CURRENT THEOLOGY

RECENT PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

There is no dearth of theological productivity in Protestant circles, either in Europe or in America. On the contrary, there is an embarrassment of riches. Every kind of theology has its exponents who offer their meditations to the general or particular public, and it is quite impossible to keep track of all movements and developments. Yet the feeling is engendered that the brilliant thinkers, the original seers, are few and far between. But could not the same be said of Catholic theology? It might be rewarding if some investigator were to delve into the reasons for the tremendous theological productivity of our time which presents us with great volume rather than much depth.

I

With this fact in mind, we must not be misled by the first chapter in Daniel Day Williams' survey whose title is "The Theological Renaissance."[1] The phenomenon to which Williams points is the strictly theological nature of the great mass of work produced. Among Protestants the speculative approach to religious problems is quite the mode. Philological disquisitions no longer dominate the scene, and even in scriptural studies the accent is on biblical theology rather than biblical criticism. At present in the field of biblical philology there is a characteristic note of sobriety and faith distinguishing it from the work done earlier in the century. Bultmann's "demythologizing" is not the same as the older constructions of the historical Jesus.[2] Bultmann insists on a faith core in the Bible which demands a new expression, but such expression is not a reconstruction of matter. In America, the strong influence of Prof. William F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University, whose scientific contributions to biblical archaeology give him a singular distinction, is noted in the contemporaneous work on the Old Testament, as the writings of G. Ernest Wright of Chicago clearly show.[3]

[1] Daniel Day Williams, *What Present-Day Theologians Are Thinking* (New York: Harper, 1952).

[2] Rudolf Bultmann, "Neues Testament und Mythologie," in *Kerygma und Mythos*, ed. H. W. Bartsch (2nd ed.; Hamburg-Volksdorf: Herbert Reich-Evangelischer Verlag, 1951), pp. 15–48.

[3] E.g., G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament against Its Environment* (Chicago: Regnery, 1950). See also the older work: *The Westminster Historical Atlas of the Bible*, ed. George Ernest Wright and Floyd Vivian Filson (London: S.C.M., 1945).

The influence of Albright makes for sobriety and balance which overcome the iconoclastic irresponsibility of former times.

The new spirit of Protestant theology, so manifold in its manifestations, has perforce produced a number of surveys. Five should be mentioned because they can be of great help for those who wish to read while they run. We have already referred to the slim volume of Daniel Day Williams, *What Present-Day Theologians Are Thinking.* In brief limits Williams indicates contemporary thought on Bible, ethics, Christ, and the Church. At greater length Claude Welch of the Yale Divinity School in *In This Name* gives us the doctrine of the Trinity in contemporary theology.[4] Arnold S. Nash has edited a symposium formed by outstanding theologians of the Protestant schools with the title, *Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century.*[5] In this work there are rapid, synthetic, and all too succinct presentations of Protestant work in the Old Testament, New Testament, ecclesiastical history, systematics, and practical theology.

Two significant syntheses of the moment are John A. Mackay's *God's Order* and Winfred E. Garrison's *A Protestant Manifesto.*[6] Both of these works are more than synthetic surveys. Detachment is not their distinctive note, for they are imbued with a stout militancy in favor of evangelicalism. They are, however, interesting books because the fervor one usually associates with fundamentalist theologians is sensibly present in these non-fundamentalist expositions, and this fervor has a decided anti-Catholic flavor. Of importance for both Catholic and Protestant students is the thesis successfully defended by Garrison that the rich diversity and seeming irreducibility of Protestant churches and Protestant theologies do not mean that there is no substantial unity in the Protestant phenomenon. Garrison makes the base of this unity the very nature of Protestantism, which for him is not a church but a movement. The movement which is Protestantism is distinguished not merely in its opposition to Catholicism, Western and Eastern, but by its positive beliefs. He clearly sees that the Bible is not exactly the first stone of the Protestant edifice, but only the second. Diversity is an unavoidable consequence of the Protestant principle, and that principle is independence of religious thought. "The Protestant tendency to independent religious thought, and especially to the exercise of the right of

[4] Claude Welch, *In This Name* (New York: Scribner's, 1952).

[5] Arnold S. Nash, ed., *Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

[6] John A. Mackay, *God's Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1953); Winifred Ernest Garrison, *A Protestant Manifesto* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952).

private judgement in interpreting the Scriptures, produced great diversity of views as to doctrine and polity."[7]

This observation of Garrison is important for Catholic theologians. That which distinguishes the Protestant is not this or that interpretation of the Scripture, not this or that conception of church-structure, but the freedom of the individual, and of the groups freely formed, to formulate the tenets of their God-scheme. So much of the ancient polemics was beside the point because this fact was misunderstood. Catholics would try to hold the Protestant to an absolute catalogue of immutable dogmas, but no Protestant by the principle of his religiosity has such a catalogue. At any given moment any given Protestant individual or group will explicitly or implicitly have a set of tenets by which the faith is defined, but such a catalogue cannot be absolute. It can change with no violence done to the basic principle by which the catalogue was framed. If it is pointed out to a Protestant that his *de facto* formulas are inconsistent or unsatisfactory, the Protestant can freely admit it without ceasing to be a Protestant. The most effective criticism of Protestant schemes has not been the criticism from outside their fellowship, but from members within the fellowship itself. The Protestant is not merely free at the beginning of his religious enterprise; he is always free in every moment of his life, and therefore change is not illogical nor is diversity a calamity. What makes the Protestant, Protestant, is his basic faith in the freedom of the individual to approach God according to his lights. By this principle he can construct a theology and a ritual thoroughly Catholic in their manifestations, but they are yet Protestant because their dynamism is free construction. By the same logic a Protestant may deny the dominating relevance of the objective Bible to any of his religious problems, and yet be a Protestant, as long as his doctrine has reference to Christ, who is known in the Bible. On principle no Protestant owes any allegiance to Luther, Zwingli, or Calvin, and these men were Protestants not because of any biblical theories they may have had but because in freedom they approached the religious question. The contemporary Protestant agrees with Luther only on that basic principle. If he agrees with him on more points, that is accidental. It is disconcerting to read some of the attacks on Protestantism made by Latin Catholic theologians. They always suppose that a Protestant dogma is derived from Luther and is in Luther's works. They always suppose that the modern Protestant must in logic accept any position taken by the sixteenth-century Reformers. Such suppositions are gratuitous and erroneous. Our present-day Protestants are blithely indifferent to the theology of the Reformers, even though they admire them enthusiastically

[7] *Op. cit.*, pp. 14–15.

not for what they thought but for their courage in living up to the Protestant principle, which obviously has its value independently of the speculations of some rebellious Catholics in the Baroque period.

Dr. Mackay's book is a stirring exposition of an evangelical Protestantism which is not fundamentalist. The work is more an exposition of the faith which Dr. Mackay has than an explanation of Protestantism itself. There is, however, one passage that Catholics should know.

