an impossible conclusion is being derived from a true insight of form criticism;...the intention of the Gospels does not automatically decide how I should use them today. The question is not whether they intend to be sources but whether they are such...and whether they can be used as such by the historian.[18]

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[16] ST, 2: 118. See above, Ch.I, p.42.

[17] Because of the brevity of the following analysis of the 'new quest', the impression may be created that the movement is unified in its conclusions. This, however, is not the case, as is indicated by James M. Robinson, 'Basic Shifts in German Theology', Interpretation, XVI, No.1 (January 1962) pp. 76-97, and by J. B. Bedenbaugh, 'The First Decade of the New Quest of the Historical Jesus', Lutheran Quarterly, XVI, No.3 (August 1964) pp.239-267.

[18] 'The Method of the Life of Jesus Research', The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville, pp.56-57. Quoted by James C. Livingston, op.cit., p.44.

The advent of this new approach to the biblical material can be traced to a lecture delivered at Marburg in 1953 by Ernst Käsemann.[19] Reacting against the position of his teacher, Rudolf Bultmann, that the message of Jesus is a presupposition, not a part, of New Testament theology,[20] Käsemann held that unless some real connection is established between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, Christianity would not be able to defend itself from a docetic elimination of God's decisive act in the man from Nazareth. From the first, however, he admitted that the kerygmatic character of the gospels shows that they were not designed to impart historical information about Jesus; they do not provide us with the opportunity to write a chronological account of him. But the significant question raised by Käsemann was this: <u>assuming</u> the form-critical view that the gospels are community proclamations of the risen Christ, should this lead to a total scepticism regarding the earthly Jesus? Or, to put it differently, can we arrive at the pre-Crucifixion life of Jesus, and thereby ascertain to what extent the kerygmatic 'biblical picture' is a reliable representation of the historical Jesus? This, as Käsemann makes clear, is not an attempt to probe behind the kerygma in order to reach the historical Jesus, but rather an effort to determine the 'continuity of the gospel...and the variation of the kerygma'.[21]

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[19] 'Das Problem des historischen Jesus', <u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u>, LI (1954) pp.125-153. E.T., 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', <u>Essays on New Testament Themes</u>, trans. W. J. Montague ("Studies in Biblical Theology", XLI, London: S.C.M. Press, 1964) pp.15-47.

[20] See above, Ch.III, pp.102-105.

[21] <u>op.cit.</u>, p.25

The criteria for establishing those authentic features of the gospel tradition which can properly be applied to Jesus are stringent.[22] R. H. Fuller has outlined three basic steps commonly employed by Käsemann and his colleagues.[23] The major task is, he says, the elimination of anything that has a kerygmatic tone - namely, those elements which reflect the post-Easter life of the church rather than the life of Jesus himself - from the sayings and deeds of Jesus. Next follows the exclusion of all material that has parallels either in contemporary Judaism or in Rabbinic tradition and Jewish apocalyptic. And finally, all authentic sayings should exhibit Aramaic features, and, to increase the chance of authenticity, the structure of Aramaic poetry.[24] On this basis, the residue of historical material left after this process can be reasonably assured authentic, and, as such, may justifiably form the basis of historical investigation.

The results of this use of the non-kerygmatic material of the gospels have been manifold. Using the valuable criteria provided by form-criticism, Hans Conzelmann maintains that the Reign of God, although still in the future, was already engaging

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[22]Cf. N. A. Dahl, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', Kerygma and History: A Symposium on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1962) pp. 138-171; and Harvey K. McArthur, 'Basic Issues: A Survey of Recent Gospel Research', Interpretation, XVIII, No.1 (January 1964) pp.39-55.

[23]The New Testament in Current Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962) pp.32-34

[24]Fuller stipulates that the Aramaic criterion can be used only in conjunction with the first two criteria. The reason given is that 'the earliest Aramaic-speaking church could also have used poetic forms, and certainly its creation would undoubtedly exhibit Aramaic linguistic features, just as the authentic logia of Jesus' (Ibid., p.33).

men in the word of Jesus himself.[25] Ernst Fuchs substantiates this by viewing Jesus' conduct in dining with publicans and sinners, and his parables and teaching (which reflect his conduct) as a special redeeming activity of the Reign making itself felt in advance.[26] Günther Bornkamm stresses the ministry as a sign calling for decision, so that the vital hour was already present in Jesus. He too considers impressions made by Jesus as authentic: his humble submission to God, his authority, and his acceptance of the sinful.[27] Finally, Gerhard Ebeling distinguishes 'elements in the message of Jesus - the nearness of the rule of God, the clarity of his will, and the simplicity of discipleship with joy, freedom, and lack of anxiety',[28] and concentrates particularly on Jesus' teaching about faith.[29]

In the light of this work done by the scholars of the 'new quest' of the historical Jesus,[30] we must seriously ques-

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[25] 'Jesus Christus', Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (3rd.ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959) Bd.III, p.621

[26] 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus', Studies of the Historical Jesus, trans. A. Scobie ("Studies in Biblical Theology", XLII, London: S.C.M. Press, 1964) pp.11-31

[27] Jesus of Nazareth, pp.53-63

[28] The Nature of Faith, trans. R. Gregor Smith (London: Collins, 1961) p.56

[29] 'Jesus and Faith', Word and Faith, trans. J.W. Leitch (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963) pp.236-238

[30] We should add here that interest in the 'new quest' is not restricted to members of the so-called 'Bultmannian school'. See Joachim Jeremias, The Problem of the Historical Jesus, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1964); Ethelbert Stauffer, Jesus and His Story, trans. R. and C. Winton (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960); and Oscar Cullmann, 'Out of Season Remarks on the "Historical Jesus" of the Bultmann School', Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XVI, No.1 (January 1961) pp.131-148. Extracts from all three works are given in In Search of the Historical Jesus, ed. H. K. McArthur.

tion Tillich's assumption that the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ cannot be used as an historical source because it is kerygmatic. When these theologians propose that research should now go behind the kerygma of the resurrected Jesus Christ, they admit that they are unable to give a bare chronological account of 'what actually took place'; they also accept that they are using the biblical narratives in a way foreign to the intentions of their authors. But if, they argue, the Evangelists employed historical or biographical material in their apostolic witness, then it is legitimate to probe the kerygma in order to discover the authentic traditions and logia of Jesus. According to this view, therefore, history known through the historical method has something of importance to say to faith; and it is in this respect that we must agree with Livingston's appraisal of Tillich's thesis:

> Certainly there is no logical connection between saying that "there is no picture behind the biblical one" and the belief that such a condition of the sources implies that the Gospels are not <u>historical sources</u> which serve as <u>historical</u> bases or <u>foundations</u> of faith (the <u>fides quae creditur</u> which serves as the object of the <u>fides qua</u>).[31]

In some ways, of course, Tillich's own position corresponds to the intentions of the 'new questers'. He too seeks a fuller appreciation of the earthly Jesus within the New Testament account, and likewise repudiates the dependence of faith upon historical research.[32] However, in his assumption that there is a continuity between the kerygma and the historical Jesus - in the sense that 'historical fact' and 'believing reception' are inseparable within the picture - Tillich has insulated faith from

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[31] <u>op.cit.</u>, p.44

[32] Cf. Bornkamm, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.9; and James M. Robinson, <u>A New Quest of the Historical Jesus</u>, p.44.

any serious examination of its factual foundation in a way that is clearly not intended by members of the 'new quest'. The scholars engaged in this enterprise seek to show not that the kerygma is true - that is beyond proof and does lie in the dimension of faith - but that the New Testament account is a reliable representation of Jesus; and this does have important implications for Christianity. For as Ebeling has remarked, if it could be shown that the Christ of faith was a misunderstanding of the real significance of the historical Jesus, then the ground would be removed from under Christian belief.[33] Therefore it is simply insufficient to say with Tillich that nothing can militate against the object of faith, because it still leaves unresolved the crucial question of whether existential participation in the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' is existential participation in the actual individual to which the name 'Jesus of Nazareth' refers. In other words, Tillich's totally sceptical approach to the historical problem of truth - that is, to the issue of the historical continuity between Jesus and his interpretation within the kerygmatic history - cannot escape the conclusion that the Christ who encounters us through the scriptural portrait might not be the earthly Jesus but a mythological representation of past human aspirations. In this connection, Harnack's famous question to Karl Barth is still relevant. If one refuses to study the Jesus of the gospels by means of critical-historical methods, how can one arrive at anything but a dreamed-up Christ in place of the real one?[34]

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[33] The Nature of Faith, p.46

[34] Karl Barth, 'Ein Briefwechsel mit Adolf von Harnack', Theologische Fragen und Antworten (Zollikon/Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1957) p.9

It is in answer to this type of criticism that Tillich draws attention to the difference between the two German words for 'history', Historie and Geschichte;[35] and in this respect his defence parallels Barth's own reply to Harnack.[36] The Christ to whom faith aligns itself is not, our author says, der historische Jesus (the object of critical research) but der geschichtliche Christus (the content of the kerygma and the focus of faith). Properly understood, the latter does not refer to the former, namely to the 'historical Jesus' whom the historian seeks behind the gospels, but to the 'historic Jesus' of the gospels, to the Jesus to whom faith has ascribed an ultimate meaning in its biblical picture of him as the Christ. Now while Tillich's use of this linguistic peculiarity makes clear that he, like Barth before him, found Martin Kähler's terminology helpful in overcoming the objection commonly voiced at this point in his theology, we should add that essentially the same form of argumentation is implicit within Tillich's later discussion of revelation and religious symbolism.[37] For there too the basic requirement is that the veracity of faith's interpretation of an object as a revelation or religious symbol is not verified in terms of the literal correspondence between the meaning faith has attached to the object and that object's own factual-historical mode of being. The validity of the biblical portrait's presentation of Jesus as the Christ is relative only to faith's 'ecstatic' experience through him of that which precedes and transcends the subject-object schema entailed in all

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[35] See above, Ch.III, pp.119-122.

