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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

FACULTY OF DIVINITY

DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

"THE WORD OF THE CROSS"

Thesis presented by

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PREFACE

This dissertation is the outcome of the pressing need felt by the writer in the course of the pastoral ministry to try to relate the challenges and insights of the contemporary theological ferment to the heart of the Christian message, the word of the Cross. Such is the pace of theological development that the teaching received less than twenty years ago, (teaching that was then abreast of the times and by no means obscurantist), has proved to be inadequate both with regard to one's own growth in experience and understanding, and to the need for a relevant preaching of the Cross at a time when many are perplexed by some of the catch-phrases of what is coming to be known as the 'new theology' and the spread of secularist attitudes into all areas of life. The study and reflection involved in the preparation of the dissertation have provided an opportunity for the writer, so to speak, to pause for breath and to take stock of the situation.

That the exercise has been found to be so valuable and personally rewarding is due in large measure to the friendly encouragement and the wise and scholarly guidance of his supervisor, Professor R.Gregor Smith, to whom the writer wishes to express his enduring sense of gratitude.

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INTRODUCTION

When Joseph of Arimathaea "rolled a stone against the door of the tomb" (Mark 15:46), it must have seemed that another episode in the tragic story of man's cruelty and corruption, his perversity and pride, his folly and his fear, had come to an end. Yet within a few weeks the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. "crucified under Pontius Pilate", were openly proclaiming that God had "raised him to life again, setting him free from the pangs of death". (Acts 2:24, N.E.B.). Associated with this affirmation was the call to "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38, N.E.B.). Clearly it was the unshakable conviction of St. Peter that the happenings in Jerusalem at the time of the recent Passover festival, involving Jesus of Nazareth, were of no ordinary significance. Although every historical event is in a real sense unique in its relation to all other events, the disciples of Jesus were utterly convinced that what had taken place could only be rightly understood as a decisive manifestation of God's love and power which radically changed the situation of every man. The "Easter-Event" of Crucifixion and Resurrection marks the birth of the Christian Church, which has constantly acknowledged the decisive, normative significance

Of the Event for its existence and its mission.

It is to this particular, contingent happening that the whole New Testament bears witness. Ebeling writes, "When Christian faith speaks about its basis, it points with monotonous regularity to the crucified Jesus, of whom it is known that he is risen." (1). Every New Testament author would undoubtedly confirm St. Paul's understanding of the kerygma as centred on the proclamation of Christ "nailed to the Cross". (1 Cor. 1:22, N.E.B.). "First and foremost, I handed on to you the facts which had been imparted to me: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised to life on the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, and afterwards to the Twelve". (1 Cor. 15:3-5, N.E.B.).

(NOTE. Vincent Taylor observes in "<u>The Cross of</u> <u>Christ</u>" (2), that "St. Paul alone uses the phrase 'the death of Christ' or 'His death', and, apart from 'the Cross' in Heb.12:2, he is the only New Testament writer to speak of 'the Cross of Christ.' ".

This fact has sometimes been taken to imply that the emphasis on the death of Jesus is peculiarly Pauline, - that the <u>'theologia crucis</u>' is a Pauline invention. Some scholars lay considerable stress upon the differences between the Pauline

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and the Johannine interpretations of the Christ-event.

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R.Bultmann, for example, writes:-

"Though for Paul the incarnation of Christ is a part of the total salvation-occurrence, for John it is the decisive salvation-event. While for Paul the incarnation is secondary to his death in importance, one might say that the reverse is true of John: the death is subordinate to the incarnation. But on closer inspection it turns out that incarnation and death constitute a unity as the coming (incarnation) and the going (death) of the Son of God. But within that unity the centre of gravity is not the <u>death</u>, as it is in Paul. In John, Jesus' death has no pre-eminent importance for salvation". (3).

Nevertheless, Bultmann himself tends to reduce the real significance of the differences which exist between Paul and John when he goes on to say, "John's passion narrative shows us Jesus as not really <u>suffering</u> death but <u>choosing</u> it - not as the passive victim but as the active conqueror." (op.cit. p.53). The theme of active obedience by which Jesus overcame the forces of evil is not lacking in Paul: cf. Phil. 2:8, Col. 2:15. And on the basis of such words as "... the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin". (1 John 1:7), and "Look,... there is the Lamb of God; it is he who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29 N.E.B.), it is not unreasonable to claim that for John the supreme manifestation of the divine love is the Cross. T.W.Manson is probably nearer the truth when he regards the differences between Paul and John as mainly differences of "selection and emphasis" rather than as a difference of "centre of gravity". (4)).

But not only was the Event proclaimed as the heart and centre of the Church's message: it was also remembered in the worship of the Church in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The occasion has always been "in remembrance of Him".

(NOTE. Considerable research, both historical and theological, has been given in recent times to the origins of the Lord's Supper and its meaning in the life of the primitive Church. In <u>"Essays on the Lord's Supper</u>"(5), Cullmann notes the duality which has long been observed in primitive conceptions of the Eucharist. He writes,

> "On the one hand there is the idea of a meal celebrated in the happy and joyful expectation of the return of Christ, without any reference whatsoever to his death; and on the other there is the Lord's Supper, in the form commended by St. Paul which was destined in the course of time to prevail, i.e. a meal concerned above all to proclaim the Lord's death in remembrance of the Last Supper and of the words that Jesus uttered on that occasion." (op. cit. p.6).

Cullmann relates the Eucharist more particularly to the joyful recollection of the Resurrection appearances, and argues that St. Paul established the connection between the Lord's Supper and the death of Christ. (op. cit. pp. 17-20). He concludes

that

"...the new elements introduced by St. Paul were so exclusively emphasized that the connection with

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the Eucharist of the early Christians 'breaking bread' was lost. The Lord's Supper was thus deprived of certain religious meanings of the greatest importance. The idea of the joyful communion of the faithful with the Risen Christ, and through Him, with the others around the table was somewhat relegated to the background as a consequence of too exclusive an attachment of Christ's presence to the 'elements' of bread and wine offered for the remission of sins." (<u>op.cit</u>. <u>p.22</u>.)

Whatever one's judgment of this view may be, it is easy to understand that the Supper may at some place and time have had each of these meanings because of the intimate connection between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. As the central act of the Church's worship it was inevitable that it should embody a recognition of both elements in the Church's gospel.

E.Kasemann in his essay on the Pauline doctrine of the Lord's Supper in <u>"Essays on New Testament Themes</u>"(6), finds little justification for regarding the Lord's Supper as a memorial meal, emphasizing that the Pauline doctrine " must be interpreted in the light of his dominant theme- the Body of Christ", and the believer's incorporation into that Body through the gift of the <u>pneuma</u>. (<u>op. cit. p.111</u>). With reference to the Words of Institution he writes,

> "...the command to repeat the actions does not merely bind the community to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly and thus to keep alive in a

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literalistic way the meaning of the death of Jesus, but places upon it at the same time the obligation to proclaim the redemptive meaning of this death." (op.cit. p.121).

Kasemann finds historical and theological

significance in the disparity between the Words of Institution

over the bread and those over the cup.

"It is not merely a question of a different form of words. According to the first formula, the sacramental gift is participation in the death of Jesus, that is, in his crucified body; according to the second formula the sacramental gift is participation in the new <u>diatheke</u>."(op. cit.p.130). Kasemann goes on to say, "The new diatheke is certainly grounded in the death of Jesus; but as its content is the lordship of the Christ, he who partakes of the diatheke partakes at the same time of the Kyrios, that is of Jesus in his exalted state. The disparity between the two formulae of Institution thus consists in the fact that the sacramental gift is described in the first as participation in the crucified body, that is, in the death of Jesus; in the second as participation in the kingdom of the exalted Lord. These are not mutually contradictory, for Paul never separates the Cross of Jesus from his exaltation and presents the death of Jesus as the foundation of his lordship." (op.cit. p.131).

Kasemann clearly understands the Lord's Supper as a participation in both the death and the exaltation of the Christ. It was thus from the beginning an occasion for recalling Jesus.).

This, of course, does not reduce the Lord's Supper to a simple meal in memory of an heroic and exemplary leader. Yet in any participation in the Eucharist there is the devoted remembrance of the crucified Christ as well as the joyous experience of the exalted <u>Kyrios</u>. And through the centuries

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the Lord's Supper has linked believers in an unbroken chain of celebration with those who first saw the Lord. Whether before the magnificent high altar of a cathedral, or in the midst of a clandestine gathering of persecuted Christians celebrating the sacrament deep in the country with a rude stone as a table; whether in the company of the high born and educated or with the lowly and illiterate, the perceptive believer has in the eucharistic worship of the Church, "discerned the Lord's Body".

In the course of the history of Christian era the Cross itself has become the sign of Christianity. Although it has been ridiculed as a symbol of pathological infantilism, debased into a symbol of racial prejudice and corrupted to inspire deeds of violence and cruelty, it still remains as a unique symbol of love and sacrifice. Futhermore, the Passion and Crucifixion have inspired some of the most sensitive works of art and literature.

Notwithstanding, however, the centrality of the "word of the Cross" in the Christian proclamation; the prominent place of the Lord's Supper with its undeniable association with the death of Jesus, in the liturgical tradition of the Church; and in spite of the devotion which the Crucifixion has inspired in individual believers, there is a

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remarkable diversity of theological interpretation concerning the meaning of the death of Jesus. Although the Cross has become the universal symbol of the Christian faith, the length and breadth and height and depth of what it actually symbolises still eludes agreed theological definition. When the questions are pressed; How was the death of Jesus related to the human situation? How could a single event in history affect the universal life of mankind? What happened between God and man on the Cross?, then conflicting voices are heard and controversy may become intense. And after twenty centuries of Christian preaching, teaching, worship and life, we seem to be no nearer to reaching a resolution of the diverse shades of theological emphasis. Before dismissing this fact as a sign of theological ineptitude we may well give deeper consideration to the phenomenon. Might it not be that the absence of a firm doctrinal formulation of the significance of the Cross serves to reveal its meaning more profoundly than a well-defined 4 theological statement?. Does it not suggest that here we are inescapably confronted with something which concerns man's relation to God at the deepest levels of his existence?. In the Christ-event man finds himself at the point where his understanding of God and his self-understanding interlock. At this ultimately undefinable point no externally authoritative

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intellectual statements can serve to express a reality which totally involves the whole individual. The absence of an agreed formula of belief constantly reminds us that Christianity has at its heart a Person rather than a creed or a code. Referring to the subjective element in atonement, Tillich writes,

> "This is why the Church instinctively refused to state the doctrine of atonement in definite, dogmatic terms, as in the case of the Christological dogma". (7)

John Knox speaks of the death of Christ

"as a moment of strange and awful pregnancy, significant beyond our understanding, pointing us towards heights incalculably beyond our reach and making us aware of depths in our existence which we know we shall never sound or probe". (8).

Has theology then nothing to say on the death of Christ?. Must we be content to leave the atonement as an infinite mystery beyond the power of thought to comprehend?. Should the preaching on Good Friday be confined to a simple repetition of the gospel passion-narratives?. Must we leave the individual believer to a mystical contemplation of a crucifix or a cross?. These questions admit of no simple answer. In fact it may well be that the sound of theological disputation about the death of Jesus has drowned the inner witness of the Holy Spirit in the minds of many. The conflict of theories of the Atonement, giving rise to innumerable questions, may hide the truth that at

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the heart of the Christ-event is One who asks a question of us. It was, however, Jesus himself who commanded us to love the Lord our God with our minds, and no premium is placed on ignorance in the kingdom of God. In fulfilling its appointed task to preach the gospel to every creature the early Church was compelled to find the terms and symbols which would most effectively assist both the proclaiming and the hearing of the "word of the Cross".

(NOTE. We have already noted the difference in emphasis and selection between the theology of Paul and that of John. This cannot be accounted for simply by referring to a difference in individual insight into the meaning of the Christevent. Both men were attempting to relate the significance of the Christ to the existence of their readers, which is of the essence of genuine preaching. It is therefore somewhat misleading for T.F.Torrance to write,

> "In Jesus Christ the Truth of God has already been made relevant to man and his need, and therefore does not need to be made relevant by us". (9).

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We may agree that God has acted in Jesus Christ in a way relevant to the human predicament. But this action cannot be proclaimed in isolation from the religious, cultural and social situation of the particular age in which the gospel is being preached. In this sense, the gospel must still be made relevant.

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Unless this is done theology becomes petrified into a mass of dogmas to which intellectual assent is required as the basis of salvation.).

The task of theology remains one of interpretation and mediation.

"The task of theology is mediation, mediation between the eternal criterion of truth as it is manifest in the picture of Jesus as the Christ and the changing experiences of individuals and groups, their varying questions and their categories of perceiving reality". (10).

It is neither honest nor just to dismiss the questions as symptoms of the depravity of man, seeking ever and again to hide himself from the Word of God which would demolish "the intellectual and moral pride of reason". (11). The Cross will no doubt remain a stumbling block to man's confidence in his ability to unravel all mysteries and to solve all problems. Theology has no cause to reduce the gospel to a comfortable and inoffensive platitude. Yet theology must always be concerned to show where the scandal of the Cross really lies.

This task of interpretation and mediation is one of the most urgent theological burdens of the present time, when the attitude of doubt or opposition to Christianity is widespread. The discontent with traditional religious idiom and imagery is not confined to those who aggressively oppose the Christian faith. It must surely be recognised as a genuine expression

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of an ultimate concern among many who are searching for a vital faith, but who are convinced that submission to authoritarian dogmas offers no answer to their predicament. There is the danger that in attempting to fulfil a mediating function theology will become guilty of a self-surrendering adaptation to the idolatries of the age. A similarly disastrous reaction to the demands of the historical situation would be to endeavour to re-assert an external religious orthodoxy. There are those who find in confident dogmatic assertions a secure foundation for their lives, but it is a foundation gained at the price of a neurotic flight from reality.

> "Only a courageous participation in the 'situation', that is, in all the various cultural forms which express modern man's interpretation of his existence, can overcome the present oscillation of kerygmatic theology between the freedom implied in the genuine kerygma and its orthodox fixation. In other words, kerygmatic theology needs apologetic theology for its completion". (12)

It is no longer possible, for example, for theologians to regard the world known in experience as merely a veil for deeper realities 'beyond' or 'behind' it, or to treat the created universe as if it were only a stage for the drama of redemption. Christ is then inevitably portrayed as a divine intruder from another world,

"whose brief and sudden appearance in this world

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confers upon it what little significance its history may have". (13).

What are the meaningful concepts with which we may communicate the word of the Cross to this generation?. We must inquire whether the traditional concepts, rooted in an ancient sacrificial system, a society in which slavery was an accepted institution, and a world view which incorporated unquestioning belief in a spiritual realm of evil forces which held man captive, can serve to confront men existentially with the challenge and the promise of the Cross. Paul Tillich declares that in Protestantism the doctrine of atonement in terms of substitutional suffering is more or less dead. He did not develop a new doctrine of the Atonement in his '<u>Systematic</u> <u>Theology</u>' because he believed that we are in a transition period concerning a symbol which has almost died and probably cannot be restored in the original sense. (14).

It is the purpose of this dissertation to consider some recent developments in theological thought and to examine their bearing upon our understanding of the Cross. We begin by referring to some contemporary writing on the fundamental theological question, the question of God.

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<u> 0 N E</u>

ON THE BEING AND NATURE OF GOD

A. The Challenge of Empirical Science and Linguistic Analysis.

"The basic theological question", writes Paul Tillich, "is the question of God". (1). "We are standing", says John Macquarrie. "only at the beginning of the revolution in the idea of God." (2). These two statements clearly indicate a salient feature of contemporary theological and philosophical discussion. The question of God refuses to be ignored, but has become increasingly problematical. A contributing factor is the breakdown of traditional God-language. Basic presuppositions and ideas are no longer shared to allow intelligible discourse. In the confused. revolutionary situation, Christian theologians are accused of atheism and atheists are being pronounced essentially religious persons. On the one hand the school of analytic philosophers have subjected theological assertions to the cold light of linguistic analysis and have dismissed them as nonsensical. On the other hand, theologians wrestling with the problem of using the term 'God' meaningfully, have shown that the plain man's idea of God is primitive and inadequate. It is even possible for some theological writers to speak with assurance about the 'death of God', - a term which has given its name to a contemporary movement in Protestant theology. (3).

The deepest roots of linguistic analysis lie in the tradition of British empirical philosophy, itself influenced by empirical science, with its established procedures of observation, experiment and verification. To assert that something exists is to affirm that it is empirically observable, or that its existence has empirically observable consequences. The existence of the planet Pluto, for example, was predicted on the basis of observable variations in the motion of the outer planets. It has come to be accepted that the reliability of belief can be determined only by an appeal to evidence which is in principle at least, open to all observers. This immediately raises considerable difficulties for those who affirm belief in the existence of God, for there is no empirical evidence to be had The religious person may well feel disturbed. to support it. He lives his life in an environment which is dominated by the attitudes and the consequences of empirical science. How can his religious beliefs be related to the attitude and outlook which dominates his life for six days of the week?. The men who really inspire his awe and wonder are the scientists and technologists, the builders of tomorrow's world. They are looked to for help in time of need, they are the 'powers' to whom he looks for the control of nature, the conquest of poverty and hunger, the cure of disease and the amelioration of distress.

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They commend themselves to him by the signs they gave wrought, and the fulfilment of predictions makes them worthy of his dependence. Referring to our faith in science, H. Richard Niebuhr writes.

> "Our beliefs about atoms and their nuclei, about electrons, protons, and stranger particles, about fusion and fission, viruses and macromolecules, the galaxies and the speed of light, the curvature of space and gamma-rays, hormones and vitamins, the localization of functions in the brain and the presence of complexes in the sub-conscious, the functions of the liver and the activities of the ductless glands- these seem to excel in variety, complexity, and remoteness from either personal experience or ratiocination all that earlier man believed about angels, demons, miracles, saints, sacraments, relics, hell and heaven." (4).

Seeing signs and wonders on every hand, modern man places his confidence in those who perform them, and, as of old, he is much more stimulated by the wonder-worker than he is by the seer and the prophet. Nevertheless, according to surveys of mass opinion, the majority of people, at least in England, affirm a belief in God. The content of that belief, however, appears to be meagre and nebulous, indicating rather a nostalgic religiosity than a living, articulate faith.

Yet in spite of the advances and undoubted benefits of empirical science, man remains subject to irrational fears, and continues to be motivated by inchoate and contradictory beliefs. We may observe a revival of supernaturalism in popular

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religion, the fascination of the occult, and the emergence of an ambivalent attitude toward science.

The thoughtful religious person may be well aware of the idolatrous admiration which science tends to inspire, and he may continue to affirm his belief in God, but he is at the same time conscious that for some reason the word 'God' tends to arouse in his mind the image of a crumbling idol. Without perhaps having heard of linguistic analysis he is nonetheless painfully aware of his uncertainty in using the term 'God'. We must now proceed to inquire into the method of linguistic analysis and try to evaluate its significance with reference to religious language.

An admirable attempt to understand the Gospel in the light of linguistic analysis has been made by Paul van Buren in "The Secular Meaning of the Gospel" (5). He writes,

> "The problem of the Gospel in a secular age is a problem of the logic of its apparently meaningless language, and linguistic analysis will give us help in clarifying it." (op.cit. p.84).

He rejects the attempt of existential theologians to reach a solution by a non-objective use of the word 'God'. This is no help at all since their use of the word allows of no verification and therefore remains meaningless.

"The empiricist in us finds the heart of the difficulty not in what is said about God, but in the very

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talking about God at all." (op.cit. p.84). "The problem now is that the word 'God' is dead". (op.cit. p.103).

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If the key word of theology is now a valueless coin, then what is left?. van Buren turns first of all to a suggestion of R.M.Hare that everyone has a set of basic presuppositions about himself and his world, a 'blik', which has not been gained by a process of logical deduction. The Christian's 'blik' is a

> "an orientation, a commitment, to see the world in a certain way, and a way of life following inevitably upon this orientation." (op.cit. p 87).

Thus it is possible, on Hare's suggestion, for a Christian to live meaningfully without the support of a theistic faith. The Christian is one whose 'blik' finds its definition in Jesus of Nazareth.

van Buren discusses other attempts to analyse the language of faith without recourse to the word 'God'. R.B. Braithwaite, for example, finds the significance of religious assertions in their use as guides to conduct. (6). As guides they may be supported by a doctrinal story which could help the Christian live according to Christian moral principles. The stories need not correspond to empirical fact, but since behaviour is determined not only by intellectual considerations but also by emotional factors, the stories may strengthen and -20-

confirm the intention in the mind of the believer to act in accord with his moral principles.

Although van Buren is certain that "a straightforward use of the word 'God' must be abandoned", (op.cit.p.100), the language of faith still has meaning as the language of one whose behaviour is dominated by the Christian 'blik'. The language refers not to a transcendent Being, whether or not conceived as an object, but to the way of life or the authentic existence of one for whom "Jesus has become his point of orientation". (op.cit.p.142). It is language which is appropriate to situations in which the individual is gripped by new insights which involve commitment and action. He sums up his argument in these words;

> "Statements of faith are to be interpreted by means of the modified verification principle, as statements which express, describe, or command a particular way of seeing the world, other men and oneself, and the way of life appropriate to such a perspective." (op.cit. p.156). The norm is "the series of events to which the New Testament documents testify centering in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth." (<u>ibid</u>.)

Such statements are validated by the conduct of the one who makes the statements. Christian faith, then, consists of a single, complete orientation to the whole world and this orientation is that of a life lived in freedom and love for men, which has its norm in the history of Jesus of Nazareth. Now this freedom of Jesus, and his love for men is shown by the Easter faith to be contagious. Hence the Christian is one who has become free with a measure of the freedom which had been Jesus' during his life. And

> "... for those for whom the freedom of Jesus is contagious, who have been so touched and claimed by him, that he has become the criterion of their understanding of themselves, other men, and the world, there is but one 'Lord': Jesus of Nazareth. Since there is no 'Father' to be found apart from him, and since his 'Father' can only be found in him, the New Testament... gives its answer to the question of God by pointing to the man Jesus. Whatever men were looking for in looking for 'God' is to be found by finding Jesus of Nazareth". (op.cit.p.147).

van Buren recognises that Christianity is here reduced to "a historical, intentional, and ethical dimension". (op.cit.p.197). But he argues that in a secular age dominated by the empirical outlook, nothing beyond this makes any sense.

> "Although we have admitted that our interpretation represents a reduction of Christian faith to its historical and ethical dimensions, we would also claim that we have left nothing essential behind". (op.cit. pp.199-200).

> > С

We cannot but be impressed by the brilliance and the force with which van Buren develops his argument. Yet for a number of reasons it must be judged inadequate. In the first place, we are, in the end, back with a liberal nineteenth century picture of Jesus as the ideal man, but understood now in terms of the current conception of the ideal, namely, "the

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genuinely free man", "the man for others". van Buren no doubt intends to avoid the pitfall of regarding Jesus as a mere example by speaking of the contagion of his freedom and love. But it is not at all clear in what way this really alters the situation. The saints and martyrs of the Church have indeed been inspiring examples of faith, love and courage and we may quite properly speak of the contagion of these qualities. So contagious have these qualities been that on occasion men have emulated them even to the point of death. Yet we are immediately aware that the impact of Jesus' life is of a quite different order. The disciples did not simply "tell the story of a free man who had set them free", (op. cit.p.134): they worshipped him. Not only had they seen Jesus in a new way- they had also seen God in a new way. And their worship was an acknowledgement that Jesus' life and the decision concerning their own lives to which Jesus had led them, was somehow grounded in the reality of God.

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Secondly, the reduction of the Christian faith to its historical and ethical dimensions leaves us with no more than a Christian humanism, with the emphasis on the humanism. van Buren has avoided the kerygma, with its eschatological demand for decision between faith and unbelief. The historical and ethical elements in the primitive Christian preaching were secondary to the proclamation of a kairos. Kasemann writes,

"The significance of Jesus for faith was so profound that even in the very earliest days it almost entirely swallowed up his earthly history". (7)

Now, of course, the question remains whether it is necessary to speak of God even in this kairos-situation. Yet it is not unimportant that in attempting to express the Gospel entirely within the limits prescribed by an empirical approach, van Buren ignores what is in fact the dominant feature of the kerygma, namely, its eschatological questioning of our existence and its call to decision. There is something more here than the resolve to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the supreme ethical example.

We turn now to consider the question of objectivity in relation to both science and theology, taking as examples of opposing points of view some recent writing of the scientist, John Wren-Lewis, and of T.F.Torrance.

Torrance vigorously argues for the "implacable objectivity" of God over against "our own subjective states and self-expressions" in the collection of papers and essays published under the title, "Theology in Reconstruction". (8).

> "The basic problem that has been raised again in our time is the relation of language to being". (op.cit. p.18).

In the realm of science the question concerns the relationship between nature it self and our understanding of nature gained

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from observation and experiment. Torrance takes issue with Mr John Wren-Lewis who dismisses as a paranoid fantasy the notion that the world known in experience is only a veil for deeper realities beyond or behind it, and that the object of all human efforts, whether scientific, artistic or religious, is to penetrate beyond the veil as far as possible. According to Wren-Lewis, the technologist, concerned with science as a tool for the transformation of nature for the enrichment of human experience, is the purest example of scientific activity- in fact is the fulfilment of the scientific revolution. Wren-Lewis writes.

> "... the classical approach to the teaching of science allows even some scientists- and at least one distinguished philosopher of science, Professor K.R. Popper- to go on thinking of scientific theories as 'explanations of phenomena' in which the gods and spiritual forces of occult tradition are simply replaced by quanta, force-fields and the like, whereas a proper emphasis on method would make it clear that the modern theories are never more than models to suggest new lines of practical action, and therefore capable of being discarded at any time in favour of radically new models in a way which would be impossible if they were attempts to express the hidden truth behind phenomena. Experimental science succeeds by finding truth in experience, in action, and this is utterly incompatible with the traditional outlook on the world, both logically and psychologically". (9).

Speaking of freud's diagnosis of religion as "the universal neurosis of humanity", Wren-Lewis writes,

"He (Freud) was referring to the practical discovery, verified again and again in actual psychological analysis, that when people try to order their lives

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by constant reference to hidden realities beyond experience or by fitting into some supposed general pattern of things, they are always in fact trying to escape from the full impact of experience itself and from the responsibility of taking a definite, creative stand of their own." (op.cit.p.28).

Wren-Lewis discerns a close kinship between the prophetic

insights of the Old Testament and the new outlook of experi-

mental science.

"The whole biblical prophetic tradition was based upon the commandment forbidding 'graven images' of God This makes sense only if the purpose of the commandment was to prevent the idea of God, and any descriptive images associated with it, from being referred to hypothetical occult realities. An idol is an image or an idea to which people are compulsively attached, and such compulsion comes about as soon as the image or the idea is regarded as the only way we have of knowing a supreme reality beyond experience. The prophets could use their anthropomorphic images freely without any such danger of taking them too seriously because, and only because, they used them in the same kind of way as the modern scientist uses his models, namely, to refer to reality that is directly accessible in common experience for the images to be checked against." (op.cit. p.34. Italics authors)

In this view, any order in nature is that imposed by the observer or scientific experimenter who is concerned not to penetrate the veil, but to discover the ways in which nature may serve the needs of man. (cf. Genesis 1 :28, Psalm 8 :6).

Torrance argues the existence of an objective reality which is fundamentally independent of the observer and which cannot be grasped or understood in statements of human

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need or concern. The rigorous approach of pure science respects the nature of what it investigates. Scientific thinking is

> "...thinking that is obedient to its proper object. thinking which follows the clues supplied to it by the object itself, and therefore thinking which develops special modes of inquiry and proof appropriate to the nature of that object. Thus the scientist is not free to think what he likes. He is bound to his proper object and compelled to think of it in accordance with its own nature as it becomes revealed under his questioning." (10). Torrance recognises that "all human knowledge and not least scientific knowledge is reached through a compromise between thought and being", but denies that this "entitles us to draw the conclusion that it is we human beings who impart order to nature or rationality to the universe. There would be no science at all if we were not up against an implacably objective rationality in things independent of any and all of us." (op.cit. p.276).

It is, however, with the theological conclusions which Torrance draws that we are particularly concerned. He sees in contemporary existentialism and anthropocentric theology a retrograde movement which fails because it is unable to distinguish objective realities from our own subjective states, or to distinguish God from ourselves.

> "Knowledge of God is in accordance with his nature, that is, in accordance with grace and therefore takes its rise from God's <u>action</u> in revealing himself and reconciling us to himself in Jesus Christ." (<u>op.cit.p.26</u>. Italics author's).

Although we must recognise a measure of impropriety in all

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human language of God, and therefore must ever be ready to

call a halt in our speaking of him, yet we must

"...be ready at the same time to let the human speech used by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures point far beyond itself to the sheer reality and glory of God who alone can bear witness of himself and create in us, beyond any capacity of our own to achieve it, genuine knowledge of God." (op.cit.p.31).

Knowledge of God is possible only upon the basis of subjecting ourselves to the pattern of his own self-communication to us, namely in the Incarnation. Herein lies the logic of the Nicaean formulation of the homoousion.

> "Apart from the homoousion there is no real and objective connection between our human knowing and speaking of God, and God himself in his own reality and nature." (op.cit.p.39). The final authority of the Apostles is categorically affirmed. "It is not given to anyone else to receive the Word directly from Christ and to translate it into Word about Christ in such a way that through their witness the whole historical Church may be directed and determined in knowledge of Christ and of God through him." (op.cit.p43). The whole body of doctrine reposes upon "the foundation once and for all laid in the Apostles", and the understanding of the Church must develop under the power of "the objective rationality of the Truth that shines forth upon us from that foundation." (op.cit. p.45).