> The Bible cannot be appreciated or understood by people who approach it with an air, and in the spirit, of pure objectivity. The person who comes to the Bible merely to look at it, to examine its truths with a cold scrutiny, bringing to bear upon his study all the apparatus of research and the encyclopedic knowledge of human documents, but without personal commitment to the God whom the Bible reveals, will utterly fail to understand or appreciate the Book. The reason is obvious. After the Biblical text and thought therein enshrined have been most carefully explored from the viewpoint of language and historical background, after the life and ideas of the Biblical personalities have been studied, the main import of the Bible's significance and message remains untouched.... If the unique self-disclosure of God and His will are to make any sense, if they are to make a true impression upon the student of the Biblical records, "eyes of faith" are needed....
>
> But then what becomes of "scientific objectivity"?... The answer is that in that kind of approach to truth in which the very existence of the inquirer is at stake no such objectivity can exist.... Vital choices and decisions are made not upon objective, but upon very subjective grounds.[8]

Mackay speaks a more "existentialist" language than Garrison, but the two are in basic agreement. The Protestant reads the Scripture in freedom, and with all the risks of freedom he commits himself on subjective grounds. Neither the canons of scientific method nor the teaching of an ecclesiastical authority are decisive factors in his decision. He need not contemn either science or tradition, but this lack of contempt does not impair his individual personal freedom. One conclusion from this principle is that, though a dialogue is possible between Catholic and Protestant, a debate seeking for conclusion on objective grounds is utterly impossible.

II

Three excellent descriptive handbooks must be mentioned. The first is Frank S. Mead's *Handbook of Denominations*.[9] For the professor of religion in

[8] *Op. cit.*, pp. 4, 6.

[9] Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951).

colleges and for the Catholic theologian who often needs a brief but not detailed description and definition of some one of the many churches that exist in the United States, this book will be genuinely valuable. Mead with great care and much labor has gathered together the more essential notes proper to each church. He has admirably achieved succinct accuracy and high objectivity. This book should be near to hand for any student of religion on the American scene. Along with the earlier *The Small Sects in America* by Elmer T. Clark,[10] Mead's compilation presents students with a complete miniature encyclopedia of America's religions.

A more leisurely conspectus of American religions without Mead's preoccupation for extreme brevity and completeness is J. Paul Williams' *What Americans Believe and How They Worship*.[11] The major churches and also the more conspicuous of the smaller sects are portrayed in the light of their history, actual constitution, theology, and cult. Needless to say, the studies do not pretend to be exhaustive, but where a superficial glimpse is desired, this book will meet most needs.

The third descriptive work is Herbert Wallace Schneider's *Religion in Twentieth Century America*.[12] This volume belongs to the Library of Congress series in American civilization under the editorship of Ralph Henry Gabriel. The work is not a consideration of the churches individually, but rather a survey of the religious activity characteristic of our twentieth century. To boil down the religious manifestations of the United States during fifty years into the space of two hundred and forty-four pages means that details and analysis have been omitted. However, the salient facts of the life of the churches have been recorded in a synthetic conspectus. The author, though a clergyman himself, writes with such detachment that the reader will not suspect that he is listening to a churchman.

[10] Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (rev. ed.; New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949).

[11] J. Paul Williams, *What Americans Believe and How They Worship* (New York: Harper, 1952).

[12] Herbert Wallace Schneider, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ., 1952). By way of note we must mention another descriptive book edited by Vergilius Ferm, *The American Church of the Protestant Heritage* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953). This is another of Prof. Ferm's long series of summary accounts of different religions done on a cooperative basis. The present book looks much like Ferm's *Religion in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948). The difficulty with such symposia is that the individual contributions are unequal in value, and the space allotted to each contributor makes a thorough study impossible.

III

Few will quarrel with the assertion that the great event in recent Protestant theology was the appearance of Paul Tillich's first volume of his *Systematic Theology*.[13] The sustained brilliance of Tillich is amazing, and his incredibly wide knowledge matches his brilliance. This volume simply demands a thorough study by Catholic theologians, and they will be well rewarded for the pleasant labor that it will involve.[14] One incidental fruit of such a study should of itself be a stimulus for the reading of the book: existentialism can be studied in it. This is existentialism at its best and in its most vivid expression, as far as the experience of this reporter can give witness.

Although the purpose of this survey is to indicate briefly significant contributions to current Protestant thought, we must give a longer consideration to Tillich than the nature of this report seems to allow.

The work under consideration is the first of two volumes called *Systematic Theology*. The second volume has not yet been published. Paul Tillich has been teaching this doctrine at the Union Theological Seminary of New York for some years, and his former students will still have the preliminary draft he gave them as notes. The present volume has put flesh on the bare bones of the propositions of the preliminary draft, but it has not covered them with excess rhetorical fat. The book reads well and easily, but the reader cannot afford to skip paragraphs or even sentences. The thinking is economically concatenated, and the expression follows the thought closely, with vigor, lucidity, and brevity.

Paul Tillich was born in Brandenburg in 1886. His father was a minister in the Evangelical Church, and the son was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, becoming later a German army chaplain during the First World War. Afterwards he taught theology in the German universities and was a well-known figure in German post-war divinity. His thinking could not be expressed or developed under Hitler, with the result that in 1933 Prof. Tillich and his family left Germany to come to the Union Theological Seminary of New York. According to Walter Horton, Tillich seriously considered becoming a Catholic at one stage of his growth.[15] He decided against

[13] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1951).

[14] It was pleasant to see that one Catholic theologian has already published a brief study of Tillich's thought as expressed in the book under discussion; cf. George H. Tavard, A.A., "The Unconditional Concern: The Theology of Paul Tillich," *Thought*, XXVIII (Summer, 1953), pp. 234–46.

[15] Walter M. Horton, "Tillich's Role in Contemporary Theology," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 41.

such a step, but he has always retained an esteem for Catholicism which he expresses without evasions, though his criticisms are also expressed forthrightly and stoutly. The present volume of Prof. Tillich is perhaps the most important product of his abundant literary activity, containing systematically some of the contents of his earlier significant work, *The Protestant Era*.[16]

In general it can be said that Tillich manifests the virtues so much needed by the theologian of any age, and so rarely found. For the achievements of the past he has no scorn nor contempt, too frequent in innovators, some of whom escape the accusation of *hybris* because of ignorance and others because of adolescent petulance. Tillich is no adolescent iconoclast, but a mature, balanced thinker. He likewise avoids Charybdis by refusing to be tied down to the errors of the past, with the justification that they belong to his heritage. The result is that he is neither a disdainful rebel nor a servile repeater; he is an original thinker with respect for thought, his own and that of others. The second quality to be noted in Tillich is the freshness of his thought. It is vital and timely, full of the energy which comes with true vision.

As the title of the work indicates, Tillich is constructing a system. He has to say words of defense for his project because by and large the Anglo-Saxon theologians share the prejudice of their milieu, which looks with coldness and suspicion on systems. However, this esteem for system makes Tillich's study very congenial to Catholic theologians, who are accustomed to deal with theology systematically. However, Tillich does not claim to be writing a *summa*, which he conceives as a complete treatment of all problems that face the theologian. He wishes only to deal with some of the problems, but in the light of a general rationale.[17]

This interest in rationale dominates the first volume of Tillich's theology. There are two hundred and eighty-nine pages of text in the book, but only seventy-eight are dedicated to the discussion of a formally theological problem: the notion of God. All the rest deal with theological method and problems of theological propaedeutics. This seeming disproportion is not unreasonable. The crying problem of our time is a proper understanding of the function of theology and its method.