[36] Cf. Barth, 'Ein Briefwechsel mit Adolf von Harnack', p.23.

[37] See above, Ch.IV, pp.177-185, 194-200.

historical judgments: the ultimate of being, being-itself; it is not, accordingly, governed by the 'historical truth' of its statements about the empirical form of Jesus' life. In this argument also the fundamental assertion is therefore made: Christianity upholds the 'theological truth' of its picture of Jesus as the Christ independently of the processes of scientific verification.

This position represents a new development in Tillich's polemic against scientific estimates of Jesus, for by it he moves from a discussion of the methodological impossibility of a quest for the historical Jesus to a consideration of its theological irrelevance. The arguments employed in this case no longer depend primarily upon an appreciation of the fragmentary and homiletic nature of the scriptural material - for example, that the narratives of Jesus' history are in fact a fusion of account and interpretation, and that the gospels are permeated with the developing christology of the early church. Here it is not simply a question of establishing a necessary correlation between acknowledging the structural complexity of the gospel tradition and denying their status as historical sources. Instead, these arguments begin with the, allegedly more profound, perception that the only history with which faith is concerned is the salvation-history of Jesus as the Christ, and that it is the <u>a priori</u> of faith that the Jesus of the historian is not, and cannot be, the Christ of faith. According to them, no statement that purports to convey a knowledge of Jesus as the bearer of New Being can be made which either precedes or is isolated from faith's own understanding of him as the Christ. On this line of reasoning, the implications that the photographable nature of the Christ-event has for historical enquiry are com-

pletely irrelevant to the truth of the ultimate significance faith imputes to Jesus in its biblical picture of him as the Christ.

Now in this thesis that we must make our theological beginning with faith's interpretation of a fact as the fundamental datum of the biblical portrait, there is undoubtedly very real insight into the character of Christian references to the past history of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus it must be agreed that critical research is in no position to confirm or legitimate faith's own distinctive understanding of Jesus' life and ministry as the 'miracle' or 'sign-event' of divine activity within the temporal order - nor for that matter does it intend to do so. Indeed we should add here that historical study itself, notably through its development of form-criticism, has been one of the chief factors in exposing the metaphysical nature of christological statements by its insistence that the language used in these statements cannot be reduced simply to assertions of objective historical fact. Taken in this sense, therefore, our author's ban on research into the historical-factual foundation of the kerygma represents a valuable witness to the impropriety of seeking an historical proof of God's revelation within the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and provides an important refutation of the claim that historical reasoning can supplant faith or reduce God's action to the level of everyday, verifiable occurrence. In this respect, Tillich is surely right when he says that the kerygmatic confession 'Jesus is the Christ' cannot be regarded as a statement made on the sort of evidence that historical science provides.[38]

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[38]To suppose otherwise, Gerhard Ebeling writes, is to misunderstand the nature of both faith and research. 'We shall

And yet, despite the clear validity of this aspect of Tillich's argument, his position remains very puzzling; and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is in fact making christological capital out of a quite proper distinction between faith and research which will not, on further reflection, sustain the kind of absolute distinction he actually requires. Let us look again at Tillich's understanding of the use of history in Christian theology. According to the notion both of 'history' as Geschichte and the non-literal structure of religious symbols, faith's preoccupation with the meaning of history, though certainly distinct from a consideration of that which can be scientifically established or verified, does not exclude the notion of factuality. Put differently, the kerygma's proclamation of the ultimate meaning of Jesus as the Christ does not neutralize or reduce its role as witness to that definite past-historical reality signified by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth'. The biblical picture has a double content held in inseparable unity: it involves reference to an historical event that has happened at a determinate place and time, and the preaching of this event's significance for our salvation.[39] Now Tillich is the first to

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hardly prove Jesus' messiahship by demonstrating his messianic consciousness; we shall not be able to get back behind the message of his resurrection to prove the historical fact on which it rests; nor will we be able to show by means of any other 'objectively demonstrable' facts in Jesus' ministry, that he was the Son of God or that he died for us. Quite apart from the questions of historical detail which this raises, such a procedure would run counter to the logic of historical judgments. Messianic consciousness says nothing about actual messiahship... And apart from the impossibility of making historically valid judgments about Jesus' own attitude to his death, knowing his attitude to it would still not relieve me of the responsibility of deciding how I myself stand in relation to it'. Theology and Proclamation, trans. J. Riches (London: Collins, 1966) pp.56-57.

[39] See above, Ch.II, pp.81-85, 94-96; Ch.III, pp.97-99, 134-137; and Ch.IV, pp.194-196.

admit that the intelligibility of christological thought depends on the correlation of these two elements. Faith, he says, does make factual claims about Jesus, for in calling him 'Christ' it maintains that New Being was actual in him. In other terms, the meaning that faith ascribes to Jesus' being implies the prior existence of certain real qualities or characteristics in his person which warranted the subsequent biblical interpretation of him. The necessary continuity, therefore, that faith demands and asserts between the picture and the historical figure it depicts is that the significance faith therein attributes to Jesus corresponds to the significance his being in fact possessed.[40] It is here, however, with Tillich's contention that research is irrelevant to the validity of this correlation, that our present difficulty arises. Following the requirements of the distinction between the areas of faith and historical criticism, faith's only claim is that its portrait embodies the <u>meaning</u> Jesus had for those who first called him 'Christ', not that it contains accurate information about his life and work. The biblical picture represents for the believer a continuity of 'historic significance' between narrative and past event, not a continuity of 'historical detail'. And for Tillich this contrast is absolute. As he expresses it most forcefully in his theory of religious symbolism, the truth of the christological assertions faith makes concerning Jesus' being <u>as</u> New Being is unrelated to the literal-scientific verification of the 'historical truth' of those self-same assertions. Thus, while the historian can contradict the biographical details offered in faith's picture, he cannot thereby confirm or deny anything of relevance to the 'theological

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[40] See above, Ch.IV, pp.148-153.

truth' about Jesus which that portrait reveals.[41]

Unpacking this argument, we can see that it depends on maintaining two propositions simultaneously:-

> a) Belief in the truth of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ requires the belief not only that a human being, signified by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth', has existed in the past, but that his being was such as would support the christological interpretation which the picture ascribes to it.
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> b) Belief in the truth of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ does not require belief in the factual-historical accuracy of its stories about the man 'Jesus of Nazareth' whom it presents as the Christ. All that is required is that these stories should be understood as conveying a meaning equal to the meaning that man actually had.

In the first proposition, Tillich asserts that the Christian confession of the biblical picture's truth as a picture of the Christ demands acceptance of certain factual statements about the nature of Jesus' historical existence; but in the second, he refuses to stipulate what past state of affairs would count for or against the central claim that 'Jesus was the Christ', since according to him no empirical evidence concerning Jesus' life could conceivably confirm or disconfirm the Christian interpretation. Clearly, both these propositions cannot be held at one and the same time. If all possible empirical evidence, whether adverse or not, is irrelevant to the truth of faith's interpretative statements about an event which faith itself agrees had an unquestionably empirical character, then all such statements are completely empty in that they imply no understanding of the circumstances which would verify or falsify the interpretation, and so no real appreciation of the nature of the event to which that interpretation is attached.

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[41] See above, Ch.IV, pp.196-200.

And if this is so, on what grounds can Tillich claim that we would ascribe to a 'photographed Jesus' the same degree of importance as faith now ascribes to the 'portrayed Jesus' in its picture of him as the Christ? Either this is unwarranted speculation, or our author is here introducing a metaphysical assumption regarding the self-evident validity of biblical testimony which he has not hitherto admitted.

