

PAUL TILLICH  
AND  
THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

A STUDY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE  
OF  
THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS  
FOR  
THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH

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Scope and Contents: The thesis seeks to show how Tillich, in laying the foundation for a new structure of religious thought, was developing his basic theological position in a new direction in dialogue with the different spiritual insights of the world religions. It attempts to examine Tillich's dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions and to show the significance of the quasi-religions for the encounter of world religions. It seeks to indicate how the dynamic-typological approach to religions is applied to the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism and it examines the consequences of this type of encounter for Christianity itself. It concludes with an evaluation of Tillich's approach to religions.

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## INTRODUCTION

To investigate the significance of the history of religions for Tillich's theology it would be helpful to make some brief preliminary comments concerning the centrality of the subject for Tillich's thought, and the various influences that induced him to take seriously the possibility of developing a structure of religious thought that would incorporate the different spiritual insights of the world religions.

Tillich considers the subject of the history of religions to be of paramount importance. In his view it is basic and central to any kind of theological enquiry of the future. He does not believe that it can be assigned to the periphery of theological investigation, because such investigation has to take into account not only the existential problems of modern man in a secular technological society, but also the variety of religious experience exemplified in other religious traditions of the world. Tillich illustrates this point of view in his compact and closely reasoned lecture on "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian" delivered at a conference held at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago on October 12th, 1965. In that lecture he expresses his belief that the future of theology lies in a long and intensive

period of "interpenetration of systematic theological study and religious historical studies."<sup>1</sup> Tillich recognises that Adolph Harnack, an older colleague of his at the University of Berlin, perceived the need for the Christian historian to take into the sphere of his investigations all aspects of the history of religions, but in Tillich's view Harnack failed to develop his insight by showing that such a comprehensive view of Church history necessitated a closer and more integral relationship between the history of the Church and religious history in general.<sup>2</sup> This is precisely one of the things that Tillich tries to do in his History of Religions lecture. He endeavours to show that confrontation with the insights of world religions is decisive for the interpretation of Christian theology. From such an encounter he believes a new type of systematic theology might develop or a new structure of religious thought "in connection with another or different fragmentary manifestation of theonomy or of the Religion of the Concrete Spirit."<sup>3</sup> Tillich sees, as Mircea Eliade has pointed out, the world wide implications of the confrontation of world religions within the context of a planetary culture, which compels "even the most provincial historian, philosopher or theologian...to think through his problems and formulate his beliefs in dialogue with colleagues from other continents and believers in other religions."<sup>4</sup>

### Formative Influences

Tillich's attraction to the subject of the history of religions can be traced back to his student days. He had a great love of Greek philosophy and mythology, and admired the vision and inspiration of men like Parmenides the Eleatic and Heraclitus. He claims that he found in the religions of the great mythologies of Greece, visions of the "Spiritual Presence" and anticipations of the "New Being".<sup>5</sup> But the formative influences on his thought were those of his teachers, one of whom was Martin Kähler, professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Halle. He was, in Tillich's estimation, a man of outstanding and overwhelming intellectual ability and moral and religious power.<sup>6</sup> It was Kähler who showed him the broken character of human thinking and the Pharisaic nature of dogmatism. From Kähler he learned the significance of doubt in the human situation and the difficulty of overcoming such problems by means of subjective experience. Tillich acknowledges his debt to Kähler in the development of his theology. This debt is discernable in Tillich's constant references to the dangers of narrowness and exclusiveness, and the loss of openness to spiritual freedom that results from taking up dogmatic positions.<sup>7</sup>

Another teacher of philosophy at Halle was Fritz Medicus, who by introducing Tillich to Schelling determined the course of his philosophical thought. Schelling's

influence can be seen in many aspects of Tillich's thought, but especially in the latter's insistence that religion cannot be assigned to one particular human function, and must be regarded as "the all-embracing function of man's spiritual life".<sup>8</sup> Tillich reflects the thought of Schelling when he refers to the common ground between the philosopher of religion with his awareness of a "mystical a priori" and the Christian theologian with his concrete criterion of the Christian message. He shows the influence of Schelling also when he refers to the ultimate unity of essential nature and to the concept of the demonic as an aspect of the structure of existence.<sup>9</sup> Tillich also uses a concept of the demonic, which reflects the influence of Jacob Boehme with whose work he became familiar through Schelling's philosophy. The Ungrund in Boehme's writings, which is described as a bottomless beyond the Grund or the Abyss, is the source of Tillich's conception of the Ground of Being.<sup>10</sup>

A colleague of Tillich at the University of Berlin, Ernst Troeltsch, was influential in showing him the value of the kind of freedom which delivered man from the narrowness of a Biblicist attitude and many traditional forms of Christian theology. Together with Max Weber, one of the great sociologists of the nineteenth century, Troeltsch saw the close relationship that pertained between religious convictions and the social conditions, and used this insight to attempt a new interpretation of the history of religions.

His essay on "The Absoluteness of Christianity" is, according to Tillich, a radical questioning of the relation between Christianity and other religions. In it he describes Christianity as the religion of "Europeism" and propounds the idea that Christianity ought not to attempt to convert the people of the East but rather should promote the interpenetration of religious ideas. Tillich sees this notion of religious "cross-fertilization" as referring more to a kind of cultural exchange than an attempt to establish "inter-religious unity of acceptance and rejection". It reflected the positivistic outlook of nineteenth century thought and the tendency characteristic of other Christian theologians and philosophers to "subsume Christianity under the concept of religion".<sup>11</sup> Although Tillich does not approve of this tendency, and at one stage refers to it as the transformation of Christian universalism into humanistic relativism, neither does he approve of the anti-universalist, exclusive trends of neo-orthodoxy, and the tendency of the crisis theologians to elevate Christianity above the concept of religion.<sup>12</sup> The latter tendency constitutes a complete denial of Christian universalism, a rejection of the notion of "cross-fertilization", and a total surrender of the kind of freedom that delivers man from ecclesiastical narrowness. Tillich attributes the blindness of "the majority of Protestant leaders in Europe to the new situation arising out of

the encounters of religions and quasi-religions all over the world" to this anti-universalist, exclusive attitude.<sup>13</sup> The polarities of universality and concreteness, openness and narrowness are for Tillich "symbolic for the intrinsic dialectics of the relation of Christianity to the religions proper."<sup>14</sup>

Tillich also acknowledges his indebtedness to the liberating effect of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule during the formative period of his studies. This history of religion school, which was closely associated with Biblical exegesis and studies in Church history, opened his eyes to the universality of human motives whether they were recorded in Genesis, or Hellenistic existentialism, or in Persian eschatology. The occurrence of "symbols for savior figures" in the history of religions also indicated to Tillich that there must have been "a long preparatory revelatory history which finally, in the kairos, in the right time, in the fulfilled time, made possible the appearance of Jesus as the Christ".<sup>15</sup> Tillich's understanding of the significance of these religions of the Biblical period was later extended to other religions of the world.

Tillich's interest in the history of religions was further stimulated by the writings of Arnold Toynbee and Rudolf Otto, and the work done in the field of depth psychology. From Toynbee's A Study of History he learned how

effective geographical, biological, psychological and sociological factors were in "producing situations out of which creative acts can arise".<sup>16</sup> This insight into the inter-relatedness of ethnic, social and religious factors in historical structures may have helped Tillich to recognise "the possibility of understanding religious symbols in relation to the social matrix within which they have grown and into which we have to reintroduce them today."<sup>17</sup> This is, for Tillich, one of the positive advantages of the method of the history of religions. It shows that religious symbols are rooted in the whole of man's experience including his economic, social and political background.<sup>18</sup> Tillich does not accept Toynbee's notion that the great need is for a synthesis of world religions. He recognises that the contrast between this view and the view of Hendrik Kraemer, the theologian of missions, with his insistence on the uniqueness of the Christian message in a non-Christian world, and the finality of the Christian revelation, is an indication of the uncertainty and indefiniteness of the attitude of Christianity to other world religions.<sup>19</sup>

Otto's classical work on The Idea of the Holy with its analysis of the holy as mysterium tremendum et fascinosum helped Tillich to understand "the interdependence of the meaning of the holy and the meaning of the divine" and "their common dependence on the nature of ultimate concern."<sup>20</sup> It

enabled him to see that to be aware of the holy was equivalent to being aware of the divine presence, or the content of ultimate concern. It showed him the mysterious and fascinating character of the holy and the ambiguity which constituted man's experience of it. It enabled him to recognize the creative and destructive possibilities of the holy, or the presence of the divine, for those who encountered it. Tillich develops this notion of the ambiguous function of the holy in relation to man's experience of his ultimate concern and in connection with the concept of divine-demonic possibilities.<sup>21</sup>

Otto's influence is further illustrated by Tillich's dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions with its stress on the experience of the holy as the sacramental universal basis of all religions, and the mystical movement as an expression of dissatisfaction with any concretion or particularisation of the holy or divine presence.<sup>22</sup> Tillich's evaluation of mysticism as an essential element in every religion is basically in agreement with the views expressed by Otto.<sup>23</sup> Tillich also admired Otto for initiating a dialogue between Christianity and the Indian religions in spite of the theological isolation into which such an attitude led him. That is, Otto's point of view was quite out of step with European theology of that time.<sup>24</sup>

The work of the depth psychologists enabled Tillich



to interpret religion as the dimension of depth in all functions of man's spiritual life, and to see this dimension of depth in the totality of man's personality rather than in any special function or aspect of man's being. It helped him to recognize faith as a personal centred act of the whole personality, in which conscious and unconscious, rational and non-rational, cognitive and emotional elements participate by being taken up "into the personal centre which transcends each of them".<sup>25</sup> Depth psychology also showed him to need to uncover the demonic structures of man's consciousness, to re-interpret sin as estrangement from essential being, and to re-interpret grace as acceptance of the unacceptable.<sup>26</sup> Tillich recognizes that the theologian is indebted to the psychologist for helping him to discover the immense amount and depth of psychological material contained in the religious literature of the world.<sup>27</sup> He is indebted also to the psychologist for showing him that the whole of man's life, both religious and secular, is rooted in religion in the wider sense as the depth of spiritual life which gives meaning to all functions of the human spirit.<sup>28</sup>

### Later Experiences

Tillich's early interest in the history of religions was later reinforced and stimulated by his experiences in Japan in 1960 and his discussions with Buddhist and Shinto priests and scholars. Mircea Eliade notes that the impact of this visit on Tillich was tremendous and that his

experiences on the voyage were only partially expressed in the Bampton lectures on Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions.<sup>29</sup> Complete immersion in a religious milieu so completely different from that of the Judeo-Christian tradition in which he had been nurtured, and close contact with the Shintoist cosmic type of religion and with the Buddhist and Zen schools, impressed Tillich so much that it prompted the beginning of a new phase in his thought. The Bampton lectures pointed the way to what Tillich thought might prove a meaningful dialogue between the different religions of the world based on the telos or inner aim of existence.

Tillich's reawakened interest in the non-Christian religions led him to propose a joint seminar with Mircea Eliade on the History of Religions and Systematic Theology. This period of study lasted for two years and were for Eliade himself an unforgettable experience, because, as he maintained, during the autumn and winter of 1964 he was privileged to witness "a creative mind in the very process of creation". He was able to observe the 78 year old Tillich classifying and analysing "the immense and heteroclite materials brought forward by the historians of religion", and grasping the meaning of such a variety of religious phenomena as "a cosmogonic myth, an initiation ritual, an eccentric divine figure, a strange but religious form of behaviour". He saw during the course of the seminar that Tillich was not

afraid to try to assess the human value of these religious phenomena because he recognized that they revealed a specific if aberrant "encounter with the sacred".<sup>30</sup> Eliade believed that during the seminar Tillich was working towards "a renewal of his own Systematic Theology", and he saw this as characteristic of Tillich's ability to renew his thought after encountering different ideologies and historical situations.<sup>31</sup> As he had taken seriously the scientific and technological process that had transformed the Western world, so, according to Eliade, Tillich felt compelled to recognize the significance for the Christian theologian of the encounter of Christianity with other religions of the world.<sup>32</sup>

### Ultimate Concern

A fundamental and significant factor underlying all the various influences which stimulated Tillich's thinking concerning the decisive role to be played by the history of religions in any kind of future theological enquiry was the wider view of religion that characterised his thought.

[Religion for Tillich is "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern".<sup>33</sup> He recognizes that it could be interpreted in the narrower sense of "a cult of the gods" with all the organization, dogmas, sacramental and ritual activities that accompanied such a cult, but he chooses to maintain the larger universal concept which he regards as "a

special development of the philosophical interpretation of religion".<sup>34</sup> Ultimate concern is for Tillich that which man regards as unconditionally important. This does not mean that man creates or produces ultimate concern. Rather he is grasped by it in the sense that he is "overcome" or "arrested" by it.<sup>35</sup> The content of a man's ultimate concern, that by which he is grasped, might be a god or gods, which for Tillich is the "predominant religious name for the content of such concern."<sup>36</sup> But it could also refer to a fetish, or the mana power that permeates reality, or an all-pervading power or principle like Brahman, or the nation, or science, or the highest humanitarian ideal.<sup>37</sup> Tillich's wider conception of religion and his notion of ultimate concern enable him to include under the term religion those secular movements which display decisive religious characteristics. He refers to those secular movements as quasi-religions and he considers the main characteristic and common problem of the encounter of world religions to be their encounter with the quasi religions based on secularism.<sup>38</sup> His conception of ultimate concern also enables him to recognize that the conflicting claims of religion arise from the question as to what constitutes "the most adequate expression of ultimacy."<sup>39</sup> This leads him to see the need to make a distinction between the content and the concept of ultimate concern in order that there might be meaningful discussion and dialogue between the

religions of the world.

### Aim and Procedure

The aim of this study is to show that Tillich, in accordance with his hope for the future of theology, is laying the foundations for a new kind of systematic theology and a new structure of religious thought in dialogue with the different spiritual insights of the world religions, or different manifestations of what he called "the Religion of the Concrete Spirit".<sup>40</sup> We hope to indicate that this is not in any way a departure from the basic theological standpoint of his Systematic Theology.<sup>41</sup> nor does it represent a radical change in his position. The existential crises and religious problems of modern man in the technological society of the West, to which Tillich addressed himself in his Systematic Theology, are with the growth of secularism and the advance of technology, equally characteristic of the societies of the Eastern world and equally problematic for the religious traditions of Asia. Technology exercises the same corroding and destructive influence within the cultural and religious traditions of the East as it exercises in the West. This is for Tillich the common problem of world religions. Our thesis is that Tillich in contemplating a new structure of religious thought is developing his basic theological and philosophical position in a new direction in

dialogue with the different spiritual insights of world religions. He is making explicit what is already implicit in his Systematic Theology. He is carrying to its logical conclusion the culminative liberating effect of the formative influences on his life which were stimulated and strengthened by close personal contact with Shinto and Buddhist religious traditions. He is re-thinking his Systematic Theology vis a vis the world religions in the context of a planetary culture, and in a world situation characterised by the rapid advance of technology and the triumph of the horizontal over the vertical in man's interpretation of the inner aim or telos of his existence.

The procedure to be followed in the course of this study can be summarized as follows. We shall examine Tillich's view of religion and revelation and show how this required the acceptance of certain basic presuppositions before the systematic theologian could contemplate a serious study of the history of religions. These presuppositions include in the first place, the explicit or implicit rejection of orthodox and secular exclusivism and represented by the orthodox and neo-orthodox theologians, on the one hand, and the secular and humanistic theologians, on the other. Secondly, they include a theology of the history of religions which maintains a balance between a positive and critical attitude to universal revelation, or between the notion of universal

and final revelation. Thirdly, they include a recognition of the need for interpenetration of systematic theology and religious historical studies and the value of the methodology of the history of religions as compared with the methodology of natural and supernatural theology.

We shall then elucidate Tillich's attempt to formulate a dynamic-typological approach to the study of the history of religions by means of an analysis of the interdependent type-determining elements of the holy. We shall examine the concept of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" as the telos or inner aim of the history of religions and show how Tillich conceives of it as unifying the type-determining elements of the holy and as epitomizing the constant struggle against the demonization of the holy, which for Tillich constitutes the sacramental basis of all religions. We shall note the significance for Tillich of the appearance of Jesus as the Christ, as the victor in the fight for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" and as the manifestation of the New Being, the great kairos, which reveals the meaning of history and the telos of existence.

We shall investigate Tillich's view of the religious significance of secularism as a liberating force in the struggle against the demonization of the holy and show how he sees the dangers of it deteriorating into the emptiness of autonomy. We shall study the implications of the dynamic-

typological approach to the history of religions for the encounter of world religions starting with what Tillich considers to be the common problem and main characteristic of all world religions, namely, their encounter with the quasi-religions based on secularism.

We shall look at the encounter of Christianity with world religions and show how past and present attitudes contrast with the need for dialogue based on the interdependent type-determining elements of the holy. We shall investigate Tillich's specific application of his dynamic-typological method to the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism, starting from the question of the telos of existence.

We shall examine the significance of the dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions for the attitude of Christianity to itself as a religion, and show how, according to Tillich, Christianity is called upon to engage in self-criticism by means of the telos principle.