In a paper on the problem of theological statement today, Torrance refers to the paradeigmatic nature of theological statements. They employ images or representations (<u>paradeigmata</u>) taken from the visible or tangible world to point out divine

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realities that cannot be simply reduced to words.

"The paradeigmata point ostensibly to divine realities beyond us, and necessarily fall far short of them. They are not for that reason false or invalid, provided that they are economically rooted in God's own acts of self-communication and condescension and governed by them". (op.cit. p.51).

It is upon the basis of the Incarnation and the <u>homoousion</u> that God has revealed himself and made possible true knowledge on our part.

> "Everything depends on the fact that the essential images of God which are mediated to us in and through Jesus Christ are the images of One who is consubstantial with the Godhead". (op.cit. p.51-2).

The paradeigmata are by no means to be identified with ontic structures in the Being of God, but,

"they are the media through which we allow objective reality to impinge upon us and bring us under the command of its inherent rationality". (<u>op.cit.p.54</u>).

It is a radical mistake to fail to understand language as a transparent medium through which we allow the objective realities to show through. We may admit, with Heidegger, a damaged relation of language to being. But this

"is no ground for some interpretation of language in detachment from its objective reference". (op.cit.p.57).

We cannot discard the objective framework of biblical and theological statements as merely an objectifying form of thought. Torrance detects in the problem of demythologising and the validity of God-language a sinful attempt to transpose

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the difficulty in theological statements from the nature of the fact that confronts us in the Being and saving activities of God in Jesus Christ, to the words that are used to speak about it. These are subterfuges behind which man in his sinful claim to autonomy seeks to hide himself from the objective Word of God.

> "It is in him (Jesus Christ) that we are confronted with the ultimate and obdurate objectivity of the Word and Truth of God which refuses to be domesticated to our subjectivity, or even our reason". (op.cit. p.69)

Knowledge of God in accordance with his own essence is therefore possible only on his own terms, to which man must submit himself.

> "Knowledge of God, like all true knowledge, is determined by the nature of what is known". (op.cit. p.86)

God reveals himself in the Word, which reaches us from the other side of creaturely being, and proceeds out of the very essence of God.

> "We do not cognize the Truth of God through our own artificial fabrications, that is, through images of our own forming, but only through modes of knowing imposed on us from the nature of God and from his own self-manifestation through the Word". (op.cit.p.90)

It is the action of the Holy Spirit which enables us effectively to relate our language to the divine Being.

"It is the Spirit who provides transparence in our

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knowledge and language of God." (<u>op.cit. p.93</u>).The Spirit "makes the content of what is revealed burst through the forms employed so that our acts of cognition are formed from beyond us by the reality disclosed in the very act of disclosure." (op.cit.p.94)

The Holy Spirit is the living divine action through which our language forms and images, when appropriated for reference to the Word, are made transparent to the objective reality of God. In this action our forms of thought and speech are opened up and reshaped from an objective ground in God.

> "It is in and through this action of the Spirit of God that we learn to distinguish the objective Reality of God himself from our own subjective states and conditions." (<u>op.cit.p. 96</u>)

Torrance continues his attack on what he calls the "revulsion from objectivity" in so much contemporary theology in a final chapter entitled "A New Reformation?". It is seen as

"an alarming sign of irrational and indeed mental disorder in the life and soul of the Church". (<u>op.cit</u>. p.271).

Despite his repudiation of the theological attitude of such writers as Bultmann and Tillich, Torrance believes that a new Reformation is upon us through a revival of the "hard and scientific thinking of pure theology". Following Francis Bacon, Torrance affirms that,

> "we have to give to nature what is nature's and to faith what is faith's: we study the books of nature

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in accordance with the nature of nature, and the books of God in accordance with the nature of God who discloses himself to us through them Thus natural science is released from the domination of a rational theology and positive theology is released from distortion through a so-called natural theology". $(\underline{op.cit.pp.273-4}).$

Pure science and pure theology have their differing frames of reference and only mischief can follow from confusing the two, but the same rigorous principles of objectivity apply to both. In the field of theology the way of understanding lies in a

> "rigorous and disciplined obedience to the objective reality of the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ". (<u>op.cit. p.283</u>).

We may indeed wonder whether there is any possibility of reconciling the views of Wren-Lewis and T.F.Torrance. Are their approaches mutually exclusive? Do the doctrines of the Church express "objective reality", or is Christianity simply a way of life arising from a disclosure of the possibilities of existence in Jesus of Nazareth? In its extreme form the argument of Wren-Lewis ultimately reduces itself to an ethic or a religious atheism. He struggles to avoid this consequence by speaking of the Genesis-faith in man's ability to exercise dominion over nature as the basis for his continuing scientific and technological endeavour,

"for without it I think humanism will inevitably collapse in despair". (11).

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We need a faith that God who is the "Ground of Love" has begun the work of "freeing mankind from bondage so that the whole universe may be raised into the kingdom of love". (op.cit, p.44). We must ask why this notion of the "Ground of Love" is accepted as the basis for a positive existence. Wren-Lewis has unwittingly recognised the reality of an unconditional claim which is not to be identified with the observed facts.

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On the other hand, Torrance's forthright defence of what he believes to be the essence of traditional dogma ignores the assured fruits of historical research. It will not do to infer that the work of scholars with the ability and integrity of Bultmann, for example, merely reflects the efforts of sinful man with his invincible self-assurance to close his ears to the objective Word of God. Furthermore Torrance overlooks the extent to which his justified admission that knowledge is a compromise between thought and being weakens the force of his assertions. It is simply not possible on this basis to be dogmatic with regard to the nature of objective reality. The subjective element in understanding carries with it a degree of C uncertainty which cannot be hidden by a retreat to dependence on the authority of the Apostles, the Fathers, or certain of the Reformers.

Any resolution of the conflicting views outlined above

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depends upon the recognition of the paradoxical character of religious language, which has at the same time both an ontological and an existential reference. All serious speech about God expresses at the same time what Bultmann calls a selfunderstanding. In other words, the existential and the ontological senses of religious language, and indeed of dogma, cannot be divorced. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the end result of Torrance's understanding of the "pure science of theology" is anything more than a return to a rigid dogmatism stemming from the acceptance of a corpus of truth, and the consequent over-intellectualist interpretation of the meaning of faith.

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<u>O N E</u>

ON THE BEING AND NATURE OF GOD

(continued)

B. A Consideration of the Thought of Paul Tillich and of Helmut Gollwitzer.

Before proceeding to outline Tillich's discussion of the question of God, we shall first of all refer to the amalgamation of an existential attitude with an ontological metaphysic which forms the foundation of his theological system.

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In "<u>The Courage To Be</u>", Tillich describes the existential attitude as "one of involvement in contrast to a merely theoretical or detached attitude". (12). This means that the knowledge of that which concerns us infinitely is possible only in an attitude of infinite concern. Now the origin of an infinite or ultimate concern is man's predicament of estrangement from God, "the ground of his being". This estrangement manifests itself in anxiety concerning one's finitude, in conflict, despair and the dread of meaninglessness. The question of man's existence is therefore no speculative question which it is possible for him to consider in a detached, objective manner.

> "The question, asked by man, is man himself. He asks it, whether or not he is vocal about it. He cannot avoid asking it, because his very being is the question of his existence. He asks it 'out of the depth', and this depth is he himself." (13).

As an analysis of the human predicament, Existentialism highlights the question of man and his being. It also draws attention to the distinction between what Tillich calls "controlling Knowledge" and "receiving knowledge". (14). The former is the knowledge gained by objective observation in a situation in which the subject controls the object. "Receiving knowledge", on the other hand, includes an emotional element, in which there is a participation of the subject in the object. Without a recognition of this there can be no proper knowledge either of man or of God. Man, therefore, can ask the question of his existence only insofar as it is for him a question which strikes at the roots of his being, and he can ask the question of God only because he participates in God, "the ground of being".

It is clear that for Tillich the question of man and the question of God are inseparable. The existential approach, however, takes as its starting point the condition of man. In this sense, Tillich's theology is anthropocentric. The function of theology, therefore, is to help man to understand the question of his existence, to shed light on his situation and to analyse and explicate the awareness of an ultimate concern. Existential theology does not deal in intellectual abstractions, but always relates itself to the concrete situation in which

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man finds himself, faced with the predicament of his existence and the question of his being. Tillich speaks of the correlation between the existential questions and the theological answers. This, of course, does not permit the theologian to be arrogantly dogmatic. The method of correlation implies rather that the work of theology must be related to the real questions which man asks out of the infinite concern which his predicament forces upon him.

But man is able to ask the question of his being, in the condition of estrangement, only because he remains inescapably bound to that from which he is estranged.

> "Estrangement always implies a fundamental belongingness, and therefore an inner drive to reunion." (15)

The question of man's finitude can be asked and answered only because the essential unity of man with the infinite survives the condition of existential separation. Although estranged from God, man can ask the question of God because an awareness of God is present in the question itself.

> "God is the presupposition of the question of God... God can never be reached if he is the <u>object</u> of a question and not its <u>basis</u>." (16).

Out of his awareness of finitude, his sense of the duality of essential and existential being, man asks the basic ontological question, the question of being-itself. He asks it under the threat of non-being, which Tillich understands

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as the dialectical negation of being.

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"...the dialectical problem of non-being is inescapable. It is the problem of finitude. Finitude unites being with dialectical non-being." (17).

Man's awareness of his finitude, which is possible only by the power of self-transcendence, is therefore an expression of his belonging to that which is beyond non-being, namely, being-itself. Yet this awareness carries with it the experience of anxiety. In this sense, anxiety is not the product of any special object, but arises from the threat of non-being.

> "Anxiety is always present, although often it is latent. Therefore it can become manifest at any and every moment, even in situations where nothing is to be feared." (op.cit. p.213).

Tillich relates finitude to the categories of time, space, causality and substance, revealing the dialectical relation of being and non-being, of anxiety and courage.

> "As experienced in immediate self-awareness, time unites the anxiety of transitoriness with the courage of a self-affirming present." (<u>op.cit. p.215</u>).

In relation to space, finitude means having no definite place.

"To have no definite and no final space means ultimate insecurity... On the other hand, man's anxiety about having to lose his space is balanced by the courage with which he affirms the present, and with it, space." (<u>op.cit. p.217</u>).

Causality raises the question of "where from?" Man is not his

own cause, and therefore the category of causality powerfully expresses the abyss of non-being in everything.

"The anxiety in which causality is experienced is that of not being in, of, and by one's self, of not having the 'aseity' which theology traditionally attributes to God." (<u>op.cit.p.218</u>).

On the other hand, courage accepts this awareness of contingency. The fourth category, substance, expresses itself in the threat of change and the loss of self-identity.

"The human experience of having to die anticipates the complete loss of identity with one's self."(op.cit.p.219).

Finitude arouses tension and anxiety in relation to what Tillich refers to as the ontological elements: individualisation and participation, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny. There exists between each of these elements a polarity which gives rise to anxiety, for in the condition of finitude the one threatens to overcome the other. Man oscillates anxiously between the threat of complete collectivisation and the threat of loneliness; between the threat of rigidity in cultural patterns and the threat of chaos; between the threat of freedom understood as arbitrariness and the threat of destiny understood as meaningless fate.

In his anxiety, in his sense of ultimate concern, man asks the question of being-itself, of the infinite from

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which he is estranged. He asks it because although belonging to being, he is aware of the threat of non-being. The theological answer to the question is God beyond being and non-being, and the affirmation of the possibility of courage even in finitude and under the threat of non-being.

How then, are we to understand the being of God? Tillich makes his position perfectly plain.

> "It would be a great victory for Christian apologetics if the words 'God' and 'existence' were very definitely separated except in the paradox of God becoming manifest under the conditions of existence, that is, in the Christological paradox. God does not exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore, to argue that God exists is to deny him". (op.cit. p.227).

Here we meet Tillich's well-known concept of "the God above God", or "the God beyond theism". God is not a being, for he would then be a being beside others, and as such a part of the whole of reality. He would be bound to the subject-object structure of reality, an object for us as subjects. And in relation to him we would be objects. This is the God who must be killed, the God whose death liberates man.

> "The ultimate source of the courage to be is the 'God above God'.... Only if the God of theism is transcended can the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness be taken into the courage to be". (18).

God, the power of being-itself, beyond the split between essence and existence, accepts man in his finitude and gives

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the courage to be. The God beyond theism transcends both mysticism, which reaches out to the object of its longing, and the divine-human encounter. The paradoxical character of this 'encounter' is that God is experienced neither as object nor subject, but as the participation in the power of being-itself. It is a participation which transcends both subjectivity and objectivity.

Tillich goes on to speak of God as

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"the name for that which concerns man ultimately. This does not mean that first there is a being called God and then the demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him. It means that whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him, and, conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is god for him". (19).

Tillich does not mean that we can replace 'God' by 'ultimate

concern'. The term is intentionally ambiguous.

"It indicates on the one hand, <u>our</u> being ultimately concerned- the subjective side- and on the other hand, the <u>object</u> of our ultimate concern, for which, of course, there is no other word than 'ultimate'. Now, in this relationship, the history of religion can be described as the attempt to find what can with justification be called this object. And in all religions this object is called 'God'. Whether it is a little fetish... or the God of Israel... the object is always the same. The object of ultimate concern has many names". (20).

Now the worship of something finite as ultimate is idolatry. Thus even monotheism can be idolatrous, the worship of an object. God, as ultimate, is not an object, but being-itself. It is obvious that we are here using language in a highly symbolic manner. Tillich's whole theological doctrine of knowledge is centred in the concept of the symbol.

(NOTE. Religious symbols, says Tillich, are the language of religion and "the only way in which religion can express itself directly". (21). With reference to language, symbols use the ordinary meaning of the word in such a way that "it points to something which cannot be grasped directly but must be expressed indirectly".(<u>op. cit. p.4</u>). "A real symbol points to an object which can never become an object". (<u>op.cit. p. 303</u>).

A characteristic of a symbol is its power to open up dimensions of reality.

"Religious symbols mediate ultimate reality through things, persons, events, which because of their mediating functions receive the quality of 'holy'. In the experience of holy places, times, books, words, images, and acts, symbols of the holy reveal something of the 'Holy-Itself' and produce the experience of holiness in persons and groups... Theological concepts are merely conceptualizations of original religious symbols". (op.cit. p.5.).

The fundamental question is whether religious symbols refer to anything that cannot be known except by symbols, that is in itself non-symbolic. Tillich approaches the problem from two angles, the phenomenological and the ontological.

> "The phenomenological approach describes the holy as a quality of some encounters with reality. The holy is a 'quality in encounter', not an object among objects, and not an emotional response without a basis in the

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whole of objects. The experience of the holy transcends the subject-object structure of experience... An analysis of this experience shows that wherever the holy appears it is a matter of ultimate concern both in attracting and in repelling, and of unconditional power, both in giving and demanding". (op. cit. p.6-7).

"The other way of reaching the referent of religious symbolism is the ontological one. It analyses the kind of being man is, in interdependence with his world. It analyses the finitude of the finite in different directions, it points to the anxiety which is connected with the awareness of one's finitude, and it raises the question of beingitself, the prius of everything that is ... The ontological method.. does not argue for the existence of a being, about which religion makes symbolic statements, but it gives an analysis of the encountered world with respect to its finitude and finds through this analysis its self-transcending quality, its pointing beyond its finitude. That to which this analysis leads is the referent in all religious symbols. One can give it metaphoric names, like 'being-itself' or 'power of being' or 'ultimate reality' or 'ultimate concern' ... Such names are not names of a being but of a quality of being". (op.cit. p.7)

Tillich distinguishes primary from secondary religious symbolism. "The primary symbols point directly to the referent of all religious symbolism".(<u>op.cit. p.8</u>). In order to do so they speak of a highest being with qualities such as personality, love, power and justice. Yet we must always be aware that this is a symbolic way of referring to being-itself. At a second level of primary symbolism,

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"religion speaks of divine actions like creation, providence, miracles, incarnation, consummation, etc.

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It is especially important to emphasize the symbolic character of these symbols, because they often are understood literally, with the consequence that they fall into insoluble conflict with the scientific interpretation of reality. In all these symbols the religious imagination subjects that which is ultimate reality to the categories of time, space, substance and causality". (op. cit. p.9.)

A third level of primary symbols is to be observed in "divine incarnations in holy things or objects". (<u>op. cit. p. 9</u>). In the higher religions this has been symbolized in the 'sacramental presence'.

Permeating these three levels of primary symbolism are the secondary religious symbols like water, oil, light and the metaphors of parable or poem.

The authenticity of religious symbols depends upon their adequacy to the religious experience they express. Religious symbols may lose their experiential basis and survive only by tradition. They are then no longer authentic and may well decay. Symbols associated with a pre-scientific world view may be noted as examples.

Tillich defines the truth of a religious symbol as "the degree to which it reaches the referent of all religious symbols". (<u>op. cit. p.10</u>). The question may be approached negatively and positively.

"The negative quality which determines the truth of a religious symbol is its self-negation and transparency to the referent for which it stands". (op. cit. p.10).

Thus religious symbols are true insofar as they do not elevate

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themselves to ultimacy in power and meaning, but point to the Holy-Itself, the ultimate power of being and meaning. Positively, the truth of a religious symbol is measured by the value of the symbolic material used. Symbolic material taken from human existence is manifestly of greater value than that taken from inanimate objects.)

The term 'God' is to be understood both symbolically and non-symbolically. With reference to being-itself, beyond the split between essence and existence, the term 'God' is used in a non-symbolic sense. But, beyond the statement that God is being-itself, "nothing else can be said about God as God which is not symbolic". (22). All language, therefore, by which we seek to comprehend and express God as being-itself is symbolic. The danger that the finite symbols through which the Ultimate is expressed will themselves become objects of ultimate concern is a constant threat to all religion. Then God disappears and the demonic asserts itself. Yet even under an idolatrous and demonic worship of the symbol, being-itself remains, hidden yet present in the very experience of ultimate concern.

Man is bound to the categories of finitude and must therefore make use of symbolic language. Even anthropomorphic language is legitimate if properly understood as symbolic.

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"The symbol 'personal God' is absolutely fundamental because an existential relation is a person-to-person relation. Man cannot be ultimately concerned about anything that is less than personal". Yet, "'Personal God' does not mean that God is a person. It means that God is the ground of everything personal and that he carries within himself the ontological power of personality. He is not a person, but he is not less than personal". (op. cit. p.271)

Similarly, when we speak of God as 'King', 'Judge',

'Creator', 'Saviour', 'Lord', 'Father', we must understand that we are speaking symbolically of the ego-thou character of a person-to-person relationship.

> "While Lord is basically the expression of man's relation to the God who is holy power, Father is basically the expression of man's relation to God who is holy love. The concept 'Lord' expresses the distance; the concept 'Father', the unity". (op. cit.p. 319).

The symbol 'Lord' expresses the unapproachable majesty of God, while the symbol 'Father' expresses the unity of man with the creative ground of being.

In striving to comprehend the divine power of being in relation to the creature we speak symbolically of God's omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. The divine omnipotence does not mean that God is an all powerful being who can do whatever he wants to do. Rather, it symbolizes the divine power of being

> "which resists non-being in all its expressions and which is manifest in the creative process in all its forms. Faith in the almighty God is the answer to the quest for a courage which is sufficient to conquer the

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-46anxiety of finitude... When the invocation 'Almighty God' is seriously pronounced a victory over the threat of non-being is experienced, and an ultimate, courageous affirmation of existence is expressed". (op. cit. p.303-4).

The divine omnipresence overcomes the anxiety of not

having a space for oneself.

"In the certainty of the omnipresent God we are always in the sanctuary. We are in a holy place when we are in the most secular place, and the most holy place remains secular in comparison with our place in the ground of the divine life". (op.cit. p.309).

The symbol omniscience affirms the fragmentary

character of all finite knowledge, but removes the threat to our

genuine participation in truth.

"We experience the broken character of every finite meaning, but not as a cause for ultimate meaninglessness". (<u>op. cit. p. 310</u>).

In the light of the symbol of divine love, we

experience the power of being which works toward the fulfilment of every creature and the healing and reunion of all that is broken and disrupted.

> "The divine love is the final answer to the questions implied in human existence, including finitude, the threat of disruption and estrangement." (<u>op.cit. p.317</u>).

The divine love is experienced as grace, in the manifestation of the divine love under the conditions of existence- namely, in the Christ.

(NOTE. Discussing the question of God from an existentialist standpoint, John Macquarrie speaks of God as

"the religious word for Being, understood as gracious". (23). The significant question is not "Does God exist"?, but, "Has Being such a character as will fulfil man's quest for grace?". Biblical faith asserts that Being reveals itself as gracious. How is this to be understood?. Besides the subject-object and the I-Thou relationship, Macquarrie refers to a third kind of relationship,

> "in which there is presented to us Being-Itself. In this kind of relation, we do not have the other term of the relation at our disposal, nor do we stand to it in a relation of equality, but rather we are grasped by it, our eyes are opened to it, and we are brought into subjection to it, but in such a way that something of its character is disclosed to us, so that to some extent it becomes known to us". (op. cit. p.14).

Corresponding to the three forms of relation there are three modes of thinking. We think of objects, we think of friends, and

"it is also possible to think of Being which though it towers above us, does not annihilate us but rather communicates itself and gives itself in the experience of grace". (op. cit. p. 14).

Macquarrie acknowledges that this does not exclude the possibility that what we take to be an encounter with Being itself is an illusion. But it does

> "describe an area of experience in which the discourse about God is meaningful", and "brings us to the point where we see that this discourse about God has to do with the most radical and concrete matters in life, the point where, exercising our freedom in finitude in all the light that we can get, we decide to take either the risk of faith or the risk of unfaith". (op. cit. pp.15, 16).

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The reactions to Tillich's exposition of the term 'God' as 'the ground and power of being'; as 'being-itself'; as 'the name for that which concerns us ultimately', have been widely varied and even contradictory. While some have hailed Tillich's work with joy as a liberating revelation, others have been irritated by what they regard as an unscholarly lack of definition and a horrifying imprecision in the use of language. One deeply annoyed critic writes,

"Until his Germanic superstructure gets washed in the detergent of plain statement we will remain bespattered with a kind of Hegeloid mud". (24).

Writing as a theological critic, Kenneth Hamilton judges Tillich's system to be "incompatible with the Christian Gospel". (25).

We turn now to a more recent contribution to the discussion in the work of Helmut Gollwitzer. In "<u>The</u> <u>Existence of God as Confessed by Faith</u>"(26), he offers a positive critique of the thought of Bultmann, Herbert Braun, Tillich and Gerhard Ebeling, together with an attempt to expound the meaning of God-language with more direct reference to the biblical proclamation. It will be sufficient for our purpose to refer to Gollwitzer's comments on Tillich's thought and his own contribution in Part 11 chapter 4, pp.202-246.

Taking his bearings from an interpretation of theism

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based upon encounter with the Word of God, Gollwitzer

challenges Tillich's "transcendence of theism".

"The 'God above God' of whom Tillich speaks, <u>can</u> be meant as the living God of Christian faith before whom our existing theistic conceptions are shattered and whose relation to the theistic God of our own conceiving is that of the New and ever and again Wholly Other; he <u>can</u> be meant as that unity of <u>deus</u> <u>revelatus</u> and <u>deus</u> <u>absconditus</u> by which the soveræignty and indisposability of the <u>deus</u> <u>revelatus</u> remains assured, and 'absolute faith' <u>can</u> be meant as faith amid the darkness of tribulation proving itself in terms of 'nevertheless'. But then of course this would have to be said from the standpoint of the <u>deus</u> <u>revelatus</u>, of his Word of promise, not from a standpoint beyond that Word, where there is no promise and thus no faith either". (<u>op. cit. p.47</u>).

Apart from the Word, faith only too readily relapses into "the optimism of a wordless mysticism or into a heroic defiance in which man in his fear, without a word and without a light, and thus without hope, drives himself to live on and hope". (loc. cit.).

Such an existence is not beyond but this side of an encounter with God through his Word of revelation and promise.

"...there can be no transcending of the divine-human encounter, but only a falling away from it". (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>p.48</u>).

Gollwitzer is sceptical concerning the value of the prohibition of objectification, since the inevitable consequence appears to be a denial of the independent reality of God. In these circumstances the relation between man and God is dissolved in the depths of man's subjectivity. And the end result is an unavoidable, albeit unintentional, atheism.

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He readily admits that language about God cannot escape an anthropomorphic reference, for God enters into the conditions under which particular being is expressed. It becomes possible to speak of God in human language, but not in the form of a description of his being, but in the form of witnessing to his acts and in proclaiming and worshipping his will. Anthropomorphic language is not transcended by abstraction, for even here we have not gone beyond the limits of the human.

> "What the Bible says of God applies to One who is not attainable by any possible method of transcendence or abstraction, but who in a special act of approach enters transcendently into the world as the One who does not belong to the world". (op. cit. pp.150-1).

With reference to divine revelation, "particular and concrete ways of speaking have the preference over general and abstract ones, and personal ways of speaking have preference over impersonal, neuter ones". (op. cit. p.153).

This means not that the latter are ruled out, but that they must submit to the standard and content of the former. Gollwitzer quotes the Old Testament scholar Ludwig Kohler, who writes in his theology of the Old Testament,

> "To describe God in human terms of human characteristics is not to humanize Him... Rather the purpose of anthropomorphisms is to make God accessible to man. They hold open the door for encounter and controversy between God's will and man's will". (27).

And in the relation of hearing, obeying, believing, loving and

thanking, for example, man encounters God,

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"not as a particular entity, not a fellow man, not an idea either, or a form of 'cohumanity', but as himself, the living Lord". (28)

Biblical anthropomorphism, although inevitable, does

not bind God to any form of being.

"Nor does it imply, as the expression 'personal God' can be misunderstood to mean, the conceiving of God as 'a person'. God is not a person -not at any rate in the sense that by describing him thus we could classify him under a category of entities known to us and in that way make him conceivable to us".(<u>op.cit.p</u>. <u>162-3</u>).

We may recall Tillich's language which sounds very similar to the above. Yet there is an important distinction. Whereas Tillich at least gives the impression that the symbolic language which we use to express the meaning of the word 'God' is founded upon man's ontological awareness of the problem of being, Gollwitzer insists that we use such terms as 'Father', 'Lord', 'Friend', because they have been actualized in God's action. Tillich's emphasis upon human experience and a fresh self-understanding lead us to suspect that the words in which we express the predicates of the deity describe no more than dispositions of the human mind.

Gollwitzer sums up his critique in these words:

"...on the one hand his concept of the symbolical makes it possible for him to speak of God in the Christian sense as the active, living Lord, yet on the other hand he is not completely serious in doing so and will not be held to it, because in his fear of making God finite and bringing him down to the 'level of

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what is' he is more concerned to emphasize the impropriety of these 'representations' than to show what they mean when taken seriously. When he is discussing the descriptions of God as Father, Lord, etc., it never becomes clear whether Tillich is aware that as biblical descriptions they have been necessitated by the biblical encounter with Yahweh and have strict reference to it, or whether he considers them universally possible designations, so that on the lips of a Babylonian, who means Marduk. and on the lips of an Israelite who means Yahweh, they are equally expressions for the unconditional concrete; since this is unthinkable for the Bible, it cannot be ignored as of no consequence for the interpretation of such designations of God".... "...if anyone wishes to say what the world-wide title 'God' as used by biblical Christian faith is properly supposed to mean, then the one thing he must not do is to speak of 'being-itself' or of 'what unconditionally concerns us', as if these words were more proper designations of the One in question, but he must speak of Yahweh. Yahweh is the meaning of the symbolic word 'God' as the Bible understands it". (op. cit. pp.168,169. Italics author's)

Gollwitzer goes on to give an exposition of the existence of God as an object of biblical proclamation.

The substance of his argument is that the statement, 'God exists' is a joyous confession of faith arising from the I-Thou encounter with the self-disclosure of God in his Word of revelation. In attempting to put this experience into language we become aware of the 'unserviceableness of 'is' propositions'.

> "He whose encounter in real ways, i.e. in ways which take place in the midst of our earthly historical reality, is what Christian faith lives from and testifies to does <u>not</u> exist if existing is here understood in the sense of existence as known to us from ourselves and the world about us". (op.cit. p.204)

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In speaking of God - the biblical God - it is impossible for us to adopt the attitude of a disinterested objective observer. Nor can there be an assent to the existence of God apart from the believing assent to his will.

> "There is thus no knowledge of God apart from and before the faith that hears his Word and is thereby brought face to face with him. Where we have to do with him, we have never to do with his being-inhimself, but always only with him in his 'being-forus' in which he bestows himself on us". (op.cit.p.207).

It is a sign of grace that we can speak of the being and existence of God.

The verbal response to the self-disclosure of God's 'being-for-us' cannot therefore be other than an expression of adoration. For here we are not dealing with a truth that we can ascertain without any change in our own being, but with a truth that has changed us. Only on the basis of this change have we been able to make the response "God is!". The experience of grace is not a new self-understanding, but the recognition that our total situation has been transformed by the One who stands beyond us and over against us, and who has nevertheless disclosed himself to us in the encounter with his Word. Here we can and must speak of the 'objective reality' of God.

Gollwitzer emphasizes the distinction between the terms 'God-for-us' and 'God-for-our-sake'. The God for our

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sake can be no more than a supplier of a deficiency in human existence, a deficiency of which the unbeliever may be as fully aware as the believer. The God for us is he who discloses himself to us in the contingent event of revelation. It is a consequence of this event that we come to know our need and the reality of grace and forgiveness. Now although the event of revelation comes to us through the word of proclamation, Gollwitzer insists that the kerygma points beyond itself to the God who encounters us in the proclamation. God cannot become the title for the experienced word-event itself, but must be distinguished from it.