Another feature of the thought of Tillich will endear him to a Catholic theologian. He uses ontology as the dynamism of his theological thinking.

[16] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1948); cf. G. Weigel, S.J., "Contemporaneous Protestantism and Paul Tillich," THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, XI (1950), 177–202.

[17] *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

It is an ontology derived from existentialist meditation, but it is ontology without apology or shame.

Yet the Catholic theologian must not be led astray by these attractive qualities of the Tillichian theology. It is not a Catholic theology. It does not wish to be, and in fact it is an apology for Protestantism.

What are the highlights of the book? It begins with the affirmation that theology is not the isolated thinking of an uncommitted individual in a void. It is the enterprise of the Church itself which must make its abiding message intelligible to each age in language and thought proper to that age. The theologian's task is never done, because theologian and Church live in time, whose changes modify the recipient of the message. The biblical literalism of the fundamentalists is a theological position, and an inadequate one, because they think that the language and thought forms of bygone ages are intelligible to all ages. There is, therefore, a theological circle, a movement from an abiding vision to the temporal expression of it, which constantly moves back to the vision and out again.

The theological movement is philosophical and not merely rhetorical. The theologian must make the revelatory message assimilable according to a philosophical scheme, semantically and logically consistent. The philosophy is not the revelation, but without it the revelation is not meaningful. What makes the theologian different from the philosopher is his concern. The theologian deals with the ultimate concern of man. This is the great Tillichian cry: ultimate concern, a phrase he uses as a phenomenological description of God. Nothing that is not man's ultimate concern is religious, and only the religious in terms of the concrete engages the attention of the theologian. Ultimate concern is the criterion whereby we can distinguish theology from all other human disciplines. This principle can be explicitated ontologically. Ultimate concern has to do with being as opposed and prior to this or that kind of being.

If one objects that such a criterion allows many kinds of theology, depending on the theologian's grasp of ultimate being, Tillich will answer that this is true, but the Christian revelation is the definitive and ultimate manifestation of the ground of being, which is another Tillichian term for God. Christian theology is therefore the definitive theology for all men.

What are the sources of this revelation? Against the empirical theologians, Tillich denies that it is human experience, because by that man only reaches himself and not the ground of being. The sources of theology are threefold. The Bible is the basic but not only source. Church history—perhaps Prof. Tillich would not object to calling it tradition—is the second source of

revelation. Thirdly, the history of religion and culture also provides a source. Although the empiricist is methodologically wrong in his approach to revelation, yet he has seen something valid. The sources reach us through experience, and so experience, though not a source of theology, is still the medium through which the sources act.

Over against the criterion, source and medium of theology, Tillich also establishes a norm. Neither the mere Bible as Protestants have wished, nor the magisterial dictamen of the Catholics, can be the norm. Tillich says: "A way must be found which lies between the Roman Catholic practice of making ecclesiastical decisions not only a source but also the actual norm of systematic theology and the radical Protestant practice of depriving Church history not only of its normative character but also of its function as a source."[18] He achieves his end by stating that the formal norm for theology is the biblical message in its encounter with the Church. The biblical message is basic but not to be taken from the book alone. The ultimate content of the biblical message is New Being in Christ, and this material norm is the ultimate norm of theology.

This phrase, New Being in Christ, is very important in Tillich. It is an ontological expression, with an ontology derived from existentialism. It is here that the Catholic feels himself estranged from Tillich. By an existentialist meditation Tillich sees man as lost because his being is threatened by death and non-being. The result is anxiety. This anxiety must be overcome by courage, and the courage derives from the vision of Jesus as the Christ, who surrendered his being to the ground of being, where non-being has no place. This effective surrender, total and transcendental, gives the believer being in Christ, and thus man is saved. All this does not intranquilize the Catholic, who could use the same words. The intranquility comes from Tillich's rejection of "Jesusology" (p. 136). The man Jesus is not the saving element in history, but rather the Christ, who is no historical individual. The Christ came into history in the life, vision, and sufferings of Jesus, but the two must not be identified.

It is here that the Catholic is overwhelmed with misgivings. The faith of the Catholic makes him see only one person in Our Lord. The Catholic accepts joyfully the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon. So did the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century. So do the fundamentalists of today. For us the Christ is a concrete historical person, one and undivided, and the one Jesus was that one Christ. They cannot be separated. What for Tillich is a patent impossibility is the basic Christian fact according to Catholic belief: God literally became man, the infinite became finite, the

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

eternal Word became flesh. "Haec est fides catholica, quam nisi quisque fideliter firmiterque crediderit, salvus esse non poterit."[19]

With the greatest benevolence and admiration for Prof. Tillich, the Catholic theologian here sadly comes to a halt. He thinks of Athanasius, Augustine, Cyril and Leo, of Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and even of Luther and Calvin. These men gave expression to the christological faith of Christianity, and that faith according to their expression was that Jesus of Nazareth, a finite man, was the Christ, not merely a pointer to the Christ. Prof. Tillich teaches the contradictory, and the Catholic theologian simply cannot see how a Christian can do that.

Prof. Tillich trenchantly shows the inadequacy of the liberal theologies of the nineteenth century with their portrayals of the historical Jesus, and he rejects such work as bad theology. Yet, on a metaphysical principle of his own derivation, Tillich comes to the conclusion characteristic of the nineteenth century historicists: Jesus is not God, except in a symbolic way helpful to weary, anxiety-ridden man.

Tillich so often points out that the theologian starts with an a priori which has grasped him, even though he cannot grasp it. That a priori is the revealing God. This first vision dominates all of his theological work. According to Tillich, no natural philosophy can lead us by syllogistic deduction to that a priori. It comes and must come first, and in its light the theologian molds a philosophy to deal with it. Yet, in spite of this clear teaching, Prof. Tillich puts above the a priori which is beyond criticism, a principle that dictates to it: the infinite cannot become finite. This principle is valid only if it is nominalistically understood, but Prof. Tillich has no desire to be a nominalist. I can define infinite so that it is nonsensical to say that the infinite became finite. If the word is so defined, and the definition accepted, then Prof. Tillich's position is secure, but the discourse has ceased to be ontological and is engrossed in mere semantics. Cyril and Augustine, Anselm and Thomas, knew very well that there was a semantic difficulty in calling the finite infinite. Their faith in the Christian message convinced them that the problem was only semantic, and they strove valiantly and not without success to force semantic media to transcend the concrete limitations which an historical situation imposed on them. In consequence, the thesis which for Prof. Tillich is utterly, immediately, and devastatingly evident—the infinite cannot become finite—leaves the Catholic theologian quite cold. We have heard that one before and given an answer. The Church met the Tillichian doctrine in the days of the Antiochean theology. The Church rejected that theology, not once but many times. We are of that rejecting,

[19] Conclusion of the Athanasian Symbol; Denzinger-Bannwart, n. 40.

that protesting Church. The Catholic Church can be very protestant, and on this point it protests vehemently.

