

The Religious Philosophy of Paul Tillich

CHARLES H. PATTERSON

IT has been said—for good reasons I believe—that any institution which declines to rethink its objectives at least once every ten years can scarcely justify its own continuation. A single decade, you may urge, is barely an instant in episcopal time and is therefore temporally inadequate for the serious reconsideration of instituted theology. Be this as it may, the rethinking of religious ideas and beliefs ought to take place more frequently than it does. Protestant Christianity is, therefore, peculiarly indebted to Dr. Paul Tillich for calling back into question so many of the hackneyed words and so much of the sacred corpus. But his reappraisal, if not agonizing, is not innocuous, and is, therefore, not always welcomed. Historically speaking, each generation has liked to think of itself as possessing in full measure the truth that was once and for all delivered unto the saints. We may concede that truth is eternal and unchanging and still allow that man's understanding of that truth is never perfect and that his comprehension of it always stands in need of improvement. It is a sad day when any individual comes to believe that his human interpretation of truth is equal in every respect to the truth as it exists in the mind of God. It is, as Dr. Tillich has reminded us on so many occasions, the very essence of idolatry to declare the finite the infinite. And although it is something that has occurred frequently in every stage of religious history, its mere frequency does not absolve it from blasphemy, and blasphemy shall not elude anathema.

CHARLES H. PATTERSON is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska. This paper was read at the regional meeting of the National Association of Biblical Instructors, held at the Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver in October, 1962.

We may freely concede that any new theological outlook will be of necessity another finite and therefore imperfect idea. This concession has led some people to infer that the entire theological dialectic is little more than a quid pro quo of finite conceptions, any one of which is as valid or invalid as the other. But this need not be the case. Human understanding can be improved without requiring that it be perfected. Nothing contributes more toward progress in this direction than that renewal of interest which beckons us to reexamine the bases of our most cherished beliefs. The fruitfulness of any such examination can usually be measured by the volume of criticism it produces. By this standard of measurement one can scarcely deny that the author of "The Religious Situation," "The Courage to Be," and "Systematic Theology" has been highly successful. Dr. Tillich's critics have been both legion and representative. They have arisen in every climate of theological and philosophical opinion. This alone would testify to the seasonableness of his work. Even those who would take issue with him on practically all of the major points of his teaching have in all likelihood gained much from his challenge. It has never been his purpose to indoctrinate but rather to encourage people to exercise more care in thinking for themselves. He has stimulated people from different walks of life to think again about their peculiar formulations of the Christian religion. Without any assertion of finality concerning his own interpretations, he has offered a wealth of suggestions which may serve as a guide toward new and more adequate conceptions relative to religion. And by this, I mean closer approximations to the absolute truth or truth as it exists

in what we so often designate as the mind of God.

The scope of Dr. Tillich's writings is so broad and the matter so profound that it would be impossible to make even a survey of his thought world in the brief time allotted me for this paper. I shall therefore confine my remarks to a few of what seem to me to be key ideas in his interpretation of the Christian religion. Even here I must plead some grave limitations. As a layman I cannot quite make claim to a full understanding of all that he has written on these topics. I do not wish, however, to associate myself with those of his critics who insist that they can understand nothing of what he has said. It is reported that the philosopher G. E. Moore, after listening to one of Dr. Tillich's lectures, arose and said "I cannot understand a single word of it." One is reminded in this connection of Schopenhauer's observation that "if a book and a head come together and nothing happens it isn't necessarily the fault of the book." I do believe Dr. Tillich makes his ideas reasonably clear to anyone who labors seriously to understand them and I hope that this presentation of his thought will afford us at least the occasion for a lively discussion.

I shall begin with his conception of God. It is, as we would normally expect, the most controversial point in his entire system. Philosophers, along with theologians, have been disturbed and provoked by what he has had to say about God. Evidence of this can be seen by merely looking at the programs announced for meetings of the American Philosophical Association during the past few years. Almost without exception at least one of the sectional meetings has been devoted to the question "Is Dr. Tillich an Atheist?" The fact that the question is never answered doubtless explains its popping up again and again at successive meetings of the Association. Most theo-

logians, it would seem, definitely know that either he is in fact an atheist, or he is equally in fact not one. Here the "either-or" is represented to be a purely ontological issue with a yes or no answer. Philosophers, on the other hand, are more apt to be divided on the verbal question of whether or not his position strictly implies atheism and here the purely logical issues tend to overshadow the theological ones. But my own interest is restricted to the observation that this question should not have arisen in the first place.

