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**THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY**

**IN PAUL TILLICH AND CHRISTOPHER DAWSON**

**A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Divinity  
in the University of Edinburgh  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**James Emerson Whitehurst  
October, 1953**





TO  
MY WIFE

## P R E F A C E

The preparation of this dissertation has been an engaging and rewarding project. There were difficulties, to be sure, chief among them being Tillich's highly individualistic vocabulary and compressed style which produced a certain initial apprehension. But this writer, for one, can testify to the transition (that is likely to come to anyone who will study Tillich's thought) from bewilderment to profound admiration and appreciation. Dawson's thought presented no such initial complications due to his lucid and arresting style. There were, however, difficulties to be encountered in attempting to uncover the basic philosophical and theological presuppositions in his thinking. It is regrettable that Tillich's second volume of his Systematic Theology is not yet in print. This hurdle, however, was not insurmountable, for Tillich has published, in mimeographed form, an outline of his forthcoming Systematics which is really an abstract of material to be covered in Volume II. (Quotations from this source are referred to in footnotes as the Propositions.)

It is hoped that the British reader will over-look the American spelling. An attempt has been made, however, to delete all American colloquialisms.

I wish to express my thanks to those who have helped in the preparation of this dissertation, to my advisers: Professors Charles S. Duthie and James Torrance, to Robert H. Daubney, E.I. Watkin, V.A. Demant, Nels Ferré, Mrs. Lilly Pincus (who loaned some of Tillich's German writings), Charles Kegley, C.Ray Dobbins, John Baillie, Donald Mackinnon,

and, above all, to James Luther Adams who loaned a number of unpublished essays by Dr. Tillich. I am indebted also to the subjects of this dissertation themselves for their willingness to answer queries about their life and work. Regardless of criticisms expressed herein, my own thinking has been highly stimulated by the writings of these men and I wish to record here my deepest gratitude for the privilege of using them as subjects for this investigation.

James Whitehurst  
Lansing, Michigan  
September, 1953



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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Our culture, as Paul Minear aptly remarks,<sup>1</sup> has been subjected to an "epidemic of philosophers of history" as is witnessed in the work of such men as Toynbee, Spengler, Latourette, Berdyaev, Butterfield, Collingwood, and now Tillich and Dawson. Nevertheless (in the view of this writer) there should be no quarantine on such attempts, for the interpretation of history is one of the pressing needs of our time - perhaps the crucial question of the hour.

The world transformation in the midst of which we are now living makes the interpretation of history all the more urgent. Everywhere men are asking such searching questions as "Why is there such suffering in history?", "Does God care?", "What is the meaning of it all? - or is there a meaning?", "Where is history going?", "Will there be an end to history?" These "damned questions," as Dostoevsky called them, are haunting men and cannot be answered within the framework of historical research. They probe deeper to the question of the meaning of existence itself and thus become philosophical and theological questions. The rational structure of man's nature demands that he find some illuminating clues that will make sense out of history - especially in critical days.<sup>2</sup> By the contingencies of our historical destiny, then, we are driven to the problem of the interpretation of history.

The authors selected for this study are both keenly aware of the critical moment through which civilization is passing. The titles

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<sup>1</sup>"Between Two Worlds: Eschatology and History," in Interpretation, January, 1951, p. 27

<sup>2</sup>Periods of crisis have always stimulated interest in the interpretation of history as witnessed by the Maccabean revolt (Daniel), the Domitian persecution (Revelation), and the barbaric invasion of Rome (De Civitate Dei).

of two of their respective books, The Shaking of the Foundations (Tillich), and The Judgment of the Nations (Dawson) reveal a concern about the present world transformation. Both thinkers, due to wide experience and catholic outlook, are aware of the disorder in all realms of life (in art, literature, politics, education, ethics, philosophy - as well as in the strictly "religious" realm) and are thus equipped to make pronouncements on the total human situation as few others in our time are able to do.

Both authors are thoroughly steeped in their own traditions (one a Protestant and the other a Roman Catholic) and each is attempting, to a degree, to relate the interpretation of history to his own tradition. Tillich asks the question concerning the relationship of Protestantism to the present world transformation (indeed, the question of whether Protestantism can even survive as an institutional force); Dawson, on the other hand, is searching for the relationship of Catholicism to the new world order. Both adhere to their respective traditions not only out of emotion or paternal loyalties (Dawson, in fact, was converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism) but out of reflection and deep conviction.

Yet both, in many instances, transcend the limitations of their own faith and press toward an even more comprehensive view of history than either tradition affords. It seems, to this author, that the impartial reader will find that both Tillich and Dawson have captured insights that are totally beyond the limited scope of either's tradition. An attempt therefore will be made in this dissertation to reach a larger perspective and to show that the proper interpretation of history demands elements more characteristically associated with Catholicism (an ontological approach in which reason is seen as the structure of being, a sacramental view of

life, a high ecclesiology centering in authority and tradition, an appreciation of culture and the history of religions, an emphasis upon philosophy in correlation with theology, etc.) as well as those elements more traditionally associated with Protestantism (prophetic judgment upon absolute pretensions, the right of autonomous structures as against heteronomous authority, a distrust of magical sacramentalism, and an insistence upon the transcendence of the divine).



## CHAPTER ONE

## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Paul Tillich, who was largely unknown to the English-speaking world five or ten years ago<sup>1</sup> is fast coming to the forefront of world-wide theological discussion<sup>2</sup> and is now being widely hailed as one of the most creative minds of our time.

Since Tillich has already published three autobiographical essays on separate occasions,<sup>3</sup> it will hardly be necessary to go into detail at this point. Nevertheless, a skeleton outline would seem appropriate in order to place him in relation to his intellectual antecedents and to call attention to some relationships between his life and his thought.

Paul Johannes Tillich was born at Starzedel in Prussia on August 20, 1886. The son of a Lutheran pastor, he was reared in a traditional and conservative home typical of the bourgeois society which he was later to criticize so vehemently. Tillich had the experience of growing up in some of the old medieval towns of Germany, first at Schönfliess-Neumark (from the ages of four to eleven) and later at Königsberg-Neumark (from the ages of twelve to fourteen). As a result he rather naturally acquired an historical temperament.

To grow up in towns in which every stone is witness of a period many centuries past produces a feeling for history, not as a matter of knowledge, but as a living reality which the past participates in the present.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a considerable period preceeding this, however, Tillich had a wide influence on continental thought as is witnessed in Otto Piper's treatment of Tillich's views in his Recent Developments in German Protestantism, (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1934), pp. 136-143.

<sup>2</sup>Tillich's writings have been translated recently into Italian, Japanese, and German.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 3-73; The Protestant Era, pp. xxiii-xlv; The Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 3-21.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections," in The Theology of Paul Tillich, (New York: Macmillan Col, 1952), p. 5.

These experiences quite naturally led to an appreciation of the Middle Ages - a fact that was responsible in part for Tillich's later formulation of the idea of a theonomous society.<sup>1</sup>

The medieval environment of his youth was also responsible, Tillich believes, for certain leanings toward Romanticism as is evidenced in his love of poets such as Goethe, Hölderlin, George, and Rilke. His love of nature was also closely associated with this phase of his life. He speaks of frequent communion with nature and of periods of "mystical participation."<sup>2</sup> This sensitivity to nature no doubt had much to do with his later choice of Schelling as the subject for his doctoral dissertations. Communion with nature, he claims, was also responsible for certain characteristics of his thought such as the Dynamic Mass, the boundary situation, the Unconditional as Ground and Abyss, and his re-statement of the classical view that salvation is cosmic and includes nature as well as man.<sup>3</sup>

Another influence during his formative years was the philosophical interest of his father, who maintained the classical position that ultimately there can be no conflict between philosophical truth and revealed truth.<sup>4</sup> Tillich comments that it was only on the basis of his being permitted to do some independent philosophical thinking that he was able to break the tight hold of the Prussian authoritarian tradition, as symbolized in his father. And through achieving autonomy in the field of philosophy, he could then begin to experience it in other realms.

<sup>1</sup>The Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 5f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 7f.

<sup>4</sup>The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Idem.

Tillich received his formal training at the humanistic gymnasium in Königsberg and later at a similar institution in Berlin. During his university days he developed a keen interest in philosophy which led ultimately to his receiving the Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Breslau in 1911 (his dissertation being "Die religionsgeschichtliche Konstruktion in Schelling's positiver Philosophie, ihre Voraussetzungen und Prinzipien") and the Licentiate of Philosophy from the University of Halle in 1912 (his thesis being "Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein in Schelling's philosophischer Entwicklung"). This interest in pure philosophy has characterized his work ever since.

In addition to Schelling's influence on him (especially in relation to his nature-mysticism, his doctrine of the Unconditional, and the significance of guilt), Tillich admits his indebtedness to philosophers as diverse as Kant (for his critical norms), Böhme<sup>1</sup> (for his awareness of non-being and the abyss), Hegel<sup>2</sup> (for his idealistic and dialectical approach), Fichte (for his self-world correlation), Nietzsche (for his existential method), Troeltsch (for his historical relativism), Husserl (for his phenomenology), and his own teacher Kähler (for his view of theology as mediation and his early formulations of the Protestant principle). Thus Tillich's thought, as Randall puts it, has been "fertilized with many of the insights of a century [and more] of German thinking."<sup>3</sup>

In 1913, Tillich received ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church and in the following year began a four-year term as a chaplain in the German Army during World War I. When he returned from the war, Tillich began his academic career as a Privatdozent of Theology at the University of Berlin.

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 160 f.

<sup>2</sup>Especially the young Hegel (See "Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought")

<sup>3</sup>John Herman Randall, "The Ontology of Paul Tillich," in The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 136 f.



It was in this period immediately following the war and its accompanying chaos that Tillich became aware of the great gap between the churches and the masses, between Lutheranism and Socialism.<sup>1</sup> This painful awareness thrust him out from the secluded academic world to grapple realistically with the pressing social problems of the hour. He and his associates (indeed, many of his generation) felt that they were living in a creative moment in history when the time was ripe for great social and religious strides. They were, as Heimann puts it, "inspired and transported by the feeling that this was the crisis that could end only in new creation: Germany defeated, humiliated, punished . . . shaken and purged and thereby enabled to bring the world religious socialism. . . ."<sup>2</sup> What was this Religious Socialism? It was an attempt to bridge the gap between Lutheranism and Socialism and to show each side its need for the other; it was an attempt to convince the churches that Socialism had spiritual roots (in its prophetism) and, on the other hand, to convince the Socialists that apart from religious infusion their optimism would end in utopianism. The periodical Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus" which Tillich inaugurated attempted to stimulate thinking at these points. Under the impact of this movement, Tillich conceived some of the characteristic motifs of his thought: the doctrine of the kairos (as the creative turning-point in history), the demonic (as evil structural forces such as Capitalism), and the Protestant principle (as that norm which is absolutely opposed to any final stage in either religious or social development).<sup>3</sup>

It might be well here to comment on the Marxism that was implicit in this movement. Although Religious Socialism was widely influenced by

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 19ff; 54 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Eduard Heimann, "Tillich's Doctrine of Religious Socialism," The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 316

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 54 ff.

Marxian ideas, Tillich maintains that the movement never took an undialectical view of Marxist doctrine and that there was always "no" coupled with "yes," criticism as well as acceptance. This movement was indebted to Marx for his penetrating insight into the contradictions of disintegrating bourgeois society,<sup>1</sup> for his uncovering of the economically-determined ideology which this society used to mask its real purposes (its will to continue in power), for his prophetic protest against religious idolatry and his prophetic awareness of the historical struggle between good and evil, for his doctrine of man (as man in society - in the context of his total behavior),<sup>2</sup> and for his dialectical materialism (revealing the economic basis of the social and spiritual structures of society in their relationships and antitheses). Nevertheless, the Religious Socialists were acutely critical of other elements in Marx, or better, in Marxism - its metaphysical determinism (the hardening of the doctrine of dialectical materialism into a mechanism of calculable processes involving the negation of human freedom), its utopianism (anticipating that history would reach its final stage in the establishment of the proletariat), its anti-scientific fanaticism,<sup>3</sup> and its tendency to become just another ideology itself (failing to see that dialectical materialism may also become a class-determined tool in the proletarian struggle for power).

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<sup>1</sup>"The most magnificent theoretical interpretation and the most effective practical interpretation of an historical period was the Marxist analysis of capitalist society" ("The Kingdom of God and History," p. 141)

<sup>2</sup>"How Much Truth Is There in Karl Marx?", The Christian Century (August 8, 1948), p. 908.

<sup>3</sup>Die Sozialistische Entscheidung,

This interest in cultural and political activities quite naturally brought Tillich into conflict with Barth. Tillich had joined the Barthians, immediately following the war, in their protest against the liberal-Protestant surrender to bourgeois culture (as in the myth of progress). But now as Barth and his followers were developing a purely kerygmatic theology (giving only answers apart from any concern with the "situation"), Tillich began to attack Barthianism as a neo-supernaturalism and joined in a polemic with Barth almost as heated as the more celebrated one between Barth and Brunner.<sup>1</sup> By putting culture outside the realm of Christian concern, Barth, Tillich charged, was rendering it invulnerable to both the critical as well as the forming (and transforming) power of religion.<sup>2</sup>

During this period, especially as a result of his stay at Marburg (where Heidegger was then located), Tillich came under the influence of the movement known as existentialism. In thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, he found a depth of spiritual insight unknown in Christian circles and great meaning even in their analyses of the meaninglessness of life. Although Tillich did not accept the existentialist's answers, he did learn much from their method of thinking. The existentialist's terminology and vocabulary remain to this day a unique component of Tillich's thought.

In the late 'twenties and early 'thirties, Tillich's interest in political movements led him to such an outspoken criticism of National Socialism<sup>3</sup> that when Hitler came to power in 1933, Tillich was among the first fifteen professors to be removed from their positions. That same year he came to the United States and for a time continued his fight against Nazism in the form of open letters to his personal friend, Emmanuel Hirsch, one of the *philosophers of the* New Lutheranism that was aligning itself with the Nazi movement. In these letters Tillich challenged Hirsch's uncritical support of Nazism as an

<sup>1</sup>Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark, 1936), pp. 52, 60, 68-70, 82-3, 150, 156, 209, 356.

<sup>2</sup>The Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 29 ff.

<sup>3</sup>See *Theological Encyclopedia*, Barth's entry which was suppressed by the Nazis.



embodiment of a specific kairos.<sup>1</sup>

During this period of the 'twenties and early 'thirties, Tillich held positions at several different universities (Berlin: 1919-1924; Marburg: 1924-1925; Dresden: 1925; Leipzig: 1925-1929; Frankfurt: 1929-1933). At each university he taught in a slightly different department - philosophy, philosophy of religion, science of religion, or theology. He speaks of his teaching responsibilities during this period as involving "a constant change of faculties and yet no change in the subject! As a theologian I tried to remain a philosopher, and conversely so."<sup>2</sup> His desire was to stay on the boundary line between philosophy and theology so that he could relate the two and thus reveal their deeper interdependence.

This breadth of concern is paralleled in Tillich's eagerness to participate in a wide range of social and intellectual activities. He was accepted as a congenial member not only by philosophical or theological groups but as well by the Bohemian world - the artists, actors, writers, and poets.<sup>3</sup> These associations, no doubt, account for his awareness of the manifold spiritual movements outside the churches.<sup>4</sup> But above all Tillich kept in contact with the labor unions and felt the proletarian struggle as his own. His interest in economics, then, was never purely academic but always included involvement and participation.

By living on boundary lines between widely-divergent groups, Tillich consciously sought to hold a mediating position between social classes, between church and society, between idealism and realism, between

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<sup>1</sup>"Die Theologie des Kairos und die gegenwärtige geistige Lage; offener Brief an Emanuel Hirsch," Theologische Blätter, 1934 (November), XIII, 306-328; "Um was es Ghet. Antwort an Emanuel Hirsch" in Theologische Blätter (May, 1935) pp. 118-120.

<sup>2</sup>The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 10; The Interpretation of History, p. 40 f.

<sup>3</sup>The only movement Tillich has kept in touch with in the United States is the depth-psychology movement. It is impossible, Tillich believes, "to elaborate a Christian doctrine of man. . . without using the immense material brought fourth by depth psychology." The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>As reflected in his book The Religious Situation.

Lutheranism and socialism, between liberalism and orthodoxy, and between Catholicism (as "sacramental reality") and Protestantism (as "prophetic protest").<sup>1</sup> Tillich compares this task to that of St. Paul who became "all things to all men."<sup>2</sup> In comparable fashion Tillich endeavored to become a realist so as to capture the realists, a Marxian in order to capture the Marxists, and an existentialist in order to capture the existentialists. His purpose in doing this was to appreciate the good in each approach and from there to point out the unavoidable frustrations if taken as a complete system, thus pointing to Christianity as the ultimate answer to their deepest quest.

When Tillich arrived in the United States he lectured at various colleges and universities, and in 1934 joined the faculty at the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, where he has remained ever since. His adjustment was a difficult one due to the fact that there had been almost no linguistic preparation.<sup>3</sup> But through the discipline of having to express himself in another language, Tillich feels that he has developed greater precision and clarity in the presentation of his ideas. In a manner not uncommon to German thinkers he was prone to conceal ambiguities under the cover of German philosophical terminology.<sup>4</sup> But this experience of coming to the new world brought about changes not only in terminology but as well in content. Tillich speaks of the experience of adjusting to a new environment as a creative and invigorating one and is appreciative of what he has

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<sup>1</sup>See "On the Boundary" in The Interpretation of History, pp. 3-73. Demant has commented that Tillich "shows a penchant for dangers of living and thinking over the chasm. . . which makes his attitude highly idiosyncratic and therefore often perhaps more interesting than helpful." ("A Theologian on Historical Existence," in Christendom (Oxford), (December, 1937), VII, 285.

<sup>2</sup>See Tillich's sermon "The Theologian" (Part II), The Shaking of the Foundations, (Student Christian Movement Press, London: 1949), pp.122 ff.

<sup>3</sup>The adjustment was difficult for his audiences, too. W.M. Horton tells of coming away from a lecture bewildered. "It was hours later that I realized... that the word "waykwoom," many times repeated, and the key to the whole lecture was meant to represent the English word "vacuum." (Walter M. Horton, "Tillich's Role in Contemporary Theology," The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd, 1951) p. xxiv.

learned from the American way of life.<sup>1</sup> From his experiences in America, Tillich believes he has gained a new appreciation of creativity and openness to the new as evidenced in a dynamic civilization,<sup>2</sup> a new appreciation of ethics,<sup>3</sup> an enhanced "world perspective," and a renewed hope in the possibility of a world church.<sup>4</sup>

Since arriving in the United States, Tillich has continued his political activities and his interest in Religious Socialism.<sup>5</sup> He worked in cooperation with the New School of Social Research in New York City and served for a number of years on the Graduate faculty of its Political and Social Science Department.<sup>6</sup> During World War II, Tillich participated in broadcasts to Germany in an attempt to interpret the significance of the war as he saw it. He was active in the "Self-Help for Emigrees from Central Europe" committee and was also chairman of the "Council for a United Germany" which worked for the reconstruction of post-war Germany along democratic lines. But the failure of some of these efforts, especially the latter when the East-West split within the membership became a reality, discouraged him from such extensive participation in political movements in the years since the war. Moreover, the present period, he feels, is radically different from

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<sup>1</sup> See "I Am An American," The Protestant (July, 1941), III, No. 12. In "Mind and Migration," Social Research (September, 1937) IV, 295-305, Tillich calls attention to the importance of "cross-fertilization of minds" in the history of creative thought. See especially pp. 295 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 108 f.

<sup>3</sup> "Beyond Religious Socialism," The Christian Century (June 15, 1949), p. 732.

<sup>4</sup> Contacts with students from many lands at Union Seminary is the basis of this observation. (The Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 17 f.)

<sup>5</sup> See Tillich's contributions to Christianity and Society published by the Frontier Fellowship for Christian Social Reconstruction, New York City.

<sup>6</sup> Tillich contributed articles to Social Research published by this school ("The Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church," 1934; "The Social Functions of the Churches in Europe and America," 1936; "Mind and Migration," 1937).



that following the last war. Instead of a feeling of hopefulness, creativity, and the possible reception of a kairos, there is cynicism, despair, spiritual darkness, and vacuum. Nevertheless, consistent with his effort to maintain a balanced view in every crisis, Tillich feels that the present mood of despair in the aftermath of World War II is to be condemned just as much as the mood of unlimited optimism following World War I. The proper mood for the Christian at either juncture of history would be a "realism of hope" (realistic, but not pessimistic; hopeful, but not utopian).<sup>1</sup>

Tillich insists that he still believes in Religious Socialism but doubts that the adoption of it as a principle is a possibility in any foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup> Hence, Tillich has tended to turn from political activism to the task of systematic theological construction. This, it would seem, is the most decisive turn of his thought in recent years.

At present, Tillich is at work on the second series of his Gifford lectures to be given at Aberdeen, Scotland, in the Fall of 1954. These lectures will comprise Volume II of his Systematic Theology. Professor Tillich will retire from his chair of Philosophical Theology<sup>3</sup> in 1954, when, it is hoped, he will have a chance to fill in some of the details of his elaborate system.

Although it is too early to make any final appraisal of Tillich's work, it does not seem inappropriate to recall a few tributes that have been made to him. Georgia Harkness has compared his work to that of Whitehead in its comprehensiveness and its appreciation of the depth-dimension of existence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. xlv.

<sup>2</sup>"Beyond Religious Socialism," in The Christian Century, June 15, 1949, p. 733.

<sup>3</sup>Tillich's desire to bridge the gap between Philosophy and Theology is evidenced in the title of his professorship at Union Seminary. See "Philosophy and Theology" in The Protestant Era, pp. 93 ff.

<sup>4</sup>"What Whitehead is to American philosophy, Paul Tillich is to American Theology," Georgia Harkness, "The Abyss and the Given," Christendom (Chicago), (Autumn, 1938), III, 508.

T. M. Greene has called him the "most enlightened and therapeutic theologian of our time."<sup>1</sup> Walter Marshall Horton claims that Tillich is a "new Aquinas"<sup>2</sup> and prophesies that his sy<sup>5</sup>tem will provide "a dwelling place for multitudes of homeless modern minds."<sup>3</sup> Even his most able critics cannot help but praise the depth of his insights and the breadth of his comprehension. To this writer it appears that the architectonic structure of thought that Tillich is building up may be compared to Einstein's Unified Field Theory in its attempt to cover the greatest number of facts with the smallest number of hypotheses<sup>4</sup> or, to express it in Tillich's own terms, in its attempt to embrace the whole of existence and essence in the most meaningful system of correlations and polarities.

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<sup>1</sup>Theodore M. Greene, "Paul Tillich and Our Secular Culture," The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>In Arnold Nash's Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), pp. 120-121. Tillich's Protestant synthesis, however, is organically different from the Thomistic synthesis. It is the difference between "a correlation of negative and positive (question and answer, philosophy and theology, reason and revelation) and a correlation of two positives (natural knowledge and revealed truth)" and even more fundamentally "between a prescientific Weltanschauung claiming finality for itself, and one which is everywhere cognizant of science and its implications, and which above all claims no such finality." (Charles Kegley in the Introduction to The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. xiv.)

<sup>3</sup>The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 47

<sup>4</sup>Lincoln Barnett, The Universe and Dr. Einstein (New York: Mentor Books, 1952) p. 122 f.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THE MEANING AND MAKING OF HISTORY

## 1. The Definition of History

The term 'history' is a difficult one and is admittedly subject to ambiguous interpretations. It refers, of course, to an understanding of the past. This is, perhaps, its fundamental meaning or its "primary definition." But in both Tillich and Dawson, the term 'history' is much broader than this; it includes an interpretation of existence as a whole. Both authors are concerned with history in its cosmic setting - in its relation to the eternal. Therefore the interpretation of history for them involves such diverse elements as the doctrine of man, nature, freedom, Christ, time, sin, salvation, creation, and eschatology. These ramifications, which are especially prominent in Tillich's thought, will be treated in the next chapter ("History and Existence"). But there are initial questions which must first be answered, such as: "What makes history what it is - fact, or interpretations of facts?", "Where does history find its meaning?", "How is it constituted?" These questions will form the basis for this beginning chapter and will serve to help define further this ambiguous term 'history.'

According to the "primary definition" mentioned earlier, history, for Tillich, is the interpretation of past events. But for Tillich this statement is not so simple as it seems. Behind this definition stands an interesting dialectic, the understanding of which leads to stimulating and provocative conclusions. The two elements in this definition (past events and interpretation) convey the double meaning of the word 'history', for history, Tillich insists, is at the same time both events and interpretation in mutual interaction.<sup>1</sup> In other words, history is subjective as well as

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<sup>1</sup>Propositions (Preliminary Draft for Systematic Theology), Part V, p. 1; "The Kingdom of God and History," in *The Kingdom of God and History* (H.G.Wood, editor), Oxford Conference Series, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1938), pp. 108 ff.



objective, and both of these elements are necessary and interdependent.<sup>1</sup> There would be no history apart from events to be recorded, nor would there be any history apart from the interpretation of these events. The elaboration of the latter half of this affirmation - that there is no history apart from interpretation - marks the beginning of Tillich's creative construction. Against the common-sense view of history as a collection of past objective events, Tillich maintains that there is no such thing as objective history apart from its subjective interpretation. Pure objectivity is, in fact, meaningless.<sup>2</sup> Apart from interpretation, pure objectivity is a denial of meaning, for meaning is always meaning for someone.

History means firstly the account of past events, secondly the events themselves. The subjective meaning of history precedes its objective meaning. . . . Genuine history is recorded [interpreted] history.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. "Centers" of History and the Rise of Historical Consciousness

Because history is conceived primarily in terms of interpretation, Tillich's whole approach hinges on the idea of the meaning of history. No interpretation is possible (and therefore no history in the full sense of the word) without a meaningful view of reality based on a decision. "History," Tillich declares, "is established or destroyed with the decision for or against its reality as a meaningful process."<sup>4</sup> Yet the decision for meaning cannot be an abstract one. It must be based on a concrete reality -

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<sup>1</sup>This subjective character distinguishes history from historiography which strives after pure fact. But even in historiography, according to Tillich, interpretation is necessarily involved. (Propositions, Part V, p. 6.)

<sup>2</sup>"If history were an objective process in time and space, then it would have to possess an objective beginning and end. . . ." (The Interpretation of History, p. 249.) And this, says Tillich, leads to numerous problems.

<sup>3</sup>Propositions, Part V, p. 1 (italics mine).

<sup>4</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 249.

an event which a human group sees as an expression of the ultimate meaning of its existence. The Persians, for instance, found their luminous even in Zarathustra, the Jews in the Exodus, and the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, the Moslems in the flight of Mohammed to Medina, the Communists in the rise of the proletariat.<sup>1</sup> Tillich uses the term "center" to describe such a meaning-giving event.<sup>2</sup> When a group has found meaning, direction, and purpose through reference to such a "center" it has become historically conscious. Whenever historical consciousness has arisen, Tillich declares, it has appeared as a correlary to such a concrete principle (a "center") which has been the basis of its meaning. Since there is no genuine history apart from such a center to give meaning and direction to the temporal process, the center in reality constitutes history - or makes history what it is! Tillich further maintains that there is no genuine history apart from a group's self-interpretation. Historical consciousness, for Tillich, is the achievement of a group and never an individual creation. Only events which stand related to the life of human groups are historical events. A group which grasps (or is grasped by) a transcendent purpose or goal feels itself responsible for sustaining and upholding the values it has come to know. Through the self-interpretation of its existence, such a group creates

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 258, "The Kingdom of God and History," pp. 108 ff.

<sup>2</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 252, 262. The value of the "center" concept is that it gives Tillich a chance to compare Christ as "center" to other "centers" of history implicitly or explicitly affirmed by various cultures or groups. By generalizing the concept, a principle of comparison is gained whereby other "centers" can be judged (and appreciated) as hidden quests for the Christ. The term "center," then, gives "an abstract and universal meaning to the Christological idea" and helps Christianity to express the universal claim of its center. The Interpretation of History, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup>Tillich thus believes that in order to understand history one must participate fully in the life of an historically-conscious group such as the proletariat or the Church.

"history." Tillich calls a group which fulfills this function a "bearer of history." Paradoxically, such groups often appear at the place of greatest meaninglessness and suffering, as with the Israelites in persecution and the proletariat in the depth of de-humanization. In such situations, the ideological cover of acceptable truth wears thin and men are driven to new and radical truths. In view of this dependence upon a meaning-giving "center" and a value-bearing group, the fact that historical consciousness is a relatively rare occurrence is readily understandable. Historical consciousness has, in fact, appeared only at a comparatively late stage of human development. Though man as man has always had the capacity for history, this capacity has seldom been actualized. "We can perhaps rightly assume," says Tillich, "that the majority of men lived without history."<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps true even today that a large section of mankind lives without history (historical consciousness), for only as an individual is related to a group striving for the realization of meaning does he participate in history in its truest sense. "Only he who can know that he has history, has history in a significant sense of the word."<sup>2</sup>

If historical consciousness has been rare, what accounts for this? There are, according to Tillich, two predominant non-historical outlooks.<sup>3</sup> One is the mystical unawareness of history, as classically expressed in Indian mysticism and neo-Platonism. Everything temporal is regarded as deceptive and evil; the real and the good lie outside the temporal process. Therefore the attempt is made to rise above temporality and nature to eternity and super-nature. Even Roman Catholicism and Neo-Orthodox supernaturalism are in danger

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 254

<sup>2</sup>Man and Society in Religious Socialism, "Christianity and Society (Fall, 1943), VIII, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, pp. 38 ff.



of succumbing to such a non-historical view through negating the value of the temporal process.)<sup>1</sup> Such views, Tillich believes, are not conducive to the development of historical consciousness. The other major non-historical outlook, according to Tillich, is the naturalistic unawareness of history. This is classically expressed in the Greek cyclical view and is probably the most common Weltanschauung of the ancient and primitive worlds. In this view, the temporal process remains in bondage to the course of nature, and space predominates against time. All life is interpreted in terms of nature as the unfolding or developing of what is enveloped. Nothing really new is expected. What Tillich calls the "myth of origin"<sup>2</sup> holds sway; the good is regarded as belonging to an original Golden Age to which the temporal process shall some day return.<sup>3</sup> This naturalistic outlook is often expressed in a sacramental view of life. Nature is regarded as an expression of the holy; the holy is therefore a present reality and not a demand or an expectation. Emphasis is laid upon nation, blood, and soil. The motherly characteristics predominate and life is regarded as warm, sustaining, and embracing. Tillich regards National Socialism as an attempt to return to such a nature-sacramental view. In an open letter to Emanuel Hirsch, Tillich criticizes Hirsch and the German Christians for their canonization ("Heiligsprechung") of events given in time and space. "You have changed the Kairos doctrine which is meant to be prophetic and eschatological into a priestly and sacramental

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<sup>1</sup>In contrast to this, Protestantism at its best does not flee into super-nature but "remains in nature as the sphere of decision." (The Interpretation of History, p. 134)

<sup>2</sup>Die Sozialistische Entscheidung, (Potsdam: Protte, 1933), pp. 28 ff.; The Interpretation of History, pp. 206 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Such cyclical views, Tillich notes, cannot be disproved by empirical research (for who could prove that the span of history as we know it will not someday be repeated?). Though we may discern forward motion and meaning within a limited period of time, we cannot prove that time and space as a whole move irreversibly forward. This is a matter of faith and decision. (The Interpretation of History, pp. 247 ff.)

sacramental consecration (Weihe) of a present-day event."<sup>1</sup> In contrast to these views, historical consciousness has appeared only when the cycle of nature has been broken through and when time has torn itself away from its bondage to space.<sup>2</sup> This occurred first of all in the Judeo-Christian tradition (although foreshadowed by the Persians). The figure of Abraham represents Israel's breaking away from the bondage to space.<sup>3</sup> As a nomadic people, the Israelites were detached from the soil and thus tended to base their self-interpretation upon a time-consciousness rather than a space-consciousness. They were bound to God by a covenant and not by the ties of blood and soil. God was to lead them into a new land; but even this land was not to be theirs by right. They were to remain a nation without space, as the exile and the diaspora have shown. Because of the work of the prophets, all priestly tradition was subordinated and judged by unconditional demand. The fatherly elements of judgment, decision, and demand predominated over the motherly, embracing, sacramental qualities. Breaking away from the "myth of origin" they looked forward, through the vision of the prophets, to the coming of the Christ and his Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Through anticipation and expectation, time was given an irreversible forward movement.<sup>5</sup> The "beside" category of space (and its

<sup>1</sup>"Die Theologie des Kairos und die gegenwärtige geistige Lage," p. 312

<sup>2</sup>This separation of nature from history does not mean, however, that Tillich considers them as two completely separated realms each with its own metaphysic (The Interpretation of History, pp. 162 ff.). With Tillich, "nature is the basis on which history moves and without which history would have no reality" (Systematic Theology, I, 122). Both nature and history are involved in the tragic separation of existence from its essence, as we shall see in the next chapter. Therefore, "the unity of being between man and nature is more basic than their difference" (The Protestant Era, p. 100)

<sup>3</sup>"Christianity and Emigration," The Presbyterian Tribune (October, 1936), LII, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Die Sozialistische Entscheidung, p. 34 ff.