> "The impossibility of demonstrating this, however, must not hinder the believer as a hearer of the Word from distinguishing between God himself and the givenness of God in faith for faith, and from following up this distinction by making a theological distinction between God's being for us which flows from the freedom of his being for himself, and a being for our sake in which God, since he cannot like worldly entities be demonstrated in objective independence, can then be thought of only functionally". (<u>op.cit. pp.231-2</u>).

Notwithstanding the mystery and incomprehensibility of God's being 'over against us',

> "the gospel-character of the Gospel depends entirely on the fact that we may and we must say: God is." (op. cit. p.235).

To speak of God only in terms of a power to live in love, in faith, or in courage, is in the end to capitulate to an

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anthropocentric humanism which will perhaps tolerate the Christian message as a recitation of a myth.

Gollwitzer agrees with H.J.Iwand's statement that "the question of being must not be supplanted by a question of value". If God is reduced to a functional term then there is no possibility of communion with God, and love can be directed only to one's neighbour. (op. cit. p. 235). What is at stake is

> "nothing less than the distinction of the living God from the dead God of general truth". (op. cit. p.240).

In what sense, therefore, can we speak of the existence of God?.

"The call 'God is'... calls us to fulfilment and life. 'God is' means: This event (the 'today' of Luke 4) and the 'existence' of God among us are identical. But then we ultimately mean a different thing from what men usually call 'God'; we are giving stammering testimony to him who himself has named his own name in Jesus Christ, who has <u>disclosed</u> himself, and in so doing we first begin to exist in full measure". (<u>op. cit. p.245</u>. Italics author's)

Gollwitzer's emphasis on the confessing quality of God-language is important and valuable. But one is left wondering whether he has done anything more than re-affirm the more traditional God-language. And this leads him into contradiction. For while he agrees that God does not exist as an object, he seeks to restore the concept of God's existence by referring to

"the change that comes over the words 'existence'

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and 'reality' when they relate to God".(<u>op.cit.p.243</u>). This change is derived from the disclosure situation of encounter with Jesus Christ and from the revelatory experience which is not a matter of believing a truth but of being changed by the truth in the very act of receiving it. Yet this can be expressed as a "stammering testimony" only in symbolic langauge. Gollwitzer has not really succeeded in his attempt to depart from Tillich's affirmation that God does not exist, and that to speak of God as living is to speak in symbolic terms. It is not sufficient to appeal to the Gospel or to the Bible as a validation of our God-language. It is of course true that these may be in a sense vehicles of the revelatory encounter which gives rise to the joyful confession. To say that "Yahweh is the meaning of the symbolic word 'God' as the Bible understands it", is simply to point out the obvious fact that the Jews used anthropomorphic symbolism to express the reality of their Tillich accepts the fact that experience of God.

> "anthropomorphic symbols are adequate for speaking of God religiously. Only in this way can be the living God for man". (29).

Doubtless, Tillich would agree with Gollwitzer's stress on the experiential element in meaningful speech about God. At the end of the eighth dialogue in "<u>Ultimate Concern</u>"(30), Tillich identifies himself with the statement of a contributor, referring

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to the present relationship of the believer to the Christ-event, that

"It is really the present experience of the saving power which in some way has come out of this historical event". (op. cit. p.220).

Gollwitzer argues that on the basis of such an experience one can only confess that 'God is!'. This may well be so, but by bestowing an ultimate authority upon the biblical symbols, he is in danger of confusing the finite with the ultimate. The biblical symbols may indeed be a meaningful expression of the Christian confession, but they remain inextricably bound up with the confession. In Tillich's terms, the symbols are valid insofar as they are adequate to the confession which is made. In themselves they cannot be ultimately authoritative. It is mot possible to identify the God who is confessed with the symbols through which the confession is made.

Critics of Tillich tend to concentrate on the limitations and weaknesses of his ontological approach to theological questions, which lead him into vagueness, abstraction and obscurity. In defence of Tillich it must be said that he does not claim as much for his method as many of his critics suggest. It is for him an attempt, relevant to this age, to speak of human existence in its finitude and in its relation to the ontological question of being in such a way as to make possible,

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in particular to the intellectual, an opportunity to reflect upon the existential meaning and significance of faith. He does not claim, for example, that the doctrine of God can be derived from an ontological system.

> "The character of the divine life is made manifest in revelation". (31).

Nor can one

"derive the divine self-manifestation from an analysis of the human predicament". (32).

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We are left with the question of revelation, to which the question of God ultimately points.

We began our whole discussion on the being and nature of God with the question of the meaning of the term 'God' for the secular man of today, and have considered some contemporary efforts to restore the word to the area of meaningful discourse. Paul van Buren would solve the difficulty simply by dropping the term altogether and giving our attention to the Man of Nazareth, and his contagious freedom. Although this procedure would solve some linguistic problems, it cannot be regarded as doing justice to the profounder depths of religious experience. His strictly linguistic approach leaves us with a constricted flat earth view which fails to comprehend the richness and depth of man's relationships and responses.

T.F.Torrance attempts to argue that the theologian must accept the given objectivity of God in much the same way

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as the scientist accepts the objective existence of the world he investigates. But this is to confuse scientific and religious knowledge. For the knowledge of God is not so much a matter of theoretical thought as of one's personal existence. The scientist John Wren-Lewis, rejects any attempt to speak of God in terms of a supernatural being, but refers to 'the Ground of Love' as the basis for a positive existence. The validity of this concept is confirmed by empirical experience of the power of love to enrich and to fulfil human life. But we are here, in the last analysis, offered a religiously tinted humanism which amounts to a prescription for self-salvation by pursuing an ideal. Helmut Gollwitzer, while continuing to reach for a supporting authority, finds meaning in the words 'God is', as the confession of those who have encountered him in what they affirm to be his disclosure in Jesus Christ. This, however, raises the whole question of the nature, substance and authority of revelation. Approaching the question from the existential predicament of man in his awareness of finitude and the experience of the 'ontological shock', and using highly symbolic terms such as 'being-itself', 'the ground and power of being', 'ultimate concern', Paul Tillich reaches the end of his stimulating treatment of the question with the recognition that the doctrine of God concludes with the further quest for a doctrine of the Christ. The God

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whom we can conceive only as an object yet who is never an object, is the God who manifests himself to us ultimately in the power of the New Being in Jesus the Christ. And John Macquarrie suggests that "God is the religious word for Being, understood as gracious", an understanding that is a gift which comes to man in a revelatory experience inseparable in its fulness from Jesus. Here we are again confronted with the problem of revelation, to which we must now give our attention.

In "<u>Has Christianity a Revelation</u>?"(33), Gerald Downing offers a searching criticism of the concept of revelation. He concludes that

> "the word 'revelation' is a source of great confusion. A theology based on it is inadequate for the exposition of the traditional faith of Christians, even in the traditional terminology". (<u>op. cit.p.274</u>). "If any 'mystery' is 'revealed' to present-day Christians with their kaleidoscopic beliefs, it is a mystery of diversity, and that by definition is not 'God'. The traditional image of the 'mystery of God' is an ocean too deep to plumb; but the total course of Christian theology makes it look like a maze so complex that everyone gets lost in his own way. If there is a 'revealed mystery' it is this that is 'revealed'....'Partially', 'gradually', 'mysteriously', rapidly become words for giving a semblance of meaning, when none really remains. When 'reveal' is so heavily qualified, it is not being refined down towards an apex of meaning, to fit it to talk of 'God'. It is having its meaning completely destroyed. The theologian is using a word that normally describes 'making clear' to mean 'leave unclear'."(op. cit. p.229).

Downing asserts that

"if God intended to 'reveal himself' in Christ, in the

events of his life, death and resurrection and in his teaching, he failed." (op. cit. p.238).

After noting that Barth, Tillich and Brunner move towards the interpretation of revelation in terms of salvation, (<u>op. cit. p.266</u>), Downing himself wishes to substitute the term 'salvation' for 'revelation' entirely.(<u>op. cit. pp.274ff.</u>) Salvation is of course bound up with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but while these may be 'saving events', they cannot be called 'revealing events' for there is no clear knowledge given with them. To call these 'saving events' implies a degree of commitment to the continuing possibilities for existence that stem from these events.

> "Sincerely to call particular events 'saving' is to commit yourself in some manner or other to possibilities that they still genuinely enable". (op. cit. p. 280).

These events cannot be proved to be God's 'salvation', but,

"it makes good sense to say 'here is salvation'; it makes good sense, so long as a man does wish to commit himself in this way to a Christian possibility of love." (op. cit. p. 281).

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It follows that Christians should not pretend to an awareness of 'God' which their lives and experience cannot substantiate. But on the foundation of a self-committal-independence to a saving event, ("the gift-without-authoritativeexplanation in Jesus Christ" -<u>op. cit p. 287</u>), one may enter

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upon the possibility of life in love and freedom. Yet at no point can one rest and say, "This is revelation: now I know for sure." (op. cit. p.286).

In "<u>The Shape of Christology</u>" (34), John McIntyre concludes his treatment of Christological models with these words,

> "Where there is no prior knowledge or acknowledgement of God, revelation propositions have no weight. If I say to an unbeliever, 'God is revealed in Jesus Christ', this proposition means no more or no less than the term 'God' means. If God has no existence, the proposition cannot assist his revelation. Propositions asserting the revelation of God presuppose some prior knowledge of God if they are to have any significance. The assertion of God's being and God's revelation cannot significantly be made in one proposition.... In short, then, the revelation model has no real place in an apologetic situation where we are conversing with total unbelievers. It has a place in a keryqmatic utterance only where it is made in the context of some degree of accepted belief in God". (p. 171).

The warnings against looking to revelation as a solution of all mysteries, and against an uncritical use of the term are necessary and valuable. But Downing's argument appears to rest on a restricted understanding of revelation. We would agree that if revelation is taken to refer to an intellectualistic grasp of an objective fact or event which obtrudes itself upon our minds, then it is clearly nonsensical to speak of God having revealed himself. It is doubtful, however, whether such theologians as Tillich and Bultmann would accept this understanding of

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revelation. The answer to Downing's question, 'Has Christianity a Revelation'?, may well be in the negative, but this does not necessarily imply that the concept of revelation is meaningless. For although we may not have a revelation of God's 'nature', we do have in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus certain events which we affirm as possessing revelatory significance. It is true, as McIntyre points out, that the unbeliever will probably discern no revelatory meaning in these events. Yet since there is a connection between actions and character, there is open to the believer at least the possibility of talking about the character of God upon the basis of what are discerned to be his actions.

"Provided we understand it in terms which imply its historical dynamism", (35)

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the concept of revelation may still be used in speaking of judgment and forgiveness, and the new self-understanding which are an integral part of the event of grace,-God's beingfor-us in the historical reality of the Christ. And from within the revelatory situation we affirm the reality of God.

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<u>T W O</u>

THE QUESTION OF SIN AND GUILT

There can be no understanding of the meaning of the Cross apart from man's sin and guilt. The view that all men are sinners is developed at length by St. Paul in the letter to the Romans, 1:18-3:20. "Jews and Greeks alike are all under the power of sin...There is no just man, not one." (Romans 3:9,10 N.E.B.). And in the hymnody of the Church the inseparable connection between the Cross of Christ and the sin of man has been a constant theme.

Yet it is apparent that to modern ears the words 'sin' and 'guilt', 'grace' and 'faith', to mention only a few, have an archaic ring which reduces their power to communicate any significant concept. Or, which is perhaps worse, the terms have become so devalued that they are used in a superficial, harmless kind of way. Even within the Christian community it is doubtful whether such words are understood in anything more than a vague and shadowy manner. It is clearly a task of theology to illuminate its language and to restore its depth and power. This will be no light burden, for not only are such words as 'sin' and 'guilt' misunderstood, but they are also rejected. Theology is therefore engaged in an important rescue operation.

In this chapter we shall first of all consider some current humanist arguments and then proceed to discuss the existentialist analysis of the human situation as a basis for the restoration of the terms 'sin' and 'guilt'.

The neo-Freudian psychologist, Erich Fromm, bases his enquiry into the psychology of ethics on a confidence in the capacity of man for goodness and productiveness.

> "A spirit of pride and optimism has distinguished Western culture in the last few centuries: pride in reason as man's instrument for his understanding and mastery of nature; optimism in the fulfilment of the fondest hopes of mankind, the achievement of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Man's pride has been justified." (1).

All that is now required is that man should apply himself with equal confidence and resourcefulness to the art of living, making use of the progress of psychology in illuminating the mysteries of the human psyche and the secret springs of behaviour.

Fromm traces the ills of mankind to the frustration of man's inherent power of self-affirmation by authoritarian ethics, stemming from, e.g. God, the Church, social conventions, or parents. In humanistic ethics, therefore, good is the affirmation of life, the unfolding of man's powers. Virtue is responsibility towards one's own existence and vice is

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irresponsibility towards oneself through submission to an irrational authority which hinders the unfolding of one's potentialities.

At the root of our malaise lies an authoritarian conscience which burdens the individual with fear and a load of false guilt.

> "The prime offence in the authoritarian situation is rebellion against the authority's rule. Thus disobedience becomes the 'cardinal sin'; obedience, the cardinal virtue." (op. cit. p.148).

Living in fear, man attempts to appease authority by means of sacrifices, and to atone for the pride in his strength and power which challenges the authority's superiority.

"Paradoxically, the authoritarian <u>guilty</u> conscience is a result of the feeling of strength, independence, productiveness, and pride, while the authoritarian <u>good</u> conscience springs from the feeling of obedience, dependence, powerlessness, and sinfulness." (<u>op. cit</u>. p.150 Italics author's).

Throughout history, guilt feelings have both increased the sense of dependency and enlarged authority's demands. A vicious circle of transgression, guilt feelings, and craving for forgiveness and absolution is formed which tends to stifle productive living. Herein lies the source of the inner conflict which expresses itself in neurotic conditions.

> "If life's tendency to grow, to be lived, is thwarted, the energy thus blocked undergoes a process of <u>change</u> and is transformed into life-destructive energy. Destructiveness is the <u>outcome of unlived life</u>".

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(<u>op. cit. p.216</u>. Italics author's).

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(NOTE. Dr. Paul Tournier has given ample clinical evidence of the disastrous effects of an authoritarian moralism in developing infantile guilt feelings, fears and tensions. (2). He makes a clear distinction, however, between true and false guilt. The latter results from social suggestion, fear of taboos or of losing the love of others. It is the guilt of doing. The former, on the other hand, he describes as the guilt of being, the guilt of which one is aware, upon reflection, in relation to oneself, to others, and to God. (<u>op. cit. pp.63ff.</u>). Properly understood, genuine religion delivers man from the oppressive influence of false guilt, while at the same time bringing to light the genuine, but often repressed, guilt of being. (<u>op. cit. pp. 119ff.</u>).)

> The foundation of Fromm's argument is the assumption "that man is able to know what is good and to act accordingly on the strength of his natural potentialities and of his reason." (3).

The humanistic conscience is the voice of our true selves. It summons us to live productively, to develop fully and harmoniously and thus to become what we potentially are. Given the proper conditions,-faith in himself and deliverance from an authoritarian conscience,- man is capable of building a social order governed by the principles of equality, justice and love. As rational faith this

> "is not wishful thinking, but based upon the evidence of the past achievements of the human race and on the inner experience of each individual, on his own experience of reason and love." (<u>op. cit. pp.207-8</u>).

The real moral problem is man's indifference to himself, a consequence of the feeling of impotence engendered by a socially patterned defect which is itself a product of a negative, authoritarian religious manipulation of man's mind.

> "Prophecies of doom are heard today with increasing frequency. While they have the important function of drawing attention to the dangerous possibilities in our present situation they fail to take into account the promise which is implied in man's achievement in the natural sciences, in psychology, in medicine and in art. Indeed, these achievements portray the presence of strong productive forces which are not compatible with the picture of a decaying culture... The outcome... rests upon man's courage to be himself and to be for himself." (op. cit. pp.249-50).

With Fromm's passion for the liberation of man from the baneful consequences of what he calls the authoritarian conscience, we may indeed have a great deal of sympathy. It must be confessed that a certain moralistic emphasis in religion has tended to prevent the development of integrated, mature personality. Yet it must be questioned whether Fromm's diagnosis reaches the heart of the problem of man's predicament. Even some of his fellow psychologists prefer the dark vision

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of Freud to the "cheery platitudes of his revisers". (4). The way to the improvement of the individual is not simply by a process of social engineering. In "<u>Life Aqainst Death</u>", Norman Brown writes,

> "It takes only the capacity to endure unpleasant truth to prefer the bleak pessimism of 'Civilisation and its Discontents' to the lullabies of sweetness and light which the neo-Freudians serve up as psycho-analysis." (5).

Freud stands opposed to Rousseau; not that man is good and society corrupts him, but that man is anarchic and society restrains him. Fromm, however, places his faith in the selfactualising personality, with regard to which the terms 'sin' and 'quilt' have a much reduced meaning.

(NOTE. In an interesting article, "The New Optimism -From Prufrock to Ringo", (6), William Hamilton suggests that in spite of our fears, the dominant mood today is one of optimism about the future of man. The new optimism

> "faces despair with the conviction that the human conditions that created it can be overcome, whether those conditions be poverty, discrimination, or mental illness." (op. cit. p.490).

The pessimism of neo-orthodoxy (e.g. Reinhold Niebuhr's 'Nature and Destiny of Man') "doesn't persuade us any more". (op. cit. p.481).

Hamilton then describes the move from pessimism to optimism in the social sciences, in the field of art, and in the civil rights movement. Here the fashionable pessimism of the

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intellectual world is being challenged. Existentialist brooding on alienation and inauthenticity and forlornness is being repudiated as cant and nonsense, while in the field of art, there appears a new element of joy and celebration in life.

> "Certain kinds of contemporary art... show that the ordinary things which technological society rejects, (coke bottles, cans, old newspapers, tires) can be reassembled, with only the slightest nudges from the artist, into something gay and beautiful, and thus the whole of life can become the subject matter for such creativity." (op. cit. p. 485).

He regards the civil rights movement as the most decisive piece of evidence.

"That there is a gaiety, an absence of alienation, a vigorous and contagious hope at the centre of this movement is obvious, and it is the main source of its hold on the conscience of... young America. You can most easily discern this optimism, beyond tragedy, beyond alienation, beyond existentialism, by singing the songs of the movement.... When we listen to 'We shall overcome', we have come into the world of historical optimism, in which this world is the place, and now is the time, for the making of long-overdue changes." (op. cit. p. 486).

Something of the eschatological optimism of Jesus with his disciples may be supplanting the anti-optimism of Paul, Augustine, Kierkegaard and post-liberal theology. But Hamilton connects the new optimism with 'the death of God', and the consequent loss of the sense of tragedy.

> "...the presence of tragedy requires the presence of God or the gods, and this presence is just what we do not have. The death of tragedy is due to the death of God."

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(<u>op. cit. p. 487</u>).

In the new mood of optimism, "we trust the world, we trust the future, we deem even many of our intractable problems just soluble enough to reject the tragic mode of facing them." (op. cit. p. 490).

We do not have the dialectic between the presence and the absence of God of neo-orthodox theology, or of existentialism.

"We are the not-havers, whose undialectical 'Yes' to the world is balanced by a 'No' to God." (op. cit. p.490).

We may be sceptical regarding the vitality and depth of the new optimism of the New World, but it is clear that im this situation, which is not without parallel in the eager participation of younger people in movements to overthrow social and political evils in developing countries, words like 'sin' and 'quilt' sound faintly ridiculous. Yet while applauding what seems to be a healthy absence of morbid brooding on the world's miseries and a determination that united action should be taken against a sea of troubles, there are two observations which we would make. First, there exists the threat of a loss of individuality in the desegregating pressures of participationa danger expressed in the almost compulsive desire to be 'with it'. Secondly, we may ask whether the new mood of optimism has sufficient depth to safeguard it against a bitter cynicism im the face of "the sheer cussedness of things", and whether it can sustain "the courage to be" in the presence of obdurate ewil.

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We turn now to consider the method by which an existentialist theology seeks to restore meaning to such traditional Christian concepts as 'sin' and 'guilt'. An existentialist approach may not wholly escape the suspicion that there is something morbidly introspective in a concentration on the question of being. Yet, notwithstanding the reluctance of those imbued with a spirit of optimism to grant any importance to the question, the fact that in 'limit-situations' the individual is inexorably, albeit perhaps rarely, confronted with the question of his being, makes the attempt to analyse it worth pursuing.

An existentialist theology assumes that man and his being are central in all theological discussion, and that theological statements are significant only insofar as they relate to existence. Its approach is therefore phenomenological, that is, it begins with the descriptive analysis of the phenomena of existence, such as anxiety, the flight from responsibility, the quest for meaning, the sense of guilt, and the threat of death.

Now the philosophical roots of existentialist theology are to be found in the thought of Martin Heidegger. In"<u>An</u> <u>Existentialist Theology</u>"(7), John Macquarrie outlines the Heideggerian analysis of existence which has provided a conceptual

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framework for an interpretation of basic biblical insights with regard to the human situation. In Heidegger's terms. man's existence in the world may be either authentic or inauthentic. Because he is aware of himself as existing, man may become an object to himself and understand himself as one object among other objects in the world. In this way, man becomes merged in his world and exists inauthentically. In biblical terms, the concept of the 'body of sin', (Romans 6:6), stands for a way of being in which man exists in relation to his world. In this situation he has actualized the possibility of sinful existence, which is one aspect of his being as man. He becomes estranged from himself and loses himself in his world. This is 'life according to the flesh' (Romans 8:5). There is, on the other hand, the possibility of authentic existence, in which man is at one with himself, the way of being described as 'life in the Spirit' (Gal. 6:8).

We may put this another way by saying that in his inauthentic existence, man becomes absorbed in his concern with the world. He loses himself in the world and regards himself only as belonging to the world. This threatens to conceal from man the difference between his own being which transcends the subject-object relation, and the being of objects in the world. The consequence of all this is to be observed in the phenomena of

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anxiety, restlessness, despair, hostility and guilt.

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Now the analysis of the experience of man as being-inthe-world claims to yield knowledge of man which is more fundamental and indubitable than any scientific understanding of man that is based upon concepts of substance and causality. Scientific knowledge is therefore subordinate to existential knowledge - the knowledge which man has of himself as existing.

Much use is here made of the feeling or mood of anxiety, in which man is aware of the split in his existence as he faces the necessity for decision. On the one hand he is aware of himself as a responsible being, yet on the other hand he is aware that he is not the master of his existence. There is an inescapable dualism in man's self-awareness, a dualism of man over against nature, a dualism within himself as one who is responsible yet who, at the same time, is subject to conditions over which he has no control, a dualism within the range of his possibilities, to exist authentically or inauthentically, and a dualism with regard to the world, which may corrupt man and become corrupted, or in which he may find his true being.

From the existentialist point of view all this is to be understood in terms of man's fallenness from his true being. This is the ontological presupposition which lies behind the phenomenological analysis. In his "<u>Theology of the New Testament</u>" (8), Bultmann interprets St. Paul's theology as a doctrine of man, making use of the insights of existential philosophy to illuminate such Pauline terms as soma, pneuma and sarx.

"The most comprehensive term which Paul uses to characterize man's existence is <u>soma</u>." (<u>op. cit.vol.l</u>, <u>p.192</u>).

"Man is called <u>soma</u> in respect of his being able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as the subject to whom something happens. He can be called <u>soma</u>, that is, as having a relationship to himself." (<u>op. cit. pp.195-6</u>).

Now this relationship can be either an appropriate or a perverted one. Man may be at one with himself or at odds with himself; he may find himself or lose his grip on himself, he may gain his self or fail to do so. But man has missed his true existence; he has chosen the possibility of inauthentic existence and has fallen from his true being. Paul sees man as constantly placed before God. Hence,

> "the ontological possibility of being good or evil is ontically the choice of either acknowledging the Creator and obeying him, or of refusing him obedience." (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>p.228</u>).

To turn from the Creator is however, to turn to the creation. Man therefore seeks to find his existence within the world and to live by his own power. This is the essence of sin. This is life 'after the flesh' -<u>kata sarka</u> - (Romans 8:5), in which man decides to understand his existence purely in terms of the world

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quite apart from any relationship to God. It is a way of being characterized by care, desire, an illusory sense of contentment, boastful self-confidence, and at the same time a sense of alienation and discontent. This situation, so full of conflict and contradiction, reflects man's alienation both from himself and from God. The sense of guilt, in this analysis, is therefore totally other than the pathological fruit of an authoritarian moralism. It belongs to the very existence of man in his fallenness, in his alienation from himself in the choice of inauthentic existence.

Believing that "existentialism is a natural ally of Christianity",(9), Paul Tillich attempts to relate the questions raised in human existence with the answers implied in the selfmanifestation of God in Christ. He assumes the essential truth and validity of the existential analysis of man's existence, an existence in which man finds himself estranged from himself, the world and from God, and threatened with disintegration and self destruction. Tillich interprets.man's predicament in terms of a conflict between essence and existence. Man has fallen from what he essentially is. This transition from essence to existence is expressed in the symbol of the Fall. The consequence is the sense of estrangement which may be analysed in terms of unbelief, <u>hubris</u> and concupiscence. In unbelief, man rejects

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his relationship to God. The other side of this is <u>hubris</u>, in which man seeks to elevate himself as the centre of his world. He seeks to ignore his finitude, and is unwilling to admit error, ignorance or limitation. And overcome with concupiscent desire he attempts to use the world as a means to self-glorification. (op. cit. pp.53-63).

The melancholy outcome is strife, disorder, tension, self-disgust, despair and disintegration. Freedom becomes mere arbitrariness: destiny appears as a fatalistic determinism against which one is powerless. The striving for self-transcendence degenerates into a frantic search for new and meaningful experience. Order expresses itself in an oppressive legalism which is suspicious of creativity. The sense of finitude appears as the horror of death and the doubt which is proper to finitude is distorted into a despairing relativism which seeks to avoid decisions. (op. cit. pp.72-86).

Furthermore, under the conditions of estrangement, anxiety assumes a tragic character, brought on by the element of guilt. It transforms the anxious awareness of one's 'having to die' into the painful realisation of a loss for which one is in a real sense responsible, in spite of its tragic universality. The profound ambiguity between good and evil which permeates the whole of existence is the source of the experience of guilt.

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And the threat of death carries the anxiety of condemnation not to an eternal punishment, but to the despair of having lost one's true destiny. All this is nothing but the manifestation of the power of Sin. (10).

It is clear that Tillich's thought is far removed from the psychologist's notion of sin as the transgression of the commands of a heteronomous authority. The existence of neurotic guilt feelings in no way contradicts the reality of genuine guilt which lies behind man's despair. The 'salvation' offered by psycho-analysis reaches only as far as these misplaced or neurotic guilt feelings. It is not the salvation which gives the courage to live in the constant and sometimes despairing awareness of existential guilt.

We would agree with John Macquarrie's judgment that

"existentialism is making a powerful contribution toward renewing some basic Christian words." (11).

With its stress on the finitude of man as thrown into a world in which he has to be; on the uncertainty of human life which is all the time haunted by the inevitability of death; on the fundamental anxiety which is attendant upon such an existence in which nevertheless, responsible decision is inescapable, existentialism focusses our attention upon truths from which we are all too prone to hide. In so doing, it endeavours to make us more receptive to that wisdom which is

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"not a technical achievement but a divine power which tries to show us the ultimate problems of our existence." (12).

And in response to the accusation that existentialism is morbid and pessimistic, we can reply that this appears to be so only if it is regarded in isolation from the answers which are implied in the questions it raises. But this leads us to matters which will be discussed in a later chapter.

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One question, however, remains to be considered. Does an existentialist theology distort the biblical faith and the biblical message in the direction of a prevailing philosophical fashion?. Three points may be made in reply. First, an apologetic purpose can be traced throughout the history of theology. And in order to be genuinely contemporary and relevant, theology has always attemped to present the Christian faith in terms intelligible to its age. There are, of course, dangers in such an apologetic procedure. But the risk must be taken, even if on occasion alien elements may slip in. As an example we refer to the influence of Greek philosophical concepts on the theological thought which produced the classical creeds of Christendom. Secondly, the purpose of an existentialist theology is above all to clarify the thought of the New Testament in such a way that its message can speak for itself. Bultmann, for example, has no other intention than to enable

man to confront the Gospel as judgment and as grace. Thirdly, it cannot be denied that for many the use of existentialist concepts has presented an extraordinarily clear view of the New Testament understanding of fallen man, and far from accommodating the Christian message to a prevailing fashion, has imported into New Testament interpretation a remarkable degree of clarity and consistency. We allow Tillich to defend the existentialist approach:-

> "The test of a phenomenological description is that the picture given by it is convincing, that it can be seen by anyone who is willing to look in the same direction, that the description illuminates other related ideas, and that it makes the reality which these ideas are supposed to reflect understandable." (13).

We conclude then, that the terms 'sin' and 'guilt' have not lost their truth, and that their expressive power has been regained through the insights which existentialism has given us.

Before leaving this chapter we must give attention to the charge sometimes made that existentialist theology is simply natural theology masquerading under a modern guise. Does the existentialist analysis of man's predicament really take us anywhere near the biblical view of man as a rebel against God?. Can there, in fact, be any true and wholesome awareness of sin apart from the experience of grace and forgiveness?.

The charge rests either upon a misunderstanding of the

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existentialist approach or upon a rigid and defensive dogmatism. We cannot here enter into a debate with the latter, but will attempt to clarify a number of points to overcome misunderstandings.

An existentialist theology does not in any way minimise the reality of man's alienation from God. Nor does it suggest that by any moral, intellectual or psychological tour de force he is able to overcome his guilt, his conflict, his estrangement and achieve authentic existence. His fallenness belongs to his being as man, and this means that he has fallen into a situation in which it is no longer possible for him to choose authentic existence.