In our summary and conclusion we shall attempt an evaluation of Tillich's dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions and enquire to what extent he was successful in laying the foundation for a new structure of religious thought and a new understanding of systematic theology in dialogue with different manifestations of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit." (By this phrase Tillich means the kind of religion which unites the type-determining elements of the holy.<sup>42</sup>)



1. Paul Tillich, The Future of Religions, ed. Jerald C. Brauer, (New York, 1966), p. 91.
2. Ibid., p. 91.
3. Ibid., p. 91.
4. Ibid., p. 35.
5. Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, (London, 1964), Vol. III, pp. 150-52.
6. Paul Tillich, On the Boundary, (London, 1967), p. 48.
7. Paul Tillich, Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology, edit. Carl S. Braaten, (London, 1967), p. 213.
8. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 11.
9. Dieter Friedrich Sommer, The Significance of the late Philosophy of Schelling for the Formation and Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Tillich, Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University, 1960, Chapters III and IV, Microfilm BA 4827 T5386 McMaster University Library.
10. Dorothy Emmet, "The Ground of Being", Journal of Theological Studies, Vol. XV, Part 2, (Oct., 1964), pp. 280-92.  
cf. James Luther Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture. Science and Religion, (New York, 1965), pp. 230-1
11. Paul Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, (New York & London, 1964), pp. 43-44.  
cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 12,13; Hendrik Kraemer, Religion and the Christian Faith, (London, 1956), pp.63-67; Austin Van Harvey, The Historian and the Believer, (New York, 1966), p. 3.
12. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 42,  
cf. p. 44.
13. Ibid., pp. 45,46.
14. Ibid., p. 46
15. The Future of Religions, p. 85.
16. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 349

17. The Future of Religions, p. 93.
18. Ibid., p. 93.
19. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p.46.
20. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 239.
21. Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, (New York, 1957), pp. 12-16.  
cf. James Luther Adams, op. cit., p. 228.
22. The Future of Religions, pp. 86-87.
23. Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology, p. xxv.
24. The Future of Religions, pp. 80-81.
25. Dynamics of Faith, p. 5.
26. Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture, (New York, 1964), pp. 6,7,  
117, 118, 123-24.
27. Ibid., p. 123.
28. Ibid., p. 9.
29. The Future of Religions, pp. 31-32.
30. Ibid., p. 33.
31. Ibid., pp. 33-34. The italics are Eliade's.
32. Ibid., p. 34.
33. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 4.  
cf. Dynamics of Faith, p. 1.
34. Paul Tillich, Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue, edit.  
D. Mackenzie Brown, (New York, 1965), pp. 6,7.
35. Ibid., pp. 6, 9, 20.  
cf. Paul Tillich, The Eternal Now, (New York, 1963), p. 93.
36. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p.5.

37. Ibid., pp. 4,5. cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 11, 12;  
Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations, (London, 1962),  
pp. 63-64; Systematic Theology, Vol.I, p. 241.
38. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 5.
39. Ultimate Concern, p. 22.
40. The Future of Religions, p. 37.
41. Systematic Theology, Vols. I,II,III, were first published  
in Chicago in 1951, 1957, 1963; by Nisbet London in 1964;  
in a combined volume by Nisbet, London, in 1968. The later  
edition is the one used in this thesis.
42. See below p. 47.

## CHAPTER I

### The Presuppositions of the Study of the History of Religions

As we have indicated<sup>1</sup> Tillich's view of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern" is basic to his understanding of the significance of the history of religions for any kind of future theological enquiry. He regards ultimate concern as that which grasps a man or takes hold of him and not something which man can produce for himself.<sup>2</sup> It is ultimate in the sense that it makes all other concerns appear preliminary. It is also unconditional in the sense that it does not depend in any way on man's circumstances or desires.<sup>3</sup> The manifestation of man's ultimate concern constitutes the revelation of a mystery and, in Tillich's view, the revelation has an objective and subjective aspect. The objective side of revelation stresses the revelatory occasion or event, traditionally termed miracle, by which man is grasped. The subjective side of revelation stresses the receiving or appropriation of the revelatory occasion or event by means of an ecstatic experience on the part of the one who is grasped. Both aspects are necessary in Tillich's view before revelation can be real

and effective. Both the giving and the receiving, the being grasped and the grasping, are essential to the whole event of revelation.<sup>4</sup> So for Tillich revelation cannot be conceived as the imparting of divine information irrespective of man's response to it. It has to be received by the human mind before it can become revelation even although man's corrupted faith and rationality means that it is received in distorted forms.<sup>5</sup>

#### Rejection of Exclusivism and Reductionism

This concept of the revelation or manifestation of man's ultimate concern is the reason for Tillich's insistence that no theologian can contemplate a serious study of the history of religions, nor attach any significance to the subject, without rejecting the exclusivism of orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy on the one hand, and the reductionism of the theology of the secular on the other.<sup>6</sup> While it might be possible, by referring to the objective side of revelation in Tillich's thought, to show his sympathy with the orthodox and neo-orthodox emphasis on the transcendence of God, the analogy ends there. Ultimate concern, in Tillich's view, is not known by means of a passive reception of a transcendental revelation. It demands man's existential response and total surrender. It is ultimate concern in fact only when it concerns man ultimately in the sense that it determines his being or non-being or his final destiny. It

is that which gives meaning and purpose to his life.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, ultimate concern, for Tillich, is not confined to Christianity nor even to the religious realm. It finds expression also in the secular dimension which has its own religious significance because of this.

The tradition of orthodox exclusivism, according to Tillich, has found clear expression at different times in the history of the Church but has in this century been renewed and expounded by Karl Barth. According to this tradition Christianity is the one true religion over against all other religions which are false. It represents the religion of revelation while all other religions are "only a futile human attempt to reach God".<sup>8</sup> In fact, as Tillich points out, the term religion for this tradition becomes equated with man's ineffectual attempt to seek God by means of his own efforts, while in the Christian revelation God is taking the initiative to seek and to save man.<sup>9</sup> For the representatives of this tradition there is nothing whatsoever to be gained from an investigation of the significance of the history of religions or from an examination of the differences between them. Tillich sees this as an explanation of Emil Brunner's half-hearted attempt to write on the subject.<sup>10</sup> It explains also "the theological isolation of historians of religion like...Rudolf Otto, and even today the similar situation of a man like Friedrich Heiler". It accounts for

the "bitter attacks on Schleiermacher for his use of the concept of religion for Christianity",<sup>11</sup> Tillich recalls that, in the early nineteen twenties when neo-orthodoxy was exercising a powerful influence in Germany, his own seminar on Schleiermacher at the University of Marburg was severely attacked by those traditionalists who regarded such an approach as criminal.<sup>12</sup>

Tillich insists that the reductionism of the theology of the secular has to be rejected also before there can be a serious study of the significance of the history of religions. He refers to this tradition, which has been clearly expressed at different periods in history, as "the paradox of a religion of non-religion" and "the so called theology-without-God",<sup>13</sup> According to this tradition, as currently expressed in what Tillich calls the "'God is dead' oracle",<sup>14</sup> religion as represented by symbols, rites and institutions can be assigned to the same sphere of irrelevance and insignificance as magic and astrology. This tradition sees no necessity for the concept of God or any need for the use of such terminology. Consequently the study of the history of religions for the representatives of the theology of the secular is also irrelevant.<sup>15</sup> While it may be possible by referring to the subjective side of revelation in Tillich's thought, with its emphasis on man's existential response to that which determines his final destiny, and also his insis-

tence on the possibility of ultimate concern being expressed in the secular dimension, to show his sympathy with the theology of the secular, his opposition to this standpoint is also quite clear. He insists that although the dichotomy of sacred and secular is no longer a relevant or adequate concept, the sacred still continues to exist within the depth of the secular and is not completely absorbed by it. It is also capable of existing in its own right outside the secular.

Both the secular rejective and orthodox exclusive traditions are, in Tillich's view, a threat to a meaningful approach to the history of religions, even although they are diametrically opposed to one another. They are both reductionist in the sense that they are "inclined to eliminate everything from Christianity except the figure of Jesus of Nazareth".<sup>16</sup> For neo-orthodoxy Jesus reveals the Word of God. His importance and significance lies in the fact that he is the Word of God to man. For secular theology Jesus embodies an ethical principle which is socially relevant. The limitation of the message of Jesus so characteristic of reductionism makes any study of the significance of the history of religions irrelevant, even including the history of the Jewish and Christian religions themselves. It is Tillich's contention that before there can be any approach to the history of religions, or any understanding of its significance there has to be a "break through the Jesus-



centred alliance of the opposite poles, the orthodox as well as the secular".<sup>17</sup>

Tillich recognizes that rejection of the orthodox and secular exclusivist and reductionist tendencies necessitates the acceptance of five basic presuppositions. In the first place it involves accepting the notion of universal revelation and the fact that God has never left himself without a witness. It means accepting the fact that there is an inextricable relation between revelation and salvation and that all revelatory experiences have the power of salvation. It involves also accepting that all men everywhere are capable of having revelatory experiences with saving power. This is, for Tillich, the foundation of all religions.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, it has to be accepted that man's ability to receive revelation is conditioned by the situation in which he finds himself. Since he is subject to certain biological, psychological and sociological limitations it follows that he receives revelation in a distorted form. That is, his condition of estrangement affects the mode and content of his revelatory experiences.<sup>19</sup>

The third presupposition which, in Tillich's view, has to be accepted before there can be a meaningful approach to the history of religions is the notion of a process of revelation in history as well as the notion of particular experiences of a revelatory character. This

process of revelation, according to Tillich, is one in which the distorted forms of revelation are open to criticism from the mystical, prophetic and secular standpoints.<sup>20</sup> In the fourth place it has to be recognized that there might be in the history of religions a central, particular, revelatory event of universal importance and significance. Tillich envisages this event as one which unites in a concrete theology, or as he calls it, in the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit," the positive results of the mystical, prophetic and secular criticism of distorted forms of revelation.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, rejection of the orthodox and secular traditions of exclusivism and reductionism involves accepting the possibility of the sacred existing in the depth of the secular. It is no longer possible to conceive of a dichotomy of sacred and secular, or to think of the sacred as a sphere existing alongside the secular. In Tillich's view, the sacred, from within the depth of the secular, exercises simultaneously a creative influence and a critical judgement upon the secular. It is able to do this because, at the same time, it judges itself and uses the secular as the means of criticizing itself.<sup>22</sup> This is the reason why Tillich can refer to the liberating function of the secular. He refers to it as possessing a "critical religious function" of its own and as representing the "most radical form of de-demonization."<sup>23</sup>

Elaborating further on the last of these presuppositions Tillich points out that the death of God terminology is not acceptable language for any theologian who takes seriously the question of the significance of the history of religions. A religious structure with its rites, symbols and myths is an enduring necessity within every culture, even the most secular kind, because it is not possible for the Spirit to function effectively apart from its embodiment in a particular concrete religion. In other words, there has to be a "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" and not merely a religion of the Spirit in abstraction. It is not enough, according to Tillich, to state that "the Holy, or the Ultimate, or the Word" are within the secular sphere. The possibility of their existence outside the realm of the secular has to be recognized also. There has to be the means of distinguishing "that which is in and that in which it is". Thus for Tillich, God-language, no matter how untraditional, is necessary for the examination of the significance of the history of religions.<sup>24</sup>

These five presuppositions are for Tillich basic and essential for the theologian who seriously wishes to "affirm the significance of the history of religions for theology against those who reject such significance in the name of a new or of an old absolutism."<sup>25</sup>

### Universal Revelation

A second basic need of the systematic theologian who would engage in a serious study of the history of religions is, according to Tillich, a theology of the history of religions which maintains a balance between a positive and critical evaluation of universal revelation. Such a theology in Tillich's view enables the systematic theologian "to understand the present moment and the nature of our own historical place, both in the particular character of Christianity and in its universal claim."<sup>26</sup> The traditional approach to the history of religions, as Tillich sees it, is confined to history as recorded in the Old and New Testaments and in the growth and development of the Church. Other religions are classified together as "perversions of a kind of original revelation" and having no "particular revelatory experiences of any value for Christian theology".<sup>27</sup> They are pagan religions and as such lack the content and saving power of true revelation. In effect the traditional approach to the history of religions amounts to a critical evaluation of the concept of universal revelation. But, as Tillich points out, the attempt to consider all other religions as pagan was never fully implemented and both Jews and Christians were "influenced religiously by the religions of conquered and conquering nations".<sup>28</sup>

It is Tillich's contention, as his studies in the religionsgeschichtliche Schule showed, that it is possible to combine the notion of the uniqueness of the appearance of Jesus as the Christ with the concept of a long preparatory period of revelation on the grounds that revelatory events do not "fall from heaven like stones".<sup>29</sup> He sees the history of salvation as something occurred within history in general. That is, he recognizes the interrelatedness of geschichte and historie. It does not follow, however, that for Tillich the history of salvation can be identified with the history of religions. What it means is that within the history of religions there are "symbolic moments," or kairoi, pregnant with significance and meaning for human existence.<sup>30</sup>

Tillich sees the period of the enlightenment as a time when eighteenth century theologians awaited the kairos which for them was the moment when mankind attained maturity of reason. Everything else was a preparation for the great moment.<sup>31</sup> For the romanticist view of history, with its emphasis on progressive development and as exemplified by Hegel, the kairos, or the decisive moment in the history of religions, is the appearance of Christianity. Hegel sees religion as a progressive development in accordance with certain philosophical principles. He regards Christianity as "the highest and last point" in that development. It is

the "revealed religion" which has been "philosophically demythologized". For Hegel, as Tillich understands him, earlier religions are aufgehoben, that is, transformed via dissolution and restruction. They are significant only in so far as they constitute "an element in the later development" of religion.<sup>32</sup> The essential identity of God and man, for Hegel, is embodied in the one man Jesus. In him "the infinite is completely actualized in the finite...He is the self-manifestation of the absolute mind".<sup>33</sup> In Tillich's view this is the "symbolic moment" in the history of religions for Hegel, and the basis of his attempt to construct a theology of the history of religions. Experiential theology is a natural consequence of this notion of progressive development.<sup>34</sup> For Teilhard de Chardin the kairos is "a universal divine-centred consciousness"<sup>35</sup> which embraces all possible spiritual developments.<sup>36</sup>

Although Tillich's interpretation of the occasion and content of the kairos differs from those we have referred to, nevertheless he recognizes the significance of "symbolic moments" for the history of religions. It is at such critical moments in history that fragmentary actualizations of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" occur. This for Tillich constitutes the inner aim and purpose, the telos, of the history of religions. It is precisely here, in the notion of fragmentary actualizations of the "Religion of the

Concrete Spirit" at "symbolic moments" or kairoi in history, that Tillich finds the key to the understanding of the history of religions. His own conception of the kairos, which is the basis of his attempt to develop a theology of the history of religions, and integral to his particular dynamic-typological approach to the subject, is related to the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. The kairos for Tillich is central to his interpretation of history.<sup>37</sup> It is that moment in history when a particular, concrete, historical occasion arises capable of receiving revelation. It is "the moment at which history, in terms of a concrete situation, matures to the point of being able to receive the breakthrough of the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God".<sup>38</sup> Such an occasion is the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. Tillich refers to it as the great, unique kairos and the centre of history. It is the centre of history for Tillich not only in the sense that it is "the centre of the history of revelation and salvation", but also in the sense that it is "the only event in which the historical dimension is fully and universally affirmed". That is, through this event history becomes aware of itself and its meaning.<sup>39</sup> For Tillich history is understood only from that point where history reveals its meaning, namely, the centre of history, the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. In him the ambiguity of time and the threat of meaninglessness are overcome.<sup>40</sup>

By his use of the term "centre of history" in relation to the event of the appearance of Jesus as the Christ Tillich is criticizing the notion of relativism and progressive development in revelation and maintaining that this event is for Christians the "criterion and source of the saving power in history".<sup>41</sup>

Tillich's affirmation concerning the universal significance of the appearance of Jesus as the Christ as the centre of history will be discussed further when we examine his dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions. Suffice it for now to say that he justifies his claim to regard the particular revelatory event of Jesus as the Christ as the universal centre of history on two grounds. First, that it is primarily an expression of the daring courage of the Christian faith, and secondly, from an empirical standpoint, that the particular in Jesus as the Christ is crucified for the sake of the universal.<sup>42</sup> This is the basis of Tillich's attempt to construct a theology of the history of religions which preserves a balance between a positive and critical attitude to universal revelation.

#### Interpenetration of Systematic Theology and Religious Studies

The third basic requirement of the systematic theologian who wishes to take seriously the study of the history of religions is, according to Tillich, a recognition of the need for the interpenetration of systematic theology and



religious studies, and the value of the methodology of the history of religions as compared with the methodology of natural and supernatural theology.

Tillich saw the value of the interpenetration of systematic theology and religious historical studies in the joint seminars with Mircea Eliade. During those discussions he saw that every Christian doctrinal statement and every Christian ritual expression acquired a greater depth of meaning when considered in the context of the history of religions. He regards this as a hopeful sign for the future of theology and proposes a longer period of interpenetration between the two disciplines in order that from it might come "another or different fragmentary manifestation of theonomy or of the Religion of the Concrete Spirit", which would provide the basis for a new structure of religious thought.<sup>43</sup> The value of the methodology of the history of religions, in Tillich's view, is that it provides the systematic theologian with a different approach to the notion of particularity. The traditional method of emphasizing the particular in supranatural theology is by referring to revelation through inspired documents. Dogmatic statements are prepared from material taken from holy books such as the Bible or the Koran. The doctrines and creeds of the Christian Church are formulated within the theological circle of the Christian faith and their particularity lies in the fact that they are

"revealed".<sup>44</sup>

In natural theology, as Tillich sees it, the method employed is first to analyse the nature of reality and the structure of the human mind, and then to deduce philosophically on the basis of that analysis certain religious conceptions which can if necessary be related to traditional doctrines. The particularity of these concepts lies in the fact that they are philosophically derived from an analysis of the nature of reality and the structure of human experience.<sup>45</sup>

The method of the history of religions places a different emphasis on particularity. Tillich believes that it is possible to distinguish five stages in the history of religions method. It begins with detached observation of such traditional material as the supranatural theologian experiences existentially. Then follows, in the manner of natural theology, an analysis of the nature of reality and the structure of the mind to discover the location of the religious problem in human experience. This entails an analysis of such questions as what is the meaning of life? what constitutes finiteness? what is meant by the holy? The third stage consists of a presentation of the phenomena of religions such as symbols, rites, ideas and activities. This is followed by an attempt to relate these phenomena to traditional concepts by indicating their similarities and differences. The final stage is the attempt to set the

traditional concepts that have been re-interpreted as a result of interpenetration with religious phenomena, in the wider context of the religious and secular history of the human race, and also "into the framework of our present religious and cultural situation".<sup>46</sup>

The advantage of the history of religious method for Tillich is, that while it incorporates part of the methods of natural and supranatural theology, it widens the whole approach to the religious question by relating traditional materials to all the religious symbols of human experience, and by setting them in the context of man's social and cultural environment. The significance of the method from Tillich's point of view is that religious symbols are no longer considered in isolation from the rest of man's experience. They are fully understood only in relation to the social, political, and economic environment in which they have developed and into which they need to be re-introduced. Another important factor in the history of religion method for Tillich is that it enables religious symbols to be used for a deeper understanding of man's nature. The emphasis on sin in Christianity and its lack of emphasis in Islam is a case in point. It shows the great difference between the two religions in their interpretation of man. Such a religious understanding of man's nature is, in Tillich's view, far more comprehensive than anything that can be pro-

duced by a psychological approach to man's nature.<sup>47</sup>

The fact that traditional religious symbols are for the history of religion method considered in relation to the whole of human experience including the social and cultural environment in which they have taken root does not mean that they are to be regarded in any sense as a social or cultural product. Neither does it mean that they have been deprived of their basis in a particular religion. They are, for Tillich, essentially related to man's religious experience within a particular religion for without such experience no theology is possible. What the history of religion method does, in Tillich's view, is to show the universality of those particular religious experiences which are to be found "in the depths of every concrete religion". This in effect is the different emphasis that the history of religion method places on the notion of particularity. Universally valid religious experiences are grounded in those particular religious experiences which are to be found in every concrete religion. In the same way universally valid religious statements are not the product of an abstraction which would do away with particular religions, but are to be found in the depth of every particular religion. So for Tillich spiritual freedom comes, not from a denial of the significance or relevance of one's own particular religion, or from an attempt to formulate some kind of universal

religion, but from a re-examination of the universal nature of those particular religious experiences which characterize every concrete religion.<sup>48</sup>

Tillich can propound these presuppositions for the serious study of the history of religions because of his view of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern", and because of the correlation in his theology of the concept of universal revelation and the concept of a normative final revelation in the event of Jesus as the Christ. His dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions is determined by these basic conceptions.