Tillich's confusion undoubtedly arises from trying to get the best of both worlds. He wants, that is, to affirm the fully concrete, past-historical nature of the event proclaimed in the gospels, while yet refusing to make this event the possible object of critical study. Now while it may be one thing to warn correctly against improper attempts to get back behind the biblical picture in order to secure some 'historical proof' of its truth as a portrait of the real Christ, it remains quite another to insist upon the necessity of such undertakings for the purpose of making intelligible the continuity which is said to exist between the man Jesus and the picture's existential interpretation of him. For if, following Tillich, the search for an historical Jesus behind the christological meaning of his being is truly irrelevant to theology, how can it be then maintained that the New Testament representation of that man is not a fiction? Equally, how can it be argued that a material correlation exists between the earthly career of Jesus and the biblical portrait when it is also held that the whole of the historical evidence for such a correlation is subsumed within scripture's 'interpretation'?[42] Tillich, indeed, has here so

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[42]Ebeling makes the same point very neatly. 'If the difference between the kerygma of Christ and the historical Jesus disappears, we shall not only have to fear that the church may usurp the position of the historical Jesus, we shall also

divorced the meaning of the kerygma from all questions concerning the kerygma's historical validity as a portrait of Jesus' actual life that, in the end, it becomes uncertain what historical claims, if any, he is making when he speaks of Jesus as the Christ. For if his assertion of an essential correspondence between 'historical fact' and 'biblical interpretation' is not a tautology, whereby the form of Jesus' existence has been presupposed in faith's definition of his meaning as New Being, then what we must have, and what Tillich never gives us, is the evidence on which this assertion is made, the independent justification for the truth of that claim. In similar vein, Reinhold Niebuhr writes:

> For him (Tillich) the center of faith and history is Christ and not Jesus. He insists that it is not possible to go behind the faith of the Early Church that Jesus was Christ and the faith that this Christ was as He is described in the Gospels. He is not interested in any rediscovery of the 'historical Jesus', since the basis of the Christian religion is the faith that the Christ is the revelation of the eternal meaning in time. That, to speak analogically, seems to me like accepting the biographers' estimate of a person's particular significance too uncritically. There was, after all, an historical Jesus who had a gospel which fitted remarkably well into a life which ended on the Cross. Humanly speaking, this life could not have been accepted in faith as the revelation of God had its intention not been in such remarkable conformity with its destiny. I wonder whether Tillich does not allow his natural theology to become too thin at this point. The faith of the Church in Jesus as Christ is like the effort of an artist to express the depth of a personality in a portrait. The portrait is not the man but the symbol of the quintessential character of the man. We can accept it only if we have corroborative evidence that the portrait is true.[43]

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have to ask whether in the end, in spite of the assertion of the real presence of Christ in the kerygma, it may not rather be the case that the kerygma has taken the place of something which is absent'. Theology and Proclamation, p.77.

[43] 'The Contribution of Paul Tillich', Religion in Life, VI, No.3 (Autumn 1937) p.578 (my emphasis). Quoted by Robert H. Ayers, 'Biblical Criticism and Faith in Tillich and Niebuhr', Journal of Bible and Religion, XXXI, No.4 (October 1963) p.316.

Tillich, as we have said, does admit that the New Testament image of Jesus is not the product of the imagination: it is a combination of 'historical fact' and 'believing reception'. But this conjunction, if we take Niebuhr's criticism, implies not only that a relation to the earthly Jesus is a requirement of the gospel message, but, more importantly for the argument at hand, that the authenticity of the gospel's historical references to that man is part of its credibility. The truth of the picture's testimony to what has happened is, that is to say, one element by which its validity as kerygma is judged; and, to this extent, the tradition which tells of Jesus of Nazareth must be examined to see if it is reliable. Historical evidence could, then, be relevant to the question of the kerygma's validity. If a discrepancy could be established between Jesus and his biblical portrayal - for example, that 'unbelief', hubris and 'concupiscence' were after all present in him - then the christological claims of the New Testament would be challenged. So long as Tillich insists that the event on which Christianity is based is a union of fact and reception, he cannot avoid the conclusion that the risk of faith is both existential and historical, namely, that faith's response to Jesus could be idolatrous in so far as it might have imputed to him characteristics he did not possess in real life.

A similar difficulty stands at the heart of Tillich's discussion of revelation and symbols. Here too he begins by emphasizing the importance of the empirical aspect of a finite entity which is taken as a 'sign-event' or 'primary-immanent' religious symbol. The use of material taken from finite reality is necessary, he says, in order to give content to the cognitive function in revelation. But to this Tillich adds that the finite media of revelation are not empirical in that the meaning 'ecstatically'

perceived in them cannot be validated within the subject-object schema of rationality. 'Knowledge of revelation', although primarily communicated through historical events and people, transcends the basic condition of historical knowledge, the subject-object antithesis, and so entails no factual assertions evaluable by historical science.[44] Now quite what our author means by transcendence of the subject-object structure of knowledge is hard to see. If he is saying that faith's assertions, as utterances of the ecstatic reason, are simply expressions of 'numinous astonishment' - more like "Oh, how wonderful!" than like "Caesar crossed the Rubicon", to borrow Dorothy Emmet's example[45] - then clearly they do not imply factual statements. Yet Tillich himself rules out this possibility when he classifies the empirical content of a revelation or 'primary-immanent' religious symbol as the 'objective' side of a revelatory constellation, of which ecstasy is the 'subjective' side. Ecstasy is not, then, an expansive feeling or mystical experience, but the individual response to an awareness of the ultimate through the contemplation of certain events and certain personalities. This, however, multiplies the confusion. For if the objective status of the medium is accepted as one element in a revelatory event, how can knowledge of it as the vehicle of revelation be dissociated from the retrospective and historical question of whether this event actually occurred in the manner prescribed by faith? In this connection, it is surely necessary for theology to take empirical evidence into consideration, even though

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[44] See above, Ch.IV, pp.187-188.

[45] 'Epistemology and the Idea of Revelation', The Theology of Paul Tillich, ed. C. W. Kegley & R. W. Bretall, p.212. Cf. J. Heywood Thomas, 'Some Notes on the Theology of Paul Tillich', Hibbert Journal, LVIII (April 1959) pp.255-256.

we may agree with Tillich that this information can never add up to knowledge of revelation. But conceding even this point does not require the complete disjunction of this knowledge from the subject-object form of knowing normally associated with any 'knowledge of past events', since otherwise it becomes difficult to understand how the purely factual assertions involved in the statements about revelation can be justified. If research, for instance, could demonstrate (per impossibile) that Jesus protested against the judgment of Pontius Pilate, or indeed that the Crucifixion never happened, would this not seriously impugn faith's claim that Jesus, as the 'final revelation' and pre-eminent religious symbol, 'remained transparent to the divine mystery until his death, which was the final manifestation of his transparency'?[46] If this conclusion is disallowed, then it would appear that we are once more faced with a tautology, according to which the allegedly historical statements about Jesus' denial of all ultimate claims for himself follow from faith's definition of him as a revelation and religious symbol.

While it may be true, therefore, that the revelatory nature of Jesus' life cannot be known through research alone, the question nevertheless remains as to whether it can be properly understood without it. Though it may be correct to say that the assertion 'Jesus is the Christ' is not equivalent to all those historical claims that could be made truthfully about

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[46] ST, 1: 149-150. Lewis Ford argues that Tillich's use of the word 'transparent' is in itself confusing. 'If the medium is purely transparent, how can we speak of its intrinsic affinity with that which it reveals? Transparency entails the negation of all visible properties. Retaining this visual metaphor, we must say that any affinity between the medium and that which it reveals will consist in visible similarities; but the medium, being transparent, has none'. 'The Three Strands of Tillich's Theory of Religious Symbols', The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No.1 (January 1966) p.115.

the history of Jesus of Nazareth, this does not entail that nothing historically true needs to be known for faith's assertion to be true. At the very least we must surely accept that faith here requires grounds for maintaining the historical proposition that there once was a man called 'Jesus of Nazareth', whose words and deeds did not belie his acceptance as the New Being. If the facticity and nature of this person belong to those things which concern faith, then it cannot dispense with the way of historical verification. So long as it remains an essential ingredient of Christianity that Jesus was an actual figure encountered by the first disciples, and not a philosophical abstraction personalized in the legends of the apostolic kerygma, then Christian belief cannot remain indifferent to the enquiries of the historian, but must, to use Bornkamm's famous phrase, 'seek the history in the Kerygma of the Gospels'.[47]

The biblical picture purports to be a portrait of Jesus as the Christ; and for that reason alone, without any detriment to its character and original purpose as a witness of faith, it must also be shown to be an historical document having its source in a genuine history.

