

BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND THE CHRISTOLOGY  
OF PAUL TILLICH

THE RELEVANCE OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM TO THE CHRISTOLOGY  
OF PAUL TILLICH'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, VOLUME TWO

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TITLE: The Relevance of Biblical Criticism to the Christology  
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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The emergence of historical consciousness and refined forms of historical criticism have created a special problem for religions, especially those such as Christianity for whom claims about particular historical events play a crucial role. The issue is how faith and doctrine can rest upon a contingent foundation whose very existence is subject to the radical and ever-shifting results of historical-research. The author studies Paul Tillich as a man who has met this problem head-on. While the study focuses on Tillich's Systematic Theology, he describes the wider context in which Tillich's work is conceived. The study concludes with a statement and criticism of Tillich's way of resolving the tension between historiography and theology.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: PAUL TILLICH AND THE FAILURE OF THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

#### I. The Problem of the Historical Jesus.

'Christology' is a technical term describing the theological attempt to interpret the person of Christ, and, more particularly, the union of the divine and human natures in that person. Although the New Testament narratives present the facts about the person of Jesus rather than any explanation of them, the Gospels witness nevertheless that the historical Christ claimed to be both Man and God; and, judging by the tenor of the Acts and Epistles, it is evident that the early Christians regarded Jesus in this way. To this extent, we may say that Christology views certain historical events as possessing not merely a special spiritual character but as disclosing the divine incursion into history itself.

In the light of this definition of 'Christology', the problem with which we are to deal in this thesis can be stated simply. If Christology depends, as it manifestly does, upon some reference to an historical person, then it entails claims which are capable of historical verification. In other words, if, as the New Testament stipulates, the life of Jesus is coincident with the lives of other men, then the events of Jesus' life should be capable of examination in the same way as the lives of other figures of the past have been examined. But this in turn involves the theoretical risk that the methods of historical science used by the biblical critic will find the historical evidence

for Christological assertions either to be inadequate or non-existent. Several questions are asked, therefore, of the Christologian, and they are admirably summarized by the subject of our discussion, Paul Tillich.

Does not the acceptance of the historical method for dealing with the source documents of the Christian faith introduce a dangerous insecurity into the thought and life of the church and of every individual Christian? Could not historical research lead to a complete scepticism about the biblical records? Is it not imaginable that historical criticism could come to the judgment that the man Jesus of Nazareth never lived? Did not some scholars, though only a few and not very important ones, make just this statement? And even if such a statement can never be made with certainty, is it not destructive for the Christian faith if the non-existence of Jesus can somehow be made probable, no matter how low the degree of probability?<sup>1</sup>

These questions are polemical and have their own history. They are the result of the awakening of that highly problematical affair, 'the critical study of history', a standpoint which, begun in the eighteenth century, demands that we make a critical distinction between the traditions of history and the facts of history, between the picture that has been handed down of an event and the reality of the event itself. In von Ranke's words, the aim is to discover 'how it actually happened' ('wie es eigentlich gewesen ist'), independent of what any or all of the sources might say.<sup>2</sup> Lord Acton tells how Leopold von Ranke was himself launched on his career as a founder of the modern study of history through noticing that Scott's picture of Lewis XI in Quentin

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<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, Volume Two (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1964) p.130. Hereafter cited as ST, 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ranke's celebrated phrase occurs in the Preface to his Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations (1824), which Fritz Stern has translated and included in his The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present (New York: Meridian Books Inc., 1956) pp.55-58. Stern points out that 'Ranke meant this now famous phrase as a modest self-denial, feeling that history ought no longer to play the role of philosopher or judge; only later was it taken as a boast, as if history could in fact achieve this kind of exactitude'. (Ibid., p.16)

Durward was inconsistent with the original in the Memoires of Philippe de Comynnes.<sup>3</sup> Such a contrast was typical: no source, however revered, could be accepted until its own story had been tested by all the techniques of historical research.

Today, the relationship between biblical criticism and Christology lies in an ambivalent and highly complex position. There are those who, while sceptical of the liberal Protestant attempt to 'reconstruct the real Jesus by means of an objective historical method which would at the same time prove Jesus' religious superiority and his absoluteness',<sup>4</sup> affirm nevertheless a continuity with the old liberal quest for the historical Jesus. Thus M. S. Enslin maintains that 'while we cannot write a biography, we can know the man, can see him engaged in a life-and-death struggle, in the midst of real men, enemies and friends alike . . .'<sup>5</sup>

Another group of scholars, largely those directly or indirectly influenced by Rudolph Bultmann, believes that, while the liberal Protestant approach was both naive and illegitimate, a new quest is possible, distinguished from the old both by its procedures and objectives. So James M. Robinson, though objecting to the original quest's application

<sup>3</sup>'The Study of History', Lectures on Modern History (London: Macmillan and Co., 1930) p.19. Quoted by D. E. Nineham, 'Some Reflections on the Present Position with regard to the Jesus of History', Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament (London: S.P.C.K. Theological Collections, No. 6, 1965) p.2

<sup>4</sup>V. A. Harvey, The Historian and the Believer (New York: Macmillan, 1966) p.168

<sup>5</sup>The Prophet from Nazareth (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) p.14 Cf. Enslin's 'The Meaning of the Historical Jesus for Faith', Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No.3, (July, 1962) pp.219-233. A continuity with the old quest of the historical Jesus is upheld also by W. D. Davies, 'A Quest to be Resumed in New Testament Studies', Christian Origins and Judaism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962) pp. 1-17. Davies prefers 'to advocate resumption of the old



of positivistic historiography to the Gospels,<sup>6</sup> still holds that 'a new quest cannot take place without the use of the objective-philological, comparative-religious, and social-historical research indispensable for historical knowledge'.<sup>7</sup>

Although a detailed exposition of the present state of biblical research into the problem of the historical Jesus is strictly outside the limits of this paper, such contributions, however briefly they may be described, raise an important issue. Whatever the new criteria of biblical scholarship, a profound difficulty remains in separating completely and successfully any new quest from the old;<sup>8</sup> and to acknowledge the importance (even residual importance) of the historical Jesus

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quest on a new level, because the recovery of the intention of Jesus and his understanding of existence. . . is inseparable from the recovery of what He did and said'. (Ibid., p.16)

<sup>6</sup> A New Quest of the Historical Jesus ("Studies in Biblical Theology", XXV, London: S.C.M. Press, 1959) pp.38-47. Robinson's classification of nineteenth century historiography as 'positivistic' has been questioned by D. E. H. Whiteley, Journal of Theological Studies, XIII, No. 2 (October, 1962) p.392. A more convincing and elaborate argument, though in essential agreement with Whiteley, is presented by T. A. Roberts, 'Gospel Historicity: Some Philosophical Observations', Religious Studies, I, No. 1 (April 1966) pp.185-202

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.97. An enlarged version of Robinson's original work appears in German: Kerygma und historischer Jesus (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960); but the additional material is found in 'The Formal Structure of Jesus' Message', Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) pp.91-110. Cf. Robinson's 'The Recent Debate on the "New Quest"', The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No. 3 (July 1962) pp.198-208; and his review of Enslin's The Prophet from Nazareth in Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No. 1 (January 1962) pp.46-48

<sup>8</sup> See V. A. Harvey and S. M. Ogden, 'How new is the new quest of the Historical Jesus?' The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. and ed. by G. E. Braaten and R.A. Harrisville (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964) pp.197-242

is to pose yet again the unsettled and crucial question of the degree to which biblical criticism can affect Christology by examining the one historical fact to which Christology is inextricably linked: the fact of Jesus.

Paul Tillich stands with those theologians, including Barth, Gogarten and Bultmann, who seek to resolve the historical problem of Christology by creatively reorientating theology away from its foundation on the fact of Jesus. This intention, as D. Moody Smith correctly remarks,

does not imply docetic leanings or an intentional diminution of the importance of the earthly Jesus, but rather a refusal to allow Christology to be dominated by the changing results of historical research.

For Tillich, the task evolves from a radical scepticism as to the possibility of reaching the historical Jesus at all by historical methods.

This radical situation is the background for my own attempt to answer the systematic question how we can say that Jesus is the Christ if historical research can never reach a sure image of the historical Jesus. The second volume of my Systematic Theology is an attempt to draw out the consequences for systematic theology created by this skeptical attitude to the New Testament generally and to the historical Jesus in particular.<sup>10</sup>

However, before examining the radical nature of Tillich's assessment of the historical figure portrayed in the New Testament narratives, which the second volume of his Systematic Theology details, we must be careful to avoid one grave misunderstanding of Tillich's position. His attempt to move Christology away from the results of biblical criti-

<sup>9</sup>'The Historical Jesus in Paul Tillich's Christology', The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No. 1, Part II (January 1966) p.132

<sup>10</sup>Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Thought, ed. C. E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) p.227. Hereafter cited as Perspectives

cism does not entail the assumption that such criticism is 'irrelevant' to Christology. Thus, for example, we find Tillich acknowledging that the 'historical approach to biblical literature is one of the great events in the history of Christianity and even of religion and human culture.'<sup>11</sup>

Every historical research criticises its sources, separating what has more probability from that which has less or is altogether improbable. Nobody doubts the validity of this method, since it is confirmed continuously by its success; and nobody seriously protests<sup>12</sup> if it destroys beautiful legends and deeply rooted prejudices.

Indeed, Tillich goes further and adds that the subjection of the biblical literature to this type of critical analysis is an expression of Protestant courage, of which Protestantism can justly be proud.<sup>13</sup> By way of illustration, Tillich proceeds to define the relevance and influence of the critical historical approach in three ways:

First, by giving an analysis of the three different semantic levels of biblical literature. . . ; second, by showing in several steps the development of christological symbols; and finally, by providing a precise philological and historical understanding of the biblical literature by means of the best methods developed in all historical work.<sup>14</sup>

The three 'semantic levels of biblical literature' are described as 'the empirically historical, the legendary, and the mythological'.<sup>15</sup> The extent to which each differs from the other is found, as David Kelsey

<sup>11</sup>ST, 2: 124

<sup>12</sup>ST, 2: 117

<sup>13</sup>ST, 2: 124

<sup>14</sup>ST, 2: 130

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

suggests, 'in the extent to which historical fact-claims are made when each is used'.<sup>16</sup> This is a most helpful suggestion in explicating a statement which otherwise suffers from its brevity. If we accept Kelsey's reading, it is evident that these three levels are enumerated in a descending order of 'fact-claims'. Within the 'empirically historical' narratives, such a claim is essential; legends 'emphasize the universal quality of particular stories',<sup>17</sup> and myths are described elsewhere as 'symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters'.<sup>18</sup>

Historical research has shown also how symbols develop, and to this extent 'historical research has given systematic theology a tool for dealing with the christological symbols of the Bible'.<sup>19</sup> First, symbols appear in a given religious culture and language; they are then used both as an expression and self-interpretation of their own existential situation; next, they are transformed in their appropriation by Christians to interpret the original revelatory event of Christ; and finally, they are distorted by popular superstition, supported by theological literalism and supernaturalism. Thus, the process of historical biblical research can reveal what symbols are and how they are used. It can help the theologian to 'demythologize' the biblical

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<sup>16</sup>The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967) p.90

<sup>17</sup>ST, 2: 175

<sup>18</sup>Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1957) p.49.  
Hereafter cited as DF

<sup>19</sup>ST, 2: 125. Cf. 'Redemption in Cosmic and Social History', The Journal of Religious Thought, III, No.3 (Autumn-Winter, 1946) pp.17-18

texts, stripping the symbols of their literalistic connotations.<sup>20</sup>

Tillich's positive evaluation of the historical approach to the biblical records makes quite clear that his otherwise negative assessment of the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology does not move against historical study as such but rather at the injudicious results attained by its exponents in the case of Jesus of Nazareth. It is this negative appreciation of all attempts to arrive at a minimum of reliable facts concerning Jesus which provides the stimulus for Tillich's christological reorientation away from biblical research. Our central concern in this chapter is to examine, therefore, the formation of Tillich's sceptical position in the light of the failure of the quest of the historical Jesus.