1. See above p. 11.
2. Ultimate Concern, pp. 6,9,20; The Eternal Now, p. 93; Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 17.
3. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 14.
4. Ibid., pp. 123-4.
5. Dynamics of Faith, pp. 78-79.
6. The Future of Religions, p. 80.
7. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 17.
8. The Future of Religions, p. 80.
9. Ibid., p. 80; cf. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 44-46; The Protestant Era, (Chicago, 1948), p. 62.
10. The Future of Religions, p. 80; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 245. Brunner's treatment of world religions and their claim to revelation is to be found in Revelation and Reason, (London, 1947), pp. 218-236. He wrote from within the neo-orthodox position.
11. The Future of Religions, pp. 80-81.
12. Ibid., p. 81.
13. Ibid., p. 80.
14. Ibid., p. 82.
15. Ibid., p. 82.
16. Ibid., p. 83.
17. Ibid., p. 84. For Barth's views on the historical Jesus see Church Dogmatics, (Edinburgh, 1956), Vol. IV:1, p. 505 ff.; Vol. IV:2, pp. 247-8; cf. Joseph C. Weber, "Karl Barth and the Historical Jesus", Journal of Bible and Religion, Vol. 32, (1964), pp. 350-54.
18. The Future of Religions, p.81.
19. Ibid., p. 81.

20. Ibid., p. 81.
21. Ibid., p. 81, 87-88. Tillich develops this theme in his dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions. See below p. 41 ff.
22. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
23. Ibid., p. 89.
24. The Future of Religions, pp. 82-83.
25. Ibid., p. 82.
26. Ibid., p. 84.
27. Ibid., p. 84.
28. Ibid., p. 84.
29. Ibid., pp. 84-85.
30. Ibid., p. 85.
31. Ibid., p. 85.
32. Ibid., pp. 85-86; Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 366.
33. Perspectives, p. 134.
34. The Future of Religions, p. 86.
35. Ibid., p. 86.
36. Ibid., pp. 86, 91.
37. "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism", The Theology of Paul Tillich, edit. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall, (New York, 1961), p. 345.
38. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 393.
39. Ibid., p. 393.

40. The Interpretation of History, trans. by N. A. Rasetzki and Elsa L. Talney, (New York, 1936), p. 260; cf. James Luther Adams, "Tillich's Interpretation of History", The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 300. Adams' comment is: "Tillich, like Schelling, holds that the meaning of history is found in the process whereby the divine, through the instrument of human freedom, overcomes estrangement through love".
41. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 388; The Future of Religions, p. 89.
42. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 392-93.
43. The Future of Religions, p. 91.
44. Ibid., p. 92.
45. Ibid., p. 92.
46. Ibid., p. 93.
47. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
48. Ibid., p. 94.



## CHAPTER II

### The Dynamic-Typological Approach to the History of Religions

Tillich's approach to the history of religions reflects his wider view of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern". He realizes that the content of a man's ultimate concern, that which he takes with unconditional seriousness, has the character and quality of the holy. He recognizes with Otto the common dependence of the meaning of the holy and the meaning of the divine on the nature of ultimate concern, and he bases his approach to the history of religions on an analysis of the nature of the holy. The experience of the holy is, in his view, the universal ground of all religions so that by distinguishing the different elements in the nature of the holy he is analysing the basic structure of religion. His analysis shows that the holy consists of three interdependent type-determining elements and he sees that whenever one of these elements predominates a particular type of religion is produced.<sup>1</sup>

### Elements of the Holy

The three elements he discerns in man's experience of the holy are, first, the sacramental element which is the way the holy manifests itself through particular events, persons, and finite things.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, there is the mystical element which, according to Tillich, opposes any concretization of particularisation of the holy and any objectification of the ultimate. It constitutes "a critical movement against the demonization of the sacramental".<sup>3</sup> Tillich realizes that while embodiments of the holy in particular forms might be necessary and justified, they do not fully express the nature of the holy nor do they represent the ultimate completely. The holy, for Tillich, lies beyond any particular embodiment of it, and he believes that in order to attain the ultimate every particular concrete form has to be transcended.<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, there is the ethical or prophetic element which Tillich refers to as the element of "ought to be".<sup>5</sup> It is opposed to those forms of the demonization of the holy or the sacramental which deny justice and love in the name of holiness. It constitutes a critical movement against the demonic consequences of the demonization of the sacramental.<sup>6</sup> Tillich sees that this element in the nature of the holy demands justice and love, but he recognizes that although it prevents the demonization of the sacramental in forms that

deny these two principles it is not without its dangers. When the ethical element predominates in a religion to the exclusion of the sacramental and mystical elements, there is a danger of that religion becoming wholly moralistic and ultimately secular.<sup>7</sup>

It is Tillich's claim that every religion requires for its existence the inter-dependence of these type-determining elements. But because man is a finite creature and unable at all times to maintain a balance of the elements of truth, one or the other of the type-determining elements tends to predominate. Tillich sees the inter-dependence and conflicts of these elements as factors that determine to a great extent "the dynamics of faith within and between religions".<sup>8</sup> They also provide him with the key to the understanding of the history of religions.<sup>9</sup>

The predominance of the sacramental element in man's experience of the holy, according to Tillich, produces an ontological type of faith. For this type of religion every single piece of reality is capable of assuming the nature and character of a sacrament. The holy can be manifested through such finite things as a piece of bread or a glass of wine, a word or book, a tree or building. One thing cannot be considered intrinsically more sacred than another because all things are equally capable of manifesting the nature of the holy. The constant danger, according to Tillich, is that the

inadequacy of finiteness may be overlooked and the particular identified with the ultimate. When this happens the representation of the ultimate becomes the object of faith rather than the ultimate itself. It is this danger which, in Tillich's view, produces the mystical reaction to the sacramental predominance and demonization.<sup>10</sup>

The mystical element in man's experience of the holy has for Tillich a positive as well as a critical aspect. It meets the problem of the demonization of the sacramental by equating the ultimate with the ground of being, "the one, the ineffable, the being above being".<sup>11</sup> In this way particular concrete forms or embodiments of the holy are transcended. The mystics' answer to the question how the ultimate can possibly be expressed if it is ineffable and transcendent lies, for Tillich, in what is considered to be the point of contact between the finite and the infinite, namely "the depth of the human soul".<sup>12</sup> To experience the ultimate it is necessary for a man to sacrifice all preliminary concerns, but he has to accept also that the final ecstasy of union with the infinite may never be granted him in this life.<sup>13</sup>

The ontological type of faith produced by the predominance of the sacramental element in man's experience of the holy and the mystical reaction to it is, for Tillich, expressed in those types of religions which have their

origin in the Indian tradition.<sup>14</sup>

The predominance of the prophetic element in man's experience of the holy, or the element of "ought to be", produces, according to Tillich, a moral type of faith which lays stress on obedience to the moral law. Tillich envisages three possible moral types of faith. The first, the juristic type, is discernable in Talmudic Judaism and in Islam. Elaborating on the latter Tillich points out that Mohammed's revelation consisted in the main of ritual and social laws. While the ritual laws point to the sacramental in man's experience of the holy, the social laws refer to the element of "ought to be". These laws determine to a great extent the everyday life of most people in Islamic countries and offer them protection and satisfaction. For Tillich the faith of Islam is primarily faith in this consecrated order rather than faith in the prophet Mohammed himself.<sup>15</sup>

The second moral type of faith, according to Tillich, is the conventional one which is represented in the system of rules formulated by Confucius. Although Confucianism has a religious and sacramental element as the worship of ancestors and the categorical nature of the precepts and commands indicate, it is, in Tillich's view, primarily secular in character. This is the reason for the growth of the sacramental and mystical religions of Buddhism and Taoism on

the one hand, and the growth and development of Communism on the other. The former constitute a reaction against the secular nature of Confucianism while the latter is a natural development of it.<sup>16</sup>

The third moral type of faith for Tillich is the ethical type as represented by Old Testament Judaism and particularly the Jewish prophets. It does not lack the sacramental element characteristic of all religions, as the notion of the covenant and the prevalence of ritual laws indicate, but the predominant element in Judaism is "the experience of the holiness of 'ought to be'".<sup>17</sup> In Old Testament prophecy the sacramental element never takes precedence over the moral element and the final court of appeal in man's relationship to God is always the principle of justice. Amos, for example, represents such an extreme form of moral indignation that with him the cultus fades into insignificance. So one of the main contributions of Judaism, according to Tillich, is a critical approach to sacramental self-certainty wherever it is to be found in religions and an insistence on "an ultimate concern which denies any claim for ultimacy that does not include the demand for justice."<sup>18</sup>

### The Religion of the Concrete Spirit

The predominance in a religion of one or other of the elements in man's experience of the holy, as Tillich points out, gives rise to certain dangers. But the interdependence and conflicts of these elements give the history of religions its dynamic character. Tillich sees the inner aim or telos of the history of religions as the drive towards the unity or harmony of the type-determining elements in man's experience of the holy. The striving for unity or harmony in the relation of these elements is as much the inner aim or telos of religions as the inner aim or telos of an acorn is to become an oak tree. For Tillich this unity is effected in what he tentatively calls the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit". He cannot see this "Religion of the Concrete Spirit", however, being equated with any particular religion, although it is possible for it to be expressed through an actual religion.<sup>19</sup> Since Tillich approaches the whole subject of the history of religions from the standpoint of one who shares the Christian vision, an "observing participant" who selects and evaluates his facts with reference to what he conceives to be the aim of history and the telos of religions,<sup>20</sup> he claims to find the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" expressed within Christianity. Even so he finds it impossible to identify the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" with Christianity as a religion. The highest

expression of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit", and the most complete unity and harmony of the three type-determining elements in man's experience of the holy, is, for Tillich as a Protestant theologian, Paul's doctrine of the Spirit.

There "the two fundamental elements: the ecstatic and the rational" are united. There love and knowledge, agape and gnosis are synthesized.<sup>21</sup>

The main characteristic of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit", for Tillich, is its constant struggle against the demonization of the holy or the sacramental. It is present wherever there is a "struggle against the demonic resistance of the sacramental basis and the demonic and secularistic distortion of the critics of the sacramental basis".<sup>22</sup> That is, wherever in the history of religions there is a struggle against the attempt to demonize the sacramental, as for example in the objectification of the holy or Ultimate, or in the denial of justice and love in the name of the holy, there the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is present. It is present also in the struggle against the complete exclusion of the sacramental and mystical elements from religions which leads to their subsequent deterioration into moralism and secularism. Tillich believes that the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit", the complete synthesis of the different elements in man's experience of the holy, has appeared in fragmentary form on many different occasions in



the history of religions. He believes too that it will appear on many occasions again since this is the inner aim and telos of the history of religions. This enables him to evaluate the history of religions "as a fight for the Religion of the Concrete Spirit" or put in a different way as "a fight of God against religion within religion".<sup>23</sup>

From what has been said hitherto we can see that what Tillich means by the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is not some kind of religion of the spirit existing as it were in abstraction divorced from all religious formulations, but a religion of the spirit that finds its concreteness in the depths of particular religions. If it symbolizes the struggle against religion, the battleground is still situated within religion.

Tillich as we have seen finds the highest expression of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" in Paul's doctrine of the Spirit which combines the ecstatic element in the experience of the "Spiritual Presence" with the rational, and rejects any form of ecstasy that produces disorder or chaos.<sup>24</sup> But the one who symbolizes the victory in the struggle for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is, for Tillich, Jesus as the Christ, and the symbol of his victory over the demonic powers is the Cross.<sup>25</sup> At that critical moment in history the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" was actualized. At that decisive moment victory was achieved in the

fight against religion within religion. For Tillich this is the great kairos.<sup>26</sup> But it is not the only actualization of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit". It is not the only place where a synthesis of different elements in man's experience of the holy has occurred, or where victory in the struggle against the demonization of the holy has been won. There has been and will be other decisive moments, or moments of kairoi. Tillich sees the siege of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity as interpreted by Israel as one such moment in the history of the Hebrews.<sup>27</sup> What happened symbolically on the Cross had happened before, and would happen again elsewhere at other times, although those occasions would not be "historically and empirically connected with the Cross". Even so, it is Tillich's claim that for Christians the criterion will always be the event of the Cross.<sup>28</sup> The symbol of the Cross points to and participates in the ultimate yet it is opposed to the notion of making any concrete religion ultimate including Christianity. For to the extent Christianity claims ultimacy for itself as a religion instead of pointing beyond itself to the ultimate, to that extent it fails and becomes the victim of demonization.<sup>29</sup>

Although Tillich envisages the occurrence of "symbolic moments" or kairoi in the history of religions which are not historically or empirically related to the event of the Cross, he sees that within Christianity itself the unique kairos,

the appearance of Jesus as the Christ, is capable of being re-experienced through relative kairoi which are historically related to the Cross. These are critical moments in the history of mankind when the victory over demonic powers symbolized by the Cross, and the actualization of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" accomplished there, are capable of being experienced again. For Tillich, such an occasion occurred in Europe after the first world war. Then the relative kairos was the obedience of the religious socialist movement and the opposition of the national socialist movement to the great kairos.<sup>30</sup> After the second world war, when there was no possibility of formulating any kind of realistic programme for reconstruction, Tillich believes that the occasion demanded responsible waiting for the kairos and he develops this notion in the doctrine of "the sacred void".<sup>31</sup>

### Jesus as the Christ

At this point we need to examine further Tillich's affirmation concerning the universal significance of the appearance of Jesus as the Christ as the centre of history and as the victor in the struggle for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit". As we have seen, he justifies his claim to regard the particular revelatory event of Jesus as the Christ as the centre of history on the grounds that it is,

In the first place, an expression of the daring courage of the Christian faith, and secondly, that in Jesus as the Christ the particular is crucified for the sake of the universal.<sup>32</sup> Tillich recognizes that the adherents of other world religions could make similar claims to universal significance on behalf of other particular revelatory events. Islam, for example, could claim universal significance for the appearance of the prophet Mohammed, and Judaism could point to the event of the Exodus as the centre of history. In the same way nationalistic interpretations of history could attach universal significance to particular national events as, for example, the founding of Rome or the American war of Independence. But, in Tillich's view, these events do not provide "the universal centre of the history of revelation and salvation" nor do they give history a meaning which is universally valid. His explanation of this is that no centre of history chosen on the "particular" principle can lose its particularity no matter how much it might try to become universal. That is, it does not point away from itself or sacrifice itself completely for the sake of the universal principle it represents. The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the appearance of Mohammed as the prophet are centres of particular histories. The same is true of the events that led to the foundation of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. In the case of Buddhism too, with its non-

historical interpretation of history, history itself is without meaning and the goal of life is to transcend the realm of history. Such an interpretation of history could hardly claim to possess a central historical event which would give the process of history a universally valid meaning.<sup>33</sup>

The Christian interpretation of history, in Tillich's view, differs from all other interpretations of history in that the appearance of Jesus as the Christ is an event of universal significance. The uniqueness of this event lies in two characteristics. First, the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ reveals no separation or estrangement from God at any time. It shows only a state of continuous communion. The uniqueness of Jesus as the Christ is "the unique relationship of undisturbed unity".<sup>34</sup> Secondly, it shows that he relinquishes everything that he could have acquired for himself through his unity with God. He makes a complete sacrifice of his particularity. Tillich's claim is that "All reports and interpretations of the New Testament concerning Jesus as the Christ possess two outstanding characteristics: his maintenance of unity with God and his sacrifice of everything he could have gained for himself from this unity".<sup>35</sup> The disciples, according to Tillich, wanted to make Jesus in his finitude the ultimate one. This form of demonization or particularization of the ultimate was

resisted and is the basic reason for the reference to Peter as demonic. In Tillich's view, Jesus became the Christ when he rejected this temptation. By his acceptance of the Cross he showed his complete unity with God and his "transparency to the ground of being".<sup>36</sup> While other centres of history chosen on the "particular" principle are unable to lose their particularity, in the event of Jesus as the Christ there is a complete sacrifice of particularity for the sake of the universal. The distinguishing factor in the appearance of Jesus as the Christ, which makes it an event of universal significance, is that particularity is denied and that he makes a "continuous sacrifice of himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ".<sup>37</sup>

#### Universal and Final Revelation

Tillich does not consider the uniqueness and finality of the revelatory event of Jesus as the Christ to be in any way exclusive. It does not nullify for him the concept of universal revelation. In fact the opposite is true. The idea of universal preparatory revelation is necessitated by the concept of final revelation because without it final revelation is meaningless. As we have shown the revelatory event of Jesus as the Christ did not drop from heaven like a stone.<sup>38</sup> God has never left himself without a witness and man has always been capable of receiving revelation even

although he has received it in a distorted form because of estranged condition and human limitations.<sup>39</sup> The concept of universal revelation is necessary for Tillich because it prevents the dehumanization of man and the demonization of God.<sup>40</sup>