II. Certainty and Historical Judgments

These considerations lead us to the second of our two main questions. Whatever the necessity of research may be from the viewpoint of christology's intelligibility and coherence, does not the failure of the original quest of the historical Jesus mean that all subsequent attempts must fail because historical knowledge is logically inadequate as a foundation of

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[47] Jesus of Nazareth, p.21

Christian faith? The problem involved here has to do with the so-called 'preliminary' or 'probable' nature of biblical study, a characteristic almost always referred to by those who seek the emancipation of faith from historical enquiry.[48] It comes as no surprise to find, therefore, that it is on the basis of this argument that our author rejects the implications of the historical findings of the 'new quest'. The scholars thus engaged, writes Tillich,

> are obviously more optimistic with respect to the probabilities, but no change results for the systematic situation. Our knowledge of the historical Jesus never gets beyond probabilities of one kind or another.[49]

Nothing, however, in Tillich's theology is more perplexing than this characterization of the methodological results of historical research; and one wonders what he means when he says that the historian can never reach certainty. As Heywood Thomas remarks:-

> ...it is obvious that of any historical or empirical statement we must admit that it is in one sense probable, namely that it is not necessarily true. But the opposition is not between certainty and probability; it is between two kinds of truth, the truths of fact and the truths of logic. We can indeed describe the former as contingent, but this in no way removes them from the possibility of verification. All we can mean if we say they are probable is that when they are verified they are not verified in the same way as the propositions, which are necessarily true. Similarly, if we describe the historian's statements as probable all that can properly be meant by this is that they are not necessarily true statements.[50]

In other words, Tillich has confused two statements about

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[48] See above, Ch.IV, p.145. For contemporary uses of this argument, see F. Gerald Downing, The Church and Jesus ("Studies in Biblical Theology", Second Series, X, London: S.C.M. Press, 1968) pp.184-187.

[49] Perspectives, p.227

[50] Paul Tillich: An Appraisal, p.86

historical criticism. The first concerns the logical status of historical assertions, namely the truism that they are contingent and, as such, probable. The second, on the other hand, is an illicit deduction from the first, namely that the historian can never reach certainty. But since the opposite of 'probable' is 'necessarily true', we can only assume that Tillich is here suggesting that the historian can never possess a certainty which would be impossible for him anyway! What he does not see is, first, that if truths of fact do resemble truths of logic then they make no assertions about existence at all, since necessary propositions (the propositions of logic and mathematics) are essentially hypothetical and unrestrictive, being applicable to any state of affairs whatsoever; second, that the verification of statements concerning matters of fact is not equivalent to logical proof, since as existential assertions they all express contingent propositions and accordingly admit the possibility of error (i.e. they are not of such a kind that it is logically impossible for them to be false); and third, that the admission of the logical possibility of error does not in itself establish grounds for doubting the veracity of the statements of fact involved. For if it did, says John Hick,

> no empirical proposition could ever be verified, and indeed the notion of empirical verification would be without use and therefore without sense. What we rightly seek, when we desire the verification of a factual proposition, is not a demonstration of the logical impossibility of the proposition's being false (for this would be a self-contradictory demand), but such weight of evidence as suffices, in the type of case in question, to exclude rational doubt.[51]

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[51] 'Theology and Verification', The Philosophy of Religion, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p.58. In an essay in the same volume entitled 'An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief', R. B. Braithwaite writes: 'Philosophers of religion who wish to make empirical facts relevant to the meaning of religious statements but at the same time desire

The suggestion here that one can possess complete assurance with regard to historical propositions, even while acknowledging the logical possibility of their being false, requires further explanation. On Tillich's view, as we have seen, complete verification is unattainable because of the inherent corrigibility of all historical results. That is to say, our author infers from the logical status of all empirical claims (namely, that they are contingent and so 'could be this or that') that one can never rule out the possibility that our present historical judgments will be refuted later, either through the discovery of new evidence or through the further testing of old evidence.[52] This possibility is, moreover, held to be unlimited, since otherwise one could conceive of a time when, with the collection of all relevant data to corroborate an historical statement, complete verification, and so absolute certainty, would be achieved. In order, therefore, to justify the argument that all empirical assertions are probable, one must also admit the permanent possibility of their future correction.

Here, however, we must refer to a recent article by Peter Carnley which demonstrates most ably the impropriety of Tillich's claim that every historical judgment is permanently

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to hold on to these statements whatever the empirical facts may be are indulging, I believe, in a sort of doublethink attitude: they want to hold that religious statements both are about the actual world (i.e. are empirical statements) and also are not refutable in any possible world, the characteristic of statements which are logically necessary'. (Ibid., pp.75-76).

[52]Cf. ST, 2: 130-131: 'It is inadequate to point out that historical research has not yet given any evidence to support such scepticism. Certainly, it has not yet! But the anxious question remains whether it could not do so sometime in the future!' See above, Ch.V, pp.209-210.

uncertain.[53] During the course of his discussion, Carnley makes a series of distinctions between knowing and claiming to know, between the validation and justification of a claim, and between knowing and being certain.[54] While the discovery of fresh evidence, he says, may show that a person of the past did not know that an event occurred, since his claim to know is not validated by present evidence, this does not mean that he was uncertain of its occurrence or that he was unjustified in claiming to know of it.

> Consequently, it is possible that the Christian may have justification for making certain claims to know particular facts about Jesus. If at a future time it is discovered that the claims are untrue (not validated) this would then entail that the Christian of the past cannot have known these facts. But it would not mean that he was not justified in claiming to know them, nor that he was not certain about them. Thus, it is possible to be certain, and to make claims to know facts of the past which turn out to be wrong in the final analysis.[55]

Dr. Carnley tells us that the important point here is that, while 'certainty' and 'knowing' are not synonymous, 'certainty' is a necessary condition of 'claiming to know'. Accordingly, the view of historical scepticism entails that 'one is never really justified in claiming to know a fact of the past', and that all historical statements 'must be tentatively asserted'. The argument advocated by Tillich is, therefore, 'that we can never really make claims to know facts of the past, thereby expressing certainty, or claim to be certain about the facts of the past, in

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[53] 'The Poverty of Historical Scepticism', Christ, Faith and History, ed. S. W. Sykes & J. P. Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) pp.165-189.

[54] Ibid., pp.180-181

[55] Ibid., p.181

the face of the permanent possibility of correction'.[56]

It is precisely this contention that Carnley shows to be erroneous.[57] Let us suppose, he continues, that the possibility of new evidence becomes a reality. At time T2 evidence is forthcoming which provides grounds for doubting that a certain event, E, occurred. Following Tillich, this means that at no previous time, T1, can it have been known with certainty that E did occur. The discovery at T2, in other words, entails that the occurrence of E could not have been known for certain at T1; and to assert the conjunction of these two propositions - that the occurrence of E was known with certainty at T1 and doubted at T2 - involves self-contradiction. But according to Carnley, this argument is unjustified. Grounds for doubting that E occurred does not entail that it did not, and so does not exclude the possibility that it did occur. Hence, it must be admitted that an historian at T1 could have known with certainty that E occurred.

> ...if it is not entailed that E did not occur, then it is logically possible that E did occur and therefore we must admit that it could have been known with absolute certainty at T1 that E did occur. Despite the fact that there are reasons for doubting at T2, if it is possible that E did occur, then it is possible that somebody could have made absolutely certain that E did occur. Clearly, it just does not follow from the fact that because somebody discovers evidence to suggest

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Here Carnley's thesis follows Norman Malcolm's in Knowledge and Certainty (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963) pp.1-57. Malcolm in turn was refuting the 'fallibilistic' arguments of C. I. Lewis and Rudolf Carnap that every empirical statement is uncertain and so not factual. Cf. Lewis, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1946) p.180, and Mind and the World-Order (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929) pp.279-282; also Carnap, Philosophy and Logical Syntax (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935) pp.11-13, and 'Testability and Meaning', Philosophy of Science, III (1936) pp.419-471, IV (1937) pp.1-40.

> that E might not have occurred, that no person at a previous time can have known with absolute certainty that E did occur.58

Having said this, however, Carnley suggests a way in which Tillich's position can be strengthened. It may be that the evidence discovered at T2 provides not merely <u>evidence to suggest</u> that E might not have occurred, but <u>absolutely conclusive grounds</u> for inferring that it did not. This being so, it would indeed be illegitimate to claim that at T1 an historian <u>knew</u> with complete certainty that E did occur. Yet Carnley maintains that even this possibility does not prove the sceptic's argument. For while the evidence at T2 will constitute proof for a particular case, it does not prove the thoroughly <u>general</u> thesis that <u>no</u> statement about the past can be known with absolute certainty, since a basic premise of that argument

> asserts precisely what needs to be proved! In order to assert that nobody in the past can have known with absolute certainty that E occurred we need to know for certain that E did not occur. But those who use the argument for historical scepticism assert that we can never know <u>any</u> statement about the past for certain.59

In other terms, if Tillich claims that any particular empirical statement is 'probable' or 'uncertain' because the acceptance of its 'historical truth' today (at T1) does not preclude the possibility of its falsification tomorrow (at T2), then he is in fact admitting that an historian at T2 <u>could</u> show conclusively that the original assertion made at T1 was false; and this is exactly what he denies when he says that <u>no</u> statement about the past can be known with certainty! Thus, by strengthening Tillich's argument, Carnley has demonstrated its complete circularity. And the

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[58] <u>op.cit.</u>, p.184

[59] <u>Ibid.</u>, p.185

dilemma is, he continues, that unless the argument is reinforced in this manner it becomes 'logically incorrect'. For if at T2 we only have grounds for doubting that E might not have occurred, and not conclusive evidence, 'then the proposition that E did not occur is not entailed, and we are able to assert without self-contradiction that at T1 somebody can have known for certain that E did occur'.[60] Accordingly, the claim which has led Tillich and other theologians to assert the necessary independence of faith from historical enquiry - namely, that complete assurance with respect to historical judgments can never be achieved - is, so Carnley concludes, a 'faulty one'.[61]

We may pursue the problem of historical probability in relation to the crucial question of whether faith can, of itself, guarantee the factual basis of Christianity. The nodal point of Tillich's argument is that if a man has faith then it is analytically true to say that he has received the reality of a 'personal life', that which has overcome the estrangement of existence in existence. As he puts it: faith's own existence 'is identical with the presence of the New Being'.[62] Thus, while empirical research can never ensure with any degree of certainty the fact that the bearer of the New Being was a man named 'Jesus of Nazareth', and while it is impossible to be sure that any detail of the biblical narrative about him is true, faith can, and does, guarantee the sheer 'thatness' of the man called 'Christ'.