## II. Tillich and the Failure of the Quest of the Historical Jesus.

Tillich has indicated that the radical character of his standpoint is largely determined by what Günther Bornkamm has called the 'funeral oration'<sup>21</sup> pronounced on the so-called 'Lives of Jesus' by Albert Schweitzer in his famous book, The Quest of the Historical Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Thus Tillich, in essential agreement with Schweitzer, writes on the 'quest':

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. The christological symbols Son of David, Son of Man, Heavenly Man, Messiah, Son of God, Kyrios, and Logos are cited by Tillich as exemplifying and corroborating the validity of the historical analysis of symbol. ST, 2: 125-130

<sup>21</sup> Jesus of Nazareth, trans. I. and F. McLuskey, with J. M. Robinson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960) p.13

<sup>22</sup> The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. A. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black Ltd., 1922). Tillich mentions this work in The Interpretation of History, trans. N. Rasetzki and E. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936) p.33. Hereafter cited as Interpretation. In the same work, Tillich also acknowledges his debt to Troeltsch, Wellhausen, Gunkel and the so-called Religionsgeschichtliche Methode as contributing to his radical historical position. (Ibid.) See Perspectives, pp.226-229

The attempt was courageous, noble and extremely significant in many respects. Its theological consequences are numerous and rather important. But, seen in the light of its basic intention, the attempt of historical criticism to find the empirical truth about Jesus of Nazareth was a failure. The historical Jesus, namely, the Jesus behind the symbols of his reception as the Christ, not only did not appear but receded farther and farther with every new step. The history of the attempts to write a 'life of Jesus', elaborated by Albert Schweitzer in his early work, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, is still valid.<sup>23</sup>

Schweitzer, in his famous history of the attempts between 1778 and 1901 to reach what Jesus had actually said and done, had castigated particularly those liberal Protestant scholars who had maintained that access to the historical Jesus could be reached by purifying the biblical narratives of their eschatological and apocalyptic undertones. Yet, as Schweitzer was quick to point out, the Jesus who emerged was a modernization, reflecting the respective rationalist, socialist or romantic presuppositions of each individual historian. The multiplicity and variety of these pictures of Jesus confirmed Schweitzer in his suspicion that no single picture was accurate. He concluded:

There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus. The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give this work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is the figure designed by rationalisation, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.<sup>24</sup>

Tillich admits that even if we reject Schweitzer's own interpretation of Jesus, we must confess that Schweitzer's history shows that 'we are in a position where we cannot know very much about the historical Jesus';<sup>25</sup> and though Tillich recognises that the constructive-conjec-

<sup>23</sup>ST, 2: 117-118

<sup>24</sup>Schweitzer, op. cit., p.396

<sup>25</sup>Perspectives, p.227

tural attempt of historical research to discover the facts of Jesus behind the gospel records was motivated by religious as well as scientific desires, he, like Schweitzer before him, attacks the intrusion of the historian's own 'religious or philosophical convictions or prejudices'<sup>26</sup> in his search for the empirical truth about Jesus.

There is only one methodological procedure, and that is to look at the subject matter and not at one's own looking at the subject matter. Actually, such looking is determined by many psychological, sociological, and historical factors. These aspects must be neglected intentionally by everyone who approaches a fact objectively.<sup>27</sup>

In view of this failure of the 'quest of the historical Jesus', Tillich tells us that some theologians, like Wilhelm Herrmann, 'tried to penetrate into the inner life of Jesus, into his relation to God, man and himself.'<sup>28</sup> This position is rejected by Tillich, for such conclusions can only be drawn from expressions of Jesus' personality which are 'always questionable'.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Tillich rejects all attempts to reduce the historical Jesus to a picture of 'essentials', to develop a Gestalt 'while leaving the particulars open to doubt . . .'

<sup>26</sup>ST, 2: 120

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>ST, 2: 143. See W. Herrmann, Faith and Morals, trans. D. Matheson and R. Stewart (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904) p.236. Cf. Daniel L. Deegan, 'The Theology of Wilhelm Herrmann: A Reassessment', The Journal of Religion, XLV, No. 2 (April 1965) pp.87-99

<sup>29</sup>ST, 2: 143

But this is not a way out. Historical research cannot paint an essential picture after all the particular traits have been eliminated because they are questionable. It remains dependent on the particulars.<sup>30</sup>

This methodological impasse, Tillich continues, has led others to confine themselves only to the 'words of Jesus'. Since few of these words refer directly to Jesus, they can be separated from the biographical content. Tillich says that usually 'the words of Jesus' were treated either 'as general rules of human behaviour'<sup>31</sup> (thereby being refined interpretations of natural law or insights into man's nature), or they are made 'concrete demands'.<sup>32</sup> But for Tillich, the first attempt 'reduces Jesus to the level of the Old Testament and implicitly denies his claim to have overcome the Old Testament context',<sup>33</sup> whereas the second attempt, closely connected with Bultmann's work,<sup>34</sup> though more profound than the first through emphasizing the message that the Kingdom of God is 'at hand' (and so demanding decision for or against the Kingdom), nevertheless still does not indicate how the requirement of deciding for the Kingdom can be fulfilled.

The situation of having to decide remains one of being under the law. It does not transcend the Old Testament situation, the situation of the quest for the Christ.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>ST, 2: 119

<sup>31</sup>ST, 2: 122

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>See particularly, Jesus (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1926); Eng. trans. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero, Jesus and the Word, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958)

<sup>35</sup>ST, 2: 122



Although Tillich's criticisms of these theological attempts from Herrmann to Bultmann to overcome the dangers attendant upon the construction of a 'Life of Jesus' are important addenda for an overall picture of Tillich's position, it is still evident that his own radical assessment of the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology stems principally from his reaction to liberal Protestant theology. As he explains, his viewpoint

pertains only to liberal dogmatics, not to the historical accomplishments of the liberal theologians.<sup>36</sup>

This is extremely important. It makes quite clear that the brunt of Tillich's criticism is not directed against historical methodology as such but rather at the incursion of the historian's own philosophical or historical prejudices when trying to discover the facts about Jesus. In many ways, Tillich's protest is against the lack, not the presence, of an objective method. Too often, the composers of the liberal 'Lives of Jesus' were motivated by the subjective desire to see Jesus as the epitome of Victorian manners, eminently respectable and unmysterious, and, in consequence, totally inadequate to account for the faith in Christ.

Perhaps Tillich's attitude to liberal Protestantism can be seen best by noting the impact of the work of Rudolf Bultmann upon him, for despite his criticism of Bultmann,<sup>37</sup> Tillich does designate his purpose as 'demythologising' (in the sense that it is a necessary fight 'against

<sup>36</sup>Interpretation, p.33

<sup>37</sup>See above, p.11

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the literalistic distortion of symbols and myths<sup>38</sup>), and does attach himself to the critical wing of the Theologie der Krise, of which Bultmann is the greatest representative.<sup>39</sup> But most significant of all, Tillich cites Bultmann's Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition<sup>40</sup> as being determinative in the formation of his insights into the character of the biblical narratives.<sup>41</sup>

It may be suggested that Bultmann demonstrated that it was the actual historical accomplishments of the liberal movement which validated Tillich's negative attitude towards liberal dogmatics, for Bultmann indicated how the liberal Protestant evaluation of Jesus 'as he actually was' allowed the methodological procedures of historical analysis to judge dogmatic presuppositions. In a classic way, Bultmann's famous work on the synoptic tradition illustrated how the liberal picture of Jesus was superceded within liberalism itself. Since this work appeared

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<sup>38</sup>St. 2: 176. Although in substantial agreement with Bultmann's programme (see Perspectives, pp.227-228), Tillich rejects Bultmann's conception of myth. He writes: 'Myth is more than a primitive world-view with which Bultmann equates it; it is the necessary and adequate expression of revelation. In this I agree with Barth, who for some questionable terminological reason calls it "Saga" (Saga).' 'The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development', Theology Today, VI, No. 3 (October 1949) p.306. Cf. R. H. Ayers, "'Myth" in Theological Discourse: A Profusion of Confusion', Anglican Theological Review, XLVIII, No. 2 (April 1966) pp.200-211

<sup>39</sup>See 'The Nature and the Significance of Existentialist Thought', Journal of Philosophy, LIII, No. 23 (November 1956) pp.739-748

<sup>40</sup>Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1921). Eng. trans. John Marsh, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963)

<sup>41</sup>Interpretation, p.33

before Bultmann's acquaintance with either 'dialectical' theology or Martin Heidegger, it is generally recognized as emanating from within the liberal tradition itself. 'Rightly so,' comments Walter Schmithals, 'in so far as Bultmann makes a historical critical investigation of the Jesus tradition without any dogmatic prejudices. Wrongly so, in that this book destroys any possibility of writing a "Life of Jesus", the beginning and the end of liberal theology.'<sup>42</sup>

It is the second aspect of Bultmann's work, which Schmithals mentions, that had the most immediate effect upon Tillich, for Bultmann's approach dismissed finally the possibility of getting back to the historical Jesus, a fact which is indicated by the character of the biblical sources itself. Liberal theology had structured its account of Jesus's personality upon St. Mark's Gospel, thought to be both the oldest of the Gospels and historically reliable. Bultmann, using the 'form-critical' method, started with the supposition that the Synoptic Gospels are all collections of small individual units, originally transmitted orally. The significance of this approach is not, as Bultmann states explicitly, that it identifies 'the individual units of the tradition according to their characteristics - aesthetic or otherwise',<sup>43</sup> but that it recognizes that

the literature in which the life of a given community, and therefore also the primitive Christian community, has taken shape, arises from quite definite needs and from expressions of the life of this community. The result is a quite <sup>44</sup> definite style and quite specific forms and categories.

<sup>42</sup>An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann, trans. J. Bowden (London: S.C.M. Press, 1968) p.198

<sup>43</sup>The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p.4

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

The discovery of the originally individual and pericopic composition of the synoptic gospels terminated the liberal 'Life of Jesus' movement. To admit that the synoptic account was constructed of individual traditions, inserted, moreover, into a gospel framework designed for that purpose at a later stage, simultaneously destroyed the liberal theological basis of the Marcan 'framework', which was thought to belong not simply to the earliest stage of the tradition, but to the 'literary' tradition emanating from the pen of the evangelist himself. No longer could the 'personality' of Jesus be exposed within a framework which now could lay no claim to ultimate historical reliability. The Gospels are not to be read as simple biographical outlines since behind the framework of each gospel lies the collective consciousness of the primitive Christian community, determined as it was by the practices, concerns and apologetic needs entailed in that community's situation. St. Mark's Gospel, far from being an historical document, is in fact Gemeindetheologie.<sup>45</sup>

In this way, Bultmann was radically critical of the old liberal quest for the historical Jesus.

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

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<sup>45</sup>Cf. H. Anderson, Jesus and Christian Origins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) p.31

struction of a picture of Jesus' character and inner development.<sup>46</sup>

This conclusion is Tillich's also. Bultmann's stress on the 'interpretative' character of the biblical narratives could only lead Tillich to assert that if Jesus said 'I am the truth', this truth may indeed be indistinguishable apart from the historical event of Jesus, but it could not be discovered by a methodological approach. Biblical criticism as exemplified by Bultmann, had shown above all the impossibility of moving out of one's concrete historical situation into the situation in which one can meet the 'historical Jesus'.<sup>47</sup>

For Tillich there is no possibility of getting behind the kerygmatic Jesus Christ, that is, the Jesus as he was received and interpreted and preached by the believing disciples as the Christ of God. It is inaccurate to speak of the 'historical Jesus' if we mean by that term the life of a person who stands behind the Gospels and can be extracted from those witnesses by historical research.<sup>48</sup>

This is a just appraisal of Tillich's position as we have attempted to describe it in this chapter. The failure of the liberal 'Lives of Jesus' and the abandonment of the quest of the historical Jesus - these are the legacies that Tillich inherited, and they determine his own negative assessment of the attempt made by historical research to

<sup>46</sup>Schubert M. Ogden, 'Bultmann and the "New Quest"', The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXX, No. 3 (July 1962) p.210. Cf. G. E. Ladd, 'The Role of Jesus in Bultmann's Theology', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVIII, No. 1 (March 1965) pp.57-68

<sup>47</sup>Cf. 'Realism and Faith', The Protestant Era (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1951) pp.81-82; trans. from the volume of Tillich's collected writings, Religiöse Verwicklichung (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1929)

<sup>48</sup>James C. Livingston, 'Tillich's Christology and Historical Research', Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1966) p.43. Reprinted from Religion in Life (Winter 1966)

find the Jesus of history. Despite the various criticisms levelled against Schweitzer and Bultmann, the methodological situation which they outlined has not changed. The result of the critical biblical approach is, Tillich concludes,

not a picture of the so-called historical Jesus but the insight that there is no picture behind the biblical one which could be made scientifically probable.<sup>49</sup>

We must now turn to the implementation of this 'insight' in Tillich's own constructive attempt to move Christology away from the scepticism of historical research.