There is another element in Tillich's conception of theological method which merits Catholic consideration and can be very useful to us. Tillich calls it the method of correlation. As far as I understand the method, it is the corrective for a "void theology," a theology that is unrelated to the totality of man's experience. Positively, it demands coherence in the theological system, so that the theological answer to human questions meets the questions totally. The theological answer must cohere with the theological source data; it must cohere logically with the other elements of the system; it must cohere with the totality of man's experience of God and human life. The method of correlation is not a plea for relativism, but rather an effort to overcome it. Its practical application can be seen in the statement that question and answer are necessarily related. There can be no answer unless there is a question, and the question itself delimits the answer. The question is the result of human anxiety, and therefore the human anxiety enters into the answer. Man's encounter with God does not take man outside of his finitude, and in a way finitizes God. (Does not this keen observation render suspect the validity of the principle that the infinite cannot become finite?) Consequently theology is always human, with the limitations of humanity and at the service of man. This is no defect in theology but its virtue and glory.

In Tillich's division of theology into its component parts we do not find a radical departure from the known divisions of our time. He changes the names and gives a correlative twist to the traditional themes. One important observation is made, and it is wise to consider it: no part of theology is independent of the others. One part supposes the others, and it is impossible to procede by a process of contiguous but discontinuous levels. Theology is an organic whole; all of it is in every part.

Systematic Theology, after sixty-eight pages of concentrated reflection on method, enters into the epistemological question. This section corresponds materially with the Catholic treatise *De actu fidei*. Prof. Tillich offers us a survey of the noological problem, especially as it confronts us today. His keen institutions and accurate observations are very telling. For example, in one place he offers the most devastating and pithy criticism of the pretenses of logical positivism that this reporter has ever seen: "In some forms of logical positivism the philosopher refuses to 'understand' anything that transcends technical reason [i.e., the logical dynamism of discourse], thus

making his philosophy completely irrelevant for questions of existential concern."[20]

However, the title of the section is "Reason and Revelation." The word that jumps at us with urgency is revelation. Tillich gives a number of definitions, but the ones that seem to express his thought more fully and more positively are: "Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately."[21] "A revelation is a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way."[22] The criteria for recognizing revelation are two: miracle and ecstasy.

Now Tillich writes both miracle and ecstasy with quotation marks, so that he be not understood in the current uncritical usage of the words. A miracle is not a preternatural activity of God, violating or suspending natural action patterns. Miracle in this sense is rejected altogether as contradictory and blasphemous. The meaning of miracle is to be found in the New Testament word for it: *semeion*, which Tillich renders as "sign-event." Such an event which is God-produced contains three elements: it is astonishing; it points to the mysterious ground of being; it arouses an ecstatic experience. It will be noted that the miracle is highly subjective. In fact, Tillich says that the Jesus of the Gospels refused to perform "objective" miracles. The miracle is obviously correlated to ecstasy, which is the subjective reaction to a subjective experience. Ecstasy is not overexcitement. It is defined as follows: "the form in which that which concerns us unconditionally manifests itself within the whole of our psychological conditions."[23] In ecstasy the mind transcends its ordinary situation; it acts without using the categories of the subject-object structure of usual knowledge.

But what is revelation itself? It is the meeting of the ground of being with the human mind. It is an encounter. It is an experience which is unusual. It gives no object, but only a profound insight into reality by looking into its abyss where the ground of being is dimly but intensely perceived. This is divine action and human reaction. The two cannot be separated, and there can be no "objective" revelation, i.e., a corpus of propositions understood categorically. It is not supernatural in the current sense of the word; it is as natural as any other experience. It does not give us new knowledge of nature, of history, of philosophy. It merely is the ever-present reality with God shining through. Consequently for Tillich it is silly to look for the story of the origins of the world in revelation. Revelation always shows only one thing, God breaking through, and this is conseptual knowledge transcending

[20] Tillich, *op. cit.*, p. 73. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 110. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 108. [23] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

logical categories and impatient of categorical limitation. In revelation rational knowledge is not materially increased, but only qualitatively illuminated by a pre-rational insight. Consequently, though revelation is not supernatural, it is not natural either, if by natural we mean the usual subject-object synthesis of ordinary discourse. If it be not too temerarious to transpose Tillichian terminology into one more familiar to Catholic theologians, it might be said that Tillich will admit that revelation is supernatural if by that word we mean a mode of perception that is not proper to human discourse. It is a perception which does not need and cannot have definition through submission to a class-concept. Although in this sense the perception is supernatural, i.e., unusual, it is not supernatural in the sense that the innate structure of the human mind has been transcended. The perception described in Tillich's account of revelation does not transcend human capacities but lies at the very heart of those capacities.

In what context does revelation take place? In many contexts: any phase of reality can be the medium of revelation, for God is the ground of being and reality; and so, where reality is, there God is too. Any object in nature can reveal God, and that is why the sacraments ultimately have their religious value. Though nature can be a medium of revelation, this does not make the revelation natural. Revelation is never natural, as we have explained above. By the analysis of propositions built up in the subject-object framework, nothing is known about God because He transcends that framework. Historical events, historical communications, and historical communities can also be the media of revelation. When they are, they must be miraculous, in the Tillichian sense of the word. History will come to us in words, and so words can communicate revelation, but we must avoid the error of the fundamentalist literalists, who think that the semantic meaning of the word shows us God. A word does more than deal semantically with an object; it also points semantically to the psychic situation of the speaker. God is always subject, never object, and therefore it is in the psychic situation of the writer that we can find revelation. Only in personal life can revelation be realized. Hence the dissecting of words and the pulling apart of sentences in the light of grammar and philology convey no revelation. Such a procedure is not a theological enterprise but must be left to the scientific philologists. Verbal inspiration and propositional revelation are contradictions in terms. Hence the theologian need not fear the findings of the historiographer, who deals with an historical series of events which are carriers of revelation. There can be no contradiction between science and faith, because faith deals with reality on an entirely different plane than

does science. Theology deals with God in man's existentialist concern. Science deals with detached objects according to finite essentialist schemes. Whether Genesis is history or not in the scientific sense of that word, is not a theological question, nor can the theologian answer it. Only the historian can deal with that problem. Whether it is historically true that the walls of Jericho fell because the Jews blew trumpets at it, interests the theologian not at all; and if the historian says that it is not true, the theologian accepts that statement without losing anything theological in the account.

Prof. Tillich is very vexed with the older theologians who tried to reject the findings of biblical criticism on theological grounds, for theology has absolutely nothing to say about historical facts, biological data, or cosmological theories. The revelatory word is not the word taken in its denotation, but as an expression of a personal state in the God-encounter.

With such a vision of revelation, can Prof. Tillich believe in a Christian revelation as something distinct from Jewish or pagan revelation? He can. He admits Jewish and pagan revelation. Revelation is possible wherever we have man reflecting ecstatically on the ultimate ground of his threatened being. However, the Christian revelation is the final revelation, the absolute revelation which totally meets the human situation. It is the revelation of New Being in the Christ. This is the definitive revelation, and nothing can surpass it; all other revelations are only preparatory for it.