Our immediate difficulty with this argument evolves from our author's insistence that while an 'historical' fact is

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., p.186

[62] ST, 2: 131. See above, Ch.V, p.211.

assured by faith - here the normal meaning of 'historical' is implied: 'something which happened in the past' - it is not the object of problematic historical investigation. In order to clarify the confusion at this point, let us examine two statements, both vital to Tillich's christology.

A) A man, denoted by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth', lived, had disciples, and died.

B) Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being in existence.

The relation between these two assertions is complex. The truth of A does not show that B is either true, probable or even meaningful. To this extent, one can agree with Tillich that faith's knowledge of Jesus as the Christ is not simply historical knowledge. That is to say, B is not the product of research, nor is the assurance it provides scientific. The historian has nothing to say about B since it belongs entirely within the realm of theology.

The difficulty before us arises with the status of A. While it is certainly true that christology is not implied by historical statements (A does not demand B), christology does nevertheless imply certain factual statements (B does demand A). Thus we find that each of the three parts of A is crucial to Tillich's exposition of B. 'A man' is important because the bearer of the New Being must be a concrete individual; he must have 'disciples' since the only record we have of him is a record of his reception as the Christ; and he must 'die' because only by his death can he be said to have participated in the finitude of existence completely. We may conclude, therefore, that the elements of A, if found to be false, would require that B is inappropriate.

For Tillich, however, to accept that historical knowledge is always 'probable' knowledge is to admit that A can never be falsified with any degree of certainty. But if research into A is indeed always a matter of probabilities, then, as Moody Smith observes, since 'any single item of the tradition may be false (i.e., unhistorical or misleading), it is logically possible that all may be false'.[63] If no statement is more true than another, then all statements could be equally true. And if this is so, then all could be equally false - and so meaningless. For this reason, to agree with Tillich that historical assertions can never be verified with certainty is simultaneously to deny any 'rule of interpretation or criticism'. If all statements about A are probable, then it seems impossible to distinguish more appropriate statements about the 'thatness' of the individual mentioned in A from the less appropriate: did he have disciples, did he die? Again, if we are prevented from saying anything about that 'man' (other than that he existed) then it appears difficult to see how one could prevent, or even determine, contradiction. It would be a hard task, in fact an impossible task, to distinguish how or in what way two assertions about that 'man' differed - while for Tillich he is the New Being, for someone else he could equally be a puppet of the disciples or even a murderer. Though one could perhaps distinguish between them in terms of intent, one could not separate them in terms of their 'appropriate relation' to their subject. In this way we arrive back at the questions posed by the 'new quest' for the historical Jesus. What guarantee has one for

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[63] op.cit., p.137

saying that the biblical picture is appropriate to its subject, or that our reception of the New Testament portrait is appropriate to Jesus' reception by the first disciples? Tillich's rejection of the 'new quest' on the grounds that all historical knowledge is probable knowledge does not elude these crucial and quite legitimate problems.

As we have seen, Tillich counters these objections with the statement that faith can guarantee not only the factual element in the event 'Jesus as the Christ' but also the 'essentials in the biblical picture'.[64] Now presumably, at a bare minimum, the reception and death of the concrete person mentioned in A would constitute such 'essentials'. But, given Tillich's own thesis, can these items be verified as being historical? Here at least one cannot avoid the suspicion that our author wants to have his cake and eat it. At one moment, the assertion that the biblical picture was forged in the situation of faith is used to prevent it from being examined historiographically. But at the next, the biblical picture makes historical claims. To this extent, we must agree with Kelsey that this use of the picture fails to obey the rules set up by Tillich's own theory.

> ...the comparison of the biblical account of Jesus with a picture is self-defeating because it is used to make contradictory claims. On the one hand, it is used as a way of denying that historical fact-claims are part of the biblical picture's meaning. On the other hand, it is used as the basis for an argument about what "must have been" the nature of that personal life (pointed to by Jesus of Nazareth) of which the picture is a picture - and that <u>is</u> an argument making historical fact-claims, albeit on improper grounds.[65]

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[64] <u>ST</u>, 2: 131. See above, Ch.V, p.211. This claim will be examined in more detail during our critique of the <u>analogia imaginis</u>.

[65] op.cit., p.101

In this way, therefore, the argument that faith's guarantee of the factual foundation of Christianity belongs in a dimension altogether distinct from that of biblical research flounders in the face of the distinction itself. If no detail of the historical tradition (A) can be guaranteed either critically (given the probable nature of historical enquiry) or by faith in such a way that historical doubt is overcome (given that faith cannot trespass into the dimension of historical knowledge), then how can <u>any</u> item of the gospel tradition be guaranteed as historically true? And how then can we proceed to the christological assertion (B)? We may take an example. Tillich repeatedly describes existence as distorted and ambiguous. But how can he know of an actual undistorted being at a particular time in the past other than through the <u>historical</u> claims of the New Testament narrative? An even more important example suggests itself. Tillich admits that the concrete being of Jesus (the 'fact') created the biblical picture (the 'interpretation'); the biblical picture concerns an individual who existed <u>apart</u> from the portrait. But how can he be sure of this? If neither the historian nor the man of faith can verify the accuracy of the scriptural image in relation to the event it is said to depict, how can it be maintained that the picture was not a work of fiction? Thus we may conclude that when Tillich states that faith can guarantee a personal life, but not the name 'Jesus of Nazareth',[66] he has not followed his own argument to its logical end. Given the preliminary nature of historical investigation, and given that faith cannot verify a fact which lies outside its own domain, Tillich's argument de-

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[66] See above, Ch.V, pp.214-217.

mands not only that the 'personal life' of the New Being may have had another name, but that the life itself may be unhistorical. Tillich cannot guarantee either that the bearer of New Being was not somebody else totally different from the figure portrayed in the biblical picture, or that that picture was not a product of the imagination.

III. The Concept of the Analogia Imaginis.

The final strand of Tillich's argument, in which he introduces his concept of the analogia imaginis, is open to the self-same objections. This is hardly surprising since it too depends on the claim that faith alone can guarantee the historical basis of Christianity. The basic tenet of the analogy is that faith assures the reality of its object because faith participates in the being of the object of its concern. This may be expressed as a syllogism: 1) Men of faith are 'transformed' by the biblical picture; 2) the New Being is the source of all 'transforming power'; 3) therefore it is the New Being which 'transforms' men of faith through the biblical picture. The circularity of this is clear but, as it stands, comparatively inoffensive since as yet it implies no factual assertions about the man signified by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth'. However, in Tillich's use of the analogy, the 'transformation' of people today is said to entail the existence of somebody in the past, living nearly two thousand years ago, as its only possible cause. His suggestion appears to be that faith can infer from its present experience of the transforming power mediated by the picture the reality of that which has caused the transformation and which lies behind the picture. More exactly, 'to be transformed' means that one has an immediate,

pre-scientific relationship to the person portrayed in the gospels, and that the awareness of this relationship carries in itself, as it were, the absolute certainty that the 'concrete biblical material is...an adequate expression of the transforming power of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ'.[67]

Now, as others have noted before, this argument presents us with a whole nest of problems.[68] Our initial criticism, however, can be stated briefly. According to Tillich, it is the a priori of faith that its reception of the power of New Being is correlated with a finite event in which estrangement was simultaneously experienced and healed in one individual human life.[69] Faith, admittedly, cannot guarantee that it was Jesus of Nazareth who instantiated the concept of New Being historically, since this is a probable historical judgment; but it can know with certainty, and know by its own response to the man pictured in the gospels, that New Being was realized in him, whatever his name. In other words, from the definition that faith is the subjective state of one to whom the transforming power of New Being has been mediated through an objective and personal occurrence, Tillich has here deduced that the affirmation of faith - the expression of one's self-awareness of transformation - in relation to the figure portrayed as the Christ by the biblical picture implies the historical appearance of New Being in him. As he has remarked already, the 'realism'

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[67] ST, 2: 132

[68] Cf. John Y. Fenton, 'Faith and Facts', Journal of Religious Thought, XXIII, No.2 (April 1966-1967) pp.107-110. See also my own article, 'The Certainty of Faith and Tillich's Concept of the Analogia Imaginis', Scottish Journal of Theology, XXV, No.3 (August 1972) pp.279-295.