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<sup>49</sup>ST, 2: 118

## CHAPTER II

### JESUS AS THE CHRIST: BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND FAITH

For our future discussions, the most important conclusion that Tillich comes to from his survey of the ill-fated search for the historical Jesus is that the failure of this attempt would have been more easily recognised if it had not been 'for the semantic confusion about the meaning of the term "historical Jesus"'.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen already, the term 'historical Jesus' more commonly denotes the results of the historian's research into the character and life of him who stands behind the Gospel reports. However, 'historical Jesus' designates also the factual element within, what Tillich calls, the event 'Jesus as the Christ'.<sup>2</sup> As J. Heywood Thomas explains, this is

simply a shorthand expression for the assertion that there is a fact of which this event is the name and interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

The semantic distinction which Tillich has made within the term 'historical Jesus' can be seen, therefore, to revolve around two elements: first, the historical evidence about Jesus which is the outcome of historical research; and second, the factual character of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. Significantly, the term 'historical Jesus' in this second sense 'raises the question of faith and not the question of

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<sup>1</sup>ST, 2: 123

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Tillich: An Appraisal (London: SCM Press, 1963) p.81

historical research'.<sup>4</sup> Since, therefore, the phrase 'Jesus as the Christ' appears to determine Tillich's discussion on the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology, we must now concern ourselves with a detailed analysis of its meaning. In a very real sense, it marks the beginning of Tillich's attempt to steer Christology away from the fruitless avenues of the quest of the historical Jesus. Consequently, in Tillich's thought, it is not merely a central phrase but a transitional one, moving away from the type of historical endeavours which we described in the previous chapter.

### I. Jesus as the Christ.

The centrality of the statement 'Jesus as the Christ' is indicated in the opening words of the chapter 'The Reality of the Christ'.<sup>5</sup>

Christianity is what it is through the affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth, who has been called "the Christ", is actually the Christ, namely he who brings the new state of things, the New Being. Wherever the assertion that Jesus is the Christ is maintained, there is the Christian message; wherever this assertion is denied, the Christian message is not affirmed. Christianity was born, not with the birth of the man who is called 'Jesus', but in the moment in which one of his followers was driven to say to him, "Thou art the Christ". And Christianity will live as long as there are people who repeat this assertion. For the event on which Christianity is based has two sides: the fact which is called "Jesus of Nazareth" and the reception of this fact by those who received him as the Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The Christian message is therefore equated with the assertion that 'Jesus is the Christ'. The strange structure of this phrase is intentional in that it rejects all liturgical and homiletic use of

<sup>4</sup>ST, 2: 123

<sup>5</sup>ST, 2: 112-135

<sup>6</sup>ST, 2: 113



'Jesus Christ' as a proper name. This form is discarded since it tends to unite two elements which are in fact distinct; namely, 'Jesus as the Christ is both an historical fact and a subject of believing reception.'<sup>7</sup>

Tillich has begun, therefore, with the principle that there are two elements within the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. The first concerns a fact which has happened, the second points to Jesus' reception as the Christ.

The receptive side of the Christian event is as important as the factual side. And only their unity creates the event upon which Christianity is based.<sup>8</sup>

As early as 1911, Tillich insisted on the radical implementation of this dichotomy. He tells us that, in a set of propositions presented to a group of theological friends,

I asked how Christian doctrine might be understood if the non-existence of the historical Jesus was to become historically probable, and then attempted to answer my own question.<sup>9</sup>

This was clearly no youthful enterprise since in 1936 Tillich continued to insist 'on raising this question radically rather than falling back on the kind of compromises that I encountered then.' He continues:

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>ST, 2: 114. This insistence paves the way for the answer to the question 'Would the destruction of mankind be a refutation of the Christian message?' Tillich answers that 'Jesus as the Christ is related to that historical development of which he is the centre . . . It begins the moment human beings start realizing their existential estrangement and raise the question of the New Being . . . the end is the moment in which the continuity of that history in which Jesus as the Christ is the centre is definitely broken.' (Ibid., p.116)

<sup>9</sup>Interpretation, p.33

The foundation of Christian belief is the biblical picture of Christ, not the historical Jesus. The criterion of human thought and action is the picture of Christ as it is rooted in ecclesiastical belief and human experience, not the shifting and artificial construct of historical research.<sup>10</sup>

What we have here is a clear methodological distinction between the fact and the interpretation, the former identified with 'Jesus', the latter with 'the Christ'. The foundation of the Christian faith certainly is 'a believing confession vis-a-vis a fact',<sup>11</sup> but more specifically it is 'the Christ' who provides this foundation.

However, before passing to an examination of Tillich's reasons why this location of the foundation of faith upon 'the Christ' should enable him to dismiss the investigations made by historical research into the historical Jesus, we must examine individually the two elements which are said to embody the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. We turn first

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp.33-34. Undoubtedly, Tillich reflects here the researches done by his teacher, Martin Kähler, who similarly distinguished between the historische Jesus (the so-called focus of historical-critical research) and the geschichtliche, biblische Christus (the content of the kerygma and the object of faith). Kähler himself frequently replaced geschichtliche Jesus with the phrase biblisches Bild (biblical picture) which is used consistently by Tillich to separate the Jesus of critical research and the Christ of faith. See Martin Kähler, The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964). In the Foreword to this work, Tillich writes: 'I do believe that one emphasis in Kähler's answer is decisive for our present situation, namely, the necessity to make the certainty of faith independent of the unavoidable uncertainties of historical research.' (Ibid., p.xii). See also Perspectives, pp.213-215. Cf. Daniel L. Deegan, 'Martin Kähler: 'Kerygma and Gospel History'', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVI, No. 1 (March 1963) pp.50-67; and C.E. Braaten, 'Martin Kähler on the Historic, Biblical Christ', The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus (ed. Braaten and Harrisville), pp. 79-105

<sup>11</sup> J. H. Thomas, op. cit., p.78

to the 'fact'.

## II. The Factual Element of the Event 'Jesus as the Christ'.

One serious misunderstanding of the factual side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' must be avoided. This is pinpointed by Maria Sulzbach, not in her illumination but in her implementation of the misunderstanding. She writes:

In his Systematic Theology, he (Tillich) distinguishes between fact and interpretation. Though Jesus is the historical fact on which all interpretation of the Christian faith is based, it is of no major importance. Not Jesus, but the Christ as the interpretation of the 'fact', is the cornerstone of all Christian thought and faith.<sup>12</sup>

Sulzbach's comment that it is the interpretation (the Christ) of the fact (Jesus) which is the foundation 'of all Christian thought and faith' is correct. So much is clear from Tillich's opening statement that it was the Caesarea Philippi confession, not the birth of Jesus, which saw the beginning of Christianity.<sup>13</sup> Sulzbach's mistake is to deduce from this the apparently parallel contention that the historical fact of Jesus is of 'no major importance'.

In fact, Tillich's proposition that the foundation of Christian faith in 'Jesus as the Christ' contains very positive statements about the facticity of the historical side of the Christian message. Indeed, his stress on the factual element is, in part, designed to counter, or at least mitigate, any ensuing attack upon his separation between fact and interpretation. The essential element of the historical reality of

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<sup>12</sup>'The Place of Christology in Contemporary Protestantism', Religion in Life, XXIII, No.2 (Spring, 1954) p.211

<sup>13</sup>See above, p.19

Jesus of Nazareth is maintained throughout: 'Jesus as the Christ' is both an historical fact and a subject of believing reception. In an early formative essay, Tillich explicitly states that 'the Incarnation is an historical event, and occurs only once in time and space';<sup>14</sup> and in the same work he rejects the suggestion that the biblical picture of the Christ is the product merely of man's imagination:

I may express the hope that one false view is excluded by everything I have tried to say: namely, the mistake of supposing that the picture of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the creation of existentialist thought or experience.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, A. T. Mollegen can state that the first principle of Tillich's Christological position is that

the Incarnation happened. Put bluntly, the Incarnational events were photographable. A sound-recording cinematograph could have captured the physical actions and words of a human individual who is the Christ.<sup>16</sup>

Tillich's insistence on the 'Jesus' element in 'Jesus as the Christ' proceeds also on 'theological' grounds.

If theology ignores the fact to which the name of Jesus of Nazareth points, it ignores the basic Christian assertion that Essential God-Manhood has appeared within existence and subjected itself to the conditions of existence without being conquered by them. If there were no personal life in which existential estrangement had been overcome, the New Being would have remained a quest and an expectation and would not be a reality in time and space. Only if existence is conquered in one point - a personal life, representing existence as a whole - is it conquered in

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<sup>14</sup>'A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation', Church Quarterly Review, CXLVII, No. 1 (January-March, 1949) p.145

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>'Christology and Biblical Criticism in Tillich', The Theology of Paul Tillich, ed. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1964) p.231

principle, which means "in beginning and in power". This is the reason that Christian theology must insist on the actual fact to which the name Jesus of Nazareth refers.<sup>17</sup>

From what Tillich has said, it becomes clear that he has a real sense of both the factual and human character of the person to which the name 'Jesus' points. Thus, for example, stories such as those dealing with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, his flight to Egypt, the early threat to his life by the political powers, his agony at Gethsemane, all confirm that the picture of the Christ in the Gospels is of a personal life, subject to existence, in which the New Being has appeared.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, if there were not this emphasis upon the facticity of the man who was the Christ, it would be very hard to see why Tillich strenuously shuns docetism<sup>19</sup> (of which, however, Sulzbach accuses him<sup>20</sup>), and why he seeks to maintain the Chalcedonian balance of humanity and deity within 'Jesus as the Christ'; for, though the doctrine of the two natures used the 'wrong conceptual tools', it raised 'the right question'.<sup>21</sup>

Any diminution of the human nature would deprive the Christ of his total participation in the conditions of existence. And any diminution of the divine nature would deprive the Christ of his total victory over existential estrangement. In both cases, he could not have created the New Being. His being would have been less than the New Being.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup>ST, 2: 113-114

<sup>18</sup>see ST, 2: 183

<sup>19</sup>see ST, 2: 114

<sup>20</sup>Sulzbach, op. cit., p.212

<sup>21</sup>ST, 2: 164

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

In conclusion, therefore, contra Sulzbach, we can only applaud

R. E. Cushman when he writes:

Tillich intends to take the historic fact seriously. We do not have to deal with 'the Christ' but with 'Jesus as the Christ', it would seem.<sup>23</sup>

### III. The Interpretative Element of the Event 'Jesus as the Christ'.

In view of the discussion of the factual side of 'Jesus as the Christ', the first thing that must be said about the interpretative side, the 'biblical picture of the Christ', is that it is not intended to replace the earthly Jesus. Although, as we shall see shortly, the New Testament narrative of the ministry is indispensable, nevertheless, the Kerygma, as the proclamation of the crucifixion and resurrection, would not of itself provide the criteria for overcoming existential estrangement. Existential ambiguity can only be overcome in the earthly existence of the personal life of him who is the bearer of the New Being. Jesus as the Christ is indeed the crucified and risen, but 'in both cases something happened within existence. Otherwise the Christ would not have entered existence and could not have conquered it!'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>'The Christology of Paul Tillich', The Heritage of Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of Robert Lowry Calhoun, ed. R. E. Cushman and E. Grislis (New York: Harper and Row, 1965) pp.174-175

<sup>24</sup>ST, 2: 177. This position is similar to Bultmann's. Bultmann, in concentrating on the pure 'thatness' (Dass) of Jesus, and not specific characteristics (Wie and Was) has been accused of being unable to determine anything of the Jesus of history. Cf. M. S. Enslin's The Prophet from Nazareth, p.5. In fact, Bultmann does make virtually certain judgments about the main events and features of Jesus' ministry and life. Cf. Jesus and the Word, pp.16-26, 28ff, 61ff, 173. Bultmann, also like Tillich, stresses the necessity of the Cross as the central historical fact, attesting to Jesus' earthly existence. Cf. Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate, ed. H. W. Bartsch and trans. R. H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1957) Vol 1, pp.37ff, 41ff, 115, 117ff. For Bultmann's

The indispensability of the biblical narrative is, however, maintained in the following way. The Incarnation entails an event, the historical occurrence of which could have been photographed. This much we have seen in our discussion of the factual side of the Christ-event. But no such photograph exists; all we have is a portrait, the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ', in which Jesus is regarded as the Christ, the Son of God, the Logos. The acceptance and reception of Jesus as the Christ resulted in the collection of data about him, in which both the activity of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah and of receiving faith are manifest. Consequently, the picture we have before us of Jesus is one presenting Jesus as the Christ. 'Jesus as the Christ' is the assertion of faith, and this is the only picture we have of him. In this respect, the relation of fact to interpretation is as follows:

The Christian fact is not formally dismissed. Interpretation must be interpretation of some actual fact else it is not valid interpretation but illusion. Yet, functionally speaking, "the Christ" (the interpretation) becomes the foundation of Christian thought and devotion.<sup>25</sup>

From this, important conclusions follow. First, it illustrates that Tillich's Christology revolves both around the fact of Jesus and *the* New Testament as the original and basic document wherein appears the picture of 'Jesus as the Christ'. All other sources, from the Apostolic Fathers to modern theologians, depend upon this testimony.