Those who assert that Dr. Tillich is an atheist usually support their claim by quoting sentences from "Systematic Theology" or some other one of his many publications in which he explicitly denies that he believes in the existence of God. This, they tell us, is exactly what atheism means and hence no further proof is required. But if one wishes additional evidence, they point to the fact that he not only rejects all of the traditional arguments to prove the existence of God, but he also insists that any new arguments which may be advanced will be just as futile as the older ones. They may even quote his statement "To argue that God exists is to deny him." The fact of the matter is that Dr. Tillich does not believe that there is a particular being, separate and distinct from all other beings, that can rightfully be called God. Those who do conceive of God after this manner are usually, he believes, unaware of the absurdities that are implied by it. They fail to recognize that a god who is a particular being is necessarily finite and hence must partake of the many limitations that go along with finitude. It is for this reason that he regards the concept as inadequate both from a philosophical point of view and also as an object of religious devotion. So strong is his conviction along this line that he does not hesitate to inform us that in his judgment even the atheism

of Jean Paul Sartre is closer to the truth than is the popular meaning of God's existence.

The rejection of inadequate conceptions of the deity does not, however, imply for him a doctrine of atheism in the sense in which that term is usually understood. Anyone who has even a slight acquaintance with Dr. Tillich's writings knows that the concept of God is an essential one in all of his thinking. He regards it as a necessary one for understanding the true nature of man, the purpose and means of salvation, the significance of religious experience, the meaning of history, or for any clear comprehension concerning the nature of the universe as a whole. Apart from a belief in God there is no adequate basis for a moral standard according to which human conduct can be judged as good or bad. It is only by means of the concept of a divine purpose that one can give meaning and significance to the historical process, and it is only to the extent in which eternal values can become incarnate in the life of a human being that it can be saved from utter meaninglessness. Obviously, for Dr. Tillich, the concept of God is not something that can be ruled out of our thinking. If current or popular conceptions of the deity are faulty, the remedy lies not in atheism but in the finding of a more adequate conception of God in which these difficulties are overcome. This, he believes, he has found in the notion of God as the ground of all being or in what he frequently designates as Being-Itself.

The use of this terminology suggests at once a whole multitude of questions. What does it mean to say that God is the ground or basis for all being? What possible content can be given to the idea of Being-Itself? Does it refer to a person? Can it appropriately be called the Creator of the universe? Can it in any sense be identified with the God of the Bible? Is it the God

of the Christian religion? How is it related to the person known as Jesus of Nazareth? How can Being-Itself be regarded as a true object of worship and devotion? Is it meaningful to pray to Being-Itself, and if so what kind of a response can be expected? To all of these questions, along with many others, Dr. Tillich gives some very definite answers. Whether the answers are satisfactory is something each person will have to judge for himself. I will try to indicate some of his answers to the extent of my own understanding.

Being-Itself is an ultimate concept. Beyond it thought cannot penetrate. All thinking must of necessity start with the assumption that something exists. Thought can negate any particular being or any class of finite beings, but it cannot without contradiction negate being-itself. One of the reasons for rejecting all of the traditional "proofs" for the existence of God is the fact that they make the concept of the deity dependent on something other than itself. Whatever the nature of the proof may be, it is of necessity something on which the existence of the deity is dependent. Concerning these so-called proofs, Dr. Tillich writes as follows:

"There can be little doubt that the arguments are a failure insofar as they claim to be arguments. Both the concept of existence and the method of arguing to a conclusion are inadequate for the idea of God. However it is defined, the 'existence of God' contradicts the idea of a creative ground of essence and existence. The ground of being cannot be found within the totality of beings, nor can the ground of essence and existence participate in the tensions and disruptions characteristic of the transition from essence to existence. The scholastics were right when they asserted that in God there is no difference between essence and existence. But they perverted their

insight when in spite of this assertion they spoke of the existence of God and tried to argue in favor of it. Actually they did not mean 'existence.' They meant the reality, the validity, the truth of the idea of God, an idea which did not carry the connotation of something or someone who might or might not exist. Yet this is the way in which the idea of God is understood today in scholarly as well as popular discussions about the existence of God. 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."