Among other difficulties raised by this doctrine, a Catholic theologian will be conscious of a central one. The revelation of New Being in Christ came to the world through Jesus of Nazareth. In Prof. Tillich's theory of this revelation, Jesus as an historical person is not the Christ, who is only revealed to Jesus. The Christian shares in that revelation through the witness of the Bible and the Church. Yet cannot the revelation be achieved without this witness? Could not a human being acquire the revelation immediately just as Jesus did? Could not the revelations in nature and communal culture prepare a sensitive soul to perceive the truth which Jesus perceived? The thought of Tillich seems to permit an affirmative answer. If it does, must we then call a Buddhist, for example, a Christian? I think that Tillich would have no difficulty in saying yes. The Buddhist would be a Christian, though he does not know that word and might even project it according to its current meaning. The acceptation of revelation, which is the same as its reception, does not depend unconditionally on one historical message. It can be derived otherwise. The upshot of Tillich's doctrine is that he is a Christian who is saved, and salvation comes from faith alone. Salvation cannot come definitively except in the vision of the total self-surrender of man to the

unconditional ground of being. This is New Being in Christ. This is faith, and this is salvation. In this terminology it is a truism to say that man is saved by faith alone.

However, it also seems to be a truism that a man can be a Christian without having heard of Jesus. There can be Christians who do not belong to a Christian community, whom the historical Gospel has not effectively reached. If these conclusions are valid, then the word Christian is identical with the term, "saved through the acceptation of the definitive revelation." Jesus is not the founder of Christianity in any substantial sense, and Christians are only those who believe after the manner of Jesus. This is certainly a consistent view, but is it the meaning which historical Christianity attaches to its own reality? Is this an objective explanation of Christianity as it was and as it is, or is it a subjective reconstruction of an historical phenomenon? Does Prof. Tillich explain what Christianity is, or does he propose to us what he would like it to be? Subjectivity is a golden word in existentialism, but objectivity has not lost its appeal for the human mind; and more objectivity and less subjectivity is the desideratum of our time.

In the final section of Prof. Tillich's book we are presented with a consideration of the meaning of God. As an introduction to this consideration, ontological reflections are made. It is refreshing to meet such a deep esteem for, and so expert a grasp of, the ontological question. Tillich does not give us lifeless formalistic answers to the problem of being, but goes into it with depth and vitality. He is a stout defender of the real distinction between essence and existence. He, like Thomas (for whom he has a reserved respect), sees the primacy of the existential. Like Thomas he makes much of the doctrine of the *analogia entis*.

However, the coincidence with Thomas is superficial, a fact which Tillich not only admits but stresses. Analogy for Tillich is essentially symbolism. A distinction is made between being-itself, the logical *ens ut sic*, and the unconditioned ground of being, which latter cannot be expressed properly but only symbolically in logical discourse. The ground of being is not conceived; it is existentially intuited. Although this intuition must be expressed conceptually, the concept is not a definition, but by affirming and negating itself becomes a pointer.

Here we have the original stand of Tillich in the matter of natural theology. It is easy to say that he rejects natural theology as invalid, but this is hardly the whole truth. He also accepts natural theology, and a Catholic might even say that he has reduced all theology to natural theology.

To see what Tillich has done, it will be necessary to compare him with St.

Thomas Aquinas. Long before Aquinas the notion of analogy was known by the epistemologists of the Greek tradition, but they did not use it effectively. Whether Aristotle would have accepted an analogical middle term as a valid element of a syllogism, is not so clear. I am inclined to believe that he would not have done so. In consequence, his *primus motor* is more of a physical concept than a theological one. The great merit of Aquinas was the clear recognition of the alogical structure of analogy, giving it nonetheless the right of functioning in a syllogism. It was not illogical, and therefore contained the perfection of the logical to a higher degree than the logical itself. Consequently Aquinas could and did develop a natural theology. Given the discipline as we know it today, it is only just to say that it was fathered by Anselm of Bec.

Now as Barth has brought out, the existentialist factors in Anselm are very strong. Even in Thomas they are not absent. They dynamize the reasonings for the existence of God. Yet Aquinas consistently considered his proofs logical and not existentialist. He could do so because he believed that the *terminus analogicus* was a valid middle term. Thomas did not believe that the ineffable God of the Christians could be achieved by the mere syllogistic reflection on existence illuminated by first principles. He did believe that some basic elements of the Christian conception of God could be so achieved, and he thus made philosophy ancillary to theology, which has richer data at its disposal.

Tillich does not share the convictions of Thomas. His whole epistemological ontology supposes that the analogical term can have no function in a syllogism. For him the middle term must be taken univocally, and if this is the case then the category for the finite is helpless to go beyond itself to find the infinite. However, Tillich does not altogether toss out the reasonings for the existence of God, which latter term (the existence of God) he considers misleading, unfortunate, and improper. He merely says that the reasonings are not reasonings, are not logical. They bring up the question of God, which is answered by revelation. Their positive contributions are existentialist insights derived from revelation but never proofs of the logical order. The divine, which for Thomas identified essence and existence, for Tillich lies beyond both essence and existence. Philosophy offers the question of God, which occasions an insight that is grasped in faith and expressed in symbol. The symbol must never be taken logically, but only as an existentialist pointer. The work of the theologian is to give the meaning of the symbol in the light of contemporaneous existentialist concern, and in terms of an ontology derived from existentialist phenomenology.

For a Catholic this concept of analogy is not sufficiently radical. It sup-

poses that experience is not noetical but only a source from which knowledge derives. It also supposes that some types of experience are so pure that they defy knowledge structure. Is not this a vestige of the Kantian dichotomy of experimental matter and categorizing form? Can such a distinction be maintained in any sense other than schematic? Would it not be better to insist on the truth, which Tillich as a matter of fact recognizes, that any experience of the human person is of its structure cognitive? If it is cognitive, then even intuitional insights can be transposed licitly and not merely in pointer fashion into logical discourse. Cognition in Tillich's meditation is too severely dualistic. For him man seems to have two thoroughly distinct levels of cognition, one which embraces logic spontaneously, and the other which condescends to pseudological expression without recognizing any logical obligations. It was this dualism of knowledges which Thomas refused to accept. He insisted, much to the satisfaction of posterity, on the unity of knowledge, admitting levels, it is true, but yet essentially continuous and organic. Faith did not violate this continuity, though it did modify it: *gratia non destruit sed perficit naturam.* It is true that Tillich demands of the theologian that he be always semantically and logically consistent, but this demand is only made so that the theologian's work can give not formulas for, but only pointers to, an ineffable ecstatic experience.

Tillich's tenets on revelation and ontology clearly determine his theology of God, which is the last contribution of the work we are considering. We must bear in mind that for him "it is true that there is no way of speaking about God except in mythological terms" (p. 223). Hence the whole theology of God is in symbolic language, whose meaning is not given objectively but in terms of human concern.

God is personal, for man cannot concern himself ultimately with something less than man himself is. This hardly tells us what personality in God is objectively, but it does show us that the ground of being is personal no less than man, though in a way which we are helpless to ascertain. God is also one, but this oneness has little to do with ontology or arithmetics, for it only affirms the concreteness of God. In Christian theology the one God is triune, but, of course, the number three is unrelated to mathematics: it "has no specific significance in itself" (p. 228). The Trinity is not discussed in this first volume, for it is a doctrine that derives from the revelation of the Incarnation, which is to be studied in the second volume. Yet there are trinitarian principles which are stated in the general theology of God. God is basically power, the *Pantocrator*; God is also supremely meaningful, *Logos*; and he is always active in terms of meaningfulness. Power and meaningful-

ness are united and rendered creative by Spirit. These principles pave the way for a trinitarian doctrine.