<sup>5</sup>See "The Kingdom of God and History," p. 111.

polytheistic accompaniments) gave way to the "toward" category of time.<sup>1</sup> Reality was now seen in terms of the emergence of the new, the novel, the unexpected, and history was born.

This is the view Christianity inherited, and one that gave it its creative principle. The full historical consciousness of early Christianity, however, was soon lost in the priestly-sacramental development. Except for Augustine, the early church lost its tension toward the future. The Kingdom was no longer vividly expected as imminent and approaching, but was regarded as already having arrived in the Church, which was the visible expression of the Kingdom and its power on earth. From time to time, sectarian movements sought to recover the eschatological dimension, but without permanent success.<sup>2</sup> All of this serves to underscore Tillich's observation that historical consciousness is in no sense the normal attitude of man toward his environment. Historical consciousness (or, history in its genuine sense) is produced only in reference to a meaning-giving "center" - some momentous event serving to give direction and purpose to the otherwise scattered and dissociated events of the temporal process.

Once a people has found a "center," a principle is thereby given through which the beginning and end of the historical process are determined. We are not speaking here of beginning and end in an empirical sense (or of creation and eschaton in a trans-historical sense) but rather in a "mythical"

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that Tillich regards the Marxian interpretation as a recovery of historical thinking and as a direct heir of the sectarian tradition.



(and intra-historical) sense.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the primarily subjective character of history, the beginning of history for the historically-conscious group is the beginning of the expectation of the "center" and the end is that point which marks the fulfillment of all the possibilities implied in the "center." For Christianity, this means that history begins with the expectation of the Christ and ends with the reign of Christ in his Church.

### 3. The Absolute "Center" of History

Now if it is true that the creation of "history" is dependent upon the centering of a group around a meaning-giving principle, is it not conceivable that several different groups may be focused at the same time around different "centers" thus creating several historical processes, each claiming finality? It is true, Tillich says, that there are and have been many "centers." But there can be, theoretically, only one "center" for history as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Though each center makes the claim for being the one clue to the totality of meaning, and each culture so centered tends to think of its history as the absolute, thus forcing surrounding cultures into a dependent and subordinate role, there can be ultimately only one "center" and one historical process.

What then of the conflicting claims? Which is right? What standards can we use for determining the true "center"? Tillich suggests the following: firstly, the true "center" of history must somehow overcome the

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<sup>1</sup>Tillich's distinction between historical (qualitative) and natural (quantitative) time is helpful here. "Billions of years before and after man appeared on the earth neither continue nor frustrate the meaningful direction of history. Neither the end nor the beginning of history can be designated on the plane of physical time" ("The Kingdom of God and History," p. 111).

<sup>2</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 250 ff.

ambiguities of time and existence, including all the destructive, meaning-defying powers of life.<sup>1</sup> Each "center" implicitly or explicitly makes this claim. We could consider here not only the world religions, but other "centers" of meaning such as humanism, science, democracy, and imperialism.<sup>2</sup> But without attempting to discuss these here, it will suffice to indicate that none of these systems of meaning is able to overcome the ambiguities of finite reality (as a "center" of history), thus failing to rise above the self-contradictions of time and history. Capitalism, for instance, began as a genuine humanitarian movement against the abuses of the feudal order and ended in de-humanization; Nationalism began as a movement of national re-integration and has ended in world disintegration; Communism began with the quest for social justice and has ended in tyranny. The tragedy of all conditioned attempts to overcome existence is evident in each of these movements of social reform. Thus Tillich affirms that no finite reality can of itself overcome the tragedy of the historical process.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the true "center" must be able to become a universal "center" and embrace the whole of the temporal process and geographical expanse of the world. But if a finite "center" should make this claim, history would be delivered into the hands of a heteronomous power.<sup>4</sup> The inability of any finite "center" to fulfill this function is immediately

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<sup>1</sup>Thus if history is affirmed at all, it must be affirmed not only as a meaningful process, but also as a process in which the ambiguities of life are finally overcome. The only history possible, therefore, is "history of salvation."

<sup>2</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson notes the same tragic process. See especially his analysis of the French Revolution in Progress and Religion (London: Sheed and Ward, 1945), pp. 230 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 134. For a discussion of heteronomy, see Chapter IV.

apparent. Both criteria can be met only by the appearance of a supra-historical manifestation.<sup>1</sup> History cannot overcome its own ambiguities. "Only through the appearance of a super-historical unconditioned meaning can history gain an ultimate foundation."<sup>2</sup> No immanent reality will do. This is the basic error of Utopianism. It depreciates the past in favor of an ideal future expected within this time process. Such a view not only fails to see that human nature is perpetually involved in sin, but excludes as well all previous generations from a share in the realization of the final meaning of their existence.<sup>3</sup> Nor can an imaginary transformation of existence, as in the idea of progress toward an ever-receding goal, give an ultimate meaning to the temporal process. Such a view fails to see that an "infinite approximation to the final fulfillment would replace the fulfillment by the way toward it; and this is ultimately self-contradictory."<sup>4</sup> Both immanent and imaginary transformations of existence, Tillich believes, finally end in non-historical stagnation.<sup>5</sup> Genuine history can be affirmed, therefore, only on the basis of ultimate meaning supported by an unconditional reality appearing in existence with transforming power.

This leads us directly to what may be called the quest for the "New Being." Each center is, to a degree, a hidden quest for a "New Being" - a reality that overcomes the ambiguities of life. But the "New Being" in

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<sup>1</sup>Tillich's comment about final revelation in his Systematic Theology, (I, 133 ff.) would seem to apply here. It is the idea that the final revelation is final only if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself. This criterion is met only by Jesus as the Christ.

<sup>2</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 261

<sup>3</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>5</sup>Both views also fail to see what Tillich calls "the ambiguity of the good" - the idea that with every forward step and every technical advancement, good as well as evil are "raised to a higher plane" (The Interpretation of History, p. 56).



its fullest content is actualized only in the Christ. In fact, as Tillich indicates, "the trends which are immanent in all religions and cultures move toward the Christian answer."<sup>1</sup> In Christ as the New Being, what man essentially is has appeared under the conditions of existence without being corrupted by existence. Christ's victory over existence is, according to the Gospel, a victory in which we can share. Because Christ makes available unconditional power for the transformation of life (thus constituting history as the "history of salvation") and because this power is valid for all mankind, Christ, above all others, is the true "center of history."

#### 4. The Church and World History

The transformation of existence by the New Being, however, is not just an external, objective event. In accordance with the subjective-objective character of history itself (as also in accordance with the nature of Jesus Christ as both event and interpretation), the effect of the New Being in history is both subjective and objective. The New Being is transforming power only as he is received by a believing group as its "center." The Christ is not the New Being apart from being received as such by faith. Or, as Tillich puts it, "the Christ is not the Christ without the church."

This means that the New Being must therefore create a community- "the community of the New Being" - consisting of those who share in the reality of his transformation of existence. This community of the New Being can become the creative core of its society. In seeking to actualize within itself a theonomous attitude (a direction toward the Unconditional) it may influence the society as a whole to become, even in its secular forms,

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<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 137. The reception of the Christ implies the reality of human freedom. History becomes history only through the decision for the "center." There could be no history apart from human freedom.

transparent to the holy and more of a true community.<sup>1</sup> And it may finally, through its universal claim and universal appeal, transform the whole of mankind into one community, thus creating world history.

At present there is no such thing as "world history." The idea of world history is a metaphysical term, not an empirical reality.<sup>2</sup> It points toward what history may become; it is a demand and not something already given. "Mankind" is a similar term; it suggests a possibility but does not point to an actual unity. Technical progress, however, has brought into existence the conditions for the realization of such a unity. In our century, for the first time, the universal unity of historical action has become a possibility. Technical progress has brought into being a unity of space for all mankind; thus "world" has become a reality. But, tragically, the same techniques which can be used to bring the world together can also be used to split it apart.<sup>3</sup> Although "world" is a reality, "world history" is still in process of becoming. Technical progress alone cannot create "world history." "In order to have an interpretation for the whole of history there must be some historical group in which the meaning of the whole of history becomes manifest."<sup>4</sup> In other words, there must be a "bearer" of world history - a group in which the unity of mankind is actualized (or a group which is, so to speak, a microcosm of the essential unity of mankind). The quest for such a group is the quest for the Church.

We noted earlier that, according to Tillich, there is no history apart from a group which, through its self-interpretation, realizes meaning

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<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 148.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>"What War Aims?" The Protestant (August-September, 1941), IV, 13 ff.; The Protestant Era, p. 262; "Mind and Migration," p. 301.

<sup>4</sup>Propositions, Part V, p. 5.

and becomes a "bearer" of history.<sup>1</sup> If world history is ever to be a reality, then there must be a group which includes the whole of mankind in its self-interpretation. Further, as we noted earlier, there is no real history apart from the interpretation by some group of its temporal events as a "history of salvation."<sup>2</sup> Where can such a group be found? The proletariat in the Marxist conception of history is one such attempt of a group to become the "bearer" of universal history and is probably the Church's greatest competitor in the claim for this title. (The proletariat, in fact, has many characteristics of a Church, with its eschatological hope, its struggle against the demonic, and its devotion to supra-individual ideals).<sup>3</sup> But the proletariat can never become a true bearer of world history; it is not sufficiently universal. The proletariat is, by definition, a distinct class and its closest approach to real community is the "solidarity" of its group. But this "solidarity" is a unified front against all opponents and immediately keeps this group from being universal enough to be a "bearer" of world history.<sup>4</sup> A similar limitation applies to its quest for salvation. Salvation, for the Marxist, is the salvation of the proletariat achieved through the suppression of the bourgeoisie. In contrast to this the Church has maintained its universality and is potentially able to weld the whole of mankind into a true community. The Church alone, "by bearing the course of history in which redemption and salvation appeared"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See page 21.

<sup>2</sup>See page 27, n.1.

<sup>3</sup>See "Marx and the Prophetic Tradition," Radical Religion (Autumn, 1935), I, 21-29.

<sup>4</sup>"Existential Philosophy," Journal of the History of Ideas (January, 1944), V, pp. 64 f.

<sup>5</sup>It should be noted, however, that calling the church the "bearer of history" is not so much a claim for the Church as it is a demand upon it. ("The Kingdom of God and History," p. 125).



can give meaning to life as a whole.

The bearing of world history by the Church, however, is a potentiality and not an actuality. The Church is divided and torn into disputing factions. Further, there is the distinction between what Tillich calls the Latent Church and the Manifest Church. The Latent Church is the indefinite historical group within paganism, Judaism, and humanism, in which there is a quest for ultimate meaning (a hidden quest for the New Being) and a partial overcoming of demonic forces and the threat of meaninglessness.<sup>1</sup> The Manifest Church, on the other hand, is the definite historical group which consciously acknowledges the New Being and seeks to participate directly in His transforming power.<sup>2</sup>

Now the possibility of a world historical consciousness (or world history) corresponds to the possibility of a Manifest Church embracing all mankind. Just as there is a latent and manifest Church so there is a latent and manifest world history. The great challenge to the Church of our time is, through its missionary activity, to bear witness to the universal character of Christ as the "center" of history and thus, through the transformation of the Latent Church into the Manifest Church, to serve as a medium for the transformation of the latent (potential) world history into an actual world history.<sup>3</sup> Because of the crucial position which Christian missions hold in this development, Tillich declares that "missions more than

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<sup>1</sup> Propositions, Part IV, p. 27; Part V, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> The distinction between Latent and Manifest Church does not correspond to that between the Visible and Invisible Church, for both Latent and Manifest Church have visible and invisible expressions. The Latent Church is not just those Christians outside of institutional Christianity, but can include individuals overtly hostile to the Church, as well as secular and humanistic movements. The latter, Tillich believes, are often more of a true Church than the organized Church because of their prophetic power combined with an absence of claim to the possession of final truth.

<sup>3</sup> "The Kingdom of God and History," p. 121.

any political or technical force for world unity have the key to world-historical consciousness."<sup>1</sup> By realizing the unity of mankind in the community of the New Being and by making possible a world-historical consciousness, the Church would fulfill its role as the "bearer of history" in the ultimate sense. For this reason Tillich believes that

"The history of the Church in its latency and its manifestation is the central movement of world history because in it history is world history, or history universal."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"History as the Problem of Our Period," Review of Religion, (March, 1939), III, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>Propositions, Part V, p. 11, (13). (Part V of the Propositions has been published in legal size - foolscap - paper as well as in the regular size. Page numbers from the foolscap size will be given first, followed by the regular size in parentheses).

## CHAPTER THREE

## HISTORY AND EXISTENCE

## 1. History as the Problem of our Period

Tillich has, for several decades, repeatedly called attention to the fact that the problem of the meaning of our historical existence has become the crucial question of our time. In an oft-quoted statement, he has declared that there has been a momentous shift of interest from the previous period's concern with the control of nature to the modern period's concern for the meaning of history. He has made full allowance for this change of emphasis in his own systematic constructions, notably in his re-interpretation of Christology in terms of the meaning of history,<sup>1</sup> and in his popularization of such terms as "center of history," "kairos," "bearer of history," and "the demonic."

Other periods have had their basic questions, too, just as has ours in its quest for a meaningful interpretation of history. In a most interesting analysis in one of his periodical articles,<sup>2</sup> Tillich characterizes the European development in terms of the basic question of each great period - the all-embracing fundamental concern which is often asked only indirectly or unconsciously. The pronouncements given in that article make possible an outline of the various periods of history as follows:

600-100 B.C. - Period of radical questioning, arising from changes in the social, political structure. Basic Question: "What is the nature of ultimate being?"

100 B.C.-400 A.D.-(Religious period of Greek and Christian philosophy)  
Basic Question: "How can the individual soul of man be saved from the demonic?"

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<sup>1</sup>"The old Christological struggle has been transformed into a struggle about a Christian or a semi-pagan interpretation of history." (The Interpretation of History, p. 261 n.)

<sup>2</sup>"History as the problem of our Period," Review of Religion, (March, 1939), III, 255-264.



- 400-900 A.D. (Byzantine period) Basic Question: "How can all reality, nature, history, and man become transparent for the spirit?"
- 900-1400 A.D. (High Middle Ages) Basic Question: "How can a human society, secular as well as religious, be built on a sacramental basis?"
- 1400-1900 A.D. (Modern Period) Basic Question: "How can we build society and control nature by human reason?"
- 1900 on - (Period of Crisis) Basic Question: "What is the meaning of our historical existence?"

Each period's question (or fundamental concern) has been rooted in the particular needs, demands, embarrassments, frustrations, and hopes of the times. The roots of our present interest in the meaning of history (as the basic question of our period) are not difficult to trace. The crisis through which we are living could not help but turn men's minds to the question of the meaning of our historical existence and the cause of our present tragedy. Tillich analyzes our present crisis in terms of its foundation in the theory of automatic harmony, which was in vogue from the seventeenth century onward. This presupposition, he believes, was behind the whole modern development (democracy, liberalism, individualism, capitalism, etc.). (This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.) As a result of the collapse of this foundation, the achievements of this period have crumbled, one after another, before our feet. The decline of Capitalism (especially in the heart of Europe) has been especially influential as a force contributing to the rise of historical thinking. Appalling conditions called for action of a drastic sort. But if action was to be successful, it must needs be based on a true understanding of historical forces. Yet, pure interpretation for the sake of theorizing was far from the intention of those concerned. There was a keen awareness that a proper

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interpretation of history must be rooted in historical decision and action.<sup>1</sup>

Religious Socialism, in its desire to bridge the gap between the transcendent view of the churches and the immanent view of the socialists, took over this insight and tried to couple a theological interpretation with social action. Tillich, as one of the founders of this movement, was thereby led into the quest for an interpretation of history as one passionately involved in the political and social struggles of his society. This philosophy of history, therefore, did not originate in abstract speculation but was wrought out on the anvil of suffering, anxiety, persecution, and doubt. As Tillich wrote later,

The new philosophy of history is a child of the World War and of the subsequent revolutions and catastrophes. It is not a product of theoretical considerations in a scientific detachment from history, but is the work of men who wrestled with the puzzles of their own fate as emigres, driven from country to country, when they wrestled with the puzzles of our period and of history generally.

The quest for a meaningful interpretation of history, however, was soon found to be impossible apart from a new interpretation of man. The anthropology implied in Marxism was inadequate, even if it did include realistic elements far in advance of what was found in liberal Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The quest for a meaningful interpretation of historical existence, then, pointed to the need for a new anthropology.

The doctrine of history drove us - I include myself in this group - to the doctrine of man. Man has history; therefore the interpretation of history depends on the interpretation of man.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The interdependence of interpretation and action was developed primarily by Marx in his idea that interpretation apart from action is pure "ideology" - a mask to camouflage the desire to maintain the status quo.

<sup>2</sup>"Nicholas Berdyaev," Religion and Life (Summer, 1938), p. 407.

<sup>3</sup>The defects in the socialist doctrine of man are due primarily, Tillich believes, to the conceptions taken over from the revolutionary period of early bourgeois society, especially its utopian expectations.

<sup>4</sup>"Nicholas Berdyaev," p. 408.

## 2. The Interpretation of Man

Although, as indicated, Tillich considers history as (existentially) the problem of our period, he believes that (systematically) the doctrine of man is "more basic and universal than the problem of history."<sup>1</sup> How, then, shall we interpret man?

Schelling describes man as having in himself both the highest heaven and the deepest hell. Berdyaev speaks of man as having his roots both in heaven above and in the abyss below.<sup>2</sup> It is this basic self-contradiction that Tillich takes as the starting point for his doctrine of man - the awareness man has of being both finite and potentially infinite.

One of the most fundamental things we can say about man is that he is a creature who is conscious of the fact that he is a creature - conscious of his finitude.<sup>3</sup> This awareness of finitude points to a relation with the infinite. "Other creatures are also finite," says Tillich, "but only man is aware of finitude on the basis of potential infinity." Man could not look at himself as finite if he were not in some way beyond this finitude and linked with the infinite. But this infinity to which man feels he belongs is at the same time an infinity from which he knows he is separated. Man has, according to Tillich, the ability "to ask about the infinity to which he belongs." But, as he goes on to say, "the fact that he must ask about it indicates that he is separated from it."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>"Nicholas Berdyaev," p. 412

<sup>3</sup>This constitutes the nature of anxiety as an inescapable ontological structure. "Anxiety is the self-awareness of the finite self as finite" (Systematic Theology, I, 192; see also The Courage to Be, passim).

<sup>4</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 258.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>1</sup>"History as the Problem of our Period," p. 263.



The infinity from which man is separated may best be described in terms of the unity and completion, or fulfillment, of life. In other words it expresses the unity and completion of man - what man feels he ought to be.

Conscience bears witness to another order of things. . . . We know that the disrupted and antagonistic elements of existence belong to a unity. . . . We know that this unity is what we are essentially. We know that even in the existential distraction of this unity, its remaining power maintains existence. We know this because it appears to us as law and command, as judgment and treat and as promise and expectation.<sup>1</sup>

This difference between what man is in his self-estrangement and what he knows he ought to be is primarily what Tillich means by his differentiation between man's essential nature and his existential nature.<sup>2</sup>

What is the cause of this cleavage? It is, according to Tillich, the actualization of man's finite freedom.<sup>3</sup> It is of the very nature of freedom to contain dual possibilities. In its best sense, freedom may be used in self-transcendence and in the realization of meaning and purpose. Through the exercise of freedom, man is able to rise above his creaturely existence, create the new, and make history.<sup>4</sup> Yet, conversely,

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<sup>1</sup>"A Re-Interpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," Church Quarterly Review (January-March, 1949), CXLVII, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Essence is not a second realm of being in a supernatural sense, but rather a concept expressing a trans-historical dimension of life. It is not a realm of being or something existing before existence (as in Platonism) but rather potentiality. It describes 1) that basic quality in which all things participate, and 2) the basis of value - that from which existence feels estranged (or that from which it has "fallen"). (Systematic Theology, I, 202; "Existential Philosophy," p. 6). Tillich recognizes that Essence and Existence are abstractions and says that in reality they appear only in their distorted forms in the dynamic unity of life.

<sup>3</sup>This is Tillich's description of the basic nature of man. Man is finite freedom. Finite freedom is not a quality that man has; it is man - man in his essential structure. ("Man and Society in Religious Socialism," Christianity and Society (Fall, 1943), VIII, passim)

<sup>4</sup>This essential freedom separates man from nature. Nature is a unified process that unfolds without question. But man is not one with his environment. He rises above it, questions it, and makes demands upon it. (The Interpretation of History, p. 204).

freedom may be used to negate meaning. Through freedom, man may fall below his existence and, instead of realizing meaning, fall into non-being and meaninglessness. Through freedom, man is able to know universal principles and to act according to them. Yet, at the same time, through freedom he is able to contradict these principles and to fall under the sway of self-destructive compulsions.<sup>1</sup> Freedom may deny itself into servitude.

The actualization of man's freedom (and the self-contradictions this entails) is, for Tillich, the major presupposition for history.<sup>2</sup>

This basic, underivable cleavage in human existence underlies all human history and makes history what it is.<sup>3</sup>

Finite freedom, in becoming actual, marks the transition from essence (the structure of finite freedom) to existence (and the contradictions resulting from the realization of freedom).<sup>4</sup>

This, then, is man's predicament as the result of the actualization of his freedom: Man finds himself divided, experiencing a deep cleft through his very being. He knows that, through his self-transcendence, he is above history, transcending it in his freedom; yet at the same time he knows that he is in history, involved in nature and the natural processes. He is essentially free; yet he is existentially bound and in servitude, unable to realize the good. Because of his potential infinity, he shares in the heritage of being and experiences support from the Ground of all being. Nevertheless, he also shares in the heritage of non-being, and his life is insecure, constantly threatened with meaninglessness and anxiety. He knows

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<sup>1</sup>"Nature of Man: An Abstract" Journal of Philosophy (December, 1946) XLIII, p. 676; The Courage to Be, p. 52

<sup>2</sup>Propositions, Part V, p. 6 (6f.)

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 212

<sup>4</sup>The doctrine of the Fall symbolizes this transition. Through the exercise of freedom, man becomes involved in existential servitude. This is both a universal and an individual experience at the same time.

that because he came from nothing he must ultimately return to nothingness. He belongs to the *eternal* order and shares in its heights of creativity, forgiveness, power, and renewal. But he also belongs to the historical order and shares in its finiteness, sin, vanity, pride and weakness.<sup>1</sup> Such is the ambiguous situation in which man finds himself.<sup>2</sup>

Other elements within man's make-up could be added to this description such as the tension between the holy and the demonic, the creative and the destructive. Insofar as man is transparent to <sup>the</sup> ground of his being, he participates in the holy. But insofar as he confuses this holiness with the divine itself and makes the claim of having divine qualities or possessing unconditional truth, he succumbs to the demonic. Insofar as man participates in the forces of growth and propagation or does constructive work, he participates in the creative structure of life. But insofar as he has a "will to death" or makes use of another life to serve his own ends, he participates in the destructive character of existence. Both sides of each tension are inextricably mixed in man's being, for his life is never exclusively creative or destructive, divine or demonic.<sup>3</sup> All of these analyses serve to fill in the picture of man as a creature tragically divided.

Tillich thinks of man as being a microcosm of the universe. Man is, as it were, a window through which the whole of life may be understood.

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<sup>1</sup>The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>The actualization of man's freedom is also the clue to the disruption of other elements of man's nature. In his Systematic Theology, Volume I, Tillich gives an analysis of man's being in terms of polar structure. Besides the polarity of freedom of freedom-destiny already implied in the previous discussion, he discusses other polarities: vitality-intentionality, and individuality-universality. Underlying both is the polarity of self-world. Each pole has a tendency to pull away from its counterpart into separate and tragic actualizations (Freedom, becoming separated from destiny, becomes arbitrariness, etc.). Corresponding poles and tensions are found also in the structure of man's reason.

<sup>3</sup>Propositions, Part IV, pp. 8-10.



Or, to change the figure, he is a mirror in which the totality of being is reflected.

There are microcosmic qualities in every being, but man alone is microcosmos. In him the world is present not only indirectly and unconsciously, but directly and in conscious encounter.<sup>1</sup>

This basic correspondence between the human spirit and reality makes it possible for man to understand the ontological structure of the universe through an awareness of his own structure. The structural elements of man's being<sup>2</sup> are the same structural elements which appear, in lesser degree, in animate and inanimate life. Only in man, however, is the structure of being complete and actualized.

Man is the microcosm in whom all cosmic forces are potentially present, and who participates in all spheres and strata of the universe.<sup>3</sup>

Man is the key to the understanding of the universe because the potential and incompleting polarities of life are united in him and approachable through him. In other words, man is the door through which the deeper levels of existence are discernible. "Personal life alone . . . comprehends in itself all levels of Being, and represents the Existential situation of all beings."<sup>4</sup>

If man reflects in his nature the structure of the whole of life, the basic cleavages we have seen in man, then, must to some extent run straight through the whole of existence. This is what Tillich tries to show. Man, as we have noted, is that being who, on the basis of his potential infinity,

<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, p. 176

<sup>2</sup>See page 40, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup>The Courage to Be, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup>Propositions, Part III, p. 14.

is aware of his finitude. And "whoever has penetrated into the nature of finitude," says Tillich, "can find traces of finitude in everything that exists."<sup>1</sup> On this basis Tillich believes that "the immediate experience of one's own finitude reveals something of the nature of existence generally."<sup>2</sup>

Thus from the elaboration of a doctrine of man, we are led directly to an interpretation of existence in general, and particularly to a doctrine of nature.

### 3. The Interpretation of Nature

If it is true that man's immediate experience is an open door to the understanding of nature, the concepts describing our immediate experience must, to some degree, be applicable to the structure of being itself.

We have described man's structure as that of finite freedom and have noticed the basic cleft dividing man: the contradiction between his existential nature and his essential nature, or what he ought to be. Now can these same categories be applied to nature? Certainly not without qualification. We cannot ascribe human freedom to nature.<sup>3</sup> Nor does it seem to make sense to speak of nature as estranged from its essence. Quite the contrary, nature seems to be a smoothly-functioning organism, always acting in accordance with its essence and never in contradistinction to it. As far as we know, nature never experiences the demand of an "ought" over against

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<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 62.

<sup>2</sup>Idem. This method of approaching existence through man's self-awareness explains the predominance of the use of psychological terms to describe ontology. All existential philosophers have used this technique. Cf. Schopenhauer's idea of the Will as the ultimate principle of Being, Freud's Unconscious, and Heidegger's Dasein ("Existential Philosophy," pp. 57 ff.)

<sup>3</sup>Tillich steers clear of panpsychism. For this reason he speaks of spontaneity in nature instead of freedom.

what it "is." Yet, says Tillich, it is wrong to think of nature as a system of iron-clad law and order.<sup>1</sup> Modern physics has shown that there are elements of unpredictability in nature and that, far from being a mechanically-determined system, nature has the quality of indeterminacy and an openness toward the new.<sup>2</sup> This is not freedom in a human sense, but it is analogous to it and represents in nature, Tillich believes, a potential, undeveloped freedom. Creatures of nature have a structure of finite freedom similar to that found in man, though it is considerably undeveloped and is potential, not actual. Nature is unfulfilled spirit.<sup>3</sup>

In nature is imperfectly developed what in man is perfectly developed: finite freedom. What happens in man is representative for what happens in all beings: the tragic actualization of their finite freedom, however immersed in necessity this freedom may be.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The rationalistic view of nature has wrongly viewed nature solely in terms of physical Law. Modern technology follows this view and seeks to know nature merely in order to be able to control it. Meanwhile the vitalistic powers of nature are breaking loose and turning on personality to destroy it. A proper view of nature must take account, therefore, not only of Law, but of spontaneity as well. Spontaneity implies some subjectivity, however rudimentary. Even things, since they have some subjectivity, should not be treated as mere objects. The approach to nature, therefore, must be through sympathetic, intuitive union. If nature were just static it could be known by analysis, apart from union and participation. But because it is dynamic as well, decision is demanded. (The Interpretation of History, p. 62; see the discussion of sacraments later in this chapter).

<sup>2</sup>"Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," Journal of Religious Thought (Winter, 1946), III, p. 27. Tillich says elsewhere that the non-historical element in nature (the cycle of genesis and decay) is balanced by an historical one. Nature, too, participates in the irreversible forward movement of historical time. "The structure of the cosmos, of atoms, of stars, of biological substance, is changing in an unknown direction." (The Protestant Era, p. 114)

<sup>3</sup>Propositions, IV, p.4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 4



Nature is not just static as over against history as dynamic.<sup>1</sup> Tillich therefore believes that there is a structure in nature (that of spontaneity and Law) analogous to the structure of freedom and destiny in man.<sup>2</sup>

Although law does appear as one of the polar elements in the structure of nature, it is not something necessarily hostile to spontaneity. It is analogous to "destiny" in man's structure which, as the sum total of all past decisions, is the basis for the actualization of his freedom. Similarly in nature Law is in interdependence with spontaneity and "Law is law only because it determines spontaneous reactions."<sup>3</sup> Tillich points out that the term law as applied to nature is taken from human society. When applied to nature it does not indicate laws which can be obeyed or disobeyed in a human way. But just as human law does not remove freedom, so natural law does not cancel spontaneity. "The law of nature does not remove the reactions of self-centered Gestalten, but it determines the limits they cannot trespass."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>" . . . nature holds something within itself which is not to be determined by static and immutable laws." (Systematic Theology, I, 180)  
 "Historical dynamics becomes pure imagination if there are no dynamic qualities in nature. . . ." (The Interpretation of History, p. 163).

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 185.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 186. Closely correlated with this particular cleavage is what may be described as the separation of power and meaning in nature. Spontaneity is related to the element of "power" - the pure, naked vitality of nature. But nature is more than mere power. It also has a spiritual meaning, as we can see in the sacraments (See the discussion later in this chapter). That all life is not sacramental points to the fact that there is this additional demonic separation and ambiguity within nature (See The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 86).

If nature does have this polarity between spontaneity and law, then perhaps this is the basis for the estrangement and separation of nature from its ground of being and for the tragic finitude which Tillich sees expressed in animate and inanimate life. Perhaps this explains why Tillich, quoting Schelling, says, "Nature, also, mourns for a lost good."<sup>1</sup>

So much for the parallel between spontaneity in nature and freedom in man. But what about the cleft between essence and existence as found in man? Can this also be applied to nature? Tillich does not discuss this point, but the answer, it would seem, is obvious. If essence is used to describe the unity (in tension) of the polar elements of man's structure, and the term existence to describe the disruption and separation of these poles as actualized in the life process, then there must be an analogy to this in the realm of nature.<sup>2</sup> The polar elements of spontaneity and law must also tend, in existence, to go their separate ways in contradiction to their essential unity, for Tillich says that there is in nature something analogous to man's tragic actualization of finite freedom.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is appropriate, in terms of the analyses of spontaneity and law, essence and existence, to speak of a self-contradiction in nature similar to that found in man.

Looking at nature in this existential fashion through the eyes of his finitude and self-estrangement, man finds that it opens its deeper

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<sup>1</sup> See his sermon with this title in The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 76 f. The quotation from Schelling is found on page 82.

<sup>2</sup> "Under the impact of finitude, polarity becomes tension. Tension refers to the tendency of elements within a unity to draw away from one another, to attempt to move in opposite directions." (Systematic Theology, I, 198).

<sup>3</sup> Propositions, Part IV, p. 4.

levels of reality to him.<sup>1</sup> In the awareness of the tragic situation of his own life, man finds a sympathy with nature in its tragedy and the possibility of communion with it. This mystical awareness of nature's heart and soul discloses the fact that "A veil of sadness is spread over all nature, a deep, unappeasable melancholy over all life" (Schelling). Following the mythological theories of apocalyptic intuition (and St. Paul, especially Romans 8), Tillich sees nature held in the bondage of corruption, awaiting its salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Nature is not only glorious; it is also tragic. It is subjected to the laws of finitude and destruction. It is suffering and sighing with us.<sup>4</sup>

The Genesis account of the divine curse on the land following the fall of man expresses, in symbolic form, an indispensable truth: nature, because of man's sin, is subjected to the same existential situation of tragedy, finitude, and despair.<sup>5</sup> Thus nature, along with man, longs for salvation, wholeness, and completion.

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<sup>1</sup>Science is wrong in thinking it can know the secrets of nature through purely objective, disinterested analyses. Though not discounting the necessity of objectivity, Tillich believes that only through sympathetic intuition can nature be approached so as to yield its rarest treasures. (See page 43, n.1.) "We cannot accept the word of mathematical science as the last word about nature, although we do not thereby deny that it is the first word." (The Protestant Era, p. 113)

<sup>2</sup>The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 82. For other references to Tillich's dependence upon German nature-mysticism and Romanticism, see Interpretation of History, pp. 6-8.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1951) pp. 101 ff.