The anxious question then is, how can man achieve authentic existence? It becomes evident that at this point existentialist theology must go beyond its philosophical foundations. Existentialist philosophy either tends to assume that the exposure of the possibility of authentic existence is sufficient to empower man to choose that possibility, or to end its analysis of the human predicament with a pessimistic, nihilistic challenge to a courageous despair. On the other hand, existentialist theology sees in the disclosure of man's existence in guilt and anxiety, the opportunity for a new selfunderstanding. This new self-understanding, however, includes

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not only the awareness of one's tragic situation, but also the genuine possibility of an authentic existence. Alienation is now seen not as the consequence of a bitter rebellion against evil fate, but as estrangement from the ground of one's being, now understood as gracious. The analysis of alienation from oneself has opened the door for the religious awareness that this alienation is also from God. Grace, then, is the event in which the real nature of both inauthentic and authentic existence is revealed and the new possibility of authentic existence is placed within man's grasp.

The transition from fallen to authentic existence is therefore not the work of man but of God. Neo-orthodox theology, says Tillich,

> "is right in asserting the inability of man to reach God under his own power. Man is the question, not the answer." (14).

Bultmann similarly emphasises that it is in confrontation with the Christian proclamation that man achieves a new selfunderstanding and that the lost possibility of gaining authentic existence is restored to him. (15). All this is a gift to man which has its source in the salvation-occurrence in Christ.

Furthermore, the extent of one's alienation and lostness is now fully revealed. The fatal nature of the

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phenomena of estrangement is now understood, and the 'exceeding sinfulness of sin' becomes apparent. We can properly speak of sin only because its power over us has been broken.

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NEW TESTAMENT

A. How did Jesus understand his death?

The question itself raises a host of related problems concerning the nature of the Synoptic tradition and the relation between the historical Jesus and the kerygma. It would take us far beyond the scope of this chapter to go into these highly controversial questions in detail. Some general observations will suffice as a background to the primary question with which we have to deal.

The attempt to derive a clear, unambiguous picture of the life and teaching of Jesus from the Gospels has been shown to be fruitless. So-called "Lives of Jesus" revealed more about the author's presuppositions, ideals and prejudices than about the historical Jesus. Few serious scholars would now deny that the Gospels are not historical narratives but reflections of the dogma and worship of the primitive church. Yet how much of the history of Jesus is it possible to detect behind the kerygmatic proclamation? It is around this question that scholarly controversy rages at the present time.

The motive for what thas been called "a new quest for the historical Jesus" is not mere curiosity. Some important issues are involved. Can we be certain, for example, that the history of Jesus can bear the weight of its post-Easter interpretation in the kerygma, with its reference to such "myths" as incarnation, atonement, resurrection? It is certainly not possible to demonstrate that Jesus' understanding of his history is identical with the kerygmatic interpretation, nor is there any suggestion that we can reconstruct the teaching of Jesus in such a way that it is possible to set it over against the preaching of the primitive church. But we may enquire whether there is a continuity between Jesus and the kerygma.

The issue was raised in a significant paper by E. Kasemann in 1953. (1). He recognises without question the kerygmatic nature of the Gospels.

> "We can only gain access to this (historical) Jesus through the medium of the primitive Christian gospel and the primary effect of this gospel is not to open up the way for us but to bar it. The historical Jesus meets us in the New Testament, our only real and original documentation of him, not as he was in himself, not as an isolated individual, but as the Lord of the community which believes in him. Only in so far as, from the very outset, he was potentially

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and actually this Lord, does the story of his earthly life play any part in our Gospels." (<u>op. cit. p.23</u>). Yet the very fact that the Gospels were written shows that the Church was not minded to allow the earthly Jesus to be hidden by the kerygmatic proclamation of the exalted Lord. Far from being unconcerned with the character and content of Jesus' history, the primitive church related its gospel to <u>this</u> man from Nazareth and to a concrete time with its special circumstances.

But how far does this really take us along the road to discovering authentic Jesus material in the Gospels? Admittedly not very far. Kasemann finds more or less safe ground only

> "when there are no grounds either for deriving a tradition from Judaism, or for ascribing it to primitive Christianity, and especially when Jewish Christianity has mitigated or modified the received tradition, as having found it too bold for its taste." (op. cit. p.37).

He concludes that the distinctive element in the earthly Jesus is his preaching of the kingdom that had dawned and of

"how God was come near to man in grace and demand." $(\underline{op. cit. p.45})$. Although "it is certain that Jesus regarded himself as inspired", $(\underline{op. cit. p.41})$, Kasemann rejects the predication 'Son of Man' as inauthentic and denies that Jesus understood himself to be the Messiah. $(\underline{op. cit. p.43})$.

A number of other scholars have taken up the new

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quest. Bornkamm speaks of a general impression made by Jesus which is quite independent of the authenticity of any particular saying. (2). We are impressed by Jesus' humble submission to God and by his tremendous sense of authority. Ebeling similarly speaks of

"a historically reliable general impression of Jesus" (3)

which may be derived from the Gospels. The core of Jesus' message is found to be the rule of God, the nearness of God and the call to joyful obedience of the will of God. In a paper entitled "The Quest of the Historical Jesus" (4), Fuchs claims that Jesus was put to death because of his audacious assertion through his own conduct that God's will was a gracious will. (<u>op. cit. p.21</u>). And since actions are more likely to stimulate imitation than words, it is highly probable that notwithstanding justifiable doubts on the genuineness of particular sayings, the Gospels cast light on Jesus' conduct.

John Macquarrie feels compelled to assert a minimal core of factuality if the New Testament is to retain any significance even as providing an understanding of the possibilities of human existence. He believes the question of historicity is theologically important, since without a firm hold in history the Christian message cannot be

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distinguished from a fairy-tale or a utopian ideal. The

minimal core of which he speaks is not a short list of basic

facts, but

"the assertion that at the source of the Christian faith there was an actual historical instance of the pattern of life proclaimed in the <u>kerygma</u> under the notions of dying and rising." (5).

He points out that even Bultmann maintains that

"the general character of his (Jesus') life is rightly portrayed in them (the Gospels) on the basis of historical recollections." (6).

Macquarrie concludes,

"This minimal core of factuality - that there was an historical instance of the pattern of life which the gospel proclaims - is not indeed something certain, but it is something that has overwhelming probability... Historical research can give no 'guarantee' for such a commitment ('Thou art the Christ'), but we can have reasonable confidence that the commitment is to a realistic possibility of existence."(7).

John McIntyre points out in "The Shape of Christology"(8),

what he regards as certain unwarranted conclusions which are often drawn from the attitude of historical scepticism.

He writes.

"Historical scepticism... has had observable consequences in the form of two denials, first, that it is quite impossible to construct a biography of Jesus; and secondly that later generations (that is, after the ascension of Jesus) have been cut off from all knowledge of the personality of Jesus... The second denial is one which to my mind is too readily dismissed as an irrefutable consequence of the previous denial. It is valuable to notice what is being denied and what remains after the denial. What is being denied is that we know

how Jesus developed psychologically from childhood to manhood; how he arrived at his messianic consciousness so-called; how indeed mind and will operated in his two-nature person. These are all significant and permissible denials. What is not necessarily implied by these denials is that we are ignorant therefore of what might be called 'the mind of Christ', of how he thought about the Father, about his own death, about men and women. It is not 'uncontrolled imagination' (Kasemann's phrase) that speaks of these subjects. Without some fill-in of that kind in our conception of Christ, without some understanding of what he thought or of his motivation, it is difficult indeed to say whom we are speaking about when we speak of Jesus Christ. He becomes simply an X recurring in a series of propositions about the keryoma; an X, moreover, concerning whose internal nature we are forbidden to speak even on the basis of the series of propositions. In short, my reply to such a view would be that if we are unable to speak of the personality of Jesus, we are ex vi terminorum forbidden to speak about Jesus.

This much is clear: if the psychological model is to be discarded, then modern christology is on the verge of reintroducing its own brand of docetism. The Word was made flesh, but made flesh in a manner which escapes all the ordinary psychological observations that one would make about a human personality." (op. cit. pp.123-4).

McIntyre's argument appears to be thoroughly reasonable, reflecting a genuine interest in historical features. But we must ask what is gained by an attempt to construct the outlines of the historical human personality of Jesus? It is not, of course, denied that behind the kerygma there is the historical figure. But if the interest in the historical Jesus is to legitimize the kerygma, then faith finds itself at the mercy of the historian. Bultmann

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points out that

"the kerygma is not interested in the 'objective historicity' beyond the simple 'that' (Jesus lived). (9).

Bultmann goes on to ask, "If the message (and work) of Jesus place the hearer before a decision and disclose to him the possibility of a new existence why can the apostolic preaching not limit itself simply to repeating the message of Jesus, as other disciples repeat the teaching of their master? Why, in addition, or rather in the first place, had they to demand faith in him as the coming Son of Man, a faith which the historical Jesus never asked for? Why could the message concerning Christ entirely turn away from this 'repetition' as we see in Paul and John? (loc. cit).

Must the kerygma be validated on historical grounds before we can respond to the proclamation concerning the Christ? McIntyre seems to come very close to making faith dependent on a credible historical reconstruction of the personality of Jesus.

But we must leave aside discussion of the interesting issues raised by the new quest. It is already clear that whatever conclusions may be reached on the question of the relation of the historical Jesus to the kerygma, we are still left with the embarrassing fact that the new quest does not greatly help us to arrive at firm conclusions to the question of how Jesus himself understood his death. A general impression of the character and conduct of the Man of Nazareth is no substitute for authentic expressions of Jesus' self-conscious-

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ness in regard to his death.

Do any of the sayings attributed to Jesus relating to his death provide the clear and unambiguous information upon which we can speak definitely of Jesus' understanding of the Crucifixion? There are critical scholars who believe that the Synoptic Gospels do give us this information. In his study of the Passion-Sayings in the Gospels, Vincent Taylor writes,

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"Whatever explanation of the death of Jesus we may give today, there can be no doubt at all that Jesus himself understood its meaning in terms of sacrifice." (10).

Jesus reinterpreted the mission and destiny of the Son of Man, and regarded his death as an essential part of his messianic achievement. (<u>op. cit. p.90</u>). Taylor finds in Mark 9:9-13 confirmation of the view that

> "Jesus believed he must suffer as the Son of Man, and that he had taught this truth to his disciples." (<u>op. ci</u>t. <u>p.96</u>).

The 'Ransom' passage (Mark 10:45), accepted by Taylor as authentic, means that

"Jesus regarded his death as in some way an act of requital." (op. cit. p.104).

Similarly, the sayings at the Last Supper, suggest that

"Jesus looked upon his suffering and death as a sacrificial offering of himself for men." (<u>op. cit.p.125</u>).

Again, "the most fundamental idea which lies behind the Passion-Sayings is the steadfast belief of Jesus that the purpose and experiences of his Passion lay deep in the providence of God." (op. cit. p.255).

In suffering, Jesus was fulfilling his messianic vocation, through which he made possible a relationship of true fellowship between men and God.

> "Translated into its simplest terms, the question whether there is a dogmatic element in the thought of Jesus, is the inquiry whether he knew what he meant to achieve for men by his messianic ministry of suffering and death. This question, it is here maintained, should be answered in the affirmative." (op. cit. p.273).

William Manson comes to a similar conclusion in

"Jesus the Messiah"(11).

"The Synoptic tradition makes it plain that the acceptance by Jesus of death was the price not simply of his fidelity to truth but of his carrying through to the end his task of reconciling the many to God and his conviction of herein serving the will of the Father in heaven." (op. cit. p.164).

Manson holds that the great expansion of the Son of Man doctrine according to which the Son of Man's exaltation is from a human life of suffering on earth originated in the depths of Jesus' religious spirit. (<u>op. cit. p.ll7</u>). Furthermore, Jesus invested the necessity of his suffering as Son of Man with redemptive significance. (<u>op. cit. p.l27</u>). With reference to Mark 10:45, Manson concludes that

"it will not do to pronounce it impossible or un-

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likely that Jesus, who saw his work and teaching to be fraught with critical significance for his nation, should think of his sacrifice in terms of an <u>'asham</u> for many, as completing and consummating the work - the conversion and redemption of the many - which he had sought by his life to effect." (op. cit. p.133).

At the end of his study Manson declares categorically,

"To history belongs not the suffering of Jesus only but the mind with which he approached that suffering and the interpretation which he put upon it. At the heart of the Synoptic tradition there stands... an irreducible core of words of Jesus about the 'cup' which he must drink, the 'baptism' which he must undergo, the rejection and death which the Son of Man must endure... Words such as these are not easily put down to <u>ex post facto</u> invention on the part of the Christian community, nor can this be done without the consequence of denying to Jesus all part in the making of Christianity." (op. cit. p.162).

It is clear that for Taylor and Manson the Synoptic tradition is a faithful reflection of the mind of Jesus regarding his death. There is no real problem as the words of Jesus may be accepted as authentic to a highly probable degree. Now although this view is probably shared by most modern preachers, it is certainly contrary to the trend of critical historical and theological scholarship both in Germany and in the English-speaking world. Bultmann finds the origin of St. Mark's Gospel, in which 'the Gospel type' is first met, in the taking over of the Palestinian tradition by the Hellenistic Church and

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in the new motives in the Hellenistic Church which produced the shaping of the traditional material into a Gospel.(12). In the primitive Christian kerygma that grew up on Hellenistic soil.

> "the Christ who is preached is not the historic Jesus, but the Christ of the faith and the cult. Hence in the foreground of the preaching of Jesus stands the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the saving acts which are known by faith and become effective for the believer in Baptism and Lord's Supper. Thus the kerygma of Christ is cultic legend and the Gospels are expanded cult legends." (<u>op. cit. pp.370-1</u>).

The Kerygma does not refer to any other than the Man of Nazareth, but what can we know of his work and character?

Bultmann writes,

"With some caution we may suggest the following about the work of Jesus. Exorcisms are characteristic, the break with the law about the Sabbath, the attack upon prescriptions about purity, polemic against Jewish law, fellowship with outcasts like tax-gatherers and fallen women, a liking for women and children. Further, we may recognise that Jesus, unlike John the Baptist, was no ascetic, but liked to eat and to drink a glass of wine. Perhaps one could add that he summoned men to follow him, and gathered about himself a small group of followers, both men and women.

As for what he proclaimed... only this can be said, that he undoubtedly came forward in the consciousness of being commissioned by God to proclaim the eschatological message of the imminent rule of God and the demands and invitations of the will of God." (13).

In the kerygma Jesus as the Christ confronts us with an eschatological, absolute claim, as one who offers final and

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authentic self-understanding.

This, however, is not dependent upon an acceptance of the historical authenticity of any particular saying of Jesus. It is the proclamation of the faith of the Church in regard to the life and death of Jesus. It is therefore an alarmist exaggeration to speak with Manson of the 'inventions' of the Christian community and of 'denying to Jesus all part in the making of Christianity.' On the contrary, the resurrection faith

> "is a way of affirming the forgiving purpose of God in the historical reality of the life of Christ." (14).

The kerygma confesses Jesus as the vehicle of God's eschatological action and invites us to

> "recognise and confess in the Cross of Jesus the judgment of God upon all history" and "the forgiving action of God extended to all history." (<u>op. cit. p.92</u>).

In his discussion of the Gospel references to the death of Jesus, John Knox concludes that although Jesus was remembered to have expected the coming of the Son of Man,

> "nowhere does Jesus identify himself, whether explicitly or by implication, with the Son of Man." (15).

With Bultmann and others, he regards the conception of Jesus as the suffering Son of Man - a conception confined to Mark as an expression of Mark's understanding of the theological -101-

significance of the death of Jesus. Knox also argues

"the psychological implausibility of the conception of the Servant-Messiah as a mode of Jesus' own self-consciousness." (<u>op. cit. p.54</u>).

Such a conception is regarded as incompatible with his full and unqualified humanity.

Jeremias, on the other hand, argues that the most critical analysis of the Synoptic material cannot but

> "reveal a core of Jesus' sayings about his passion which must antedate the crucifixion." (16).

He is convinced that the phrase 'after three days'(Mark 8:31, 14:58, Luke 13:32) in which

"there is nowhere a distinction between the resurrection and the <u>parousia</u> ... shows that the substance of such announcements antedates Easter." (<u>op. cit. p.43</u>).

Furthermore the great variety of indirect announcements of the passion, for example, cup, baptism, slain shepherd, indicate that Jesus at least predicted his death.

But it is in five texts that Jeremias finds the bedrock of tradition:- (a) The Eucharistic words 'for many', which show "that Jesus found the key to the meaning of his passion and death in Isaiah 53." (<u>op. cit. p.46</u>). (b) Mark 10:45. "The least that must be said:... this... tradition... presents Jesus as interpreting his passion with the aid of Isaiah 53." (op. cit. p.47) (c) Luke 22:35-38. "As soon as we realise that what Jesus announces is not just hatred and persecution but the imminent beginning of the apocalyptic tribulation, it is evident that we are dealing with a saying which cannot have been coined ex eventu but must be pre-Easter... Again it is Isaiah 53 which furnishes in Luke 22:35-38 the interpretation of the passion lying before Jesus." (op. cit. p. 47). (d) Mark 14:27f. "The image of the shepherd preceding his flock and guiding them to Galilee can by no means have been worded ex eventu after the resurrection." (op. cit. p.48). The idea is not only of the eschatological tribulation of the flock but also of the gathering of the tried and purified remnant within the kingdom of God. In this reference, Jesus' death "marks the turning point inaugurating the final tribulation and salvation." (op. cit. p.48). (e) Luke 23:34. "We have in this prayer an implicit interpretation of Jesus' death. For Jesus offers it in place of the expiatory vow: 'May my death expiate all my sins', which a condemned man had to say before his execution. Jesus applies the atoning virtue of his death not to himself, as was the custom, but to his executioners. Here again Isaiah 53 is in the background." (op. cit.pp.48-9).

Now although Jeremias argues for the authenticity of these words, he yet speaks only of the "great probability" that Jesus interpreted his death as a fulfilment of Isaiah 53.

"Certainty is not to be expected." (<u>op. cit. p.50)</u>.

Our conclusion is that it is not possible to go behind the kerygma to indubitably authentic words of Jesus with regard to his death. We cannot be sure in what sense Jesus understood his death. The problem, however, is one for history, not for faith. Faith is not a belief that Jesus entertained certain ideas, which therefore must be true, or

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that he spoke certain words on particular occasions, the authenticity of which we cannot doubt; it is rather the conviction that his life and death was the central element in a divine and supremely significant event.

> "Faith affirms the real presence of God in the life and death of Jesus", and "the certainty of faith is the affirmation of meaning in that life of selfgiving which is Christ's." (17).

Similarly Tillich writes,

"The certitude of faith does not imply certainty about questions of historical research." (18).

It is impossible to provide a safe foundation for the Christian faith by positing a minimum of reliable facts about the Man of Nazareth. The christological symbols such as Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah, are the titles applied by faith to the One

"in whom the essential unity of God and man has appeared under the conditions of existence ." (op. cit. p.126).

This faith is affirmed by those who find themselves transformed into the state of faith. No historical criticism can question this awareness, nor can any 'assured results' of historical research strengthen it. Faith is confirmed by the transforming power of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. The risk of faith is not a risk concerning uncertain historical facts.

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"The risk of faith is existential." (<u>op. cit. p.134</u>). It involves aur total response to the claim which arises out of our past in the message concerning Jesus, a claim which involves a decision concerning the way we understand our life and its meaning. (19).

Although Gregor Smith and Tillich express themselves rather differently, it is clear that for both of them the fundamental quality of faith in Jesus is neither belief in spite of inadequate historical foundations nor belief because of certain indubitable facts, but an existential decision concerning Jesus as the New Being (Tillich), or as the eschatological event (Gregor Smith).

But this leads us to a closer examination of the message concerning Jesus, and to that we now turn.

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THE CROSS

in the

NEW TESTAMENT

(continued)

B. The Primitive Church.

In the final chapter of his survey of the present position of New Testament study, Reginald Fuller draws attention to a number of issues that require fuller and deeper investigation. One of these is the need for

> "a greater clarification between Palestinian and Hellenistic strata in the traditions behind our written gospels." (20).

He points out that the whole distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity is becoming increasingly problematical.

With this caveat in mind, we will set down as briefly as possible the kerygma of the Palestinian and the Hellenistic churches as outlined by Bultmann in his "<u>Theology</u> of the New Testament".

From the beginning, the earliest church recognised and acknowledged in Jesus, the Messiah. But the proclamation occurred within the framework of the Jewish eschatological expectation, and it was therefore more particularly as the coming Messiah that he was proclaimed. Therefore, -106-

"Jesus' importance as Messiah - Son-of-Man lies not at all in what he did in the past, but entirely in what is expected of him for the future." (21).

This accounts for the lack of interest in the earliest church in the personality of Jesus. The church was an eschatological congregation awaiting the near end of history.

Yet Jesus' coming was already being recognised as in some sense a decisive eschatological event. A christology was

> "explicit in the earliest church to the extent that they understood Jesus as the one whom God by the resurrection has made Messiah, and that they awaited him as the coming Son of Man." (op. cit. pp.43-4).

But the Cross presented a difficulty. How could one who had suffered such a death be acknowledged as having been sent by God, as one who claimed the allegiance of men? The scandal of the Cross was surmounted in the Easter faith.

> "The rise of the Easter faith made necessary a way of understanding the Cross that would surmount, yes, transform, the scandal of the curse which in Jewish opinion had befallen Jesus; the Cross had to make sense in the context of the salvation-process." (op. cit. pp.45-6).

In the process of understanding, it was recognised that the Cross was a <u>skandalon</u>, but that it was also a divine necessity. (cf. Luke 24:26f. - 'Was the Messiah not bound to suffer thus before entering upon his glory?').

But beyond that, Jesus' death was probably already

being conceived as an expiatory sacrifice. Bultmann sees in Romans 3:24f, a reference to the earliest kerygma.

> "The designation of Christ as the <u>hilasterion</u> occurs only here in Paul; nor is it Paul's habit elsewhere (except Romans 5:9, and, again following tradition, in reference to the Lord's Supper, to speak of 'the blood' of Christ, but of 'the Cross'... The idea found here of the divine righteousness demanding expiation for former sins is otherwise foreign to him." (op. cit. p.46).

In the Hellenistic world, Christian missionary preaching began with the proclamation of the one God. Because it does not know God, the pagan world is held to be sunk in ignorance and error. To accept the Christian faith is therefore to know God, or the truth. But since polytheism and idolatry was seen to be part of the world's sin and vice, the acceptance of the Christian faith involved a repentance as well as a turning aside from idols. The call to repentance was made under the conviction that the one God, the Creator, was also the Judge.

> "Hence Christian preaching of the one true God is at the same time eschatological proclamation, preaching of the impending judgment of the world." (<u>op. cit .p.74</u>).

At an early stage the christological motif enters the kerygma with the assertion that Jesus appears as the Judge of the world. Christ is the judge of the living and the dead. According to Acts 17:31, God gave proof that he had

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appointed Christ Judge of the world by raising him from the dead. But the Judge is also to be the Saviour of those who believe. (1 Thess.4:15-18).

The Judge, however, was none other than he who had previously been put to death on the Cross. (Romans 4:25, 1 Cor. 15:3f.). Therefore the telling of the passion story played a considerable part in the proclamation concerning Jesus.

> "It is hard to say, however, to what extent there was theological reflection on the death of Christ, i.e., to what extent positive significance for salvation was ascribed to it." (op. cit. p.84).

What theological significance the Cross did receive was determined by the Old Testament tradition and not, at least yet, by concepts derived from Hellenistic syncretism. Bultmann affirms that

> "the interpretation of Jesus' death as an explatory sacrifice for sins... was without doubt presented in the Hellenistic-Christian mission." (op. cit. p.84).

In such terms as 'for you', 'for us', 'for sins', the significance of the death of Christ is expressed. From the same tradition come the references to Jesus' death as a sacrifice and as a covenant sacrifice, linking the death not simply to the individual but to the congregation, the 'people of God'. And the same train of ideas is to be seen in the references to Jesus' death in terms of deliverance from sin, and a means of

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sanctification, grounded in forgiveness.

We may note in passing that Vincent Taylor, from a point of view much less critical than Bultmann's, concludes that the beliefs of primitive Christianity relating to the death of Jesus refer to its messianic, sacrificial significance. Furthermore, the death bore a close relation to sin and was understood as a vicarious act.

> "The belief which lay deepest in the mind of primitive Christianity was that Jesus, as the Christ, the Son and Servant of God, had died and risen again to deliver men from sin and to establish, by the sacrifice of himself, a new covenant relationship between them and God. No theory, no rationale, of this conviction is given in the records, but the evidence shows that the deed of Christ was widely understood as the fulfilment of the ancient purpose of God, as a vicarious act, and as in some sense representative." (22).

In summary, then, it seems clear that while the death of Jesus had not as yet received doctrinal formulation, it was reckoned to be an integral part of the salvation process, an event with sacrificial significance whereby believers received forgiveness, and deliverance in the day of judgment. Closely related was the call to repentance and the exhortation to live a life 'pure and undefiled'. And in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper, these themes were given sacramental confirmation and expression. -110-

THE CROSS

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(continued)

C. The Cross in the Theology of Paul.

Critical scholarship has not yet resolved the question of the theological environment out of which Paul emerged. Was his theology influenced predominantly by his Pharisaic background or by the Hellenistic environment in which he was born and in which he worked? While Bultmann finds the Hellenistic influences decisive, W.D.Davies argues that although

> "both Hellenism and Judaism were his tutors unto Christ", (23)

elements in Paul's theology which are often labelled Hellenistic might well be derived from Judaism. Whatever conclusions are reached by scholars concerning individual features of Paul's thinking, it is surely clear that his profound reflection on the meaning of the Christ led him quite naturally to use the ideas and concepts which were to hand in his rich cultural and religious environment. Not only did he receive the kerygma, but he interpreted it with regard to his understanding of the human situation, and gave the gospel the stamp of his own brilliant mind. -111-

Of one thing we can be sure, and that is the

centrality of the Cross in his preaching and teaching.

"God forbid that I should boast of anything but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world!" (Gal.6:14, N.E.B.).

In Corinth he declares that he was resolved

"to think of nothing but Jesus Christ - Christ nailed to the Cross." (1 Cor.2:2, N.E.B.).

He had been sent to preach the gospel

"and to do it without relying on the language of worldly wisdom, so that the fact of Christ on his Cross might have its full weight." (<u>l Cor.1:17, N.E.B.</u>).

This emphasis may be traced to his conversion. Bultmann writes,

"The question thrust upon him... was whether he was willing to regard the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. whom the kerygma asserted to have risen from the dead, as the expected Messiah. But for Paul, the fervent champion of the traditions of the fathers, straightway recognising how basically the Torah was called into question by the Hellenistic mission, that meant whether he was willing to acknowledge in the Cross of Christ God's judgment upon his selfunderstanding up to that time -i.e. God's condemnation of his Jewish striving after righteousness by fulfilling the works of the Law. After he had first indignantly rejected this guestion and become a persecutor of the Church, at his conversion he submitted to this judgment of God... His was not a conversion of repentance; neither, of course, was it one of emancipating enlightenment. Rather, it was obedient submission to the judgment of God, made known in the Cross of Christ, upon all human accomplishment and boasting. It is as such that his conversion is reflected in his theology." (24).

Although this may be recognised as the well-spring

of his theology, the problem for Paul's interpreters has been to reconcile what appear to be contradictory explications of the meaning of the Cross. The mass of literature on Pauline theology is witness to this fact. But it is not to be thought that Paul was a systematic theologian, and for him the personal and cosmic significance of the Christ on his Cross was utterly beyond the reach of neat systematisers and those bent on removing all apparent inconsistencies. The caricatures of Paul's view of the Cross which have appeared in the falsely objectified 'theories of the atonement' show the impossibility of confining the dynamic richness of a personal relationship within the rigid framework of a dogmatising theology. We shall therefore indicate in this section the primary images which Paul uses in seeking to expound the word of the Cross. But first we must examine Paul's understanding of the human condition, his anthropology.

Bultmann has interpreted Paul's theology on the basis of what he regards as a fundamental Pauline distinction, that between man prior to faith, and man under faith. The transformation is made possible through the Cross in which the 'old man' is judged and condemned, and the life in faith,

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the 'new creation' comes into being. Nothing less than a radical transformation and reorientation of life is involved.

The situation of man prior to faith is one of slavery. To understand this we need to examine Paul's use of the terms '<u>soma</u>' (body) and '<u>sarx</u>'(flesh). The term 'soma' denotes for Paul, man as a person, man as a whole.

> "Man is called <u>soma</u> in respect of his being able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as the subject to whom something happens." (op. cit.vol.l, p.195).

Romans 12:1, for example, reads,

"I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves (soma) to him: a living sacrifice." (N.E.B.).

On the other hand, man is able to yield himself to sin:

"So sin must no longer reign in your mortal body." (soma) (Romans 6:12, N.E.B.).

Man therefore is a being who has a relationship to himself, and that relationship may be either appropriate or perverted. He can be at odds with himself or in control of himself. The term corresponds most closely to the Hebrew '<u>nephesh</u>', 'living soul' - man as a self-conscious being.

But the <u>soma</u> understood as the self, may be under the rule of '<u>sarx</u>'. When under the domination of <u>sarx</u>, the term <u>soma</u> may be used in the same way as <u>sarx</u>. Thus in Romans 8:13 -

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"But if by the Spirit you put to death all the base pursuits of the body, then you will live,"(N.E.B.), the body (<u>soma</u>) under the sway of <u>sarx</u> can be spoken of in the same way as <u>sarx</u> itself. Hence the flesh-ruled <u>soma</u> comes to be spoken of as 'the flesh'. Man, then, is seen by Paul as under the domination of <u>sarx</u>, a power which lays hold of him and determines his life and behaviour. Deliverance from slavery to <u>sarx</u> does not therefore mean release of the self from the body, as though the body were a prison, but rather the transformation of the <u>soma</u> into a Spirit-ruled <u>soma</u>.