This quotation brings to light some of the logical advantages as well as the peculiarities involved in Dr. Tillich's conception of God. First of all, it maintains a sharp distinction between the finite and the infinite. God is neither a particular being along with others, nor is he the sum total of all finite creatures. Dr. Tillich thus avoids the pitfalls implied in the notion of a finite God and he does so without committing himself to the errors involved in pantheism. As being-itself God transcends the realm of existence. For this reason his being cannot be inferred from any of the facts that can be known about the finite world. You cannot derive the infinite from the finite. It is true that many of the facts connected with human experience give rise to a question concerning their meaningfulness or significance, and in order to get a satisfactory answer to the question it may be necessary to go beyond the facts themselves. But neither nature nor nature's processes can of themselves supply the answer. In fact the whole question concerning God can be illuminated, at least to some

degree, by drawing an analogy from the human self or personality. Naturalists, as we all know, have on occasions denied the reality of selfhood. Usually, they have sustained this denial on the premise that a self cannot without self-contradiction be conceived as a particular thing. It cannot be located in any particular place nor does it belong to any particular moment of time. There are no physical nor biological facts, they insist, from which the self's existence could legitimately be inferred. But to be sure there are plenty of human experiences which, to be meaningful, require the postulation of a self or person. In other words, these experiences raise a question concerning the validity of a concept of selfhood, but no answer to the question can be wholly derived from the bare physical facts themselves. The feeling of obligation, the sense of duty, the awareness of freedom, the notion of responsibility, and similar experiences are significant only in relation to self-hood; but the reality of the self, if there be one, belongs to a different order from that of the particular facts which can be investigated through observation and experimentation. Now the relationship between God and the world may be conceived in a similar manner. God may give meaning and significance to finite experiences even though the reality of God could not be inferred from any one of them nor indeed from all of them taken together.

As the being which transcends all finitude, God is the power that makes possible everything that belongs to the realm of existence. In the case of human beings he imparts to them the power of affirming and of negating their essential nature. Even non-being is dependent on being for there could be no negation without some positive reality which could be denied. It is in this sense, and in this sense only, that God may be said to be responsible for evil. There are those who maintain

that belief in God necessarily implies a denial of the reality of evil. But this is not true of Dr. Tillich's conception of deity. The God who is Being-Itself gives to his creatures the power of choice. That which exists can, if it so chooses, go from being into non-being. In other words, it has the power to negate its own essential nature. The urge or tendency to do this is what is called the demonic. But though it is God who makes it possible for his creatures to choose between being and non-being, the choice belongs to them and not to God. A world in which there could be no evil would at the same time be one in which there could be no goodness. The freedom to choose is a necessary condition for having either one.

The transition from the realm of essence to the realm of existence is, in a sense, what is meant by the doctrine of creation. God as the Creator is the power which makes existence possible. The divine life is by its very nature a creative power. The creative act is neither necessary nor contingent. It is not necessary because there is no higher power to which God is subject. Neither is it contingent since it cannot be the result of something happening to God. Creativity is one of the characteristics of the divine life. The doctrine of creation is, however, something that is frequently misunderstood. The story of creation which is recorded in the book of Genesis is not an account of something that has occurred but once and at a particular point in time. It is true that people often think of it that way. This may be due to the fact that they are not aware of the inconsistencies implied in this manner of thinking or that they are not conscious of the limitations placed upon thinking by the structure of the human mind. That which takes place in time is always **before** that which follows, and **after** that which precedes it. Now **before** and **after** are temporal concepts. They belong to the world of space and time