<sup>4</sup>The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup>Also involved in the cleft of existence are the "Categories of Apperception." The categories have a double relation: on the one hand, to being; on the other, to non-being. As related to non-being, temporality, without eternity, becomes mere transitoriness. Causality, without aseity, becomes total determinism. Accidentality without losing substance becomes a form of total self-loss. Spatial existence, without an immovable ground, becomes a form of total uprootedness. These are expressions of <sup>the</sup> anxiety of non-being as over against the courage which is rooted in being. (Systematic Theology, I, 192 ff; Propositions, Part III, pp. 6-8; see also The Courage to Be, passim.)



#### 4. The Interpretation of History

If man and nature are deeply cleft and separated from their ground of being, history must also share in this self-contradiction, for history is rooted in nature and also rests upon the activities of human groups in their self-interpretation and quest for the fulfillment of meaning. The fact that history does share in the cleavages of existence makes it imperative that history be studied in the light of this relationship. For Tillich, the question of the meaning of history is closely related to the question of the interpretation of existence, and is one element in that interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

To what extent can history be said to share in the cleavages within existence generally? The cleft in history is not, strictly speaking, the same as that in man, *i.e.* the disruption of essence and existence. For history is always existential. History appears only when, through the actualization of human freedom, there is a transition from essence to existence (as symbolized by the Fall). History takes place only in existence; there is no history in essence.

Nevertheless, the historical process expresses, in all of its manifestations, an abvious ambiguity. Through all of man's institutions there is at the same time both a realization of meaning and a denial of meaning. Each cultural activity, as a quest for meaning, meets with frustration and lack of fulfillment. Nowhere is there complete and pure actualization of meaning or perfect fulfillment. For this reason, history is constantly pointing beyond itself toward some final unambiguous fulfillment and unwittingly witnessing to a supra-historical realm in which the self-contradictions of history are overcome. So if there is not a cleft between history's essence

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<sup>1</sup>Propositions, Part V, p.5.

and its existence, there is at least the separation between what history is in its frustrations and failures, ambiguities and self-contradictions and what it is intended to be in its completion and perfection. Because of this cleft, Tillich believes that history points beyond itself to what may be symbolized as the Kingdom of God.

History, like all other aspects of life, shares in another basic cleavage within existence - the duality of seriousness and insecurity. On the one hand, history is supported by the eternal or the unconditional. It shares in the inexhaustibility of meaning and being; it must be taken seriously. On the other hand, history, like all being, shares in non-being and is always threatened by the possibility of plunging into the "abyss of nothingness."<sup>1</sup> It has a basic, underived insecurity. Because of this duality of seriousness and insecurity, as in the analysis above, history points beyond itself to its transcendent ground, <sup>in</sup> which seriousness finds its ultimate support and in which insecurity is overcome by "courage."<sup>2</sup>

But even more tragically, there is a cleft in history between the divine and the demonic forces. The term demonic, for Tillich, is not intended to express a world of spirits. It is not an ontological category, but rather refers to the "blind, chaotic element which is implied in all powerful creating movements and drives them toward final dissolution."<sup>3</sup> The demonic is ultimately rooted in the polarity of Abyss and Logos within the divine life. Normally power and form, abyss and logos, are held together in creative unity and tension within the divine. But in existence, the element of power, which is the creative

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 273, 271.

<sup>2</sup>"Courage" is a key concept in Tillich's thought. It is correlated with the sustaining power of being as, conversely, anxiety is correlated with the threat of non-being. (See: Systematic Theology, I, 193-198; Courage to Be, passim.)

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 85.



and vital basis of life, becomes separated from meaning and drives toward independent expressions. It must always take on form in order to exist (for there is no power apart from meaningful form) but it takes on form only to abuse it - to lead the form out beyond its normal expression into characteristics it cannot recognize as its own. The demonic, then, is a perversion of the divine creative power.<sup>1</sup> The divine and the demonic within man and existence meet on the stage of human history as their decisive battleground. But this does not mean that any single historical manifestation can be described as wholly divine or wholly demonic. Life is an ambiguous mixture of both elements in every moment of its being. There is no purely demonic institution, no purely divine organization. Every individual act and every social manifestation expresses both powers in varying proportions.<sup>2</sup>

The term demonic is used by Tillich to convey as well the idea that evil in history is not just due to individual sin but is rather a matter of structure.<sup>3</sup> It came vividly to his mind through the struggle for Religious Socialism in Germany that there are evil structures of society. In the dehumanization of the industrialized masses, he sense a supra-individual, even a supra-institutional, power against which the moral power of good will is ultimately of no avail. The wars and depressions of this century, he came to believe, are more than just bad accidents caused by a few wicked men. Rather, they express inescapable structural trends and are the actualization

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<sup>1</sup>This combination of creativity and destruction is particularly treacherous in the political realm. The really dangerous political powers are always creative as well as destructive, and it is difficult to know when a political power has gone beyond its proper claim for sacrifice and obedience in the creation of what it conceives to be the good. Hitler is a good example of a "Savior" whose creations became demonic.

<sup>2</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>As over against the view of the Enlightenment that evil is purely personal and therefore can be educated away through persuasion.



of demonic power.

But the demonic structures do not hold forth without opposition. They are checked by other structures which Tillich calls Gestalten of grace. A "Gestalt of grace" is a form in which the divine is particularly present, or rather, a form which is unusually transparent to its divine ground. The Church, in its ideal form, is such a structure, as also is the eucharist. A great work of art portraying the unity and harmony of life may manifest the divine and become a "Gestalt of grace." Individuals, too, as they are transparent to the divine may be forms through which grace is revealed in a striking manner. Christ himself is the most luminous "Gestalt of grace." These forms, however, do not embody grace in a tangible, objective way. Grace is perceptible in history only through faith.<sup>1</sup>

We have noted that Tillich regards history as the battlefield in which the demonic structures are pitted against the divine structures. But although the demonic is at work in all realms of existence, it is in history that its character becomes most visible; in history we see its greatest aggravations. "History," Tillich says, "is the main place for the manifestations of the demonic character of existence."<sup>2</sup> All the other clefts and tensions we have noticed in nature and in man also come to their most exaggerated expression in history. History is, as it were, the brightly-lighted stage on which the forces of good and evil give their most dramatic performances. On

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<sup>1</sup>The term "Gestalt of grace" is an intentional paradox. Grace must express itself in history as history's unconditional support. Yet grace can never, according to the Protestant view, be encased in any historical form. Cf. Tillich's concept of the "Protestant principle." Protestantism must take on form (i.e., be a "Gestalt") in order to have any "ground" on which to make its protest; yet it must always contest the claim of any conditional reality to embody the unconditional (or to possess - or dispense- grace in history).

<sup>2</sup>Propositions, Part V, page 6.

the plane of history, good and evil, creativity and destruction rise to their greatest intensity.<sup>1</sup> Above all other spheres of life, history, it would seem, stands in need of salvation.

##### 5. The Universal Quest for Salvation

We have seen how the doctrine of history has led (both logically and, in the case of Tillich, autobiographically) to the doctrine of man. In addition we have seen how the understanding of man and his microcosmic qualities led naturally to a doctrine of existence in general (and a doctrine of nature in particular), finally throwing new light on the character of history itself.

In all three areas (man, nature, and History) we have noted similar basic cleavages. The whole of life is separated from itself in tragic self-destruction and is estranged from the ground of its being. Further, we saw how man, nature, and history all have an element of self-transcendence and point beyond themselves to a supra-historical fulfillment. The whole of life, then, longs for salvation in the root meaning of the word ("being made whole").<sup>2</sup> There is the longing of nature for a Being beyond the self-destructive implications of the natural process. There is the longing of man for spiritual perfection beyond the ambiguities of this life. There is a longing of the bearers of history for a trans-historical fulfillment beyond the fragmentary actualization of history. How can these longings be fulfilled?<sup>3</sup> How can

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<sup>1</sup> Propositions, Part V, pp. 6,7 (7,8)

<sup>2</sup> See "Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> These questions exemplify the basic format of Tillich's systematic construction: the correlation of existential questions and theological answers. The existential analyses of frustration, ambiguity, and self-contradiction in all spheres of life lead to basic questions which are finally answerable only by Christian faith. In reason there is the quest for revelation; in being there is the quest for God; in existence there is the quest for the Christ; in life there is the quest for the Spirit; in history there is the quest for the Kingdom of God.





the cleavages in man, nature, and history be overcome? It is a basic element in Tillich's thought that the salvation of one is dependent upon the salvation of all. Life is a unity. Nature, man, and history interpenetrate and are mutually involved in tragedy and in the quest for salvation.

To begin with there is the mutual dependence of man and nature. Man is part of the physical world in his psychic as well as in his bodily nature. He is ultimately rooted in the soil and cannot escape the physical processes of life. Conversely, nature stands in a close relationship to man. Through the power of reason, man has become nature's master and has transformed the face of the earth in almost every conceivable fashion, from gardens to earth-scorching obliteration. The myth of the Fall pictures in symbolic form the mutual reliance of man and nature.

As nature, represented by the "Serpent," leads man into temptation, so man, by his trespassing of the divine law, leads nature into tragedy.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, it is unrealistic to speak of a transformation of man apart from the transformation of nature. It is idealistic, Tillich believes, to separate man and nature and to believe that man can come to fulfillment where nature is excluded. "Man and nature belong together in their created glory, in their tragedy, and in their salvation."<sup>2</sup> If nature is not transformed, how can man be transformed, for nature reaches into man; and if man is not transformed, how can nature be redeemed, for man's sin defaces nature? The

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<sup>1</sup>The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Tillich points out two insights which strengthen the possibility of a salvation for nature: 1) the interdependence of self and world given in Kant - the idea that the world is not the sum of things outside man, but is correlated to the self whose world it is (Cf. Systematic Theology, I, 261, "What happens in the microcosm happens by mutual participation in the macrocosm, for being itself is one."), and 2) the removal of mechanical determinism in physics and the possibility of openness toward the new ("Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," p. 27).



salvation of the one is interrelated with the salvation of the others.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, there is the interdependence of nature and history.

Though Tillich, in some ways, makes a sharp separation of nature from history<sup>2</sup> and believes that history cannot come into being except as time tears itself loose from space, and forward direction from the cyclical processes of nature, he comments, nevertheless, that "The unity of being between man and nature is more basic than their difference. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Nature, he believes, is the basis for history, just as it is the basis for man's being, and to separate history from nature and try to develop a separate metaphysic for each would lead to endless absurdities.<sup>4</sup> "Nature is the basis on which history moves and without which history would have no reality."<sup>5</sup> The mutual dependence of nature and history has always been a subject of apocalyptic vision, as exemplified in the expected reign of peace in the animal kingdom ("the lion and the lamb shall lie down together") and in the coming of "a new heaven and a new earth." Christian myths and legends also testify to this inter-relationship. The earth shakes when the Christ dies and quakes again when he is resurrected.

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<sup>1</sup>Nature's participation in salvation, according to Tillich, is an indispensable element in true sacramental thinking. A sacrament involves the idea that "natural objects can become bearers of transcendent power and meaning" (The Protestant Era, p. 114). "Nature is not the enemy of salvation. . . . as Calvinistic thinking is inclined to believe; rather, nature is a bearer and an object of salvation." (Idem). See the discussion of sacraments later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Piper is wrong in criticizing Tillich on the basis that his "historical conception of history remains that of an analogy to natural processes" (Recent Developments in German Protestantism, p. 144). Tillich declares that history is much more than just a continuation of natural processes (See: The Protestant Era, p. 278).

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 162 f.

<sup>5</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 122.

Stars and angels as well as men worship the Christ-child. And the symbol of the resurrection of the body points to the fact that man's final salvation involves more than an "immortal soul." His physical basis also shares in the resurrection. All of these symbols witness to the fact that "Nature. . . must be understood historically and in the context of the history of salvation."<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, there is the mutual dependence of history and man. This is the most obvious of all the interdependencies. Man, through his freedom and the quest for meaning, creates history. On the other hand, historical institutions have a tremendous influence upon the moulding of man's character and personality (indeed, as Tillich would point out in the case of industrialism, upon man's very being, whether he is "to be or not to be."). It is not quite so obvious, however, that the salvation of one is dependent upon the salvation of the other. Throughout most of its history, Christianity (due to the influence of Christian mysticism and Platonism) has concentrated upon the salvation of the individual, as if man could come to completion apart from the salvation of society and the fulfillment of history as a whole. We now realize, says Tillich, the inadequacies of such views. We know that man is rooted in history and therefore that it is unrealistic to conceive of his salvation apart from the salvation of history. Today, "historical consciousness forbids such individualism; for the same reason it forbids a dual predestination. It links our eternal destiny to our historical fate."<sup>2</sup> We feel today that "the destiny of the individual cannot be separated from the destiny of the whole

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>"History as the Problem of Our Period," pp. 260 f. Cf. Augustine's idea that one of the joys of Heaven is the possibility of looking into Hell to see the torments of the damned. Such a picture for Tillich would be a convincing argument against Heaven, for there can be no Heaven with the knowledge that others are suffering.



in which it participates."<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Tillich is suspicious of the doctrine of personal immortality, especially the idea that, immediately upon death, one is judged and his eternal destiny decided. Such views, Tillich believes, wrongly separate the individual from the universal guilt in which he is inescapably involved. We are, says Tillich, mutually involved in the fall and curse upon all creatures and all mankind. The eternal destiny of the individual can only be described in correlation with the destiny of all other individuals and with the destiny of the whole of history.<sup>2</sup>

But if the salvation of man is linked with the salvation of history, the converse is also true: there is no salvation of history apart from the redemption of man.<sup>3</sup> The prophetic interpretation of history has usually erred at this point by envisioning a fulfillment of history totally apart from any fulfillment of the individuals (especially those of previous generations) who created the historical process.<sup>4</sup> Both Christian mysticism and propheticism fail to see the interdependence of man and history. Both, at opposite extremes,

<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 270.

<sup>2</sup>This would seem to suggest that Tillich is a universalist. Mythologically speaking, he is; but existentially speaking (if such a distinction may be drawn) he believes that "finite freedom cannot be forced into unity with God" and that freedom can ultimately resist God's love and bring self-destruction upon itself (Systematic Theology, I, 284). But the discussion of this issue seems irrelevant in the context of Tillich's thought, since he entirely dismisses the idea that there is any real, objective end to the historical process or any second realm of being where such universal salvation could have any reality. (See Chapter VI - "Evaluation and Criticism").

<sup>3</sup>Tillich seems here to have modified his views since the publication of The Interpretation of History in 1936. (The German article from which this section of the book was taken, however, was first published in 1929.) His view then was that "the question of the individual after death" stands "outside of genuine eschatology" (p. 281). But perhaps Tillich really meant in this statement that individual fulfillment in terms of an immortal soul in a second realm of being is what lies outside the question of eschatology. If so, it would explain the reason for the rejection of this concept in his eschatological construction. (Note: since the writing of this footnote, Tillich has personally confirmed this interpretation just given.)

<sup>4</sup>"Eschatology and Personal Destiny," Unpublished manuscript, in possession of James Luther Adams, Chicago Theological Seminary.



miss the double truth that "History cannot be fulfilled without the fulfillment of the bearers of history," and further that "the bearers of history cannot reach their ultimate aim as long as history has not reached it."<sup>1</sup> In eschatological terms this means that the Kingdom of God (salvation in a social sense) is in correlation with the eternal destiny of the individual (Eternal life, Immortality, Resurrection - or in whatever symbols it may be expressed).

## 6. Man and the New Being

We have seen how man, nature, and history are each dependent upon the salvation of the other. If all of them are mutually involved in the quest for salvation and fulfillment, then whatever fulfills the salvation of one would, so it seems, also bring salvation to the other realms of being.

Concerning the salvation of man and nature, for instance, Tillich states that although they are mutually interrelated with reference to their salvation, the turning power and the point at which salvation may be actualized is in man.<sup>3</sup> The redemption of history, likewise, seems to focus ultimately

<sup>1</sup>"Eschatology and Personal Destiny," p.1

<sup>2</sup>Tillich believes that the following symbols best express man's part in the eternal destiny:

- a) Resurrection of the body: because it emphasizes the individual element - the participation of the whole, concrete individual in eternal destiny,
- b) Metempsychosis (or trans-migration): because it emphasizes the historical element - development and progress toward the eternal destiny,
- c) Spiritual immortality of the soul: because it emphasizes the spiritual element - the super-individual and universal character of man's destiny.

No one symbol is to be taken in isolation from the others. On the other hand, Tillich rejects the following symbols as being inadequate:

- a) Return of the individual to creative life (Naturalism)
- b) Eternity of the active mind alone (Averroes, Hegel)
- c) Absorption of the individual into the Absolute (Buddhism)

This rather detailed outline is given here because the article from which it is taken ("Eschatology and Personal Destiny") is not readily available; Cf. also Propositions, Part V, p. 15 (17f.)

<sup>3</sup>"Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," p. 22; Shaking of the Foundations, p. 83. (Cf. Romans 8:19, "Even the creation waits with eager longing for the sons of man to be revealed," cited in Shaking of the Foundations, p. 81)

upon the redemption of man. Through man, then, the universe as a whole is to gain salvation.

At this point Tillich utilizes again the concept of man as the microcosm who stands at the meeting point of the cosmic forces and "is called to unite them in the whole of nature by knowledge and control. . . ." <sup>1</sup> But although the salvation of the universe hinges on man, this does not mean that man is the cosmic hero who rescues the world from darkness. Quite the contrary. Man is not able to save himself, let alone to save nature and history. Nature and history are in their tragic predicament precisely because of the sin of man, as the ancient myths declare. Universal salvation centers on man; but since man is unable to effect it, it is possible only through the "man from above." <sup>2</sup> Nature, man, and history long for the "New Being" who alone is able to save and to make all things new and whole. <sup>3</sup>

The salvation of the universe, then, hinges on man only because the New Being appears as man and because man alone among all creatures is able

<sup>1</sup>"Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," p. 22f.

<sup>2</sup>Man's inability to save himself is expressed in the following set of propositions:

- a) "Since Existence is not only freedom but also fate, no act of freedom can liberate from its contradictions and its self-destructive consequences. . . ."
  - b) "Since Existence is the result of a transition from Essence by actualized freedom, no return to Essence by elevation above Existence is possible."
  - c) "Existence can be overcome only by the manifestation and actualization of Essential Being under the conditions of Existence."
- (Propositions, Part III, p. 9).

<sup>3</sup>The concept of Christ as the New Being places Tillich's Christology squarely in a soteriological framework. Tillich objects to approaching Christology as a metaphysical problem, as in the relationship between the finite and the infinite (in terms of a "higher chemistry"). Instead, it should be approached as a soteriological problem, *i.e.*, as to how essential Godmanhood can appear in existence with transforming power. ("A Re-Interpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," Church Quarterly Review (January-March, 1949), CXLVII, p. 139).



fully to respond to the New Being and to participate directly and consciously in his transforming power. Because man is a microcosm comprehending in himself the existential situation and estrangement of all beings, the New Being appears as personal life<sup>1</sup> in order, through man, to save the whole of existence.

But the fact that universal salvation centers around man does not mean that we are back to the former views of individual salvation that Tillich criticizes. Rather, the salvation of man is seen as the center of a universal salvation. "The end of redemption is the 'New Being,' cosmically, in nature, man, and history."<sup>2</sup> Tillich's emphasis is upon salvation as an objective, universal event in which man participates along with nature, history, and the totality of being.

Salvation is primarily a cosmic event and. . . the individual is an object of salvation only insofar as he is called upon to participate subjectively in the objective and universally valid salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Because the salvation of the universe centers around man, this does not mean that God thereby depreciates the universe. On the contrary, "He deals with man because He has His purpose with the universe, of which man is a part."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, says Tillich, the New Being could appear only in a human life, for only in personal life is the structure of being complete, the self and the world in correlation (Propositions, Part III, p. 14). There is, then, an essentially humanistic element in the doctrine of the Incarnation ("A Re-Interpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 143 f.).

The value of the term "New Being" is that it calls attention to the transforming of existence generally as well as to the transformation of man. The "old" being (existence) is transformed by Him who makes all things "new." ("A Re-Interpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 133). Other values in this concept are 1) it implies that Jesus is the Christ in the totality of his being, and not just in his words and deeds, 2) it indicates a real transformation of existence, and 3) it connotes the possible participation of individuals and history in this transformation, and 4) it has eschatological implications ("A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," pp. 146-148).

<sup>2</sup> "Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," p. 26 (*italics mine*).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> A paraphrase of Tillich's thought by Otto Piper in Recent Developments in German Protestantism, p. 138 f.



## 7. The Universal Transformation Through the New Being

If salvation, then, is a universal, objective event involving the transformation of the whole of existence, and if the New Being really makes all things new, what specific transformations can we point to in man, in nature and in history?

Man, as we noted in a previous section, is a finite creature conscious of being separated from the infinite. Deep in his nature is a cleft between what he is, existentially, and what he ought, essentially, to be. His essential freedom constantly betrays itself into existential servitude; his creativity is poured into destructive channels; and his divine ground is used to support demonic manifestations. Man is infinitely estranged and tragically divided. He is separated from himself, from his fellows, from nature and from God. In what way does the New Being bridge this tragic separation and make men whole?

Christ as the New Being represents a human person in whom all of the cleavages of life are overcome. As the Mediator, he overcomes the separation between finitude and infinity, God and man. The concept of the Mediator, however, is not intended to mean a third reality between God and man, but rather the expression of their essential unity and interdependence.<sup>1</sup> As essential Godmanhood, Christ appears as man under the conditions of existence revealing the fact that God and man, in their essential relationship, belong together.<sup>2</sup>

It is not just the estrangement between God and man that Christ bridges, but as well the separation between the various poles of man's nature which, in existence, become antagonistic and mutually destructive.<sup>3</sup> Christ

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<sup>1</sup> Propositions, Part III, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> See page 40, n.2.

overcomes the estrangement between self and world, and between freedom and destiny, individuality and community, intentionality and vitality.<sup>1</sup> Further, all the threats of time and space, causality and substance, the hazard of non-being, and the menace of meaninglessness fail to disrupt his essential structure of being or his complete unity with the Father. The necessary seclusion of individuality never becomes distorted into isolation; the essential self-relatedness of being never yields to self-centeredness; the loneliness of life never gives way to the horror of death; inescapable human error refuses to become deliberate lie; unfulfilled want never becomes self-dividing frustration; doubt, counteracted by faith, never becomes meaninglessness.<sup>2</sup> As essential being, appearing without distortion under the conditions of existence, Christ is "the paradoxical anticipation of the ultimate perfection."<sup>3</sup>

To what extent may Christ's victory over existence become ours? Christ's benefits for mankind can best be expressed through reference to the cross. The cross of Christ symbolizes a necessary dual movement between God and man which Tillich describes as 1) the self-surrender of the infinite to the finite (God to man), and 2) the self-surrender of the finite to the infinite (man to God). Through the cross, Christ makes a representative sacrifice (of the finite to the infinite) for the whole of mankind. As all were involved in Adam's fall, so, through the cross and resurrection, all share in his victory and in his perfect union with the Father. The cross is mankind's representative response to God. Mankind thus participates in Christ's redemptive work - but not in an automatic or mechanical way. Christ's self-surrender is not a substitute for our own self-surrender. "Genuine representation

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<sup>1</sup>"A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 144

<sup>2</sup>Propositions, Part III, pp. 6-8.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 262.



implies the participation of those who are represented in the reality that represents them."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, although the redemption of life is a cosmic and objective event, there is no real transformation of man apart from his response to the New Being. This, however, does not mean that Christ is just a moral example whom we are to emulate. Christ, for Tillich, is always much more than just a human possibility.<sup>2</sup> Though, as man, he courageously sacrifices himself to God, at the same time, God is uniquely present in him. Christ is always an incursion from the divine and never solely an eruption from within history. Christ's perfection, then, is not something that we can attain, but is through and through a paradoxical manifestation.

We are transformed, therefore, not through our own moral endeavor, but only as we participate in the reality of this New Being and in the Community of the New Being which he establishes. But we may share in the power of his victory not only through the reality (gestalt) of the Church, but as well through his real presence with us, for Christ is our contemporary as much as he was the contemporary of the disciples.

The Christian way is to have a continuous connection with the reality which has happened. . . . We are contemporaries with Christ. . . . The first disciples had no advantage before all others in this respect. If they had, the universality of the Christian faith would be destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

The transformation of man through union with Christ, however, is always incomplete and imperfect. It is, in fact, more in terms of anticipation and expectation than in terms of visible, tangible results. It shares in the duality constantly referred to by Tillich of "already" and "not yet," or of "reality" as over against "expectation." The New Being is a reality in history -

<sup>1</sup>Propositions, Part III, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>"The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Christian Faith", Monday Forum Talk, February 28, 1938, given at Union Theological Seminary. (Unpublished manuscript in possession of James Luther Adams.), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 248.



even a sacramental reality- yet, like Grace,<sup>1</sup> it always remains transcendent and can never be confined or localized. On the other hand, the New Being is expectation. But this is not just the bare anticipation of something entirely future. The faith that he is to come again is based on the fact that he already has come. True expectation, says Tillich, is possible only on the basis of partial possession.<sup>2</sup>

The New Being, then, is both "here" and "not here." The duality remains; we both possess and do not possess Him. Therefore all transformation is fragmentary and incomplete, making us look ever forward and upward to the complete fulfillment of the eschaton. Perhaps the best expression of this paradox of "having" and "not having" is the doctrine of Justification. Though we are conscious of being accepted, it is an acceptance in spite of what we are; our guilt and sin continue. We are transformed, but more in terms of anticipation than in terms of tangible results.

Another concept expressing the transformation of human existence by Christ is that of "Eternal Life." Tillich prefers this doctrine of Eternal Life (or Resurrection<sup>4</sup>) to that of Immortality, which is usually thought of as exclusively future and grounded in a supposed substantial quality of the soul.<sup>5</sup> Eternal Life, Tillich affirms, does not mean something to come at the end of time, for such an idea is self-contradictory.<sup>6</sup> The eternal is equally

<sup>1</sup>See page 50, n.1.

<sup>2</sup>"Anticipation without possession is religiously as impossible as nearness without presence; for nobody can anticipate the ultimate without being touched by it" (The Protestant Era, p. 248).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 247 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Resurrection, says Tillich, has nothing to do with the idea of dead bodies leaving their graves. "Resurrection happens now, or it does not happen at all. It happens in us and around us" ("The New Being," Religion in Life, (Autumn, 1950) XIX, 517).

<sup>5</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 188, 276.

<sup>6</sup>The end of time is itself a time-determined thought. One would have to stand in some sort of time to conceive that time had "ended." Such an end would be only a discontinuance and not a real end (The Interpretation of History, p.280).

near to (and distant from) all moments of time. Further, says Tillich, Eternal Life does not mean an existence in some second realm of being above this one. "Our empirical world is the only existing world."<sup>1</sup> Eternal life, therefore, is a quality of life in the here and now - a new dimension in relation to the ultimate. It expresses "the eternal participation of the individual in the ultimate fulfillment."<sup>2</sup> But though Tillich is primarily interested in Eternal Life as a present possession, he does indicate that it also has a future reference.<sup>3</sup> It, too, shares in the duality of "already" and "not yet."<sup>4</sup>

The fact that man can participate now in the ultimate fulfillment gives his life new meaning.<sup>5</sup> Eternal Life as a present reality means that there is infinity of meaning for each of his finite acts. Although everything we do participates in *non-being* and has a transitory character, although the exercise of finite freedom leads inevitably to tragedy and frustration, by means of this new dimension, man is enabled to rise above the incompleteness of existence and realize that each of his creative acts has infinite significance. The transitory character of whatever we achieve does not prevent it from being a vehicle of infinite meaning.

All of these areas we have been discussing are facets of man's transformation through the power of the New Being. Tillich's existential analysis of man as a microcosm, it will be remembered, enabled us to see

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<sup>1</sup>"But," he goes on to say, "it is precisely this empirical world which includes within itself the strange contradiction between what it is actually and what it is existentially." (A Reinterpretation, etc., p. 142). This experience accounts for the fact that Tillich can conceive of the supra-historical or the transcendent (as wholeness, completion, perfection of meaning, etc.) without positing a second realm of being. The contents of Christianity, Tillich says, are symbols for the transcendent meaning of the one world of experience." (The Attack of Dialectical Materialism on Christianity, The Student World, XXXI, 122).

<sup>2</sup>"Eschatology and Personal Destiny,"

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>For a critique of this future reference, see Chapter VI.

<sup>5</sup>"The transcendent cannot be expressed in terms of being but only in terms of meaning" ("The Kingdom of God and History," p. 113).



new dimensions in nature and history (in terms of estrangement and the longing for salvation). Similarly, his understanding of the transformation of the microcosm should shed light on the transformation of nature and history through the New Being.

What is nature's share in the transforming power of the New Being? In what way does Christ overcome the estrangement of nature from itself and from the ground of its being?

Tillich has not gone specifically into the question of how the essential unity between spontaneity and freedom can be restored (paralleling the unification through Christ of the various polarities in man's nature). Although he comments that nature, through the New Being, is liberated from its ambiguities and from its bondage to the demonic forces, he does not give any details.<sup>1</sup> He has, however, in a more general way, a great deal to say about how nature, through the sacraments, participates in the power of the New Being.<sup>2</sup> If the whole of reality is touched by the New Being, then nature, too, is included in the "History of Salvation" and must, in however limited a way, be able to witness to its Savior. Sacraments, Tillich believes, are the way in which nature is enabled to become transparent to its ground of being. A genuine sacrament, however, reveals not only something about God or Christ, but also something about the "power of being" of the natural object which is its bearer.

Everything in nature, Tillich believes, has an inherent "power of being" (Seinsmächtigkeit) which makes it what it is and without which it could not exist.<sup>3</sup> This "power of being" in things has been tragically neglected in

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, pp. 114, 125.

<sup>2</sup>Tillich's sacramentalism is greatly influenced by the Berneuchener movement in which he participated.

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 122. Not only everything in nature but as well every individual and community has its "power of being" which is its unique form (The Protestant Era, p. 129). God Himself is the ultimate "Power of being."



recent centuries through the application of science and technology. Things, losing their "power of being" have become objects to be mastered and controlled. (Tillich calls this process "thingification.") Industrial technology forces forms on things from the outside, contrary to their original "power of being" so that they no longer reveal any sign of their ultimate origin or transcendent ground.<sup>1</sup> There has been a wide-scale violation of things in our modern technical civilization.<sup>2</sup> The loss of a mystical (eros) attitude toward nature has been accompanied by a marked decline in sacramental thinking.<sup>3</sup> But through a sacramental approach this "power of being" is regained and the "power of being" in things is allowed to point beyond itself to the ultimate Power of Being.

The elements of the sacraments, then are not just arbitrary symbols which could be replaced or dispensed with. The water of baptism has a "special character or quality, a power of its own."<sup>4</sup> "By virtue of this natural power, water is suited to become the bearer of a sacral power. . . ."<sup>5</sup> There is, then, an intrinsic relation between water and the sacrament of baptism. The same is true of the bread and wine of the eucharist. Both bread and wine have

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<sup>1</sup>Die Sozialistische Entscheidung, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>"The lines and colors of most things used for commercial manufacture do not express the true nature of the material of which they are made, nor do they express the purpose for which they are produced." But Tillich goes on to say that this situation is being recognized and that many are now "trying to rediscover the inherent power and beauty of the materials they use and of the products they create." (The Protestant Era, p. 137)

<sup>3</sup>This in turn has been responsible for the loss of the masses, especially by the Protestant Church. Protestantism has over-emphasized the conscious appeal of the Word. Sacraments are needed to appeal to the unconscious. (The Protestant Era, p. 228)

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Tillich is probably indebted here to Paracelsus. (See "The Relation of Religion and Health: Historical Considerations and Theoretical Questions," Review of Religion (May, 1946), X, 358.)

inherent natural powers which are recognized in the "realistic" sacrament. They point beyond themselves to the symbolic meaning of the eucharist; this is their primary purpose. But they also point to the natural powers which nourish man and provide the support for the highest achievements of the spirit.<sup>1</sup> If this latter aspect alone were recognized, it might be thought that the powers of nature by themselves would make sacraments possible. Actually sacraments are possible only when the powers of nature are brought into the context of the history of salvation.<sup>2</sup> Through sacraments, natural power becomes united with spiritual power. Nature, apart from the New Being, is pure power and vitality. But through the New Being this natural power is reunited with its inherent spiritual power.<sup>3</sup> Nature is made whole and becomes a bearer of the holy; it becomes transparent to its ground of being.

It is to be noted, however, that transparency to the holy is not to be misunderstood as transmutation into the holy. Over against the Roman Catholic tradition in which Grace is interpreted as tangible reality, Tillich holds that Grace appears only through a sacrament but not in it.<sup>4</sup> To transubstantiate a substance into a holy object would be to elevate a conditioned reality to Unconditional power. This, for Tillich, is blasphemy and demonization. Protestant sacramental thinking must insist that the forms through which Grace appears never themselves become unconditional, but continue to point beyond themselves. Grace, as we have noted in other connections, is never allowed to become "capsuled" or encased in history. It is both "here" and "not here."

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 114, 125.

<sup>3</sup>The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>"The Protestant Vision," Chicago Theological Seminary Register, (March, 195), XL, 11.