[69] See above, Ch.II, pp.94-96; Ch.III, pp.97-99, 134-137; and Ch.V, pp.212-216, 223-226.

of the scriptural image is 'tested by its transforming power'.[70] But what he fails to see is that this is a tautology - a deduction of a conclusion already implicit within the previous definition of faith - and so quite empty. On Tillich's argument, to respond in faith to the person presented in the New Testament narratives <u>is</u> to identify him as the actual bearer of New Being because <u>faith itself</u>, as the individual self-consciousness of transformation by the power of New Being, presupposes the factuality of the human life in which the ambiguities of existence were overcome. Thus X is Y because by X we mean Y.

This, however, is not the only objection to be voiced against Tillich's definition of faith. For further study reveals that this definition is itself determined by the <u>ontological</u> requirements of our author's own correlative method. That is to say, his claim that faith's response to the picture <u>entails</u> a correspondence between the picture and the concrete historical existence of the Christ is governed by his prior ontological analysis of those existential conditions which <u>must have been fulfilled</u> by the person whose portrait has occasioned faith's experience of the transforming power of New Being. As several commentators have observed, and as we shall now show, this use of ontology to substantiate the historical claims of faith constitutes one of the most serious defects in Tillich's christology.[71]

Briefly put, Tillich's argument proceeds as follows. According to his discussion of the function of ontology within the 'method of correlation', ontological judgments cannot yield an independent account of that which is manifested to faith in the

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[70] <u>ST</u>, 2: 133. See above, Ch.V, pp.229-230.

[71] Cf. Kelsey, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp.91-101; Hamilton, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp. 158-173; and Tavard, <u>op.cit.</u>, pp.169, 172-173.

situation of revelation.[72] What ontology can show, on the other hand, is that the appearance of New Being, in historical and personal form within the area of estrangement, is the only form in which salvation could occur; it can, that is, provide warrants for historical conclusions about the concrete nature of that revelation should it happen. Since, therefore, faith's present experience of transformation through the biblical picture proves that it is the Christ-event which is portrayed there,[73] this experience also implies that in this event all those existential conditions necessary for the transformation of reality were fulfilled. For if, as faith asserts, New Being was present in the man referred to as 'Jesus of Nazareth', then he must have exhibited those characteristics which ontological analysis has shown are essential for the conversion of 'old being' into 'new being'.

It is in this sense that faith can guarantee that the concrete biblical material, if not historically accurate on points of detail, is yet analogous to its subject inasmuch as it depicts a 'personal life' which, though encountering serious temptation, real struggle and the tragic ambiguities of life, lacked any 'mark' of estrangement from God.[74] Precisely the same form of argumentation was used, we remember, to establish the factual element in the gospel accounts of the Crucifixion and Resurrection.[75] Faith cannot ensure the historical truth of those stories which tell of Jesus dying on a cross and rising from the dead; but it can guarantee that underlying these stories

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[72]See above, Ch.II, pp.60-66, 82-85.

[73]See above, Ch.V, p.224.

[74]See above, Ch.IV, pp.150-152; and Ch.V, pp.225-226.

[75]See above, Ch.II, pp.89-93; and Ch.V, pp.215-216.

is the historical fact that the man pointed to by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth' did surrender himself to the finite consequences of existence, and did conquer the death of existential estrangement. This claim is similarly justified by appeal to ontological analysis of what must have been the case for New Being to have entered the temporal order. Since these two sets of stories symbolically express what ontology has shown to be the two essential prerequisites for the transformation of reality, faith's immediate awareness of the power of New Being mediated by the biblical picture constitutes irrefutable evidence of the fact that these requirements were realized in the personal life it portrays. If Christian faith, in other terms, is the experience of being grasped by the power of New Being, then it is analytically true to say that these existential conditions, whatever the specific historical circumstances may have been, were fulfilled in the person whose portrait has evoked the response of faith.[76]

The first, and undoubtedly most problematic, feature of this argument consists in Tillich's view that ontological judgments can warrant historical judgments about the concrete nature of the bearer of New Being. From ontology's utterly general observations about the form of man and his world, our author has here deduced a few, but nevertheless quite definite, criteria of authentic revelation - his assumption being that the knowledge

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[76]This is implied, for example, when Tillich speaks of the factual element in the symbol of the Resurrection:- 'Faith can give certainty only to the victory of the Christ over the ultimate consequence of the existential estrangement to which he subjected himself. And faith can give this certainty because it is itself based on it. Faith is based on the experience of being grasped by the power of the New Being through which the destructive consequences of estrangement are conquered'. (ST, 2: 179 - my emphasis).

gained from contemplating the universal human situation can provide the key for understanding the 'factual content' of the biblical symbols. For example, since ontological analysis has demonstrated that the New Being must be without 'unbelief', hubris or 'concupiscence', and that he must 'suffer and die', such claims are therefore made about the person whose portrait has successfully mediated the power of New Being to the faithful.[77] Equally, since the bearer of the final revelation must become 'completely transparent to the mystery he reveals' and must 'surrender his finitude', so 'in the picture of Jesus as the Christ we have the picture of a man who possesses these qualities...'[78] Yet it is precisely this form of argumentation which brings us to the principal christological difficulty that emerges from Tillich's correlative method. The difficulty is that the concept of New Being, if derived from a study of the universal predicament of man and his quest for salvation, cannot specify that actual historical event in which New Being appeared, for the study of history, dealing as it does with the order of becoming and contingency, is not amenable to discourse in terms of universals. Thus, even if we accept that faith's experience of the power of New Being can guarantee the picture's reference to the historical Christ - and this itself is a highly dubious assumption to which we shall return presently - ontological reflection on what must have been the concrete character of the human source of that power can provide no single historical instance in which the conditions necessary for its creation were

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[77] See ST, 2: 144-145.

[78] ST, 1: 148 (my emphasis).

realized. Here we must agree with Tavard that the main deficiency in Tillich's discussion of 'New Being' is that this concept 'conceived as a universal...can never fully and exclusively be identified with any particular event'.[79]

This criticism, which is certainly one of the most common amongst Tillich's readers, exposes the extreme formlessness of his interpretation of the New Testament picture as a portrait of an 'event in time and space'.[80] That is to say, our author's use of the ontological category of 'New Being' is characterized by a distinct lack of <u>specificness</u> concerning the so-called 'bearer of New Being'. Though faith, it is held, may be able to guarantee the actualization of New Being in <u>a</u> person, it cannot ensure the historicity of any occurrence of which the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, or of any specified individual, was a constituent. On this reasoning, therefore, the notion of 'New Being' has become so generalized that it appears possible for faith to experience its religious transformation by the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ without recourse to any determinate and exclusive claim that any particular man, such as Jesus, was the one and only Christ.[81]

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[79]Tavard, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.172

[80]Cf. Wilfred O. Cross, 'Some Notes on the Ontology of Paul Tillich', <u>Anglican Theological Review</u>, XIV, No.4 (October 1957) pp.297-310; and Thomas E. McCollough, 'The Ontology of Tillich and Biblical Personalism', <u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>, XV, No.3 (September 1962) pp.266-281. A more general, but less critical, discussion of this problem is found in Nels Ferré's article review, 'The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology', <u>Scottish Journal of Theology</u>, XXI, No.2 (June 1968) pp.157-169.

[81]This lends weight to Killen's warning that there is a 'real danger...that some of his (Tillich's) successors may find some other religion just as compatible with his ontology while rejecting the Christ whom he represents'. See R. Allen Killen, <u>The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich</u> (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1956) p.265.

But if that is the case, then this argument not only denies the scriptural assertion that the one whom God has made 'both Lord and Christ' is '<u>this</u> Jesus whom ye crucified';[82] it also impugns those elements of factuality and uniqueness which Tillich himself sought to maintain in his discussion of the 'given' or 'miracle' side of the Christian revelation.[83] For if, as we have said before, he cannot specify the <u>particular</u> individual in whom essential manhood is alleged to have entered existence, if he cannot know of any historical <u>instance</u> in which New Being appeared, then what possible justification can there be for the claim that estrangement has been conquered in '<u>a</u> personal life'?[84] At this point, moreover, we should also ask whether there is not an implicit contradiction between Tillich's emphasis on the incomparable, unrepeatable form of this 'sign-event' and his subsequent derivation of its concrete characteristics from speculative conclusions about the nature of reality as such. For instance, should we not rather say that, inasmuch as this event signifies the advent of a 'new creation', it actually abrogates the ontological status of all prior levels of the created order as it transforms them?[85] Indeed, this suggestion indicates the most obvious fault in Tillich's juxtaposition of philosophical questions and the answers of revelation. It is

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[82]Acts 2: 36 (my emphasis). Quoted by Hamilton, <u>op.cit.</u>, p.161.

[83]See above, Ch.IV, pp.160-164.

[84]See above, p.249.