and have no meaning at all apart from the finite objects by which they are measured. Creation is a continuous process rather than a single event. It is exemplified whenever a cell in any living organism is replaced by another one. It takes place in every instance of growth whether it be the growth of a plant, an animal, a civilization, or a planet. Instead of being the explanation of the beginning of all things, it is the assertion of the creatureliness of all finite things. The necessary correlate of creatureliness is divine creativity. The full meaning of the doctrine of creation is more than can be grasped by any single form or mode of human thought. It can be symbolized by each of the three modes of time, past, present, and future. The first of these is expressed in the classical doctrine known as *creatio ex nihilo*. The second one is expressed in the idea of sustaining creativity, and the third one in the concept of a directing agency which points toward the full realization of the essential nature of things.

Whether the conception of God which we have attempted to describe is the God of the Judeo-Christian Bible will depend to a very large extent on the way in which the language of the Bible is interpreted. This brings us to a consideration of another one of the key ideas involved in Dr. Tillich's interpretation of the Christian religion. I refer specifically to his use of myth as a proper instrument for the expression of religious truth. This again is a highly controversial point and one that has been seriously challenged by many of his critics. The issue involved can be illustrated by the following questions. When the Bible speaks of God as a person, as indeed it does throughout both the Old and New Testaments, are we to understand that God is a person in the same sense that we speak of human beings as persons? Or, should we interpret the language used as symbolic of a reality which differs from human personality in some respects

but is like it in other respects? Or again, when we read the story of the fall of man as it is recorded in the early chapters of the book of Genesis are we to understand that this is an actual account of events that happened to particular persons who lived in a certain time and place? Or, should we regard the entire story as an appropriate symbol of a condition that characterizes the human race? In other words, is the story a myth the meaning of which is to be found in the conception of human nature which it illustrates? In another one of the early chapters of the book of Genesis there is a story about the building of a tower that was designed to reach up to heaven so that in the event of another flood men could climb to the top of this tower and be saved. What shall we say about this story? Is the meaning of it to be found in its accuracy as a record of some historical event or is the story to be regarded as a myth which symbolizes the idea that whenever human beings try to save themselves by their own efforts the enterprise will end in frustration and failure? Other examples could be added but these are sufficient to illustrate the problem involved in the interpretation of religious language.

Now it is Dr. Tillich's conviction that there are many parts of the Bible which are rightfully interpreted as myths. This is not because he wants to discredit the writings. Rather, it is his belief that this the only way in which the greatness of these writings can be recognized or their essential truths grasped by human minds. The reasons for this position are fairly obvious. The language which is perfectly adequate for dealing with finite experiences is no longer valid when it is applied to that which goes beyond the realm of finitude. The literal meaning of language is always derived from the way in which that language has been used. Its meaning is expressed in terms of the categories of the human mind

and it is therefore appropriate only to those areas of thought in which finite experience is under consideration. The categories are the forms which enable the mind to grasp and shape the character of that which it tries to understand. Space and time, for example, are categories or forms of thinking and the same is true of cause and effect, substance and accident, and the like. These forms enable us to organize experiences and thus to make them intelligible. To say that a certain object or event is the cause of something else is a meaningful way of expressing the relationships that hold true within the realm of finite activities. But when we talk about the cause of the universe as a whole, or what causes God to act as he does, we are extending the category of the cause and effect relationship into an area where it does not belong. The descriptions which are true in regard to human relationships cannot be applied in the same way to realities which transcend all finitude. How then, it may be asked, can we think or talk correctly about God at all inasmuch as the only language we have for this purpose is what has been derived from our own finite experiences? There are, of course, many thinkers who will tell us quite frankly that it cannot be done. Positivists, for example, have often insisted that all this talk about God is sheer nonsense. It is rejected not because they believe it conveys false information but because it doesn't mean anything. It cannot be regarded as knowledge because they define knowledge as that which can be verified through sense experience and certainly this cannot be done with regard to anything that transcends experience.