Tillich regards the revelation in Jesus as the Christ as final in the sense that it is "the decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable revelation...the criterion of all the others".<sup>41</sup> It is the telos of revelation for those who participate in it existentially.<sup>42</sup> The justification for this claim rests on the fact that final revelation has "the power of negating itself without losing itself".<sup>43</sup> What this means in effect is that Jesus as the Christ as the bearer of final revelation is able to become "transparent to the divine mystery" and a witness to the fulness of revelation.<sup>44</sup> This is possible for him because of his unity with the ground of his being.<sup>45</sup> It would be wrong of us to infer from this that Tillich favours a form of "Jesus-ology" or a veneration of Jesus which elevates him to the position of ultimacy. In fact he specifically rejects any attempt to propagate "Jesus-ology" on the grounds that it elevates a finite being to the position of the ultimate, and is a clear example of demonization.<sup>46</sup> In the same way and for the same reason Tillich rejects any attempt to make Christianity as a religion superior to other religions.<sup>47</sup>

The notion of universal revelation and a history of revelation is, for Tillich, a necessary correlate of final revelation, and he recognizes that in Christian thought this idea finds clear expression in the doctrine of the logos. Prior to its embodiment in the person of Jesus as the Christ the logos had operated with revelatory and saving power in the world and would operate again through the Spirit to give further insight into the meaning of existence.<sup>48</sup> The logos which became concrete in Jesus as the Christ was at the same time the universal logos which was in the world from the beginning. Thus, as Tillich shows, in Christian thought generally the particular historical embodiment of the logos at a decisive moment in time is always interpreted in the light of the universal logos, "the universal principle of the divine self-manifestation".<sup>49</sup>

Tillich's insistence on the correlation of universal and final revelation is the reason for his rejection of humanistic theology on the one hand and neo-orthodox theology on the other. This rejection, as we have shown, he considers to be one of the presuppositions of a serious study of the history of religions. The former does away with the concept of final revelation completely by identifying revelation with religion and culture generally. The latter reserves the term revelation for final revelation and does away with the notion of a history of revelation. Barth and



his followers, for example, relinquish the classical doctrine of the logos in which universalism finds clear expression.<sup>50</sup> In Tillich's view, both theologies are mistaken because the history of revelation "should neither be levelled down to a history of religion nor be eliminated by a destructive supranaturalism".<sup>51</sup>

Tillich expresses the correlation of universal and final revelation also in terms of what he calls the Spiritual Presence and the Spiritual Community. The Spiritual Presence and anticipations of the New Being are, for Tillich, constantly manifested in history. As he puts it: "Mankind is never left alone. The Spiritual Presence acts upon it in every moment and breaks into it in some great moments, which are the historical kairoi".<sup>52</sup> It is present in the mana religion in the depth of existence. It is embodied in the concrete figures of the mystery gods of Hellenistic cults. It is present for Christians in Jesus as the Christ and according to Tillich the undistorted Spiritual Presence, or the New Being in Jesus as the Christ, is the ultimate criterion of all experiences of the Spiritual Presence. It is the "Spiritual Presence in the Christ as the centre of history" which enables man to come to "a fuller understanding of the manifestation of the Spirit in history".<sup>53</sup> This means that there is no essential difference between the Spiritual Presence in Jesus as the Christ and the Spiritual

Presence in history as a whole. The Spirit that creates the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the same spirit that works "in all those who have been grasped by the Spiritual Presence before he could be encountered as an historical event".<sup>54</sup> That is, the Spirit which creates the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the same Spirit which prepares mankind to encounter the New Being in him. But the norm or criterion of all manifestations of the Spiritual Presence is for Tillich the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

The Spiritual Presence, which is manifested in mankind as a whole, is also present in what Tillich calls the "Spiritual Community." There is, according to Tillich, a latent and manifest form of the Spiritual Community. The Spiritual Community is latent in the assembly of the people of Israel; in the devotional communities of Islam; in the worship of mythological gods; and in the classical mysticism of Asia and Europe. In some respects these communities, in Tillich's view, could represent the Spiritual Community better than the Christian churches and could criticize the churches in the name of the Spiritual Community. This insight, according to Tillich, prevents all kind of ecclesiastical arrogance and compels Christians "to consider pagans, humanists, and Jews as members of the latent Spiritual Community and not as complete strangers who are invited into the Spiritual Community from outside."<sup>55</sup> In the same way the

Spiritual Community is latent in groups outside the churches in the secular field of politics, art and education, where the power of the New Being is manifested.<sup>56</sup> But the manifest form of the Spiritual Community is that community or ecclesia or "assembly of God" which reveals the unambiguous life of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. It is this manifest form of the Spiritual Community which is the ultimate criterion of all the other latent forms.<sup>57</sup>

#### Elements in the idea of God

We have examined Tillich's dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions from the standpoint of his analysis of the interdependent type-determining elements in the nature of the holy. We have shown how the predominance of one element or another produces particular types of religions and how the inner aim or telos of religions is to effect the unity of these elements in a "Religion of the Concrete Spirit". It is possible now to look at Tillich's approach to the history of religions from the standpoint of his analysis of type-determining elements in the idea of God, the predominant religious name for the content of ultimate concern. Tillich sees that the idea of God consists of elements of concreteness and ultimacy which are constantly in a state of tension with one another. When the tension between these elements is overcome a certain type of religious structure is produced in which the meaning of God

is grasped and interpreted.<sup>58</sup> Tillich sees the possibility of a typological approach to the history of religions on the basis of the tension between these elements in the experience of God's nature. He realises that man's need for concreteness in his expression of ultimate concern leads him to accept a polytheistic form of religion. But the reaction of the ultimate element in the idea of God against the characteristics of finitude inherent in concreteness prompts him to accept monotheistic religious structures. Man is moved finally to conceive of a trinitarian structure in order to preserve the balance between ultimacy and concreteness.<sup>59</sup>

Tillich notes three types of polytheism in which man's need for concreteness predominates. They are the universalistic, the mythological, and the dualistic types. In universalistic polytheism the "all-pervading sacred power (mana), which is hidden behind all things", finds embodiment in persons, things, and places. It does not represent complete polytheism because of the underlying unity, or substantial unity, behind all concrete forms and manifestations. But neither does it represent complete ultimacy because the forms and appearances of concreteness are not transcended. It shows clearly the tension between the concrete and ultimate in man's idea of God.<sup>60</sup>

In mythological polytheism the divine power is embodied in beings or gods who are related to one another

and whose antipathies and loves are recorded in the great mythologies. Man's need for concreteness and his inability to be radically concerned with the impersonal leads to the personification of these gods. It is this need which lies at the root of every desire for a personal god in all religions. But the need for ultimacy also finds expression in this type of polytheism in the subpersonal and supra-personal representations or forms of the divine power. Here again the tension between the elements of concreteness and ultimacy in man's idea of God is revealed.<sup>61</sup>

The dualistic type of polytheism is based on the struggle between the elements of the divine and demonic in the nature of the holy. It recognizes the destructive as well as the creative possibilities of the nature of the holy. The ambiguity is overcome in this type of polytheism by the creation of two realms and two gods, one good and the other evil. Although this satisfies the need for concreteness, the element of ultimacy is manifested in the fact that the demonic is considered inferior to the divine. Tillich sees the need for ultimacy being expressed in the triumph of good over evil, and in the concept of "an ultimate principle above the struggling realms, namely, the good embracing itself and its opposite."<sup>62</sup>

In each of these types of polytheism the concrete element in the idea of God predominates but, as Tillich tries

to indicate, the tension between the elements of concreteness and ultimacy is present in each type.

The monotheistic types of religious structures, in Tillich's view, show the predominance of the element of the ultimate in man's idea of God although the concrete element cannot be ignored. He envisages the possibility of four types of monotheism: the monarchical, mystical, exclusive and trinitarian. He fails to see the possibility of monarchical monotheism being liberated from polytheism because it conceives of God as a kind of monarch who rules over other inferior gods and who is equated with the ultimate.<sup>63</sup> The mystical type of monotheism identifies the ultimate with the ground of being in which the struggle between the divine and the demonic is overcome and transcended. But although in this type of religious structure the concrete element in the idea of God is denied, the need for concreteness remains, particularly among those who find it difficult to comprehend the notion of a purely abstract ultimate.<sup>64</sup>

The exclusive type of monotheism is, in Tillich's view, the only type which succeeds in resisting the tendency to polytheism. It does this by attributing universality and ultimacy to a concrete God. An example of such a God is the God of Israel. He represents a concrete God who is at the same time absolute. His claim to absoluteness lacks demonic content because it is based on the principle of

justice. This principle, according to Tillich, is universally valid. It finds expression in the words of the prophets and the reformers and also in the Protestant principle. All nations including Israel are subject to it. The main danger of the exclusive type of monotheism, for Tillich, lies in the fact that it tends to lose the concrete element in the idea of God in the sense that all the personal characteristics which detract from his ultimacy and universality are removed.<sup>65</sup>

Trinitarian monotheism represents for Tillich "an attempt to speak of the living God, the God in whom the ultimate and concrete are united".<sup>66</sup> The trinitarian problem, according to Tillich, is a perennial one in the history of religions because it is concerned with the unity of the concrete and ultimate elements in God. Other types of monotheism are aware of the problem also. In mystical monotheism, for example, the tendency to trinitarianism can be observed in the way the god Brahma is distinguished from the Brahman principle. Ultimacy is represented by the Brahman-Atman principle while concreteness is preserved in the trinity of gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. In exclusive monotheism the trinitarian trend can be discerned in those powers which mediate the absolute, transcendent God, such as the hypostasized qualities of Wisdom and Glory, and the divinely-human person of the Messiah. In these "the God who had become absolutely transcendent and unapproachable now becomes

concrete and present in time and space".<sup>67</sup> Tillich observes that in Christianity the Messiah figure is identified with the personal life to which the name Jesus of Nazareth is given, and that for Christians the trinitarian problem becomes part of the problem of Christology.<sup>68</sup>

The approach to the history of religions based on an analysis of the tension between the inter-dependent type-determining elements of ultimacy and concreteness in the idea of God is essentially the same for Tillich as the approach based on the analysis of the type-determining elements of sacramental, mystical and prophetic in the nature of the holy. The inner aim or telos of religion in both cases for Tillich is the unity of these type-determining elements which is effected by the event of Jesus as the Christ. In him the ultimate attains concreteness or particularity without loss of ultimacy; in him also the different elements in man's experience of the holy are synthesized and the battle against demonization won.

### Summary

We have tried to show in this chapter that Tillich's approach to the study of the history of religions reflects his wider view of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern". We have shown also that, in Tillich's view, the best possible approach to the study of religions is by way of an analysis of the basic elements of the nature



of the holy, the universal ground of all religions. We have indicated that the inner aim of all religions for Tillich is to unite the interdependent type-determining elements in the nature of the holy in the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit," the highest expression of which is to be found in Paul's doctrine of the Spirit. We have pointed out also that the type-determining elements of ultimacy and concreteness in the idea of God, the predominant religious name for ultimate concern, are, in Tillich's view, united in the event of Jesus as the Christ. But ultimate concern, for Tillich, is not confined to the religious realm. It is expressed also in the secular sphere through movements of various kinds. Because of this Tillich can refer to the religious significance of the secular and the importance of what he calls the quasi-religions. This is what we shall now proceed to examine.

1. The Future of Religions, p. 86.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 87.
4. Ibid., p. 87; Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 105 ff where Tillich refers to the dangers of profanization and demonization.
5. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 59, cf. Dynamics of Faith, pp. 65, 67.
6. The Future of Religions, p. 87.
7. Ibid., p. 87, cf. Dynamics of Faith, p. 56.
8. Dynamics of Faith, p. 56.
9. The Future of Religions, p. 88.
10. Dynamics of Faith, pp. 58-60.
11. Ibid., p. 60.
12. Ibid., p. 61.
13. Ibid., p. 62.
14. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 59.
15. Dynamics of Faith, pp. 65-66.
16. Ibid., pp. 66-67.
17. Ibid., p. 67.
18. Ibid., p. 68.
19. The Future of Religions, p. 87.
20. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 2-3.
21. The Future of Religions, p. 88.
22. Ibid., p. 88.

23. Ibid., p. 88. See above pp. 26, 34-36.
24. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 123-25. See above p. 48.
25. The Future of Religions, p. 89, cf. James Luther Adams, op. cit. p. 234; Systematic Theology, I, p. 149.
26. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 391, 393. Vide p. 31. above.
27. Ultimate Concern, p. 131.
28. The Future of Religions, p. 89.
29. Dynamics of Faith, p. 122; See below p. 118.
30. The Protestant Era, pp. 53, 55, cf. Systematic Theology Vol. III, p. 395; pp. 393-96.
31. The Future of Religions, pp. 27-28; Ultimate Concern, pp. 128-32.
32. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 392-93; Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 81. Vide p. 32 above.
33. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 391-93; See below p. 75; where Tillich refers to the vocational element in nationalism being over shadowed by the self-assertive element.
34. Ultimate Concern, p. 214, cf. pp. 142-46; 153-56; 211-19.
35. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 150. Tillich equates 'particularity' with self-gain or self-aggrandizement.
36. Ibid., pp. 149, 151.
37. Ibid., p. 153; cf. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 81.
38. The Future of Religions, p. 85; See above p. 29.
39. Ibid., p. 81.
40. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 155.
41. Ibid., p. 148.
42. Ibid., p. 153.
43. Ibid., p. 148.

44. Ibid., pp. 149-50; 164.
45. Ibid., p. 148.
46. Ibid., p. 151.
47. Ibid., p. 150.
48. Ultimate Concern, p. 107.
49. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 33; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 27-32; cf. The Protestant Era, pp. 15, 34; cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 138-39.
50. The Protestant Era, p. 102; cf. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 46. See above p. 21 ff.
51. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 154.
52. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 149.
53. Ibid., p. 157.
54. Ibid., p. 157.
55. Ibid., p. 165.
56. Ibid., p. 163.
57. Ibid., p. 159.
58. Ibid., p. 243.
59. Ibid., p. 245; cf. Vol. III, p. 301 ff.
60. Ibid., p. 246.
61. Ibid., pp. 246-48.
62. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 248-50.
63. Ibid., p. 250.
64. Ibid., p. 251.
65. Ibid., pp. 251-52.

66. Ibid., p. 252.

67. Ibid., p. 254.

68. Ibid., pp. 253-54.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Religious Significance of the Secular and the Quasi-Religions

Tillich's wider conception of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern" enables him to see the religious significance of the secular dimension. He realises that man's ultimate concern is capable of being expressed through secular ideals and movements and this helps him to relinquish the idea of a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.<sup>1</sup> He maintains that the secular is never "essentially and inescapably secular" but always "potentially sacred and open to consecration" because the infinite has to express itself through finite secular things.<sup>2</sup> He believes that it is equally possible for secular events to become matters of ultimate concern as it is for divine powers to lose their religious function and become secular. Both movements are characteristic of the history of religion and culture which suggests a basic unity between the holy and the secular.<sup>3</sup> In Tillich's view, the interdependence of secular and sacred ultimates has to be recognized and he believes that it is as important to examine the religious implications of the secular as it is to

examine the secular implications of the sacred.<sup>4</sup>

#### Autonomy, Heteronomy and Theonomy

Tillich's view of the religious significance of the secular dimension enables him to refer to the secular as another form of the critical movement against the demonization of the holy. The mystical and prophetic elements in man's experience of the holy, to which we have referred,<sup>5</sup> constitute two forms of the critical movement against the demonization of the holy. For Tillich, the secular is "the third and most radical form of de-demonization".<sup>6</sup> It exercises a liberating function in the sense that it saves the holy from being demonized in the form of irrational activities. The secular, for Tillich, represents the rational world, or the world of rational structures.<sup>7</sup> So when it criticizes or judges the irrationality of the holy it does so in the name of rationality. This is the essence of the secular form of de-demonization. The problem, according to Tillich, is that the religious life can become dominated by ecstatic forms of the holy which deny the claims of justice, goodness, truth and beauty. The secular preserves and defends these claims and in the process shows something of the spirit and purpose of the prophetic. But although the secular is exercising a correct function in this respect it ends by losing contact with the holy and the divine.<sup>8</sup> The

forces of law, morality, cognition and aesthetics, instead of pointing beyond themselves to the ultimate, become a law unto themselves. Tillich refers to this as the "self-actualization of all the cultural functions",<sup>9</sup> and this is what he means by the secularization of the holy. The loss of ultimate concern, of religious substance, of ultimate meaning, which characterizes the secular, produces the emptiness of autonomy.<sup>10</sup>

Tillich defines "autonomy" as man's obedience to the essential structure of reason within himself. By "heteronomy" he means that law external to man which at the same time represents the depth of reason within man. Both autonomy and heteronomy, which constitute the polarity of structure and depth within reason, are for Tillich, rooted in theonomy. By this he means that both the structure and depth of reason are united in God. In a theonomous situation the structure of autonomous reason is united with its own depth. But Tillich recognizes that when the process of secularization takes place there is a struggle between autonomy and heteronomy, between the tendency to "self-actualization of all the cultural functions" and the "consecration of life". When the world of rational structures as represented by the moral, legal, cognitive and aesthetic spheres, point beyond themselves to the ultimate meaning of life, then what we have according to Tillich is theonomy, which he describes as



indicative of the relation between the sacred and the secular and "an element in the structure of the Religion of the Concrete Spirit".<sup>11</sup> He is able to refer to theonomy in this way because, as the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is present in the fight against the demonization of the holy, theonomy is present in the fight against the secularization of the holy. This is the reason also why Tillich can refer to theonomy as "another telos...of the history of religions".<sup>12</sup> If the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is the fight against religion within religion, theonomy is the fight against autonomy within the secular. Theonomy too, in the same way as the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit", appears in fragmentary form and never fully.<sup>13</sup>