Yet it must not be thought that Paul uses the term <u>sarx</u> to refer simply to physical flesh. <u>Sarx</u> can denote not only the material body but also 'fleshiness', referring to an attitude in which man seeks to discover his life in purely human and transitory concerns. Life 'after the flesh' means life which is centred on the self and the world. (2 Cor. 11:18 -"people brag of their earthly distinctions.." N.E.B.). For Paul, this life is the spurious life. But it is also the sinful life, for it is nourished by the selfdelusion that man can find his life in himself apart from his Creator. This gives rise to boastful arrogance in the 'works of the flesh', pride of knowledge and wisdom, and the

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striving after righteousness in the zealous bustle of moral and religious activities. (1 Cor. 1:26, 2 Cor. 10:12-18, 12:1.) In Philippians 3:3-7, Paul makes it especially clear that the attitude which orients itself by 'flesh' is the self reliant attitude of the man who puts his confidence in his own strength and in that over which he has mastery. Such an attitude is characteristic both of the Jew, who boasts of God and the Torah (Romans 2:17,23), and of the Greek who boasts of his wisdom (1 Cor. 1:19-31). It also gives rise to the tendency in man to compare himself with others in order to be able to boast (Gal.6:4).

But the baleful consequence of this life '<u>kata</u> <u>sarka</u>', is fear, fear which is the reverse side of zeal. Man becomes fearful and anxious with care. He becomes the slave of that which he supposes he can control. In Paul's understanding, therefore, man has fallen victim to flesh and sin (regarded as a demonic power) and against them he is powerless. Their rule in man's life is ultimately destructive, for man becomes divided against himself, he is dominated by fear and fails to achieve that life which he intends.

What then, does Paul understand by the terms '<u>psyche</u>' and '<u>pneuma</u>'? He seldom uses the word <u>psyche</u> and it usually means 'life itself' in contrast to self-conscious existence. Like <u>soma</u> it can almost correspond to the Hebrew <u>nephesh</u> (<u>Bultmann, op. cit. p.204</u>). The word may also be translated as 'spirit' with a small 's'. In Philippians 1:27, Christians are exhorted to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind (<u>psyche</u>), i.e. to have the same attitude or orientation of will. The phrase '<u>ek psyches</u>', (Eph. 6:6), means 'heartily', 'with a will', 'with spirit'. Yet the term can also have the meaning of 'inferior'. The man who is '<u>psychikos</u>' (1 Cor. 2:14 - <u>un</u>spiritual, N.E.B.), is the man whose life is bound by earthly concerns.

Paul uses the term '<u>pneuma</u>' prdominantly to refer to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God, and in Romans 8:16 the divine <u>pneuma</u>, which Christians have received, is distinguished from 'our Spirit'. ("In that cry,(Abba! Father!) the Spirit of God joins with our spirit"). With reference to the human spirit, Paul's use of the term <u>pneuma</u> approaches the modern idea of consciousness, or self-conscious awareness.

> "When Paul speaks of the <u>pneuma</u> of man he does not mean some higher principle within him or some special intellectual or spiritual faculty of his, but simply his self." (op. cit. p.206).

<u>Pneuma</u> approaches the concept of '<u>nous</u>'. In 1 Corinthians 14:14, for example, there is the contrast between the divine <u>pneuma</u> and the human mind. <u>Pneuma</u>, then, refers particularly to the

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self-conscious willing self. To be 'led by the Spirit' therefore means to have one's will orientated in a particular direction. It is not clear whether Paul was thinking in terms of possessing, so to speak, a particle of the divine Spirit. But the divine <u>pneuma</u> is evidently an active power which is contrasted with the domination of the flesh. In the Christian, the old life, <u>en sarki</u>, has been displaced by the new life, <u>en pneumati</u>.

According to Paul then, man is a living unity, aware of himself, his relation to others and to the world. But the analysis of his existence reveals a perversity which thwarts his efforts to achieve his goals and intentions. His existence is never a fulfilled reality. Yet his existence is always 'existence before God', the Creator who demands obedience. Man therefore is confronted with the choice either of acknowledging the Creator and obeying him, or of refusing him obedience; of living after the flesh, striving to justify himself, or of accepting his creaturely relationship. But under the dominion of sin man chooses to justify himself, and victimized by his self-delusion, he gains not life but death.

In what sense is man responsible for his situation? Paul's statements are not consistent with each other. In

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Romans 1:18-3:20 Paul demonstrates the universality of sin, but simply shows that all men, both Gentiles and Jews, are sinners. Their behaviour demonstrates their apostasy from the Creator, and involves genuine guilt. But in Romans 5:12-19, sin is attributed to Adam's sin. Man henceforth lives under a curse for which he is not himself responsible.

"Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners." (Romans 5:19, N.E.B.).

It is not possible to speak of guilt in the ethical sense in this situation.

Yet we may infer from the notion of inherited sin that every man is born into a humanity that is and always has been guided by false strivings. In human relationships, trust can be destroyed by a single lie, and a single deed of violence can give rise to strife. Everyone in fact lives in a world in which each strives to justify himself, insists on rights and is aware of inner conflict. Paul's 'inconsistency' derives from his insight into the human situation, and no theologian who shows similar insight has avoided the same inconsistency. For on the one hand there is the evil tendency in man which makes him prefer darkness to light, and the responsibility which must be his if he is to be held accountable for his existence. It is doubtful if even a

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behaviourist psychologist would be unaware of a conflict arising from a sense of responsibility if he were required under duress to deny his behaviourist theories.

Two further concepts are basic to Paul's understanding of man's plight: the cosmos, and the Law. Besides meaning simply 'the creation', 'Kosmos' often denotes

> "the quintessence of earthly conditions of life and earthly possibilities." (Bultmann, op. cit. p.254).

In 2 Corinthians 1:12 Paul uses the term to refer to his relationship with his fellow-men. Similarly in Romans 5:12, the use of the term signifies the 'world of men' rather than the universe. In some places, however, Paul thinks of <u>kosmos</u> as the sphere of human life, which in its totality is at enmity with God. (Rom.3:6, 19, 2 Cor.5:19.). The <u>kosmos</u> is this evil age, in which sin abounds and which is destined for death. Bultmann regards Paul's usage of 'flesh' and 'world' as sometimes synonymous.

> "Then the eerie fact is that the <u>kosmos</u>, the world of men, constituted by that which the individual does and upon which he bestows his care, itself gains the upper hand over the individual. The <u>kosmos</u> comes to constitute an independent superself over all individual selves. " (op. cit. pp.256-7).

We may speak of 'the spirit of the world', 'the spirit of science', or the 'cultural environment' as the compelling atmosphere which influences every man.

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This eschatological-historical meaning is expressed also in Paul's mythological statements about the powers of the <u>kosmos</u>. The <u>kosmos</u> is the domain of demonic powers -'angels, principalities and powers' (Romans 8:38), 'the rulers of this age' (1 Cor. 2:6, 8). The head of these anti-divine powers is Satan (Romans 16:20, 1 Cor. 5:5), the 'god of this age' (2 Cor. 4:4). Paul, however, does not think of these powers in the dualistic manner of Gnosticism. The powers belong to God's creation, but they derive their evil significance from man who lets them on to the throne of his life. For the Christian, they are dethroned and he is no longer subject to them. Hence the mythological notion of spirit powers is not the product of cosmological speculation attempting to explain terrifying phenomena, nor is it an attempt to relieve man of responsibility and guilt.

As a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Paul's life and religion were centred in the Torah, the Law of God. The Law was not a rational moral law inherent in man's intellect, but the concrete demands, cultic, ritual and ethical, which man must obey. Yet in his experience, Paul discovered that his most earnest efforts to achieve a right relation with God by keeping the Law only led him into more sin and into despair. Vincent Taylor describes Paul's words in connection with the Law as "the language of intense spiritual disappointment" (25). Yet the Law is 'holy and good' (Romans 7:12), and it is through the Law that we come to an awareness of sin. It brings to light the perversity of man's willing. Paul believed that the attempt to justify oneself on the basis of obedience to the Law was already sin. For sin is man's selfpowered striving to procure his own salvation by his own strenoth.

> "It is not merely evil deeds already committed that make a man reprehensible in God's sight, but man's intention of becoming righteous before God by keeping the Law and thereby having his 'boast' is already sin." (26).

Paul's attitude to the Law inevitably became ambiguous. On the one hand, the Law was God-given, part of his purpose for mankind, it provided moral and religious stability. On the other hand it became an unbearable burden and under the power of sin, set itself in the place of God. Man's situation within the Law became a desperate one.

Summarising, we may say that Paul sees the Cross against the background of man's desperate need for deliverance. We now turn to examine the images he employs to relate Christ's death to that deliverance.

One of the dominant concepts used by Paul is that of sacrifice. This he found to be part of the tradition he had

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received, and which saw in Jewish sacrificial practice an analogy to the death of Jesus. Jesus' death is the '<u>hilasterion</u>' in his blood, it is the expiatory sacrifice by which forgiveness of sins is effected.

"For God designed him to be the means of explating sin by his sacrificial death." (Romans 3:25, N.E.B.). The same concept is dominant in the liturgy of the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. 11:24f.). Similarly the idea of explation is behind the passages in which Jesus is spoken of as having 'died for our sins' (1 Cor. 15:3, 2 Cor. 5:14); 'died for us' (Romans 5:6, 14:15); or as having 'given himself up' or 'sacrificed himself' (Romans 8:32, Gal. 1:4). In 1 Cor.5:7 Christ is referred to as our Passover sacrifice. The sacrifice is vicarious -

> "God made him a sin-offering for us." (<u>2 Cor. 5:21</u>, N.E.B. margin). "Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the law by becoming for our sake an accursed thing." (<u>Gal. 3:13</u>, N.E.B.).

In this reference, the vicarious death of Jesus is the means whereby we are redeemed from the curse of the Law. This apparently means release from the punishment imposed upon sin understood as disobedience to the Law. The sacrifice is believed to cancel guilt and punishment. Yet we should here notice Galatians 4:4, where Paul speaks of Christ having been sent "to purchase freedom for the subjects of the Law."

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Here freedom clearly refers not simply to release from punishment but from bondage to the Law itself, understood as a power of this sin-dominated age. This is further emphasised in Galatians 1:4, where it is declared that

> "Christ ... sacrificed himself for our sins, to rescue us out of this present age of wickedness." (N.E.B.).

It seems clear that Paul found the concept of explatory sacrifice inadequate in itself to express the significance of Jesus' death. This is further confirmed in the fact that Paul has very little to say about forgiveness in relation to the crucifixion. Bultmann suggests that the concept of sacrifice does not express Paul's characteristic view. (<u>op. cit. p.296</u>). Similarly Vincent Taylor observes that Paul never represents forgiveness as the object for which Christ died. (27). W.D.Davies, on the other hand, insists that the background of the Jewish sacrificial system cannot be ignored. He suggests that

> "it was Paul's very familiarity with the sacrificial system that possibly accounts for the comparatively little use he makes of it in his theology." (28).

In all sacrificial activity it was the blood which was central. Therefore through the outpouring of Jesus' blood the defilement which separated man from God was removed. Davies links the <u>hilasterion</u> of Romans 3:25 with the 'kapporeth' of Exodus 25:17-22. In the cultic ritual of Judaism, the Law dealt with the expiation of sin in the sprinkling of the innermost shrine of the sanctuary with blood. So Paul thinks of Christ in terms of the spiritual <u>hilasterion</u> publicly set forth, not hidden away inaccessibly in the Holy of Holies and effective for atonement in virtue of his own blood, not that of any beast.

In spite of Davies' point, it remains true, nevertheless, that Paul did not make use of the sacrificial concept in the same way as for example, the author of the letter to the Hebrews. The concept was undoubtedly a major feature of his spiritual heritage, but he did not lay great stress on it as an interpretative principle, and easily moved when speaking in sacrificial terms to other concepts, notably that of release from bondage. Davies himself concludes that sacrificial categories are of only minor importance compared with the concept of the New Covenant and the perfect obedience which is implicit in it. Davies finds great significance in the references to the obedience of Jesus. Just as the covenant at Sinai was sealed with blood and involved obedience to Jahweh, so the new covenant instituted by Jesus (1 Cor.11:25), was ratified by the shedding of his blood, which was itself the supreme act of obedience and

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hence the perfect fulfilment of the Law.

"For Paul, Jesus himself in the totality of his being was a New Torah: Christ is for him both the New Torah and also the example of a perfect obedience to that new Torah." (<u>op. cit. p.266</u>).

The merit of Christ's obedience is efficacious for all who believe.

We have already referred to the idea of release from bondage to the Law, which is certainly close to the heart of Paul's thinking. Christ's death is not merely a sacrifice which cancels out sin and punishment, but effects a release from the dominion of the powers of this age - Law, Sin and Death. Here the complexity of Paul's thought cannot be reduced to consistency. In 1 Cor.6:20 Paul writes, "You were bought at a price". To whom or to what was the price paid? Within the context of 1 Cor. 6:12-20 it seems obvious that Paul is not referring to any fantastic notion of a price paid to the Devil but to those powers into whose grasp man has fallen. In Colossians 2:15, however, Paul places the emphasis on the direct victory of Christ over "the cosmic powers and authorities".

Paul uses a variety of images - sacrifice, ransom, obedience, victory over demonic forces - to relate the death of Jesus to the need of man for salvation. His language is often strongly metaphorical, resisting any attempt to reduce it to rigid theological consistency. But the question arises whether these images really take us to the heart of the 'salvation-occurrence'. Are they more than traditional images which Paul found at hand? Can we build any theory of atonement on any or all of these images combined? It would seem that at the root of the fact that theories of the atonement are so unsatisfactory is the tendency to ground them upon limited or inadequate concepts.

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THE CROSS

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NEW TESTAMENT

(continued)

D. The Johannine Writings.

The most striking characteristic of the Johannine writings is the use of antithetical terms - truth, falsehood; life, death; light, darkness; love, hate; this worldly, not of this world - to express the two possibilities of existence, either as a slave to 'the prince of this world' or as one who in faith has been brought from darkness to light. The coming of Jesus faces men with the decision to choose between the two. This world is under the dominion of the Evil One and therefore is in darkness, but the appearance of Jesus breaks the tyranny of the Devil.

> "The Son of God appeared for the very purpose of undoing the devil's work." (<u>1 John 3:8</u>, N.E.B.).

Sin is understood as a despotic power,

"everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." (John 8:34, R.S.V.).

The certainty and universality of sin are expressed in

blunt terms-

"If we claim to be sinless, we are self-deceived and strangers to the truth." (<u>1 John 1:8</u>, N.E.B.).

Now although John, like Paul, sees the coming of

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Jesus against the background of the present evil age, and affirms that Jesus has radically changed man's situation, he does not link the accomplishment of that change as dimectly as does Paul to the death of Jesus. He nowhere speaks of the 'cross' or the 'crucified' in the manner of Paul. John rather speaks of the death of Jesus as the culmination of his whole ministry, which in its very totality, was the manifestation of the divine action against the powers of darkness. This fact has led Bultmann to conclude that,

> "The common Christian interpretation of Jesus' death as an atonement for sins is not, therefore, what determines John's view of it." (29).

He supports this conclusion by regarding 1 John 2:2 ("He is himself the remedy for the defilement of our sins, not our sins only but the sins of all the world), and 1 John 4:10 ("..the remedy for the defilement of our sins"), as redactional glosses.

Nevertheless it is apparent that John does not make sacrificial concepts central to his interpretation of the Christ-event. He makes certain allusions, but the reader is left to discern their significance, for example, the grain of wheat, (John 12:24), the Passover lamb, (John 19:36), and consecration (John 17:19). It is also noteworthy that John does not narrate the institution of the Lord's Supper in which the atonement idea occurs in the words, 'for you' and 'for many'. John also substitutes the 'new commandment' (13:34) for the 'new covenant' (1 Cor. 11:25). Furthermore, he makes no use of the concepts of righteousness and justification.

Vincent Taylor writes with a degree of disappointment,

"He never represents Christ as dying for sinners, as bearing their sins, falling under their curse, offering himself in sacrifice on their behalf, inviting them to trust in his redemptive ministry and share in the power of his self-offering.... There is no description of a self-offering of Christ for sinners with which they can identify themselves in their approach to God for pardon, reconciliation and peace. " (30).

This is a revealing statement, for it expresses both the fact that sacrificial categories are lacking in John's thought and the difficulties which arise when the attempt is made to interpret the New Testament witness to the Cross within the framework of the concept of sacrifice.

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We are here confronted with the crucial question as to whether sacrificial concepts are in fact adequate to express the meaning of the Cross. Two considerations must be borne in mind. First, there is the evidence from Paul and John that while reference is made to sacrifice and the sacrificial efficacy of the death of Jesus, their thought

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goes beyond the limits of sacrificial concepts. We have, for example, the recognition of the eschatological significance of Jesus' life and death and resurrection. In John this overshadows the idea of sacrifice and leads Vincent Taylor to conclude that John has a weaker grasp of the meaning of Jesus' death than has Paul. (<u>op. cit. p.156</u>). Yet the same eschatological interpretation of the Cross is apparent in Paul when his thought is released from the bonds imposed by sacrificial concepts. While the 'word of the Cross' is the substance of Paul's gospel, it is understood as the proclamation of the total salvation-event, which includes the resurrection. Furthermore, Paul stresses the presentness of the new aeon.

"The old order has gone, and a new order has already begun." (2 Cor. 5:17, N.E.B.).

In the second place, the attempt to confine the presentation of the death of Jesus to sacrificial categories has led so-called theories of the atonement into gross absurdity, or into an objectivity which leaves an unbridged gap between the Cross and the believer. For what does Jesus' death, reckoned as a sacrifice, accomplish? The transference of the penal consequences of sin from man to Jesus? The satisfaction of God's justice so that he is free to forgive

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sinners? A change in the attitude of God towards sinful man? The conservation of ethical values in a world of moral realities? Is Jesus' sacrifice of his life an example of heroism and love which arouses a responsive love and devotion in man?

In each case the dynamic relational quality of faith tends to be obscured. The individual is left as it were at a distance to observe what is claimed to be the objective fact of the sacrificial death and to accept the further claim that this death in the distant past somehow effected a change in his status before God. Man remains a spectator of a wondrous action of God. The crude objectivity of such a view of the Cross is sometimes modified in the attempt to involve the individual more directly in the sacrificial act. Taylor, for example, affirms that the saving deed of Christ and the appropriation of his work by faith

> "together constitute the Atonement". He goes on, "We need an objective deed which in its sublimity stands apart from us, something which is there whether we accept it or not, something which is true whether we believe or whether we reject it, a stark irremovable reality which exists in its own right and which owes nothing to ourselves by way of creation or action. Such a reality is the saving deed of God in Christ. But we need also a believing response if this deed is to become effective in our relationships with God. This response is faith union with Christ." (31).

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Now although Taylor's argument appears to overcome the remoteness and unreality of the objective sacrificial view, we are left with two acts of faith - belief in the 'fact' reported about Jesus' death as a sacrificial act, 'the saving deed', and a faith-commitment in terms of repentance, acknowledgement of guilt and self-surrender. A further consequence of Taylor's view is that the gap between God and the individual is in part overcome by certain conditions fulfilled by the believer. In "<u>The</u> <u>Atonement in New Testament Teaching</u>", he speaks of the moral conditions which are necessary if man is to be reconciled to God, namely, repentance, obedience and submission to the will of God. (p.195).

The difficulty lies in the assumption that 'the saving deed' can be observed objectively. But that the death of Jesus is a saving deed is not an immediately accessible 'fact'. We cannot properly speak of Jesus' death as having redemptive significance apart from a prior relationship of faith. It is only as in faith I recognise and accept in the life and death of Jesus God's judgment and forgiveness that I can speak of a saving deed. We may from within the faith relationship think of Jesus' death as having sacrificial qualities, but this follows upon the acceptance of the message concerning the life and death of Jesus as a message of judgment and hope, a message about God's being-for-us in the present.

We conclude that notwithstanding the use made of S sacrificial concepts in the New Testament witness to the Cross, they are in themselves inadequate to express the full significance of the salvation-occurrence as an eschatological event. Sacrificial categories, regarded in isolation, lead to an almost mechanical objectivity and to the necessity of justifying the ways of God in terms of his subjection to "moral realities". (32). But the result is far from convincing. In spite of the use of such terms as 'participation' (op. cit. p.265), and 'appropriation' ("The Cross of Christ"p.100f.), the saving event remains separated from the present by an extending period of history; faith inevitably presupposes a 'believing that'; and the Cross is either reduced to a moral example or affirmed as a substitutionary sacrifice.

We turn now to a consideration of the Cross in relation to the formative theological thought of Rudolf Bultmann.

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<u>FOUR</u>

THE CROSS

and

NEW TESTAMENT MYTHOLOGY

It is immediately apparent to a modern reader of the Gospels that the view of the world held by the authors is fundamentally different from that of a man living in an age of science. The difference may be a source of bewilderment and raise difficulties that are not at all related to the essential gospel proclamation. The urgent need is to examine the question whether the gospel is bound to its particular world view. The name of Rudolf Bultmann is inextricably associated with the attempt to grasp the meaning of the kerygmatic proclamation through the interpretation of the mythological terms in which it is expressed.

In religious terms, a myth may be defined as the attempt to express in concrete objective terms a particular aspect of the mystery of human existence in relation to transcendent realities. Bultmann writes, "Myths express the knowledge that man is not master of the world and of his life, that the world within which he lives is full of riddles and mysteries and that human life also is full of riddles and mysteries. Mythology expresses a certain understanding of human existence. It believes that the world and human life have their ground and their limits in a power which is beyond all that we can calculate or control. Mythology speaks about this power inadequately and insufficiently because it speaks about it as if it were a worldly power. It speaks of gods who represent the power beyond the visible, comprehensible world. It speaks of gods as if they were men and of their actions as human actions, although it conceives of the gods as endowed with superhuman power and of their actions as incalculable, as capable of breaking the normal, ordinary order of events. It may be said that myths give to the transcendent reality an immanent, this-worldly objectivity. " (1).

Now when we look at the Gospels we find that one of the characteristic references is to the Kingdom of God. It is a matter of common agreement among New Testament scholars that the Kingdom was generally understood as something whose coming was imminent and which would be inaugurated by a cosmic act of God. Certainly Jesus, the earliest church and Paul expected the Kingdom of God to come in the immediate future.

> However, "this hope of Jesus and the early Christian community was not fulfilled. The same world still exists and history continues. The course of history has refuted mythology. For the conception 'Kingdom of God' is mythological, as is the conception of the eschatological drama. Just as mythological are the presuppositions of the expectation of the Kingdom of God, namely, the theory that the world, although created by God, is ruled by the devil, Satan, and that his army, the demons, is the cause of all evil, sin and disease. The whole conception of the world which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New

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Testament generally is mythological; i.e., the conception of the world as being structured in three stories, heaven, earth and hell; the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the course of events; and the conception of miracles, especially the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the inner life of the soul, the conception that men can be tempted and corrupted by the devil and possessed by evil spirits. This conception of the world we call mythological because it is different from the conception of the world which has been formed and developed by science since its inception in ancient Greece and which has been accepted by all modern men. In this modern conception of the world the cause-and-effect nexus is fundamental. Although modern physical theories take account of chance in the chain of cause and effect in subatomic phenomena, our daily living, purposes and actions are not affected. In any case, modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated, by supernatural powers," (op. cit. pp.14-15).

And it is not otherwise in the case of the modern study of history. No historian proceeds with notions involving the intervention of God or the devil or of demons in the course

of history.

"The question inevitably arises: is it possible that Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God still has any importance for modern men and the preaching of the New Testament as a whole is still important for modern men? The preaching of the New Testament proclaims Jesus Christ, not only his preaching of the Kingdom of God but first of all his person, which was mythologized from the very beginnings of earliest Christianity...His person is viewed in the light of mythology when he is said to have been begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, and this becomes clearer still in Hellenistic Christian communities where he is understood to be

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the Son of God in a metaphysical sense, a great, pre-existent heavenly being who became man for the sake of our redemption and took on himself suffering, even the suffering of the cross." (op. cit. pp 16-17).

Bultmann believes that "for modern man the mythological conception of the world, the conceptions of eschatology, of redeemer and of redemption, are over and done with." (op. cit. p.17).

These extensive references to Bultmann's own words serve to outline the extent to which he is prepared to apply the method of demythologizing to the New Testament. It is not the purpose of this chapter to discuss the scope or the limits of demythologizing but rather to show how as a hermeneutic method it may enable the 'word of the Cross' to confront man with a decision which is meaningful in terms of his present existence.

This leads us to notice another important feature of Bultmann's work, namely, his use of existentialist philosophy in his biblical interpretation. In defence of his position Bultmann draws attention to the undeniable fact

> "that every interpreter brings with him certain conceptions, perhaps idealistic or psychological, as presuppositions of his exegesis... But then the question arises, which conceptions are right and adequate? Which presuppositions are right and adequate?" (op. cit. p.48).

Now Bultmann clearly distinguishes between presuppositions in respect of results and presuppositions in respect of method. In other words, exegesis is not determined by any pre-

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suppositions as to what the results of the exegesis should be. He regards his existential philosophy as providing a method of putting questions to the New Testament. It is obvious that if we ask the wrong questions we shall not be able to interpret the New Testament aright. The 'right question' arises from the problem of man's existence.

> "This is, then, the basic presupposition for every form of exegesis: that your own relation to the subject-matter prompts the question you bring to the text and elicits the answers you obtain from the text." (op. cit. p.51).

What question do we bring to the Scriptures?

Bultmann affirms that

"the right question to frame with regard to the Bible ... is the question of human existence. I am driven to that by the urge to inquire existentially about my own existence." (2)

This question is integral to the question about God.

"Man has a knowledge of God in advance, though not of the revelation of God, that is, of his action in Christ. He has a relation to God in his search for God, conscious or unconscious. Man's life is moved by the search for God because it is always moved, consciously or unconsciously, by the question about his own personal existence. The question of God and the question of myself are identical." (3).

In Bultmann's view, what we might call the religious question appears as the existential question.

We have already discussed the insight which an

existential theology provides into the meaning of sin and

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guilt, (chapter 2), and noted that fallen or inauthentic existence is characterized by anxiety, care, the tendency towards depersonalization, and the fear of ultimate meaninglessness and annihilation. Out of this fallen condition man asks the question of his being and existence. What is man's true life? How is it to be secured? What is authentic existence?

How then, is the 'word of the Cross' to be understood in non-mythological terms and from within the context of man's existential concern for his true life?

Bultmann believes, as every Christian theologian must, that God has acted in Jesus Christ. This is the fundamental assumption of all attempts to comprehend Christian faith and experience. But in what sense can we speak non-mythologically of the action of God? Clearly, if we think of God's action in Christ as an observable intervention in the course of historical events we remain bound to mythological concepts. For Bultmann, the action of God is not to be thought of as an action which happens as an intervention into history from a supernatural realm. Rather it is an action which happens within the course of worldly events. In other words, the action of God in the events of history remains hidden from every eye, except the eye of faith. De cannot discern the action of God from the detached, objective standpoint of a scientific observer. The action of God can be recognised only in relation to the question which I ask concerning my own existence. We cannot, therefore, speak of God as acting in a general way.

> "God's action generally, in nature and history, is hidden from the believer just as much as from the non-believer. But in so far as he sees what comes upon him here and now in the light of the divine word, he can and must take it as God's action." (<u>op. cit. p. 64</u>).

For the believer, therefore, the scientific worldview does not comprehend the whole reality of the world and of human life. Certainly events may be investigated and found to be completely intelligible within a natural and historical connection. Nevertheless, the man of faith may discern in these events an action of God in relation to his particular existence. And only in this way can we speak of an act of God.

"I can speak only of what God does here and now with me, of what he speaks here and now to me." (<u>op. cit.p.66</u>).

We can speak of an act of God only when we are personally involved in the action in which we find ourselves addressed, judged or accepted by God. The act of God is therefore inseparable from the existential relation between God and man.

"Statements which speak of God's actions as cosmic

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events are illegitimate. The affirmation that God is creator cannot be a theoretical statement about God as <u>creator mundi</u> in a general sense. The affirmation can only be a personal confession that I understand myself to be a creature which owes its existence to God. It cannot be made as a neutral statement but only as thanksgiving and surrender. Moreover, statements which describe God's action as cultic action, for example,that he offered his Son as a sacrificial victim, are not legitimate, unless they are understood in a purely symbolic sense." (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>pp. 69-70</u>).

Now the New Testament commonly speaks of God's act in Jesus Christ as an act of grace. How are we to understand this affirmation? It is important to grasp the way in which Bultmann speaks of grace. Grace is not a quality of God which may be observed in a general way; it is rather an event in which we experience God's gracious action towards us personally.

> "God's grace is not a quality, not his timeless kindliness, and what the Gospel brings is not enlightenment as to God's hitherto misunderstood nature as if till now he had been wrongly conceived as wrathful and ought hencforth to be regarded as gracious. On the contrary! Now, as then, 'God's wrath' pours out 'against all ungodliness and wickedness of men'. (Rom.1:18)... God continues to be the Judge, and Christian faith in the grace of God does not consist in the conviction that God's wrath does not exist or that there is no threateningly impending judgment, but the conviction of being rescued from God's wrath." (4).