The transformation of nature, then, like the transformation of man, is both present and future, "already" and "not yet." The salvation and wholeness of nature (the unity of natural power and spiritual meaning) expressed in sacraments is limited to specific forms and moments. Grace in nature is far from being a permanent reality. Nature, along with man, awaits the final transformation - "a new heaven and a new earth" which, it is to be repeated, is not to be expected as a future event but is instead a symbol pointing to the mysterious depths of our present world.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, what is history's share in the universal salvation? How is the historical process transformed by the New Being? It will be remembered that the most exaggerated expressions of the demonic cleavages in existence were noted as most visible in their historical manifestations. Conversely, Tillich believes that it is in the sphere of history that the transforming effects of the New Being are most visible.

The most apparent expression of salvation in history is what Tillich calls the "theonomous society" - a society that is transparent to the eternal in all of its major expressions. In European history the best expression of such a period is found in the early and high Middle Ages. In this period there was a spontaneous acknowledgment of a spiritual center for the whole of life and a real sense of spiritual community. Such a society is made possible by the New Being in history and especially through the Community of the New Being, or the Church. This Community, however, does not "lord it over" secular culture or dictate its forms of expression. (This would be "heteronomy" and not "theonomy"<sup>2</sup>) Instead, the Church serves as a standard for society as a whole and demonstrates how the society's own autonomous forms and daily activities may express the holy which is the ultimate power behind these forms.

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<sup>1</sup>The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter IV for a discussion of these forms of society.



Another concept dealing with the transformation of history by the New Being is that of the kairos (the "fulness of time," or "the right time").<sup>1</sup> This concept is closely correlated with the idea of a theonomous society, for in the acceptance of its kairos, a society may take an important step toward the actualization of theonomy.<sup>2</sup> Christ as the New Being is the unique kairos and thus sets the standard for other such realizations. Other kairoi occur whenever special demands are felt in a special moment, calling for specific decisions for the Unconditional. Not everything is possible, true, or demanded at every moment of time, but each time has its own vocations and its own specific demonic powers which may be overcome.<sup>3</sup> Every kairos marks a turning point in history. Christ as the unique kairos split history in B.C. and A.D.- into a period of preparation and a period of reception. So, too, every derivative kairos becomes the center for a similar division. On the basis of the kairos concept, the periodization of history becomes possible.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the Reformation marks the unique turning point in modern history. Specific demonic forces were challenged and overcome; consequently preceding events could be seen as preparation for the Reformation and subsequent events as reception of the message of this particular kairos.<sup>5</sup> Other examples in recent history are the Enlightenment and the Counter Reformation.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Kierkegaard's doctrine of the Augenblick - the moment in which eternity touches time and demands a personal decision. ("Existential Philosophy," p. 61) Tillich, however, stresses the social aspects of the tension-laden moment.

<sup>2</sup>The kairos doctrine expresses a duality between Judgment and Creation (Kritik und Gestaltung); it is a turning-point in which the eternal both shatters and transforms history. The kairos idea represents Tillich's synthesis of Lutheranism and Socialism (the "critical" - that all action is sin, plus the "constructive" - the prophetic demand for social action).

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 38. There is nothing automatic about the kairos. It is a pregnant moment which may either be seized or neglected. If proper decisions and choices are made, creative forces may be loosed; if the wrong choice or no decision is made, then the kairos is lost and destructive forces reign.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. xxxiv.

<sup>5</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 123.

Although both concepts (theonomy and kairos) connote the transformation of history by the New Being, both also express the incompleteness of any historic transformation. Even the most perfect theonomous society, Tillich believes, is far from the Kingdom of God. Theonomy, of necessity, moves in the direction of heteronomy (the domination of the spiritual or political elements of society over the others) for there is an inevitable tendency to try to preserve the achievements of a theonomous age. Thus the good that is reached becomes legalized; the artistic forms become an absolute, domineering standard; free expression and the impulse for creativity in new channels is thwarted. The society becomes static and immobile, provoking, in turn, autonomous reactions. As Tillich sees it, autonomy and heteronomy are always in dialectical tension, with theonomy as the synthesis of the two. But, contrary to Hegel's dialectic, the synthesis always breaks, and the dialectical process moves on to new manifestations. There is no final stage in which the dialectical tension ceases.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of the kairos also expresses, in a similar way, the fact that historical transformations remain incomplete. For the kairos always represents an ecstatic moment in time, never a prolonged period.<sup>2</sup> The kairos, like Grace, cannot be confined to history. Although particular expressions of the demonic may be met and conquered as the particular vocation of the kairos, the demonic kingdom as a whole still stands. "The demonic is subdued in actual victories from time to time, but it is never extirpated."<sup>3</sup> Further, every manifestation of the power of God in history stimulates the

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<sup>1</sup>James Luther Adams, "Tillich's Concept of the Protestant Era," The Protestant Era (U.S. edition), pp. 304 f.; See also James Luther Adams, "Tillich's Interpretation of History," The Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 296-302.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, pp. 87 f.

<sup>3</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 126.



demonic forces at the same time that it overcomes particular evils.<sup>1</sup> Therefore salvation in history is always fragmentary, and history, like man and nature, must look beyond itself for the complete and perfect fulfillment; its ambiguities and failures to achieve completed and permanent meaning point history beyond itself toward the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is, in a sense, an all-embracing concept including the fulfillment of man and nature as well as that of history. Man's fulfillment is included in it, for men are the subjects of the kingdom; nature, too, is included as symbolized in the "new heaven and a new earth" associated with its advent. As with the other eschatological symbols, however, the Kingdom of God is not to be expected as a future event in time and space or at the end of time.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the Kingdom of God symbolizes the purification of history's distorted meanings, the fulfillment of history's ambiguous quests, and the unification of all the dispersed embodiments of meaning which take place in historical acts and institutions.<sup>3</sup> The Kingdom, Tillich believes, represents the prolongation into the absolute of realities already appearing in history in a fragmentary and ambiguous way. This is the meaning of Tillich's puzzling statement that "There is nothing in the ultimate that is not in history."<sup>4</sup> In other words, there is nothing in the eschaton that is not

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<sup>1</sup>For this reason Tillich puts little trust in the doctrine of progress. There may be progress in technical and political spheres, even in the humanization of relationships. But there is no progress in the moral realm or in respect to the creative works of culture ("The Kingdom of God and History," p. 112; The Interpretation of History, p. 56; Cf. Tillich's concept of the "ambiguity of the good," mentioned earlier).

<sup>2</sup>Continental eschatology, by taking the "end" in a literal and temporal way, is in danger of returning to a "pre-Renaissance geocentrism, though not in astronomical terms" ("The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development," Theology Today (October, 1949), VI, 309.)

<sup>3</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 113; Propositions, Part V, pp. 7ff.

<sup>4</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 279.



already in history in a partial and incomplete sense and that there is no fulfillment in the Kingdom that is not intended to be actualized in the historical process. "The Kingdom of God therefore embraces everything in the course of history as its transcendent meaning."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the ambiguities and distortions of history belong to a supra-historical unity and fulfillment means that they already have a share in the Kingdom of God and thus that the Kingdom has a present as well as a future reference. The Kingdom of God symbol, therefore, shares the duality already mentioned in relation to other eschatological concepts of "already" and "not yet," for it is both in history and beyond it. The Kingdom reaches into history and is established through history, but it is never completely actualized and always remains transcendent.<sup>2</sup> In setting his own views over against those of Barth, Tillich comments:

"At hand" means that it is here and not here, it is "in your midst," but it cannot be seen and handled. It is qualitatively different from everything that is known to us. But with this distinctively qualitative difference: it breaks into our world.<sup>3</sup>

Further, the fact that every ambiguous and frustrated meaning participates in the perfect fulfillment serves to give infinite meaning to every historical actualization of the good, no matter how incomplete or limited it may be. Paralleling the earlier discussion in which it was seen that every individual achievement (in spite of its transitoriness) has a share in the ultimate meaning, Tillich comments that the same thing applies in the wider, historical scene.

In every historical event in past and future there is a relationship to an ultimate fulfillment, which lends meaning to relative and conditioned fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup>"The Church and Communism," Religion in Life (Summer, 1937), VI, 355; Systematic Theology, I, 268; "The Kingdom of God and History," p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>"What is Wrong with Dialectical Theology?" Journal of Religion (April, 1935), XV, 143.

<sup>4</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 278.

Or, as Tillich says elsewhere, "history in each of its moments, in eras of progress and eras of catastrophe, contributes to the ultimate fulfillment of creaturely existence. . . ." <sup>1</sup> This insight serves to give an absolute meaning and final validity to the historical process in contradistinction to all supernaturalism in which the historical process is depreciated or disregarded. <sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there is no completeness of meaning within this temporal process. The partial fulfillments, frustrations, and ambiguities of history point (for faith) beyond themselves to their unity and completion in the Kingdom of God. History, along with man and nature looks toward the ultimate "restoration of all things."

#### 8. The Restoration of All Things

The phrase the "restoration of all things" can be used to summarize the ultimate transformation of man, nature, and history.

The Kingdom of God in its transcendent reference is described by Tillich as the universal unity and perfection of all being. <sup>3</sup> (This includes the unity of man with man, social group with social group, man with nature, and nature with itself; the term 'perfection' includes perfect justice and community, the fulfillment of individuals according to their uniqueness, and even the salvation of time and space. <sup>4</sup>) At other times he speaks of the renovation or restitution of the world and of regeneration in a cosmic sense as universal transformation (prior to its meaning in a personal or moral sense). But the symbol "restoration of all things" can be used to cover most of these meanings.

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<sup>2</sup>Barthianism, according to Tillich, holds that the meaning of existence is fulfilled entirely beyond history and independently of human activity ("What is Wrong With Dialectical Theology?" p. 142 ff. Tillich's views on Barth himself, however, have changed since the publication of this article. For this reason Tillich did not want this essay published in The Protestant Era.)

<sup>3</sup>Propositions, Part V, p. 14 ff. (15).

<sup>4</sup>Time, according to Tillich, is also involved in the ambiguities of existence. In the ultimate fulfillment, time is elevated to eternity and its disrupted moments are brought into a supra-historical unity (Propositions, Part V, p.15).

<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 267.



The idea of a "restoration of all things" needs to be protected against misrepresentation and distortion. Restoration might be misconstrued as meaning a return to some previous stage of existence. Tillich's use of the concept "Essence" does at times seem to suggest something of this sort. He cautions frequently, however, that essence is not to be conceived as some previous state of existence. It is not something existent at all; it is to be thought of primarily in terms of potentiality or in terms of the "ought" as over against what "is." The idea of a return to the state of essence or original perfection is also a falsification of the picture. Tillich's ultimate fulfillment has nothing to do with a Golden Age or with anything static taken as a norm. The "restoration of all things" is more a dynamic fulfillment in which the potentialities of essence become actualized and, in the process, produce the absolutely new and novel (beyond even the potentialities of essence). Original perfection (as implied in the concept of Essence) is an uncontested, undecided perfection and innocency. The perfection of the eschaton, however, is of a much higher sort. It transcends both existence and essence. Its superiority over existence (and its self-destructive clefts) is obvious. But what is meant by a state higher than essence? As we said, essence is to be thought of as potentiality. In terms of a personal quality, goodness, for instance, this would mean an original, uncontested goodness. But the goodness of the eschaton is not undecided or uncontested; it is goodness which has withstood the temptations of life and risen above them. In terms of history, a similar dynamic fulfillment is expressed in the symbol of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not just the restoration of some original order - a timeless and tensionless bliss. Such an idea, Tillich says, "is an abstraction whose roots lie in a static conception of transcendence."<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God,

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<sup>1</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 117.



he goes on to say

is . . . not a system of eternal essentialities whose realization was given in the Creation, was lost in the Fall, and was regained in Redemption. The Kingdom of God is the dynamic fulfillment of the ultimate meaning of existence against the contradictions of existence.<sup>1</sup>

The final fulfillment (in both personal and social life) is a fulfillment of the ultimate and not of the origin.

The figure of Christ as the New Being expresses a similar fulfillment and helps to fill out the picture. The New Being also is a creation beyond both existence and essence.<sup>2</sup> Christ is essential man appearing under the conditions of existence (including all that this means in the way of temptation, suffering, anxiety, etc.) without any transformation of his essential unity with the Father. His goodness and perfection represent, therefore, not an undecided and uncontested innocence, but a purity and unity of life which has triumphantly withstood every finite existential condition without succumbing to distortion. In this way he overcomes existence and is able to be the New Being.

Another possible misinterpretation of the phrase "restoration of all things" would be to take it as meaning a universal salvation in the sense that God will finally, through persuasion or power, overcome every finite will. Such a view, Tillich believes, means a weakening of ultimate responsibility and is an underestimation of the absolute seriousness of human freedom.<sup>4</sup> God took a risk in giving men finite freedom - the possibility that this freedom could ultimately be turned against Him in final rejection of His love.<sup>5</sup> Man, then, is

<sup>1</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>"A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 142.

<sup>3</sup>See the discussion of universalism, p. 55, n.2. Fulfillment, according to Tillich, is impossible apart from freedom. "In eternity fulfillment cannot be enforced." (The Interpretation of History, p. 283).

<sup>4</sup>"Redemption in Cosmic and Social History," p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 269.

not irresistably saved; he can cut himself off from the ground of his being and be left to the non-being which he chooses.<sup>1</sup>

One final distortion to be guarded against has already been repeatedly recognized - that of conceiving the final "restoration of all things" as a future event. The supra-historical, Tillich affirms, cannot be understood in terms of any future state of being, but only in terms of meaning.<sup>2</sup> To try to express it in terms of time and history "makes the ultimate meaning a section in the totality of meanings, a history after history, a time after time,"<sup>3</sup> thus negating its ultimacy. Supra-historical concepts (such as Eternal Life, the Kingdom of God, the "restoration of all things") really symbolize a hidden dimension within our present existence (which is the only existence); they express life's deepest meaning: its relation to the Unconditional as the ground, source, and aim of life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>On the other hand, Tillich rejects the concept of "eternal condemnation" which he believes to be a contradiction in terms. "It establishes an eternal split within being itself." (*Systematic Theology*, I, 285). We may separate ourselves from God, but "eternity" cannot be attributed to this state. Eternity is applicable only in the realm of being. "Where the divine love ends, being ends." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 284) When a man finally rejects God, he falls into non-being, where temporal qualities no longer apply.

<sup>2</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 113.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>4</sup>For a criticism of Tillich's eschatological concepts, see Chapter VI.



## CHAPTER FOUR

## RELIGION AND CULTURE

## 1. A Definition of Terms

Just what does Tillich mean by "religion" and by "culture"? What are their similarities, differences, and interrelationships?

Contrary to the general assumption in which religion is identified with the holy and culture relegated to the realm of the secular, Tillich affirms that both religion and culture are rooted in a common "spiritual substance" and that they differ only in the way in which they express that substance. An understanding of Tillich's conception of "spiritual substance" is therefore basic to our discussion.

According to Tillich, culture, along with the whole of existence, is supported by the Unconditional which is the Ground of all being and meaning. In relation to the sphere of culture, Tillich calls this unconditional support "religious [or spiritual] substance" and claims that it is this alone that gives content, meaning, and import to life.<sup>1</sup> Now this spiritual substance may be expressed in two ways: religion expresses it directly and intentionally; culture expresses it indirectly and unintentionally.<sup>2</sup> It is the vocation of religion, so to speak, to proclaim this unseen support which, as the ground of all being, is hidden as an assumption in all cultural activity. Religion calls attention to this "spiritual substance," symbolizes it, and seeks to relate life directly to it through worship. Religious forms express in symbolic form "the religious substance that bears our entire existence."<sup>3</sup> Religion, in other words,

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<sup>1</sup>"Die Idee Eine Theologie der Kultur," Religionsphilosophie der Kultur, (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1921), Philosophische Vorträge, Kantgesellschaft No. 24., passim.

<sup>2</sup>Religiöse Verwirklichung, pp. 255 ff.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 53.



is the depth-dimension of culture; it accepts as its vocation the task of making the source of this depth-dimension known, loved, and obeyed.

In culture, on the other hand, the spiritual substance is only indirectly and unintentionally apprehended. Cultural activities are concerned with conditional forms, immanent ends, and preliminary concerns which express the finite structure of reality. In culture the dependency of finite forms upon the infinite is only indirectly and unwittingly expressed. Religion and culture differ, then, primarily in the degree of intentionality and consciousness with which they express the spiritual substance and Unconditional ground that sustains them both.

## 2. The Relationship between Religion and Culture

Because of the spiritual substance that undergirds them both, religion and culture are, according to Tillich, closely related. They are, in fact, "mutually immanent"<sup>1</sup> and are as interdependent as form and content. Tillich frequently expresses this relationship in the following formula: "Religion is the substance of culture; culture is the form of religion."<sup>2</sup> The first half of this statement should be clear from the foregoing discussion. Tillich is simply saying that all culture is ultimately dependent upon a spiritual substance that gives it a center of meaning. The second half of the affirmation- that "culture is the form of religion" - means simply that religion must express itself in and through cultural forms in order to have any reality.

This formula is meant, however, to describe the essential relationship between religion and culture and not necessarily their existential relationship. Ideally, as in a theonomous culture, religion is the recognized substance

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 62

<sup>2</sup>Cf. this to the double truth expressed in much of Dawson's thought, that  
1) no religious faith is robust unless it produces its proper culture, and that  
2) no culture can survive unless it becomes the embodiment of a living religion.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 225, 227, 238.

of culture and culture provides the forms through which religion is expressed. But under the conditions of existence this is not often the case. The substance of culture is not usually religious; preliminary concerns intrude and put themselves at the center. On the other hand, the forms for religious expression are not often drawn from contemporary culture but instead from an archaic one and are therefore not particularly meaningful or vital.<sup>1</sup> Existentially, then, there is a separation between religion and culture contrary to their essential relationship of interdependence.

Culture as the totality of man's spiritual creativity is essentially the expression of man's ultimate concern. But existentially it has the tendency to isolate itself from the connection with the holy and to become secular. Religion, conversely, has the existential tendency to isolate itself from culture and to produce a special religious realm in which the theoretical function produces special objects of intuition . . . special forms of action. . . and special kinds of feeling.<sup>2</sup>

Under the conditions of existence, religion and culture usually move against one another. A conflict thus ensues between autonomous culture and heteronomous religion in which neither is able to transcend its limitations toward the achievement of a theonomous unity.

Asked what the proof is for the fall of the world, I like to answer, religion itself, namely, a religious culture beside a secular culture, a temple beside a town hall, a Lord's supper beside a daily supper, prayer beside work, meditation beside research, caritas beside eros.<sup>3</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that religion and culture can be entirely separated. Culture cannot avoid ultimate concerns; it cannot permanently hide its spiritual substance. Every culture, whether it recognizes it or not, is undergirded by a spiritual substance which gives it, according to Tillich, a "substantially religious character."<sup>4</sup> Underneath every society, Tillich

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<sup>1</sup>Religion in such cases becomes "heteronomous" if it seeks to force these archaic forms upon a society as if they were the only proper expression of the unconditional.

<sup>2</sup>Propositions, Part IV, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 49.



insists, is "an unconscious faith which is not assailed because it is the pre-supposition of life and is lived rather than thought of. . . . This all-determining, final source of meaning constitutes the actual religious situation of a period."<sup>1</sup> Because culture, along with the whole of reality, is rooted in the Unconditional, it is possible to find traces of the ultimate in even the most avowedly autonomous or secular cultures. Even when a culture appears materialistic, humanistic, or even atheistic, it still reflects some ultimate concerns - some unconditional faith and meaning- which reveal its basic religious character. Secular culture is thus as impossible as atheism, for even atheistic negation is grounded in being itself and can make its protest only on the basis of the power and support that comes from the ground of being.<sup>2</sup> By defining religion as "ultimate concern" Tillich thus avoids restricting it to its institutional expressions. Ultimate concerns are reflected in politics, economics, the arts, and in all realms of life.

Whenever human existence in thought or action becomes a subject of doubts and questions, whenever unconditioned meaning becomes visible in works which only have conditioned meaning in themselves, there culture is religious.<sup>3</sup>

By means of what he calls a "theonomous analysis," Tillich seeks to uncover the latent religious character of secular movements and to show how secular pursuits embody ultimate concerns and are therefore basically religious.<sup>4</sup> Culture then, according to Tillich, cannot entirely avoid expressing its spiritual substance; it can never become completely separated from its religious foundations.

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<sup>1</sup>The Religious Situation, p. 12

<sup>2</sup>"Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," Union Seminary Quarterly Review (May, 1936), I, 12; Cf. also his statement "There is no place beside the divine, there is no possible atheism, there is no wall between the religious and the secular. The holy embraces both itself and the secular." (Prot. Era, p. xxix)

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 49

<sup>4</sup>"Über die Idee Eine Theologie der Kultur", passim; Systematic Theology, I, 40 The Protestant Era, pp. 62 ff.



But neither can religion, on the other hand, cut itself off from culture. Religion cannot avoid expressing itself through cultural forms such as those provided in art, music, literature, philosophy, and poetry. What would institutional religion be apart from the techniques of building and construction? And what religion could get along without utilizing the language of a culture? Apart from these cultural forms, religion could not even exist, let alone express itself; it is in and through cultural forms that religion becomes a reality.<sup>1</sup> Even an other-worldly faith has to have some form of social embodiment in order to exist; even a religion which renounces the world has to express its renunciation in worldly forms. A heteronomous religion is thus not as absolute as it thinks it is, for it is dependent upon the culture that surrounds it for the forms of its expression. Even if it chooses to use archaic forms, these forms must have some contact with contemporary life and express some cultural meaning, however remote. Otherwise that religion would have no "power of being." Thus religion and culture, even under the tragic conditions of existence, cannot be completely hostile or "strange" to one another, but only "estranged."

Tillich's ideal society would be one in which this estrangement is overcome and in which religion and culture realize their essential relationship of mutual immanence.<sup>2</sup> In such a society, culture would penetrate to its depths and find that its autonomous forms transcend themselves. Its forms would become transparent to the divine ground and would evidence the spiritual

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<sup>1</sup>This insight has relevance for Tillich's concept of revelation. Revelation for Tillich is not something that breaks through and is foreign to life, but rather something that must be received in and through the forms of secular culture. There is thus a preparation for revelation in the history of religions and in the history of cultures. ("What is Wrong with Dialectical Theology?", p. 140).

<sup>2</sup>Tillich calls such a culture a "theonomous" one. A full discussion of this will be given later in this chapter.

substance that supports them. Religion, on the other hand, would find expression in and through the forms of the daily life. The autonomous forms would be filled with ultimate meaning and significance. Through such a two-fold process, the essential relation between religion and culture would be actualized; the secular would become religious and the religious would become secular (in the way it expresses itself).

This quest for the mutual immanence of religion and culture, however, should not be taken as an indication that Tillich believes that religion and culture should become fused or incorporated into one another. There is no thought that religion ought to absorb the secular realm (as, for instance, the church exercising control over the State).<sup>1</sup> Although Tillich wants to overcome the false antithesis of religion and culture, he is careful to caution against the dangers of fusing or synthesizing the two. His view of the ideal relationship of religion and culture is that of correlation (rather than either separation or synthesis).<sup>2</sup> He favors a dialectical approach in which religion and culture are seen as two poles of one reality. The poles are mutually dependent upon one another, yet are in significant contrast to one another. Each pole needs the other for its fulfillment and completion. Culture needs a religious (prophetic) protest in order to keep its forms from becoming empty; religion needs cultural criticism in order to keep it from becoming arrogant and heteronomous.

### 3. Autonomy, Heteronomy, and Theonomy

It has been impossible to discuss the relationship of religion and culture without introducing the terms autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy. Tillich believes that it is possible to classify all varieties of societies

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>See especially the article "The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development," *passim*.



and all possible periods of history according to these three types. Our analysis, then, would not be complete without a discussion of these terms and their relevance for Tillich's typology of culture.

Autonomy means, of course, "self-law" and refers to the law of reason (the logos structure) which is immanent in reality and in the mind. It does not mean lawlessness, but rather the acceptance of and obedience to the objective demands involved in the nature of our world.<sup>1</sup> As an attitude assumed by a society, autonomy refers to the attempt of a group to live according to the rational structure of reality as it is perceived by the human mind without any particular recognition of the dependency of these rational structures upon the unconditional ground and abyss. An autonomous society is not necessarily irreligious (although it tends in this direction); it often begins, in fact, as a religious (prophetic) protest against the abuses of a heteronomous society in which finite realities have set themselves up as absolutes. In the name of universal reason and the dignity of man it registers its protest, as it did in the age of the Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> Its real power, however, usually comes from the spiritual substance of a previous theonomous age. As long as this inherited spiritual character lasts, the autonomous society remains creative, but when this inherited foundation begins to crumble, the autonomous culture becomes empty. As Tillich puts it,

Autonomy is able to live as long as it can draw from the religious tradition of the past, from the remnants of a lost theonomy. But more and more it loses this spiritual foundation. It becomes emptier, more formalistic, or more factual and is driven toward scepticism and cynicism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>A more detailed account of the Enlightenment is given in the next chapter.

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 53.



When a society loses its contact with the eternal, science is no longer concerned with truth, politics with justice, or art with eternal meanings. The greatest danger, however, is not merely that the forms of life become empty but rather that the religious vacuum thus created cannot remain a vacuum and is invaded by demonic forces. There is, in other words, no such thing as a "matter of fact" culture. "An autonomous culture without religious foundation necessarily falls into anti-divine heteronomy."<sup>1</sup>

Heteronomy means, of course, "other-law" or "alien-law" and refers to the imposition of a religious or secular power in disregard of the logos structure of mind and world. Heteronomy, according to Tillich, can originate in two ways. Firstly, as indicated above, it can arise from an autonomy which has become impoverished. To avoid meaninglessness and chaos following the failure to live according to the demands of reason, a society may submit itself to superior and oppressive forces (such as an arrogant church or political power). An example of this process at work is seen, Tillich believes, in the great transition of our time from an individualistic society (based on the presupposition of "automatic harmony") to a collectivist society centered around the omniscient State.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, heteronomy may arise from a disintegrating theonomy. It occurs for instance when a Church has once been the center of cultural creativity finds its indirect power weakening and begins to wield direct power in order to preserve the forms which were once an adequate expression of meaning (but have since become empty) and to force them upon the society as absolutes. The classical example of this for Tillich is the breaking up of the medieval society and especially the use of the inquisition. In both cases the heteronomous power assumes control of the social situation, stifles

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<sup>1</sup>"Our Protestant Principles", The Protestant, (September, 1942) IV, 13.

<sup>2</sup>The next chapter will deal with this transition in detail.

all rational criticism, and subjects all things unto itself. In either case heteronomy represents a type of demonry, in that a finite reality claims for itself unconditional validity.<sup>1</sup> When religion acts heteronomously, says Tillich, it "has ceased to be the substance and life-blood of a culture and has itself become a section of it, which, forgetting its theonomous greatness, betrays a mixture of arrogance and defeatism."<sup>2</sup> Autonomous forces, of course, react to this heteronomous subjection. The ensuing struggle between autonomy and heteronomy may issue in theonomy. There is, however, nothing automatic about this; there is no necessary synthesis (theonomy) as a result of the interaction between thesis (autonomy) and antithesis (heteronomy).<sup>3</sup>

Theonomy means, of course, submission to the divine law or, better, an openness toward the divine. This openness toward the unconditional, while expressing itself in a wide variety of cultural manifestations, does not necessarily indicate an age in which the majority of people are actively religious.<sup>4</sup> It is rather an age in which

the consciousness of the presence of the unconditional permeates and guides all cultural functions and forms. . . . This situation finds expression, first of all, in the dominating power of the religious sphere, but not in such a way as to make religion a special form of life ruling over the other forms. Rather, religion is the life-blood, the inner power, the ultimate meaning of all life.<sup>5</sup>

In a theonomous society, all forms of cultural life are pulsated by the consciousness of the unconditionally real. Theonomy therefore differs radically from heteronomy. In a heteronomous society, autonomous creativity is stifled in the interest of conformity; in a theonomous society, autonomous

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 235. Religious Socialism in Germany, for instance, failed in its attempt to overcome the gap between a heteronomous church (rejected by secular revolutionists) and an autonomous culture (rejected by the churches). See The Protestant Era, p. 62..

<sup>4</sup>Systematic Theology, p. 148; The Protestant Era, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 49.



creativity is saved from self-destruction, directed (i.e. given an ultimate meaning and purpose), and fulfilled. Autonomous forms are not dominated by religion or subjected to its control, but rather become transparent to their ground and aim as bearers of ultimate meaning. In a theonomous situation, religion does not press its forms upon life but rather the forms of life become filled with religious meaning. Tillich thus speaks of theonomy as an "autonomy filled with religion"<sup>1</sup> or as a "self-transcending autonomy"<sup>2</sup> for in a theonomous age, the autonomous forms are recognized as having a definite contribution to make. "Protestant secularism" is another synonym Tillich uses for theonomy in order to indicate the necessary autonomous elements in it.<sup>3</sup> Protestantism as opposed to both Judaism and Roman Catholicism is able to recognize the inherent values of secular culture and to give full value to its autonomous forms so that

the secular forms in thought and action approach the specifically religious ones without becoming religious themselves. They remain secular, but they show the spiritual influence that permanently emanates from a Gestalt of grace. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Although a theonomous age has an awareness of an unconditional "otherness" this transcendent element is not alien or strange, as in heteronomy, but is rather a transcendence that is within. The divine law is not subjected upon man "from above" but is seen as a law known to man as he becomes aware of the transcendent depth within himself and within his society.

Theonomy asserts that the superior law is, at the same time, the innermost law of man himself, rooted in the divine ground which is man's own ground; the law of life transcends man, although it is, at the same time, his own.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. xxxi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 63.



Thus, in a theonomous age, the inner transcendency of existence itself is made visible.

Transparency to the unconditional, however, should not be taken to mean transmutation. Autonomous forms which become windows toward the eternal do not thereby become segments of the eternal. That is the error of Roman Catholic sacramentalism. For Tillich, the sacraments are only symbols of the unconditional and, as we saw in the previous chapter, do not possess unconditional power or validity in and of themselves. The same thing applies to aspects of society (including the Church) which, in a theonomous age, are recognized as gestalten of grace. The Protestant principle demands that no finite reality be given an unconditional significance. Thus even a theonomous age itself cannot be identified with the Kingdom of God, for the achievements of a theonomous age are only partially filled with unconditional meaning and are therefore transitory.<sup>1</sup>

Tillich believes that these three classifications we have been discussing are applicable to the whole of history and that in every period one or the other attitude predominates. The transitions from one period to another and the structural changes involved become, for Tillich, luminous clues to the understanding of the historical process.

Seen in a world historical perspective, the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy is the key to any theological understanding of the Greek as well as of the modern development and of many other problems of the spiritual history of mankind.<sup>2</sup>

The next chapter will deal with Tillich's analysis of the source and solution of the present world crisis in the light of these principles.

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, p. 85.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## THE SOURCE AND SOLUTION OF THE PRESENT WORLD CRISIS

Although Tillich is not primarily an historian or sociologist, he is keenly interested in the present world crisis and has made some important contributions to the understanding of the historical roots of our present situation. He believes that it is impossible properly to diagnose the present situation and prescribe remedies apart from a thorough knowledge of its historical antecedents.<sup>1</sup> His Marxian view of structural trends operating in the historical process causes him to look upon the events of recent years as the result not of a series of bad accidents but rather as the manifestations of profound structural changes which have been shaking our society for centuries.<sup>2</sup> Tillich describes this world-revolution largely in terms of the transition from the autonomous age of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, through the intermediate period of the Victorious Bourgeoisie to the heteronomous age of modern industrial society. In this chapter we shall attempt to see this process in detail.

Tillich outlines this development in several essays<sup>3</sup> but touches upon its widespread manifestations time and again in his various writings. An attempt is made to incorporate a variety of sources in order to give as complete a picture as possible of Tillich's total historical analysis of the source and solution of the present world crisis.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Meaning of the German Church Struggle," etc, p. 130; The Protestant Era, pp. 26, 29, 286, 291.

<sup>2</sup>"Our Disintegrating World," p. 145; The Protestant Era, pp. 261, 291

<sup>3</sup>"The World Situation" The Christian Answer (Charles Scribner's, 1946); "Our Disintegrating World," Anglican Theological Review (April, 1941) XXIII, pp. 134-145; "The Disintegration of Society in Christian Countries" The Church's Witness To God's Design (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1948); "Trends in Religious Thought that Affect Social Outlook", Religion and the World Order (F. Ernest Johnson, ed.) (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), pp. 17-28.