[85]This is Bonhoeffer's criticism of Tillich's method: 'If revelation is essentially an event brought about by the free act of God, it outbids and supersedes the existential-ontological possibilities of existence'. <u>Act and Being</u>, trans. Bernard Noble, with an Introduction by Ernst Wolf (London: Collins, 1962) p.75.

that his correlative method has here so determined what the 'final revelation' can and cannot be that the skandalon of the gospel message is severely compromised. More exactly, it is that Tillich's conception of this revelation has been so controlled by the exigencies of his ontology that it is no longer compatible with his own notion of the Christian 'paradox' as that which 'contradicts the opinion derived from man's existential predicament and all expectations imaginable on the basis of this predicament'.[86] For if it is ontology that warrants faith's historical judgments about the concrete nature of the Christ-event, then this event has become, in effect, the 'answer' already presupposed in, or anticipated by, man's existential 'questions' apart from revelation. This makes it very hard to accept Tillich's claim that philosophical questions determine only the 'form' of the theological answers, but not their 'content' which is derived from revelation.[87] For surely when Jesus is called the 'bearer of New Being' a quite definite 'content' is thereby ascribed to him - a content wholly governed by ontological analysis of those conditions required for the reunion of the estranged.

From this we may conclude, therefore, that Tillich's analogia imaginis, far from involving a continuity between the

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[86]For similar criticism, see John C. Bennett, 'A Protestant View of Authority in the Church', Theology Digest, XI, No.4 (October 1963) p.212; Gordon D. Kaufman, 'Can a Man Serve Two Masters? - Philosophy and Theology in the Thought of Tillich', Theology Today, XV, No.2 (April 1958) p.64; Hendrik Kraemer, Religion and the Christian Faith (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956) pp.437-439, 445; and Josef Schmitz's comprehensive study, Die apologetische Theologie Paul Tillichs (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1966) p.271.

[87]ST, 1: 72. See above, Ch.II, p.63.

biblical material and the historical manifestation of New Being in Jesus as the Christ, actually consists in no more than a correspondence between faith's picture and our author's own, ontologically derived, conclusions about what the concrete nature of the Christ-event must embody. This suggests in turn that Tillich's ontological interpretation of revelation has resulted in a position directly opposite to that intended. For though seeking to distinguish theology from anthropology, he has yet remained bound to a preconceived philosophical doctrine of man's predicament, from which he has deduced the concrete form in which New Being must appear; and though clearly concerned to uphold the universal validity of those 'concrete and special elements' in the Christian message,[88] his own subsequent use of ontology has not sufficiently safeguarded Christian thought against the substitution of the distinctive historical existence of the Christ for an idealistic notion of what the agent of salvation 'must be like' to effect the transformation of reality. For this reason, Gustave Weigel can still ask,

> Is this an objective explanation of Christianity as it was and as it is, or is it a subjective reconstruction of a historical phenomenon? Does Professor Tillich explain what Christianity is, or does he propose to us what he would like it to be? Subjectivity is a golden word in existentialism, but objectivity has not lost its appeal for the human mind, and more objectivity and less subjectivity is the desideratum of our time.[89]

Not surprisingly, Weigel's charge of subjectivism becomes even more substantial when we move from Tillich's use of ontology to another, and equally questionable, feature of the analogia imaginis, namely, the role assigned to religious experience. Our

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[88] ST, 1: 12

[89] 'Recent Protestant Theology', Theological Studies (Baltimore), 1953, p.576. Quoted by Heywood Thomas, Paul Tillich: An Appraisal, p.194.

author's claim is that the authenticity of the New Testament image as a portrait of the real Christ can be guaranteed by faith's experience of the power of New Being mediated by that portrait. According to him, therefore, the gospel <u>does</u> offer a picture of the actual historical appearance of the Christ to those who <u>are</u> transformed by the power of New Being communicated through it.[90] However, here we must say that this appeal to faith's experience, while it may direct attention to some human psychological state induced by the literary skills of the evangelists, remains totally unsatisfactory as an argument for the historicity of the actual character depicted in the biblical picture. For, remembering Peter Carnley's thesis, it does not follow that an historical judgment is true simply because somebody is convinced it is.[91] A statement such as 'X is certain that E occurred' may be true in so far as it is a statement about the particular, subjective disposition of X when he claims to know of E's occurrence. But the truth of the assertion that X was <u>certain</u> in this respect does not entail that he was <u>correct</u> in his judgment about E, that it did in fact occur. Subjective certainty is not, in other words, the measure of objective truth,

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[90]Given Tillich's earlier criticism of Wilhelm Herrmann (see above, Ch.I, pp.35-36), it is interesting that Herrmann employs a similar argument in his book <u>Faith and Morals</u>, trans. D. Matheson and R. Stewart (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904). On p.236, he writes:- 'One wins confidence if in the personality of Jesus as he himself (the believer) meets with it in the traditional records he experiences that he is met by the revelation of the Spirit which lays compulsion on his inmost nature. From that point onwards we can view with composure all the attempts of historical criticism. For in that experience there has been extinguished any possibility of our regarding the portrait of Jesus as the creation of men who longed for some such revelation of that Spirit'. Van A. Harvey also draws attention to this similarity in <u>The Historian and the Believer</u>, pp.150-151.

[91]See above, pp.271-275.

neither is it a sufficient condition for the truth of an historical claim. In this connection, Moody Smith's remarks are again appropriate:-

> Is not the factor that has given the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ its transforming power faith in it as historical reality rather than its historical reality per se? On the other hand, is it not conceivable that there could be a true portrayal of the reality of the New Being in the form of an imagined picture capable of bringing the New Being into reality, historical reality, in those who allowed themselves to be transformed by it? The fact that transformations of a sort take place by faith in Jesus Christ does not in any way guarantee the historicity of faith's object. Obviously the non-historical or fictional symbols of other religions have had transforming power, and it is not even certain that the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ would completely lose its transforming power if it could be shown to be unhistorical. To argue that such phenomena could not be manifestations of the New Being is only to assert the historic Christian conviction, and it is not clear how such a conviction can be maintained apart from the Christian confession that Jesus is the Christ.92

Notwithstanding Tillich's claim that it is the a priori of faith that its own existence is identical with the actual appearance of New Being within the area of estrangement, no relation of entailment can therefore be said to exist between a man's experience of the 'transforming power of New Being' mediated by the biblical picture and his realization that a concrete historical person is portrayed there. For, following Smith's criticism, one cannot deny that a fictional character may be 'powerful' without being a portrait of an actual individual. Does biography necessarily elicit more response from its readers than a work of the imagination simply because it tells of real events and real people? On the contrary, says John Clayton, 'a fictional creation is often more power-full precisely because it is a composite of characteristics of several individuals or

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92 op.cit., p.138

because it epitomises common human experiences'.[93] The fact, therefore, that the figure of Jesus of Nazareth pictured in the gospels has been sufficiently forceful to transform the attitudes and actions of successive generations of Christian believers does not, in itself, 'guarantee' that this figure was drawn from life. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that the gospels do portray an actual person, and that it 'was this reality, when encountered by the disciples, which created the picture'.[94] But, as we have intimated elsewhere, the claim that a correspondence would exist between a photographic record of Jesus and the concrete biblical material can be upheld only if no historical evidence to the contrary is forthcoming.[95] Were such information discovered, then this material, in so far as it purports to present that 'event in time and space' through which Essential God-Manhood appeared in existence, would have to be declared false and so abandoned, no matter how profound the responses it may continue to evoke.

Indeed, if the analogia imaginis asserts a correspondence between the biblical picture and certain historical facts, should we not go further and say that the discovery of such adverse evidence remains a permanent theoretical possibility? In other words, if faith's experience allegedly 'guarantees' that essential manhood appeared in the person portrayed in the gospels, and that his actual individual characteristics were such as would support the gospels' description of them, then it is hard to see how this experience can abrogate that element of

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[93] op.cit., p.157

[94] ST, 2: 132

[95] See above, pp.264-268.

probability which is, according to Tillich himself, present in every claim to be certain about facts of the past. Even if it were the case that historical knowledge could be reached on the basis of some kind of 'experiential' evidence, our author's own understanding of the epistemological status of historical judgments requires that no historical statement, however it is substantiated, can be absolutely certain because all such statements are contingent. Since these assertions, by definition, refer to something which 'could be this or that', then the logical possibility of their falsification remains, irrespective of how they were originally attained. If faith can infer from its present experience of transformation that the man pictured in the New Testament was the Christ, then this claim, inasmuch as it involves historical claims about the nature of this man's life as a whole, can never be more than probable. Saying this, however, does not mean that Tillich is wrong when he holds that knowledge of revelation cannot be reduced to historical knowledge; but it does indicate that he is mistaken - and mistaken, moreover, in the light of his own remarks about historical probability - when he maintains that the confession 'Jesus is the Christ' transcends 'the alternative, "falsifiable" or "verifiable"...'[96] For if Tillich insists that there is an analogy between the concrete biblical material and the historical actualization of New Being in the personal life signified by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth', then the truth of the kerygmatic witness is conditioned by the historical claim. Admittedly, his theological application of the assertion 'Jesus is the Christ' does not, strictly speaking, involve empirical statements about

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96, 'Interrogation of Paul Tillich', Philosophical Interrogations, p.367

Jesus; but it does nevertheless entail a series of historical (and so corrigible) statements about the man to whom that name points. The saving power mediated to the faithful by the biblical picture does not therefore possess its own certitude, since it is itself dependent on the existential appearance of New Being in a way analogous to scripture's image of it - and that is, logically at least, subject to empirical verification or falsification. For, given the contingency of all descriptive statements, one can assert neither the necessity of the analogy nor that it is necessarily true that such a correspondence exists. Though we may say, therefore, that Tillich is right to emphasize that the risk of faith is not merely historical risk, he is equally wrong to hold that historical risk is in no sense entailed by the risk of faith.