The 'wrath of God' must not be understood as an emotion, wrathfulness. 'Wrath of God' means an occurrence, namely, the judgment of God. Man, under the conditions of

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inauthentic existence stands under the judgment, or wrath of God. In Romans 1:18-32 the wrath of God is identified with what factually takes place in the life of the heathen: abandonment to the 'lusts of their hearts', to 'dishonourable passions', to a 'base mind'. And the 'day of wrath' is the 'day of judgment'. This day in which the verdict of condemnation is pronounced has, however, its counterpart in the gift of 'eternal life', (Romans 2:7f), or of 'salvation', (1 Thess. 5:9).

From this Bultmann concludes that

"God's grace is not his hitherto unknown or misconceived graciousness, but is his now occurring act of grace. This act of grace does not, as it might seem, take the place of God's previous judgeship, but is his gracious dealing precisely as the Judge... The grace of God... is not a mode of dealing which God has decided henceforth to adopt, but is <u>a single deed</u> which takes effect for everyone who recognises it as such and acknowledges it (in faith) - 'grace' is God's eschatological deed." (<u>op. cit. p.289</u>. Italics author's)

The grace of God therefore, is the event in which God both judges me and restores to me my lost possibility of authentic existence. It is the event in which I see my inauthentic life judged and condemned, my past blotted out in the divine forgiveness and my future seen as the gift of God, in which there is the possibility of authentic existence.

But what event is the event of grace? It is the

event constituted by the saving event which God wrought in Jesus Christ.

"The deed of divine grace consists in the fact that God gave Christ up to die on the Cross." (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>p.292</u>).

Yet, for St Paul, the salvation-occurrence includes both the death and the resurrection of Jesus. He sometimes speaks of the death alone, e.g. Romans 3:24f.; of the resurrection, e.g. Romans 1:4, 10:9 ; or of both together, e.g. Romans 4:25, 1 Cor. 15:3f. The death-and-resurrection form the decisive content of the salvation-occurrence.

Now the New Testament, as we have seen, speaks of the Cross in sacrificial terms drawn from the Jewish cult. Christ ^C is seen as the sacrifice whose blood atones for sin. He bears the punishment of sin in place of the sinner. We noted at the end of the last chapter, however, the extraordinary difficulties which beset the theologian when he tries to interpret such statements drawn from the sacrificial cult, as matters of fact. All theories of atonement have run into difficulty, if not into sheer absurdity, when working from this assumption. Bultmann observes that the sacrificial categories do not contain Paul's characteristic view. Already, he claims, St Paul is bursting open the categories of Jewish thought.

"Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the law

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by becoming for our sake an accursed thing...so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." (<u>Galatians 3:13-14</u>)(N.E.B.).

Here the thought of the death of Jesus as a sacrifice which frees from the punishment of sin is translated into the understanding of his death as

> "the means of release from the powers of this age: Law, Sin and Death." (<u>op. cit. p.298</u>).

The event of grace puts an end to our inauthentic existence under God's judgment, and offers forgiveness and liberation from the powers of this world.

Now the recognition of the event of grace in the Christ and the new understanding of oneself under that grace is a single act. There is therefore, no initial preliminary belief in the pre-existent Son of God followed and completed by an act of self-surrender in faith to Christ.

> "Paul can speak of Christ as 'the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me' only as the Paul who has waived his own righteousness and given up his self (his eqo) to die. He knows of that Christ only by knowing himself anew in the same act of recognition. From the outset, Paul, the 'zealot' for the 'traditions of the fathers', understood the proclamation of Christ the Son of God and Lord when it reached him as the demand that he give up his former sort of 'zeal for God' ". (op. cit. p. 301).

To believe in the cross of Christ is not to believe that an objective event once happened - even the non-believer may accept as historical fact the death of Jesus of Nazareth - but

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to recognise in this act of God in which my past is judged and condemned, and in which I am forgiven and offered authentic being. In this way the Cross is present to me, not as a mere past event, but as an eschatological event, in which I understand myself in a new way, as one both condemned and forgiven, as one whose old life of striving for self-sufficiency is brought to an end and who accepts his true life as the gift of God.

The proclamation of the Cross confronts me with a decision-question: how am I to understand my life? The proclamation of the event of grace is itself a call for faith, a call to give up my previous self-understanding and to 'be reconciled to God'. This decision is a constantly repeated decision which must be ever renewed.

> "This is the decision-question which 'the word of the cross' thrusts upon the hearer: whether he will acknowledge that God has made a crucified one Lord; whether he will thereby acknowledge the demand to take up the cross by the surrender of his previous understanding of himself, making the cross the determining power of his life, letting himself be crucified with Christ (1 Cor. 1:18-31; Gal. 6:14). The fact that this acknowledgment does take place demonstrates that Christ's death is a 'cosmic' event; i.e. that it may no longer be considered as just the historical event of Jesus' crucifixion on Golgotha. For God made this event the eschatological occurrence, so that, lifted out of all temporal limitation, it continues to take place in any present moment, both in the proclaiming word and in the sacraments." (op. cit. p. 303)

Bultmann understands the resurrection in relation to the proclamation. The resurrection is not an historical happening centred around an empty tomb, which may be investigated like any historical happening and judged as being truth or fantasy. Nor is the resurrection to be thought of as the continuing influence of Jesus of Nazareth in the lives of his followers. What takes place is that in the proclamation, the fate of an historical person is raised to the rank of the eschatological event.

> "The word which makes this proclamation is itself a part of this event; and this word, in contrast to all other historical tradition, accosts the hearer as personal challenge. If he heeds it as the word spoken to him, adjudicating to him death and thereby life, then he believes in the risen Christ." (op. cit. p.306).

In summary, we may say that for Bultmann the salvation-occurrence, God's act, the grace of God, is to be understood as existential-historical. In so far, therefore, as the Cross and resurrection are saving events and are proclaimed as such, they are not past occurrences of world history but open to man a new self-understanding and new possibilities, namely, forgiveness and a new life. They are thus understood as existential-historical happenings. Interpreted from an existential point of view, the 'word of the Cross' confronts me with a decision concerning the question

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which I ask out of the depths of my inauthentic existence. Here the 'scandal' of the Cross stands revealed, for it demands a decision which means the repudiation of all efforts to justify myself or to find security in good works or ascetic practices, and the acceptance of God's righteousness in which I find reconciliation and new life.~

How does Bultmann interpret the terms 'righteousness' and 'reconciliation'?

> "That which was brought to light by the occurrence of salvation in Christ, and which is the content of 'the gospel', is the new possibility of a 'righteousness' which shall be a 'righteousness of God' (Romans 1:16f.; 3:21)". (op. cit. p. 271).

Righteousness is primarily a forensic term, and does not mean the ethical quality of a person. Righteousness is therefore not something that a person has as his own, but rather is something which he has by virtue of a verdict pronounced upon him. Now in Jewish piety the forensic term righteousness became an eschatological term. In other words, the pious Jew sought by his endeavours to observe the whole Law, to fulfil the conditions which would ensure God's verdict: 'righteous!' For Paul also, righteousness was a forensiceschatological term. But Paul affirmed that righteousness is at the same time a present reality. (1 Cor. 6:11, Romans 9:30). "The paradoxicality of his assertion is this: God already pronounces his eschatological verdict (over the man of faith) in the present; the eschatological event is already present reality, or, rather, is beginning in the present. Therefore, the righteousness which God adjudicates to man (the man of faith) is not 'sinlessness' in the sense of ethical perfection, but is 'sinlessness' in the sense that God does not 'count' man's sin against him (2 Cor. 5:19)." (op. cit. p. 276).

Bultmann thus avoids the perplexities that follow upon a misunderstanding of righteousness as an ethical quality of a man. The term refers to his relation to God, who has absolved him from his sin by his gracious verdict.

Now according to Paul, man is justified or declared righteous, apart from works of the law.

"Our argument is that a man is justified by faith quite apart from success in keeping the law." (Romans 3:28) (N.E.B.).

Righteousness cannot be won by human effort, nor does any human accomplishment establish it; it is sheer gift. The conditions of salvation have therefore been provided by God he has pronounced his verdict. And so Paul goes on to ask, "What room is left for boasting?" (<u>Romans 3:27, N.E.B.</u>). All boasting is excluded. Now boasting in one's accomplishments is the essence of sin and the direct opposite of faith. Faith is

> "the attitude of man in which he receives the gift of 'God's righteousness' and in which the divine deed of salvation accomplishes itself with him". (op. cit. p.314).

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Faith's attitude is therefore the radical opposite of the attitude of boasting. And this attitude of faith is the substance of our obedience to God.

"As true obedience, 'faith' is freed from the suspicion of being an accomplishment, a 'work'. As an accomplishment it would not be obedience, since in an accomplishment the will does not surrender but asserts itself; in it, a merely formal renunciation takes place in that the will lets the content of its accomplishment be dictated by an authority lying outside of itself, but precisely in so doing thinks it has a right to be proud of its accomplishment. 'Faith' - the radical renunciation of accomplishment, the obedient submission to the God-determined way of salvation, the taking over of the cross of Christ - is the free deed of obedience in which the new self constitutes itself in place of the old. As this sort of decision, it is a deed in the true sense: In a true deed the doer himself is inseparable from it, while in a 'work' he stands side by side with what he does." (op. cit. pp. 315-6).

Faith, then, is not an 'experience', nor is it primarily remorse or repentance. They are included in it, but faith is primarily the obedience which waives righteousness of one's own.

The corollary of that righteousness which is the obedience of faith that waives all claim to self righteousness, is reconciliation. The man whose obedience is the obedience of faith <u>is</u> reconciled. Reconciliation, therefore, does not primarily denote a subjective experience, as though as a consequence of any alteration in man's attitude to God, he

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might be said to be reconciled to God.

"When we were God's enemies we were reconciled to him... We also exult in God through our Lord Jesus, through whom we have now been <u>granted</u> reconciliation." (<u>Romans 5:10-11</u>, N.E.B. My italics).

On the other hand, the 'message of reconciliation' carries with it the invitation to make the subjective response, 'be reconciled to God'. (2 Cor. 5: 19,20 N.E.B.).

> "The 'word of reconciliation' then, is not the conciliatory and reconciling word but the proclamation of the already accomplished reconciliation, and 'be reconciled' is the invitation to faith." (op. cit. p. 287).

We must now turn to consider the question we mentioned earlier, namely, the structure of authentic existence.

Authentic existence may be described as man's recovery of his true being, made possible by God's act of grace in Jesus Christ. Bultmann defines salvation as

> "nothing else than the fulfilment of man's authentic intention to life, to his true self, which had been perverted by sin." (5).

It is a genuine life of faith, in which there is a steady orientation of the self to the possibilities of existence which arise out of the new self-understanding given to man in the act of grace. And the predominant characteristic of the life of faith is freedom.

In the New Testament man is represented as enslaved

to the personified powers of sin and death, and to the rulers of the cosmos. Man in the conditions of his inauthentic existence is a slave of anxiety, fear and care. His controlling concern is to justify himself. The future is regarded without hope because the past constantly overshadows it. In the life of faith, however, there is true freedom in which the old understanding of the self as sufficient unto itself is given up. Concern with the world and the mastery of things, the quest for righteousness through observance of a legalistic moral code, confidence in wisdom and technological competence, or the resolve to live in an attitude of bold despair, all are abandoned. The present is affirmed as the time in which authentic, eschatological existence is a possibility, as the time in which the decision to act in faith or unfaith is constantly repeated. In the decision of faith, there is revealed the freedom which is openness for the future.

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"The power of the flesh binds man to the past, the power of the spirit gives the freedom which discloses the future." (6).

"Faith is the abandonment of man's own security and readiness to find security only in the unseen beyond, in God." (7).

Yet it is in this freedom that one is committed to a new servitude, the paradoxical freedom which is servitude and the servitude which is freedom. One becomes both the slave of Christ and a freedman of Christ (1Cor. 7:22-3). In the freedom of authentic existence we are to live by the Spirit; in living by the Spirit we express genuine freedom. And above all, to live by the Spirit is to serve one another (Gal. 5:13), and to be a slave of all (1 Cor. 9:19). This is the new obedience which reveals the genuineness of faith. Here the inseparable connection between faith and love is secured. Love is not an ideal, an emotion, or a general attitude of benevolence towards mankind. Love is always a particular concrete demand in a particular 'now'. It is the demand to see in the neighbour who is at hand, one to whom I am responsible in the context of a relation between I and Thou. For it is in the other that I meet the God who is demanding.

Criticism of Bultmann's work tends to concentrate upon the assertion that in it the Christian faith is scarcely to be distinguished from a philosophy of human existence. Faith is dissolved into self-understanding, the 'objective' acts of God become mere symbols of a new orientation to the world. Bultmann is accused of retaining mythological language when he speaks of God as acting. And on the other hand, it is questioned whether the Christian faith can be reduced to existential statements without a remaining transcendent element which can only be expressed in mythological terms.

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We do not wish to enter upon a detailed critique of Bultmann's theology. But something may be said in so far as the criticisms relate to the Cross.

Bultmann's assertion that such a statement as that God offered his Son as a sacrificial victim is not legitimate unless understood in a purely symbolic sense may appear to deprive the salvation-occurrence of all objectivity. But the difficulty appears only because a false emphasis is placed upon the distinction between subject and object in the faith relationship. It is not possible to reduce the complex relationship between God and the believer which exists in t/ genuinely personal and historical faith to a near subjectobject schema. The attempt to achieve such an apparently clear distinction leads either to a naive subjectivism in which faith becomes a mere sentiment or to an equally naive objectivism in which faith becomes the intellectual acceptance of the pronouncements of an 'infallible' authority, be it Bible, Pope, Confession or Council.

We may properly speak of the Cross as a redemptive event and as a ground of faith, but we must also emphasise that it is only apprehended as such within the faith relationship. The principle is the same in our personal relationships. Love cannot be defined or understood object-

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ively, but becomes a reality only within the risks and tensions, the joys and the freedoms of the love relationship. We cannot prove the existence of God, nor can we observe the slavation-occurrence in a detached manner. We can speak of God only in terms of what he is doing to us and with us, and can acknowledge certain events as having redemptive significance only in so far as we participate in those events. This is not a purely subjective experience, but carries with it an inescapable awareness of the Other. For in the decision-situation of faith we become certain both of our own personal identity and the reality of the One who confronts us with the necessity for decision. Therefore in the message concerning the Christ which comes to me in the preaching of the Word and in which I am offered a new possibility of understanding my own existence, I confess the real presence of the Christ as the saving event. There can be nothing in my experience which is more certainly objective, or more profoundly subjective. For in faith I understand myself anew, and this understanding can be maintained only as an ever renewed response to the Word of God which proclaims his action in the Christ. I do not speak of the saving event as an event in the distant past which somehow secures my future beyond death, but as that which gives me

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life in the present.

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THE CROSS

in the

THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH

Tillich pursued his theological work with the conviction that the task of theology is twofold: to affirm and to interpret. Not only must the Christian message be proclaimed, it must also be interpreted in a manner relevant to the temporal situation in which it is proclaimed. In other words, theology has both a kerygmatic and an apologetic function. Placing himself on the boundary between philosophy and theology, Tillich has wrestled to interpret each to the other in a manner unique among contemporary theologians.

Tillich establishes common ground between philosophy and theology in his claim that both are concerned with the ontological question of being.

"Philosophy and theology ask the question of being. But they ask it from different perspectives. Philosophy deals with the structure of being in itself; theology deals with the meaning of being for us." (1).

Theology deals with the question of being in so far as it

is a matter of ultimate concern. This means that theology must combine an ontological and an existential aspect.

Now the existentialist analysis of man describes a situation in which the individual is filled with anxiety and threatened with meaninglessness. He is aware of the conflicts in his life, both within and in relation to the world. And out of the depth of his predicament, man is driven to ask the question of his being. The question becomes a matter of ultimate concern. But is there an answer, and if so, where is it to be found? Here we meet Tillich's distinctive 'method of correlation', which is fundamental to his whole theological system. He affirms both the independence and interdependence of existential questions and theological answers.

> "Question and answer are independent of each other, since it is impossible to derive the answer from the question or the question from the answer. The existential question, namely, man himself in the conflicts of his existential situation, is not the source for the revelatory answer formulated by theology. One cannot derive the divine selfmanifestation from an analysis of the human predicament." (2).

On the other hand, it is equally wrong to try to derive the question implied in human existence from the revelatory answer.

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no question to which it is the answer. Man cannot receive an answer to a question he has not asked." (op. cit. p.15).

Yet correlation also implies that in some respects questions and answers are dependent. But this dependence can be comprehended only from within the 'theological circle' of commitment to the revelatory answer.

> "This circle can be understood as an ellipse... and described in terms of two central points - the existential question and the theological answer. Both are within the sphere of the religious commitment, but they are not identical." (op. cit. p. 16).

From within the circle, therefore, the theologian can direct the question of man's being and his predicament, (in which he shares), to the revelatory answer, (by which he is grasped).

> "The question implied in human finitude is directed toward the answer: the eternal. The question implied in human estrangement is directed toward the answer: forgiveness." (op. cit. p.17).

If the Christian message is to be understood, the existential questions must be allowed to influence the theological answer. This is the other side of correlation. While the substance of the answer is independent of the question, the form must allow itself to be in large measure determined by the situation in which the question is asked and the manner in which it is expressed. Only in this way can the message be seen to be relevant.

Although it is not our purpose to discuss the

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criticisms of Tillich's method of correlation which have come in particular from the Barthian theologians, it will be helpful to remind ourselves of the basic presupposition which lies behind Tillich's whole theological enterprise. It is the affirmation of an essential relationship between God and man in the depth of being which survives man's estrangement from God.

> "Man discovers <u>himself</u> when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated." (3).

A fundamental distinction in theological thought is that between essential and existential being. The problem is to understand the nature of the distinction and to account for the split between essence and existence. Tillich uses the symbol of the 'Fall' as a scheme in which to consider the transition from essence to existence.

> "It points, first, to the possibility of the Fall; second, to its motives; third, to the event itself; and fpurth, to its consequences." (4).

The Fall is possible because man is free. Here we face the most difficult and most dialectical point in the doctrine of creation and also the most mysterious point in human experience. For to be a creature

"means both to be rooted in the creative ground of

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the divine life and to actualise one's self through freedom. Creation is fulfilled in the creaturely self-realisation which simultaneously is freedom and destiny. But it is fulfilled through separation from the creative ground through a break between essence and existence. Creaturely freedom is the point at which creation and fall coincide." (5).

Fully developed creatureliness is therefore fallen

creatureliness.

In discussing the motives driving to the transition

Tillich uses the concept of 'dreaming innocence'.

"Both words point to something that precedes actual existence." (op. cit. vol. 2 p.38).

Now the state of 'dreaming innocence' is one of non-actualised potentiality. But the state of 'dreaming innocence' drives beyond itself and

"the possibility of the transition to existence is experienced as temptation. " (op. cit. vol. 2 p.39).

Temptation is possible because the state of 'dreaming innocence' is not one of perfection, in which there is the conscious union of existence and essence, transcending both, as in God. In his awareness of his finitude man is subject to anxiety, but he is at the same time conscious of his freedom.

"One could call man's freedom 'freedom in anxiety' or 'anxious freedom'." (op. cit. vol. 2, p.39).

Now the sense of finitude and anxious freedom give rise to the temptation to actualise freedom. Tillich observes that in

the Genesis story the divine prohibition already presupposes the element of aroused freedom, otherwise the prohibition would not have been necessary. The command is necessary because there is already a split between creator and creature. The tension within the state of 'dreaming innocence' occurs

> "in the moment in which finite freedom becomes conscious of itself and tends to become actual." (<u>op. cit. vol.2, p.40</u>).

On the one hand, 'dreaming innocence' wants to preserve itself, while on the other hand aroused freedom strives for actual expression.

> "Man is caught between the desire to actualise his freedom and the demand to preserve his dreaming innocence. In the power of his finite freedom, he decides for actualisation." (op. cit. vol.2, p.40).

The transition from essence to existence, says Tillich, is the original fact. In mythological language it is seen as an event in the past, but the meaning of the myth is that the transition is a universal quality of finite being.

> "In every individual act the estranged or fallen character of being actualises itself." (op. cit. vol.2, p.43).

What then becomes of the element of moral responsibility in the myth? Tillich affirms that existence is rooted both in ethical freedom and in tragic destiny.

> "Their unity is the great problem of the doctrine of man." (op. cit. p.43). Tillich refers to the

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insights of analytic psychology and analytic sociology, which show how

"destiny and freedom, tragedy and responsibility, are interwoven in every human being from early childhood on and in all social and political groups in the history of mankind." (op. cit. p. 44).

Critics of Tillich have not been slow to point out the ambiguity of his language in his treatment of creation and fall. In saying that "there is a point in which creation and the Fall coincide" (<u>op. cit. p.50</u>), and that "fully developed creatureliness is fallen creatureliness" (<u>op. cit. vol.1, p.284</u>), Tillich appears to suggest that sin is ontologically necessary and not a matter of personal responsibility and guilt. Does not his analysis make it necessary for man if he is to become man to become sinner also? Kenneth Hamilton writes,

> "His system divides sin from moral responsibility". (6).

Tillich himself in reply to his critics simply reaffirms that

"Creation and the Fall coincide in so far as there is no point in time and space in which created goodness was actualised and had existence... Actualised creation and estranged existence are identical. Only biblical literalism has the theological right to deny this assertion. He who excludes the idea of a historical stage of essential goodness should not try to escape the consequences." (7).

Although the realities of experience confirm the elements of tragic destiny and responsible freedom in man's decisions, the

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unity of the elements remains an enigma.

The result of the transition from essence to existence is a situation of universal estrangement. The term is intended to convey the fact that man belongs essentially to that from which he is estranged. Yet it also expresses the characteristic mark of sin as described in the biblical literature. Hostility, strife, alienation, division and suspicion are the features of the classical description of man against himself and his world. Tillich would retain the term 'sin' in order to emphasise the personal character of estrangement.

> "It expresses personal freedom and guilt in contrast to tragic guilt and the universal destiny of estrangement... The word has a sharpness which accusingly points to the element of personal responsibility in one's estrangement. Man's predicament is estrangement, but his estrangement is sin." (op. cit. vol. 2,p.53).

Sin must be distinguished from 'sins' understood as deviations from moral laws.

"It is not the disobedience to a law which makes an act sinful but the fact that it is an expression of man's estrangement from God, from men, and from himself." (op. cit. p. 53).

Estrangement manifests itself in unbelief,

"the disruption of man's cognitive participation in God", and "the separation of man's will from the will of God... Man's unbelief is his estrangement from God in the centre of his being... The -167-

disruption of the essential unity with God is the innermost character of sin... Sin is a matter of our relation to God and not to ecclesiastical, moral, or social authorities." (<u>Op. cit. vol. 2,pp54-6</u>).

Estrangement is also understood as 'hubris', the desire for

potential infinity. It is the other side of unbelief.

"It is the turning towards one's self as the centre of one's self and one's world." (op. cit. p.58).

'Hubris' manifests itself in the tendency to identify the

limited with the absolute, the partial with the ultimate.

Furthermore,

"no one is willing to acknowledge, in concrete terms, his finitude, his weakness and his errors, his ignorance and his insecurity, his loneliness and his anxiety. And if he is ready to acknowledge them, he makes another instrument of '<u>hubris</u>' out of his readiness." (<u>op. cit. pp.58-9</u>).

A third aspect of estrangement is 'concupiscence', which manifests itself in the desire for unlimited abundance, and in the endless striving for sex and power. (<u>op. cit. p.60</u>). This must of course be distinguished from proper selfaffirmation. It is rather the distortion of self-affirmation into lust and selfishness.

Tillich distinguishes estrangement as fact and

as act.

"Sin is a universal fact before it becomes an individual act, or more precisely, sin as an individual act actualises the universal fact of estrangement... The destiny of estrangement is

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actualised by all free acts." (op. cit. p.64).

Estrangement, however, cannot be explained in deterministic terms, by physical, biological, psychological or sociological methods.

"None of these explanations accounts for the feeling of personal responsibility that man has for his acts in the state of estrangement." (<u>op. cit. p. 65</u>).

In the predicament of estrangement man is still aware of his individual responsibility, yet is also liberated from

> "the unrealistic assumption that in every moment he has the undetermined freedom to decide... for good or bad, for God or against him." (op. cit. p.65).

The consequence of estrangement is contradiction of man's essential being, manifesting itself in what Tillich calls "structures of destruction" (<u>op. cit. p. 69</u>). Disorder and chaos, self-loss and world-loss are characteristics of man's predicament. The disruption of the self by drives that cannot be brought into unity describes a self-loss which also involves a disordered relation to the world. The extreme manifestation of disintegration is in psychopathological disorders, in which there is a profound loss of meaningful relation within the self and to the world.

> "Such experiences are extreme, but extreme situations reveal possibilities in the ordinary situation." (op. cit. p.71).

In all men such disruption is present in some degree.

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Tillich relates all this to a conflict in the ontological polarities.

"Freedom is distorted into arbitrariness, destiny is distorted into mechanical necessity." (<u>op. cit.</u> <u>p.73</u>).

The polarity of dynamics and form is disrupted, so that creative drives degenerate into a frantic search for new experience, and form becomes an uncreative legalism. Individualisation and participation are separated, so that subjectivity tends towards isolation and loneliness and participation merges into a loss of identity in a depersonalised collective. (op. cit. p.75-6).

Under the conditions of estrangement, finitude appears as the horror of death. The relation of this to the popular image of immortality and the description of the sacramental food of the Lord's Supper by the early Church teachers as the 'medicine of immortality' is obvious. Yet there is also the awareness that death as the loss of potential eternity is

> "something for which one is responsible in spite of its tragic universality." (op. cit. p. 78).

Sin gives death its sting. Furthermore, in estrangement, time is experienced without the 'eternal now' and becomes a demonic power, destructive of man's strivings and

producing despair. And finally, the insecurity and uncertainty which belong to man's essential finitude, but which are accepted in the power of the dimension of the eternal, become in the state of estrangement, the source of anxiety, doubt and meaninglessness.

"Doubt becomes absolute and drives toward a despairing refusal to accept any finite truth." (op. cit. p. 84).

A destructive reaction to existential doubt and insecurity is the attempt to make absolute a finite security or a finite certainty. This is manifest in fanaticism, brutality and dishonesty.

The final index of man's predicament is the state of despair, the state of inescapable conflict. In despair man has already come to the end of his possibilities, except for suicide. Tillich relates the experience of despair to the symbol of the 'wrath of God'. The satisfaction of God's wrath has frequently been the foundation for descriptions of the atoning work of Christ. In the death of Christ the wrath of God finds its satisfaction and enables God to forgive what has aroused his wrath. This crude interpretation violates the majesty and integrity of God; yet the symbol is not without meaning. Apart from reconciliation man perceives God negatively, so to speak, as a threat to his

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"He perceives God as the God of wrath, rightly so in preliminary terms, wrongly so in ultimate terms. But the theoretical knowledge that his experience of God as the God of wrath is not the final experience of God does not remove the reality of God as a threat to his being and nothing but a threat. Only the acceptance of forgiveness can transform the image of the wrathful God into the ultimately valid image of the God of love." (op. cit. p.89).

Following his analysis of the human predicament Tillich proceeds to discuss efforts toward self-salvation. Although religion is frequently identified with man's attempts at self-salvation, this ignores the ambiguity which religion shares with the whole of life in the situation of estrangement. Religion is also

> "the place where life receives the conqueror of the ambiguities of life, the divine Spirit. Therefore, it is the sphere in which the quest for the New Being appears over against the split between essential and existential being... The quest for the New Being presupposes the presence of the New Being, as the search for truth presupposes the presence of truth." (op. cit. p. 93).

The tragedy of religion is that it distorts what it has received and fails in what it tries to achieve. Nevertheless it remains the sphere in which the quest for the Christ appears.

Tillich discusses six ways of self-salvation which may be observed in the history of religion. The most conspicuous is the legalistic. Although, as in Judaism, the law may be cherished as a divine gift, yet in the situation

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being.

of estrangement law becomes commandment, and its fulfilment becomes an impossibility. It leads to despair or to compromise - or the quest for a New Being. The attempt to restrict the libidinous drives and the will to power is found in asceticism as a way of self-salvation. Yet although conscious acts of self-abnegation may repress concupiscent tendencies, they are unable to overcome them. The disruptive power of repression is a commonplace of depth psychology. Another form in which the ascetic tendency is manifested is in the puritan attitude to work, pleasure and business enterprise. This 'worldly asceticism' is made the ground for the expectation of the divine blessing. A third method of selfsalvation is by way of mysticism. Tillich affirms that

"the mystical is the heart of every religion as religion." (<u>op. cit. p.96</u>).

It characterises the presence of the divine. But when mysticism becomes a method of overcoming estrangement through physical and mental exercises, it has become an attempt to achieve self-salvation .

In addition to the legalistic, ascetic and mystical ways of self-salvation, Tillich mentions the doctrinal, the sacramental and the emotional. In doctrinal self-salvation faith becomes belief in verbal formulations. But this

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inevitably arouses further questions.

"The terrible inner struggles between the will to be honest and the will to be saved show the failure of doctrinal self-salvation." (op. cit. p.99).

Closely linked is the sacramental approach, in which salvation becomes dependent on a work of man, in this case the sacramental act performed by the priest and participated in by the believer. The emotional form of self-salvatiom represents the personal encounter with God which is fundamental to genuine religion. But the temptation to self-salvation is present in all efforts to seek for a stereotyped conversiom experience. And in its distorted form, piety represents a striving which produces anxiety and moves toward famaticism.

Although ultimately ineffectual, attempts to achieve self-salvation represent the quest for a new reality which appears in all religions. Herein lies the tragic predicament of man in the condition of estrangement. Because he belongs essentially to that from which he is estranged, man is driven to seek reconciliation. But the attempts to overcome estrangement within the condition of estrangement lead only to hard toil and bitter failure.

"Only a New Being can produce a new action." (op. cit. p. 92)

Christianity affirms that the Christ is

"the bearer of the New Being in its fimal manifestation".