## 1. The Theonomy and Heteronomy of the Middle Ages

Our analysis may begin with Tillich's view of the theonomous period of the Middle Ages. Although Tillich cautions that no one period can be considered as a norm - not even the New Testament period - he does indicate that the high Middle Ages may be considered "a symbol for our future work."<sup>1</sup> This high estimation is based upon the spontaneous acknowledgement of a common spiritual center by individuals and society alike during this age. Every person, regardless of education and status, participated in a common spiritual reality which transcended him and yet at the same time gave him a personal center. There was thus a high degree of real community spirit and a genuine harmony of interest between individuals and society guaranteed by the identical foundations of both.<sup>2</sup>

The Middle Ages, of course, had its defects. Individual autonomous creativity was often suppressed in favor of group creativity; the development of individual personality was consequently thwarted. The over-emphasis upon sacramental grace obstructed the free flow of prophetic criticism, and the loss of prophetic criticism led in turn to a definite trend toward heteronomy during the late Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> The adoption of an official Roman Catholic philosophy tended to kill the philosophical eros and discourage autonomous thought.<sup>4</sup> The pride of achievement and the belief that society was attaining a final and ultimate form led to the subordination of "the Logos to the great Kairos on which their culture was built,"<sup>5</sup> and the imprisonment of eternal

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 290.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 233 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Systematic Theology, p. 28

<sup>5</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 17.



truth in finite forms. It was against this growing tendency toward authoritarianism and oppressive heteronomy that the Renaissance and the Reformation revolted.

## 2. The Autonomy of the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and "Rise of The Bourgeoisie" Periods

The great autonomous period of modern culture Tillich considers as beginning with the Renaissance. Although there was a definite tendency in the direction of autonomous creativity in all cultural pursuits, not all aspects of the Renaissance were by any means "autonomous," according to Tillich's definition. "The Renaissance was a step toward autonomy, but still in the spiritual power of an unwasted medieval heritage."<sup>1</sup> Although the Renaissance scholars were enchanted by the discovery of Greek culture, their achievements remained largely dependent upon the inescapable Christian foundation which gave its color to every major thought and act of this period.

Everything Greek came back again; yet nothing was in reality Greek, for the religious foundation was no longer the same.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the break with the Christian tradition and the medieval culture had begun. The rupture was accentuated by the preeminence given to Reason as the principle of humanity - that which had power to liberate man from religious and political absolutism and tyranny. In the great battle against the petrification of medieval culture, the rational elements gradually became independent and unleashed forces that were to usher in a new age.

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 9; See: Courage to Be, pp. 18 f.; The Renaissance, then, was not a simple recovery of the Greek tradition but a basic transformation of it. Neo-Platonic negative asceticism became a positive, enthusiastic affirmation of the world, Greek individualism became transformed in its application to the new theories of the State and Society; Hellenic intuitive science became an instrument of technical control, etc.

The Reformation in some ways carried on the autonomous spirit of the Renaissance and, in its attack on Roman Catholicism, helped prepare the soil for the growth of autonomy. But although the Reformation began as a protest against heteronomy, it swiftly hardened into a new heteronomy. The emphasis upon correct doctrine, the legalistic Bibliolatry, the arbitrary demand for the repetition of Luther's experience of justification by faith,<sup>1</sup> all issued, according to Tillich, in an authoritarianism and obscurantism oftentimes worse than anything the Middle Ages had seen.<sup>2</sup>

But the period in which the autonomous attitude is most clearly expressed is, as Tillich calls it, the period of the Rise of the Bourgeoisie. Behind the ascendancy of this new class of merchants, entrepreneurs, and capitalists was the new conception of man coming out of the Renaissance and blossoming into full force in the Enlightenment - an anthropology based on a faith in the essential goodness of man and the basic integrity of human reason.

The transcendent foundation for personal and social life provided by the common faith of the Middle Ages was, as would be expected, undermined in the period of reformation and religious wars. Tillich agrees with Dawson in seeing the battle between Protestant and Catholic forces as providing an opening wedge for the growth of secularism.<sup>3</sup> By the time of the Enlightenment the transcendent foundations were replaced by immanent ones provided by reason and its metaphysical and ethical creations.<sup>4</sup>

The Enlightenment brought into play what Tillich calls "revolutionary reason" directed toward the formation of a new humanity and a new society by

<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 290.



liberating man from the medieval authoritarian Leviathan and giving him a new dignity. Now this attempt to overcome the demonic distortions of the petrifying medieval society was indirectly a religious attack which had behind it the definitely religious motivation of prophetic criticism. The religious demonry that violates human nature through divine decree and destroys human reason and psychic power through heteronomous subjection needs to be attacked and overcome. So in spite of its critical attitude toward religion, Tillich sees in the humanism of the Enlightenment a warfare carried on for the sake of the image of God in man. Yet its criticism, based as it was on an optimistic faith in human reason, was oftentimes shallow; through its emphasis upon the divine clarity tended to obscure the divine depth.<sup>1</sup> Although it began as a religious (prophetic) protest, it soon lost contact with the spiritual depths from which it had sprung and became two-dimensional, failing to grasp either the depths or the heights of classical Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Through an emphasis upon the power of human reason to cut through all levels of life and discern truth about our universe, the philosophers of the Enlightenment succeeded in banishing all fear of demons (and the taboo formerly associated with nature) and in constructing a view of the universe as a closed, rational system. Consequently it was thought that there were no longer any hindrances to the "will for knowledge" and no limits to the possibilities of forming and shaping matter. The only elements remaining to be overcome were immanent realities: ignorance, finiteness, and indolence.<sup>3</sup> With nature shorn of its numinous qualities and deprived of its basic resistance to man, it became possible to perceive it, analyze it, and rule it.

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Freeing itself from the transcendent "threat" it also cut itself off from the transcendent "support".

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 109.



The loss of the demonic depths and contradictions in nature paved the way for what Tillich calls the philosophy of harmonism which became the force of integration during the whole period of the rise and victory of the bourgeoisie. According to this view, the whole universe comprises one great harmonious system wherein "all things work together for good." Although not assuming that everything is "sweetness and light," there was the basic presupposition that, behind the back, so to speak, of the historical process was a "pre-established harmony"<sup>1</sup> which would over-rule the separate, self-willed, egoistic acts of man.<sup>2</sup> Reason in one individual was thought to be essentially in harmony with reason in every other individual. Therefore every man could pursue his egoistic desires without hindering the basic harmony of life.<sup>3</sup> Individualism, self-affirmation, and initiative far from upsetting the social balance were thought to contribute to the forward march of progress. For if there was a providential harmony, as believed, between the free will of man and the organic structure of society, the pursuit of individual interest could not help but result in the general welfare of the community. Although not a verbalized belief for the average man, this view, according to Tillich, was such a basic presupposition that it gave color to nearly every social manifestation of the period.

It was expressed in economics, for instance, in the doctrine of laissez-faire.<sup>4</sup> Since natural harmony was thought to exist among the competing interests of men, the economic process functioning according to its own structural laws (without government interference) would automatically produce the best

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Leibnitz's monadology and Pope's "Essay on Man" ("Whatever is, is right")

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 265.

<sup>3</sup>"Trends in Religious Thought that Affect Social Outlook," p. 19ff; The Protestant Era, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup>"The World Situation," p. 21 f.

possible distribution of wealth. Underneath the competitive struggle for profits, in other words, lay an essential harmony by means of which all aspects of economic life could work together for the common economic good of all.

In politics, harmonism was expressed in the doctrine of liberal democracy, especially in the idea that individual political judgments and the rule of the majority would lead to the rational and just shaping of society. The great development of this period, parliamentary democracy, Tillich believes rests upon the harmonistic view of life and presupposes a basic conformity and common interest among the members of a society.<sup>1</sup> As long as there was an agreement to differ and a willingness to accept compromise for the sake of society as a whole, democracy could function successfully, as it did during this period. There was further, according to Tillich, an interdependence between liberal democracy and the economic power of the rising bourgeoisie. Tillich even goes so far as to call democracy an expression of middle class economics.<sup>2</sup> Although under the theory of harmonism no absolute rulers were needed or tolerated, there were hidden rulers who kept control of the democratic process and were the real "bearers" of democratic society.<sup>3</sup> These were the bourgeois capitalists. Their dominance, says Tillich, was comperable to that of the ruling classes under feudalism, except that in feudalism the control of society was in the hands of those whose office had a general social sanction

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 266 f. Dawson similarly speaks of liberal conformism as the basis of parliamentary democracy and sees Capitalism and parliamentary democracy (along with the idea of progress) as parallel aspects of the liberal movement (Religion and the Modern State, pp. 1,14,25 f., 48; Enquiries, pp. 9,10,11.)

<sup>2</sup>"The power which supports democracy is made up of the forces which can make use of it in establishing their own dominion in place of the sacred old aristocracies. The pillar of democracy is the middle class and particularly that part of the middle class which exercises economic leadership, in whose hands lies the control of capital. . . . Capital creates majorities and with majorities it creates political power." (The Religious Situation, p. 94 f.)

<sup>3</sup>Idem.



and consecration. Democratic leadership, on the other hand, was usually more a matter of personal will to power and lacked the numinous quality of the consecrated feudal offices.<sup>1</sup> Bourgeois leadership was thus devoid of any real sense of social responsibility.

In international relations, the doctrine of natural harmony produced the "balance of power" structure.<sup>2</sup> The religious cohesions of the Middle Ages had been replaced by the supposedly automatic harmony existing between sovereign states. The development of one State, even through the competitive struggle for markets, was thought to be in harmony with the development of all nations.

In education the presupposition of automatic harmony led to an emphasis upon individual personality and human potentiality. The undermining of the old sacred degrees of power (kingship, knighthood, nobility, etc.) and the making of person equal to person created an atmosphere in which the development of the individual personality took precedence over group life. Spiritual production became individual and personal rather than communal. There was no fear that this would lead to anti-social conduct for again, according to the presupposition of natural harmony, the development of each was thought to promote the development of all. The humanistic ideal in education was to actualize the greatest possible human potentiality in each individual and, through a maximum of self-expression, to produce a harmonious community.<sup>3</sup> The humanist ideal also emphasized reason as the principle of truth and, since everyone had reason, an impetus was given to universal education.

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>"The World Situation," p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35.



In religion, Protestantism was the chief expression of the harmonistic view of life. Free reign, for instance, was given to individual interpretation of Scripture since it was believed that one man's interpretation would not differ radically from another's. Protestantism stressed freedom and personalism as against authoritarianism and symbolism; it emphasized autonomy and individualism as against certainty and collectivism.<sup>1</sup> The stress on Biblical education in Protestantism produced a rationalized, intellectualized faith as over against Catholic sacramentalism.<sup>2</sup> It was thought that a mere hearing or reading of the Word would create religious common sense and that preaching alone was sufficient for maintaining the church and creating a community of believers.

As a whole, this period that Tillich labels the "Rise of the Bourgeoisie" was an autonomous age in which there was a breaking free of the human spirit from the shackles of feudal oppression. Unrestricted optimism and confidence prevailed along with faith in the goodness of man, the integrity of human reason, and the straight march of history toward perfection. The presupposition of automatic harmony undergirded the entire social structure and gave it an apparent security and balance.

Now the amazing thing is, as Tillich points out, that most of the political and social actualizations of this philosophy did work relatively well for a considerable period. It is easy to see why men thought they had tapped universal principles. As long as the accumulated spiritual power of the Middle Ages lasted, religious individualism could flourish without harm to society as a whole; as long as cultural conformity continued, liberal democracy could hold its own; as long as Great Britain could maintain the balance of power,

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 267. Tillich calls attention to the fact that today the trends are in the opposite direction. Protestantism therefore faces the possible end of its "era." The implications of this will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson's analysis at this point is very similar.

relations between States could function relatively harmoniously; as long as markets were expanding without limit, free trade could be allowed to continue without restriction and many benefits were extended to society as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, as Tillich points out, these were results of a particularly favorable constellation of social-economic-religious forces. In reality, then, this period was living from the accumulated spiritual substance of the past- the social harmony of the previous age which had been based on common religious and social foundations. Such harmony as was produced during the bourgeois period was due not to a smoothly-working natural law as was supposed but to the basic conformity of interest and ideology of the rising bourgeoisie- their mutual interest, for example, in the accumulation of wealth and in the restriction of government to keep it from interfering in the economic realm.<sup>2</sup> The believe in a harmonious universe, then, was more a matter of faith than of fact - a faith in the goodness of man and the world and in the spiritual unity between man and nature. Tillich therefore calls the belief in harmonism a rationalized trust in Providence.

As this particular constellation of forces changed with the years, significant transitions were to come. The succeeding period unwittingly brought into play new forces which were to undermine the very foundations for the doctrine of automatic harmony.

### 3. The "Hidden Heteronomy" of the "Victorious Bourgeoisie" Period

The next period - the period of the "Victorious Bourgeoisie" as Tillich calls it - was characterized primarily by an expansion of creative vitality and new conquests of reason over nature and society. Although outwardly

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<sup>1</sup>See James Luther Adams, "Tillich's Concept of the Protestant Era," p. 283; The Protestant Era, pp. 265, 268, 271.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 290.



this age might be classified as the apex of achievement for the autonomous spirit, it represents in reality the beginning of the decline of autonomy and the gradual subjection to a new heteronomy. Tillich does not classify this period in terms of autonomy or heteronomy; nevertheless it seems appropriate to speak of it as an age of hidden heteronomy (as contrasted to the open heteronomy of our century and the conscious submission to new dictators and collectivist States). Life was beginning to come under the grips of a huge impersonal machine - the all-embracing capitalistic society and the world mechanism of production and exchange.

The period begins with a significant transformation in the concept of reason. "Revolutionary reason" of the previous period, which was concerned with ends, was gradually transformed into "technical reason" concerned with means. Reason, now less revolutionary, was becoming more sober, scientific, and technical. Fighting reason was replaced by calculating reason.<sup>1</sup> Part of this decline suffered by "revolutionary reason" was due to the fact that reason (the "pure reason" of the Enlightenment) had been mistakenly deified. Pure reason had failed to bring in the millenium and now, through Kantian criticism, it was dethroned.<sup>2</sup> The loss of the universality and depth of this type of reason (akin to "ontological reason" as used in the Systematics) paved the way for the advent of technical (or "controlling") reason - with its methods of detachment, analysis, and objectivation - which ushered in an era characterized by the triumph of science and technique.

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<sup>1</sup>"Trends in Religious Thought that Affect Social Outlook," p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 83.

<sup>3</sup>Tillich here follows the thought of Max Scheler, according to J.H. Randall (The Theology of Paul Tillich, p.145.)



The basic question<sup>1</sup> which Tillich lists for the entire period from A.D. 1400 to 1900 - "How can nature and society be controlled by human reason?" - here in this particular span of time (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) finds its most pointed relevance. Everywhere in Western society man was inspired by the desire to dominate nature and make it serve his purposes. Animals became so much horse-power; rocks were turned into highways and water into thoroughfares; iron was transformed into steam engines and soil into dams.

These achievements, of course, had great value for civilization. Man, released from his bondage to nature and to finite things, was swiftly becoming the rightful master of the material world. Finite things were no longer considered holy in themselves and personality could thus be exalted above all things.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding all of these gains, Tillich is keenly critical of this development. He is unusually sensitive to the estrangement between man and nature that is produced by modern technical civilization. The domineering attitude toward nature characteristic of the victorious bourgeoisie led to what Tillich calls "thingification" (Verdinglichung) - the reduction of all reality to things that can be measured, classified, analyzed, and controlled. Things as such were no longer valuable as objects of knowledge but only as elements of reality to be calculated and used for utilitarian purposes. Such exploitation deprived things of their original meaning and organic purpose (or "power of being" as Tillich calls it) and made the world seem a huge machine. Nature, as a result, lost its inherent power and its element of unconditionality. Traces of the ultimate were no longer found in all things and being lost its ability to point beyond itself toward its

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<sup>1</sup> See page 35 f.

<sup>2</sup> The Religious Situation, p. 72.

transcendent ground. When being ceased to be considered divine, God ceased to be thought of in terms of ultimate being and became just another object alongside other objects. As Tillich puts it

Complete thingification is the complete elimination of the relation of existence to its origin, its complete profanization. The spirit of bourgeois society is the spirit of a group of men who, after having cut through every original tie, subjected a materialized world entirely to its purposes.<sup>1</sup>

But Tillich is concerned not only with what happened to nature through this exploitive attitude of bourgeois man but also with what happened to man and to human personality. What Tillich laments is not just that a domineering personality was produced contemptuous of nature and things, unlovely as that may be, but that the exploitation of nature led to the subjection of man as well as nature to technical and economic purposes. Man became a part of the huge impersonal machine he had created. The domination of personality over things issued in the domination of things over personality! What man took away from things (their "power of being") he lost for himself so that he became just another "thing" in the process of unremitting industry.<sup>2</sup>

Man who transforms the world into a universal machine serving his purposes has to adapt himself to the laws of the machine.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, the Victorious Bourgeoisie saw the power of money gradually transform all human relations into commodity relations. A large class of workers became totally dependent upon the "free sale" of their work with their

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<sup>1</sup>Die Sozialistische Entscheidung (1948 edition), p. 49 f. Dawson on the other hand, though also taking somewhat of a mystical attitude toward nature, looks upon scientific and technical development in a more favorable light. He sees the rationalization of the world by science as an essential part in the eventual spiritualization of the world.

<sup>2</sup>"Basic Features of Religious Socialism," p. 15. In his latest book, The Courage to Be, Tillich takes a slightly different attitude toward technological production and "unremitting industry." He sees in the ceaseless productive impulse in America (usually criticized by foreign observers as concentration upon means apart from worthy ends) a definite spiritual value. In America, he says, it is not the means that are important (as the telos) but the production itself as a creative participation in Being-itself which is essentially productive and creative.

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 138.



destinies entirely dependent upon the turn of the market. One day they could be thrown into the factory, the next day into the streets, and the next into the front lines of a battlefield.

This is where the designation "hidden heteronomy" that we noted earlier gains meaning. The mechanization of life during this period created what Tillich calls a "second Nature" - the impersonal machine of capitalistic finance and production which subjected man. This "second nature" was a new, man-made nature above physical nature that man was not able to control. It was, in other words, a Frankenstein creation that turned on its maker so that man was swallowed by his own creation.<sup>1</sup>

The history of art bears striking testimony to the effects this great transition has had upon human personality. Tillich sees significant changes in types and expression from the works of Giotto to Titian and Rembrandt.<sup>2</sup> In Giotto he sees expressed the spirit of the Middle Ages when man was caught up in a transcendent community - when the forms of his personal and social life bore witness to something greater than he and his life was thereby giving meaning and significance. Titian, on the other hand, represents an entirely different spirit- the spirit of the Rising Bourgeoisie. His paintings express the greatness and the power of man and the triumph of revolutionary reason in liberating man from authoritarian abuse. Later, in Rembrandt, the Victorious Bourgeoisie are strikingly pictured. The self-sufficient capitalistic spirit has triumphed. Man has entirely broken with the spiritual substance of the past and has lost all supra-individual symbols and institutions. He now lives in a self-enclosed, lonely world. Man's conquest of nature provides,

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<sup>1</sup>"The World Situation," p. 23. Berdyaev similarly analyzes the trend through which the machine has conquered not only natural elements, but man as well. (The Meaning of History, New York, Charles Scribners, 1936, pp. 152 ff, 182 ff.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-32.



in Rembrandt, a foretast of the self-willed Fascist type of personality which we see in modern art.

The disintegration of personality which we have seen thus revealed has its counterpart in the disintegration of community, for as Tillich puts it, "Only personalities can have community. Depersonalized beings have social interrelationships."<sup>1</sup> Communal disintegration of this period parallels the personality disintegration we saw portrayed in the history of art. In the Middle Ages society was dedicated to a transcendent ideal, and there was a real unity of purpose and meaning in community life. The period of the Rising Bourgeoisie saw the disappearance of that common foundation and spiritual purpose and the disintegration of families into individuals.<sup>2</sup> When the old social groups with their sacred character collapsed there was little to take their place. The individual was cut off from his existential roots in the social group and from its traditions and symbols.<sup>3</sup> Consequently the period of the Victorious Bourgeoisie saw communities disintegrate into masses, especially in the crowded industrial cities - masses determined by the same economic fate, threatened by fear of unemployment, and ruled by the manipulators of mass psychology.<sup>4</sup>

In economics, the transition during this period was from laissez-faire to monopolistic capitalism. Economic power, through its growth in strength and concentration, was beginning to encroach upon the political realm and dominate it wherever possible. The State was no longer considered just a legal framework intended to give industry free scope to develop according to its own laws, but a power to be bent to industry's purposes (as with the tariff). Political control by industry, however, was not often direct. Industry brought its influence to bear in a more indirect way through its control of the channels of public communication. As a result, the "capitalistic spirit" came to dominate most of life. For Tillich this means not just a

<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 289

<sup>2</sup>The World Situation, p. 32 f.

<sup>3</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 222

view regarding production and distribution but rather a whole attitude toward life - an attitude which he characterizes as "self-sufficient finitude."<sup>1</sup> The success of human techniques had given confidence to the attempt to fulfill the meaning of the finite in the finite without looking beyond toward the eternal and the unconditional. There was, as a result, no hallowing of existence, no self-transcending faith but only a "ceaseless unrest. . . not oriented to some higher sort of calm."<sup>2</sup>

The political expression characteristic of this age was not democracy, as in the previous period, but nationalism. Nationalism, according to Tillich, was closely associated with capitalism and, at least in the West, was largely the by-product of capitalistic disintegration.<sup>3</sup> The relationship is, as Tillich sees it, simple enough. The diminishing latitude for exploitation in the late colonial world forced each national group to intensify its own political and economic aspirations and thus lead to national self-consciousness and fanaticism.<sup>4</sup> Thus nationalism and capitalism are twin disintegrating forces - demonic powers, as Tillich calls them. Their good qualities do not keep them from being demonic, for the demonic, as we saw earlier, includes creative as well as destructive power.<sup>5</sup>

In the realm of education, this period shows an emphasis similar to that of the former period upon the development of individual personality. The need for adjustment to the conditions of the new industrial society, however, brought with it a demand for vocational education in addition to the humanistic curriculum. Education thus became centered in adjustment to the existing

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<sup>1</sup>This is the theme of Tillich's book The Religious Situation.

<sup>2</sup>Religiöse Verwirklichung, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 135.

<sup>4</sup>"Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church", Social Research, (November, 1934), I, 407; See also The Religious Situation, p. 83 f.

<sup>5</sup>The demonic gains power precisely because it can appeal on the basis of its constructiveness, as in the case of Hitler overcoming unemployment by resort to conquest.



society so as to prevent any serious disturbances of that order. Although education continued to rest upon humanistic foundations and stressed the role of reason, the nineteenth century Leviathan of capitalistic production and techniques was the real master.<sup>1</sup> Further, the loss of an eternal reference caused everything to be regarded from an intellectualistic and formalistic viewpoint with corresponding concentration upon finite and phenomenal forms. Even religious education, in protest against this trend, tended to become a separate body of knowledge about religion (as a theoretical concern) rather than an expression itself of the ultimate concern.<sup>2</sup>

In religion, there was doubtful gain in the fact that the Victorious Bourgeoisie came to adopt a less hostile attitude toward religion than their predecessors of the revolutionary period. Since the bourgeois group now feared the revolutionary impetus of its own fighting period, religious symbols were found to be helpful as a means of keeping the masses content. The churches thus became little more than agencies for safeguarding the accepted moral standards of society.<sup>3</sup> In Protestantism in particular, the loss of sacramental grace and the confessional was beginning to show itself. Although Protestantism in its earlier period was able to live on the accumulated spiritual substance of the past, its individualism was now becoming arid and moralistic. The stress upon conscious decision (as against sacramental communion and incorporation into a mystical fellowship) was leaving the subconscious untouched and personality was being cut off from the vital basis of its existence. Protestantism, as Tillich sees it, had developed a "theology of consciousness" and the conscious was being separated from the unconscious in analogy to Cartesian philosophy.<sup>4</sup> In its insistence upon doctrinal conformity, Protestantism was becoming hardened, encrusted, and oppressive. The movement that began

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<sup>1</sup>"The World Situation," p. 35 ff.

<sup>2</sup>"Religion and Education," THE Protestant Digest (April-May, 1941), III, 58 ff.

<sup>3</sup>"The World Situation," pp 59, 62.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 256.



in individualism and autonomy was now ending in legalism and heteronomy.

Tillich finds the spirit of the age summarized again in art, which he regards as the most sensitive barometer to the changing social styles and temperaments of a culture. The art of the period portrays some of the characteristics we have been considering: the moral and intellectual tyranny of consciousness, the supremacy of reason, and the triumph of man over nature. In Bourgeois naturalism and realism, reality was deprived of its self-transcendence and symbolic power; art had become entirely two-dimensional. On the whole, artists seemed to be satisfied with painting only the surface of reality without penetrating to universal or eternal meanings. There was, however, another strata that foreshadowed the crisis to come. Sensitive artists were beginning to reflect the inner rebellion of man's spirit (the vital, unconscious side of his personality) against the moral and intellectual tyranny of the time. In expressionism and surrealism they shattered the two-dimensional surface of reality in an effort to expose deeper levels of being. The surface world was no longer all important. Fragments of it (limbs, furniture, color) grotesquely thrown together on the canvas conveyed to the discerning eye the fact that artists were no longer satisfied with objective reality as it can be weighed, measured, and analyzed, and were pressing toward a self-transcending realism.<sup>1</sup>

The age of the Victorious Bourgeoisie, then, was not as great a triumph of the human spirit as its contemporaries had expected. Although the network of finance, investment, and capital had spread from city to city tying nations together in a great mechanized and industrialized civilization, and although science and techniques reigned supreme, the monstrous mechanism that resulted was beginning to swallow personality and community. Late in the period

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, pp. 53, 65.; "The World Situation," p. 53.

there were signs of an undercurrent of protest in realms other than art. In the midst of the spirit of human domination over things and the rational control and exploitation of nature, doubt was being cast on the supremacy given to science and techniques, and movements against the tyranny of "controlling knowledge" were gaining momentum. There was the Romantic movement with its nostalgia for the past,<sup>1</sup> "philosophy of life" with its longing for true human creativity, and Existentialism with its desire to transcend the cleavage between subject and object and to bridge the Cartesian dichotomy.<sup>2</sup> All of these movements were protests against scientific detachment, against "objectivation" and "thingification."

Perhaps most significant was the rebellion against the harmonistic presupposition of the preceding periods. The glaring contradictions in late bourgeois society produced radical questioning on the part of the great thinkers of the day. The optimistic notion that there was a pre-established harmony between nature and reason and the corresponding high estimation of man's rationality was attacked from two sides: by pessimistic naturalism and pessimistic supranaturalism.<sup>3</sup> The first school (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and followers) saw the irrational depths of human nature expressed in anxiety, despair, the will to death, and the will to power and could no longer believe in any rational structure of society. The second group, the pessimistic supranaturalists (following Kierkegaard) saw the tragedy of the historical process and could no longer believe in the essential goodness of human nature. They did believe, however, that man's goodness could be restored through Christ and the Church and that history had a transcendent fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The rise of Capitalism was connected with an anti-metaphysical movement in opposition to medieval sacramentalism. Therefore it is natural that the reaction to Capitalism was accompanied by the recovery of a mystical approach to life. (The Religious Situation, p. 125).

<sup>2</sup>"Existential Philosophy," p. 56 ff.

<sup>3</sup>"Trends in Religious Thought, etc.", p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.



The nineteenth century witnessed an impressive array of men who were aware of the approaching earthquake. Marx challenged the de-humanization of the economic order and the making of man into a mere "commodity"; Burckhardt prophesied the catastrophe of mass culture; Dostoevski revealed the demonic forces beneath man's rationality; Freud uncovered the depth of the human subconscious and brought to light the mechanism of repression used by the bourgeois Protestant personality; Nietzsche saw humanity reaching the stage of the "last man" who is a completely rationalized cog in a machine devoid of creative vitality.<sup>1</sup> In all of these thinkers there was an eschatological consciousness - an awareness that the foundations were being shaken. They sensed the social and spiritual disintegration of the times and saw, instead of harmony, discontinuity and conflict.<sup>2</sup> This sensitivity was especially keen in Marx and Nietzsche who, according to Tillich, spear-headed the transition into the modern age.<sup>3</sup> Both took for granted the collapse of the transcendent foundation of the previous periods. From there they proceeded to attack and to shatter the immanent foundation of society based on natural harmony and faith in human goodness and social progress.<sup>4</sup> These various prophecies of approaching doom and judgment proved only too true. And in exposing the clefts in late bourgeois society, the pronouncements of Marx and Nietzsche served only to widen the breach and thus to precipitate the crisis.

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<sup>1</sup>"Nietzsche and the Bourgeois Spirit," Journal of the History of Ideas, (June, 1945), p. 307 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Tillich points out that the most important analysts have lived outside the Christian sphere. ("Our Disintegrating World," p. 143)

<sup>3</sup>Their atheism, Tillich contends, is not an argument against their analyses of the disintegration of the bourgeois world ("Our Disintegrating World," p. 143). Tillich even doubts that they may be classified as atheists. "If this struggle - one for justice [Marx] and the other for creative life [Nietzsche] was in both cases fought against God, then it was against a god who was bound to a standpoint, the standpoint of bourgeois society."

<sup>4</sup>"History as the Problem of Our Period," p. 257.



#### 4. The "Open Heteronomy" of the "Period of Crisis"

This analysis brings us to the present period which Tillich calls the "Crisis of Bourgeois Society" - the age that began with the early years of World War I.

The anti-rational forces unleashed in the previous period have now come into prominence. Reason no longer reigns supreme on the heights; indeed, since World War I there has been a growing feeling of the loss of control of reason over man's historical existence. Life has increasingly come under the control of supra-individual forces such as the omnipotent state and the "second nature" of mechanized society, and man has been made either a slave in a totalitarian state or a cog in a vast industrial machine. The "I-determined" world of the nineteenth century, as Tillich puts it, has become the "it-determined" world of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere the "basic question" of our period is being asked with growing intensity: "What is the meaning of our historical existence?"

The crisis of our time in regard to human personality is evidenced by the rising tide of personal insanity. Tillich lays much of the blame for this situation directly at the feet of Protestantism. The Protestant stress upon conscious personality, rationalized faith, and rigorous moralism has consistently denied the vital and mystical impulses and could not help but lead to deep cleavages within personality. The soul (i.e. the vital forces) deprived of its power and subjected to the rationalized intellectualized consciousness was driven into repression.<sup>2</sup> It has finally, however, wreaked its revenge in the volcanic eruption of insanity and irrationalism in our period.

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<sup>1</sup>"Martin Buber and Christian Thought," Commentary, (June 1948), V, 519.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, pp. 148 f, 228 f., xxxix.

More and more individuals became unable to endure the tremendous responsibility of permanently having to decide in intellectual and moral issues without help of sacramental grace or the confessional. The weight of this responsibility became so heavy that they could not endure it; and mental diseases have become an epidemic in the United States as well as in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The individualism of the Protestant-humanist tradition must also shoulder some of the responsibility for the modern disintegration of personality.

Although producing some impressive personalities, it finally led to dangerous consequences.

The humanist ideal of personality tends to cut the individual off from his existential roots. . . It tends to make him abstract-universal and detached from any concrete concern; everything interests, nothing affects. There is no ultimate meaning, no spiritual center.<sup>2</sup>

The meaninglessness, loss of a personal center, and nomadic loneliness connected with Protestant individualism were no doubt factors contributing to the rise of insanity noted above.

The disintegration of personality was paralleled by the disintegration of community life. Both were accompanied by the loss of a meaningful "center" - <sup>in</sup> the one case a personal center and in the other case a social and historical center. With the disappearance of ideological harmony through the contradictions and conflicts within capitalistic society, the bourgeoisie had lost all traces of a common world. Without something in common more than the quest for material possession there can be no real community, Tillich affirms. The social atomization, loneliness, and solitude of the late bourgeois era led to an indirect quest for community and for a new spiritual center for society. This explains the popularity of the youth movements and of romantic nationalism. Through the irony of the dialectical process, the rise of personality above community (in the Enlightenment) had led to the fall of personality below community.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the subjection of social relations

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<sup>1</sup> The Protestant Era, p. 228 f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 140 f., 146.

to the individual's purposes (characteristic of the previous age) led in our time to the subjection of personality to the new totalitarian community. In the Nazi state, for instance, there was a desire to return to a primitive tribal state of existence in which the individual personality was negated. Fear, anxiety, and the longing for security, uncertainty, the dread of making decisions, loneliness, solitude, despair, meaninglessness, and the urge for commanding loyalties and symbols all served to strengthen the collectivist trend.<sup>1</sup> Cynicism and pessimism captured by the State-cult were easily transformed into fanaticism. In totalitarianism, men found answer/s to their quest for myth, hope, and a fighting community. In the "commanded" community of the new omniscient state the individual could become a self-dedicated instrument of an absolute, controlling will. The vacuum of disintegration produced by bourgeois culture was thus filled by demonic constellations. This is the path which has led to

an extinction of the individual as individual and therefore to a demonic, sub-personal structure of life. This is a tragic consequence of the loss of Christianity as the spiritual center of the "Christian" nations. The reaction against an empty individualism leads to a demonic collectivism.<sup>2</sup>

The crisis of our time in the area of economics has been expressed in technological unemployment and world wars. Both, according to Tillich, are results of the inherent structural trends of capitalistic society. The closing of world markets and the fierce national competition of late monopolistic capitalism resulted in structural unemployment and the inability of a nation to use its full resources except in a war economy. Tillich blames the first World

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<sup>1</sup>In The Courage to Be, p. 57ff., Tillich classifies the emptiness and meaninglessness of our times as "spiritual anxiety" in contrast to the "ontic anxiety" of ancient civilizations and the "moral anxiety" of the Middle Ages. Spiritual anxiety is especially prominent, Tillich believes, at the end of an era when "accustomed structures of meaning, power, belief, and order disintegrate," and when the individual can no longer gain courage by falling back upon meaningful participation in established institutions(p. 62.)