The basic attribute for God the revealed is, according to Tillich, His creativeness. God is the Creator. Yet this must not be reduced to the notion of God being the First Cause, operating like finite causes. It means that God is actualization and thus actualizing. Not only is the world an instance of such actualizing, but also the angels, who are not understood to be beings, but rather symbolized structures of being whereby God is revealed. God is eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, and predestinating, but the words are only symbols for God's unconditionality, which is the basis for all conditioned things, even time, change, presence, knowledge, and contingence. Yet all such symbolic truth—and symbols are truthful—concerning God merely brings up the question of Christ. With this statement Tillich ends the first part of his study.

Even so meager a survey as the one here given will show the wealth of material in Tillich's book. A long acquaintance with the questions involved helps the formed theologian to follow fascinatedly the work of Tillich. However, for the theological tyro the encounter with this theology must be overwhelming in both senses of that word: excitingly awesome and awfully confusing. The students of Tillich can be envied for their opportunity of meeting a prophet and sage. The good ones will be stimulated to think furiously, and the others will at least have had the experience of standing near the mighty ocean.

The Protestant theologians are becoming aware of the need of taking Tillich seriously. This awareness has produced a symposium of studies concerning different facets of Tillich's thought.[24] However, the volume of commentary, produced by first class thinkers, does not have the sweep, verve, and power of Tillich's own work. In the symposium, it might be wise to point out Dorothy Emmet's questioning of Tillich's epistemology. This is the most important point in Tillich's thought. He stands or falls with his epistemological postulates.

IV

It is a curious fact that the only Protestant voice that sounds thoroughly dissonant to a Catholic ear is the evangelical, whether fundamentalist or activist. The full-fledged liberal does not sound dissonant; he sounds utterly alien. A radical conservative like Paul Tillich proves very stimulating. But

[24] Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, ed., *The Theology of Paul Tillich* (New York: Macmillan, 1952).

the voice that sings in our style is the Anglo-Catholic, even though it sings in a different key. A clear example of this fancy is *The Christian Sacrifice* by Fr. W. Norman Pittenger, S.T.D., of the General Seminary of New York.[25] Pittenger's love and high esteem for the Eucharist is so genuinely Catholic that a Catholic finds himself in immediate resonance with the theology expressed. (I know that Fr. Pittenger takes no offense at my identification of Catholic with Roman Catholic, and Anglo-Catholic with Protestant, though it probably tries his charity.)

Fr. Pittenger's little work is a *summula* of Eucharistic doctrine. A Catholic will spontaneously compare it with Fr. de la Taille's *Mysterium fidei*, perhaps the most significant theological work of our century. The comparison is not out of place, because Fr. Pittenger is influenced greatly by Fr. de la Taille's thought, and it might be said that the Anglo-Catholic work would not have been possible if it had not been for the orientations and excitement produced by de la Taille in the twenties.

Pittenger rightly says that the Eucharist cannot be understood correctly unless the natures of Christ and His Church be properly conceived. Hence he begins with an explanation of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Son of God. The Church is Christ, and that is why the Mass is the Sacrifice of Christ. (Fr. Pittenger seems to avoid the word "Mass," though it is used at least once when referring to High Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.)

The general theses of the book will ring familiarly to us. The Church is Christ in the world, the Incarnation prolonged, a human society but not merely a human society. The central act proper to this Church is the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This act can only be performed by the total Church through the functioning of ministerial organs empowered by the continuous whole Church, so that Holy Orders is a necessary sacrament for the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is a real sacrifice. It is the Sacrifice of Christ Himself. This implies no multiplication of sacrifices of the redeeming Christ, whose Sacrifice was only one. It does imply the repeated sharing and participating renewal of the Body of Christ in the saving act of Christ.

In the Sacrifice Christ under the veil of bread and wine becomes truly present, and this presence is more than the mere Zwinglian symbolism. The present Christ can be preserved for adoration outside of the Sacrifice, though care must be had lest this lead to the abuse of a Eucharistic piety divorced from the Mass.

It is the Eucharist that identifies the Church and mediates the life of

[25] W. Norman Pittenger, *The Christian Sacrifice* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951).

Christ to men. It is the great sacrament, the sacrament of the body of Christ in both senses of that term.

Yet Fr. Pittenger presents these theses with comments that frequently make the Catholic reader uncomfortable. His notion of Christ's humanity permits errors on the part of Jesus with reference to His own being and to His mission. It is also asserted that Jesus may not have known all the Eucharistic truths that the later Church formulated under the stimulus of development of doctrine. One wonders if Fr. Pittenger's understanding of the Chalcedonian doctrine is not exactly what the recalcitrant Alexandrines feared: a return to Nestorianism. It would be reassuring to see Fr. Pittenger affirm flatly that Jesus was a divine person with a human nature, and every human act of that person was God acting, so that those human deficiencies which are ungodly, such as sin, ignorance, and error, cannot be admitted in the person of Jesus.

Rightly Fr. Pittenger deprecates a current Protestant tendency to consider sacrifice as something defective in Jewish religion, a relic derived from earlier barbaric visions. As he well points out, Christ accepted the sacrificial framework of Judaism as absolutely proper. However, there is a tendency in Pittenger's study to symbolize the sacrifice away. It is true that the Christian notion of sacrifice is highly symbolic, but sacrifice means more than a profession of obedience and surrender to God, heightened to the point of accepting death. Immolation cannot be dismissed so easily. It seems that de la Taille's analysis of sacrifice is more profound and more coherent with all the factors in the data.

Fr. Pittenger teaches the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. However, he gently rejects the notion of transubstantiation, and along with it Luther's consubstantiation and Calvin's virtualism. In their place he suggests an idea of his own: Christ is present in the Eucharist by instrumentalism. This thought seems to contain the following elements: (1) the bread and wine remain bread and wine; (2) in some mysterious way God connects bread and wine with the resurrected Christ, whose body is spiritual and not physical; (3) this connection is organic, so that Christ really becomes present through the medium of the bread and wine.

For the rejection of the other theories of presence, Fr. Pittenger points to christological heresies parallel to the theories attacked. Transubstantiation looks like Monophysitism, where one reality in the Eucharist must absorb the other. Consubstantiation looks like Nestorian union of two substances. Might it be suggested that Pittenger's instrumentalism looks more Nestorian than consubstantiation? Nestorianism logically must be reduced to the doctrine of two agents in Christ. Luther did not want two agent

principles in the Eucharist, though the terms he used conflicted with his desires. Does not Fr. Pittenger's theory make the bread act as bread, even though unimportantly it is true, so that by its *own* divinely elevated action it serves as a mysterious organ of the body of Christ? In such an explanation the sacramental unity of the Eucharist does not seem to be substantially safeguarded. I would suggest that Fr. Pittenger's theory on reduction will become either transubstantiation or consubstantiation. He will have to choose which he wants, but there is here no *via media*. If he wants neither, he can still use his formula in a symbolic sense pleasing to the naturalist but unacceptable to the age-old Catholic tradition.