The use of myth as an instrument for the expression of religious truths enables Dr. Tillich to make an effective reply to this argument of the positivists. He recognizes the truth in their position, viz., that the language of our experience interpreted literally cannot

correctly describe anything that is beyond or outside the limits of our experience. Hence, we cannot say that God is exactly like anything we can think. Neither can we say that his relationship to the world corresponds exactly to any of our human relationships. But this is as far as his agreement with them goes. The disagreement lies in the fact that he holds we can have a meaningful and significant understanding of God and his relationship to the world even though that knowledge will never be complete nor will it be perfect in every respect. There is really nothing so strange about this. Our knowledge of finite things is never complete, either, but this does not warrant the conclusion that we can know nothing about them. Our knowledge concerning the character of any human being is always based on analogies with ourselves. Although the similarities between our own experiences and those of the persons we try to understand will never extend to identity, the resemblances will be sufficient to give us knowledge that is fairly reliable. The same thing can be true of our knowledge about God and his relationship to creatures. The language used will necessarily be the language of finite experience, but if it is given a symbolic rather than a literal interpretation, the meaning is not restricted to the area of finitude. It can refer to a reality that is different from ourselves but not so completely different that no similarity can be recognized. A God that is "wholly other" could have no meaning at all for human minds, for there would be no basis from which analogies could be drawn. But this is not true of the God that is designated as Being-Itself. The God that is the ground or basis for all that exists has enough in common with his creatures that his nature can be at least partially recognized even though it can never be known completely. The major function of the Biblical myths, as Dr. Tillich

interprets them, is to set forth important truths concerning God and his relationship to the world. This method of interpretation enables him to avoid both the errors of an extreme literalism and the opposite errors of an extreme liberalism which sees in many of the Biblical narratives nothing more than the crude ideas of primitive people who have not outgrown the folklore of the culture in which they were reared. He takes the narratives seriously even in those instances where he does not interpret them literally.

Some Biblical scholars have talked about demythologizing the Bible. Rudolph Bultmann, for example, after pointing out that the geographical, astronomical, cosmological, and related ideas which are implicit in the literature of the New Testament are taken from the culture of that period; tells us that the spiritual message of the book is in no way dependent on those ideas. They reflect the conceptions of the universe which prevailed at that time but which have since been shown to be false. In other words the myths are false and should be put aside but the spiritual truths with which they were associated should be retained. The task of the theologian then is to separate the truths from the false mythology. Dr. Tillich's position in regard to biblical myths is somewhat different. He does not regard the myths as false if they are interpreted correctly. What he advocates is not a demythologizing of the text but rather a deliteralizing of it. Perhaps one or two illustrations will make this point clear.

Take, for example, the story of the man who was born blind and who was cured of his blindness after Jesus had replied to those who raised the question about whose fault it was that this person had been so afflicted. There are two different ways in which this story may be interpreted. From the literal point of view, it is the record

of an actual historical event. Jesus has performed a miracle and the fact that he has the power to do it is evidence of his divine character. Interpreted as a myth the meaning of the story is not dependent on the historical accuracy of the record. To be sure, we have no proof that it did not happen any more than we have certain proof that it did happen. But regardless of what the historical fact may be, the meaning of the story lies in the contrast between spiritual blindness and spiritual insight. People who did come under the influence of Jesus' life and teachings were able to see that which they had never been able to see before. It would be most appropriate to say they had passed from a state of darkness into the light.

The same thing is again illustrated in the story of the raising of Lazarus. We are all familiar with the details of the story. Lazarus had been dead for four days and his two sisters are lamenting his death. Jesus calls to him and the dead man comes back to life. The people who are standing about bear witness to this remarkable event. What is the meaning of this story? Here again, the literal interpretation makes the story depend upon the accuracy of historical reporting. But to say simply that Jesus has the power to bring dead people back to life is to vacate history and to talk instead about the logic of potentiality. Later on, the story of Jesus' own resurrection is variously interpreted in some such conflicting ways. What is the meaning of the story when it is interpreted as a myth? Here the heart of the story is in the contrast between spiritual death and spiritual life. From this point of view the life that is eternal is qualitative rather than quantitative. Continuation of life as a biological organism is not the important point and so does not require the support of history. What really matters is not how long human life may last but how well it is lived. The significance of the Jesus

story lies in the quality of living which he exemplified, a quality that can rescue human life from meaninglessness. Divine qualities can become incarnate in human beings and whatever is divine is eternal, and whatever is eternal is immortal and it is in this sense that Jesus yet lives.