<sup>2</sup>"The Disintegration of Society, etc.", p. 61



War on "imperialistic competition." The nations entered the war as capitalistic groups of power and the will to war, he holds, came from the capitalist groups within each nation.<sup>1</sup> The economic crisis is further evidenced in the increasing State control of the means of production and distribution. World-wide depression and unemployment made it necessary for States to step in to support the economic structure - first to "subsidize the losses" and finally to control.<sup>2</sup> In reaction to this, fear of state interference in economics led monopolistic groups in some countries to seize control of the State itself, as in Fascism.<sup>3</sup> There is thus, according to Tillich, a definite structural trend from capitalism to totalitarianism which parallels the trend we have noted from capitalism to nationalism. In addition to the impetus capitalism gave to the rise of national spirit (through international competition), it also produced forces of disintegration such as class struggle and party conflict that demanded a stronger national state as an integrating force. In some areas, the threat of communism also drove many classes within a nation together in a mutual desire to strengthen the State against communist infiltration. These factors, along with the general disintegration of bourgeois morals and customs pointed to the need for political, spiritual, and economic re-integration through the agency of some kind of a totalitarian state.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Protestant Era, p. 265. Tillich recognizes other factors in the situation - especially the political crisis in Eastern and Central Europe and the establishment of new nation-states on the basis of a more authoritarian tradition ("The Totalitarian State," etc, p. 410). Dawson similarly points out the importance of the breaking up of the four military empires of Eastern and Central Europe and the organization of new totalitarian states as a cause for the war, but thinks that this situation was far more important than any dynamics of capitalism.

<sup>2</sup> The Interpretation of History, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> The Protestant Era, p. 264.

<sup>4</sup> "The Totalitarian State, Etc.", pp. 407-412

In the realm of politics, the crisis of our era is evidenced in the decline of liberal democracy. This, too, according to Tillich, is largely the result of a structural trend in the development of late capitalism. Capitalism had given rise to self-conscious industrial masses who revolted against their oppression and thus destroyed all semblance of political conformity which provided the sociological basis for democracy. With the advent of bitter class-consciousness and the collapse of conformism, democracy became increasingly difficult to sustain, for liberal democracy, as we saw, was based on the agreement to differ and the willingness of minorities to abide by the decision of the majority.<sup>1</sup> With the rise of the workers and their organization into political parties, the foundations for democracy were greatly weakened.<sup>2</sup>

In education the disintegration of our time is reflected in the fact that the State has increasingly become the schoolmaster. With the lack of any other powerful center of meaning (such as a religious or cultural one), the Nation-State is appreciably setting itself up as the center of all education. In the growing tendency toward the heteronomous State, all autonomous elements are being brought under subjection. This is, of course, especially true under dictatorships, where rational criticism is almost entirely curtailed.

What has happened in the realm of religion? The period of crisis found the churches in a position of diminished prestige - at a lower peak, Tillich believes, than at any time since the beginning of Christianity. Protestantism, especially, had entered a "Babylonian captivity" to humanist bourgeois

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<sup>1</sup>"The World Situation," p. 45; The Protestant Era, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson notes the same foundation (conformism) for democracy and fears the current undermining of it. (See Enquiries, pp. 9 f.; Religion and the Modern State, pp. 14, 26).



society. Because of its support of the status quo it was becoming, at least in Europe, widely suspect by the masses of industrial workers. Without symbolism and sacred power, it had no appeal to the disinherited.<sup>1</sup> But under the leadership of Karl Barth the church began to awaken from its slumber and to challenge the shallow optimism of bourgeois culture. This powerful critical movement, however, offered little in the way of creative or constructive impulse. It had no program for relating the message of the church to the crying needs of contemporary society. The "crisis theology" was aware of the crisis, but not of the way out.

In all of these areas, then, there was an awareness that the foundations of society were crumbling. Automatic harmony has been thoroughly discredited and in its place is a quest for mass re-integration. The only remaining institution having the power to effect such a reintegration of life is the State. Tillich therefore believes that the great structural change through which we are now living is the transition from automatic harmony to planned unity under State auspices.

Following the breakdown of the natural or automatic harmony on which the whole system of life and thought during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was based, the attempt is now being made to produce a system of life and thought which is based on an intentional and planned unity.<sup>2</sup>

This transition, at least to a degree, is destined to take place universally. Although this is not for Tillich a matter of inexorable law or "mechanical necessity" it is an inescapable structural trend.<sup>3</sup> It is not to be expected that all parts of our globe will experience the final stage (planned unity) simultaneously. There have been and will continue to be vast differences in tempo. Many areas, such as the United States, are still largely in the stage of the Victorious Bourgeoisie<sup>4</sup> and have not yet witnessed the depths of

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<sup>1</sup>"The Present Theological Situation," p. 302.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>"Our Disintegrating World," p. 136 f.

<sup>4</sup>"American lives still in a happy backwardness" (Protestant Era, p. 272).



bourgeois-capitalistic disintegration such as was experienced in the heart of Europe. While on the other hand Russia, largely in reaction to the emptiness of the bourgeois world it saw reflected in its Europeanized intelligentsia, jumped directly from the feudal stage to the collectivist stage without mediation of the other stages of western culture (such as the Renaissance and the Reformation).<sup>1</sup> But regardless of national differences there is, Tillich believes, a world-wide trend toward collectivism and a greater degree of heteronomy.

This trend has given stimulus to three great systems of mass integration: Communism, Fascism, and Roman Catholicism.<sup>2</sup> One of Tillich's major concerns is that in this situation Protestantism is no longer a live alternative, for by its very nature Protestantism is opposed to the whole modern trend toward collectivism. The mood of the hour is definitely a willingness to sacrifice freedom to security, autonomy to certainty, and individualism to community. Growing numbers of people want their decisions made for them and are longing for mass organization and mass ideas. All of these tendencies are the very antithesis of pristine Protestantism which stresses moral decision and personal responsibility.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, modern totalitarian movements have assumed quasi-religious qualities and have utilized religious symbols such as fire, blood, soil, charismatic leadership, etc. - absolute symbols beyond all criticism.<sup>4</sup> The Protestant principle stands ever-lastingly opposed to the absolutizing of any conditioned reality. It proclaims the finite character

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<sup>1</sup>"The Christian Churches and Europe," Religion and Life (Summer, 1945), XIV, p. 333 f.; "The Totalitarian State, etc.", pp. 424 f.; Tillich's Review of "The Russian Soul and Revolution" by F. Stepan, Christendom (Chicago) Winter, 1936, p. 366

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 230.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 226

<sup>4</sup>Totalitarian systems thus prove that a center of integration must be spiritual. This is borne out even by Communism with its trust in Marxist "science," its faith in scientific myth, its obedience to the political party as a religious community, and its utopian, eschatological expectations (See "The Class Struggle and Religious Socialism" in Religiöse Verwirklichung, esp. page 207).

of every human achievement and brings the judgment of the eternal to bear upon every claim to usurp the divinity of the divine. In the midst, then, of so powerful a collectivist trend, can Protestantism survive? As a principle, Protestantism has unconditional validity. But even an eternally relevant principle has little practical value apart from embodiment in an institution. If institutional Protestantism is to be a formative influence in this period of world revolution, what changes must it undergo? The discussion of this question must await an analysis of the characteristics of the new age that Tillich feels is approaching.

##### 5. The New Theonomy of the Future Age

We have noted that Tillich's view of history involves a dialectical approach in which the various alternations between autonomy and heteronomy have the possibility of resolving themselves in a new theonomy. There is some evidence, Tillich believes, that through the self-destruction of the bourgeois world we are being brought to the threshold of a potentially new and creative era of human history - another theonomous age comparable to that of the Middle Ages.

The present period of the decay of liberalism and secularism may be called a period of expectation which perhaps may be followed by a period of reception after the turning-point, the kairos, has occurred.<sup>1</sup>

If such a period should come, what would be its characteristics? Tillich nowhere attempts to give a blueprint of what may be expected but he does give a number of hints (largely through his criticism of bourgeois secularism) of what a theonomous age would be like.

First, a theonomous age would include the supremacy of what Tillich calls "theonomous reason" as over against "revolutionary," "technical," or "planning" reason. Theonomous reason would unite theory and practice, union and detachment,

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<sup>1</sup>"The Kingdom of God and History," p. 123.



and receiving and shaping knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The best elements of autonomous reason, however, would be included. The gains of the bourgeois period, especially the elevation of reason above authoritarianism and obscurantism, would not be lost.

In a theonomous age there would be a new attitude toward nature and things. The "inherent power of being" in all things would gain new appreciation; man's relationship to things would not be that of technical manipulation but rather one of "immediate spiritual communion."<sup>2</sup> An attitude akin to "new realism" in crafts and applied arts would prevail - an attitude in which the creative artist allows the nature of the material itself (color, texture, form, etc.) to express itself according to its own structures and laws. There would be a desire to rediscover the inherent power and beauty of materials and to unite oneself with things not in order to exploit them but in an attitude of devotion and in the spirit of eros.<sup>3</sup> There would be a realization that "everything has levels that transcend scientific calculability and technical usefulness. . ." and that "Everything has the power to become a symbol for the 'ground of being' which it expresses in its special way."<sup>4</sup> This applies even to tools and machines which, according to Tillich, are gestalten with individual gestalt qualities (including subjectivity).<sup>5</sup> As gestalten, they demand a productive empathy and a vital eros relationship.<sup>6</sup> Tillich believes that in a truly theonomous society there would be a mythos of technology and a cultic consecration of technical production which would lead to a mutual fulfillment of persons and things.

<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 94, 155, 177.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 49 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 137 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>5</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 173.

<sup>6</sup>"Basic Features of Religious Socialism," pp. 21 f.



The fulfillment of personality in a theonomous society would be largely dependent upon the recovery of a spiritual center of personal life giving it transcendent meaning, direction, and purpose. The reintegration of communal life likewise hinges on the recovery of a spiritual center. A truly theonomous society thus "centered" would overcome individualism and loneliness. To do this, some form of collective life would be required. Tillich believes, then, that the trend toward collectivism is not entirely evil and that planning is necessary in order to save "the democratic way of life." It is impossible, he believes, to return to the era of automatic harmony and laissez-fair. The attempt to refashion the old structure for use today would only serve to postpone and aggravate an eventual crisis.<sup>1</sup> "We must go forward under the direction of planning reason toward an organization of society which avoids. . . liberal individualism."<sup>2</sup> But Tillich is also keenly aware, as we have seen, of the dangers of collectivism and cautions that totalitarian absolutism must also be avoided. Tillich's ideal, therefore, is a planned economy in which enough liberal elements are included so as to prevent totalitarian tyranny. Collectivism in one form or another, he believes, is inevitable.

The example, laid down by the Fascist, and - on the basis of the opposite principle- by the Soviets, will be followed (although with important modifications) by the democracies. The tremendous task of a fundamental transformation of the world will permit no other way.

If collectivism of one form or another is unavoidable, then

The Protestant principle is more necessary today than at any time since the period of the Reformation as the protest against the demonic abuse of those centralized authorities and powers which are developing under the urge of the new collectivism.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup>"The World Situation," p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>"Freedom in the Period of Transformation," Freedom: Its Meaning (R.N. Anshen, ed.) (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1940) p. 138.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p.231

In favoring a centralized State power with democratic correctives, Tillich thus opposes the Marxist view of the eventual "withering away" of the State. Tillich believes that the State is a necessary power structure; it exists to preserve justice which, according to Tillich, is better than chaos.<sup>1</sup> "History," he says, "seems to show that without the shell of a state, a community cannot exist."<sup>2</sup> But beyond this restrictive function, the State, according to Tillich (who here goes beyond even Martin Buber himself), has potentialities for an I-Thou relationship. These potentialities, it is to be assumed, would be realized in a theonomous age.

Other than some form of collectivism, what else can be said about the economic situation in a future theonomous age? For one thing, Tillich does not believe in absolute economic equality. This theory denies, he believes, the element of finitude (and contingency) in human nature expressed in the accidental character of one's existence.

A social form built on community and love has nothing to do with the egalitarian ideal, but rather recognizes a ranking of ability. . . . For it lies in the essence of love to affirm the individual precisely in his particularity.<sup>3</sup>

There is only one basic equality, according to Tillich, and that is the equal claim to be acknowledged as a person and this includes the right to actualize one's creativity within the limits of his finitude.<sup>4</sup> It is hardly necessary to add that Tillich does, however, believe in economic justice which involves the principle that the infinite productive capacity of modern industrialism be used for the advantage of all rather than for the few.

<sup>1</sup>"The Gospel and the State," Grozer Quarterly (October, 1938), XV, 254.

<sup>2</sup>"Martin Buber and Christian Thought," Commentary (June, 1948), V, 520.

<sup>3</sup>"Der Sozialismus als Kirchenfrage,"

<sup>4</sup>"Man and Society in Religious Socialism," Christianity and Society (Fall, 1943), VIII, 7.



What does Tillich affirm about man's freedom in such a society?

What fate may we expect for constitutional democracy in the coming age?

Tillich believes that it is necessary to distinguish between "political freedom" (dependent upon a particular set of constitutional procedures) and "historical freedom" (the right to historical self-determination).

In a theonomous age everyone must be given the latter (for this involves the very basis of his claim to be acknowledged as a person). Tillich does not think, however, that "political freedom" is absolutely necessary and points out that "political freedom" in itself is no guarantee that men will really be free or that they will, in other words, have "historical freedom." For "political freedom" through a manipulation of political bosses, party machines, bureaucracies, and the control of economic groups can easily become nothing more than a shell. Even such a framework as liberal democracy (the best theoretical system for safeguarding freedom) can become a tool for suppressing free creativity.<sup>1</sup> Tillich therefore believes in democracy as a way of life (as that system which best does justice to the dignity of every man) but not necessarily in democracy as a constitutional procedure. The latter is a means to an end and should not be regarded as an end in itself; it is to be employed only so long as it works.<sup>2</sup> Constitutional procedure may, in fact, need to be revised or limited, Tillich believes, in order to further the development of real democracy as a way of life. In a theonomous age, then, the rights of man (and especially the right of historical self-determination) would be protected, but the special political form providing for this would not necessarily be a constitutional one.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Freedom in the Period of Transition," p. 134.

<sup>2</sup>"The World Situation," p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>"The Church and Communism," Religion and Life (Summer, 1937) VI, 353; "Man and Society in Religious Socialism," Christianity and Society (Fall, 1943), VIII, 6 f.



What can we say about the international structure in a coming theonomous age? Tillich looks forward to either a Federation of Nations or to a system of federations.<sup>1</sup>

The freedom of the nations is dependent upon a supernational unity in which each nation actively participates and which has the power to protect it against insecurity and conquest.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless Tillich believes that such a federation is unrealistic apart from a common spirit within each federation of nations.<sup>3</sup> For this reason he agrees with Dawson that a European Federation is at present a more realistic solution than that of a World State.<sup>4</sup> It is also unrealistic, Tillich believes, to think in terms of world cooperation apart from dependency upon some all-embracing structure of power.<sup>5</sup> If such a world federation is ever to come into being, some group must become the bearer of this supernational structure of power. The churches, the intellectuals, and the proletariat are all potentially bearers of such<sup>a</sup> power structure which could transcend national boundaries, but at present none of these possesses sufficient moral or spiritual power to do so.<sup>6</sup>

In the area of education, Tillich envisions "a new, non-denominational religious foundation of the whole secular life, including teaching and education."<sup>8</sup> There would be no separation between education and religious education but rather an awareness of the "tangible, wholly obligatory, basic, and holy meaning of the educational ideal and method" itself.<sup>9</sup> Children would be taught

<sup>1</sup>"What War Aims?", p. 14 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13 f. Tillich notes that the correlate to this is the proposition that "The freedom of the individual is dependent upon a social and economic organization in which each individual actually participates and which has the power to protect him against insecurity and exploitation."

<sup>3</sup>"The World Situation," p. 49; Systematic Theology, I, 92.

<sup>4</sup>"What War Aims," p. 16.

<sup>5</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 195 ff.

<sup>6</sup>"The Gospel and the State," p. 255

<sup>7</sup>The Interpretation of History, 196

<sup>8</sup>"Religion and Education," p. 61

<sup>9</sup>The Religious Situation, p. 113

to see the deeply religious meaning of daily tasks and communal enterprises. In such a society there would be "a common relationship of both teacher and taught to something ultimate, to the eternal."<sup>1</sup> Such education would embrace humanistic, scientific, and technical elements but would be inspired primarily by religious motives and theonomous ideals.<sup>2</sup>

And finally, a theonomous age would involve structural changes in the realm of institutional religion. Tillich's ideal in terms of pure religion is a combination of the Protestant principle and Catholic substance. The former has already been dealt with and the latter will be treated more completely in the concluding chapter. Briefly, however, Tillich uses the term Catholic substance to indicate those elements in Catholicism such as the emphasis upon symbols, authority, and sacramental reality which he believes Protestantism must recover if it is to survive in an age of collectivism and mass consciousness.<sup>3</sup> In conjunction with this, the Protestant principle would retain its function in a theonomous age as a guardian against all demonic claims on the part of finite realities (especially authoritarian institutions) to unconditional significance.

In general, a theonomous age would involve a hallowing of the "profane" so that large sections of society would become transparent to the eternal. Human existence would point to a spiritual center outside itself and would be characterized by a "Thou-determined" attitude rather than an "I-determined" or "it-determined" one. The achievement of a new spiritual center transcending all the old patterns of Western culture would result in "a new integration of life. . . by replacing the principle of immanence with a

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<sup>1</sup>The Religious Situation, p. 110 f.

<sup>2</sup>"The World Situation," p. 39

<sup>3</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism," Protestant Digest (February-March, 1941), III, pp. 28 f.



principle which reunites all finite concerns - political, communal, and personal - with their ultimate ground."<sup>1</sup>

## 6. Steps Toward a New Theonomy

What, according to Tillich, may be done to help usher in this new theonomous age? One necessary prerequisite is that the church must 1) free itself from entanglements with the present disintegrating society and 2) prepare for a new embodiment of Protestantism.<sup>1</sup> The first part of this statement implies certain dissociations. The church must learn to differentiate its message from the shattered assumptions and illusions of Western culture and must proclaim the spiritual center necessary for the reintegration of life. The church must transcend the limitations of bourgeois society, conquer within itself the principles of immanence and individualism, and assert once more the transcendence of the spiritual principle. (These steps- the steps of "dissociation" have been taken by Barth and the Neo-Reformationists.) The second part of Tillich's proposition implies a certain "association" with the disintegrating culture. The church must not merely stand apart from society and make its pronouncements of judgment but must lovingly show how the profane forms of society can become transparent to the eternal. (This the Barthians have failed to do.) The church, Tillich believes, must refrain from becoming authoritarian or heteronomous in an oppressive and arbitrary way; it must spiritualize some of the present forms of society and thus prepare for a new historical existence.<sup>2</sup> This, Tillich realizes, cannot be accomplished through institutional changes or the action of ecclesiastical hierarchies alone but must involve a large-scale transformation of individuals. For, as Tillich

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<sup>1</sup>"The Disintegration of Society," pp. 62 ff.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History," pp. 138 ff.



says,

the corrupt human situation has deeper roots than mere historical and sociological structure. It is rooted in the depth of the human heart. [Thus] . . . the regeneration of mankind is not possible through institutional and political changes alone, but requires changes in the personal attitude of many people toward life.<sup>1</sup>

Tillich therefore attempts to transcend the antithesis between a "social gospel" and a "personal gospel" by stressing what he calls "historical grace" which is a power received vertically (God to man) that operates horizontally (man to man).

The problem of religion and social reform lies on a deeper level than the problem of personal life and institution. It is the question of "historical grace" which forms personalities and through them institutions. . . . The religion of the future will not be based on the conversion of more individuals, but on the readiness of the coming generation to receive the historical grace which is needed for the continuation of human history.<sup>2</sup>

On the whole, however, Tillich seems to place more faith in the power of a small, esoteric<sup>3</sup> group to effect a transformation toward a more theonomous type of society.

My idea for the spiritual reconstruction of Europe envisions a large number of anonymous and esoteric groups consisting of religious, humanist, and socialist people who have seen the trends of our period and who were able to resist them, who have contended for personality and community (many of them under persecution), and who know about an ultimate meaning of life, even if they are not yet able to express it.<sup>4</sup>

Some of these groups Tillich calls "cultural vanguards" and others "religious vanguards." By "cultural vanguards" Tillich means these groups (including non-Christians) who are "ultimately concerned" about the necessity of realizing

<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>"Vertical and Horizontal Thinking," American Scholar (Winter, 1945) XV, 112.

<sup>3</sup>Although esoteric, their purpose is not to remain so but rather to become exoteric (to establish a democratic exoterism) and thus to lay the foundations for a new social conformity ("Freedom in the Period of Transformation," p. 141).

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 295. W.S. Morris comments that this smacks of Plato's Revidius and asks: "Must the wise shelter behind the wall until the opportunity is given them to become philosopher-kings?" (Review of The Protestant Era, Hibbert Journal (July, 1950) XLVIII, 419.

the autonomous spirit in spite of the increasingly heteronomous character of our age. These groups are for people with "courage and patience, vision and rationality"<sup>1</sup> who have been willing to risk persecution for the sake of preserving human freedom and dignity. These groups (which presumably include what Tillich calls elsewhere the "political vanguard") are inspired with a "faith and heroism with respect to truth in whatever terms truth may be expressed."<sup>2</sup> Such groups, Tillich believes, "will be the main bearers of freedom and autonomous creativity in the period of transformation."<sup>3</sup> The special role of the "religious vanguards" on the other hand is to press for radical Christian action in the social sphere and further to realize in itself the transformation of Protestantism which is required for its survival.

This cannot be done by the churches officially; it is an adventurous task and the duty of a Christian vanguard of a volutary and half-esoteric character.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Church as a whole is too greatly bound to tradition to accept such a program for itself, it should give support and protection to this spiritual vanguard.

Both the "cultural vanguard" and the "religious vanguard" are, Tillich believes, ineffective in and of themselves, and need one another. The "cultural vanguard" lacks the institutional means of making its protest effective and the "religious vanguard" needs a greater degree of secular expression.<sup>5</sup> "Without the participation of the secular spirit in the work of spiritual reconstruction, nothing can be done."<sup>6</sup> Both groups, on the other

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<sup>1</sup>"Freedom in the Period of Transformation," p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. See also The Interpretation of History, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>"Freedom in the Period of Transformation," p. 141

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 293.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 293.



hand, need to participate in established social movements. The goal of a combined Christian-humanist-socialist group was most effectively realized, Tillich believes, among the "Religious Socialists" of Germany with whom he was associated from the beginning. Regardless of the political defeat of this movement and many of its associated movements in other lands, Tillich still maintains that this approach needs to be made.

It is my conviction that neither the Catholic Church nor Ecumenical Protestantism but the spirit of these small groups will determine the future of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, in the last analysis, Tillich does not place much confidence in any human means for achieving a theonomous age. He maintains that a new theonomy cannot be created by intention or religious romanticism but is rather a matter of historical destiny (i.e., the approach of a new kairos) and historical grace (i.e., the intrusion of final revelation).<sup>2</sup> A kairos is not something that can be created but rather is something grasped; revelation cannot be produced but rather is only received. Thus in spite of his concern for Christian social action, Tillich maintains that the will for a new theonomy is itself irreligious and unspiritual.<sup>3</sup> The only thing we can do, he feels, is to realize our spiritual poverty, emptiness and nakedness and then to wait.<sup>4</sup> When waiting and acting have become profound enough then our culture may be able to receive a new kairos.<sup>5</sup>

That we no longer believe we can redeem culture through the Church or the Church through culture - this is the first and most important sign of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Trends in Religious Thought, etc.", p. 28; See also "An Historical Diagnosis," Radical Religion (Winter, 1936), II, 17.

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 149 f.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 239.

<sup>4</sup>In regard to Tillich's doctrine of the "sacred void" Heimann comments that "The only question one may raise is whether, thus waiting for the distant and unknown kairos. . . we may not possibly miss minor assignments of a makeshift nature, which, however uninspiring and preliminary in themselves, could be the earnest and symbol of the coming light. . . ." (Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 324f.)

<sup>5</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 67

<sup>6</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 239.



Whether or not a new kairos is now in the making or whether our culture will be able to receive it if it should come, Tillich is not prepared to say. His only comment is that

it is not possible to assert that Western society can be saved. Still less is it possible to assert that God's plan for the world depends upon its salvation and that of the Western churches which have been associated with it. . . . [It is my conviction] that Western civilization has in the past incorporated great spiritual values, that it is worth saving if it can be saved, and that the only means by which it can be saved is the recovery of the Gospel of Christ as the power which can heal the sickness of society from within, from the ground of its own being. Even if all this were destroyed, the Gospel would still be the Gospel, and God's purpose would go forward through other men and in other ways.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"The Disintegration of Society," p. 64

## CHAPTER SIX

## EVALUATION AND CRITICISM

## OF

## TILLICH'S INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

The importance of Tillich's contribution to contemporary theology can hardly be overestimated. His emphasis upon the importance of an understanding of history as the problem of our period and his linking of Christology to the interpretation of history has rescued Christ from a narrow interpretation as Savior of individual souls and elevated him to his rightful position as the Savior of history and cosmos as well. He has widened our horizons through his recovered emphasis upon eschatology and has helped to give many of the old myths a new relevance.<sup>1</sup> Again, Tillich has done our generation a great service in his development of a method of correlation between theology and philosophy and in his construction of a new terminology which, once grasped, is a goldmine of insights for a fresh reinterpretation of traditional doctrines. Yet, underneath much of this lies a basic ambiguity. In spite of his existential approach and his realistic grappling with political and social problems, his system has an air of unreality. This can perhaps best be explained in reference to his eschatological concepts.

### 1. Eschatological concepts

Tillich has called our attention to the need for a transcendent reference if life or history is to have any real meaning. He has demonstrated how every area of life, torn by its self-contradictions and ambiguities, points beyond itself in a quest for the Christ and the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, who has popularized this mythological-historical approach, probably borrowed many of his insights from Tillich.

Tillich's ability, by means of his training as a philosopher, to demonstrate how the deepest philosophical questions are answerable only on the basis of Christian doctrine meets a great need. We may, however, have some serious misgivings about the type of Christian answers Tillich gives, insofar as he interprets these answers in a mythological way. We need to ask what reality his eschatological concepts have ("Eternal Life," "Kingdom of God," "restoration," etc.) if the eschaton, after all, is just spiritualized away into a transcendent ultimate. We need to ask to what extent his Christian answers come down from the realm of myth and concept and involve an actual transformation of existence, a real overcoming of the tensions and tragedies of life, and a genuine victory over the demonic forces he so adequately portrays.

Tillich does speak of a partial transformation of existence. The Kingdom of God is in history as well as beyond it; the New Being is a sacramental reality as well as "demand" and "expectation"; society may become theonomous for a period of time, and the demonic may be overcome in specific manifestations during a special kairos. But every present actualization, every "already" is, as we saw, strongly qualified by a "not yet." History as a whole can never be the scene of the perfect or the complete. History, taking place as it does in existence, must continue to share the ambiguities of existence; it must always remain the scene of contending powers.

We can, no doubt, agree with Tillich that to expect anything more in history would be Utopian. Where we must part ways, however, is in his view that there is no ultimate solution beyond history. (This, of course, Tillich would deny; yet it seems to be the end result of his de-mythologizing tendency.) It is true that Tillich does speak about ultimate fulfillment beyond history and that he has a great deal to say about supra-historical solutions. Yet they seem entirely lacking in content. Two specific facts lead to this



judgment: 1) Tillich's criticism of a second realm of being, and 2) Tillich's disavowal of the end of history as an empirical event.

1) Tillich tells us plainly that he does not believe there is a second realm of being beyond this existence and affirms that this world of experience is the only realm of being. The ultimate or transcendent, he believes, cannot be conceived in terms of a supernatural "second story" above this world but only in terms of meaning. The ultimate is history's trans-temporal meaning - the realm meaning underlying all those realities appearing in the historical process in a fragmentary, anticipatory way. There is, in fact, nothing in the ultimate (eschaton) that is not already in history in an incomplete, imperfect way,<sup>1</sup> and there is nothing in history that is not in the ultimate in a perfect, completed way. The ultimate, it would seem, is the theoretical perfection of history's ambiguities. We are to expect, then, no other realm of being in which persons after death - or history at its close- may be renovated or completed.

2) Secondly, Tillich holds, as we have noted earlier, that the eschaton should not be conceived as appearing in any future moment of history. The end of history is not a temporal one in an empirical sense, but rather a quality of life in which the eternal and transcendent meaning may be known

<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 279. V.A. Demant quotes this idea as Tillich's "arch-heresy" and comments that no interpretation of history can be given without reference to a trans-historical absolute or a real supernatural realm through which man can gain truth coming from outside of history. ("A Theologian on Historical Existence," pp. 287 f.)

<sup>2</sup>In terms of telos (inner aim) rather than finis (absolute end). Part of the difficulty in reference to Tillich's interpretation of the Christian myths lies in his idea that all religious knowledge is necessarily symbolical. The Unconditional is beyond essence and existence; therefore all that we can say about ultimate reality must take the form of finite symbols. Eschatological symbols are limited human attempts to describe what cannot finally be described or defined. This does not mean, however, that the referents of symbols have no reality! Although we cannot say they have objective reality (religious symbols, according to Tillich, do not refer to a world of objects), they do express express what is ultimately and really real. Tillich criticizes the notion that religious symbols are only "ideology" (Marx) or "sublimation" (Freud) and insists that they are not just subjective. (See: "The Religious Symbol," pp. 16 ff.)

as a present reality.

Now if there is no final fulfillment within history, no empirical ending of the historical process, and no second realm beyond history where ultimate fulfillment may take place, what is the purpose of the term ultimate fulfillment? Does it have any reality or significance?

This dilemma becomes even more visible in the case of the inter-relationship between individuals and history. There is no personal fulfillment, Tillich believes, apart from historical fulfillment.<sup>1</sup> Yet, according to Tillich, neither personal nor historical fulfillment is to be expected within history. Further, as we noted, there is no realm beyond, above, or at the close of history in which personal and historical fulfillment may have any "being" or reality. If this is so, why speak then of personal and historical fulfillment at all? If "fulfillment" is just a possible dimension within our present existence - the idea that we, in our incompleteness may somehow feel related to a theoretical completeness and perfection of things which shall never really be ours - then is it not just an idle dream? On this basis is there any real ground for Christian hope?

Can we really make sense of the historical process apart from a real, objective ending of history (however impossible or illogical such an idea may be) in which completion and perfection become actual? If there is nothing beyond the imperfection, frustration, defeat, and tragedy of life, have we not lost one of the most important elements in Christianity - the note of final victory and the hope that this gives? Now it may be very acceptable and meaningful to speak of a fulfillment of history at each of its moments as it participates in the transcendent - to speak of the realization of infinite meaning in every historical event. But still, this is intra-historical fulfillment and, in so far as it is confined to history, is partial, incomplete and ambiguous. Is nothing more than this to be expected?

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<sup>1</sup> See page 54f.



The same difficulty arises in relation to the ultimate destiny of individuals. Here again Tillich speaks of hope and victory, through Eternal Life. But Eternal Life for him is primarily here and now, within the ambiguities of existence and not beyond them. This, too, is acceptable as far as it goes, especially the idea that we can realize infinite meaning in each of our creative acts. But is there nothing beyond this? Though Tillich does speak of Eternal Life as future as well as present, the future reference is vague and meaningless, for all futurisms in his thinking are symbols and do not mean what is normally meant in Christian eschatological expectation.