To Fr. de la Taille Pittenger does a great service and a minor disservice. The great service is the presentation of a better formula for de la Taille's heroic struggle to unify Supper and Calvary. Fr. Pittenger's phrase is: the Supper is a proleptic sharing in the Sacrifice of Calvary. This is splendid and avoids the many difficulties that de la Taille ran into. It is also fruitful as a pointer to the meaning of the Mass. If the Supper is a proleptic sharing in the action of Calvary, then our Mass is a metaleptic, i.e., retroactive, sharing in the same. Perhaps proleptic and metaleptic in both phrases should be completed with another adjective: liturgical. These ideas are more than latent in de la Taille.

Pittenger's disservice to de la Taille is the rather unintelligible assertion that de la Taille did not take sufficient account of the Church as offering the Sacrifice. If there is one thing that stands out in de la Taille's book, it is precisely his insistence on the action of the Church as the body of Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. He, perhaps more than any other in recent years, laid great stress on this truth. Because of this recognition he was perhaps the major stimulus for the renewed interest in the doctrine of the Mystical Body in our time. Just how Fr. Pittenger escaped this phase of de la Taille's work is puzzling.

One feels surprised that Fr. Pittenger did not stress more the Benedictine contributions to Eucharistic theory, especially because such contributions should be very congenial to his liturgical interest. Dom Odo Casel in terms of theology gave to the prolepsis and metalepsis of Calvary a highly liturgical significance. In the Sacrifice of the Church, as Fr. Pittenger so eloquently brings out, we act. We share the Sacrifice not in its immolational aspects but as an active oblation, and this oblation is pragmatic and dramatic, i.e., liturgical. This doctrine powerfully enriches the piety and vision of the Christian.

It would be easy to grow very enthusiastic over Fr. Pittenger's moving book, were it not for the constant suspicion that some of the more important

assertions are theological "double-talk." They can be accepted by the metaphysically-minded Catholic and also by the symbolizing naturalist. Nor is it clear from Fr. Pittenger's own remarks whether he is ready to make a forthright choice between the two acceptations. He seems to anticipate this objection in a short description of his theological method, which is a valid description of Anglo-Catholicism in general.

> We might indeed add that there are two difficulties which are actually forms of one theological error, found in the extreme Protestant and in the Roman views of the Eucharist. In the former, the sacrifice of the Eucharist is rejected because it cannot be neatly reconciled with certain theological ideas. In the latter, the sacrifice is stated in language that often seems so definite and precise that it is impossible to accept it. Both are forms of the same fundamental fallacy—the notion that perfectly explicit statements can be made in an entirely logical manner about the subject. We believe that it is much wiser to approach the matter in the imaginative and suggestive fashion which we have indicated. Here there is room for mystery, but here, also, the reality of the Eucharist as a present fact of Christian life is plain, with all of its rich implications and its wide range of meaning.[26]

Not all members of the Anglican community should be called Anglo-Catholics, even when they are theologians. For example, it would be hard to see how Canon Charles E. Raven could be called a Catholic in any but the most deceptive sense. The emeritus professor of divinity at Cambridge University has published the first series of his Gifford Lectures of 1951, under the title, *Science and Religion*, which is the subtitle for the first part of his general theme, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology*.[27]

Canon Raven sets forth a plea for naturalism, and a very naive form of naturalism at that. He does not believe in the miraculous, except perhaps in some accommodated sense. He rejects any true notion of the supernatural, and seems to believe that the doctrine of the Incarnation means that in and through nature man comes to God. He has no patience with the perennial doctrine of the fall of man, nor with the doctrine of the elevation of man by grace. It all sounds like the late nineteenth-century attempt of liberal theologians to make Christianity fit into the framework of the empirical naturalism, the dominating philosophy of that time.

The greater part of the book is an historical conspectus of the vicissitudes of empiricist naturalism within Christianity, and we are presented with a procession of scientists through the ages. I hope that it is not too harsh to

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[27] Charles E. Raven, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology* (Gifford Lectures, 1951, First Series: *Science and Religion*; Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1953).

say that the contribution of the book either to theology or the history of science is light. It contributes nothing significant to the question of the proper relations of religion to science, because the author obviously subordinates religion to science, and that is not an adequate answer. Our age is looking for a theory of coordination. Any theory of subordination of one to the other smells unpleasantly of the past.

V

Orthodox evangelicalism raises its voice today no less than the other forms of Protestant theology. Carl F. H. Henry, of the Fuller Theological Seminary of Pasadena, a very significant figure in American fundamentalist theology, published his W. B. Riley Memorial Lectures, held at Northwestern Schools in 1951, under the title, *The Drift of Western Thought*.[28]

As Henry sees it, the classical world looked for salvation in idealism, which rejected Democritan naturalism and also the supernatural. The Christian Middle Age found salvation at hand in the notion of the kingship of a revealing God, and it tried with human media to build up the kingdom of God in time. Nevertheless, the supernatural thought of the Middle Age as formulated by Thomas Aquinas took over the naturalism of Aristotle and used it to reach God without revelation.

The note of the Modern Age is its belief in the ultimacy of nature. This is opposed to the Christian view of reality, not because Christianity is opposed to science (for it is not), but because Christianity will not give to nature but only to the revealing God definitive ultimacy. Likewise the biblical doctrine of man's corruption goes counter to the optimism of naturalism. Henry well insists that the naturalism of our time is not derived from science, which, not being a philosophy, will not teach an ontology.

Yet Christianity is still with us, and it still makes its claims; and these claims are strong because of the Christian roots of the West. The essence of Christianity for Henry is the belief in a supernatural miraculous revelation—special revelation. He knows that this notion is attacked by simon-pure naturalists and also by the more scintillating spokesmen of Protestantism. These stand for a general revelation of God in nature; they deny or distort the notion of special revelation. Henry examines their objections and finds them wanting.

In the last lecture Dr. Henry takes a general look at the theological perplexity of our moment. His summary at one point is too good not to be reproduced here.

[28] Carl F. H. Henry, *The Drift of Western Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1951).

To evangelical Protestantism, the obscuring of special Biblical revelation will always appear as one of the major characteristics of our era. Revelation, in this sense, finds its meaning for an evangelical in the truths about God and His relations to His creation which have been disclosed by special divine initiative and inscripturated. The Roman Catholic view of revelation, which is as much as ever a competitor on the American theological scene, assigns equal value to the Bible and to church tradition, and concentrates revelation in the supposedly infallible interpretation of the teaching Church, especially in the Pope. The more recent Neo-Supernaturalistic view, associated particularly with the names of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, regards the Bible merely as a "witness" to revelation which presumably occurs continuously in a personal encounter with God conditioned upon human response, and denies the very possibility of doctrinal revelation, combining its affection for special, historical revelation with an evolutionary and higher critical approach to the scriptures. Modernism, having sacrificed special revelation and miracle to the recent philosophy of science which insisted on the absolute uniformity of nature, absorbed special revelation to general revelation, regarded as simply another way of viewing the process of human insight from its upper side, and yet professed to salute Jesus Christ and His moral demands absolutely. Humanism, with its clear-cut denial of the reality of the supernatural, eliminated the ambiguity of the modernist's appeal to the so-called scientific method and recognized no legitimate function to be designated as revelation in distinction from human insight, subject to revision, gleaned from the application of the scientific method of sense observation and verification; here the concept of revelation, if admitted at all, is thoroughly secularized.[29]

Henry's book makes a strong impact on the reader and gives to fundamentalism a respect and dignity which are usually denied it by Protestant thinkers themselves. The source of Henry's impressive success—besides the author's patent talent and learning—is his negative approach to the new theologies. He does not prove that fundamentalism is the Christian way of faith and salvation. He proves that the non-fundamentalist theologians are untrue to Christianity's conception of itself as shown by its perennial history. The tacit supposition is that, since they have failed, there is nothing left but a return to fundamentalism. That supposition can certainly be questioned.