In the struggle between autonomy and heteronomy during the process of secularization, Tillich claims that victory for autonomy, or the "self-actualization of all the cultural functions", produces emptiness and indifference to the meaning of life.<sup>14</sup> This in turn prompts the appearance of new religious symbols and the formulation of what Tillich calls the quasi-religions. His use of the term "quasi" rather than "pseudo" for these religions based on secularism, indicates that they show certain genuine similarities with religions proper,<sup>15</sup> and that they are capable of being real expressions of ultimate concern in so far as they retain their religious content.<sup>16</sup> In Tillich's view there have been two

periods in the history of the world when autonomous cultures flourished. The first occurred in the ancient world with the rise of Greek speculation. Then ultimate concern was expressed in ethical and philosophical terms rather than in religious symbols. This movement or culture reached its zenith in the schools of the Epicureans, Stoics and Sceptics.<sup>17</sup> The second period was the period of the Enlightenment which was followed by a technological invasion of traditional cultures and the development of a general indifference to the question of the ultimate meaning of life.<sup>18</sup> But Tillich maintains that indifference to the meaning of life cannot prevail indefinitely; new religious symbols appear to replace the traditional symbols that have become impotent. With the appearance of these new symbols comes the formulation of the quasi-religions which attempt to give new answers to the question of the ultimate meaning of life.<sup>19</sup>

### The Quasi-Religions

Tillich refers specifically to three quasi-religions, namely, Nationalism, Socialism and Humanism. He sees nationalism as an expression of the need for self-affirmation. Prior to the process of secularization it was not possible to distinguish the religion of a group from the group itself because religious symbols were used to aid and to consecrate the need for self-affirmation. In the secular age this

identity of religion and group no longer exists and nationalism fills the gap created by a discarded religion. It succeeds in providing a new content for ultimate concern.<sup>20</sup>

Self-affirmation, however, is only one of two elements which, according to Tillich, together contribute to making nationalism a quasi-religion. The other element is the consciousness of vocation, or the ability to represent an ultimate principle. For Tillich both elements are united in the Hellenistic consciousness of culture and the Jewish consciousness of God's covenant with man. But the fundamental problem is the tension that exists between these two elements in the life of a nation. Often the vocational element is overshadowed by the self-assertive element, namely, the desire of the nation to express or to affirm itself at all costs irrespective of the consequences, and even though it means sacrificing the ultimate principle it represents. When that happens nationalism as a quasi-religion loses its religious content and becomes demonic.<sup>21</sup> When the vocational element is preserved and the national consciousness is made aware of its ability to represent an ultimate principle, then it is possible for the nation to "become a representative of the supra-national unity of mankind" or the Kingdom of God.<sup>22</sup>

Tillich realizes that even in those nations where the power element is controlled by the vocational element, or

where the element of self-affirmation is balanced by the element of vocational consciousness, the threat of demonization is always present.<sup>23</sup> When the demonization of nationalism takes place it produces Fascism. The essence of demonization here is that the preliminary national concern is given the status of ultimate concern and in the process the nation's finitude is denied.<sup>24</sup> This form of demonization is exemplified for Tillich in Nazism, where the symbol used for the future of the Third Reich is the eschatological symbol of the millenium which referred originally to the ultimate aim of history.<sup>25</sup> He realizes that denial of a nation's finitude could lead to the justification of systematic lying, the suppression of all criticism of the nation, and the wholesale murder of opponents of the nation.<sup>26</sup>

In the quasi-religion of socialism Tillich perceives ultimate concern as being expressed in a particular form of society or social order. Like nationalism it is capable of representing an ultimate principle, or pointing to the ultimate, without claiming ultimacy for itself. It is able to do this to the degree that it retains its religious content, or its ability to witness to an ideal beyond itself. But as Tillich shows, when socialism fails to point beyond itself to the ultimate and is itself elevated to the position of ultimacy, then demonization takes place. The radicalization or demonization of socialism for Tillich is Communism. Here

a finite ideology becomes a matter of ultimate concern. This form of demonization was exemplified by Russia during the Stalin period, when the symbol of utopia was the classless society which was equated with the goal of history. All injustices, evils and cruelties were justified for the sake of the realization of the ideal of "communal self-affirmation".<sup>27</sup>

Tillich refers to the religious socialist movement of Europe in the 1920's as "an attempt to liberate the socialist ideology from absolutism, utopianism, and the destructive implications of a self-righteous rejection of criticism from beyond itself".<sup>28</sup> The religious socialist fight against absolutism in this form is, for Tillich, an application of the Protestant Principle, by which he means that prophetic form of criticism directed against the demonization of the holy. He notes that the struggle of the religious socialist failed to prevent the demonization of socialism and the elevation of a social concern to unlimited ultimacy in Communism.<sup>29</sup> But this does not prevent Tillich from maintaining that the fight against the danger of demonization and the acceptance of wrong absolutism should continue in order to stop the increasing secularization and emptying of the cultural life.<sup>30</sup>

The third quasi-religion, liberal humanism, is the one to which Tillich is greatly attracted. For him it finds political expression in the American constitution, and

philosophical expression in the works of William James and A. N. Whitehead. He defines liberal in this context as "autonomous thought and action", but humanism for him always carries a religious connotation.<sup>31</sup> This means that for Tillich theonomy is constantly present in the liberal humanistic tradition. He is realistic enough to acknowledge that individuals tend to be involved in quasi-religions of one form or another, and he maintains that their task as individuals is to prevent the demonization and secularization of quasi-religions in order that they might continue to be real expressions of ultimate concern.<sup>32</sup>

Tillich sees liberal humanism together with its democratic expressions as "fragile forms of life, rare in history, and easily undermined from within and destroyed from without".<sup>33</sup> He realizes that when it defends itself against the threat of absolutism it preserves its religious content, but he maintains that any fight against Communism or Fascism would result in its demonization. This would occur because in the process of defending itself, liberal humanism would undergo a change of nature and become similar in character to the less fragile forms of quasi-religions.<sup>34</sup> Tillich refers to the demonization of liberal humanism as scientism, which he envisages as depriving all creative activity in the field of religion and the arts of its autonomous character.<sup>35</sup>

There is a similarity between liberal humanism and

Protestantism in Tillich's view. They are both fragile in the sense that they are both to an extent autonomous involving personal decisions on the part of the individual. Both suffer from the same disadvantages. When liberal humanism defends itself against radicalism it becomes demonized in the process. When Protestantism defends itself against absolutism it sacrifices a great deal of its spirituality in the struggle by having to accept authoritarian elements. Tillich's conclusion is that because of their fragility liberal humanism and Protestantism cannot be expected to endure for long.<sup>36</sup>

We have shown hitherto in this chapter that the religious significance of the secular in Tillich's thought is derived from his view of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern", since he believes that ultimate concern is not confined to religions as such but also finds expression in secular events. We have indicated that the quasi-religions rooted in secularism are an attempt, through new symbols, to offer an interpretation of the meaning of life that has been lost in the general indifference of a secularized culture. From this we can see why, for Tillich, no study of the history of religions can be complete without taking into consideration the significant religious contribution of the secular, and without recognizing the inter-relatedness of the sacred and the secular. It is Tillich's

claim that the encounter of religions with the quasi-religions is the main characteristic and common problem of the present encounter of world religions, and the dynamic element in their relation with one another. "Even the mutual relation of the religions proper", he maintains, "are decisively influenced by the encounter of each of them with secularism, and one or more of the quasi-religions which are based upon secularism."<sup>37</sup>

Tillich's visit to Japan and his discussions with the Christian missionaries there convinced him that the main problem facing Japan was the tremendous amount of religious indifference that prevailed in the country. It had been produced by the growth of secularism and the spread of technology.<sup>38</sup> The same problem existed in China and it had characterized the European scene during the second half of the nineteenth century. In Tillich's view neither Christianity nor the religions of China were prepared for the threat of technology nor had they been able to cope with it.<sup>39</sup>

#### The Encounter of Religions with Quasi-Religions

Tillich maintains that an analogy of structure exists between Communism and Islam in the sense that both are rooted in Old Testament prophecy and Jewish legalism. They are both critical of static sacramentalism which savours of



superstition and lacks any kind of social application. Both tend to disregard the significance of the individual, stressing rather the importance of identification with the collective ideal. In both also there is to be found a dynamic type of ultimate concern which includes the spirit of utopianism and a vision of a future ideal. The main difference between them, according to Tillich, lies in the fact that the Islamic hope is transcendent and the Communist hope immanent, but he recognizes that the difference is "much smaller from the psychological than from the theological point of view".<sup>40</sup>

This analogy between Islam and Communism indicates for Tillich the reason why Islam successfully resists Communism. The stability of the social structure within the legal organisation of Islam makes it impregnable to the Communist ideology. The same reason, Tillich claims, could be advanced for its resistance to Christianity also, but like all other religions Islam is completely exposed to the influence of secularism through science and technology, and to the influence of nationalism.<sup>41</sup> Tillich believes that Islam's immunity to Communist influence is shared also by Judaism and Christianity. The reason for this is that they are all, and especially prophetic Judaism, "the ultimate source of the revolutionary movements of the West, out of which Communism finally developed".<sup>42</sup> These three religions that originated in Israel have as a basic element in their

structure a deep desire for justice that neither secularism nor nationalistic aspirations can remove. As long as they preserve this basic desire for justice they will, according to Tillich, continue to resist Communism, the corrupted product of the prophetic tradition.<sup>43</sup>

Tillich does not envisage success for Communism in its encounter with the primitive religions of Africa. One of the reasons he gives for this is the deep-seated anxiety of the common people as they face the possibility of the loss of the feeling of security that their religious practices give them. This sense of insecurity, in Tillich's view, would marshal them in defence of their sacramental traditions. Although he recognizes that poverty might work on behalf of Communism in Africa he claims that another obstacle to the success of this quasi-religion in its encounter with the primitive religions is the influence of nationalism. Of the world religions the one most likely to succeed in its encounter with the primitive religions of Africa is Islam. Its primary advantage according to Tillich is "a simplified law and a simplified myth without racial discrimination".<sup>44</sup> The Christian concepts of sin and grace, and the mysticism of Hinduism and Buddhism are, in comparison unlikely to have any appeal for a practical and vital people, "whose collective past keeps them from the personal problems of sin and grace which are central in Christianity".<sup>45</sup>

The situation in India and South East Asia where the Hindu and Buddhist traditions predominate is, according to Tillich, one of opportunity for the quasi-religion of Communism. The main reason for that is the fact that while the religious traditions provide no motivation for the transformation of society, this quasi-religion offers the hope of a classless society.<sup>46</sup>

Of the three quasi-religions referred to the smallest role, in Tillich's view, is played by liberal humanism. From his personal experiences in Japan Tillich believes that its influence there, together with that of Protestantism, has been significant although not measurable in numerical term. Neither Shintoism nor Buddhism in his view are able to supply the spiritual resources the country requires to preserve the democratic form of government that found acceptance there in the post war period. Although demonized forms of nationalism and socialism can conceivably replace democracy, Tillich believes that the people's dislike of Fascism and Communism and the strong sense of individualism that exists throughout the country makes such an eventuality extremely unlikely. Tillich's hope is that liberal humanism might ultimately prove successful.<sup>47</sup>

Tillich distinguishes between Protestantism and Catholicism when he describes the encounter of Christianity with the quasi-religions. He sees Protestantism as more

positive than Catholicism in its attitude to the religious significance of the secular dimension and to the quasi-religions based on secularism. He attributes this to the prophetic nature of the Protestant Principle which enables this form of Christianity to see how both the secular and the sacred can point to the ultimate. Tillich maintains that from the standpoint of Protestantism both the secular and the sacred have equal claims to grace and are "infinitely distant from and infinitely near to the Divine".<sup>48</sup> But this attitude to the secular makes Protestantism more vulnerable to the influence of the quasi-religions than Catholicism which rejects the three types of quasi-religions and refuses to recognize their religious significance. Tillich observes that the attitude of Protestantism to the quasi-religions is sometimes ambiguous. As an example of this he refers to Luther's use of the nationalist protest against Rome to support the Reformation, and the similar use of nationalism against Rome in England. But when nationalism is demonized in the form of Fascism, Tillich recognizes that although the Protestant majority reject it some Protestant groups identify themselves with it.<sup>49</sup>

The Protestant attitude to socialism and the principles of social justice is in Tillich's view less positive than that of Catholicism because "its negative judgment about the human predicament made it conservative and autho-

ritarian".<sup>50</sup> But he notes that Protestantism did attempt to apply the religious elements of socialism in such movements as Christian Socialism and the Social Gospel. He recognizes too that the Protestant opposition to the demonization of socialism was as uncompromising as that of Catholicism, although it did show a desire to understand and not merely to reject the Communist ideology which captivated the imagination of such a large proportion of the world's population.<sup>51</sup>

Protestantism's encounter with liberal humanism, according to Tillich, was such as to produce on many occasions a complete amalgamation of both as the many forms of liberal Protestantism indicated.<sup>52</sup> The Catholic attitude to this quasi-religion on the other hand, although generally speaking negative as we have shown, tended to be more complex because of the difficulty of depriving liberal humanism of all its religious significance.<sup>53</sup>

Tillich conceives the readiness of Christianity, particularly in its Protestant form, to recognize the significance of the quasi-religions and to engage in dialogue with them, as an indication of its strength rather than its weakness.<sup>54</sup> It reflects the belief in universal revelation which has characterized Christianity throughout the greater part of its history, but as far as Protestantism is concerned it indicates also a logical working out of the prophetic principle.

As we have indicated,<sup>55</sup> Tillich believes that the encounter of religions with one another is profoundly affected by their mutual encounter with the quasi-religions based on secularism. They are united in a common bond because of their sense of insecurity in the face of the growth of secularist influence. So in Tillich's view, any thought of winning converts from one religion to another is unimportant and irrelevant in comparison with the difficult situation in which all religions find themselves as a result of the powerful impact of secularism.<sup>56</sup> This Tillich considers to be one of the positive contributions of the secularist attack on world religions and "the indirect way which historical destiny takes to unite mankind religiously".<sup>57</sup> But although Tillich believes that the problem arising from the encounter of religions with quasi-religions might eventually come to the forefront of interreligious discussion, he still maintains that dialogue between religions should take place.<sup>58</sup> He maintains that such a dialogue could prove extremely valuable in view of the defensive position occupied by all religions throughout the world, and that it would mean at least that there would be no undue concentration on theological niceties.<sup>59</sup>

Tillich's approach to interreligious dialogue is from the standpoint of one who shared in the Christian vision and he applies his dynamic-typological method specifically though

not exclusively to the encounter of Christianity with Buddhism. This will be the subject of our investigation in the following chapter.

#### Note

It may be thought strange that we should deal with the religious significance of the secular before the encounter of Christianity with world religions. We offer as an explanation of this procedure the following considerations. First, Tillich considers the encounter of religions with one another to be profoundly affected by their mutual encounter with the quasi-religions based on secularism. Hence we thought it appropriate to give an account of the quasi-religions. Secondly, he sees the secular as the third and most radical form of the movement against the demonization of the sacramental. Since we referred to the other two forms of the movement against demonization, the mystical and the prophetic, in the previous chapter, we thought it appropriate to follow with an examination of the religious significance of the secular. Thirdly, he sees theonomy as an element in the structure of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit". Since we have already referred to this as the struggle against demonization within religion, we thought it appropriate to examine the implications of the struggle between autonomy and heteronomy for the creation of theonomous situations within the secular dimension.

1. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 4, 5.; Ultimate Concern, pp. 11, 12; Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 241. See above, p. 26.
2. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 242.
3. Ibid., p. 242; cf. Vol. III, pp. 262-64.
4. Ibid., pp. 245-46; cf. Vol. III, p. 108.
5. See above, pp. 41-43.
6. The Future of Religions, p. 89.
7. Ibid., p. 89.
8. The Future of Religions, p. 90; James Luther Adams, op.cit., p. 234.
9. The Future of Religions, p. 90.
10. Ultimate Concern, p. 87, p. 57, p. 38.
11. The Future of Religions, p. 90; Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 92-94; Vol. III, pp. 264-85. cf. James Luther Adams, op. cit., pp. 227-28.
12. The Future of Religions, p. 90.
13. Ibid., p. 90.
14. Ibid., p. 90.
15. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 5.
16. Ultimate Concern, p. 34.
17. Ibid., p. 32.
18. Ibid., pp. 31-33; cf. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 13.
19. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 13-14.
20. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
21. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
22. Ibid., p. 17; cf. Ultimate Concern, p. 34.



23. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 17.
24. Ibid., pp. 6, 8; ; cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 29, 54.
25. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 7.
26. Ibid., p. 7; cf. Ultimate Concern, p. 54.
27. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 6-8; cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 29, 54, 70-80.
28. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 8.
29. Ibid., pp. 8, 9; cf. Ultimate Concern, p. 30.
30. Ultimate Concern, p. 36.
31. Ibid., p. 37.
32. Ibid., pp. 37, 38.
33. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 9.
34. Ibid., pp. 9, 10.
35. Ibid., p. 10.
36. Ibid., pp. 10, 11; cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 54, 62; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 97, note 1; cf. Vol. III, p. 405 "Protestantism is less armed against secular trends on its soil than Catholicism".
37. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 5.
38. Ibid., p. 12.
39. Ibid., pp. 13, 14.
40. Ibid., p. 19.
41. Ibid., pp. 20, 21.
42. Ibid., p. 24.
43. Ibid., p. 24.