One of the rather obvious advantages of the mythical interpretation over the literal one, is that it does not make the appeal of the Christian message dependent upon either the laws of the scientists or the reports of the historians. Those who glory in the fact that a scientists will occasionally bring to light a piece of evidence which corroborates a Biblical story may be premature in celebrating what they like to call the proof of the Bible's accuracy. There is no telling what new and contrary evidence the scientists will discover in the future, and if their current findings are allowed to verify the biblical record, their future and perhaps different findings must be equally allowed to falsify it. Albert Schweitzer pointed out many years ago in his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* that if the validity of the Christian religion depends upon our ability to prove that the Gospel records are historically accurate, we would be historically compelled to give them up. Now, in contrast, it is logically possible for a record to be a true account and not to be historically sustainable. A Gospel, therefore, which is made independent of any future archeological spade work, is certainly in a more logically favored position.

If some of the Gospel narratives are allowed to pass as religious myths, and not others, how shall we classify the stories that are directly related to the life and ministry of Jesus? If these, too, are to be included in the mythical interpretation, their meaning will be quite different from the one expressed by the same language when taken literally.

This brings us to the third crucial

idea in Dr. Tillich's theology. I refer to his conception of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. This is a subject which lies at the very heart of the Christian religion, and what he has to say about it will be of the essence for anyone who takes this religion seriously.

Before dealing directly with this subject it seems appropriate to say a few words about what Dr. Tillich has called the method of correlation. One of the distinctive features of this method is its insistence that the Gospel message must be stated in a way that will make it relevant to the situations that actually confront human beings here and now. In order for this to be done it is necessary to see a close analogy between the experiences of Jesus and the possibilities which are available for any human being. In other words, the real significance of the career of Jesus on this earth will be lost unless the individual who contemplates it can see in Jesus' experiences something that is applicable to his own peculiar situation. It is for this reason that Dr. Tillich places so much emphasis on the idea of Jesus' humanity. Unlike the mystery cults of the Graeco-Roman world whose central figure was the heroic redeemer, a mysterious figure coming into this world from the realm of the supernatural, Christianity is an historical religion. This means that it is all based on what happened in the life of a genuine historical character, an actual human being who lived on this earth and whose birth, life and death are comparable to what happens to other human beings. This is an important point and one that is frequently overlooked by those who think of Jesus as a god, as well as by those who regard him as a being who was part human and part divine. Neither a god nor a being who is half-god and half-human could be "tempted in all points" as we are. Unless there is available for other human beings the same power to overcome temptations and to resist

the forces of evil that was present in him, his career on earth will have little or no significance for them. This is not to deny the essential truth of what is often referred to as the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. But this doctrine is interpreted falsely when it is taken to mean that Jesus of Nazareth was a god and not subject to the same frailties and weaknesses and other limitations which belong to human beings in general.

Dr. Tillich's conception of the humanized Jesus seems to be in complete accord with the teachings of the New Testament. We see it reflected in many ways throughout the various writings. Take, for instance, the genealogies which are reported in the early chapters of both Matthew and Luke. They are not identical in every respect, but they do agree in listing among the ancestors of Jesus some characters of rather dubious reputation. These genealogical charts plainly indicate that his ancestors were neither better nor worse than our own lineage. In this respect he was truly representative of the human race. If our own temptations are due in any degree to bad blood and poor environment, the same was true of the ones which he experienced. The author of the letter to the Hebrews states clearly that he was "tempted in all points like as we are." Obviously, the story of his supernatural birth, if literally interpreted would indicate that he had but one human parent. Were he, in fact, divine he would not have faced the temptations of life with our poor equipment and could not have been, therefore, our good example. It is a fundamental Christian conviction that Jesus was the son of God, but it is not necessary to interpret sonship in biological terms. Any human being is potentially a son of God. "To as many as believed on him, to them gave he the power to become sons of God."