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understanding of the Cross, see Joseph C. Weber, 'Jesus and the Kerygma in the Light of the Law and Gospel in Bultmann's Theology', Dialog, III, No. 3, (Autuman 1964) pp.291-293

<sup>25</sup>R. C. Johnson, 'The Jesus of History and the Christian Faith', Theology Today, X, No. 2, (July 1953) p.174

In itself the New Testament is an integral part of the event which it documents. The New Testament represents the receptive side of that event and provides, as such, a witness to the factual side. If this is true, one can say that the New Testament as a whole is the basic document of the event upon which the Christian faith rests.<sup>26</sup>

Second, it provides Tillich with the occasion to state that, despite the undoubted complexities of New Testament study, there is an underlying unity within all the books: all unite in the assertion that 'Jesus is the Christ'. For this reason, against the so-called liberal theology, Tillich believes that there is no significant difference between the message of Christ given in the Gospels and Epistles. What difference there is between the Synoptic account and the remainder of the New Testament (including the Gospel of John) lies in the former giving 'the picture on which the assertion that Jesus is the Christ is based, while the latter give the elaboration of this assertion and its implications for Christian thought and life.'<sup>27</sup> But this distinction is not exclusive, for it is one of emphasis not substance. Thus:

The New Testament witness is unanimous in its witness to Jesus as the Christ. This witness is the foundation of the Christian church.<sup>28</sup>

Third, it shows why Christ is not merely 'the head of the Church'<sup>29</sup> but also why Christ and his church are 'necessarily interdependent';<sup>30</sup> for without the believing reception of Jesus as the Christ,

<sup>26</sup>ST, 2: 134-135

<sup>27</sup>ST, 2: 135

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>ST, 2: 114

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.



Jesus could not have been the Christ 'even if he had claimed to be the Christ.'<sup>31</sup> In this way, it is the indissoluble unity of the two elements, fact and interpretation, upon which Christianity is based.

But fourth and finally, the functional emphasis upon the interpretative side of 'Jesus as the Christ', and the convergence of the aforementioned three points evolving from that emphasis, provide us with the first major argument which Tillich presents to resolve the question of the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology. Christology is not based on determinable empirical facts, for the New Testament writers were not interested in reporting merely factual data; this, indeed, was a secondary concern. They were interested only in transmitting a religiously significant picture of Jesus.

The original picture which existed from the beginning was of a numinous and interpreted character, and it was this which proved to have the power to conquer existence.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, biblical criticism cannot effectually undermine Christology because the empirical truth of Jesus cannot be distinguished apart from the faithful appropriation of that fact, in which the recipient is quite as important as the fact itself.

Tillich fully endorses this understanding of his position. First, it realizes the implications of the two-fold semantic distinction which Tillich made within the term 'historical Jesus'.<sup>33</sup> If the factual character of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' is presented only within a situation of faith (which 'Jesus as the Christ' constitutes), then in

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>'Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation', Church Quarterly Review, p.145

<sup>33</sup>See above, p.18

this sense the question of faith is raised and not of biblical criticism. Second, the coincidence of fact and faith within the biblical picture precludes historical research from finding the 'historical Jesus' because in order to do this research it would have to separate two elements which are, however, inseparable, namely, the factual from the receiving side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. For this reason, the failure of the 'quest' is not a matter of the preliminary shortcomings of biblical research (which could, perhaps, be rectified at a later date) but is 'caused by the nature of the sources itself'.<sup>34</sup> Third, the essentially interpretative character of the biblical narratives does not imply the dissolution of the factual historical element of the gospels, for 'if the factual element in the Christian event were denied, the foundation of Christianity would be denied.'<sup>35</sup> This can only mean that a confessional statement (such as 'Thou art the Christ') must be rooted and grounded in the factuality of Jesus' earthly existence; and to be sceptical of the work of biblical research is not to deny this element, for the event 'Jesus as the Christ' would, as we have seen, be nothing without it.

With these points in mind we may arguably call Tillich a 'Kerygmatic' theologian, not of course in the sense that through the kerygma we can know Jesus' personality, inner development and the course of his life, nor in the sense of placing emphasis upon Jesus' consciousness of being the bearer of the Word of God to call men to decision in the last hour, but rather through Tillich's stress on the mode whereby the fact of Jesus is apprehended. 'Jesus is the Christ' is a kerygmatic proclama-

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<sup>34</sup>ST, 2: 118

<sup>35</sup>ST, 2: 123

ation which has meaning only within a faith encounter-situation. From this, Tillich can develop his thesis that the historical-critical effort to discover the 'historical Jesus' is of little concern for faith because from the beginning

the basis of faith was a certain fruitful confluence of fact and mode of appropriation of fact - interpretation, and appropriative appreciation.<sup>36</sup>

We may regard Tillich's examination of the relationship of fact to faith within the event 'Jesus as the Christ' as the first major argument advanced by him to safeguard Christology from being determined by historical criticism. It is the outcome of the basic semantic distinction which Tillich made within the term 'historical Jesus'. The only valid meaning of the term 'historical Jesus' is that there is a factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. However, in view of Tillich's distinction between the 'historical Jesus' of biblical research and 'the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ', he can conclude that the presence of this factual element does not raise the question of historical research, for the only 'historical Jesus' that exists is found within the biblical picture. This picture was formed in the situation of faith, and, as such, effectually precludes historical investigation from undermining that factual element which faith receives and to which faith responds.

#### IV. Faith and the limitations of historical enquiry.

Thus far in our discussion of Tillich's position, we have focused attention exclusively upon the implications of the phrase 'Jesus as the Christ' for the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology. A second argument is proposed by Tillich within another, though closely related,

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<sup>36</sup>Cushman, op. cit., p.176

context. It too evolves from the semantic distinction drawn by Tillich within the meaning of 'historical Jesus'. It is distinguished by Tillich's definition of the word 'historical'.

Clearly, Tillich's primary use of the word 'historical' within this second argument corresponds to his earlier statement that the only "'historical" Jesus' is that apprehended by faith within the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ. 'Historical' here refers only to the immediate certainty of faith (the interpretation of the factual element within the event 'Jesus as the Christ') and does not involve any type of historical investigation. Faith interprets this factual element for faith only, and thereby transfers it to the realm of faith. In doing this, faith determines the use of the word 'historical', for when used in this way it can be known only through faith. This much we have seen by examining the phrase 'Jesus as the Christ'.

This use of the word 'historical' within the term 'historical Jesus' is not to be semantically confused with that definition of 'historical' which denotes the historiographical methods employed by biblical critics. Here, "'historical" for the scientific view of things are those events which are verified within the limits of every historical verification by special methods of research.<sup>37</sup> It is through this second definition of 'historical' that Tillich advances his second argument for the removal of Christology from dependence on biblical criticism.

The most important characterization of historical research which Tillich has given us is that it views 'those events which are verified within the limits of historical verification'. The limitation of which Tillich speaks is prompted by his view of historiography as that which

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<sup>37</sup>The Bible and Systematic Theology, an unpublished Ms., cited by A. T. Mollegen, *op. cit.*, p.234

'can only lend probability'.<sup>38</sup> It is on this basis that Tillich asserts that historical methodology is itself inadequate to serve as the criterion of Christology.

Historical research provided probabilities about Jesus of a higher or lower degree. On the basis of these probabilities, it sketched 'Lives of Jesus'. But they were more like novels than biographies; they certainly could not provide a safe foundation for the Christian faith.<sup>39</sup>

This statement does not annul Tillich's previous stress on the importance of the historical method in considering the trustworthiness, composition and nature of the biblical records,<sup>40</sup> any more than the kerygmatic character of the narratives did. Yet it is still clear that whatever the success of this procedure, the historian

never can reach certainty in this way, but he can reach high degrees of probability.<sup>41</sup>

Tillich is saying that biblical criticism, like all historical enquiry, can only achieve probable results of higher or lower degree; and 'religious certainty cannot rest on a probability the degree of which changes with more enquiry.'<sup>42</sup> Thus, quite apart from the incursion of the historian's own prejudices or the scant amount of biblical records, probability as such is inadequate as a basis for faith. To identify faith 'with the belief in the historical validity of the biblical stories' is, Tillich claims, 'a disastrous distortion of the

<sup>38</sup>Interpretation, p.265

<sup>39</sup>ST, 2: 121

<sup>40</sup>See above, p.6

<sup>41</sup>ST, 2: 120

<sup>42</sup>Mollegen, op. cit., p.234

meaning of faith'.<sup>43</sup> Certainly faith entails risk, but 'it is wrong . . . to consider the risk concerning uncertain historical facts as part of the risk of faith.'<sup>44</sup>

There is nothing new in this contention. Ever since Lessing noted a discontinuity between contingent historical truths and eternal truths of reason in his famous formula that 'accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason,'<sup>45</sup> theologians, unwilling to erect a Christology upon the Jesus of historical research, have pointed out persistently that recorded history can never serve as the basis of faith; since historical judgments, by their very nature, never attain anything more than a degree of probability, they cannot be the media of revealed truth.<sup>46</sup>

Tillich fully incorporates this type of argument. Biblical criticism, he tells us, was 'suspect from its very beginning' because it appeared 'to criticize not only the historical sources but the revelation contained in these sources . . . Historical criticism seemed to

<sup>43</sup>DF, p.87

<sup>44</sup>ST, 2: 134

<sup>45</sup>On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power (1777), trans. H. Chadwick, Lessing's Theological Writings (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956) p.53

<sup>46</sup>For Lessing's attitude towards historical judgments, see Karl Barth, Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl, trans. B. Cozens (New York: Harper and Bros., 1959) pp.136 ff; and L. De Moor, 'Problem of Revelation in 18th century Germany: with particular reference to Lessing', Evangelical Quarterly, XXXIX, No. 2 (April-June, 1967) pp.66-74; No. 3 (July-September 1967) pp.139-151; No. 4 (October-December 1967) pp.205-215

undercut faith itself'.<sup>47</sup> This, however, is an erroneous judgment, and results precisely from the semantic confusion that Tillich seeks to overcome. In the first definition of 'historical' we are concerned with the factual element in 'Jesus as the Christ', which demands and requires the correlative apprehension by faith alone. In the second definition, we are concerned with the historicity of the biblical narratives, which is always a matter of the degrees of probability reached by historical research. These two definitions are utterly distinct, and are never to be confused with one another.<sup>48</sup> In the first definition, the 'risk of