44. Ibid., p. 22.
45. Ibid., p. 22.
46. Ibid., p. 23.
47. Ibid., pp. 24, 25; cf. Ultimate Concern, p. 87.
48. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 47.
49. Ibid., pp. 49, 50.
50. Ibid., p. 50.
51. Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
52. Ibid., p. 51.
53. Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
54. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 51.
55. See above p. 80.
56. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 95.
57. Ibid., pp. 95-96.
58. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
59. Ibid., p. 63.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Encounter of Christianity with World Religions

Tillich approaches the study of the history of religions from the standpoint of an "observing participant" and not from the standpoint of an outside observer.<sup>1</sup> This means that he is existentially involved in the study as one who shares in the Christian vision and not as a collator of religious phenomena. His analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the materials supplied by the historian of religions is determined by his view of the central significance of the event of Jesus as the Christ, and by the purpose or telos he discerns in the history of religions generally.<sup>2</sup> The relation between Christianity and other world religions is consequently one that seriously concerns him, and he begins his examination of that relation by looking at the approach of Christianity to other religions from the historical standpoint. He points out that when any individual or group claims to possess the truth it means rejecting contradictory claims that might be made by other individuals or groups. So when Christianity claims to possess the truth in the event of Jesus as the Christ then it has to reject other claims to the possession of the truth which contradict or are

contrary in any way to the Christian claim since it is not possible for truth to be divided. The same holds true for claims made by other religions.<sup>3</sup>

#### Christian attitudes to non-Christian Religions

Tillich does not object to the principle of rejection but he shows that a great deal depends on the way in which rejection takes place. When the principle of rejection is applied to the relation between Christianity and other religions, Tillich observes that it is possible for Christianity to adopt one of three attitudes. In the first place it can totally reject all other religions as false. This is a complete negation of any semblance of truth in non-Christian religions, and thereby implies that no dialogue is possible between Christianity and other religions. In the second place Christianity can both accept and reject some of the assertions of other religions. Although this attitude shows a greater degree of tolerance towards other religions, Tillich does not think it is really possible to account for the complexity of religions in this way. Thirdly, it is possible for Christianity to adopt an attitude of "dialectic union of acceptance and rejection, with all the tensions, uncertainties, and changes which such dialectics implies".<sup>4</sup> This attitude of creative tension, in Tillich's view, has predominated in the history of the Christian approach to non-

Christian religions, which is contrary to the popular belief that Christianity has assumed a completely negative approach to other religions.<sup>5</sup>

Tillich shows that by accepting the principle of rejection Christianity does not adopt a radical-exclusive attitude to other religions. He points out that for Christianity, as for other religions, exclusivism is always conditioned by what he calls the principle of justice. As an illustration of this he refers to Jahweh's superiority over the pagan gods as the superiority of the god of justice. He means by this that it is Jahweh's justice and not his absoluteness that makes him superior. The same principle of justice is capable of destroying the people of the covenant when they violate the cause of justice. The implication of this, for Tillich, is that justice constitutes "a principle which transcends every particular religion and makes the exclusiveness of any particular religion conditional."<sup>6</sup>

In Tillich's view the principle of justice is confirmed by the words of Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan. There love and justice are shown not by those who represent the religious tradition, but by the despised Samaritan. The principle of justice is also confirmed by the parable of the last judgement in which Christ places on his right hand all those who have shown love and justice.<sup>7</sup>

Another early Christian principle which, according

to Tillich, preserves the character of Christianity as an all-inclusive rather than a radically-exclusive religion is the principle of the logos. This "universal principle of divine self-manifestation"<sup>8</sup> is present in all religions and cultures even although it finds historical embodiment in Jesus as the Christ. Other religions are preparations for Christianity in the sense that "their inner dynamics drives them toward questions whose answer is given in the central event on which Christianity is based".<sup>9</sup> The same principle of the logos, in Tillich's view, enables Christianity to accept the metaphysical and moral principles of Hellenism, as well as the rituals of the mystery religions and many pagan symbols.<sup>10</sup> But it does not follow that Christianity can be equated with shallow syncretism or eclecticism, because whatever Christianity receives is always measured by the ultimate criterion or norm, the event of Jesus as the Christ. So within Christianity, as Tillich shows, there always exists a polarity between the universal and the particular. It is the preservation of this polarity that enables Christianity to retain its all-inclusive character without loss of particularity.<sup>11</sup>

The all-inclusive character of Christianity, however, as Tillich shows, is not always predominant in the Christian attitude to non-Christian religions. This indicates for Tillich the dialectic nature of the encounter of Christianity

with world religions. The encounter of Christianity with Islam, which Tillich describes as having its origin in prophetic Judaism,<sup>12</sup> resulted in Christianity being forced on the defensive because of the Islamic threat to Western culture and civilization. But when Christianity is forced to defend itself, a process of narrowing down takes place which produces a closing of the ranks and results in a retreat into radical exclusivism.<sup>13</sup> Two quite irrational expressions of this radical exclusive attitude are the Crusades and anti-Semitism. The latter, in Tillich's view, was produced by the profound impact of the Islamic encounter. Christianity up to that point was tolerant of the Jews and awaited their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, but suddenly it became aware of Judaism as another religion with the result that opposition followed.<sup>14</sup>

The paradox of the encounter of Christianity with Islam for Tillich is that it produces not only radical exclusivism but also the most tolerant kind of humanism. An example of this is the work of Nicholas Cusanus, De Pace Fidei, in which he endeavoured to show the underlying unity and harmony of all the different world religions in the logos principle.<sup>15</sup> A similar spirit of toleration characterizes the work of Erasmus and Zwingli, both of whom recognized that the Holy Spirit is active in spheres other than that of the Christian Church. The humanistic spirit

then moved in the direction of relativism in the works of the leaders of the Enlightenment, who advocated that all religions should be judged by the principle of reasonableness, and who accepted Christianity only on "a universal, all-inclusive basis".<sup>16</sup> The principle of the Enlightenment determined the attitude of many Protestant theologians during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their philosophies of religion depicted Christianity as one of the world religions and on the same level as all the others.<sup>17</sup>

In the history of Christian thought, according to Tillich, the radically exclusive attitude to non-Christian religions appeared continually. It stressed the particular nature of Christianity and insisted on the uniqueness of the revelation through Christ. It regarded Christ as the only way of salvation and denounced all forms of relativism in the approach to world religions as "a negation of the absolute truth of Christianity".<sup>18</sup> The neo-orthodox school of Karl Barth exemplified this approach with its insistence that revelation be confined to the appearance of the Christ, and its rejection of the attempt to apply the concept of revelation to other religions. Yet, as Tillich points out, Barth's radical exclusivism is produced not by his encounter with world religions as such, but rather as a result of his encounter with the demonic forces of nationalism that arose in Germany. The radical self-affirmation of nationalism in



the form of Nazi-Fascism produced the radical self-affirmation of Christianity in the form of exclusivism. Tillich recognizes that Barth saved European Protestantism by narrowing down his theology to meet the attack of Fascism but he believes that Christianity paid a high price for this defence.<sup>19</sup> Exclusivism meant the rejection of theological openness and a subsequent narrowness of thought and blindness to the fruitful possibilities of the encounter with world religions.<sup>20</sup> It is Tillich's contention, as we have seen, that both radical exclusivism and humanistic relativism have to be rejected before any fruitful dialogue between Christianity and non-Christian religions can take place.

#### Dynamic-Typology and Dialogue

Tillich's brief resumé of the approach of Christianity to world religions from the historical standpoint convinces him of the need for dialogue concerning the basic principles of religion. He believes that discussion of the encounter of Christianity with non-Christian religions should be based on a typological analysis of the nature of the holy, the universal ground of all religions. He uses the dynamic-typological approach specifically for the encounter of Christianity with Buddhism, which he describes as "the greatest, strangest, and at the same time most competitive of all the religions

proper".<sup>21</sup> In contrast with the Hegelian dialectic which classified Buddhism as an early stage of man's religious development, dynamic-typology regards it as "a living religion" in which certain religious elements predominate.<sup>22</sup> These predominant elements enable Buddhism to stand over against other religions in which different religious elements predominate. The interdependence of these type-determining elements provide the dynamic character of the relation of religions to one another. Tillich recognizes that because the type-determining elements belong "to the nature of the holy and with it to the nature of man, and with it to the nature of the universe and the revelatory self-manifestation of the divine" they constitute the perennial forces which produce particular religions.<sup>23</sup> While specific religions, or historical embodiments of type-determining elements, might cease to exist, the forces that bring them into being cannot cease to be.<sup>24</sup>

Tillich shows that dialogue in accordance with the dynamic-typological method involves not only a discussion of the relation or interdependence of type-determining elements between religions but also within religions. Any discussion between representatives of Buddhism and Christianity concerning the mystical and ethical elements in both religions, and whether one should take priority over the other, means that a similar discussion has to take place within each

religion. The advantage of the dynamic-typological method for Tillich is that not only discussion, but also criticism and appraisal between religions, means that each participating religion becomes involved in the process of self-criticism and self-appraisal.<sup>25</sup> No Christian could fully understand Eastern mysticism, for example, without first experiencing the mystical element in its own structure.

A historical survey of the relation between Buddhism and Christianity showed Tillich that although they had come into contact with one another on many occasions little dialogue had taken place between them. Schopenhauer noted a similarity between his metaphysics and some of the insights of Buddhist thought, and Otto initiated a dialogue with the Indian religions. The work of the Zen Buddhists among the educated people of the West was also significant. But as Tillich points out, the effect of Christianity on Buddhism through direct missionary activity was negligible as far as the educated class was concerned. The "indirect, civilizing influence of Christianity" was far more significant, and the influence of personal dialogue was of even greater importance.<sup>26</sup> Tillich believes that the way is open for a far more fruitful dialogue between the two religions on the intellectual level concerning the meaning and purpose of life, and he maintains that this will only be possible when both sides acknowledge the significance and revelatory

character of the other's position. Furthermore, true dialogue in Tillich's view will only take place when there is deep conviction on both sides, a common ground for discussion, and a readiness on both sides to accept criticism.<sup>27</sup>

One of the basic questions for all religions, in Tillich's view, is the question of the meaning and purpose of life. He believes this to be a far more relevant starting point for interreligious dialogue than "a comparison of the contrasting concepts of God or man or history or salvation".<sup>28</sup> The answer given to the question of the meaning of life reflects the characteristics of the particular religion concerned, and Tillich refers to this as the telos-formula of religions. He indicates that for Christianity the telos-formula is "everyone and everything united in the Kingdom of God", while for Buddhism it is "everything and everyone fulfilled in the Nirvana".<sup>29</sup> The emphasis on the personal in Christianity and the impersonal in Buddhism is, for Tillich, indicative of the distinction between the two religions in their approach to reality. The Kingdom of God is "a social, political, and personalistic symbol...taken from the ruler of a realm who establishes a reign of justice and peace".<sup>30</sup> Nirvana on the other hand is "an ontological symbol...taken from the experience of finitude, separation, blindness, suffering, and, in answer to all this, the image of the blessed oneness of everything, beyond finitude and error, in

the ultimate Ground of Being".<sup>31</sup>

Yet despite the contrast between Christianity and Buddhism in their approach to reality Tillich realizes that there is a similarity between them in that both are united in evaluating existence in a negative way. The symbol of the Kingdom of God represents opposition to worldly kingdoms and the rule of power, while Nirvana represents true reality as opposed to what appears to be the real world.<sup>32</sup> But, as Tillich points out, the similarity between the two religions is not complete because of a basic difference of attitude towards the world. Christianity conceives of the world in its essence as the creation of God and basically good. Hence it is the world in its existence and not the world in its essence, the fallen world and not the created world, which is opposed by the symbol of the Kingdom of God. Christianity then, is not wholly negative in its approach to the question of the meaning of existence, whereas for Buddhism the very existence of the world presupposes "an ontological Fall into finitude".<sup>33</sup> Tillich notes that other differences follow from this. In Christianity the ultimate is personal; in Buddhism the ultimate is beyond the personal, the "absolute non-being". In Christianity man is a responsible creature who precipitates the Fall by his sinful actions; in Buddhism man is "a finite creature bound to the wheel of life with self-affirmation, blindness, and suffering".<sup>34</sup>

These differences between Christianity and Buddhism on the basic questions concerning God, man and the world do not prevent Tillich from insisting on the possibility of a dialogue between them. He claims that the nature of the holy, the universal ground of all religions, requires the interdependence of type-determining elements both within and between religions. The predominant elements in one religion have to be included in another religion. The predominant element in those forms of Christianity where the Kingdom of God symbol is pre-eminent is the prophetic element of "ought to be". It is discernable in "the synoptic type of early Christianity, in Calvinism, and in the social type of liberal Protestantism".<sup>35</sup> But this does not mean that Christianity is devoid of the other two elements in the nature of the holy. The sacramental and mystical elements are also present even in those forms of Christianity where the prophetic element predominates. Because of this Christianity is able to entertain views of God and man which are similar to Buddhist concepts. The Christian description of God as Being, for example, refers to the unconditional nature of God and implies that nothing finite can possibly fully represent the infinite and universal. As an abstract, transpersonal concept, Being also makes it easier for the Christian to understand the Buddhist notion of absolute nothingness.<sup>36</sup> The predominant element in Buddhism with

its symbol of Nirvana is the mystical element, but this does not mean that the sacramental and prophetic elements are absent. Because of this Buddhism is able to entertain concepts of God similar to that of Christianity. Mahayana Buddhism, for example, envisages the Spirit of Buddha as assuming a personal character, which makes it easier for that form of Buddhism to understand the personal God of Christianity.<sup>37</sup> It does not follow from this, however, that the distinguishing factors in the Christian and Buddhist conceptions of God can be overlooked or that a common concept of God can be introduced.<sup>38</sup>

On the basis of his analysis of the interdependent type-determining elements in the nature of the holy Tillich rejects also the notion that the Christian symbol of the Kingdom of God and the Buddhist symbol of Nirvana are mutually exclusive. He recognizes that in fact there exists an affinity between the idea of Nirvana "as the state of transtemporal blessedness" and the Kingdom of God as "the symbol of Eternal Life" or as "the eternal intuition and fruition of God".<sup>39</sup> But the existence of an affinity between the two concepts does not imply that the distinction between them can be ignored, or that they can both be united in a common concept.

The dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism from the standpoint of a typological analysis of the nature of the

holy, when it concerns the moral consequences of man's relation to nature and to his fellow man, reveals specific differences between the two religions. Tillich notes two conflicting ontological principles in the symbols of the Kingdom of God and Nirvana. The one is expressed by the term "participation" and the other by the term "identity". As Tillich points out, "One participates, as an individual being, in the Kingdom of God. One is identical with everything that is in Nirvana".<sup>40</sup> The implications of these ontological principles for man's relation to nature are, in Tillich's view, profound. On the basis of the principle of participation for example, it is possible for man to justify controlling nature and using it for his own ends. The technological control of nature in the Western world can be interpreted as the fulfilment of God's command to Adam to rule over the creatures of the earth, and as a perfect application of the principle of participation.<sup>41</sup> On the basis of the principle of identity on the other hand, no subjection of nature can take place since man identifies himself with the processes of nature. Such identification finds artistic expression in those countries where Buddhist influence predominates, but a similar type of identification exists in Hinduism. There it finds expression in prohibition of the killing of animals, which is related to the belief that in order to fulfil his karma a man might be reincarnated in animal form.<sup>42</sup>



This difference of approach to nature on the part of Christianity and Buddhism does not mean, according to Tillich, that the two religions are diametrically opposed to one another on this question. In its mystical approach to nature Christianity can show an attitude which is almost indistinguishable from identity. St. Francis of Assisi exemplified this as did Protestant mysticism and German Romanticism. Buddhism also displayed a tendency to participation as it spread out from India; but, as Tillich shows, it is the principle of identity that predominates in Buddhism and this is significantly expressed in the belief that every rock garden is "in a kind of mystical omnipresence".<sup>43</sup>

Tillich recognizes the significance of the Buddhist principle of identity for man's relation to his fellow man. The characteristic of the principle of identity is compassion which implies the ability to suffer with others. Tillich sees this as an active form of loving which can be compared with the Christian concept of agape. But there is a difference between agape and compassion. Agape, as understood in the Christian context, accepts the unacceptable and attempts to change or transform both man and society thereby exemplifying the principle of participation. Compassion shows no impetus to transform man directly or to change him indirectly by effecting a transformation in his social environment. Tillich concludes from this that even the most profound

expression of compassion in Buddhism cannot be compared with agape because it lacks the power to accept the unacceptable and to change man and his society. As Tillich puts it:

It differs in that it lacks the double characteristic of agape-the acceptance of the unacceptable, or the movement from the highest to the lowest, and, at the same time, the will to transform individual as well as social structures.<sup>44</sup>

Tillich is also aware of the significance of agape in man's relation to himself. He sees it as the foundation on which a man should endeavour to build his life. When man experiences a sense of alienation from his fellows, it is, in Tillich's view, an expression of his sense of alienation from himself. This in turn produces a feeling of self-contempt which separates man from the very ground of his being. The sense of meaninglessness and emptiness, and the feeling of doubt and cynicism which follows, indicates the depth and extent of man's estrangement from the ground of being and expresses his deep anxiety. For Tillich, the answer to the problem of man's anxiety, and his sense of alienation from himself and from the ground of being, is to be found in love. When it comes to him in the form of grace it gives him the assurance that he is accepted, and consequently enables him to experience the sense of being integrated with himself and reunited with others.<sup>45</sup> It is the ability of love to transform man's character in this way that, in Tillich's view, distinguishes it from the Buddhist concept of compassion.

The dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism on the basis of the interdependent type-determining elements in the nature of the holy, is continued by Tillich in connection with the problem of history. He shows that for the type of Christianity with the Kingdom of God symbol, history is not only the dimension in which man works out his own destiny but also "a movement in which the new is created and which runs ahead to the absolutely new, symbolized as 'the new heaven and the new earth'".<sup>46</sup> That is, history constitutes a movement or process which has as its goal the creation of a new society. According to Tillich, this means that the Kingdom of God is a revolutionary symbol in the sense that it represents a type of Christianity which aims at changing society in the most radical possible way. This revolutionary spirit in Christianity has never been quenched by any kind of conservative reaction, and, in Tillich's view, it is the unrecognized source of such Western revolutionary movements as liberalism, socialism and democracy.<sup>47</sup>

Buddhism with its symbol of Nirvana represents the mystical non-historical interpretation of history. As Tillich shows, it sees no meaning in historical existence as such and proposes an attitude of detachment to the world. No attempt is made by Buddhism to transform history in any way so that justice might prevail for the benefit of humanity as a whole.<sup>48</sup> It advocates meeting the ambiguities of life by transcending

them and living "as someone who has already returned to the Ultimate One."<sup>49</sup> The fundamental approach to history in Buddhism is to show how to escape from it rather than how to transform it. The principle of Nirvana, as Tillich perceives, shows "no belief in the new in history, no impulse for transforming society".<sup>50</sup> Even the new interest in social affairs displayed by contemporary Buddhists is determined by compassion rather than by love.<sup>51</sup>

As Tillich envisages it the Buddhist emphasis in the approach to history is on the vertical rather than the horizontal. Yet he does not believe that no further dialogue is possible because of this. He insists that although the revolutionary character of the symbol of the Kingdom of God is quite apparent when applied to the historical process, the horizontal emphasis in Christianity is always balanced by the vertical. Occasionally the vertical emphasis predominates to such a degree, as for example in Catholic sacramentalism and Lutheran conservatism, that it comes near to an indifference to history.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, although the principle of Nirvana with its emphasis on escape from history shows a predisposition to ignore the horizontal, in fact historical developments forced Buddhism to adopt a more positive attitude to history. Japan's acceptance of democracy, for example, compelled Buddhist leaders to seek the spiritual foundations of that form of government. They found

it in the Christian belief that every individual is of infinite value in the sight of God.<sup>53</sup>

The non-historical interpretation of history which characterizes Buddhism is to be found also in Vedanta Hinduism and Taoism. According to Tillich these religions see no meaning in historical existence as such and try to transcend history while still living within it.<sup>54</sup> They make no attempt to transform history in order that humanity might benefit from the introduction of just laws. Hinduism like Buddhism stresses escape from history and envisages entry into the one-ness of Brahman-Atman as the ultimate goal of blessedness.<sup>55</sup> Tillich believes that the type of dialogue he initiated with Buddhism should continue in connection with Hinduism and Taoism.