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(<u>op. cit. p. 102</u>).

This affirmation expresses the inescapable paradox at the heart of Christianity. It is important to understand how Tillich uses the term.

> "The Christian paradox contradicts the opinion derived from man's existential predicament and all expectations imaginable on the basis of this predicament. The 'offence' given by the paradoxical character of the Christian message ... is against man's ordinary interpretation of his predicament with respect to himself, his world, and the ultimate underlying both of them . It is an offence against man's unshaken reliance upon himself, his self-saving attempts, and his resignation to despair ... The appearance of the New Being under the conditions of existence, yet judging and conquering them, is the paradox of the Christian message. This is the only paradox and the source of all paradoxical statements in Christianity." (op. cit. p. 106-7).

How then are we to understand the Christ in relation to God and man? In orthodox Christianity he is spoken of as the 'Mediator' between God and man. Christianity has always rejected the concept of the Christ as a third reality between God and man, but in doing so its Christological affirmations have tended towards docetism and monophysitism. Tillich finds the term not to be without difficulty, since it can appear to suggest that God is dependent on the Mediator to perform his saving acts. (op. cit. p.196). The essential function of the Mediator is to represent God to man. -175-

This is to be understood in terms of the paradox

"that in <u>one</u> personal life essential manhood has appeared under the conditions of existence without being conquered by them." (<u>op. cit. p.108</u>).

The Christ represents to those who live in the condition of estrangement what man essentially is and ought to be. It is in this sense that he mediates God to man. He manifests the eternal relation of God to man. He is the bearer of the New Being.

We now turn to consider Tillich's treatment of the event which according to the Christian message fulfilled the expectations for a new reality, the historical event concerning the man of Nazareth, called 'the Christ'.

Christian theology cannot ignore the fact to which the name of Jesus of Nazareth points. For theology affirms that the expectation of a new reality has been fulfilled under the conditions of existence. The New Being is not an idea but a reality in time and space. Yet theology at the same time affirms that this historical life, lived under the conditions of estrangement, manifests the conquest of these conditions. This man Jesus is the Christ. Christian theology

affirms

"the actual fact to which the name of Jesus of Nazareth refers...and...the believing reception of Jesus as the Christ." (<u>op. cit. p.114</u>).

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But how much can we know of Jesus of Nazareth? Tillich recognises that the attempt to discover a minimum of reliable facts about Jesus in order to provide a safe foundation for the Christian faith has been a failure.

"There is no picture behind the biblical one which (can) be made scientifically probable." (<u>op. cit. p.118</u>).

We cannot even be certain that he who came to be known as the Christ was in fact named 'Jesus'. (op. cit. p.123). In his radical scepticism regarding what can be known of the Jesus of history Tillich goes so far as to take issue with Bultmann. He accuses Bultmann of 'existentialist liberalism' in seeking a foundation for the Christian faith in the message of Jesus with its call to decide for or against the Kingdom of God. (op. cit. p.122).

> "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." (loc. cit.)

This, however, is a serious misunderstanding of Bultmann's position. As we have seen in a previous chapter, Bultmann does not try to establish by historical research a minimum of historical facts upon which the Christian faith may be built. And it is precisely on account of his scepticism that Bultmann has been criticised for paying too little regard to history. In emphasising the eschatological call of Jesus

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to decide for or against the Kingdom, Bultmann is looking to the kerygmatic proclamation of the primitive Church.

Although Tillich refuses to establish the Christian faith on the uncertainties of historical research, he does insist upon 'the factual element' in the Christian event. This is

> "the factual transformation of reality in that personal life which the New Testament expresses in its picture of Jesus as the Christ." (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>p.123</u>).

But what are the features of that picture? Tillich refers to the words, deeds and sufferings which express the being of Jesus as the Christ. (<u>op. cit. pp.139-42</u>). Now this is not to suggest that Jesus is to be seen as a religious and moral teacher. Tillich insists that the words, deeds and sufferings are the expressions of the New Being in the Christ.

"Not his actions, but the being out of which his actions come makes him the Christ." (op. cit. p.141).

But Tillich also goes on to say,

"Our records do not give a psychological description of his development, piety, or inner conflicts. They show only the presence of the New Being in him under the conditions of existence." (op. cit. p. 143).

But he then proceeds to outline a picture of Jesus as the Christ which looks very like a picture drawn from history.

> "There are, in spite of all tensions, no traces of estrangement between him and God and consequently

between him and himself and between him and his world (in its essential nature)."(<u>op. cit. pp.144-5</u>). "He experiences the anxiety of having to die... his finitude is manifested in his loneliness... he is deeply affected by the misery of the masses... we do not find symptoms of repression of doubt in the picture of Jesus as the Christ... no traces of fanaticism are present in the biblical picture." (<u>op. cit. pp.150-54</u>).

Now what is all this if not considerable biographical detail? It seems that in order to convince us that the New Being is present in the Christ Tillich has described a mature and integrated personality.

Is the Gospel then the handing on of this picture for the admiration and inspiration of all who will but ponder over it? It looks very like it, in which case we are back with the old style liberal portraits of Jesus.

But how do we recognise from this picture the reality of the New Being? Tillich says that the picture itself mediates the transforming power of the New Being.

> "The picture has this creative power, because the power of the New Being is expressed in and through it." (op. cit. p. 132-3).

Faith is an "immediate awareness" that arises in "those who find themselves transformed into the state of faith." (op. cit. p.131). Now although this would appear to suggest a reduction of the element of individual, existential decision, Tillich also holds that faith is a decision. (op. cit. p. 134).

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One feels that Tillich is ambiguous and even contradictory in his discussion at this point. On the one hand, we are asked to contemplate the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ which

> "is guaranteed as an adequate expression of the transforming power of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ"(<u>op. cit. p.132</u>) - it is guaranteed because the New Being itself transformed the first witnesses and enabled them to recognise in Jesus the New Being and to produce an adequate picture of him as the Christ-

but on the other hand we are told that faith cannot find a foundation in certain unassailable historical facts. It would appear that while we cannot speak of indubitable historical facts, the 'picture of Jesus' is to be regarded as having unquestionable accuracy. Furthermore, faith is described as a decision, "an act of courage" (<u>op. cit.p.134</u>), yet it is also an immediate awareness in those who find themselves transformed into the state of faith. The words 'who find themselves transformed' suggests something rather less than 'a daring act of courage'.

Tillich's concern is to show that the situation of estrangement, which is man's predicament, has been overcome in one personal life. Under the power of the New Being, which is present in a fragmentary way in the disciples as the drive within their quest for a new reality, the disciples

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themselves recognised in Jesus the New Being. The New Being

is new in Jesus in so far as it is the

"undistorted manifestation of essential being within and under the conditions of existence." (<u>op. cit. p.137</u>).

In this sense Jesus as the Christ is unique, and normative

for all other manifestations of the New Being.

"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." (op. cit. p.138).

And in this sense we may say that history has come to an end.

"In the sense of 'aim' history has come to an intrinsic end qualitatively, namely, in the appearance of the New Being as a historical reality." (op. cit. p. 138).

In Jesus as the New ^Being the tensions within

estrangement are overcome, and the conflict in the ontological polarities is reconciled. There are no traces of unbelief, <u>hubris</u> or concupiscence in the picture of Jesus. Yet, since, like every other man, Jesus as the Christ is finite freedom, his temptations were real. (<u>op. cit. p. 146</u>). We may ask, however, how the New Being can experience the reality of temptation. Tillich answers first by distinguishing between desire and concupiscence.

> "The difference between the natural self-transcendence which includes the desire for reunion with everything, and the distorted concupiscence, which does

not want reunion with anything but the exploitation of everything through power and pleasure, is one which is decisive for the evaluation of desire in the state of temptation. Without desire, there is no temptation, but the temptation is that desire will become changed into concupiscence." (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>p.147</u>).

In the paradise story, the desire is not in itself bad,

"but the conditions of its lawful fulfilment are not kept, and so the act of eating becomes an act of concupiscence." (<u>op. cit. p. 148</u>).

Jesus overcame his temptations by refusing to fulfil his desires apart from God. Secondly, the state of unbroken unity with God is not without the risk implied in the ontological polarities. But in Jesus as the Christ the finite is not desired at the cost of unity with God, but within that unity. Thirdly, the resistance to temptation was a matter of both freedom and destiny.

> "The decision of the Christ against succumbing to the temptations is an act of his finite freedom and... as a free decision it is an act of his total personality and of the centre of his own self." (op. cit. p. 149).

Yet freedom without destiny is mere contingency. In his finite freedom he stands with all men

"under the directing creativity of God, (providence)". (op. cit. p.150).

The biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ does

not hesitate to express the marks of finitude.

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"As a finite being, he is subject to the contingency of everything that is not by itself, but is 'thrown' into existence. He has to die, and he experiences the anxiety of having to die... He experiences the lack of a definite place...(and) his finitude is manifest in his loneliness." (op. cit. p. 150).

In his efforts to communicate with others, even with his

disciples,

"he experiences all the tensions which follow from the self-relatedness of every finite person and proves the impossibility of penetrating into the centre of anyone else." (op. cit. p.151).

Jesus is also involved in the tragic ambiguity of relationships with others and with groups. In his relation with the Jews for example, he is involved in the tragic element of guilt

"in so far as he made his enemies inescapably
guilty." (op. cit. p. 152).
"The innocent one becomes tragically guilty in
respect to the very one (Judas) who contributes
to his own death," (op. cit. p. 153).

Although Jesus participated in the tragic ambiguities of existence these did not separate him from God. On the contrary as the bearer of the New Being he took these very negativities of existence into unbroken unity with God.

> "This is the picture of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. It is not the picture of a divine-human automaton without serious temptation, real struggle, or tragic involvement in the ambiguities of life. Instead of that, it is the picture of a personal life which is subjected to all the consequences of existential estrangement but wherein the estrangement is conquered in himself and a permanent unity is kept with God." (op. cit. pp. 154-5).

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Tillich notes different and to some extent contrasting elements in the biblical picture. In the Synoptic picture the dominant feature is the participation of the New Being in the conditions of existence, while in John the emphasis is on the victory of the New Being over these conditions. Another contrast is seen in the Kingdom-centred sayings in the Synoptics and the Christ-centred sayings in John. A third contrast concerns the eschatological significance of Jesus. These differences are apparent within both the Synoptics and John.

> "In the Synoptics, Jesus sometimes appears merely as the prophetic announcer of the Kingdom to come and sometimes as the central figure within the eschatological drama." (<u>op. cit.pp.157-8</u>).

As the latter he has to die for the sins of the people and to fulfil the eschatological prophecies of the **Cld Testament**. And he is to return to judge the world. In John this aspect is also found, but there is alongside it a transformation of such statements into references to

"eschatological processes which happen in his presence in judgment and salvation." (op. cit. p.158).

Tillich does not regard these contrasts as exclusive, yet recognises that they demand systematic consideration. He resolves the difficulty by distinguishing between

> "the symbolic frame in which the picture of Jesus as the Christ appears and the substance in which the power of the New Being is present." (op. cit. p.153).

The symbolic frame includes such symbols as 'the Christ', the 'Son of Man', the 'Messiah', the 'Logos'. Yet within this symbolic framework the substance is untouched. The power of the New Being shines through in Jesus as

> "the undisrupted unity of the centre of his being with God;... as the serenity and majesty of him who preserves this unity against all the attacks coming from estranged existence;.. as the self-surrendering love which represents and actualises the divine love in taking the existential self-destruction upon himself." (op. cit. pp.158-9).

Before proceeding to consider Tillich's understanding of the relation of the Cross to the New Being as the Christ, we shall briefly summarise the position we have now reached. The existential analysis of the human situation reveals a state of anxiety, tension, conflict and despair. Seen from the standpoint of participation in the New ^Being, this predicament is the consequence of man's estrangement from God, or the 'ground of his being'. Aware of disintegrating tendencies within his life, man seeks for a way of overcoming them, and pursues a variety of methods aimed at achieving self-salvation. But from within the condition of estrangement, these efforts are futile, leading either towards fanaticism or despair.

"Only a New Being can produce a new action." (op. cit. p.92).

The answer which Christian theology gives is the affirmation

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of the fundamental and inescapable paradox, that the New Being has appeared in the Christ under the conditions of existence without being conquered by them. In the biblical picture of the Christ we see in one personal life the conquest of the condition of estrangement from within the ambiguities of existence.

> "In Jesus as the Christ the eternal unity of God and man has become historical reality." (<u>op. cit.p.170</u>).

The threat of existential disruption which is a possibility in the condition of finite freedom and finitude, did not in Jesus as the Christ break the essential God-man unity. In Jesus as the New Being there is the undistorted manifestation of essential being within and under the conditions of existence. This is the biblical picture, which

> "reveals what can be described best by the phrase 'continuous communion with God'- no interruption of this." (8).

Now how is all this related to the Cross? We return for a moment to what Tillich regards as an expression of the New Being in Sesus as the Christ, namely, his suffering.

Jesus' death is seen as

"a consequence of the inescapable conflict between the forces of existential estrangement and the bearer of that by which existence is conquered." (<u>op. cit. vol.</u>2, p.141).

Only by his total participation in the conditions of existence

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could he

"conquer every force of estrangement which tried to dissolve his unity with God." (<u>op. cit. p.141</u>). His suffering and death are therefore inescapable and at the same time inseparable from his being as the Christ. His suffering and death is "an inescapable implication of this appearance", namely the appearance of essential God-manhood under the conditions of existence. (op. cit. p. 142).

It is therefore a mistake to separate the suffering of Jesus from his being, and regard it as an additional 'work' which effects redemption. Because theology has commonly made this separation, the life and deeds and words of Jesus have tended to be regarded as of secondary significance in comparison with his sufferings. The significant factor is the appearance of the New Being, not any particular expression of it in the Christ.

Nevertheless, there is a certain justification for regarding the suffering of Jesus as having a decisive function. It confirms his character as the Christ in that it is the expression of the continuous sacrifice of himself as a particular individual to himself as the bearer of the New Being, the Christ. Without this, "he could not have been the Christ". (op. cit. p.142). In 'Ultimate Concern' (9), Tillich

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says

"In the moment Jesus went the way of the cross, he <u>could</u> become the Christ, and not before."

It is important that we should understand the way in which Tillich speaks of sacrifice in relation to the suffering and death of Jesus. The suffering is in no sense substitutional, but participation in the suffering of existential estrangement.

> "The suffering of God... in the Christ, is the power which overcomes creaturely self-destruction by participation and transformation. Not substitution, but free participation is the character of the divine suffering." (10).

Now the suffering of Jesus was an essential and inescapable expression of the New Being. As the bearer of the ultimate, he had to sacrifice his individual character.

> "The acceptance of the cross, both during his life and at the end of it, is the decisive test of his unity with God, of his complete transparency to the ground of being ... Only through his acceptance of the cross has he become the 'Spirit' who has surrendered himself as flesh, namely, as a historical individual. This sacrifice is the end of all attempts to impose him, as a finite being, on other finite beings. It is the end of Jesusology. Jesus of Nazareth is the medium of the final revelation because he sacrifices himself completely to Jesus as the Christ. He not only sacrifices his life, as many martyrs and many ordinary people have done, but he also sacrifices everything in him and of him which could bring people to him as an !overwhelming personality' instead of bringing them to that in him which is greater than he and they. This is the meaning of the symbol 'Son of God'." (11).

Tillich confesses in '<u>Ultimate Concern</u>' (12), that this paradoxical idea has often been misunderstood. Nonetheless he adheres to it. The Cross is therefore a symbol of Jesus' victory over the temptation to 'save himself'.

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"In Christianity, in the symbol of the cross, there is the fundamental revelation that he who was supposed to bring the new aeon, the new reality, the new being, the eschatological fulfilment, the Kingdom of God- all this- in order to achieve it had to sacrifice himself, in his individual character, as a bearer of the ultimate." (op. cit. p.76).

One of the most revealing episodes in the synoptic record, for Tillich, is the rejection of Peter's demonic suggestion that Jesus should not suffer. (Matthew 16:21-23). If he had not sacrificed his finitude on the cross he could not have been the Christ. He refused to make himself in his finitude, ultimate.

Now the unique and universal significance of the event of Jesus of Nazareth has been expressed in symbol and myth. Some of the christological symbols used in the New Testament are: Son of David, Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah, Lord, Logos.

> "Christological symbols are the way in which the historical fact, called Jesus of Nazareth, has been received by those who consider him to be the Christ." (13).

These symbols must not be demythologised, but 'deliteralised' (op. cit. p.175). Tillich insists that it is not the use of

symbolic and mythological language which is the problem but the literalistic distortions of such language. He strongly rejects the attempt to remove myth as a vehicle of religious expression.

> "Symbols and myths cannot be criticised simply because they are symbols. They must be criticised on the basis of their power to express what they are supposed to express, namely, in this instance, the New Being in Jesus as the Christ." (op. cit. p. 176).

Two central symbols stand out in the New Testament the 'Cross of the Christ' and the 'Resurrection of the Christ'. The first expresses the Christ's subjection to existence while the second expresses his conquest of existence. The two symbols are of course interdependent.

> "The Cross of the Christ is the Cross of the one who has conquered the death of existential estrangement... And the Resurrection of the Christ is the Resurrection of the one who, as the Christ, subjected himself to the death of existential estrangement." (op. cit.pp.176-7).

The subjection of the Christ to the conditions of existence is further emphasised in corroborating symbols, such as his assuming the form of a servant and dying the death of a slave. Similarly the threat to his life in infancy, his subjection to hunger, homelessness, misunderstanding, all come to a climax and are summed up in the symbol of the Cross.

> "They are important in their power to show the subjection of him who is the bearer of the New Being to the destructive structures of the old being. They

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are symbols of the divine paradox of the appearance of the eternal God-man unity within existential estrangement." (op. cit. p. 183).

But the vital question is how the manifestation of the New Being in the Christ affects the human predicament. In what sense is the manifestation a 'salvation-event'?

Salvation is understood in relation to the character of man's predicament. Man is estranged from his true being, threatened by non-being and

> "ultimate negativity... the loss of the inner telos of one's being." (op. cit. p. 191).

The meaning of salvation is therefore inseparable from our understanding of that from which or into which we must be saved. In the early Greek church,

> "death and error were the things from which one needed and wanted to be saved. In the Roman Catholic Church salvation is from guilt and its consequences... In classical Protestantism salvation is from the law, its anxiety-producing and its condemning power. In pietism and revivalism salvation is the conquest of the godless state through conversion and transformation for those who are converted. In ascetic and liberal Protestantism salvation is the conquest of special sins and progress towards moral perfection." (op. cit. pp. 190-1).

Tillich finds in the term 'healing' the most adequate expression of the meaning of salvation. It signifies the reuniting of that which is estranged, the overcoming of disruption, the healing of the split between God and man, man and man, man and himself. -191-

"Out of this interpretation of salvation, the concept of the New Being has grown." (<u>op. cit. p.192</u>).

In 'Ultimate Concern', he says,

"the 'sin-forgiveness structure' or 'justificationby-grace structure'.... is not the only important thing in Christianity.... perhaps in Paul himself the central problem was the divine Spirit and not justification by grace." (p.114).

The problem of man's predicament in our culture raises the question

"Is there a new reality on which we can rely as the power of reconciliation?, rather than the Lutheran question 'How do we experience a merciful God'?" (14).

Now it is obvious that this has a bearing on any theory of atonement. The plea for divine forgiveness remains psychologically true as an expression of man's need, but it is liberated from semi-mechanistic theories which regard the Cross as a work of Christ which enabled God to forgive.

The concept of the New Being avoids the unsatisfactory theological scheme which divided the person and work of Christ, and interpreted the atonement as

"a kind of priestly technique undertaken for the purpose of salvation. " (15).

Christ is Saviour because his work is his being and his being is his work. In Christ, as the bearer of the New Being, there is no inner disruption or inconsistency. His work and his being are in unbroken harmony.

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But we have still to answer the question how the New Being changes or transforms my situation. Here it is necessary to refer to Tillich's understanding of revelation.

> "Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately." (16).

It is the mystery of our being experienced as ultimate concern which appears in revelation. Revelation is only revelation with respect to a concrete situation.

> "Someone is grasped by the manifestation of the mystery; this is the subjective side of the event. Something occurs through which the mystery of revelation grasps someone; this is the objective side." (op. cit. p.123).

But the two sides are inseparable and the one does not exist without the other. Tillich uses the term 'ecstasy' to describe the experience of revelation. This is not to be confused with a destruction of reason.

> "Ecstasy is the form in which that which concerns us unconditionally manifests itself within the whole of our psychological conditions. It appears through them, but it cannot be derived from them." (<u>op. cit</u>. pp.125-6).

Revelation is therefore not information about divine things,

but the

"ecstatic manifestation of the Ground of Being in events, persons, and things." (op. cit. vol.2, p.192).

There is a knowledge in revelation, but it is not a

knowledge which can be added to technical knowledge. Rather

is it a wisdom, an insight, a new self-understanding in which the mystery of being is manifested without being removed. It is existential knowledge, inseparable from our experience of ultimate concern.

Now according to Tillich's method of correlation to which we have referred (supra p.160ff.), the question of being and the quest for the new being finds its answer in the Christ. He is the manifestation of the New Being, which the christological symbols seek to express. When we speak of 'atonement' we are endeavouring to describe

> "the effect of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ on those who are grasped by it in their state of estrangement." (op. cit. vol.2, p.196).

It embodies revelation and an ecstatic insight into the mystery of being. As with revelation, it has an objective and a subjective side: there is both a divine act and a human reaction. It is also an ecstatic experience in which the negativities of life are fragmentarily replaced by awareness of unity with the Ground of Being. This is the experience of the healing event, of salvation. The source of this ecstatic experience is the power of the New Being itself. The saving power of the New Being (or the Spiritual Presence, see <u>Systematic Theology</u>, vol.3, ppl40f), creates faith, which

Tillich defines as

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"the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and opened to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life." (op. cit. vol. 3, p.139).

Now as we noted earlier (supra p.178f.), the saving power of the New Being is mediated by the biblical picture of the Christ. In a concrete situation in which we are ultimately concerned about the question of being, the picture of the Christ as the New Being may have revelatory power and give rise to an ecstatic insight in which

> "the ontological shock is preserved and overcome at the same time. It is preserved in the annihilating power of the divine presence (mysterium tremendum) and is overcome in the elevating power of the divine presence (mysterium fascinosum). Ecstasy unites the experience of the abyss to which reason in all its functions is driven with the experience of the ground in which reason is grasped by the mystery of its own depth and of the depth of being generally." (op. cit. vol.1, p.126).

Tillich describes the experience of salvation as participation in the New Being, acceptance of the New Being and transformation by the New Being, corresponding to the traditional theological terms regeneration, justification and sanctification. (op. cit. vol.2, pp.203-7).

The New Being as an objective reality precedes subjective participation in it.

"Regeneration is a state of things universally. It is the new state of things, the new eon, which the Christ brought; the individual 'enters it', and in so doing he himself participates in it and is reborn through participation." (op. cit. vol.2, p.204).

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The message of the Gospel is therefore twofold; first, a message of a new reality to which one is asked to turn, and secondly, a call to turn away from the old reality, the state of existential estrangement in which one has lived. The subjective consequences of regeneration are fragmentary and ambiguous and cannot be made the basis for claiming participation in the New Being. The basis of such a claim is the faith which accepts Jesus as the bearer of the New Being.

It will be observed that Tillich gives priority to regeneration. For it is participation in the New ^Being, (regeneration), which gives rise to acceptance of the New Being,(justification). Faith, or the state of being grasped by the divine presence, precedes justification. Faith is thus preserved from becoming an intellectual work prior to regeneration on the basis of which one is justified.

> "Justification brings the element of 'in spite of' into the process of salvation. It is the immediate consequence of the doctrine of atonement, and is the heart and centre of salvation." In the objective sense, "justification is the eternal act of God by which he accepts as not estranged those who are indeed estranged from him by guilt and the act by which he takes them into the unity with him which is manifest in the New Being in Christ." (op. cit. p.205).

This 'in spite of' enables man to overcome the anxiety of guilt, for it emphasises not only man's estrangement but also, and more particularly, God's justifying act.

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Participation and acceptance describe the reunion of what is estranged, the healing, the reconciliation, which is salvation. Sanctification is the process of transformation by the New Being which follows upon the event of regeneration and justification.

"Sanctification is the process in which the power of the New Being transforms personality and community, inside and outside the church." (op. cit. p.207).

In the third volume of his 'Systematic Theology', Tillich elaborates upon these three aspects of salvation. (17). Regeneration is described as the experience of the New Being as creation. The New Being creates faith. Seen in any other light faith is degraded into a belief, an intellectual act produced by will and emotion. It is a complete distortion when the gift of the divine Spirit is said to follow faith in the divine forgiveness. The question may arise, "What can I do to experience the New Being?" If the question is asked with existential seriousness by one who is ultimately concerned about his state of estrangement and about the possibility of its being overcome, then he is already in the grip of the Spiritual Presence, and the question becomes meaningless.

Justification is described as the experience of the New Seing as paradox. It is important to escape the "devastating confusion" which surrounds the doctrine of justification by

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faith. Faith is not the cause of God's justifying act.

"Not faith but grace is the cause of justification, because God alone is the cause. Faith is the receiving act, and this act is itself a gift of grace." (op. cit. vol.3, p. 238).

We may ask, "How can man accept that he is accepted; how can he reconcile his feeling of guilt and his desire for punishment with the prayer of forgiveness; and what gives him the certainty that he is forgiven?" The answer is in

> "the unconditional character of the divine act in which God declares him who is unjust to be just... The impact of this message.. turns the eyes of man away from the bad and the good in himself to the infinite divine goodness, which is beyond good and bad and which gives itself without conditions and ambiguities. The moral demand for justice and the fearful desire for punishment are valid in the realm of the ambiguity of goodness... But within the New Being they are overcome by a justice which makes him who is unjust just, by acceptance. This transcendent justice does not negate but fulfils the ambiguous human justice." (op. cit. p.240).

Yet there is in man, in his condition of estrangement, a strong resistance to the acceptance of acceptance. It stems from the <u>hubris</u> which drives man to try to conquer estrangement and to achieve reunion with God by his own efforts.

> "Such <u>hubris</u> avoids the pain of surrender to God's sole activity in our reunion with him, a pain which infinitely surpasses the pain of moral toil and ascetic self-torture... The courage to surrender one's own goodness to God is the central element in the courage of faith." (op. cit. pp.240-1).

In the situation of radical doubt concerning the meaning of life it may appear that the only thing left is

"the ultimate honesty of doubt and the unconditional seriousness of the despair about meaning." (op. cit. p.242).

Yet in the very seriousness of existential despair God is present, although unrecognised. To accept God's paradoxical acceptance is to affirm the meaning in life in spite of the doubt and meaninglessness which surround it. This is the courage of faith.

Tillich observes three distinct attitudes in Protestantism towards sanctification and the transformation of the Christian life.

> "In Calvinism sanctification proceeds in a slowly upward-turning line; both faith and love are progressively actualised." (op. cit. p.244).

The law retained a function in guiding the Christian who is not yet completely surrendered to the divine Spirit. This type of Protestant ethics in which progressive sanctification is the aim of life had a tremendous effect in shaping powerful, self-controlled personalities, dedicated to a worldly asceticism of work, self-control and the repression of libidinal energy.

In Lutheranism, sanctification

"was seen instead as an up-and-down of ecstasy and

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anxiety, of being grasped by <u>agape</u> and being thrown back into estrangement and ambiguity." (<u>op. cit.p.245</u>). Although this revealed a deeper understanding of the demonic elements in life it also tended towards a disintegration of morality and practical religion.

A third attitude towards sanctification is to be found in radical evangelical and pietist sects in which the paradoxical character of the Christian life is overshadowed by the assurance of unambiguous progress towards perfection among those who are elected as bearers of the divine Spirit.

Tillich believes that under the impact of secular criticism, these ways of interpreting the process of sanctification are of diminishing significance. He sets down four criteria of life under the Spiritual Presence - increasing awareness, increasing freedom, increasing relatedness, and increasing transcendence.

The principle of awareness is found in the process of sanctification as an increasing

"sensitivity toward the demands of one's own growth, toward the hidden hopes and disappointments within others, toward the voiceless voice of a concrete situation, toward the grades of authenticity in the life of the spirit in others and oneself." (op. cit. p.246).

It is a growing awareness of the ambiguities within one's self and at the same time an awareness of the answers to the

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questions implied in this situation.

The second principle is that of increasing freedom from slavery to objects and from the compulsions which impede one's development toward mature freedom. This is, of course, most difficult and in particular in relation to external law is susceptible of dangerous distortion.

> "The fact that reunion is fragmentary implies that freedom from the law is always fragmentary... Freedom from the law in the process of sanctification is the increasing freedom from the commanding form of the law. But it is also freedom from its particular content. Specific laws... are not only helpful, they are also oppressive, because they cannot meet the ever concrete, ever new, ever unique situation." (op. cit. p.247).

A third principle is that of increasing relatedness, both with others and within oneself. It overcomes selfseclusion, loneliness and hostility. But this relatedness is not mere 'togetherness'. It involves also the power to sustain solitude, for a symptom of mature self-relatedness is that reunion with one's self which overcomes both self-elevation and self-contempt.

> "The process of sanctification runs toward a state in which 'the search for identity' reaches its goal, which is the identity of the essential self shining through the contingencies of the existing self." (<u>op. cit. p.250</u>).

The fourth principle is that of increasing selftranscendence, or "participation in the holy". This may or -201-

may not be related to the formal ecclesiastical structures.

"In the mature life, determined by the Spiritual Presence, participation in the devotional life of the congregation may be restricted or refused, prayer may be subordinated to meditation, religion in the narrower sense of the word may be denied in the name of religion in the larger sense of the word; but all this does not contradict the principle of self-transcendence." (op. cit. p.250).