Can we so lightly dispense with the idea of an actual perfection of individuals and history beyond, above, or at the close of history? If there is no real perfection to come, what can we make of all the torments and sufferings of this life where no realization of infinite meaning within the present seems at all possible or likely?<sup>1</sup> Can Christianity make sense

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<sup>1</sup>Tillich attempts to answer the question of how a Christian view of life is possible in view of the fact that so many seem to be excluded from any possible intra-historical fulfillment. All theological statements, he says, are existential and necessarily bound to the person making the statements. "This existential correlation is abandoned if the question of theodicy is raised with respect to persons other than the questioner. . . . If we wish to answer the question of the fulfillment of other persons. . . we must seek the point at which the destiny of others becomes our own destiny. And this point is not hard to find. It is the participation of their being in our being. The principle of participation implies that every question concerning individual fulfillment must at the same time be a question concerning universal fulfillment. The destiny of the individual cannot be separated from the destiny of the whole in which it participates" (Systematic Theology I, 269 ff.) This is an excellent answer and sheds much light on the problems of providence and predestination. Yet, as in the other eschatological answers that Tillich gives, the substance is lost through a mythological interpretation. When we consider what Tillich means by "universal fulfillment" we discover that it is no answer at all and we return to the same ambiguity: the solution of a final fulfillment which he never expects really to happen!



of life and history apart from an ultimate fulfillment which has more substance to it than anything to be found in Tillich's eschatology? Must we not agree with Nels Ferré when he says that "No full claim for a Christian God can ever be made legitimately from within a history like ours except in the light of a perfect ending"?<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The "Historical Jesus"

The question of the historical Jesus parallels, in a sense, the question about the reality of the eschatological symbols. It is the question as to whether Christ himself, in Tillich's system, is not just a symbol or myth ultimately lacking in historical reality. If the beginning and the end of history are to be understood mythologically and not as empirical happenings, is not the "center" of history drawn into the same mythological interpretation? Tillich has been widely criticized for over-symbolizing the Christ concept.<sup>2</sup> D.M. Baillie, for instance, believes that Tillich neglects the historical Jesus to such an extent that his Christology is "quite independent of the question whether Jesus ever existed as an historical personality at all."<sup>3</sup>

It is true that Tillich does speak often of the "New Being," the "center of history," and the "picture" of the Christ and seldom of Jesus as a real historical person. Because of his philosophical approach and his concern for the development of a new terminology, Tillich does seem at times to speak of Jesus in a docetic or gnostic fashion. Further, Tillich's desire

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<sup>1</sup>"Present Responsibility and Future Hope," Theology Today (January, 1952) p. 483.

<sup>2</sup>See: Otto Piper, Present Developments, etc., p. 143 f.; Harkness, "The Abyss and the Given," Christendom (Chicago), (Autumn, 1938), III, 519; Lehman's review of The Protestant Era and The Shaking of the Foundations in Interpretation (January, 1949), III, 115 f.; D.M. Baillie, God Was in Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp. 72-79.

<sup>3</sup>D.M. Baillie, op.cit., p. 78.

to generalize the Christ concept so as to afford a basis for comparing the Christian claim with other "centers" of meaning in other faiths and cultures opens him again to the charge of vagueness or even gnosticism.<sup>1</sup> But although there are grounds for being suspicious of Tillich's Christology, I should like here to defend Tillich against many of his adversaries.<sup>2</sup>

First, let us consider the reasons for the criticisms. It is to be admitted at once that Tillich leaves himself open to attack at many points. He has made such radical statements as this: "The foundation of the Christian belief is not the historical Jesus, but the biblical picture of Christ."<sup>3</sup> Earlier in the same paragraph he tells of how, since 1911, he has attempted to answer the question as to "how the Christian doctrine might be understood, if the non-existence of the historical Jesus should become historically probable."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Far from being a gnostic or a docetist, Tillich has specifically argued against such heresies. Speaking of the Virgin Birth he says, "But this symbol (though it has its values) in its supra-natural-miraculous form it is not in conformity with the anti-docetic emphasis on the perfect humanity of Jesus as the Christ." (Propositions, Part III, p. 19) Again, Tillich criticizes the attempt of the "German Christians" to try to make Jesus a hero demigod and thus transform Christianity into a pagan-gnostic movement. ("The Totalitarian State, etc.", p. 419).

<sup>2</sup>The criticism in the previous section would seem to make the defense of Tillich at this point inconsistent. Still, the evidence in favor of Tillich's belief in a real Incarnation based on factual events is overwhelming. Further the criticism of Tillich's eschatological concepts is not crucial to his system as a whole, which can still be appreciated in spite of this defect. If it could be shown, however, that Tillich's Christology is gnostic, his whole system would crumble. For the focal point in Tillich's system is the Incarnation - the overcoming of estranged existence by the Christ. If there is no fact upon which this is based, there could be no real victory over existence and Tillich's system would be nonsense. (It should also be said that this defense of Tillich was written prior to the publication of The Theology of Paul Tillich which contains an essay by A.T. Mollegen, whose approach is much the same as that given here. The interpretation of Tillich's Christology given here was personally confirmed by a letter from Dr. Tillich, March 31, 1952.)

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 33



A great deal of the misunderstanding of Tillich's position has to do with the ambiguity of the term "historical Jesus." Tillich himself distinguishes three different meanings of the term:

- 1) The objective event itself (Jesus of Nazareth) and the occurrences happening around this man. (This Tillich recognizes as the absolutely indispensable foundation of the Gospel. The event is the foundation upon which the "picture" of Christ is based.)
- 2) The religious picture of the Christ- the story of the events as reported in a "belief-full" interpretation. (This, Tillich says, is the only Christ we can really know, for all of our sources are interpretations and it is impossible to get behind them to "pure facts" about Jesus.)<sup>1</sup>
- 3) The scientific reconstruction of the life or personality of Jesus- a critical restatement of the above two concepts in an attempt to get behind them in order to discover the facts about Jesus, his inner life, etc. (This is the "historical Jesus" that Tillich rejects<sup>2</sup> and especially the attempt of scholars to make this type of "historical Jesus" the foundation of the Christian faith.)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The hyphenated noun Jesus-Christ should convey the double meaning of 1) and 2) above - Jesus as the historical fact interpreted through faith as the Christ. Neither emphasis, Tillich believes, should be lost. To negate the fact of Jesus is to lose the gospel of God's coming to man and manifesting Himself under the limited conditions of existence. To negate the interpretation of that fact is to destroy the significance that the fact has more - much more - than a plain historical value (Propositions, Part III, p. 1) Thus the same duality that we noted in Tillich's definition of history (as both subjective and objective, fact and interpretation) also applies to Jesus as the Christ (Propositions, Part V, p.3).

<sup>2</sup>When the term is used in this third sense it will be set in quotation marks to indicate that what Tillich is rejecting is not the factual Incarnation but rather what he calls "the artificial product of historical research."

<sup>3</sup>"The Significance of the Historical Jesus," pp. 1-3. Other reasons for Tillich's rejection of the "historical Jesus" are: 1) if taken as the foundation of the Christian faith, it makes Christianity rest on historical probability. "If the Christian faith is based even on a 100,000 to 1 probability that Jesus has said or done or suffered this or that. . . then it has lost its foundation completely. Then the historical event [the transforming New Being] has become a matter of empirical verification. . . ." and 2) researchers for the "historical Jesus" seek to measure Christ by history rather than allowing history to be measured by Christ. Such attempts put Christ at the mercy of historical investigation rather than recognize that there would be no history in its fullest sense apart from Christ as its "center." ("The Problem of Theological Method," Journal of Religion, (January, 1947), XXVII, 21.)



In the light of this analysis, it immediately becomes clear what Tillich means when he says that "The foundation of Christian belief is not the historical Jesus (sense 3) but the biblical picture of Christ [sense 2 - the picture which is based on objective, factual events]"<sup>1</sup> As Tillich goes on to say, "The criterion of human thought and action is not the constantly changing and artificial product of historical research, but the picture of Christ as it is rooted in ecclesiastical belief and human experience."<sup>2</sup> But even though the "picture" of Christ is an interpretation rooted in "ecclesiastical belief" and "human experience" it is more fundamentally based on a real event that actually happened. Tillich says emphatically that the picture of the Christ is not just an idea or a product of philosophical imagination. "If this were the case, it would be as distorted, tragic, and sinful as existence itself, and would not be able to overcome existence."<sup>3</sup> There is a factual event, says Tillich, in Jesus of Nazareth.

This fact is called "Incarnation" and if there are only ideas, only and ideal picture, then we have no Incarnation because we have no fact.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>"A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," Church Quarterly Review, (January-March, 1949), CXLVII, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>"The Significance of the Historical Jesus," p. 5; See also The Interpretation of History, p. 262; Propositions, Part III, p. 13. A footnote in Tillich's article "The Religious Symbol" (Journal of Liberal Religion, (Summer 1940, p. 29, first published in Religiöse Verwirklichung, p. 88 ff. is worth quoting here in its entirety. "The assertion of Kurt Leese, on the occasion of a discussion of my whole position, that I have quite consistently transformed Christ into a symbol is erroneous. If it is meant by this to say that the empirical reality of Christ through a mythical interpretation is of no significance at all, my view is wrongly interpreted. The symbolic character of Christ involves also his empirical character. Only so much is correct, that this empirical aspect cannot be understood apart from symbolic intuition. It is not possible and it is also superfluous to prove into the empirical element "in itself" that stands behind the symbolically interpreted, empirical aspect of Christ. This would be to search for something that would no longer be symbolic, as liberal theology tried to do."

With these distinctions in mind, let us look again at D. M. Baillie's criticism.<sup>1</sup> "With all his deep interest in Christology," writes Dr. Baillie, "he regards it as quite independent of the question whether Jesus ever existed as an historical personality at all."<sup>2</sup> It should be clear by now that Tillich does regard it as of decisive importance that there was an historical personality called Jesus and that, without this factual Incarnation, there could be no gospel of God's coming to man in his existential situation.<sup>3</sup> Baillie's error is in taking Tillich's "non-existence of the historical Jesus" to mean the non-existence of an historical

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<sup>1</sup>The discussion will center on Baillie's criticism because it is the most widely-known and the most incisive. D.M. Baillie is not to be criticized personally, however, for Tillich did not make his view clear on this point until some of his more recent writings which are not readily available in Britain. Actually, Tillich is closer to Baillie's position than Baillie realizes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 78f.

<sup>3</sup>Since many of the sources on Tillich are not readily accessible, some of the more important references dealing with the factualness of the Incarnation will be listed here. (*Italics mine*).

"The doctrine of the Incarnation concerns an event which has happened, and is independent of any interpretation of it. . . . it is an event with all the characteristics of an "event in time and space": namely, occurring "but once", unrepeatably, possible only in a special situation and in a special, incomparable, individual form, a subject of report and not of analysis or deduction." ("A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 133)

"The fact which is called 'The historic Jesus'. . . is an event which has made possible the Gospel. . . . A fact happened which gave the possibility of sharing the picture of a man in whom God appears to us in a human life. This is the first we have to affirm: An event has happened which gave rise to the picture of Christ in the gospels. . . ." ("The Significance of the Historical Jesus," p. 5)

"The Logos became an immanent Son of Man, an earthly man, an historical man, flesh." ("A reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 139)

"The Messiah, the mediator between God and man, is identical with a personal human life the name of which is Jesus of Nazareth." (Systematic Theology, I, 229 f.)

"Christ is an historical event, God manifesting himself in time as the center of time, and by his appearance filling time with meaning. . . ." ("History as the Problem of Our Period," p. 261).

"There is an historical event which in symbolic-mythological terms is described as the appearance of the Christ" ("Present Theological Situation," p. 306).

"The logos became history, a visible and touchable individuality, in a unique moment of time." (The Protestant Era, p. 24).



personality.<sup>1</sup> Baillie then goes on to interpret Tillich as believing that the "incarnation of God in a man is a purely 'mythical' idea, which could not possibly be actualized in an historical person. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Now the New Being, for Tillich, may be a symbol or a myth, but it is much more than just a 'mere' symbol or a "purely 'mythical' idea, which could not possibly be actualized." It is a symbol rooted in historical reality; it is the result of Christ's appearance as a transforming power within history, which Tillich believes cannot adequately be expressed apart from symbols and myths.<sup>3</sup>

Although his statements are sometimes extreme, what D.M. Baillie is really trying to say about Tillich (and other dialectical theologians)<sup>4</sup> does need to be said, i.e. that he does not give due attention to the events in the life of Jesus. With the major reservation that Tillich does believe in a factual incarnation, this writer agrees with Tillich's critics in the observation that Tillich does not show sufficient interest in the biographical details of the Jesus of history. If the God-man really has appeared in history in what Tillich calls a "paradoxical manifestation of the ultimate perfection"<sup>5</sup> we should make every effort to trace the details of that manifestation.

This should not be taken to mean, however, that Tillich is skeptical about the possibility of knowing Jesus as an historical personality (i.e., in so far as we know him at the same time as the Christ of faith). What he is skeptical of is the attempt of scholars of the past to find an "historical

<sup>1</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Here Tillich disagrees with Bultmann who believes that a myth is just a primitive world-view that need not be taken seriously. For Tillich, a myth is the "necessary and adequate expression of revelation." ("The Present Theological Situation, etc.", p. 306).

<sup>4</sup>D.M. Baillie, op. cit., pp. 54 f.

<sup>5</sup>The Interpretation of History, p. 262.



Jesus" who could be known apart from interpretation or the witness of faith. Tillich no longer follows the school of radical form critics who, believing that what we really have in the Gospels is the preaching of the Apostolic Age, are skeptical of the possibility of knowing much of anything about Jesus as he actually was.<sup>1</sup> Tillich is more confident that the New Testament records are substantially reliable as a true witness to Christ.<sup>2</sup> Although he is skeptical about the details of the records and does not believe that we have the exact words of Christ, he does believe that we have a reliable "picture" or a true interpretation of the facts.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, Tillich speaks of the "full New Testament picture" of Christ as the criterion for faith.

I take the full content of the Gospels as much surer than the cutting away of those things which are doubtful from a historical point of view. I am rather critical. . . about the many singularities of the reports; but when I wish to be dogmatic or when I preach, I think there should be a difference in principle. Then I use all these words which I am convinced are not historical but come from Paul's interpretation or John's. . . . They cannot be taken as the historical man, Jesus - they are interpretations; but nevertheless, for dogmatic purposes, for religious purposes, for my own religion, for preaching, and so on, I use these words without any differentiation. . . . Therefore, I speak of the full picture of the New Testament as comprising the content of the Incarnation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>D.M. Baillie seems to include Tillich among the followers of this school (*op. cit.*, pp. 53 n., 54 ff.). Tillich indicates that he has changed his mind about the value of the more radical criticism ("The Significance of the Historical Jesus," p. 6).

<sup>2</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr thinks that Tillich is too quick to accept the "biographer's estimate" without criticism and that the Gospel portrait can be accepted "only if we have corroborative evidence that the portrait is true." ("The Contribution of Paul Tillich," *Religion in Life* (Autumn, 1937), VI, 578). Tillich would probably ask where Niebuhr would presume to find such "corroborative evidence."

<sup>3</sup>There were facts about a man called Jesus. But these facts were seen and interpreted by men of faith. Apart from the faith-interpretation, says Tillich, the facts would have no religious significance. It is the faith-interpretation that is the important thing; it is this interpretation which has proved to have the power of overcoming reality.

### 3. Religious Socialism

Any critical discussion of Tillich's interpretation of history that seeks to be complete in any way cannot avoid taking cognizance of the sociological views that occupy so much of Tillich's writings. Immediately behind the vast panorama of Tillich's social views and concerns is his basic philosophy of Religious Socialism. This philosophy, in turn, is admittedly guided and informed by many elements of Marxist thought. The basic question we shall then need to ask is this: Is Marxism, purged of its utopianism, un-scientific fanaticism, and metaphysical materialism<sup>1</sup> a helpful supplement to Christian thought? Or, in other words, is Tillich justified in canonizing Marx as a Christian saint?<sup>2</sup>

Tillich points out many elements of Marxism that need to be appropriated by the church. But most influential to Tillich's thinking is the Marxian analysis of the contradictions within Capitalism that unavoidably drive it beyond itself toward the establishment of a collectivist society. Tillich, as we saw in the previous chapter, regards Capitalism as in its latter stages of decline.

It is difficult for one living in a land where Capitalism is flourishing to believe, with Tillich, that it is destined so to decline. Much of American prosperity, admittedly, is due to historical contingencies and is not all the product of the "free enterprise" system. It is also to be admitted that the self-contradictions of Capitalism are apparent to the

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<sup>1</sup>Most of these elements, Tillich believes, are accretions and are not the thought of Karl Marx himself.

<sup>2</sup>It is not within the scope of this critique (or, indeed, within the ability of this writer) to discuss whether or not Tillich has adequately interpreted Marxism. Eduard Heimann argues that Tillich has misconceived Marx's view of man - a view entirely at odds with the Christian doctrine of man ("Tillich's Doctrine of Religious Socialism," in The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 323 f.). Tillich replies that "Marx exegesis has in common with the exegesis of the Bible. . . the fact that it is open to many contradictory interpretations (The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 346).



discerning eye and that they will become more noticeable should another depression occur. Nevertheless, it seems to this writer that Tillich has over-exaggerated the depth of these contradictions and has over-emphasized the necessity of collectivism as the solution to the problem. Tillich's views, it must be remembered, took shape in Germany at a period when the proletariat had reached the stage of utter despair. But in the United States there has never been as sharply defined a proletarian class as in Germany or even in Great Britain. In the United States, even in the worst days of the 1930 depression, the workers never knew despair comparable to that experienced in the heart of Europe. Especially at present there is no concerted criticism of the capitalistic structure as such; workers may demand better hours and more security, but these demands are for changes within the structure of capitalistic society. There is no general revolt against the free enterprise system. Indeed, the average worker (perhaps due to a decade-long advertising campaign on the part of management) seems more willing to support, and even to fight for, the free enterprise system than a good many of the intelligentsia. Now Tillich may be right in declaring that America rests in a happy stage of backwardness<sup>1</sup> and that structural changes are in the making that are destined to change all of this. But can we believe that these structural trends are as all-determining as Tillich imagines them to be? Tillich is careful to say that he does not mean to imply any sort of metaphysical determinism when he speaks of "structural necessity." Then is "necessity" quite the word to use? It is likely that there is a structural "trend" moving, even with considerable momentum, toward the collectivist society. But if it is a "trend," then is it not conceivably reversible?

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 272.



(Most advocates of the capitalistic system in America are aware of such a trend and are seeking to divert it.) In other words, is the movement toward socialism a necessity according to the dialectics of history?

Further, if we do grant that the self-destructive trends within capitalism are driving us beyond the present economic structure of society and are, as Tillich puts it, "working themselves out to a finish"<sup>1</sup> will this "finish" necessarily be the planned society under State auspices that Tillich envisions? Is socialism the only alternative? Is it not possible that the trend toward collectivism can end in something less than socialism as we know it? It seems to this writer that the United States may be in the process of evolving such an alternative solution. Through the increased strength of labor unions, from the one side and, from the other, the growing awareness on the part of management of its social responsibilities (and a desire to avoid more radical measures) labor and management seem to be moving toward a more cooperative relationship. Is it not possible that this "managerial revolution," as it is called, would, if successfully carried out, preclude the more advanced stages of socialism that Tillich predicts? May it not be that in the United States there is actually a trend toward a truer "middle of the Way" position than is found even in Great Britain? - a way that will safeguard personal initiative and creativity and that will allow for the expansion of industry to a degree that is not possible when industry is government-dominated?

It may not be out of order to call attention to one further weakness in Tillich's approach. One of the major structural elements in Tillich's analysis of the decline of capitalism is his Marxist conception that the

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<sup>1</sup>"Our Disintegrating World," p. 144.

survival of capitalism depends upon ever-expanding world markets. The end of the age of economic expansion and exploitation, the closing of world markets, the diminishing supply of raw materials, and the consequent imperialistic competition involved have inevitably led to world wars and are thus, for Tillich, one of the major reasons for Capitalism's decline. Does this view take into full account the scientific advancement in the last quarter of a century? Does not this view rest on the assumption that the full production necessary for capitalist economy is based on an exhaustible supply of raw materials? Tillich does not take cognizance of the fact that the dependency upon raw materials such as iron and rubber is being replaced, to some extent at least, by synthetics - vegetable compounds that could be produced in almost unlimited quantities through the scientific tilling of the soil. Nor does he seem to be aware of the fact that new forms of energy are being produced (including atomic power) that may in the future replace industry's dependency upon static supplies of coal, gas, and oil. Is Tillich, then, as realistic as he attempts to be? Is not his thought at this point limited by a remnant of Marxian dialectics? Thus we return to the question with which we began: Can Marxism be accepted as a helpful supplement to the Christian interpretation of history?

#### 4. Roman Catholic Criticism

This chapter so far has not attempted to deal with a criticism of Tillich's approach from a Roman Catholic viewpoint. Since Dawson will be criticized from a Protestant standpoint in a succeeding chapter, it is only fair to subject Tillich to the same treatment. We shall therefore briefly consider Dawson's criticism of Protestantism (especially as concerns an interpretation of history) to see to what extent, if any, it applies to Tillich's thought.



Although Dawson nowhere attempts to construct a systematic critique of Protestant thought, his writings are full of illuminating sidelights in which Protestantism is implicitly and explicitly judged and found wanting. One of Dawson's most forceful criticisms of Protestantism is its tendency to abandon the cultural problem. Protestantism, he claims, has established such a drastic dualism of faith and works "as to leave no room for any positive conception of Christian culture. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The "otherness" of the divine has been declared with such rigor that there is a fear "lest the transcendent divine values of Christianity be endangered by any identification or association of them with the relative human values of culture." <sup>2</sup> This divorce of culture from religion has been so pronounced that Dawson claims to see a direct line from Lutheranism (the separation of the state from the judgment of the church) through Hegel's exaltation of the Prussian State to Hitler. <sup>3</sup>

Another aspect of the detachment of culture from religion is the traditional Protestant de-valuation of the centuries of Christian history prior to the Reformation. The Reformers imagined that they were able to cancel out a thousand years of darkness, superstition, and bigotry and begin afresh. This attempt to wipe out the debt to the Middle Ages resulted in a severing of religion from its cultural and historical roots and thus paved the way, as we shall see in Dawson's analysis, for total secularism. The failure to see Christendom as a continuity in time led to the failure to see it as a continuity in space and this resulted in the self-assertion of individual nations against the reality of Christendom.

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), p. 10

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>See the essay "Hegel and the German Ideology" in Understanding Europe, pp. 187-203; The Judgment of the Nations (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943), pp. 33. Dawson recognizes that this cultural divorce is more characteristic of the Lutheran wing of Protestantism. Calvinism, he comments, has always stressed Christianization of society (The Judgment of the Nations, p. 26).



Again, the divorce of religion and culture led Protestantism to a negative appraisal of non-Christian cultures and a narrowness that made it impossible to see God at work in every religion in terms of "general revelation" and also in terms of a quest for the Christ.

Tillich's reply to these criticisms is not difficult to construct, for he is in entire agreement with Dawson in regard to the unhealthy separation of religion and culture. Although he likes to think of himself as standing within the Lutheran tradition, he is far more a son of John Calvin in his views concerning the redemption of society. With Dawson, Tillich believes that religion must avoid being strictly transcendent and must come to grips with the problem of relating its message to the cultural situation. He agrees with Dawson that there is a link between Lutheran quietism and the rise of Hitler. He states, to this effect, that the Reformation was carried on largely through the power of the Germanic princes with the result that

the princes took over many functions of the bishops, thus subjecting the church to State administration and political power in a measure which was never possible for Catholicism. This was the price the German nation had to pay for being the motherland of the Reformation. Without this heritage, Hitler's tyranny would never have been possible.<sup>1</sup>

To overcome the false separation of religion and culture, Tillich believes that the Church should construct a positive "theology of culture" which would "attempt to analyze the theology behind all cultural expressions."<sup>2</sup>

Again, because of his early environment, Tillich acquired a strong appreciation of the European historical tradition and is thus not open to Dawson's criticism of the Protestant disposition to treat the Middle Ages lightly. He is particularly conscious of the fact that Protestants have so often overlooked the value of these centuries and cautions that Protestantism

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<sup>1</sup>"War and The Christian Churches," Protestant Digest (January, 1940), III, 15. Yet, in another place, Tillich speaks of the theory of attributing Hitler's evil to Lutheranism as being grossly over-exaggerated ("Love's Strange Work," The Protestant (January, 1942), IV, 75.

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 39.

still depends upon the "religious substance" and power of the Roman Catholic tradition.<sup>1</sup> Tillich is aware, too, of the essential unity of Christendom as a "social reality" which rises above national particularism. Censuring Emanuel Hirsch's German nationalism, Tillich comments that "such a thing would mean the break-up of the more than a thousand-year-old tradition that the Christian western world constitutes a homogeneous family of nations."<sup>2</sup>

And finally, Tillich is immune to the criticism of failing to see the deeper religious levels in primitive and non-Christian cultures.<sup>3</sup> As we have seen, he makes a place in his system for "General Revelation" - not, to be sure, in terms of a Natural Theology that can discover final answers, but at least as a worthy quest for the answers that can be provided only within the Christian framework.

In the Old as well as in the New Testament we find in language, rites, and ideas a large element of general revelation as it has occurred and continuously occurs within human religion generally. The universality of the Christian claim implies that there is no religion, not even the most primitive which has not contributed or will not contribute to the preparation and reception of the new reality in history.<sup>4</sup>

Tillich seems to hold a view close to Roman Catholic syncretism when he states:

I am convinced that Christianity is able to take all possible elements or religious truth into itself without ceasing to be Christian. . . .<sup>5</sup>

In his eagerness to overcome the false dualism of religion and culture, Tillich finds himself in substantial agreement with Dawson on these points and thus rises above the traditional Roman Catholic criticisms.

<sup>1</sup>"The Protestant Vision," pp. 10 f.

<sup>2</sup>"Die Theologie des Kairos und die gegenwärtige geistige Lage: Offener Brief an Emanuel Hirsch," Theologische Blätter (November, 1934) XXII, 322.

<sup>3</sup>See Tillich's remarks on the theological history of religions as a source for systematic theology (Systematic Theology, I, 39).

<sup>4</sup>"The Problem of Theological Method," p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>Idem.



Another area in which Dawson censures Protestantism is in its individualism. Dawson realizes that Protestant individualism has made some important contributions. It was, he realizes, a powerful force in the achievement of the social and political reforms that lie behind the modern development.<sup>1</sup> It was responsible, too, for increased literacy (through its stress on the Bible as the ethical norm) and the modern spirit of independent judgment.<sup>2</sup> Yet these advancements, he believes, have not compensated for losses in other directions such as the "growing impoverishment of the communal life of society" and the consequent secularization of life.<sup>3</sup> Protestantism's stress on the individual - especially in terms of conversion - has tended to make the redemption of humanity "an isolated act which stands outside history and which involves on the part of humanity only the bare act of justifying faith."<sup>4</sup> Protestantism, Dawson believes, has therefore failed to see the salvation of mankind as a "vital process of regeneration which manifests itself in the corporate reality of a divine society."<sup>5</sup>

Tillich's continual emphasis upon the corporate aspects of society makes documentation of his agreement with Dawson on this point unnecessary. Indeed, his preoccupation with salvation through "participation" has made him susceptible to attacks, by his Protestant colleagues, that he makes no place for individual conversion!<sup>6</sup>

Dawson's criticism of the Protestant failure to see the redemption of humanity as taking place through the "corporate reality of a divine society" leads us directly to his critique of the Protestant idea of the Church. The

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<sup>1</sup>"Christianity and the Western Tradition," The Listener (May 6, 1948), p. 742.

<sup>2</sup>"The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," in Our Culture: Its Christian Roots and Present Crisis (London: Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1947), p. 40 f.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>Religion and the Modern State (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), p. 97.

<sup>5</sup>Idem.

<sup>6</sup>"Tillich's View of the Church," The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 264.



Church, at least by sectarianism, has been nominalistically conceived as a group of people who bind themselves together in terms of a common faith, rather than realistically conceived as the historical continuity of the body of Christ. Further, there is in much of Protestantism a fear of ascribing authority to the Church or to ecclesiastical tradition. Authority, rather, has been made to rest upon individual interpretation of the Scriptures. Religion in Protestant countries, Dawson believes, has therefore tended to become arbitrary and subjective - only an impoverished version of Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> When this faith in individual interpretation of the Scriptures as an infallible norm was undercut by historical criticism, the attempt was made in Liberal Protestantism not only to eliminate ecclesiastical tradition but even to get behind the early church itself to the figure of the "historical Jesus." Dawson believes that this rationalized explanation of Jesus' person and teachings is fundamentally illogical and unhistorical.<sup>2</sup> The attempt to cut off the supernatural elements of the gospel picture results only in a selection of "those elements of the Gospel which appeal to the modern liberal mind. . . ."<sup>3</sup> This, Dawson believes, is the final blunder of the Protestant failure to see the Church as an organic-historic reality.

Tillich, it need hardly be pointed out, has a doctrine of the Church that is not susceptible to these criticisms. He stresses the concept of the Church as the organic continuation of the Incarnation and is thus hostile to any nominalistic view.

The church is the historical embodiment of the New Being created by the Incarnation. The very term New Being therefore excludes any doctrine of the Church which conceives it to be brought into existence by religious decisions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Christianity and the New Age (Sheed and Ward, 1931), pp. 68 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>"A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 147.

And again,

The Church is not a creation of religious individuals, but religious individuals are the product of the Church. The Church antecedes individual piety; it is not the result of it.<sup>1</sup>

With Dawson, Tillich is aware of the evils of sectarianism and speaks of the divisions within the "body of Christ" as "utterly tragic."<sup>2</sup> The greatest expression of this tragedy, Tillich believes, is the fact that "even the New Reality as it appears in time and space under continuous disruption, estrangement, anxiety, and despair becomes itself disrupted."<sup>3</sup> Likewise Tillich sees the need for some commanding authority beyond the individual. The sacramental (though not the legal) side of Catholic authority needs to be revived among Protestants. This Tillich conceives as the task of representing "the New Being in such a way - in symbols and personalities - that it becomes a new authority for masses and individuals."<sup>4</sup> Further, although he would not go as far as Dawson in this regard, Tillich speaks of ecclesiastical tradition as having some normative (or at least guiding) function in theological construction. As he insists,

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.<sup>5</sup>

In general, Tillich believes that the church must recover its role as a "sacramental reality." He agrees entirely with Dawson that "The gift of freedom, including religious freedom, is paid for by a loss in living substance. The loss of spiritual substance since the end of the Middle Ages,

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<sup>1</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church, etc.", p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>"The Protestant Vision," p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church, etc." pp. 26 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 51; see also "The Problem of Theological Method," pp. 20 f.



both intellectual and religious, has been tremendous. . . ."<sup>1</sup> With Dawson Tillich believes that this process resulted in a Protestantism that is "empty of substance, impotent in its social reality [and] secular because of its surrender of all places, things, men, and actions supposedly holy in themselves."<sup>2</sup> Protestantism has thus tended to become an amorphous group without sacramental quality - just one group beside others, delivered to the relativities of history.<sup>3</sup> To offset this tendency, Protestantism, Tillich believes, must regain the note of the Church as a "gestalt of Grace" - a sacramental reality, having organic relatedness and historical continuity. Only then can it give men "courage to be" against the threatening relativities and meaninglessness of modern life. To do this, Protestantism, Tillich believes, must proclaim the "holiness of being" (the sacramental element) in addition to the "holiness of what ought to be" (the prophetic element); it must stress once more the "mother element" (carrying, sustaining, protecting, etc.) in combination with the "father element" (the theocratic note of demand, judgment, criticism, etc.).<sup>4</sup> Thus again Tillich accepts and rises above the usual Catholic criticisms.

The final item we shall consider is Dawson's censure of the Protestant separation of reason from revelation, philosophy from theology. Dawson points out the well-known truth that the Reformation was not basically a reaction of reason against faith but rather a revolt of faith against intellectualism.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>3</sup>Propositions, Part IV, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church, etc.", pp. 25 f.

<sup>5</sup>Inquiries into Religion and Culture (London: Sheed and Ward, 1933), p. 147.



He speaks of Luther (however profound or genuine his religious experience may have been) as disregarding the intellectual elements in religion and turning back to primitive motifs: God as fearful and terrible.<sup>1</sup> This de-intellectualizing of religion (the cutting off of dogma from tradition and philosophy) made the whole edifice of Protestant theology, according to Dawson, rest upon an arbitrary and subjective basis, lacking internal consistency.<sup>2</sup> Thus with the rise of rational criticism in the Enlightenment, religion was left helpless before the onslaught.<sup>3</sup> The stripping away of non-Jewish, mystical, and philosophical elements led, in one great branch of Protestantism, to a milleniarist emphasis which was finally secularized into a doctrine of Progress. The Protestant anti-metaphysical bias thus led ultimately, Dawson believes, to an interpretation of history as the progressive development of immanent principles.<sup>4</sup> This moral utopianism was accompanied by a cultural activism, stemming from the same de-intellectualizing process. Calvinism, for instance, created "an immensely strong moral motive for action without any corresponding intellectual ideal, a culture of the will rather than of the understanding - a purely ethical discipline which neglects intellectual and aesthetic values."<sup>5</sup> This is especially true, Dawson believes, of the American civilization and comes from over-stressing the purely occidental elements as over against the oriental elements of contemplation and asceticism. And all of this is a result of the de-intellectualizing of religion that began with the Reformation.

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<sup>1</sup>Christianity and the New Age, pp. 68 f.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 147; Christianity and the New Age, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson's essay in The Kingdom of God and History (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1938) p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 23.