It is Tillich's conviction that a similar type of dialogue should take place between Christianity and Judaism. He feels like many Christians that to try to convert the Jews is a most questionable thing.<sup>56</sup> He shows that a kind of dialogue has been going on between Christianity and Judaism since the time of Jesus. James, and to a lesser degree Peter, had both tried to make Christianity a Jewish sect, but Paul had broken the bonds that tied it to Judaism and enabled it to become a world religion.<sup>57</sup> For Tillich the concept of God in Judaism does not constitute a problem for the purposes of dialogue since Amos liberated Yahweh from being a

nationalistic God and elevated him to a position of transcendence above the history of Israel.<sup>58</sup> The main problem for Jewish-Christian dialogue, according to Tillich, is whether or not the Messiah has come in the person of Jesus. The Jewish argument is that since there is no appreciable difference in the condition of the world it is reasonable to assume that we still have to await the advent of the Messiah. That is, the Jewish expectation equates the advent of the Messiah with the establishment of the principle of justice in the world. Christianity on the other hand, sees the advent of Jesus as the Christ and his death on the Cross as only a fragmentary manifestation of the principle of justice.<sup>59</sup>

The main Christian objection to Judaism, in Tillich's view, is that it binds man to the law. But Tillich recognizes that the accusation of excessive legalism cannot be applied to all Jews. Some Jews show mystical tendencies, as for example Martin Buber, who regards the law as a guide to living rather than a prohibitive force that can drive man to despair. In the same way, as Tillich shows, it is a mistake to think of Christianity as being concerned only with grace.<sup>60</sup> Catholicism can be accused of being so legalistic as to create the conditions for the Protestant Reformation. And Protestantism in turn can be censured for deteriorating into the most rigid form of moralism. In Tillich's view,

Christianity, when it deteriorates into a form of legalism, is as much in need of grace or acceptance as Judaism.<sup>61</sup>

The main difference between Christianity and Judaism, however, according to Tillich, has to do with the question of reconciliation. Although the Jews have their Day of Reconciliation it is not something that can be worked out in their daily lives in the same way as the Christian experience of reconciliation and forgiveness can be worked out in the lives of Christians. For the latter the power of reconciliation is grounded in the new reality of Jesus as the Christ and mediated not through good works but through grace in response to the plea for forgiveness.<sup>62</sup>

### Summary

We have shown that, in Tillich's view, Christianity, through the concept of the logos and the principle of justice generally assumes an all-inclusive attitude to other religions. We have indicated how Tillich applies his dynamic-typological method to the encounter of Christianity with Buddhism. We have shown how he compares the personal ontological symbol of the Kingdom of God in Christianity with the impersonal ontological symbol of Nirvana in Buddhism, in relation to the nature of reality and the meaning and purpose of man's existence in the world. We have noted how, in

Tillich's view, the symbol of the Kingdom of God can be expressed by the concept of participation, and the symbol of Nirvana expressed by the concept of identity, and how this affects man's basic attitude to nature, to his fellow man, to himself, and to the meaning of history. We have indicated how for Tillich the predominance of one type-determining element in a particular religion does not exclude the presence of other elements, and how this enables religions to understand one another better and appreciate their basic unity. We have shown that in Tillich's view the dialogue between religions, based on an examination of the inter-dependent type-determining elements in all religions, is the most fruitful kind of dialogue possible. It means in effect that when religions participating in the dialogue examine critically the predominant or characteristic elements in one another, they are at the same time submitting those elements to critical examination within their own structures. Any criticism or appraisal between religions in this kind of dialogue therefore, involves the participating religions in the process of self-criticism and self-appraisal. So for Tillich the encounter of Christianity with world religions means dialogue on the basis of a typological analysis of the universal ground of all religions. This in turn involves Christianity in self-analysis and self-criticism.



1. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p.3.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
4. Ibid., p. 30.
5. Ibid., pp. 29-31.
6. Ibid., p. 32.
7. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
8. Ibid., p. 33.
9. Ibid., p. 34. Tillich uses the terms 'preparatory' and 'preparation' when referring to other religions not in the chronological sense but in the sense that the other religions exemplify universal revelation.
10. Ibid., p. 35.
11. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
12. Ultimate Concern, p. 111.
13. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp.38, 83; cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 63-66, 189.
14. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 39.
15. Ibid., p. 40.
16. Ibid., p. 41.
17. Ibid., p. 42.
18. Ibid., p. 44.
19. Ultimate Concern, p. 63. See above pp. 22, 56-57.
20. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp.44-46; cf. The Protestant Era, p. 62; cf. The Future of Religions, p. 80.
21. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p.54. cf. A.N. Whitehead, Religion in the Making, (Ohio, 1960), pp. 42-3.
22. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 56

23. Ibid., p. 57.
24. Ibid., p. 57.
25. Ibid., pp. 57-58; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 150 ff.
26. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 59-61
27. Ibid., p. 62.
28. Ibid., p. 63.
29. Ibid., p. 64.
30. Ibid., p. 64.
31. Ibid., pp. 64-65.
32. Ibid., p. 65.
33. Ibid., p. 65.
34. Ibid., p. 66.
35. Ibid., p. 66.
36. Ibid., pp. 66-67.
37. Ibid., p. 67.
38. Ibid., p. 67.
39. Ibid., p. 68.
40. Ibid., p. 68.
41. Ibid., p. 69.
42. Ibid., p. 69.
43. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
44. Ibid., pp. 71, 72.
45. The Shaking of the Foundations, Pelican Book, (London, 1962) pp. 163-64; cf. The Courage to Be, (Nisbet, London, 1952), p. 39.

46. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,  
p. 72.
47. Ibid., p. 72.
48. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 375.
49. Ibid., p. 376.
50. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,  
p. 73.
51. Ibid., p. 73.
52. Ibid., p. 73.
53. Ibid., p. 75.
54. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 383.
55. Ultimate Concern, p. 130.
56. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,  
p. 95.
57. Ultimate Concern, p. 103.
58. Ibid., p. 106.
59. Ibid., p. 106.
60. Ibid., pp. 113-14.
61. Ibid., p. 117.
62. Ibid., p. 115: cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 153,  
where reference is made to the contrast between the  
prophetic and mystical religions in their attitudes to  
sin and forgiveness.

## CHAPTER V

### Christianity and Self-Criticism

We have shown that the effect of dialogue between religions on the basis of dynamic typology was to produce dialogue within religions. This applies equally to Christianity, which as a result of its appraisal and criticism of non-Christian religions is involved in self-appraisal and self-judgement. As Tillich tries to show, it is not possible for Christianity to engage in a critical examination of a religion in which the mystical element predominates without looking critically at the mystical element within its own structure. But the actual norm or criterion of the ability of Christianity to judge itself as a religion is, in Tillich's view, to be found in the event of Jesus as the Christ, "the decisive self-manifestation in human history of the source and aim of all being".<sup>1</sup> As we have seen,<sup>2</sup> Tillich attributes the uniqueness and universality of Jesus as the Christ to the fact that he remains in a state of constant communion with God and that he sacrifices his own particularity, and everything that he might have gained from it, for the sake of the universal.

The normative function of the final revelation in

Jesus as the Christ, however, is, in Tillich's view, correlated to the concept of universal revelation. Without the latter it would not be possible to conceive of final revelation except by depriving man of his humanity and God of his true holiness.<sup>3</sup> The event of Jesus as the Christ is final revelation in the sense that it is the criterion of all revelation, the telos of revelation for those who participate in it existentially.<sup>4</sup> But how does one participate in this event which, as Tillich shows, is also the basis of the ability of Christianity to judge itself? Participation does not result from submitting to authoritative statements concerning the event, nor does it come from the acceptance of tradition or accumulating historical information about it. It is only possible, in Tillich's view, by being "grasped by the spiritual power of this event" and thereby being able "to evaluate the witnesses, the traditions and the authorities in which the same spiritual power was and is effective."<sup>5</sup> Tillich recognizes the risk involved in such a process of participation. Since it depends on the spirit rather than the law there is always the possibility that participation might never occur. But he believes that the risk has to be taken in order that Christianity might exercise self-criticism from its own basic ground and by means of its own criterion of revelation.<sup>6</sup>

The consequence of the revelatory event of Jesus as

the Christ is the formation of a new religion. This development does not reveal the essential meaning of the Christ event which, for Tillich, is primarily the image of a personal life free from any ties with a specific religion and so full of love as to be able to take in both the secular and the religious dimensions.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless Christianity as a religion has developed by continuing the Old Testament tradition and incorporating certain elements from other religions with which it has come into contact. According to Tillich, this openness to other religious influences and ideas was characteristic of Christianity in the early period and involved it in a process of judging other religions and being judged by them. Its freedom in this respect, however, was curtailed to a great extent by the growth of hierarchical authority and the development of polemical situations. As tradition grew so it became increasingly difficult to assume a flexible attitude in religious matters. Once decisions were made in conflicting situations and statements of creeds formulated it became almost impossible for Christianity to accept judgement or to engage in self-criticism.<sup>8</sup> Tillich claims that to the extent Christianity has developed into a religion instead of retaining the essential meaning of the event of Jesus as the Christ to that extent it has failed.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the Process of being narrowed down and forced

into established positions, early Christianity, according to Tillich, was involved in judging other types of religions and being judged by them. This gave rise to self-judgement in accordance with the criterion of the event of Jesus as the Christ. As an example of this Tillich refers to the encounter of Christianity with polytheism. Following the Jewish tradition, Christianity rejects polytheism as idolatry and as "an attempt to elevate finite realities, however great and beautiful, to ultimacy in being and meaning".<sup>10</sup> The polytheistic counter charge against both Christians and Jews is that they are atheists "because they denied the divine presence in every realm of being".<sup>11</sup> Christians accept this counter criticism without ceasing to reject the polytheistic standpoint and transform it into self-judgement. They conceive of many concrete examples of God's presence in the world. They envisage the Word, and Wisdom and Glory, as hypostases of God's function, and they see in Jesus as the Christ the mediator between God and man. It is in this way, according to Tillich that the influence of polytheism affects Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

Tillich cites Christianity's encounter with Judaism as another example of criticism and counter criticism being transformed into self-criticism. Christianity has judged Judaism continually throughout the centuries but on the whole has been reluctant to accept criticism from it. Through the

forces of liberal humanism, however, Christianity receives the indirect judgement of Judaism and transforms it into self-criticism. Tillich sees the prophetic spirit of the Christian Socialist movement in Germany as a reaction against certain pagan ideas and also against the loss of the spirit of self-criticism in the churches.<sup>13</sup>

It is possible also for Christianity, in Tillich's view, to learn something from Islam's solution of the racial problem and its treatment of primitive people. The conspicuous success of Islam in these two fields of activity is sufficient enough reason for Christianity to engage in self-criticism on the basis of participation in the event of Jesus as the Christ.<sup>14</sup>

The same process of criticism and counter criticism resulting in self-judgement is discerned by Tillich in the Christian encounter with Zoroastrianism. The dualistic approach of this religion found its way into Christianity through Gnosticism and the Hellenistic distinction between spirit and matter. The concept of a cosmic battle between a God of light-Ahura Mazda, and a God of darkness-Ahriman, is rejected by Christianity because of its acceptance of the Old Testament doctrine of creation. But at the same time Christians recognize how seriously the dualistic religion of Persia regards the problem of evil. As Tillich shows Manicha<sup>e</sup>ism frees the divine from demonic influences by



attributing all demonic potentiality to the evil one. The successful influence of the dualism of Manichaeism over such a profound thinker as Augustine is, for Tillich, an indication of acceptance of the seriousness of the problem of evil.<sup>15</sup>

Christianity's encounter with mysticism has, in Tillich's view, produced the same rhythmic process of criticism, counter criticism and self-criticism. When Christianity rejects "the nonpersonal, nonsocial and non-historical attitude of the mystical religions" it is performing a necessary task of criticism. But it has to receive the counter criticism of mysticism concerning the primitive nature of its own form of personalism and recognize the need for such a concept to be expressed in a more transpersonal way. Christianity has in fact accepted the counter criticism of mysticism, transforming it into self-criticism in the process, when it acknowledges the inability of religion to exist at all without the mystical element.<sup>16</sup>

The success of Christianity for Tillich, as we have shown,<sup>17</sup> depends on the degree to which it retains the essential meaning of the event of Jesus as the Christ and resists the tendency to become a specific religion. Tillich claims that there is a constant state of tension between what he calls "Christianity as a religion and Christianity as the negation of religion".<sup>18</sup> In the struggle against itself as

a religion Christianity is fighting for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit"; it is the fight of God against religion within religion. Tillich shows that the two elements which characterize religion in the narrow sense of the term are myth and cult, so that in the struggle against itself as a religion Christianity has to fight against the influence of these two elements.<sup>19</sup> This struggle took place in Old Testament times with the prophetic attacks on the cultus and the tendency to polytheism among the people. It was present also, according to Tillich, in the way the God of Israel was demythologized and thereby prevented from being regarded as the national God of the Jews.<sup>20</sup>

A similar struggle for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" against the influence of myth and cult took place in New Testament times when Jesus ignored ritual laws in order to show love to the people. Again, as Tillich shows, Christianity's fight against itself as a religion continued when Paul rejected the ritual law completely after his conversion, and when John equated divine judgement and eternal life with the acceptance or rejection of that light which lightens every man who comes into the world.<sup>21</sup> The process of demythologizing, which for Tillich is characteristic of the struggle against the influence of myth and cult, is present in all periods in the history of Christianity. It is present in the notion of "God above God" for example,

which is implicit in the way the early Church Fathers rejected the attempt to represent God as being in any way similar to the finite gods of polytheism. Although polytheistic mythology is no longer a real issue in the struggle, there is still, as Tillich points out, the henotheistic tendency to regard God as a particular being confined to a particular group. So in that respect the struggle for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" continues to be a real one within Christianity. Tillich refers to the notion of "God above God" as the source of the courage to be; as present in every divine-human encounter; as the object of all mystical longings; and as the God who appears when the God of tradition has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt.<sup>22</sup>

In the fifth century when the mystical element was a powerful influence within Christianity Tillich perceives a continuation of the struggle for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit". The insistence of mysticism on the experience of direct encounter with the infinite and unity with the ground of being means, that all finite symbols associated with myths and cults are transcended. During the period of the Reformation also the struggle was carried on in the work of the reformers and the evangelicals. It was symbolized by the attack on monasticism and the insistence on God's presence in the secular dimension. The Enlightenment went further and got rid of mythical and religious

elements altogether leaving man with a philosophical notion of God, a feeling of embarrassment with the concept of prayer, and a view of the Church as a moral society.<sup>23</sup>

The struggle against religion in the narrow sense of the term produces, as Tillich shows, a counter struggle in favour of the notion of Christianity as a religion with myths and cults. This counter struggle is supported by the view that the revelatory experiences on which Christianity is based needs mythical and ritual elements in order to be adequately expressed. The same is true of all religions and quasi-religions because as Tillich points out, there are secular as well as religious myths. But the problem for Tillich is that he can see no way of escaping from the power of myth and ritual completely. Every attempt to demythologize religion will fail because the ecstatic nature of man's religious experiences needs myth for its complete expression. An attack on one set of myths is only possible by the use of other myths. As Tillich puts it:

You cannot escape them, however you demythologize and deritualize. They always return and you must judge them again. In the fight of God against religion the fighter for God is in the paradoxical situation that he has to use religion in order to fight religion.<sup>24</sup>

The ability of Christianity to judge itself as a result of its encounter with non-Christian religions on the basis of the criterion or norm it finds in the event of Jesus as the

Christ, has, in Tillich's view, implications for the whole question of mission. He believes that conversion in the traditional sense from one religion to another is no longer a relevant issue, and he maintains that dialogue which allows for self-criticism as well as criticism and counter criticism is the only way forward for the encounter of world religions.<sup>25</sup> The traditional method of inviting converts to a better religion shows a complete misunderstanding of the nature of Christianity, and Tillich maintains that no particular religion matters so much as the fact that the New Being has appeared and that there has been a new creation in the midst of the old creation.<sup>26</sup>

But if the method of dialogue permits a fairer evaluation of all religions, the same applies to the secular dimension. Christianity's ability to judge itself as a religion can, in Tillich's view, lead to the recognition of the value of the secular as a positive rather than a negative factor in religious history. Communism, for example, together with the other quasi-religions, can be regarded as one of the ways for bringing about a religious transformation among significant groups of people.<sup>27</sup> As we have shown,<sup>28</sup> Tillich's view of the religious significance of the secular is derived from his view of religion as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern", so Christianity's negation of itself as religion in the narrow sense means the

discovery of itself as a religion in the wider sense and the recognition of its close relationship to other expressions of ultimate concern in both the religious and secular realms.