<sup>47</sup>ST, 2: 117

<sup>48</sup>This argument appears most explicitly in Tillich's discussion of 'revelation' in Systematic Theology, Volume One (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951) pp.106-131. (Hereafter cited as ST, 1). Historical research cannot dissolve revelation because revelation belongs to a level of reality which 'contradicts the attitude of ordinary cognition'. (Ibid., p.108). It indicates the 'mystery of being' and directs us to our 'ultimate concern' (Ibid., p.110). Thus, whatever scientific analysis or historical research may say about the conditions in and through which revelation appears, revelation remains unaffected by their discoveries. This is corroborated by Tillich's belief that 'no conflict between different dimensions of reality is possible . . . Reason is not destroyed by revelation, just as revelation is not emptied by reason' (Ibid., pp.117-118). Moreover, since revelation is the manifestation of the 'mystery of being', it does not inform us about 'the structure of nature, history, and man' (Ibid., p.129). It does not imply factual assertions, and its truth can only be judged by its own criteria (Ibid., p.130). Therefore, ordinary knowledge cannot clash with knowledge of revelation. For these reasons, theologians 'need not be afraid of any historical conjecture, for revealed truth lies in a dimension where it can neither be confirmed nor negated by historiography' (Ibid.) For a discussion of the significance of Tillich's doctrine of 'revelation' for the historical value of the biblical narratives, see A. R. Dulles, 'Paul Tillich and the Bible', Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, ed. T. A. O'Meara and C. D. Weissner (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1964) pp.109-132; and, in the same volume, G. Weigel, 'Myth, Symbol and Analogy', pp.187-191

faith is existential', and does not imply the risk of historical judgment which is 'theoretical and open to permanent scientific correction.'<sup>49</sup>

Here are two different dimensions which should never be confused. A wrong faith can destroy the meaning of one's life; a wrong historical judgment cannot. It is misleading, therefore, to use the word 'risk' for both dimensions in the same sense.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, in order to protect the kerygma, and yet to guarantee the importance and freedom of the historian, faith and criticism are placed in two dimensions, which, Tillich insists, must be kept separate. In one sense, of course, there is a similarity between the two dimensions, for historiography, no less than faith, involves an interpreting subject;<sup>51</sup> this does not, however, provide the historian with the occasion to transform 'historical probability into positive or negative historical certainty by a judgment of faith'.<sup>52</sup> This would illegitimately confuse one dimension with the other by supposing that 'faith can guarantee the truth of a questionable historical statement'.<sup>53</sup> Faith cannot so guarantee historical facts because this is not faith's concern. For example,

It is not a matter of faith to decide how much legendary, mythological and historical material is amalgamated in the stories about the birth and the resurrection of the Christ . . . All these questions must be decided, in terms of more or less probability, by historical research. They are questions of historical truth, not of the truth

<sup>49</sup>ST, 2: 134

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. DF, p.86

<sup>52</sup>ST, 2: 120

<sup>53</sup>DF, p.86



of faith.<sup>54</sup>

In the light of this argument, Tillich can maintain that it is not faith's task to determine the character of the Pentateuchal narratives, or the degree to which Genesis is composed of myth and legend rather than actual history.<sup>55</sup> These are not questions of faith, but are rather the concern of problematical historical enquiry. Nowhere, of course, is this more evident than in the crisis reached when historical research investigated the biblical sources and so raised the dilemma which we have frequently described: the historical validity of the biblical picture of Jesus who is called the Christ. Once again, Tillich's answer affirms that the investigations instigated by historical research have no implications at all for Christian faith. 'Faith does not include historical knowledge about the way in which this event took place.'<sup>56</sup> Consequently, presupposing Tillich's two-dimensional theory, faith is itself exclusive of historical fact-claims.

Tillich's reason for concluding that the sceptical results of historical research into the life of Jesus should have no influence on Christian faith is not that faith guarantees the biblical portrait of Jesus to be historically accurate. Rather, his reason for so concluding is that faith, when properly understood, makes no factual claims whatsoever about some man named 'Jesus' who flourished in the years 1 to 30.<sup>57</sup>

It may be supposed that this type of argument disallows also the factual basis of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', which forms a

<sup>54</sup>DF, p.88

<sup>55</sup>Cf. DF, pp.87-88

<sup>56</sup>DF, p.89

<sup>57</sup>William L. Rowe, Religious Symbols and God (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) p.212

necessary element within that event. Two points are made by Tillich to correct this false impression.

First, the distinction that is being made is not between the fact of Jesus as basis and its reception by faith, but between knowledge of the way in which that event took place and faith. The question whether the event 'Jesus as the Christ' actually happened in the way it is reported to have happened exists in a dimension which cannot come into conflict with faith. 'Therefore, faith cannot be shaken by historical research even if its results are critical of the traditions in which the event is reported.'<sup>58</sup> The importance of the event lies rather in its existential implications for faith. It does not lie with its historical component parts which could be examined historiographically.

Second, the separation of historical research from faith does not result in the loss of the factual basis of Christology because, Tillich tells us, there is a final sense in which faith itself can overcome historical scepticism about the factual element in 'Jesus as the Christ'. Faith, 'through its own power, can . . . guarantee the existence of Jesus of Nazareth and at least the essentials of the biblical picture'.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the factual basis of Christology can be assured by means of faith alone.

This second point is, Tillich readily admits, ambiguous. He proceeds, therefore, to define more exactly what it is that faith can guarantee. That which is assured by faith is 'only its foundation,

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<sup>58</sup>DF, p.89

<sup>59</sup>ST, 2: 131

namely, the appearance of that reality which has created the faith'.<sup>60</sup>  
 This reality is identified with the New Being 'who conquers existential  
 estrangement and makes faith possible'.<sup>61</sup> Faith, then, is 'the immed-  
 iate (not mediated by conclusions) evidence of the New Being within and  
 under the conditions of existence';<sup>62</sup> as such, it cannot be investigated  
 by historical research. Referring to the Augustinian-Cartesian refutat-  
 ion of radical scepticism ('which pointed to the immediacy of a self-  
 consciousness which guaranteed itself by its participation in being'<sup>63</sup>),  
 Tillich stresses equally that it is faithful participation, not histor-  
 ical argument, which guarantees 'a personal life in which the New Being  
 has conquered the old being'.<sup>64</sup>

It would appear that Tillich's argument here revolves around the  
 familiar two-fold structure of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', namely,  
 its factual and receptive character. Jesus as the Christ is the bearer  
 of the New Being, and he is received as such. Yet, as we have seen, the  
 New Being must include the reality of a 'personal' life, for the ambig-  
 uities of existence can only be overcome by the participation of the  
 bearer of the New Being in existence.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, faith necessarily  
 receives the 'personal' reality of the New Being when it accepts and

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<sup>60</sup>St., 2: 131

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>See above, p.24

receives 'Jesus as the Christ'. Therefore, to say that a man has faith analytically entails that he has received that which has overcome existence in existence. In this sense, faith does guarantee the historical basis of Christology, for it guarantees that 'someone' conquered existence. But it does not ensure that 'Jesus of Nazareth' is that 'someone'. This, Tillich agrees, is the historically absurd but logically necessary conclusion resulting from his appreciation of the historical method.<sup>66</sup>

The 'Jesus' element in the event 'Jesus as the Christ' indicates only the personal and factual foundation of Christology. It is not, however, to be equated with the historical person 'Jesus of Nazareth'. As Kelsey succinctly remarks, in this argument 'the fact named by Jesus of Nazareth turns out to be different from the fact pointed to by Jesus'.<sup>67</sup>

The first part, the fact 'named', is subject to historiographic examination; but the second, the fact 'pointed' to, is subject to faith alone.

Faith, therefore, cannot guarantee the empirical factuality of the biblical picture since, by its very nature, it does not include historical information about the way in which the event 'Jesus as the Christ' occurred. Faith does, however, include 'certitude about its own foundation',<sup>68</sup> namely, a personal life in which the old being was conquered by the New Being. 'Whatever his name, the New Being was and is actual in this man'.<sup>69</sup> Though photographable, no photograph exists of this event, for neither faith nor the probabilities of historical

<sup>66</sup>ST, 2: 131

<sup>67</sup>D. Kelsey, op. cit., p.93

<sup>68</sup>DF, p.89

<sup>69</sup>ST, 2: 131 (my emphasis)

research provide such a photograph.

V. Tillich's concept of the 'analogia imaginis'.

However, if all that can be said about the factual basis of Christology is that a personal life existed, and if that factual basis is limited only to the biblical picture, then the final problem before Tillich now is: 'How can the New Being who is called "the Christ" transform reality if no concrete trait of his nature is left?'<sup>70</sup> As Tavard puts it:

It is not enough to state that the original fact is the Apostles' interpretation of Jesus. For how can we accept an interpretation if we do not know what is to be interpreted?'<sup>71</sup>

Tillich answers with his concept of the analogia imaginis, wherein he claims an analogy between the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' and the concrete, personal life from which the biblical picture has evolved.

There is an analogia imaginis, namely, an analogy between the picture and the actual personal life from which it has arisen. It was this reality, when<sup>72</sup> encountered by the disciples, which created the picture.

Thus, as Mollegen expresses it, the New Testament confession of Jesus as the Christ 'means not only that a human individuality existed, but that he was such as supports the Biblical picture.'<sup>73</sup> In other words, faith guarantees not only a factual basis for Christology but also an

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> G. H. Tavard, Paul Tillich and the Christian Message (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962) p.109

<sup>72</sup> ST, 2: 132

<sup>73</sup> A. T. Mollegen, op. cit., p.234

actual personal life whose concrete characteristics were such as to give rise to the biblical picture. We have seen already why the first guarantee which faith provides is not open to historical criticism: the only factual element which exists is found within the biblical picture; as such it is known and guaranteed only by faith, and is in no way to be confused with the dimension of probable historical knowledge. We must now ask why the analogia imaginis also effectively precludes Christology from being potentially falsifiable by historical research.

The analogia imaginis represents Tillich's third and final argument concerning the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology because it is his 'way of asserting the unity of a historical existence and kerygmatic witness while at the same time claiming immunity from any form of historical test.'<sup>74</sup>

Initially, it may be said that the analogia imaginis is independent of biblical research because the analogy entailed here does not consist in the adequacy of its historical representation of the actual life presented in the biblical picture of the event 'Jesus as the Christ'. The significance of the analogy lies rather in the continuance of the 'transforming power of the New Being'<sup>75</sup> between that picture and that event. It is this 'transforming power' which forms the analogy, so that the theologically important character of the biblical picture is not its historical detail concerning Jesus of Nazareth, but the 'power' which it mediates.

<sup>74</sup>J. C. Livingston, op. cit., p.48

<sup>75</sup>ST, 2: 132

The power which has created and preserved the community of the New Being is not an abstract statement about its appearance; it is the picture of him in whom it has appeared. No special trait of this picture can be verified with certainty. But it can be definitely asserted that through this picture the New Being has power to transform those who are transformed by it.<sup>76</sup>

Tillich's argument, therefore, is that, despite the unreliability of the biblical narratives, the biblical picture is nevertheless analogous to its subject because the 'transforming power of the New Being', which the disciples encountered when they met Jesus, is similarly encountered through the biblical picture. In this sense, there is an analogy between the personal life of him who was received as the Christ and the picture through which the New Being is now received.