In accord with the persuasions of orthodox evangelicalism, Prof. Henry finds the substance of the biblical message in two concatenated propositions: (1) mankind is corrupt, materially and mentally, as the result of an initial historical sin; (2) salvation comes to man through faith, i.e., fiducial trust, in Jesus, who was truly God, and who saved us by a death which was an objective atonement for men's sins. If we modify the evangelical doctrine of

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 132–33.

faith, a Catholic could accept this as true, but he would add that participation in the salvation of Christ must be derived from the Catholic Church. This latter proposition would hardly please Prof. Henry, because he derives his first two propositions according to the evangelical method: through the individual's free approach, under the loving influence of a guiding God, to the content of the revelation semantically determinable in the Protestant canon of the Bible.

Can Prof. Henry show that such a methodology is the genuine Christian way according to Christianity's account of its two thousand years' existence? I doubt it. Prof. Henry is disappointed in the non-fundamentalist Protestant theologians, but I think that he should not be. They accept the biological theory of evolution, and they subject the Bible to the criticism of the historical method. Prof. Henry finds this contrary to the Protestant tradition. It is true that the sixteenth-century Reformers did not do this. However, I find that the new theologians are boldly doing exactly what the Reformers did, and what Prof. Henry is doing. Both he and the new theologians are genuine Protestants because both use the Protestant principle effectively, though the new theologians are doing it with greater coherence with the times in which we live. The essence of Protestantism is not evangelicalism; that was something incidental characterizing the first historic incarnation of the Protestant principle. The very soul of Protestantism, whether in Luther and Calvin, or in Henry and Tillich, is the principle of man's untouchable freedom in the construction of God's revelation. The first Reformers, faithfully followed by Prof. Henry, freely decided that the revelation was in the propositions of the Bible according to the literal content of the book. Freely they have constructed this content to their satisfaction. The new theologians use absolutely the same principle, but they have freely decided that the literal Bible is not the source of revelation. Prof. Henry should not complain because the new theologians have departed from the path of orthodox evangelicalism. They have done so without abandoning Protestantism; they have only dropped the construction that satisfies Prof. Henry, because it does not satisfy them nor the men of our time. Prof. Henry is convinced that his construction is the right one; the new theologians are similarly convinced of their construction. By the Protestant principle both have acted consistently. It is not correct to derive modern Protestant naturalism from Thomas Aquinas. The Thomistic influence is very thin. Modern Protestant positions have their genuine derivation from the Protestant principle of free construction of revelation. Much as it may surprise Prof. Henry, it is nevertheless true that he and the non-fundamentalists are in hearty agreement in principle, merely diverging in its application. This is good Protestantism, but is it good Christianity?

VI

The ecumenical movement continues to vitalize Protestant theological thought, and it logically directs Protestant thinking as to the nature of the Church. Two recent books—which are not so recent, as we shall see—are important straws in the theological wind.

The first of these books is *This is the Church,* which is an English translation of a symposium prepared by Swedish theologians and published in Sweden in 1943. The editor of the volume was the well-known Swedish theologian, Anders Nygren, Bishop of Lund.[30]

In the English translation the book is divided into two parts: (1) the Church in the New Testament; (2) the Church in history. The second part will not be attractive to those who are not interested in the doctrines of Luther, for all the work is preoccupied with the theories of Luther; and there is a strong tendency to show that Luther did not reject the perennial doctrine of Church, even though he did teach that there is a visible and an invisible Church. Both Bishop Nygren and Bishop Gustaf Aulén contribute studies to this part.

The first part is the important part. It is the biblical theology of the Church in the light of recent research. A brief description of such research is given by Olof Linton:

> The secular view of the church and of the office, according to which church and office are secondary and inferior realities, has been completely altered in the later research. This is no isolated phenomenon, but a general facing about of scholarship. In the exegesis of the more recent day the attempt has been, so to speak, to see the religion of the New Testment from the inside. Scholars have attempted to take Christianity's own consciousness more seriously, and to set forth the way in which the New Testament itself regarded the whole of existence. . . .
>
> . . . The idea of the church therefore plays a central role in the thought world of early Christianity. It is *from the beginning* a theological concept.[31]

Not all the contributions are of equal weight. One is disappointed in the initial study of Bishop Nygren, in which he analyses the conception, *Corpus Christi.* It says so little. On the other hand, the two studies of Anton Fridrichsen, "Messiah and the Church" and "The New Testament Congregation," are splendid. For Fridrichsen the early Church was a social union under authority through officers established by Christ. It was cultic, sacramental, and very realistic in its attitude toward baptism and the Eucharist. In like vein Hugo Odeberg, in "The Individualism of Today and the Concept

[30] Anders Nygren, ed., *This is the Church,* trans. Carl C. Rasmussen, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1952).

[31] *Ibid.,* pp. 102–3.

of the Church in the New Testament," shows clearly that the individual did not come before the Church, but rather the Church came before the individual, who was personally incorporated into something bigger than himself, and only by such incorporation did he participate in the doctrine and salvation of Christ.

This book is Lutheran, not fundamentalist, but so sober and illuminating that Catholic professors of ecclesiology are strongly urged to study it.

The other ecclesiological symposium is the volume edited by Dr. R. Newton Flew, of Wesley House, Cambridge.[32] It is the fruit of the report of the Second World Conference on Faith and Order in Edinburgh in 1937. The studies were made under organization, and they were published to serve as a basis of discussion at the meeting of Lund, where the Conference on Faith and Order acted in its new capacity as a Commission of the World Council of Churches.

There are twenty-five ecclesiologies given. Dr. Flew gave the Catholic position, regretting that he could find no Catholic scholar to contribute to the symposium. In so vast a collection made from twenty-five denominational standpoints we can expect anything. However, it is surprising that throughout the studies a deep respect and devotion to the Church, the *una sancta*, are unevasively portrayed. The volume is important, not for its advancement toward a unified ecclesiological theory, but in manifesting contemporary chaotic disunity. This feeling of disheartening disunity is deepened by the sister volume of *The Nature of the Church*, another symposium concerning the liturgical questions that separate the churches, called *Ways of Worship*.[33] The collection gives different denominational statements concerning liturgy and sacraments.

Both of these works demonstrate the enormity of the task of the World Council of Churches in its worthy enterprise of trying to bring multiplicity under some kind of real unity. Whether it will succeed is the theme for a prophet and not for a reporter. Prof. L. A. Zander, of the Orthodox Church, has offered us his insights into the problems of the World Council and his suggestions for solving them.[34] His book makes interestin observations, but it is doubtful whether it has come to close grips with the problems at hand.

Woodstock College GUSTAVE WEIGEL, S.J.

[32] R. Newton Flew, *The Nature of the Church* (New York: Harper, 1952).

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