According to Tillich inter-religious dialogue is the way ahead for theology and this includes dialogue between religions and quasi-religions. But the question arises to what end or purpose does one engage in dialogue. Does it involve the victory of one religion over all others, or the synthesis of all religions, or the end of religion as we know it? Tillich rejects all these notions. The victory of one religion, in his opinion, would make a particular religion universal; the synthesis of all religions would mean doing away with particularity all together and the dynamic power which one associates with a particular religion; the concept of the end of religion is not an idea that can be reasonably entertained because man can never ignore completely the ultimate question of the meaning and purpose of life.<sup>29</sup> What then is the purpose of dialogue? For Tillich it is to enable a particular religion to lose its particularity in the bad sense of the term and point to the universal, thereby resisting the tendency to become a specific religion. This does not mean sacrificing a particular religious tradition in order that a universal concept or an all-embracing abstraction might take its place. On the contrary, it is Tillich's claim that universality is to be

found in the depth of each particular religion. When inter-religious dialogue enables this universality to break through then a particular religion is given the spiritual freedom necessary to see the Spiritual Presence, or the New Being, or the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" "in other expressions of the ultimate meaning of man's existence".<sup>30</sup>

1. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 79.
2. See above, p. 53.
3. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 155; See above p. 55.
4. Ibid., pp. 148, 153.
5. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 80.
6. Ibid., p. 80.
7. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
8. Ibid., p. 83.
9. Ibid., p. 84. See above p. 118.
10. Ibid., p. 85.
11. Ibid., p. 85.
12. Ibid., pp. 85-86.
13. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
14. Ibid., p. 87.
15. Ibid., pp. 87-88; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 152.
16. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 88-89; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 96, where Tillich refers to the mystical as that which denotes the divine presence and as essential to the nature of religion; cf. also Vol. III, pp. 152-3.
17. See above p. 118.
18. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 81.
19. Ibid., p. 89.
20. Ibid., p. 90.
21. Ibid., p. 90.
22. Ibid., p. 91; cf. The Courage to Be, (London, 1952), pp. 176-180; cf. Ultimate Concern, pp. 2, 12, 51.



23. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 91-92. Note. Tillich may have had Augustine in mind when he referred to the powerful influence of mysticism within Christianity during the fifth century.
24. Ibid., pp. 93-94. The concept of "religionless Christianity" is worked out also in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison, (London, 1959); cf. also Daniel Jenkins, Beyond Religion, (London, 1962), Chapter III; John A.T. Robinson, Honest to God, (London, 1963), Chapter II; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 151.
25. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 95.
26. Paul Tillich, The New Being, (London, 1956), pp. 17, 18.
27. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 95-96.
28. See above p. 70.
29. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 96.
30. Ibid., p. 97; cf. The Future of Religions, p. 9.

## CHAPTER VI

### Summary and Conclusion

We have tried to show that Tillich's view of the centrality of the study of the history of religions for present day theological investigation is, on the one hand, the natural result of the effect of those formative influences on his life which were later stimulated and strengthened by personal contact with the Shinto and Buddhist religious traditions, and on the other hand, the development of his fundamental conception of religion as the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern.

We have indicated that this view of religion prompts Tillich to reject both the exclusive attitude of orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy and the reductionist attitude of secular or humanistic theology. Both attitudes make it impossible to undertake a serious study of the history of religions because the former denies the possibility of universal revelation and the latter equates revelation with culture and the sacred with the secular. Tillich's view of religion as ultimate concern also enables him to propose what he considers to be the basic presuppositions and requirements for the study of the history of religions. These include the acknowledgement of universal revelation capable of being

received by man as conditioned by his environment and in his state of estrangement; the recognition of the religious significance of the secular dimension; the possibility of a single particular revelatory event having universal significance; the need to preserve a balance between the notion of universal and final revelation; and the value of the history of religion method with its emphasis on the particular as that which possesses universal significance and validity.

We have indicated that Tillich's approach to the history of religions, determined as it is by his view of religion as ultimate concern, proceeds from an analysis of the basic, universal ground of all religions, namely, the nature of the holy. We have shown that for Tillich the interdependence of the type-determining elements of sacramental, mystical and prophetic, in the nature of the holy, are essential for the existence of every religion, but that when one element predominates, a particular type of religion is produced. While the sacramental element is basic to all religions, the mystical element functions as a criticism of the demonization of the sacramental in the form of the particularization or the objectification of the holy or the ultimate, and the prophetic element constitutes a critical movement against any denial of justice or love in the name of holiness.

We have pointed out that in Tillich's view, the inner

aim or telos of all religions is to produce the unity or harmony these type-determining elements in the holy. When this occurs then the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" is actualized. We have shown that the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" cannot be equated with any particular religion, although it is possible for it to be expressed through a specific religion. It preserves all the characteristics of the mystical and prophetic struggle against the demonization of the holy or the sacramental and has appeared in fragmentary form on many occasions in the history of religions. Its highest expression for Tillich is Paul's Doctrine of the Spirit, and it is most perfectly symbolized by the Cross where the victory over demonization in all its forms is complete. For Christians this is the criterion of all actualizations of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit." In the event of Jesus as the Christ we have the centre of history, the criterion of revelation. Such a claim is justified because of his uninterrupted and continuous communion with God and because of his complete denial and sacrifice of himself to the infinite and his perfect witness to the ground of his being and his transparency to the divine mystery.

We have shown that in Tillich's view the finality and uniqueness of Jesus as the Christ is not exclusive. He is unique in the sense that he is the norm of all revelation and not in the sense that no other revelation occurs apart

from him. In fact universal revelation is a necessary concept if we are to avoid dehumanizing man by making him incapable of receiving revelation and debasing God by conceiving of him as having no relationship with man at any time other than through the event of Jesus as the Christ. This correlation of universal and final revelation is clearly expressed in Christian thought in the notion of the universal logos which was embodied in the concrete logos of the person of Jesus as the Christ. It is expressed also in a different form in relation to the Spiritual Presence and the New Being, which, although universally present in the religious history of mankind, finds its normativeness in the Christ event.

We have indicated that another approach Tillich makes to the history of religions is from the standpoint of an analysis of the type-determining elements of concreteness and ultimacy in the idea of God, the predominant religious name for ultimate concern. The predominance of one or other of these elements produces particular types of religion but the inner aim of religions is to unite them. For Christians this is effected by the event of Jesus as the Christ in whom ultimacy attains concreteness without the nature of ultimacy being undermined.

We have shown that ultimate concern for Tillich is not confined to the religious realm but finds expression also

in the secular sphere. Consequently his approach to the study of the history of religions has to take into consideration the religious significance of the secular. He sees the secular as a radical form of the critical movement against the demonization of the holy. Since it represents the rational world it can judge that form of demonization of the holy which takes place when certain ecstatic activities tend to become irrational and consequently to deny the claims of truth, justice, goodness, beauty. But the secular fails to avoid the danger of losing contact with the divine and the subsequent growth of autonomy. In the struggle between autonomy and heteronomy, or self-actualization and the consecration of life, victory for theonomy means that the rational world of truth, beauty, goodness and justice points beyond itself to the ultimate. This constitutes a victory in the struggle against demonization, and is an element in the structure of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit." Victory for autonomy on the other hand produces emptiness and indifference. But since indifference to the meaning of life can only be a temporary phase, this in turn leads to the creation of new symbols and the growth of the quasi-religions of Nationalism, Socialism and Humanism. Nationalism for Tillich, as we have indicated, is a real expression of Ultimate concern to the degree that it retains its religious content by preserving its vocational

element over against the element of self-assertion, and thereby continues to represent an ultimate principle. When it fails to do this and the self-assertive element predominates, demonization takes place which results in Fascism. In the same way Socialism and Humanism when they fail to retain their religious content, are radicalized into Communism and Scientism and finite ideologies become matters of ultimate concern.

We have indicated that for Tillich the main problem confronting religions throughout the world is their encounter with the quasi-religions based on secularism. We have referred to the encounter between Communism and the religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and we have shown how these religions resisted Communism to the degree that they retained their basic desire for justice. We noted also Tillich's account of the encounter of Communism with the primitive religions of Africa where it was less effective than with the Hindu and Buddhist traditions of South East Asia. There the situation is one of opportunity for Communism. We referred to the encounter of liberal Humanism with the Shinto and Buddhist traditions of Japan as one of possibility for liberal Humanism. We noted the distinction Tillich makes between Protestant and Catholic encounters with the quasi-religions and the readiness of Protestantism to engage in dialogue.

We noted Tillich's historical resumé of the Christian attitude to other religions, where it was shown that Christianity, by means of the principle of justice and the idea of the logos, adopts on the whole an all-inclusive rather than a radically exclusive attitude to other religions, and we indicated how Tillich engages in a dialogue with Buddhism on the basis of the dynamic-typological analysis of the nature of the holy. The dialogue between religions in accordance with this method involves also a dialogue within the structure of each participating religion, since type-determining elements are characteristic of all religions. We showed how Tillich takes as the starting point of dialogue the telos of existence, or the meaning of life, as interpreted by each religion, maintaining that it is more relevant than a general comparison of such concepts as God or man. The personal ontological symbol of the Kingdom of God in Christianity is compared with the impersonal ontological symbol of Nirvana in Buddhism in order to bring out the similarities and differences between the two religions in their approach to the nature of reality and the meaning of existence in the world. We indicated that for Tillich the predominance of the prophetic element in Christianity does not exclude the mystical and sacramental elements, which makes it easier for Christianity to understand the Buddhist concepts. Similarly we showed that the predominance of the mystical in Buddhism



does not exclude the sacramental and the prophetic which enables Buddhism to understand Christian concepts better. The notion of the interdependence of type-determining elements in the nature of the holy makes it easier for religions to understand one another and appreciate their basic unity, but it does not take away their distinguishing factors or remove the differences between them.

We have shown how for Tillich the symbol of the Kingdom of God can be expressed by the concept of participation and the symbol of Nirvana expressed by the concept of identity and we have indicated how this affects man's basic attitude to nature, to his fellow man, to himself, and to history. But the basic differences of approach in the two religions does not mean that Christianity shows no tendency to identity or Buddhism to participation.

We have indicated, by noting Tillich's brief references to the Christian encounter with Hinduism and Taoism concerning the nature of history, and the encounter with Judaism on the question of the Messiah, law and grace, and reconciliation, the fruitful possibilities of interreligious dialogue of this kind.

We have pointed out that according to Tillich dialogue between religions in accordance with the method of dynamic-typology involves each participating religion also in an internal dialogue and a process of self-analysis and self-

appraisal. Self-analysis or self-criticism for Christianity is possible not because of any norm encountered in any other religions but on the basis of participation in the norm or criterion of revelation, namely the event of Jesus the Christ. In its essence this event is the image of a personal life free from a particular religion and capable of embracing both the religious and secular realms. The historical development of Christianity as a religion involved it, during its periods of openness in the process of judging other religions and being judged by them. This in turn resulted in self-criticism on the basis of existential participation in the norm or criterion of Jesus as the Christ. But the success of Christianity for Tillich depends on the degree to which it resists the tendency to become a specific religion and fights against the elements of myth and cult which produce religion in the narrow sense of the term. This struggle to retain the essential meaning of the Christ event has characterized the whole history of Christianity. It is the struggle for the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit," for God against religion, and for Christianity as the negation of religion. It produces the counter struggle for Christianity as a specific religion on the grounds that revelatory experiences need to be expressed in form of myth and cult. This means that the fight for God against religion is an unending continuous task.

We have shown that Tillich sees dialogue on the basis of dynamic typology as the way ahead for theology in that it allows for a fairer evaluation of all religions and an acknowledgement of the value of the quasi-religions. It means the rejection of the old notion of mission and the idea conversion from one religion to another. The purpose of dialogue of this kind is not the victory of one religion over all others, nor the synthesis of all religions, nor the end of religion as we know it. Its main purpose is to enable a particular religion to lose its particularity and point to the universal. Its aim is to enable a particular religion to become the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" with the spiritual freedom that is necessary to see different fragmentary manifestations of the Spiritual Presence or the New Being in other expressions of man's ultimate concern.

### Evaluation

In stressing the need for greater interpenetration between systematic theology and the study of religion, Tillich recognizes that it is no longer possible for the Christian theologian today to proclaim his message effectively in isolation from the spiritual insights of other religions. His emphasis on the significance and importance of the manifestations of what he calls the New Being, the Spiritual Presence, and "the Religion of the

Concrete Spirit" in other religions for the future development of Christian theological investigation, is I believe, correct and sound. It is difficult to fault the argument that in the context of a planetary culture, the theologian who confines himself to the small island of his own tradition and refuses to recognize the significance of the insights of other religions or to engage in dialogue with them, is in danger of remaining provincial and missing a world historical occasion. I believe Tillich advocates successfully that the study of the history of religions should be given a central place in Christian theological investigations, and that the future of theology lies in this direction.<sup>1</sup>

If Tillich takes seriously the religious plurality of man, he also recognizes the significance of man's secularity. His attitude to the secular is refreshingly positive and stands in contrast to the more negative type of approach which has characterized systematic theology. His refusal to posit a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, while recognizing at the same time that the sacred cannot be equated with the secular, is, I believe, a realistic appraisal of man's total situation. His view of religion as the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern leads him inevitably to a recognition of the religious significance of the secular and to a realization

of the importance of the quasi-religions. But his insistence that the dialogue between religions should include dialogue with the quasi-religions is a significant contribution to man's religious understanding.<sup>2</sup>

The type of approach to the history of religions Tillich proposes, which is based on his analysis of the type-determining elements of the nature of the holy, recognizes the basic unity of all religions because of the interdependence and interrelatedness of these elements. This is not to say that Tillich does not benefit from other approaches to the study of the history of religions. He recognizes the value of the phenomenological approach, for example, or religionswissenschaft,<sup>3</sup> when he insists that a religion should be studied in the context of its own environment, and that religious symbols are only fully understood in relation to the social, political, economic and cultural milieu in which they develop. He sees that such an approach prevents the wrong interpretation of what might appear to be strange and unusual religious phenomena. But although he agrees that each religion is, in this respect, a complete entity and should be studied sui generis, he does not agree that no dialogue is possible between them, nor any room for judgement and evaluation. Such a notion would be contrary to his thesis concerning the interdependence of the type-determining elements of the nature of

the holy, and the normative character of the revelation in Jesus as the Christ.

An approach to religions that Tillich rejects is missionswissenschaft, the approach that sees the purpose of dialogue as conversion from one religion to another in accordance with certain theological presuppositions. He rejects also the superficial approach to religions which sees value in every religious tradition apart from one's own, together with the type of approach that aims at the complete synthesis of all particular religions into one universal, all-embracing, whole. The value of Tillich's own dynamic-typological approach to the history of religions, I believe, is, that while it clearly shows the basic unity of all religions, it does not underestimate, or attempt to detract from, the significance and importance of particular religions. It recognizes that every religion has in its depth a clue to the meaning of ultimate reality, and a universality, which when liberated through dialogue, points to other manifestations of the Spiritual Presence or "Religion of the Concrete Spirit".<sup>4</sup>

A further value of Tillich's approach to the history of religions is that it shows how dialogue between religions leads to the participating religions engaging in an internal dialogue within their own structures. So Christian judgement of other religions involves Christianity itself

as a religion in a process of selfappraisal, which is not on the basis of any norm encountered in other religions, but in accordance with the criterion of Jesus as the Christ. This meets the objection often levelled against any kind of dialogue or comparative approach to religions, that the attempt to judge one religion by the standards of another produces an attitude of superiority. Tillich's approach, however, shows the fallibility of all forms and structures of religion. It does not judge other religions by the standard of Christianity, but submits every religion, including Christianity itself, to the judgement of the normative revelation of Jesus as the Christ. By so doing it recognizes, correctly I believe, the impossibility of being as completely objective in the approach to the study of the history of religions as the purely phenomenological approach seems to require.

The correlation of universal and final revelation is fundamental to Tillich's thought, but it is problematic in so far as we are required to maintain a true concept of universal revelation together with the notion of a final revelation which is the norm of all revelations. The reference to universal revelation as preparatory revelation and to the final revelation in Jesus as the Christ as unsurpassable does not help matters. In reply to a criticism by John Macquarrie that such a correlation of preparatory

and final revelation makes it doubtful whether creative dialogue with other religions is possible.<sup>5</sup> Tillich states that what he is attempting to do is to analyze and describe concretely 'the relation of the implicit absolutism of a particular position and the pronounced relativism'. That is, he is trying to show why a particular tradition is affirmed despite relativistic assertions.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is necessary to stress, in order to show how correlation of universal and final revelation is possible, that Tillich insists on the revelation in Jesus as the Christ as final only in the sense that it is the norm of revelation, or in the sense that the concrete logos is an embodiment of the universal logos which is continually operative in the world. It does not imply the end of all revelation, neither does it lay claim to exclusiveness.

But a further question arises. What are Tillich's grounds for maintaining Jesus as the Christ to be the final, unsurpassable, normative revelation? What is his reason for regarding the norm of revelation to be "the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as our ultimate concern"?<sup>7</sup> Clearly it is derived from the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ which is all that remains of the original revelatory occurrence. But the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the norm of revelation only for those who participate in it existentially. Like every revelation it involves the



correlation of miracle and ecstasy, a giving and a receiving side, for it is this which constitutes the complete revelatory occurrence. Is Tillich then, by referring to the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as normative of all revelation, equating revelation with miracle, that is with the giving side only?

My conclusion at the close of this investigation is that Tillich has made a significant contribution to the study of the history of religions both in relation to its methodology and its centrality for present day theological investigation. There is no doubt that had he lived longer he would have developed his own systematic theology in the direction of further dialogue with the insights of other world religions. However, he succeeded in laying the foundation for further dialogue and clearly pointed the way forward for future theological enquiry.

1. The same view is developed by W. Cantwell Smith in The Faith of other Men (1963), particularly in the section on "The Christian in a Religiously Plural World," and also by G. Parrinder in Comparative Religion (1962).
2. This attitude to the secular is reflected by Arend Th. Van Leeuwen in Christianity in World History (Edinburgh, 1964), where he refers to secularization as the product of Western Christian civilization, with technology, science, democracy, socialism and nationalism as its fruits. Van Leeuwen claims that the Spirit of Christianity "incognito" is at work in the spread of modern Western civilization throughout the world. See also the works of Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York, 1965), Charles Davis, God's Grace in History (London, 1966), D. M. Mackay, (edit.) Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe and other Essays, (London, 1965).
3. A term coined by Max Muller, who pioneered the study of the history of religions with his series on Sacred Books of the East (1875ff). For him it denoted the independence of the science of the history of religions of any theological or philosophical presuppositions.
4. Similar views are expressed by Simone Weil who believes that much missionary zeal is mistaken and dangerous, and who claims that the person who calls on Osiris or Krishna or Buddha with a pure heart receives the Holy Spirit within his own tradition and not by abandoning it for another. See Letter to a Priest (London, 1953), pp. 29-33.
5. "Christianity and Other Faiths", Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 1964, Vol. XX, No. 1, p. 43.
6. "Discussion: Christianity and Other Faiths", Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 1965, Vol. XX, No. 2, pp. 177-78. For further discussion read pp. 180-89.
7. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 56.
8. This point is developed by David Kelsey in The Fabric of Tillich's Theology, (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1967).

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