The analogia imaginis is similarly independent of historical enquiry because it can be guaranteed only by each individual's participation (in faith) in the 'transforming power of the New Being'. In this respect, Tillich's use of the analogy undergirds and evolves from his earlier statement that faith can, of itself, guarantee the factual basis of Christology.<sup>77</sup> If faith implies response to him who, as the bearer of the New Being, has the 'power' in him to conquer existential estrangement, then to say that a man now has faith through the biblical picture entails that this picture is an adequate expression of the New Being's 'transforming power', and so, in turn, of the reality of the New Being. 'Only in this sense', Tillich tells us, 'does faith guarantee

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>See above, pp.38-39

the biblical picture of Jesus.<sup>78</sup>

In this respect, Tillich continues, the analogia imaginis can be compared with the analogia entis, which he describes as not 'a method of knowing God' but 'a way (actually the only way) of speaking about God.'<sup>79</sup> Tillich states that those two analogies are comparable to each other because in both cases

it is impossible to push behind the analogy and to state directly what can be stated only indirectly, that is, symbolically in the knowledge of God and mediated through faith in the knowledge of Jesus.<sup>80</sup>

It appears, therefore, that historical investigation cannot get behind the biblical picture to discover the empirical truth about Jesus

<sup>78</sup>ST, 2: 132. In his 'Rejoinder' to Moody Smith, Tillich is emphatic on this point:- 'If I am asked, "Does Christian faith guarantee that the synoptic picture of this man is guaranteed as historically correct - including his name?" I would say "No!" If I am asked, "Does Christian faith guarantee that this picture is an expression of the bearer of the Spirit who, through this picture, creates and recreates human beings spiritually?" I would say "Yes!" If the Christian faith can guarantee as much as this, it does not need to call for the support of human work, namely historical research. And it does not need to be afraid of it.' The Journal of Religion, XLVI, No. 1, Part II, (January 1966) p.192

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. There is abundant textual evidence for Tillich's equation of the analogia entis with 'symbol'. Cf. ST, 1: 239-240; 'Reply to Interpretation and Criticism', The Theology of Paul Tillich, p.239; 'Reply' in Gustave Weigel's 'The Theological Significance of Paul Tillich', Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, p.23. In a letter to Weigel, cited in Weigel's 'Contemporaneous Protestantism and Paul Tillich', Theological Studies, XI (June, 1950), Tillich writes: 'I speak of symbolic knowledge and mean by it exactly what St. Thomas means with analogia entis' (p.201). However, J. Heywood Thomas argues that, in omitting many ontological distinctions made by Aquinas, Tillich 'is quite wrong when he says that he means by symbolic knowledge what St. Thomas meant by analogy'. (Op. cit., p.198). In holding this view, Heywood Thomas largely follows Edward O'Connor, 'Paul Tillich: An Impression', Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, pp.25-41



of Nazareth because the analogia imaginis does not provide the means for such an approach.

This "picture analogy" is, like the analogy of being, not a way given to man whereby he may "naturally" or empirically know the Christ, but a way through which he may speak about the one who makes himself known through that picture.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, just as 'symbol' is the determinative form through which God is cognitively approached by means of the analogia entis, so faith is the form through which a knowledge of Jesus as the Christ is mediated through the analogia imaginis. Consequently, it is faith's reception and experience of the 'transforming power of the New Being' which alone vindicates the analogy between the individual existence of the bearer of the New Being and the biblical picture. It is not substantiated by the degree of historical correspondence between the picture and that event.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, the analogia imaginis makes no claim to historical

<sup>81</sup>A. J. McKelway, The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1964) p.159

<sup>82</sup>The same conclusion is reached when the analogia imaginis is viewed within Tillich's discussion of 'revelation' in ST, 1: 106-131. This connection between the analogy and revelation is legitimate since Tillich states that all manifestations which have 'shaking, transforming and healing power' are 'revelations' (ST, 2: 192). Revelations 'are saving events in which the power of the New Being is present'. (Ibid., pp.192-193). The analogia imaginis stipulates, therefore, that both the event 'Jesus as the Christ' and the biblical picture of that event are 'revelations' since through both the 'transforming power of the New Being' was, and is, manifest. The picture here functions as a record of revelation and as a revelation. Consequently, given Tillich's theory of 'revelation' as developed in ST, 1 (see above p.34 footnote 48), it can be said that the analogia imaginis is contained within a dimension which is incapable of historical examination. For an important discussion of the analogia imaginis in the setting of 'revelation', see Kelsey, op. cit., pp.96-107

truth (namely, that truth which could be evaluated by historical research) because if 'analogy is not identity, not one reference to the historical Jesus in the biblical picture need be historically true'.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, we find Tillich stressing again that it is impossible to push behind the analogia imaginis because the medium through which the 'transforming power of the New Being' is now presented to us (viz., the biblical picture) is not a photograph - which would be an exact replica of the factual element in 'Jesus as the Christ'.

However, if the biblical picture is not an empirical description of an historical person, this does not imply that the picture is a work purely of the imagination. It is not in the 'idealistic style of art'<sup>84</sup> whereby we would have to interpret the 'New Testament picture as the painted projection of the experiences and ideals of the most religiously profound minds in the period of the Emperor Augustus'.<sup>85</sup> It is not an imaginary picture but a 'real picture'.<sup>86</sup> The word 'real' here points to the necessary 'reality' of the New Being, for, as we have seen already,<sup>87</sup> the experience in faith of the 'transforming power of the New

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<sup>83</sup>B. J. R. Cameron, 'The Historical Problem in Paul Tillich's Christology', Scottish Journal of Theology, XVIII, No. 3 (September 1965) p.265

<sup>84</sup>ST, 2: 133

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>See above pp.24, 39

Being' must presuppose an individual life in which the ambiguities of existence were overcome. Faith also, then, guarantees the realism of the biblical picture since the personal 'reality' to which it refers must have existed independent of the biblical picture. A picture imagined by Jesus' contemporaries

would have expressed their untransformed existence and their quest for a New Being. But it would not have been the New Being itself. That is tested by its transforming power.<sup>88</sup>

In this sense, therefore, the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ, through which the 'transforming power of the New Being' is received, is neither a photograph nor an imaginary work. It is the picture of an individual who existed apart from the picture. To this extent, it may be appropriately called an "'expressionist" portrait'.<sup>89</sup>

In this approach a painter would try to enter into the deepest levels of the person with whom he deals. And he could do so only by a profound participation in the reality and the meaning of his subject matter. Only then could he paint this person in such a way that his surface traits are neither reproduced as in photography (or naturalistically imitated) nor idealised according to the painter's ideal of beauty but are used to express what the painter has experienced through his participation in the being of his subject. This third way is meant when we use the term "real picture".<sup>90</sup>

Again, the crucial element in the biblical picture is participation in Jesus as the bearer of the New Being. Our knowledge of Jesus is not dependent upon knowing simply the historical facts about him ('in terms of historical documentation we do know many people better than Jesus')<sup>91</sup>, but is occasioned only by faith's acceptance and experience of

<sup>88</sup>ST, 2: 133

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. (My emphasis)

<sup>91</sup>ST, 2: 134

the 'transforming power' of his being, which is the New Being. In this way, the factual basis of Christology is appropriated and certified by faith alone. We know that Jesus as the Christ lives in the biblical picture by virtue of the analogia imaginis: the power of the New Being is expressed in and through the picture. We know also that Jesus as the Christ lived apart from the biblical picture: the transforming power experienced now by faith must have a correspondence to him whose power it was to overcome existence in existence.

With this treatment of the analogia imaginis, Tillich concludes his discussion of the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology. For Tillich, the question whether historical research can erode the factual basis of Christology is resolved again by his radical reappraisal of the nature of faith in relation to the event Jesus as the Christ. Faith, in one sense, enables contemporaneity with a past event. This does not imply participation in the historical details of Jesus who is the bearer of the New Being, but rather the immediate, existential awareness of the 'power of New Being'. This 'power', originally mediated by Jesus to the first disciples, is now expressed through the biblical picture of him as the Christ. In this way, 'we can say that we know nobody as well as Jesus;' <sup>92</sup> and if faith can do this, then clearly there is no need to have the event 'Jesus as the Christ' corroborated by historical research. Certainly faith cannot know everything about this event (not even that Jesus was called 'Jesus'), but it can guarantee that which is

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<sup>92</sup>ST, 2: 133

sufficient and necessary for Christology, despite the scepticism engendered by biblical criticism. Faith can certify that the 'transforming power of the New Being', expressed through the biblical picture and experienced in faith by succeeding generations of Christian believers, evolves from the reception of Jesus as the Christ by the original disciples. Consequently, the picture is not one created by 'a hypothetical description of what may lie behind the biblical picture',<sup>93</sup> but it is based on a concrete, personal life. This, in essence, constitutes the analogia imaginis.

In view of this argument, Tillich can reiterate the fundamental principle of his thesis. However much research may indicate the unreliability of those biblical narratives upon which the historical claims of Christology are based, the factual foundation of faith in Jesus as the Christ can be, and is, affirmed. It is assured by faith itself. For this reason, therefore, the historical basis of Christology is guaranteed within a dimension which, at the same time, immunizes that basis from any type of historical examination.

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<sup>93</sup>ST, 2: 132

### CHAPTER III

#### CONCLUSION: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Any evaluation of Tillich's discussion of the relevance of biblical criticism to Christology must start with the recognition of the problems, latent in nineteenth century biblical research, which he has faced with courage and concern. In the first place, Tillich is fully aware that the quest of the historical Jesus was incapable of supplying a cause, in the earthly man Jesus, adequate to account for the emergence of the community of the New Being. For Tillich, this conclusion is substantiated by the opinion of form-critics, that the only Jesus we know is Jesus as the Christ and the Lord of the community of faith; and by his own contention that the certainties of faith cannot rest upon probable historical enquiry. The task, therefore, was to indicate how the Jesus of history could be reunited with the Christ of faith. Tillich's solution is a redefinition of the historical Jesus as 'Jesus as the Christ', the Christ of the early church's faith. In this way, the indispensability of the 'fact' and the 'reception' of the fact is indicated, and, in consequence, the problem of historical scepticism is overcome. Thus Tillich recognized that an 'objective' quest into the factual foundation of Christology is, in principle, misconceived, if not impossible, for the only historical event of which we can speak lies within the life of the community of faith.

Indeed, initially we may say that Tillich's argument concerning the problem of the place and function of the concrete historical fact of Jesus in Christology appears very alluring. His insistence that it is the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' upon which Christianity is based, and that Jesus himself plays no functional role in determining the faith of Christians, certainly leaves little incentive to probe 'behind' the biblical picture to discover the empirical truth about Jesus. Moreover, as 'Jesus' refers only to the factual basis of Christology, and since biblical research can achieve at best only probable knowledge, then it could never be proved conclusively that this 'fact' did or did not exist. Thus, the whole question of the historical correspondence between the 'picture' and 'Jesus of Nazareth' is resolved. The question of the unreliability of the biblical sources need not be raised, and the scepticism engendered by historical research is done away with.

When we consider this position, we are struck immediately by the positive content of Tillich's analysis. Undoubtedly, modern critical research into the Gospel narratives is very different from what it was in the previous century; and Tillich, by taking the entire kerygma into account, is at one with the present biblical standpoint. The positive significance of this is extremely important, not least in containing, as Cameron points out, 'a refreshing and valid emphasis upon Christology as living existential faith rather than arid theoretical speculation'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there are grave dangers, as well as assets, in accepting this position. If it is the biblical picture, and

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<sup>1</sup>B. J. R. Cameron, op. cit., p.157

not the historical Jesus, that is of central importance for Christian faith, then we are in danger of surrendering the affirmation 'the Word became flesh', and of discarding the salvation-history of God's activity in the man Jesus of Nazareth.

It is at this point that a large question mark must be placed over Tillich's argument, as, indeed, has been done recently in a series of interrogations by John Baillie, Gordon Kaufmann, Allen O. Miller, Albert Outler, and D. Moody Smith.<sup>2</sup> Baillie's acute remarks are representative of their criticism.