Tillich goes on to say that self-transcendence

"is actual in every act in which the impact of the Spiritual Presence is experienced." (op. cit.p.251).

With increasing maturity in the process of sanctification,

"participation in communal devotion may decrease and the religious symbols connected with it may become less important, while the state of being ultimately concerned may become more manifest and the devotion to the ground and aim of our being more intensive." (<u>op. cit. p.251</u>).

Tillich's description of the manifestation of the New Being or Spiritual Presence reflects his description of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ which we have before us in the biblical picture. This is thoroughly consistent, but we must raise again the question mentioned earlier (supra pp.177f.), concerning the historical status of the picture. Notwithstanding Tillich's judgment of the historical quest as a failure, the conclusion seems inescapable that the biblical picture bears a close relationship in Tillich's thought to the conception of the mature personality held by a twentieth

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century psychologist. Is not Tillich therefore simply avoiding the historical problem by creating an ideal picture from the gospels of a man whom any mature and enlightened person of this century would regard as admirable? And although Tillich expressly rejects the attempts to imitate Christ, he is nevertheless prepared to say,

> "If the word 'imitation' is used at all... it should indicate that we, <u>in</u> our concreteness, are asked to participate in the New Being and to be transformed by it, not beyond, but within, the contingencies of our life." (<u>op. cit. vol.2, p.141</u>).

But the conclusion seems inescapable that we are in fact to model our life on the picture of the New Being in the Christ. Van Buren speaks of Jesus as the free man the contagion of whose freedom sets other men free. (18). Tillich speaks of the transforming power of the picture of the New Being in the Christ in those who confront it in a concrete situation of ultimate concern. (19). And does there not lie behind both 'pictures' the projection of an idealised man into the first century? It may well be that faith must have a grounding in history, but it is most unhistorical to replace the uncertain-5 ties of ancient history with a contemporary projection. One cannot avoid the suspicion that the alleged response of the first believers is also in some degree a projection of the response which van Buren and Tillich would make to their own

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idealised 'pictures'.

To return to the Cross of the Christ. It will be clear that for Tillich the suffering and death of Jesus are the supreme manifestations of the reality of the New Being in him and the ultimate proof that he was the bearer of the divine Spirit. This has been expressed in a variety of symbols and mythological constructions which must be 'deliteralised'. The finite symbols should never become absolute, for then they become demonic threats to the New Being. Instead of pointing to the New Being and participating in the power and freedom of the divine Spirit, they contradict it. Similarly, theories of atonement are but halting attempts to give cognitive expression to the reality of the New Being in the Christ and its relation to man's predicament of estrangement. Of what value then, is a doctrine of atonement? Certainly it can have no definitive significance. It must be an unceasing attempt to convey in meaningful contemporary terms the response of God to the realities of man's predicament. Are there any affirmations which must find a place in the development of such a doctrine? Tillich names six. First of all,

"the atoning processes are created by God and God alone." (op. cit. vol.2, p.200).

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That is to say, God is not dependent on a particular work of

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Christ, but that the Christ in the totality of his being,

"mediates the reconciling act of God to man." (<u>Op. cit. vol.2, p.200</u>).

In view of Tillich's hesitancy about the use of the term 'mediator' (op. cit. pp.194f.), would it not be adequate to say that the Christ as the bearer of the New Being <u>is</u>, in the totality of his conquest of estrangement, the reconciling act of God?.

The second affirmation is that

"there are no conflicts in God between his reconciling love and his retributive justice." (op. cit. p.200).

As the justice and love of God are not in conflict it is not possible to speak of the work of Christ on the Cross as something which enabled God's love to be reconciled with his justice.

> "The justice of God is the act through which he lets the self-destructive consequences of existential estrangement go their way." (<u>op. cit. p.201</u>).

These belong to the structure of being itself. Justice which resists what is against love, is itself an aspect of love.

A third affirmation is that

"the divine removal of guilt and punishment is not an act of overlooking the reality and depth of existential estrangement." (op. cit. p.201).

This terminology with its implicit objectifying of God is, of course, symbolic and the analogy of forgiveness is limited. But in the experience of being grasped by the New Being, one is made more deeply aware of one's responsibility for separation from God and for resistance to reunion.

The fourth principle which must be affirmed is that

"God's atoning activity must be understood as his participation in existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences." (<u>op. cit. p.201</u>).

This implies that

"God takes the suffering of the world upon himself by participating in existential estrangement." (<u>op. cit. p.202</u>).

Through his participation in the self-destructive consequences of estrangement God is able to transform them

> "for those who participate in his participation". (op. cit p. 201).

Tillich recognises that to speak thus is to use highly symbolic language, for it appears to contradict the affirmation that God is beyond freedom and destiny. He refers to the element of non-being which is eternally conquered in the divine life.

> "This element of non-being, seen from inside, is the suffering that God takes upon himself by participating in existential estrangement or the state of unconquered negativity. Here the doctrine of the living God and the doctrine of atonement coincide." (op. cit. p.202).

> The fifth principle to be affirmed is that "in the Cross of the Christ the divine participation in

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existential estrangement becomes manifest.... It is a manifestation by being actualisation. It is not the only actualisation, but it is the central one, the criterion of all other manifestations of God's participation in the suffering of the world." (op. cit. p.202).

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Now it must be emphasised again that

"the Cross is not the cause but the effective manifestation of God's taking the consequences of human guilt upon himself." (op. cit. p.203).

That is to say, although in the language of devotion it may sometimes appear that there is a causal relation between the death of Jesus and the experience of release from guilt, theological language must affirm that the Cross is supremely the manifestation of God's participation in the destructive consequences of estrangement.

This leads to the sixth principle which affirms

that

"through participation in the New Being, which is the being of Jesus as the Christ, men also participate in the manifestation of the atoning act of God." (<u>op. cit. p. 203</u>).

The divine suffering is not to be thought of as a substitute for the suffering of man, but as participation in the situation of estrangement. In being grasped by the New Being men also participate in that suffering which was also the manifestation of Christ's triumph over estrangement. And they likewise participate in that triumph.

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It now remains to make some general comments on Tillich's christology, and then to draw attention to what appear to be two serious defects in Tillich's whole treatment of the Cross and the meaning of salvation.

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It is quite clear that the christological dogmas of Chalcedon are radically transformed in Tillich's system. He recognises that it was necessary for the Church fathers to formulate the dogma in order to protect the Christian message against distortions. But their conceptualisation of the symbols expressing the Christian message was not entirely successful.

"The christological dogma saved the Church, but with very inadequate conceptual tools." (<u>op. cit. vol.2</u>. p.161).

The formula of Chalcedon sought to establish the genuine meaning of the Christian message, but theology is not forever bound to the philosophical concepts which were then used. It must constantly strive to express its substance

> "with every tool which proves to be more adequate than those given by the ecclesiastical tradition." (op. cit. p.163).

The doctrine of the two natures in the Christ is concerned with a fundamental issue of the Gospel.

"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 -208-

nature would deprive the Christ of his total victory over existential estrangement." (<u>op. cit</u>. <u>p.164</u>).

How then, can the christological substance of the ancient dogmas be expressed? Tillich replaces the ancient concept of static essence by the concept of dynamic relation. He finds the concept 'nature' as used in the terms 'human nature' and 'divine nature', ambiguous and inadequate.

> "The assertion that Jesus as the Christ is the personal unity of a divine and a human nature must be replaced by the assertion that in Jesus as the Christ the eternal unity of God and man has become historical reality. In his being, the New Being is real, and the New Being is the re-established unity between God and man." (op. cit. p.170).

Tillich creates the term 'Eternal God-manhood' to express the dynamic quality of the relation. 'Eternal' points to the general presupposition of the unique event Jesus as the Christ.

> "This event could not have taken place if there had not been an eternal unity of God and man within the divine life... This unity... in the unique event of Jesus as the Christ, became actualised against existential disruption." (op. cit. p.171).

Tillich goes on to affirm that both incarnational and adoptionist christologies have biblical roots and that neither should be ignored.

> "Incarnational christology was needed to explain the adoptionist christology... incarnational christology needs adoptionist christology for its fulfilment." (<u>op. cit. p.171</u>).

"The incarnation of the Logos is not metamorphosis but his total manifestation in a personal life. But manifestation in a personal life is a dynamic process involving tensions, risks, dangers, and determination by freedom as well as by destiny." (<u>op. cit. p.172</u>).

One is left wondering whether Tillich has really thrown more light on the christological paradox. The dynamicrelational concept is certainly more meaningful, but upon reflection one begins to suspect that his christology is inadequate. For we seem to be left with a Jesus who is neither God nor man. Jesus as the Christ actualises the ontological structure of the essential unity between God and It is neither God nor man, but the 'ontological unity' man. which is manifest in the Christ. To be sure, this unity is manifested in a personal life, but Tillich regards Jesus as the Christ as the bearer of the New Being (op. cit. p.139). Here we seem to be moving towards a purely adoptionist christology. We may be in sympathy with Tillich's dynamicrelational concept which certainly does greater justice to psychological structures, but his attempt to formulate a christology ends in confusion rather than clarity.

We have already mentioned a certain ambiguity in Tillich's references to faith.(supra p.178f.) He speaks of it in general terms as

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"the state of being grasped by that toward which self-transcendence aspires, the ultimate in being and meaning. In a short formula one can say that faith is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern." (op. cit. vol.3, p.138).

There is a risk involved in faith since it may affirm a wrong symbol of ultimate concern, "a symbol which does not really express ultimacy (as, e.g. Dionysus or one's nation)" (<u>op. cit</u> <u>vol. 2, p.134</u>). This can lead to idolatry or demonization. For Tillich the Cross symbolises the conquest of the demonic temptation of that which is finite to claim ultimacy for itself. (Jesus sacrificed himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ). It follows that none of the symbols in and through which the Christian message is expressed may claim ultimacy. If as finite and partial elements they claim ultimacy they cease to be transparent to the genuinely ultimate and hence become idolatrous.

But in the Christian sense faith is

"the state of being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ." (<u>op. cit. vol.3, p.</u> <u>139</u>).

Yet in volume 2, p.134, Tillich says that

"the affirmation that Jesus is the Christ is an act of faith and consequently of daring courage."

Now it is understandable that initially, when confronted with the picture of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ, the

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affirmation that he is the Christ would be a daring act of courage. But having made the affirmation, and having begun to be transformed by the New Being, it would appear that faith would give way to certainty and assurance. It is hard to see how Tillich can speak at one and the same time of risk in faith and of the reality of personal transformation in the power of the New Being. Such transformation may indeed be partial and fragmentary and not unmixed with doubt, yet how can we speak of the reality of the transformation unless there is a degree of certainty that the Christ is the genuine fulfilment of our truly ultimate concern? In the process of transformation under the power of the New Being faith loses its radical quality of personal historical decision. And the Cross becomes not the constantly recurring challenge to my selfunderstanding and the decisions which flow from it, but a kind of ideal external principle of judgment, by means of which my concerns and those of others may be judged. The Cross becomes the 'criterion' within the life of faith. (20).

A second point at which Tillich's interpretation of the Cross appears to be deficient relates to the meaning of forgiveness. It is true that Tillich came to express the view that the "sin-forgiveness structure is not the only

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important thing in Christianity".(21). On the other hand. in 'Systematic Theology' vol. 2, he recognised the value of Anselm's doctrine of atonement in that it did justice to the psychological situation created by the consciousness of quilt. (op. cit. p.199). And his fifth principle of a doctrine of atonement affirms that the Cross is the

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"effective manifestation of God's taking the consequences of human guilt upon himself." (op. cit. p. 203).

The question we would raise however, is whether Tillich's description of the paradox of salvation as 'the acceptance that one is accepted' retains the essentially personal quality of the experience of forgiveness. Tillich's terminology avoids the danger of making the Cross the cause of God's forgiveness, but at the cost of an apparent weakening of the essentially personal relationship which is basic to the reality of forgiveness. Tillich's argument can easily be interpreted to mean that salvation is a matter of becoming aware of one's unity with the ground of one's being, of participating in the essential God-man unity. The Cross then becomes the symbol of a general state of existence rather than the point at which I experience the paradox of being both judged and forgiven, condemned and renewed, in the daily decisions of life. It may well be that the symbol of

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substitutional suffering is 'more or less dead' because of our 'fully developed individualism' (22). We have no wish to revive it. But Tillich's symbolism with regard to the Cross becomes less than transparent when we try to express the sense of the costliness to God of forgiveness, or of the act which overcomes estrangement and effects reunion. There is here something more than the inseparable unity of justice and love in the divine life.

It is not within the scope of our purpose to pass a comprehensive judgment on Tillich's theological system. While competent critics have expressed doubts concerning Tillich's method and its effectiveness as an instrument, few can question the predominantly evangelical concern which runs through the whole system, the power of his conceptions and the stimulation of his arguments. Whether or not we agree with Kenneth Hamilton that

> "to see Tillich's system as a whole is to see that it is incompatible with the Christian gospel" (23),

it is important to remember that Tillich claims no finality for his system. The task of theology is never ending. It is a matter of only partial and fragmentary insights, a slow advance from vantage point to vantage point. With respect to the Cross, Tillich himself recognised that in the present

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situation in which traditional symbolism has lost its power, he could do no more than offer criteria for the development of another atonement doctrine. (24). Nevertheless our final word must be a question. Is it in fact possible within the framework of Tillich's idealist metaphysical approach to express the utterly historical, individual and personal character of the decision regarding the Easter faith?

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THE WORD OF THE CROSS

AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

The Life of Faith in the Shadow of Death

In this final chapter we must summarise the discussion of the previous chapters and try to indicate certain emphases which may enable the word of the Cross to be recognised and understood as a relevant and liberating word to man.

We began with the question of God, and concluded that although the question remains problematical - as problematical as the question of our existence - it is a question which is not resolved by logical analysis of language or the simple equating of the reality of God with the Man of Nazareth. We cannot escape the question, but theology is committed to the task of defining it and of striving to discover fruitful lines towards an understanding of it. We noted in our earlier discussion that one such line of approach which appears to be helpful is that provided by the

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existentialist analysis of existence. Arising from our discussion we set down the following affirmations:

- The question of God and the question of our existence are inseparable.
- The question of God is not primarily a matter of theoretical thought but of personal existence.
- The question of our existence is aroused in acute form in the proclamation of the message concerning Jesus as the Christ.
- 4. The proclamation carries with it the affirmation of God's being-for-us in the historical reality of Jesus Christ.
- 5. The decision in response to the proclamation involves a new self-understanding which is inseparable from the affirmation of the reality of God.

It is clear that in approaching the question of God in this way, it is no longer possible to think of him as a kind of autocratic monarch, a "Louis XIV of the heavens".(1). For this reason it is doubtful whether the idea of the sovereignty of God, with its lingering autocratic overtones is adequate to express the reality of the transcendent otherness of God over against his creation. Nor can we think of God as a Being whose existence can be either proved or disproved. Speaking of the hiddenness of God as one of his properties

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Barth writes,

"We lack the capacity both to establish His existence and to define His being." "The being apprehended by us in thoughts and words is always either not yet or else no longer the

being of God." "God is inapprehensible." (2).

Dur speaking of God must always be a confession, a confession marked by a sensitive reticence. Yet we do confess that God has made himself accessible in terms of his revelation, his action in history, in which we encounter him in his being-for-us in the historical reality of the Christ. Barth goes on to

say,

"In His revelation, in Jesus Christ, the hidden God has indeed made Himself apprehensible. Not directly, but indirectly. Not to sight, but to faith." (op. cit. p.199).

In discussing what we mean by an act of God,

R.Gregor Smith writes,

"When we speak of what happens to us, in the relation of faith, we are speaking of God's act. And when we speak of God's act we speak of what he is. The basic utterance of faith is that God is true: what he does to us is what he is." (3).

Can we speak of God apart from our experience of his action in making himself accessible to us in the relation of faith? Gregor Smith goes on to affirm,

> "We cannot speak of God in himself. We cannot speak of God as he is. We cannot put any content into the concept of God's being... All that we can say of the

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absolutely Other, of God, is that in his paradoxical giving of himself to us, which we receive in faith, the faith that we are forgiven and reconciled, we do indeed believe that it is not simply of ourselves and of the human other that we are speaking, but of God." (op. cit. p.123).

For those who have responded in faith to the proclamation

concerning the Christ,

"God is not anything else than temporal and historical."

"We cannot get nearer to God than this: he is not accessible in isolation or in abstraction, as a being, or as being itself. He is known only as he gives himself, and in this giving he expresses himself as entirely historical." (op. cit. p.124).

The revelatory encounter does not dissolve mystery into knowledge, but reveals the mystery - the mystery of God's being-for-us, to which the appropriate response is not the confident assertion of knowledge, but worship and the obedience which expresses itself in love, in being for others.

Referring to the words 'sin' and 'guilt' we noted the justifiable humanist condemnation of an understanding of the terms which relates them exclusively to the fact and consequence of a self-negating obedience to a heteronomous authority. The evidence of psychological analysis revealing the unwholesome and often disastrous consequences of certain moralistic emphases on rewards and punishments cannot be ignored. Yet the condition of man is not to be explained

simply as the expression of a pathological sense of sin, nor is it caused by the arousal of false guilt feelings. Here again the existential analysis of the human situation provides insights which give renewed significance to the terms 'sin' and 'quilt'. When shorn of a moralistic connotation the words refer to an inescapable and universal sense of estrangement and alienation - from oneself and from the world. The reality of anxiety, care, fear, hostility and despair is the expression of a disorder which cannot be explained as a superficial blemish or put right by some clever psychological engineering. For notwithstanding his truly astonishing mastery of his environment, man remains in bondage to a variety of political, moral, religious and cultural ideologies. He is willing to trade his freedom in responsibility for the promise of political or religious security. 'Sin' and 'guilt' are not to be confused with the transgression of particular moral prescriptions and external authoritarian commands. We speak of sin because man's alienation from his true being makes commandments necessary. Sin must be understood in relation to the universal predicament of man in which the ambiguities and contradictions of his life reflect an estrangement from his true being which he is powerless to overcome.

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This led us to an examination of the Cross in New Testament history and faith. How did Jesus regard his death? Our conclusion was that by their very nature as faith-documents the Gospels provided no indubitable factual information about the mind of Jesus in respect of the Cross. We have no certain means of knowing whether Jesus died with a sense of accomplishment or whether his death meant the shattering of all his expectations.

The resurrection faith, affirming the unique presence of §od in the life and death of Jesus, was bound to find that the death demanded explanation and interpretation. Whereas Peter at Pentecost made no attempt to give a rationale of the Cross, but concentrated on resurrection, Paul relates the Cross and resurrection to the total human situation and the judgment of God, employing categories derived from both Jewish and Hellenistic religious thought and expectations to express the meaning of the Cross. A scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks, the Cross was interpreted in the early Church in terms of release from bondage to Sin and the Law, a victory over cosmic forces of evil, as a sacrificial offering, and a manifestation of God's love.

It is immediately apparent to a modern critical reader that the supernatural view of the universe, with its

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redeemer myths, its cosmic drama of redemption and its eschatological expectation of an imminent end to history through divine intervention, is quite alien to his understanding of the universe. Is the meaning of the Cross bound to the mythological framework in which it was originally understood and expressed? Is the proclamation of the word of the Cross inseparable from the sacrificial categories with which it has traditionally been associated? And in what sense is it possible to speak of a 'manifestation of God's love'? How can the word of the Cross be recognised as a liberating word to man in his predicament?

These are the questions which press upon us in a time when to speak of the Cross in traditional categories and with the use of images belonging to a pre-scientific understanding of the universe, demands a <u>sacrificium intellectus</u> or an obscurantist dependence on ancient formulae which is a disgrace to faith and indeed a contradiction of the power of the Cross to liberate man from petrified attitudes and forms of thought.

We are in full agreement with Paul Tillich when he says that in its analysis of the predicament of man and his world in the state of estrangement, existentialism is "a natural ally of Christianity" (4) It provides a conceptual framework within which the Christian message may be proclaimed in this age, with renewed relevance and power. In the judgment of John Macquarrie,

> "a Christian existentialism looks like one of the most promising ways of presenting the New Testament message in our time." (5).

In Bultmann's view, existentialist philosophy provides a method of putting the right questions to the New Testament. (6).

Now it is clear that the existentialist approach is fundamentally different from that which regards the proper religious attitude to be one of submission to external, authoritarian claims, be they of biblical or of papal infallibility. The existentialist attitude is one in which one's personal existence and history are discovered to be meaningful in themselves, and not merely the shadow of deeper and more significant realities. Furthermore, religious beliefs and moral codes cease to be regarded as secure, protective shields against the vicissitudes of the world, or as guarantees of heavenly rewards. Faith emerges as the power in which we find the 'courage to be' in the midst of insecurity, uncertainty, doubt, and the constant necessity for responsible decision.

How then, shall we declare the word of the Cross in terms meaningful to the present age? In the first place,

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we must place the utmost emphasis on the complete historicity of the Cross and of our own existence. By this I mean that to speak in terms of a legal act in some cosmic law court, or of a military victory on some cosmic battlefield, or of a sacrificial offering on some cosmic altar is to remove the Cross from our present existence. It becomes a super-historical wonder before which man can only fall on his knees in adoration. In speaking of the historicity of the Cross it is essential to realise that this refers not merely to the crucifixion of a man of Nazareth under Pontius Pilate, but also, and just as importantly, to the Cross as a factor in my own experience of life and my understanding of what life is. In fact, as Gregor Smith has argued (7), the two aspects of what we mean by 'history' cannot be separated.

> "<u>Historie</u> without <u>Geschichte</u> would remain simply an abstract construct. <u>Geschichte</u> without <u>Historie</u> is likewise an abstraction. The two meet as a unity in the present." (<u>op. cit. p.85</u>).

The Cross becomes a reality only in so far as it ceases to be a mere occurrence, or even an occurrence to which an orthodox or traditional interpretation has been given, and is acknowledged as a constant element in the present, an inescapable factor in every decision which in any way expresses my understanding of my life and its relationships.

Confronted in his predicament of estrangement,

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in his inauthentic existence, with the message of the Christ, man finds that his urgent questions about the meaning of life are overshadowed by the question which is implicit in the message itself. How do you understand your life and will you let your present self-understanding be crucified in order that a new self-understanding may come to life? For the word of the Cross does not offer an answer; it challenges to decision.

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The word of the Cross thus becomes a word both of judgment and release, of condemnation and forgiveness. For in the decision of faith we discover that the self-understanding within which we are driven compulsively to justify ourselves, to boast of our accomplishments, to withdraw from human relationships behind a protective facade, to adopt hostile and defensive attitudes, to demand spiritual, intellectual and moral security, is the manifestation of inauthentic existence. The word of the Cross accomplishes both an end and a beginning, for while we are judged and condemned, and our previous selfunderstanding is ended, we are at the same time forgiven and the possibility of a new existence, a new self-understanding is offered to us. And the characteristic of the new selfunderstanding is the realisation that our history, our existence is a gift, permeated with grace.

But what proof is there of all this? There is none.

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I cannot point to any observable facts, to objective knowledge, to works of piety or to particular moral actions. In response to the word of the Cross concerning God's being-for-us in the Christ, I confess that this is henceforth how I understand my life. My faith therefore is utterly historical, for it means that my decisions and actions are determined by the daily experience of grace in which the word of the Cross with its judgment and its promise, becomes an existential reality.

The immediate question which arises is how this understanding of the Cross is to be distinguished from mere subjectivism. In common with all religion, Christianity is constantly threatened by an absorption with feeling states or by mystical flights into the ineffable. Is the alternative, however, the affirmation of a firm and unquestioning belief in a body of objective dogmatic certainties? Unless we affirm in a fundamentalist way the absolute verbal authority of the biblical record this is quite impossible. We are back with a radically depersonalized faith based on submission to an external authority. And a depersonalized faith ceases to be a genuinely historical faith, for resting on authority, it takes the Cross out of history and places it at the centre of an idealised picture of history and its purpose. The

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consequence is that the Cross is related only in a tangential manner to one's present existence.

We affirm, therefore, that while our interpretation of the word of the Cross is both profoundly personal and firmly historical, it is certainly not subjective in the pejorative sense. For what is it but the experience of decision concerning our very existence which makes us both ineluctably aware of our personal significance and at the same time aware of the 'objective' reality of others, the world and of that which demands and waits upon our decision? The word of the Cross presents what Bultmann calls a 'decisionquestion'. (8). The question whether we are willing to give up our old self-understanding and to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ is one and the same question, and the decision involves an answer to both. The love and grace by which the hearer is grasped in the preaching of the word of the Cross are understood not as subjective states but as a participation in something which one can only confess to be of God. And if someone should choose to dismiss all this as subjective opinion, then one can only reply, "So be it, but this is how I understand my personal existence".

Nothing more specific can be said concerning the life of faith which the word of the Cross brings into being.

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It does not involve acceptance of a corpus of truth, or obedience of a set of moral principles, or the furtherance of a scheme for world reformation. Rather does it mean that we are thrown into genuine eschatological existence, in which the distinctive feature is a 'careless' readiness for the future, and an openness to the immediate situation which is grounded in our participation in the presence of the Living Lord.

> "The theology of faith", writes Professor Gregor Smith, "is a theology of the cross, and thus a <u>theologia viatorum</u>. It is a theology of a pilgrim journey which makes its own map as it goes". (9).

What is the word of the Cross in the shadow of death? We are familiar with the evidence that for man death is not merely a physiological phenomenon but is seen as a threat to being. In the philosophy of Heidegger man's being is described as "being-unto-death" (10), and in his inauthentic existence man tries desperately to conceal the inevitability of this uttermost certainty and to cloak his mind from its stark reality. Heidegger sees one of the characteristics of authentic existence as freedom for death. Death can become an integrative rather than a destructive power in life, imparting a new seriousness and resolution.

The word of the Cross to man in his anxiety in the face of death is not the presentation of a fantasy concerning

a heavenly world but the affirmation that in this life. death is not merely negation but carries within it the potentiality of positive meaning. The Cross of the Christ marked the end of his life, but it was in giving himself up to destruction that he "broke the power of death" (2 Tim. 1:10, N.E.B) and became the one who "led the way to life" (Acts 3:15, N.E.B.). Yet to the man of faith the death of Jesus is not simply an inspiring example of the triumph of courage and resolution, or an illustration of the way in which victory may sometimes emerge from apparent defeat. It is not any moral which may be drawn from the example of Jesus which helps to ease the sharpness of death. For one who has responded in faith to the word of the Cross and has accepted its condemnation and its renewal, death is also overcome in that same judgment which has put an end to his former existence with its inauthentic striving towards self-justification. Death remains, but dying has lost its sting. It is no longer the final absurdity in a cruel, meaningless farce, nor is it the doorway to judgment, to be approached with fear and trembling. Because of his acceptance of the judgment of the Cross upon his history, the man of faith may be said to have died with Christ. And because Christ "led the way

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to life" Christ may be called "the first to return from

the dead" (Col. 1:18, N.E.B.) Therefore the man of faith already participates in the life of Christ, as he expresses the obedience of faith in works of love. Sharing in the life of Christ is always being on the move, it is a constant reaching forward to its goal. (Phil.3:9-14). Over the man of faith death no longer has dominion.

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Yet sharing in the life of Christ is also a daily dying with Christ, the rejection of all illusory security based on moral, intellectual or pious achievements. It is a daily sacrificing of oneself in love for the neighbour and a readiness in the Spirit for any future. This is the genuine <u>imitatic Christi</u>, a life in which love alone is the absolute obligation and which is a participation in that liberty which is the gift of the Spirit.

But it is precisely here that the Cross stands forth in all its offensiveness. For it holds man, and the man of faith, at a distance from unambiguous truths, unchallengeable merits and unassailable certainties. It demolishes comforting ideological illusions and mythical world views. It places the man of faith in the midst of the world and history and while freeing him from the "cosmic powers and authorities" (Col.2:15), simultaneously places him under the obligation to live responsibly in the world as a fellow-heir with Christ.

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(Rom.8:17 ,N.E.B).

"For the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed" (Rom.8:19, N.E.B.).

In the 'de-divinized' world in which the gods and powers of the world have been dethroned, (11), the man of faith is called to accept responsibility for the world as a son and heir. The Cross is not, therefore, an event in the past to which he may look with sentimental wonder and pious adoration. It is the ever present point from which he moves responsibly into the future and which shapes his decisions and gives meaning to his actions. But it is also the point from which he may sometimes cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?".

We turn to one final question. It concerns the power of the traditional imagery and symbolism to express the word of the Cross. Tillich's warning about the demonic tendency of religion to absolutize both its visible and conceptual forms must be heeded. (12). The very Cross which is the universal symbol of Christianity is at the same time the symbol of the action and decision of one who refused to make his continued finite existence an ultimate necessity. We must therefore recognise that our attempts to conceptualise the meaning of the Cross are not more than symbolic expressions

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of that which lies beyond the symbols. They are not the ultimate. We should not be disturbed, therefore, if some symbols become less expressive and die. Symbols which derived their power from the ancient concepts of sacrifice may already be such as can be kept alive only artificially in the cultural situation of today. But fresh symbols cannot be created at will. They must emerge from the union of an awareness of the event of grace with the cultural environment in which the event occurs. It may well be that new insights into the structure of personality provided by depth psychology, for example, will produce the material out of which vital and culturally relevant symbols may arise. And perhaps the Church under the Cross, rediscovering its shape as a prophetic fellowship will express in its life of obedience in freedom, the most effective and powerful symbol of the revelation from which it derives its life.

Yet the word of the Cross remains paradoxical and the halting expression of a mystery. For it speaks at one and the same time of the God who destroys and makes alive, of justification in spite of guilt, of acceptance in the midst of despair, of life from the grave.

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