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus referred to physical birth as a

symbol of spiritual birth. In conversation with Nicodemus he is reported to have said "Except you be born again you cannot see the kingdom of heaven." When Nicodemus interpreted the statement literally, he was promptly corrected, and told rather precisely that such was not its meaning. Instead, it was made clear that Jesus was talking about a transformation which takes place in a person's life and which can be brought about only through help from God. Man cannot change his own nature any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. Spiritual birth no less than physical birth is something the individual cannot do for himself. Any transformation from the bad to the good which takes place in a human being involves action on the part of God as well as cooperation and response on the part of the creature.

It was just this response to and cooperation with the Father on the part of Jesus of Nazareth which spells out his uniqueness and marks him as the standard which Christians would emulate. Again and again he declares "I can of mine own self do nothing." The words that he spoke as well as the deeds which he performed were, according to his own statement, accomplished only through the power of God. It was his function to be the medium through which the Father was revealed to the world. He did not want the medium to become a substitute for that which was to be revealed through it. This seems to be a reasonable explanation for the fact that throughout the synoptic gospels, the account of the miracles is so often followed by an account of Jesus' admonition to tell no one about it. He didn't want people to become so interested in his personality that they would fail to see the God who was revealed to them. Yet this is precisely what does happen when the miracle is interpreted to mean that the one who performs it has some special kind of power that

enables him to suspend the laws of nature whenever he so desires. When a person's character is changed from bad to good, this is a manifestation of divine power, and it can rightly be characterized as a miracle. But a miracle in this sense is not something that conflicts with either the laws of nature or the familiar routine of scientific procedure. It is something that takes place in that part of our experience which is alien to the ken of science. In view of these facts, it seems reasonable to interpret the miracle stories of the New Testament as appropriate symbols of the power of God working through the hearts and minds of men rather than extraordinary manipulations of natural phenomena. To be sure, we have no right to deny that events took place exactly as they are literally described in the text. But whether they did or did not occur as observable phenomena, is not relevant to their profound spirituality. The question may be of interest to the historians, but it is not a matter of religious moment.

Christianity is based on the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was also Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one who is God's instrument for the salvation of human beings from the sins of the world. Evidences of his messiahship are present in every instance in which he overcomes the forces of evil. He overcomes temptations of many different kinds and thus demonstrates what the power of God can do in a life that is fully committed to the divine will. But the fact that he conquers evil does not mean that he escapes suffering or even death. Although some have maintained that no one can, without self-contradiction, believe in both the justice and in the mercy of God, we can see how both are exemplified in Jesus' death on the cross. His justice is revealed in the fact that this man had to suffer in the same way that any other person under similar circumstances would

have to suffer. His mercy is revealed in the fact that power for the overcoming of evil is always available for anyone who is willing to receive it.

The crucifixion and the resurrection are two events which are necessarily associated in the Christian mind. Neither one can be grasped in its full meaning apart from the other. Taken together, they constitute the very foundation of the Christian faith. In the Gospel accounts, the events connected with the crucifixion are described more vividly and in greater detail than those of the resurrection. And what is more, the New Testament accounts of the resurrection show serious discrepancies. But on one point they are in perfect accord, viz., that the resurrection was a real fact. And the resurrection meant something more than a dead man coming back to life. That was something that had happened to other people in other times. But the resurrection of Jesus was the resurrection of his message and the revival of his cause. At the time of his death

when most of his followers had forsaken him, it looked for a while as though the cause he stood for was lost. But now it was alive again and powerful and vibrant; it was dangerous, too, and Rome trembled. Without doubt this remarkable resurrection was associated in the minds of the early Christians was a reanimation of the physical body that had been placed in the tomb. As to what actually happened to the physical body, we have only the recorded testimony of the early Christians, but of the larger and more significant resurrection we can call to witness the living, dynamic, intact corpus of Christian history.

This brief glimpsing at three pivotal points in Dr. Tillich's theology was not undertaken with the intention of delineating his whole system, but it was definitely my purpose to show by fair sampling that his theology is systematic and reasonable, and religiously adequate. Whether or not I have accomplished this, it is yours to say.

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