Tillich appears to imply that Christian faith would not be affected by however great a degree of skepticism regarding the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet he makes the idea of incarnation central in his understanding of the Christian faith. But surely the idea of incarnation is a false idea if no incarnation actually took place on the level of ordinary history. Or to put it otherwise, how can Christ be 'the centre of history' if he was not himself a real historical person, but only an idea? An idea can indeed be the center of a system of ideas, but only an actual historical figure can be the center of history.<sup>3</sup>

Tillich does, of course, insist that 'Jesus' denotes an historical individual, and that 'Jesus as the Christ' is eternal God-manhood appearing in existence. In this respect, he cannot be accused of the naive hermeneutical position of the liberals who did not take sufficient account of the relation between the historical reality of Jesus and the picture of him as the Christ, but instead substituted the picture for the reality. Nevertheless, Tillich has not, we suggest, taken the

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<sup>2</sup>'Interrogation of Paul Tillich', Philosophical Interrogations, ed. Sydney and Beatrice Rome (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) pp. 357-409

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 363



implications of this historical emphasis seriously enough, and consequently continuing doubt and perplexity remain concerning the degree of importance he allows the historical dimension in Christology. His semantic distinction made within the term 'historical Jesus' is certainly important, and is useful in overcoming some of the confusions arising when the biblical critic investigates the historical foundation of faith. Yet, despite Tillich's emphasis upon the factual side of the event 'Jesus as the Christ', this semantic distinction requires that he cannot substantiate his claim historically. Thus, however much he may stress a 'personal life' in which essential manhood has appeared, Tillich can provide no single historical instance of this actually happening. To this extent, Baillie's criticism is appropriate. Tillich is overstating his case when he holds that historical research is irrelevant to the assertion that 'Jesus is the Christ', since otherwise it is difficult to see why Jesus is a reality and not an ideal category. If this conclusion is alien to Tillich's intentions, then, to avoid it successfully, something more should be said concerning the historical Jesus.

Tillich's reply to this type of criticism is dependent upon his conception of the kerygmatic character of the biblical sources. It is impossible to penetrate behind the gospels, and so discover the 'real Jesus', because the historical Jesus exists only in the kerygma. The earthly Jesus cannot be examined critically apart from his reception (in faith) by the first disciples. The 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' can only be interpreted as a document of faith rather than as a source of strictly historical value. As Tillich correctly sees, it was this interdependence of fact and reception which doomed

the original quest to failure.

Our concern with this analysis of the biblical picture does not evolve from Tillich's premise that the gospels are kerygmatic but from the conclusion he draws from this premise, namely the sharp distinction made between the dimension of faith (to which the picture belongs) and the dimension of historical research. In this connection, two questions must be asked and answered. First, does the failure of the original quest of the historical Jesus mean that we can never know anything of Jesus through biblical research? And second, does the methodological failure of that quest mean that it is logically impossible for historical knowledge to serve as a basis of Christology?

The first of these questions centres on Tillich's assertion that, since the historical Jesus exists only in the kerygmatic picture of him as the Christ, the factual foundation of Christology lies outside the sphere of biblical research. This argument revolves around the supposition that to admit the kerygmatic nature of the biblical picture is to deny its use as an historical document. That this judgment is by no means certain has been shown by a number of New Testament scholars engaged in a 'new quest' of the historical Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

Thus Hans Conzelmann states:

It is still being argued that the intent of the Gospels is not to offer historical records; therefore, they should not be used as historical sources. Again, an impossible

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<sup>4</sup>Because of its brevity, the following analysis of the 'new quest' may give the impression that the movement is unified. That this is not the case is indicated by J. M. Robinson, 'Basic Shifts in German Theology', Interpretation, XVI, No. 1 (January, 1962) pp.76-97; and J. B. Bedenbaugh, 'The First Decade of the New Quest of the Historical Jesus', Lutheran Quarterly, XVI, No. 3 (August, 1964) pp.239-267

conclusion is being derived from a true insight of form criticism; . . . the intention of the Gospels does not automatically decide how I should use them today. The question is not whether they intend to be sources but whether they are such . . . and whether they can be used as such by the historian.<sup>5</sup>

The advent of this new approach to the biblical sources can be traced to a lecture delivered at Marburg by Ernst Käsemann.<sup>6</sup> From the first, Käsemann admitted that the kerygmatic character of the gospels indicates that they were not designed to impart historical information about Jesus. They do not provide us with the opportunity to write a chronological account of him. But the significant question raised by Käsemann was this: assuming the form-critical view that the gospels are community proclamations of the risen Christ, should this lead to a total scepticism regarding the earthly Jesus? Or, to put it another way, can we arrive at the pre-Crucifixion life of Jesus, and thereby establish to what extent the kerygmatic 'biblical picture' is a faithful representation of the historical Jesus? This is not an attempt to probe behind the kerygma in order to reach the historical Jesus, but rather an effort to establish the 'continuity of the gospel . . . and the variation of the kerygma.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Conzelmann, 'The Method of the Life of Jesus Research', The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville, pp.56-57. Quoted by Livingston, op. cit., p.44

<sup>6</sup>Käsemann, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', Essays on New Testament Themes ("Studies in Biblical Theology", XLI; London: S.C.M. Press, 1964) pp.1-47

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.25

The criteria for establishing those authentic features of the tradition which can properly be applied to Jesus are stringent.<sup>8</sup> Fuller outlines three basic steps commonly employed by Käsemann and his colleagues. The major task is the elimination of anything that has a kerygmatic tone (namely, those elements which reflect the post-Easter life of the Church rather than the life of Jesus himself) from the sayings and deeds of Jesus. Next, all material which has parallels either in contemporary Judaism or in Rabbinic tradition and Jewish apocalyptic is excluded. And finally, all authentic sayings should exhibit Aramaic features, and to increase the chance of authenticity, the structure of Aramaic poetry.<sup>9</sup> Upon this basis, the residue of historical material left after this process can be reasonably assured authentic, and, as such, may justifiably form the basis of historical investigation.

The results of this use of the non-kerygmatic material of the gospels are manifold. Using the valuable criteria provided by form-criticism, Hans Conzelmann maintains that the Reign of God (although still in the future) was already engaging men in the word of Jesus himself.<sup>10</sup> Ernst Fuchs substantiates this by viewing Jesus' conduct in

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. J. Jeremias, 'The Present Position in the Controversy Concerning the Problem of the Historical Jesus', The Expository Times, LXIX, No. 11 (August, 1958), pp.333-339; and N. A. Dahl, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', Kerygma and History, trans. and ed. C. E. Braaten and R. A. Harrisville (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) pp.138-171

<sup>9</sup>R. H. Fuller, The New Testament in Current Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962) pp.32-34. Fuller stipulates that the Aramaic criterion can be used only in conjunction with the first two criteria. The reason given is that 'the earliest Aramaic-speaking church could also have used poetic forms, and certainly its creation would undoubtedly exhibit Aramaic linguistic features, just as the authentic logia of Jesus.' (Ibid., p.33)

<sup>10</sup>See Conzelmann, 'Jesus Christus', Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, ed. K. Galling, 3rd ed., (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1959) III, p.621

dining with publicans and sinners, and his parables and teaching (which reflect his conduct) as a special redeeming activity of the Reign making itself felt in advance.<sup>11</sup> Günther Bornkamm stresses the ministry as a sign calling for decision, so that the vital hour was already present in Jesus. He too considers impressions made by Jesus as authentic: his humble submission to God, his authority, and his acceptance of the sinful.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Gerhard Ebeling distinguishes 'elements in the message of Jesus - the nearness of the rule of God, the clarity of his will, and the simplicity of discipleship with joy, freedom, and lack of anxiety',<sup>13</sup> and in particular spotlights Jesus' teaching about faith.<sup>14</sup>

In view of this work done by the scholars of the 'new quest', we must seriously question Tillich's assumption that the biblical picture cannot be used as an historical source because it is kerygmatic. It is true that the biblical narratives are being used in a way which is foreign to the intentions of their authors. But if, in their apostolic witness, the Evangelists employed historical or biographical material, then it is legitimate to probe the kerygma to discover the authentic traditions and logia of Jesus. To this extent, we agree with Livingston's appraisal of Tillich's thesis:

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<sup>11</sup>See Fuchs, 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus', Studies of the Historical Jesus ('Studies in Biblical Theology', XLIII; London: S.C.M. Press, 1964) pp.11-31

<sup>12</sup>Bornkamm, op. cit., Ch.3

<sup>13</sup>See Ebeling, The Nature of Faith (London: Collins, 1961) p.56

<sup>14</sup>Ebeling, 'Jesus and Faith', Word and Faith (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963) pp.236-238

Certainly there is no logical connection between saying that "there is no picture behind the biblical one" and the belief that such a condition of the sources implies that the Gospels are not historical sources which serve as historical bases or foundations of faith (the fides quae creditur which serves as the object of the fides qua).<sup>15</sup>

In some respects, of course, Tillich's position is similar to the intentions of the 'new quest'. He, too, seeks a fuller appreciation of the earthly Jesus within the New Testament account, and, likewise, repudiates the dependence of faith upon historical research.<sup>16</sup> However, in his assumption that there is a continuity between the kerygma and the historical Jesus (in the sense that the fact and reception are inseparable) Tillich has insulated faith from any serious examination of its factual foundation in a way which is clearly not intended by the 'new quest'. The scholars engaged in this enterprise seek to show not that the kerygma is true (this is beyond proof and does lie in the dimension of faith) but that the biblical account is a reliable representation of Jesus. This does have implications for faith. As Ebeling points out, if it could be shown that the Christ of faith was a misunderstanding of the significance of the historical Jesus, then the ground would be removed from under the Christian faith.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it is insufficient to say with Tillich that nothing can militate against the object of faith, because it leaves unresolved the crucial question whether existential participation in the 'biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ' is

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<sup>15</sup>Livingston, op. cit., p.44

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Bornkamm, op. cit., p.9; and J. M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.44

<sup>17</sup>Ebeling, The Nature of Faith, p.46

existential participation in the individual to which the name Jesus points. Thus, in his clear-cut division between faith and historical enquiry, one cannot avoid the suspicion that Tillich has sought in the biblical picture a positivistic basis of belief. This is a curious charge to make against a person who has so strenuously fought Biblicalism, but it appears inescapable in view of the shift of ultimate interest from the 'Word made flesh' to the 'picture' of that event.

These considerations lead us to the second of our two questions. Does the failure of the original quest of the historical Jesus mean that all subsequent attempts must fail because historical knowledge is logically inadequate as a foundation of Christology? The problem involved here has to do with the so-called 'probabilities' entailed in biblical research. It is significant that it is on the basis of this argument that Tillich rejects the implications of the historical findings of the 'new quest'. The scholars thus engaged, writes Tillich,

are obviously more optimistic with respect to the probabilities, but no change results for the systematic situation. Our knowledge of the historical Jesus never gets beyond probabilities of one kind or another.<sup>18</sup>

However, this characterization of the methodological results of historical research is highly perplexing, and one wonders what Tillich means when he says that the historian can never reach certainty. As Heywood Thomas remarks,

. . . it is obvious that of any historical or empirical statement we must admit that it is in one sense probable, namely that it is not necessarily true. But the opposition is not

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<sup>18</sup>Perspectives, p.227

between certainty and probability, it is between two kinds of truth, the truths of fact and the truths of logic. We can indeed describe the former as contingent, but this in no way removes them from the possibility of verification. All we can mean if we say they are probable is that when they are verified they are not verified in the same way as the propositions, which are necessarily true.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, Tillich has confused two statements about historical research. The first concerns the epistemological status of historical assertions, namely the truism that they are contingent and probable. The second, however, is an illicit deduction from the first, namely that the historian can never reach certainty. But since the opposite of 'probable' is 'necessarily true', we can only assume that Tillich is here suggesting that the historian can never possess a certainty which would be impossible for him anyway.

We may pursue the problem of historical probability with regard to the crucial question of whether faith can, of itself, guarantee the factual basis of Christology. The nodal point of Tillich's argument is that to say a man has faith analytically entails that he has received the reality of a 'personal life', that which has overcome existence in existence. Thus, while empirical research can never ensure with any degree of certainty the fact that the bearer of the New Being was 'Jesus', and while it is impossible to be sure that any detail of the biblical narrative about him is true, faith can, and does, guarantee the sheer 'thatness' of the New Being.

The difficulty with this argument evolves from Tillich's insistence that while an 'historical' fact is assured by faith (here the

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<sup>19</sup>J. Heywood Thomas, op. cit., p.86



normal meaning of 'historical' is implied: 'something which happened in the past') it is not the object of the probabilities of historical investigation. In order to clarify the confusion at this point, let us examine two statements, both crucial to Tillich's Christology.

A. A man (denoted by the name 'Jesus') lived, had disciples, and died.

B. Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being in existence.

The relation between these two statements is complex. The truth of A. does not show that B. is either true, probable or even meaningful. To this extent one can agree with Tillich that faith's knowledge of Jesus as the Christ is not simply historical knowledge. B. is not the product of research, nor is the assurance it provides scientific. The historian has nothing to say about B. since it belongs entirely within the realm of theology.