We have already expressed the opinion that if Tillich cannot guarantee the past reality of someone who was actually called 'Jesus of Nazareth', then neither can he guarantee the past existence of the 'fact' pointed to by that name, that is, the 'personal life' in which Essential God-Manhood (or New Being) is alleged to have entered the area of estrangement.[97] But even if we accept, for the moment, that New Being necessarily implies an historical individual as its bearer, does this still allow the analogia imaginis the degree of importance that our author claims for it? For example, given Tillich's theological preoccupation with the state of the Christian - viz., the existential transformation of the faithful - what prevents us from saying that the process of transformation is primary, and the nature of its historical source merely the reflection

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[97] See above, pp.279-280.

of this experience projected back into history? If the analogy can be maintained independently of historical research, can we rule out the possibility that Tillich has inferred from the experience of transformation that the intrinsic properties of the bearer of New Being, as pictured in the biblical narrative, are true (namely, that he did overcome existence in existence)? If, on Tillich's reasoning, every historical detail of the portrait could be false, except that an actual person existed, and if through that portrait we experience the 'transforming power of New Being', can we assume, in other words, that the man depicted in the narrative was in fact the Christ, the one who did overcome the ambiguities of estrangement? Although we may grant for the purposes of this argument that the experience of transformation presupposes an historical source, can we guarantee that the faith we have is distinctly Christian? It is by no means certain that the concrete historical character of the so-called 'bearer of New Being' is commensurate with his transforming effects in us.[98]

At this point, therefore, we must agree with John Clayton when he remarks that Tillich should have remembered his own warning against the danger of subjectivism if the 'expressive' element in art (that is, the 'spiritual power' which comes to expression through artistic forms) is not held in check by other

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[98]Tillich's remarks notwithstanding, one cannot therefore exclude the view that in the analogia imaginis 'experience' does function as the source from which the contents of the biblical picture are derived, and not simply as the 'medium through which they are existentially received' (ST, 1: 48). This inconsistency in Tillich's thought has often been noticed by commentators. See Tavard, op.cit., pp.24-25; Robert C. Johnson, Authority in Protestant Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959) pp.133-134; and Willem F. Zuurdeeg, An Analytical Philosophy of Religion (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959) pp. 156-157.

elements, notably by the empirical 'subject matter' or 'content'.[99] As Clayton continues, the inherent weakness of Tillich's aesthetic model is that expressionism cannot produce 'a criterion by which its product can be checked against that which it allegedly brings to expression'.[100] Indeed, so concerned is Tillich with the 'expressive' function of the biblical image, with faith's experience of the 'power' mediated by it rather than with the external factuality of the occurrence which forms its 'content', that it becomes doubtful whether his interpretation of the portrait as a picture of the Christ-event can ever emerge from the subjectivist circle. For though this account of faith's religious experience may provide an important description of what it is like to think and act as if Jesus were the Christ, of the inner transformation which accompanies faith, it yet remains silent on the crucial question of the portrait's validity; it cannot say, that is, whether the picture on which this faith is based is historically justified or not, whether there has ever existed a being before whom one could legitimately take up such an attitude. Thus, so long as our author founds his concept of the analogia imaginis on the 'expressive' role of the gospel image, on its transmission of the 'power of New Being' to the faithful, and so long as he offers no corroborative historical evidence for the truth of the analogy, it provides a most dubious basis on which to assert a continuity between the New Testament record and a particular historical personality.

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[99] op.cit., pp.162-163. See above, Ch.V, pp.231-237. Clayton tells us that Tillich's paragraph on the ambiguity of the expressive element appears only in the German edition of Systematic Theology. See Systematische Theologie, Bd.III, trans. Renate Albrecht et al. (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1966) pp.90-91.

[100] Ibid., p.163

Reviewing this appraisal of the analogia imaginis, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that Tillich's concept seeks to resolve the problem of correlating subject and object in experience somewhat after the manner of Kant's critical idealism. The 'given' (the 'fact') is known only as it is 'received' by the subject of experience - in this case, the man of faith. It is the subject which here determines the object, not in its being (the Ding-an-sich, the actual ministry and person of Jesus remain unknowable) but, as Cushman puts it, in its being 'what it is known as'.[101] In view of the erosion of historical material by radical biblical criticism, this is the only way the event 'Jesus as the Christ' can be known at all. It is in this sense that the event includes both subject and object. The event of Christ is so enlarged as to encompass not only the career of the man pointed to by the name 'Jesus of Nazareth', but also the life of the community of the faithful. On this line of reasoning, therefore, the historical problem of Christianity is resolved by relocating the empirical basis of faith within the recognizable and appropriable life of the community of the New Being.

But if this is the case, then we may justifiably ask whether christology has not in fact been supplanted by ecclesiology. On Tillich's theory, it would appear that, though ecclesiology does include the 'historical fact' of a personal life in which essential manhood appeared, nevertheless without the church christology is impossible. The interdependence of the factual and receptive elements within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' seems to result in the view that the church is not

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[101] R. E. Cushman, op.cit., p.178 (my emphasis)

merely constitutive of the event but that apart from the church there can be no discussion regarding the verity of the Christ-event. Nothing, it would seem, can be affirmed of the antecedent reality of the 'object' of faith except by means of the availability of the phenomenon, that is, the community established by the experience of 'transforming power'. In this way, the historical problem of Christianity is resolved within a phenomenalistic epistemology.

Christology as ecclesiology is, admittedly, far from Tillich's original intentions; but is it, we may wonder, far from the logical conclusion of his own arguments? If the experience of the 'transforming power of the New Being' provides an 'immediate' certainty, and if it is not 'mediated by conclusions',[102] then it is hard to see how this experiential evidence should necessarily incorporate belief in an historical occurrence, much less assure it. As long as Tillich insists on a correspondence between the historical actualization of the New Being and the kerygmatic witness, then the truth of that correspondence can only be asserted on the basis of an historical claim. Otherwise the continuity between the 'power' mediated through the picture and the 'power' initiated by the concrete manifestation of Essential God-Manhood in existence cannot be affirmed. If the kerygmatic claims about the bearer of New Being cannot, logically at least, be open to historical verification, no necessary connection between the biblical picture and the historical figure portrayed within it can be presumed.[103] Equally, if Tillich

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[102] ST, 2: 131. See above, Ch.V, p.211.

[103] For an interesting article in support of this view, see I. T. Ramsey, 'History and the Gospels: Some Philosophical Reflections', Studia Evangelica, III (Texte und Untersuchungen, 88), Berlin, 1964, pp.201-217.

claims that the kerygma is the result and creation of the historical appearance of undistorted manhood to which it refers, he cannot avoid a search for the empirical truth concerning that 'personal life' through which New Being entered the area of estrangement.

In the first chapter of this thesis, we remarked that Tillich's intention was to immunize the factual basis of Christianity from the radical historical method employed by the biblical critic.[104] Ironically enough, this aim is dependent on our author's desire to guarantee the distinctly historical framework of the Christian faith. But the assertion that Christianity is uniquely historical is devoid of content unless one can specify that place in which something unique happened in history. This must involve an historical claim about the historical figure proclaimed as the Christ by the faithful, namely that in Jesus' own life existential estrangement was overcome. If this is to be held - and we should remember that Tillich himself viewed its denial as 'historically absurd'[105] - and if we are not to surround Christianity with all the dangers attendant on belief in a mere "X" in history, then this fundamental christological claim must be tested in such a way that a continuity between Jesus of Nazareth and the kerygma can be maintained. In other words, some relation must be established between the person named 'Jesus' in the gospels and the person there described as the Christ. For this reason, Tillich's distinction between the dimensions of faith and historical knowledge is not as clear-cut as he assumes. We grant that faith's knowledge of the salvation

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[104] See above, Ch.I, pp.46-47.

[105] ST, 2: 131. See above, Ch.V, p.213.

wrought by Jesus cannot be exhibited simply by the methods of historical research; but faith can claim immunity from such criticism only at the cost of circumventing the material importance of Jesus' earthly ministry. The significance of Jesus for faith cannot be maintained by stressing only the 'thatness' of Jesus' existence independently of the special nature of his work and his own attitude toward it. Yet it is precisely this problem of the continuity between the career of Jesus and the biblical picture which pushes before us the efforts of gospel research to make intelligible the messianic interpretation which is ascribed to Jesus' life and teaching. And to this extent, the theoretical risk remains that the biblical critic may find the historical evidence for such an interpretation either to be inconclusive, inadequate, or indeed, non-existent.

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