The difficulty before us arises with the status of A. While it is true that Christology is not implied by historical statements (A. does not demand B.), Christology does imply certain factual statements (B. does demand A.). Thus we find that each of the three parts of A. are crucial to Tillich's exposition of B. 'A man' is important because the bearer of the New Being must be a concrete individual; he must have 'disciples' since the only record we have of him is a record of his reception; and he must 'die' because only in this way could he participate in existence completely. We may conclude that the elements of A., if found to be false, would require that B. is inappropriate.

However, for Tillich, to accept that historical knowledge is always 'probable' knowledge is to admit that A. can never be falsified with any degree of certainty. But if research into A. is always a matter of probabilities, then, as Moody Smith remarks astutely, since 'any

single item of the tradition may be false (i.e., unhistorical or misleading), it is logically possible that all may be false'.<sup>20</sup> If no statement is more true than another, then all statements could be equally true. But if this is so, then all could be equally false - and so meaningless. For this reason, to accept with Tillich that historical statements can never be verified with certainty is simultaneously to deny any 'rule of interpretation'. If all statements about A. are probable, then it seems impossible to distinguish more appropriate statements about the 'thatness' of the individual mentioned in A. from the less appropriate (did he have disciples, did he die?) If we are prevented from saying anything about 'that man' (other than that he existed) then it appears difficult to see how one could prevent, or even determine, contradiction. It would be a hard task, in fact an impossible task, to distinguish how or in what way two statements about 'that man' differed (while for Tillich he is the New Being, for another he could be a puppet of the disciples, or even a murderer). Though one could distinguish between them in terms of intent, one could not separate them in terms of their 'appropriate relation' to their subject. In this way we arrive back at the questions posed by the 'new quest'. What guarantee has one for saying that the biblical picture is appropriate to its subject, or that our reception of the biblical picture is appropriate to Jesus' reception by the first disciples? Tillich's rejection of the 'new quest' on the grounds that all historical knowledge is probable does not elude these crucial and

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<sup>20</sup>Moody Smith, op. cit., p.137 (my emphasis)

legitimate questions.

Tillich counters these objections with the statement that faith can guarantee not only the factual element in 'Jesus as the Christ' but also the 'essentials of the biblical picture'.<sup>21</sup> Presumably, the reception and the death of the concrete person mentioned in A. would be such 'essentials'. But, given Tillich's own thesis, can these items be verified as being historical? One cannot avoid the suspicion that Tillich here wants to eat his cake and keep it too. At one moment, the assertion that the biblical picture was forged in the situation of faith is used to prevent it from being examined historiographically. But at the next, the biblical picture makes historical claims. To this extent, we must agree with Kelsey that this use of the picture fails to obey the rules set up by Tillich's own two-dimensional theory.

. . . the comparison of the biblical account of Jesus with a picture is self-defeating because it is used to make contradictory claims. On the one hand, it is used as a way of denying that historical fact-claims are part of the biblical picture's meaning. On the other hand, it is used as the basis for an argument about what 'must have been' the nature of that personal life (pointed to by Jesus of Nazareth) of which the picture is a picture - and that is an argument making historical fact-claims, albeit on improper grounds.<sup>22</sup>

In this way, the argument that faith's guarantee of the historical foundation of Christology belongs in a dimension altogether distinct from that of historical research flounders in the face of the distinction itself. If no item of the historical tradition (A.) can be guaranteed either historically (given the probable nature of historical

<sup>21</sup>ST, 2: 131. See above p.37

<sup>22</sup>D. Kelsey, op. cit., p.101

enquiry) or by faith in such a way that historical doubt is overcome (given that faith cannot trespass into the dimension of historical knowledge), then how can any item of the tradition be guaranteed as historically true? And how then can we proceed to the Christological assertion (B.)? We may take an example. Tillich describes existence as distorted and ambiguous. But how can he know of an actual undistorted being at a particular time in the past other than through the historical claims of the biblical narrative? An even more important example suggests itself. Tillich admits that the concrete being of Jesus (the 'fact') created the biblical picture; the biblical picture concerns an individual who existed apart from the picture. But how does Tillich know this? If neither the historian nor the man of faith can verify historically the accuracy of the biblical picture with the event, how can it be said that the picture was not a fiction? Thus, we may say, in conclusion, that when Tillich states that faith can guarantee a personal life, but not the name 'Jesus', he has not followed his own argument to its logical conclusion. Given the so-called 'probabilities' of historical investigation, and given that faith cannot verify a fact which lies outside its own domain, Tillich's argument demands not only that the 'personal life' of the New Being may have had another name but that the life itself may be unhistorical. Tillich cannot guarantee either that the New Being was not somebody else totally different from that portrayed in the biblical picture, or that the picture is not a product of the imagination.

Tillich's use of the analogia imaginis is open to the self-same objections. This is not surprising since it too is dependent upon the statement that faith alone can guarantee the historical basis of Christ-

ology.<sup>23</sup> The basic tenet of the analogy is that faith assures the reality of its object because, according to Tillich, faith participates in the object of its concern. This argument may be stated as a syllogism: Faithful individuals are 'transformed' by the biblical picture. The New Being is the source of all 'transforming power'. Therefore, it is the New Being which 'transforms' faithful persons through the biblical picture. The circularity of this argument is obvious but, as it stands, relatively inoffensive since it implies no factual assertion about the man Jesus. However, in its use by Tillich, the 'transformation' of contemporary people is supposed to entail the existence of somebody, who lived two thousand years ago, as its only possible cause. That this conclusion is a non sequitur has been noted by others.<sup>24</sup> The analogia imaginis guarantees only the New Being as the source of participation. It does not guarantee that this source is historical. Since Tillich provides us with no evidence for the truth of the analogy, it presents a most dubious basis upon which to assert a continuity between the biblical picture and an historical event. In this connection, Moody Smith's remarks are appropriate:

<sup>23</sup>See above p.42

<sup>24</sup>See G. H. Tavard, op. cit., p.109; Reinhold Niebuhr, 'The Contribution of Paul Tillich', Religion in Life, VI, No. 4 (Autumn, 1937) p.578, as quoted by Robert H. Ayers, 'Biblical Criticism and Faith in Tillich and Niebuhr', Journal of Bible and Religion, XXXI, No. 4 (October, 1963) p.316; Bernard Martin, Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Man (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1966) p.177; Kenneth Hamilton, The System and the Gospel (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963) pp.162-165

. . . is it not conceivable that there could be a true portrayal of the reality of the New Being in the form of an imagined picture capable of bringing the New Being into reality, historical reality, in those who allowed themselves to be transformed by it? The fact that transformations of a sort take place by faith in Jesus Christ does not in any way guarantee the historicity of faith's object. Obviously the non-historical or fictional symbols of other religions have had transforming power, and it is not even certain that the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ would completely lose its transforming power if it could be shown to be unhistorical.<sup>25</sup>

We have already expressed doubt as to whether Tillich can substantiate his claim that faith guarantees the 'personal' reality of the bearer of the New Being. But even if we accept, for the moment, that New Being necessarily implies an historical figure as its bearer, does this still allow the analogia imaginis the degree of importance that Tillich claims for it? For example, given Tillich's theological preoccupation with the state of the Christian (viz., the existential transformation of the faithful), what prevents us from saying that the process of transformation is primary and the character of its historical source merely the reflection of this experience projected back into history? In other words, can we rule out the possibility that Tillich has inferred that the intrinsic properties of the bearer of the New Being, as pictured in the biblical narrative, are true (namely, that he did overcome existence in existence) from the experience of 'transforming power'? But if every item of the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ could be false, except that a concrete individual existed, and yet if through the picture we experience the 'transforming power of New Being', can we assume that the man depicted in the narratives was in

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<sup>25</sup>D. Moody Smith, op. cit., p.138

fact the Christ, that he did actually overcome the ambiguities of existence? Although we may grant, for the purposes of this argument, that the experience of transformation presupposes an historical source, can we guarantee that the faith we have is distinctly Christian? It is by no means certain that the historic character of the so-called 'bearer of the New Being' is commensurate with his transforming effects in us.

With these remarks in mind, we can hardly avoid the conclusion that the analogia imaginis resolves the problem of correlating subject and object in experience somewhat after the manner of Kant's critical idealism. The 'given' (the 'fact') is known only as it is received by the participating response of the subject of experience - in this case, the man of faith. It is the subject which determines the object, not in its being (the ding-an-sich, the ministry and person of Jesus remains unknowable) but, as Cushman puts it, in its being 'what it is known as'.<sup>26</sup> In view of the erosion of historical material by radical biblical criticism, this is the only way the event 'Jesus as the Christ' can be known. It is in this sense that the event is inclusive of both subject and object. The event of Christ is so enlarged as to include not only the career of the man pointed to by Jesus, but also the life of the community of the faithful. In this way, the historical problem of Christology is resolved by relocating the empirical basis of faith within the life of the community of the New Being, which is positively identifiable and appropriable.

If this is the case, we may justifiably ask whether Christology

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<sup>26</sup>R. E. Cushman, op. cit., p.178 (my emphasis)

has not in fact been supplanted by ecclesiology. On Tillich's theory, it would appear that, though ecclesiology does include the 'fact' of Jesus, nevertheless without the church Christology is impossible. The interdependence of the factual and receptive elements of the event 'Jesus as the Christ' seems to result in the view that the church is not merely constitutive of the event but that apart from the church there can be no appeal regarding the verity of the Christ-event. Nothing, it appears, can be affirmed of the antecedent reality of the 'object' of faith except by means of the availability of the phenomenon, that is, the community established by the 'experience of transforming power'. In this way, the historical problem of Christology is resolved within a phenomenological epistemology.

Christology as ecclesiology is far from Tillich's intentions, but it is not, we suggest, far from the logical conclusion of his own arguments. Moreover, if the experience of the 'transforming power of New Being' provides an 'immediate' certainty and if it is not 'mediated by conclusions'<sup>27</sup>, then it is hard to see how this experiential evidence should necessarily incorporate belief in an historical occurrence, much less assure it. As long as Tillich insists upon a correspondence between the historical actualization of the New Being and the kerygmatic witness, then the truth of the correspondence can only be asserted on the basis of an historical claim. Otherwise the continuity between the 'power' mediated through the picture and the 'power' initiated by the concrete manifestation of the New Being in existence cannot be affirmed.

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<sup>27</sup>ST, 2: 131. See above p.38



If the kerygmatic claims for the bearer of the New Being cannot, logically at least, be open to historical verification, no necessary connection between the kerygma and the historical figure portrayed within it can be presumed. So long as Tillich claims that the kerygma faithfully incorporates Jesus' own actualization of essential God-manhood, he cannot avoid a search for the empirical truth about Jesus.

Tillich's intention was to immunize the historical basis of Christology from the radical historical method employed by the biblical critic. Ironically, this aim is dependent upon Tillich's desire to guarantee the distinctly historical framework of the Christian faith. But the assertion that Christianity is uniquely historical is devoid of content unless it be said also that something unique happened in history. This must involve an historical claim about the historical figure proclaimed as the Christ by the faithful, namely that in Jesus' own life existential estrangement was overcome. If this is to be held, (and Tillich clearly intends that it should be), and if we are not to surround Christianity with all the dangers attendant upon belief in a mere 'X' in history, then the claims of Christology must be tested in such a way that a continuity between Jesus and the kerygma can be upheld. For this reason, Tillich's distinction between the dimensions of faith and historical knowledge is not as clear-cut as he assumes. We grant that faith's knowledge of the salvation wrought by Jesus cannot be exhibited simply by the methods of historical research; but faith can claim immunity from such criticism only at the price of circumventing the material importance of Jesus' earthly ministry. The significance of Jesus for faith cannot be maintained by stressing only the 'thatness' of Jesus' existence independently of the special nature of his work and his

own attitude toward it. It is precisely this problem of the continuity between the career of Jesus and the kerygma which pushes to the fore the efforts of biblical research to make intelligible the messianic identification which is attached to Jesus' life and teaching. And to this extent, the theoretical risk remains that the biblical critic may find the historical evidence for Christological assertions either to be inadequate or non-existent.

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