A corollary to this is Dawson's criticism of Protestant rationalism. It seems contradictory at first sight to call Protestantism both de-intellectualized and rationalistic at the same time. But the type of reason that Protestantism lost in the process mentioned above was the intellectus of the Schoolmen - the emphasis upon knowledge through mystical intuition and union. The loss of this element coupled with the casting aside of symbols and authority led, Dawson believes, to Biblicism, rigid scholasticism, and arid rationalism. Further, the cutting off of reason from the vital, mystical elements and "confining Christianity to the inner world of consciousness"<sup>1</sup> led to a repression of vital forces that were sooner or later to break forth in terrifying demonic forms (as in Nazism).<sup>2</sup>

Tillich, again, agrees with Dawson point by point in lamenting the Protestant failure to make a place for the higher type of reason ("ontological reason" as he calls it). His whole systematic construction takes the form of attempting to overcome the divorce between philosophy and theology, reason and revelation through his "method of correlation." He emphatically does not agree with the Roman Catholic solution of the relationship between philosophy and theology, but he does give them credit for being aware of the problem. Tillich realizes that reason cut off from revelation has, in Protestant orthodoxy, created an autonomous civilization and, in Liberal Protestantism, dissolved revelation into reason, thus creating idealism and humanism.<sup>3</sup> He admits as well that Protestantism has, through a de-intellectualizing process, become moralistic, educational, scientific, vague, and popular and that it

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<sup>1</sup>"Concordats or Catacombs?", The Tablet (June 26, 1937), p.910.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations (London: Sheed and Ward, 1943), pp. 19, 153.

<sup>3</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church, etc.", p. 31.



has a tendency to degenerate into a "shallow secularism trimmed by religious phraseology."<sup>1</sup> Tillich is also aware, as we saw, that the overburdening of the conscious center through obedience to Luther's "Law of Justification" has led to personality disintegration. The loss of spiritual substance, supra-individual symbols, and sacramental grace, Tillich believes, are all aspects of an overly-rationalized faith. Having failed to find depth in a religion sheared of mysticism, Tillich caustically observes, many are now turning to psychoanalysts to help them find a depth in their souls.<sup>2</sup> With Dawson, Tillich believes that human personality thus severed from its vital base is easy prey to demonic forces such as vitalistic nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in this regard, as in the other areas we surveyed, Tillich accepts the truth of the Roman Catholic criticism and rises above the limitations of his own tradition. It will be interesting to see, after first investigating his general thought, how Dawson similarly rises above the traditional Protestant criticism of Roman Catholicism.<sup>4</sup> This will lead us, in the concluding chapter, to an analysis of the Catholic elements in Tillich's thought and the Protestant elements in Dawson's thought, and finally to a consideration of how an acceptable interpretation of history must include elements of both traditions.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church, etc.", pp. 25 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>"The Meaning of the German Church Struggle for Christian Missions," pp. 133 ff.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter Twelve.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

(CHRISTOPHER DAWSON)

A distinguished layman of the Roman Catholic Church, Mr. Christopher Henry Dawson has been influencing the English-speaking world for several decades. In an indirect way he is perhaps one of the greatest Roman Catholic apologists of our time.

Born at Hay Castle in the Wye Valley on the Welsh border on the twelfth of October, 1889, he was the only son of Lieutenant Colonel H.F. Dawson of Harlington Hall, Skipton and Mary Louisa Bevan, eldest daughter of Archdeacon Bevan of Hay. Christopher Dawson traces his descent on his mother's side from a long line of professional soldiers. From both sides he inherited the characteristics of the old rural aristocracy - what E.I. Watkin calls "the preeminently gracious and cultured tradition of the Anglican country gentleman. . . ." <sup>1</sup> He speaks of his mother as thoroughly Welsh and passionately devoted to Welsh traditions. A learned woman and something of an antiquarian, she was an authority on Welsh saints and had marked literary tastes. It was these tastes that Dawson acquired at an early age, for as he says, "she had a simple and child-like gift of communication." <sup>2</sup>

Dawson's father, although a professional soldier, never shot, fished, or hunted; he was more interested in the science of his profession and was something of a scholar in his own right. He was an ardent reader with wide tastes in the sciences, history, philosophy, novels, and poetry.

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<sup>1</sup>"Christopher Dawson," in Commonweal (October 27, 1933), p. 607.

<sup>2</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance: Memoirs of a Victorian Childhood, Part I," (Spring, 1949), p. 213.

Above all, he admired Dante. Dawson says of his father that "This love of Dante no doubt stimulated his interests in Catholicism and helped to dispel his Protestant prejudices and upbringing."<sup>1</sup> Another of his father's Catholic sympathies Dawson points out is the use of Roman Catholic devotional books for the family prayers. Further, Dawson describes his father's decision to move the family from the south (Alverstoke and Easton) back to Craven, Yorkshire, as "part of a deliberate reaction against the Protestant tradition and an attempt to recover lost spiritual roots in a past which he felt to be Catholic."<sup>2</sup> Yet, says Dawson, all of this "never led him to become a Roman Catholic for he had little of the via media Anglicanism of the High Church party."<sup>3</sup> Rather, "he had a kind of hereditary 'political' loyalty to the Church of England, and I remember he once said to me that no man has the right to leave the Church to which his fathers belonged. In that he was more Roman than Catholic."<sup>4</sup>

With such a background, it is easy to see how Dawson acquired the keen interest in social tradition that characterizes his writings, his broad literary tastes, his appreciation of rural life and nature, and his deep religious convictions. Each of these merits a more detailed consideration.

Concerning the source of his interest in social tradition and history, Dawson says, "The house where I was born was a Tudor building constructed in and out of a medieval castle originally built in the twelfth century."<sup>5</sup> His boyhood was quite naturally steeped in history and tradition.

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<sup>1</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance: Memoirs of a Victorian Childhood, Part II," The Wind and the Rain (Summer, 1949), VI, 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.

<sup>5</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance, Etc.", Part I, p. 213.



From his earliest years he was surrounded by "the feeling of antiquity - the immense age of everything. . . the continuity of the present with the remote past. . . ." <sup>1</sup> This feeling, as he says,

was reinforced by the fact that nothing had changed since my mother had been a child in the same house and that all the family relations existed in duplicate, so that alongside my parents, my nurse, and my uncles and aunts I saw my mother's parents and her nurse and her uncles and aunts." <sup>2</sup>

His father's deliberate attempt to recapture some of the old family traditions and ties, as we noted, by returning to the north from which his family had come is another example of how the father's interest in social tradition carried over to the son.

Concerning Dawson's acquisition of literary tastes, we have only to imagine the spacious library at the center of his parent's home to realize what an influence this aspect of his parent's life had on him. His parents spent many hours sharing favorite passages of great books so that early in life books became a second world to him - not, as he says, a dream world but rather as an extension of the real world. <sup>3</sup> From his parents he learned the connection between story and history, and comments that he grew in an understanding of the past not so much through studying outlines of history as through becoming engrossed in historical stories, myths, and legends and discovering that history is composed of a series of different worlds, each with its own spirit, form, and riches.

The rural atmosphere of his early years was another great influence in Dawson's later thought. He speaks of the early impressions of the elemental forces of nature as he saw them in the transformation of the valley at Craven

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<sup>1</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance, etc." Part I, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance, etc." Part II, p. 16.



and in the rising of the water. In his early childhood, running water always had a particular fascination for him as being "more satisfying than the artificial and restricted reality of the grown-up world."<sup>1</sup> This type of life lived close to nature had been a characteristic of his family for generations.

Neither my parents nor their parents nor theirs - almost ad infinitum - ever lived in a town, and I find it exceedingly difficult, not merely uncongenial but unnatural, to do so myself.<sup>2</sup>

This background no doubt had a great deal to do with Dawson's insight into the disintegrating effects of modern urbanization and his view that culture has an essential relation to the soil.

And finally, the religious atmosphere of his early years entered deeply into Dawson's thought. Growing up in a staunch Church of England home steeped in the high Anglican religious culture, Dawson learned through personal experience the need and value of a vital relationship between religion and culture. The family devotions, the Bible reading, the encouragement of his father in the study of the writings of Roman Catholic saints and mystics, and his father's own Catholic sympathies were all of great influence in his later development and his final conversion to Roman Catholicism.

The religious training of his home was supplement<sup>ed</sup> by his education at Bolton Grange preparatory school near Rugby and by his training at Winchester (which Watkin calls "the most religious and traditional of the great English public schools"<sup>3</sup>). Later he had as a tutor the Reverend C.H. Moss of Bletsoe.

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<sup>1</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance, etc." Part II, p. 8. Cf. Tillich's love of nature and the influence this had on his thought (See Chapter One).

<sup>2</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance, etc." Part I, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup>E.I. Watkin, "Christopher Dawson," p. 608.

Bedfordshire, and it was here, in 1905, that he began his life-long acquaintance with Mr. E.I. Watkin.<sup>1</sup> The following years were spent at Trinity College, Oxford, where for a time Dawson shared lodgings with Watkin. Dawson also spent a year as a private pupil of the eminent Swedish economist, Gustav Cassel.

It was in these years after he had left the university, the years prior to World War I, that Dawson became more and more interested in Roman Catholicism. Many factors entered into his final conversion. Among them were his dissatisfaction with traditional Anglicanism. The advance of Biblical criticism had shaken the foundations of Anglican authority. By the time Dawson had entered preparatory school, religious instruction had become "more ethics than religion, and a haze of vagueness and uncertainty hung around the more fundamental articles of Christian dogma."<sup>2</sup> Anglo-Catholicism had attempted to compensate for this lack of external Biblical authority by providing a new standard of authority of its own. These attempts, however, were felt by most of Dawson's superiors (schoolmasters, tutors, and pastors) as the innovations of an enterprising minority.

The result of this conflict of authority was that I lost faith in religion altogether for the time being. The intellectual current was, in fact, setting away from Christianity, and I felt the first influence of that wave of paganism which has since swept the country.<sup>3</sup>

Yet his early training could not easily be cast aside. Although he lacked at that time the intellectual grounds for faith, he claims that he never really doubted the validity of the spiritual side of life.

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<sup>1</sup>Watkin compiled the indexes for most of Dawson's books.

<sup>2</sup>"Why I am a Catholic," The Catholic Times (May 21, 1926), p. 4.

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



In addition to his dissatisfaction with Anglicanism there was a growing suspicion of Anglo-Catholicism to which Dawson, like Newman, had turned for spiritual support. During this period of three or four years preceding his reception into the Catholic Church he had tried to hold to the Anglo-Catholic path and had even attended Anglican confession regularly as he had not previously done.<sup>1</sup> Still his allegiance to Anglo-Catholicism was "half-hearted and without intellectual conviction."<sup>2</sup> He expresses it as an attempt to live on Catholicism from the outside "in a kind of spiritual eclecticism, which subsists on Catholic ideals but lacks the foundation of intellectual conviction."<sup>3</sup>

Another factor in Dawson's conversion was a trip to Rome he made at the age of nineteen which gave him an acquaintance with Roman Catholicism as a living religion and opened for him a "new world of religion and culture."<sup>4</sup> "I realized for the first time," he says, "that Catholic civilization did not stop with the Middle Ages, and that contemporary with our own national Protestant development there was the wonderful flowering of the Baroque culture."<sup>5</sup> Dawson was struck with the atmosphere of the Catholic Churches which was so different from anything he had known in England and recounts that for him "the art of the Counter Reformation was a pure joy."

I loved the churches of Bernini and Borromini no less than the ancient basilicas. And this in turn led me to the literature of the Counter Reformation, and I came to know St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, compared to whom even the greatest of non-Catholic religious writers seem pale and unreal."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Why I am a Catholic," p. 4

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>"Why I am a Catholic," p. 3

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 4

<sup>7</sup>Idem.



Further, there was the influence of his personal friends who were Roman Catholics, especially E. H. Watkin with whom, as we noted, he shared lodgings at Oxford. Watkin had himself become a convert to Catholicism (in 1908) and knew what Dawson was going through in his spiritual struggle. Perhaps just as influential was Dawson's personal reading in Von Hügel, Pere Pratt, and the German theologian Matthias J. Scheeben, in addition to his readings in the medieval and counter-Reformation mystics.<sup>1</sup>

But most important for Dawson in his conversion to Roman Catholicism was his new understanding of the doctrines of the Church and of Sanctification. His readings in the New Testament, especially in St. John and St. Paul, in Pratt and in Scheeben made him realize "how the Pauline doctrine of the Mystical Body was the key to the Catholic doctrine of the Church and of Grace."<sup>2</sup> The fact which seems to have impressed Dawson most is what he calls the "fundamental unity of Catholic theology and the Catholic life"<sup>3</sup>—an organic unity which stretches back into the centuries of Christian history and includes all aspects of the Church's life. What really tipped the balance for Dawson, as with Newman, was his realization that

the Anglo-Catholic conception of a Catholic Church made up of separated 'branches' was a modern innovation and that the Patristic conception of Catholic unity was not merely a unity of faith but a unity of communion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>After his conversion, Dawson was influenced by the seventeenth-century French mystics "who are so profoundly Pauline." He calls attention to the fact that "there is . . . a traditional link between Christian mysticism and the Christian (and post-Christian) philosophies of history which emerges at every stage of Western thought and no doubt this is largely responsible for the direction of my own thought" (Personal letter to the writer, January, 1952). Other major influences in Dawson's thought apart from those leading to his conversion to Catholicism have been St. Augustine (his conception of history as centering around the two cities), Edmund Burke (his idea of Europe as a "Commonwealth of Christian nations") and, in sociology, Victor Brunford and Patrick Geddes (who were also the teachers of Lewis Mumford).

<sup>2</sup>Personal letter writer, January, 1952.

<sup>3</sup>"Why I am a Catholic," p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Personal letter to writer, January, 1952.

As he says elsewhere,

I realized that the Incarnation, the Sacraments, the external order of the Church and the internal working of sanctifying grace were all parts of the one organic unity, a living tree, whose roots are in the Divine Nature and whose fruit is the perfection of the saints.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of Sanctification were, then, linked for Dawson. This is where Dawson's earlier study of the Catholic saints and mystics plays a decisive part. The knowledge of these lives kept recurring to him and he increasingly felt that any genuine and complete Christian faith must make some place for these higher types of Character and experience. The life of the saint, he came to believe, is not

the independent achievement of a few highly-gifted individuals, but the perfect manifestation of the supernatural life which exists in every individual Christian, the first fruits of that new humanity which is the work of the Church to create.

This fundamental doctrine of Sanctifying Grace as revealed in the New Testament and explained by St. Augustine and St. Thomas in all its connotations removed all my difficulties and uncertainties and carried complete conviction to my mind. It was no longer possible to hesitate, difficult though it was to separate myself from earlier associations and traditional ties.<sup>2</sup>

So on the Eve of Epiphany, January 6, 1914, Dawson, at the age of twenty-four, became a Roman Catholic at St. Aloysius' Church, Oxford.

Two years later, in August 9, 1916, Dawson was married to Miss Valery Mills at Chipping Camden. His wife, Watkin states, has been a constant source of inspiration and help to him, especially in his illness.<sup>3</sup> They have three children: two daughters, Juliana and Christiana, and one son, Philip.

Dawson's academic career has been rather brief. Having inherited his father's estate, he has not been under the compulsion of earning his

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<sup>1</sup>"Why I am a Catholic," pp. 4 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Personal letter from Watkin, January, 1952.



subsistence and has been able to give himself wholly to scholarly pursuits. His only real academic position was at the University of Exeter where he was lecturer in the History of Culture at the University College from 1930-1936. He has also given a number of public lectures, among them the Forwood lectures in the Philosophy of Religion at Liverpool in 1933-4 (incorporated in his book entitled Medieval Religion) and the Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1947 and 1948 (which later appeared as Religion and Culture and Religion and the Rise of Western Civilization).<sup>1</sup> Most of his life, however, has been spent not in classroom teaching or in public lectures but in research and writing. His first book, The Age of the Gods (1928), is an account of the prehistoric origins of European culture and is almost a pure cultural anthropology. His subsequent books have dealt with a wide variety of topics including history, sociology, literature, art, comparative religions, architecture, archeology, metaphysics, and theology. He has contributed scores of articles to literary, historical, sociological, and religious journals - many of which have been included as chapters in his later books. In all of these fields he has displayed a masterful ability to sift out the important facts and most telling illustrations from a vast range of materials.

According to E.I. Watkin, Dawson's original plan was to construct a history of Western civilization from a Christian and Catholic point of view as a counterpart (and counterblast) to H.G. Well's secular interpretation.<sup>2</sup> The Age of the Gods and The Making of Europe (and to some

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<sup>1</sup>It might also be mentioned that Dawson took part, with Tillich, in the Oxford Conference on "Church, Community, and State" in 1937. His contribution to this conference is published in The Kingdom of God and History, (H.G. Wood, et.al), (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1938), pp. 197-216.

<sup>2</sup>Personal letter from Watkin, January, 1952. See also the article by Michael Wade, "A Catholic Spengler," Commonweal (October 18, 1935) XXII, 605.



extent Medieval Religion) were the first volumes in this projected series. But somehow Dawson was deterred from this course, much to the regret of Mr. Watkin.<sup>1</sup>

One major interruption in Dawson's literary career was his affiliation with the movement called "The Sword of the Spirit," founded in 1940 by Cardinal Hinsley, with Dawson as Vice-Chairman. The crisis of the early war years deeply affected Dawson and he was eager to help organize some sort of Christian action in Britain as a counterpart to the Catholic Action movement on the continent, keeping in mind the specific British needs. Dawson speaks of the purpose of the movement in these words:

We are not attempting to create a Catholic political party. . . . On the other hand, we are not simply an organization for teaching Catholic social principles. The Sword of the Spirit is an attempt to fill the gap between the Christian Church and the Secular State—a gap, a yawning abyss, which threatens to swallow up everything.<sup>2</sup> It is an attempt to create a new organ, an organ for spiritual action in temporal affairs.<sup>3</sup>

Spiritual action in temporal affairs demanded the devotion of dedicated Christian laymen, consequently great stress was laid upon the "Lay Apostolate." Further, an attempt was made to get Protestant and Catholic clergy and laymen to cooperate in this common program of spiritual regeneration. The plan proved successful for a period inasmuch as a non-Roman movement was developed (the "Religion and Life" movement) to work cooperatively with the "Sword of the Spirit" and such Protestant figures as the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Chichester gave their support to the cause.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the program finally came to grief over the

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<sup>1</sup>Personal letter from Watkin, January, 1952.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Tillich's interest in Religious Socialism as an attempt to fill the gap between Lutheranism and Socialism.

<sup>3</sup>"Europe and Christendom," The Dublin Review (October, 1941), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Smith Leiper in Christendom (Chicago), (Autumn, 1942)p. 530.

issue of joint Christian action.<sup>1</sup> Upon the death of Cardinal Hinsley, the movement continued (and is still functioning) under the direction of Cardinal Griffin, but Dawson no longer took an active part. The results of Dawson's practical and political thinking during the years of his participation in this movement are best seen in his book The Judgment of the Nations.

Among the other positions held by Dawson have been his editorship of the Dublin Review from 1941-1945 and his advisory capacity, as one of the four directors, with The Tablet, a weekly Roman Catholic newspaper. On the whole, however, Dawson has led a life of scholarly retirement, especially in these later years. Being of a more introverted temperament, he prefers the inner life of thought to the life of social and political action (although his thought is definitely not of the ivory-tower variety). His persistent ill health has also made it impossible for him to take a more active part in the social and political movements which he knows so well. He now resides at Cope Side, Boars Hill, Oxford, where, at the age of sixty-four, he continues to write, his latest publication being The Understanding of Europe.

It is impossible to give any final evaluation of Dawson's contributions at this point in his career. Through his concern for Christian unity, his open-mindedness, his depth of insight, and his appreciation for some of the Protestant contributions<sup>2</sup> Dawson may perhaps prove to be one of the leaders in the development of an ecumenical interpretation of history.

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<sup>1</sup>"The English Catholics," Dublin Review (Fourth Quarter, 1950), p.11.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson is an authority on the Protestant "Spirituals" who flourished under Oliver Cromwell and is also especially appreciative of the contributions of the Non-conformists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

But Dawson will probably be most remembered for his elucidation of the relationship between religion and culture. His one major theme, constantly reiterated in a wide variety of contexts, has been the necessity for a religious undergirding of culture. E.I. Watkin expresses this so adequately when he tells us that

It is an entire fabric of historical sociology which Mr. Dawson is building up, not in a continuous treatise logically constructed and set out, but by turning the flash-light of his trained and piercing vision on a host of different points in the history of social mankind to display everywhere religion as the essential social form, constructing a society whose value is conditioned by the degree of its own purity and truth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Christopher Dawson," p. 609.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

## THE MEANING AND MAKING OF HISTORY

A glance at the index indicates that the chapters of this dissertation are of disproportionate length. This is not accidental and reveals a basic difference between the two authors. Tillich's major emphases are philosophical and theological. Therefore, the chapters dealing with his theoretical formulations about history and the theological problems involved were more lengthy than the chapters dealing with his concrete analyses of the relationships between religion and culture and of the source and solution of the world crisis. Dawson, on the other hand, concentrates on the concrete investigation of culture and historical trends. Therefore the initial chapters dealing with the theoretical aspects of Dawson's interpretation of history will be less lengthy than those dealing with his elaborate historical analyses.<sup>1</sup> Dawson nowhere deals specifically with the theory of history as does Tillich, nor does he develop any systematic theological construction.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the following two chapters concerned with a discussion of Dawson's theoretical and theological formulations will be comparatively brief and are included primarily in order to provide a basis for comparing and contrasting the views of the

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<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to note that, paradoxically, Tillich, who talks more about the necessity for concrete analyses (and uses frequently such terms as involvement, participation, and decision) produces the most abstract and speculative conclusions, while Dawson, who takes more the position of an ivory-towered spectator comes out with the more practical political observations and conclusions.

<sup>2</sup>This does not mean that Dawson is lacking in theological comprehension. He is an able student of theological and philosophical problems. Except for occasional chapters and articles, however, his own views on these subjects remain in the background where, perhaps, they are even more important because of their nature as presuppositions.

two authors.

### 1. The Definition of History

Dawson agrees with Tillich that history is not purely objective but that it involves a preeminently subjective factor - a group's self-interpretation. The essence of history, Dawson believes, is not to be found in facts but rather in group traditions.

The pure fact is not as such historical. It only becomes historical when it can be brought into relation with a social tradition so that it can be seen as part of an organic whole.<sup>1</sup>

The only history that we can know anything about, therefore, is the history of a social tradition.<sup>2</sup> Thus, whereas for Tillich's a group's self-interpretation is dependent upon its meaningful "center," for Dawson, its self-interpretation is dependent upon its tradition. Dawson therefore lays a great deal of stress on the importance of social tradition as the real essence of history. The emphasis on tradition is especially important in reference to Dawson's conception of Christianity and the Church. Dawson continually speaks of Christianity as a concrete social reality. For him the church is not just a group of individuals united by common opinions or beliefs (as with a sect) but is an organic unity - a unity of communion. As the successor to the Hebrew "people of God" it is a "theophoric" community bearing the presence of God in history as a vehicle of God's redemptive activity directed toward the regeneration of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson concurs with Tillich in seeing historical consciousness as a relatively rare achievement so that the denial of the significance of history is the rule rather than the exception. He agrees with Tillich, too, in noting that in Christianity above all men first acquired a sense of the unity and purpose of history. (See Dawson's essay in The Kingdom of God and History, pp. 197 ff.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>Christianity and the New Age (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), p. 79.

This process of the formation of a divine society and the creation of a new humanity gives the historical process an absolute value and a transcendent end.<sup>1</sup> Dawson's doctrine of the Church will be treated later in greater detail. The important thing to note here, however, is that the Church is the best example of what Dawson means by a living tradition around which history may be formed. As Dawson sees it,

tradition is an organ of the Spirit of God in the world and the living witness to the supernatural action of God on humanity is central to the Catholic understanding and interpretation of history.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Center of History

Regardless of the fact that, for Dawson, tradition more or less takes the place of the notion of a "center" as the focal point for historical consciousness, Dawson does have something to say about centers of history, especially in relation to Christ. Although Dawson does not develop the idea, as Tillich does, that every civilization is a quest for the Christ-center, he does see various world cultures as differing quests for God, each opening a new window to heaven.

Every way of life is therefore a potential way to God, since the life that it seeks is not confined to material satisfaction and animal activities but reaches out beyond itself toward eternal life.

As might be expected of a Roman Catholic, Dawson believes that Christianity fulfills the hidden quests of all religions and is the completion and fulfillment of their groping toward the truth. "Catholicism," he says, "stands essentially for a universal order in which every good and every truth of

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Modern State (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), p. 97. This notion parallels closely Tillich's idea of the Church as the "bearer of history" - that group in which history finds its being and meaning.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p.62; Cf. p. 211.



the natural or the social order can find a place."<sup>1</sup> Dawson thus calls Christ the "center of history" because he sees in him an "event of absolute value and incomparable significance for all times and all people."<sup>2</sup> As he goes on to say,

Amid the diversity and discontinuity of human civilization and tradition there appears One Who is the same for all men and all ages; in Whom all the races and traditions of man find their common center.<sup>3</sup>

This "center" keeps history from being a "mere unintellectual chaos of disconnected events" and gives history order and unity and significance.<sup>4</sup> It is, however, not just a plain significance or meaning that Christ gives history but a divine significance and an absolute meaning, for in Christ eternity entered time and transformed history in a unique and final way.<sup>5</sup> With Tillich, Dawson believes that this unique event divided history into a period of preparation and reception so that, in Christ, history finds its beginning, center, and end. As a result, says Dawson,

it is natural and appropriate that our traditional Christian history is framed in a chronological system which takes the era of the Incarnation as its point of reference and reckons its annals backward and forward from this fixed center.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. The Church and World History

From this Christ-center, according to Dawson, it becomes possible to see the history of humanity as an organic unity. As yet, however, there

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson's preface to Maritan's *Religion and Culture*, p. ix f.; See also *Enquiries* etc., P. 189; *Christianity and the New Age*, p. 35, 47 f.; "The Papacy and the New Order," *The Dublin Review* (April, 1942) p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>*The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>4</sup>*Religion and the Modern State*, p. 80; "The Christian View of History," *Blackfriars* (July-August, 1951) p. 314.

<sup>5</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 314

<sup>6</sup>*Idem.*

is no such thing as world history or the history of humanity as a whole. Paralleling Tillich's argument that there is so far no common center for the whole of mankind, Dawson says that there is as yet no common tradition or unity of culture which has been able to unite humanity.<sup>1</sup> There are, he says, a number of historical cultures each with its own limited life, but as yet no universal history. This observation has more than a theoretical significance for Dawson. The failure to see this has led to repeated attempts to write a universal history each of which has been, in reality, only the interpretation of one tradition in terms of another. For Dawson, "history deals with civilizations and cultures rather than Civilization, with the development of particular societies and not with the progress of Humanity."<sup>2</sup> Further, the failure to realize these limitations has led to a false internationalism based upon the assumption that a cosmopolitan civilization already exists. According to Dawson,

There is no such world community and the attempt to by-pass all existing communities in order to reach an ideal. . . can only land in super-totalitarianism.<sup>3</sup>

Most of these errors may be traced back to the philosophers of history who attempted to construct a universal history on the basis of a false rationalistic idealism.<sup>4</sup> But regardless of these criticisms, the possibility

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<sup>1</sup>The Age of the Gods (London: John Murray, 1928), p. xvi; The Kingdom of God and History, pp. 200 f.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, pp. 200 f.

<sup>3</sup>"The Two Currents in the Modern Democratic Tradition" in Democracy and Peace (pamphlet) (London: National Peace Council, 1945).

<sup>4</sup>Although Dawson frequently criticizes Collingwood as a representative of this rationalistic, idealistic tradition, Collingwood seems surprisingly to be in essential agreement here with Dawson. According to Collingwood, there is a "fundamental flaw in the very idea of a universal history - the fact that it claims a kind of universality which by its very nature history can never possess. All history is the history of something, something definite and particular. . . ." (The Philosophy of History, p.9; see also p.8)



of a universal history remains for Dawson as a goal and an ideal. With Tillich, Dawson believes that modern technology is increasingly bringing mankind into at least the physical unity of a scientific world civilization.<sup>1</sup> Although this has an important part to play in serving to remove the traditional fixed orders of the old religion-cultures (which were blocking the advent of a true world civilization), technology alone cannot create world unity.<sup>2</sup> The only possible basis for world historical consciousness, says Dawson, is through cultural unity which involves a unity of tradition and ultimately a unity of faith.<sup>3</sup> Now the great world religions, through their incorporation of various cultural traditions, have, Dawson believes, been moving in the direction of unity for increasingly larger sections of mankind.<sup>4</sup> The great barrier to the functioning of this means of world integration, however, is the fierce competition between the various religions, each of which claims to be absolute and final. The solution does not lie in religious syncretism (from above)<sup>5</sup> but rather in the coordination (from below) of a number of different cultural traditions in a common religious unity.<sup>6</sup> As Dawson sees it, Christianity is preeminently suited to form the basis for such a unity, for it alone,

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and Culture, pp. 212 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>3</sup>Just as a national culture must precede the creation of a national State, so international culture must precede the creation of an international State (Enquiries, etc., p. 57; The Modern Dilemma, p. 18).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Tillich's similar comment: "The great world religions, in creating world missions, have anticipated the problem of a spiritual world unity. But none of them has been able to bring about this unity so far. It is not impossible that, in connection with the present religious and cultural cross-fertilization, movements may develop. . . which would lead to a unity of cooperation between the world religions, and later, on this basis to a unity of symbols and existential truth." ("Approach to World Peace," p. 685.)

<sup>5</sup>This fails to see the fact that cultural differences, as Dawson believes, are the real basis for religious differences.

<sup>6</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 211; Cf. Tillich's similar comment: "the spiritual unity of mankind is a matter of an existential union of the big cultural groups on the basis of decisions they make for the one ultimate existential truth." ("Approach to World Peace," p. 685).



amongst the great world religions, is not tied to any specific civilization.<sup>1</sup>  
 With Tillich, then, Dawson calls attention to the organic relationship  
 between Christianity and the creation of a world historical consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

Dawson believes that the advent of a world civilization is within the divine plan and, in fact, that it can be shown that there has been a progression toward this goal. The history of humanity (if we may use this phrase prematurely) shows a progressive evolution toward a greater and richer group consciousness, a continuous process of integration moving (though certainly not in a straight line) toward the greater unity and group consciousness of mankind. This process, he believes, is not likely to stop until humanity as a whole finds social expression in a common civilization.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. xvi; Judgment of the Nations, p. 152. Dawson recognizes that Judaism is also super-cultural, and so is speaking here of the common Judeo-Christian culture.

<sup>2</sup>Both authors agree that Protestant individualism has failed to give sufficient attention to this correlation. See The Kingdom of God and History, pp. 209-211.

<sup>3</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. xix; "On the Development of Sociology in Relation to the Theory of Progress," Sociological Review, XIII, 82; Enquiries, etc., p. 125.

## CHAPTER NINE

## HISTORY AND EXISTENCE

## 1. Historical Interpretation as a Pressing Necessity

Although Dawson does not consider the interpretation of history the supreme question of our age with quite the same urgency as Tillich, he does believe that this task is an absolute necessity. Several reasons may be given for this judgment. First, Dawson, with Tillich, is aware of the crisis through which our civilization is passing, with its demand for a proper interpretation of its historical antecedents. "The events of the last few years," he writes, "portend either the end of human history or a turning point in it. They have warned us in letters of fire that our civilization has been tried in the balance and found wanting. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The threat of total secularization of our culture and the annihilation of all the great values that have sustained society in the past make it imperative that we understand how we arrived where we are in order to know what remedies to apply to our situation. This in itself is enough to make the interpretation of history of paramount importance.

Again, the interpretation of history is being pressed upon us through the increasing competition of materialistic and anti-Christian interpretations of history.

Outside the academic world, new social forces have been at work which have used history, or a particular version of history, for social ends, as a means of changing men's lives and actions. And the rise of these new political ideologies and ideological theories of history has shown that the development of scientific specialism has in no way lessened man's need for an historical faith, an interpretation of contemporary culture in terms of social process and spiritual ends. . . . <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Religion and Culture, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Religion and the Rise of Western Culture (London, Sheed and Ward, 195),

Dawson has particularly in mind, of course, the threat of the Communist interpretation of history and its propagandistic force. The clash between Communism and Christianity is, he believes, the central problem of our time, and the "point where their contact is closest and their conflict most acute" is in their respective philosophies of history.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the very term "philosophy of history" calls to mind another reason why the interpretation of history is so central a task for contemporary scholarship. Dawson believes that irreparable harm has been done by the idealistic philosophies of history of the past.<sup>2</sup> Philosophical idealism (which has affected so much modern thinking about history) went off the deep end, Dawson believes, in Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling.<sup>3</sup> The consequent disavowal of German idealism has, in turn, caused a reaction against the philosophy of history in general, so much so that today many question whether such a thing as a Christian philosophy of history is at all possible.<sup>3</sup> "If we approach the subject from a purely philosophical point of view,"<sup>4</sup> says Dawson, there is a good deal to justify such a scepticism. Dawson therefore sets aside the philosophical approach and seeks to treat the interpretation of history purely as a theological problem - in a Jewish, apocalyptic framework rather than a rationalistic, idealistic one. The Christian view of history, he believes, is a matter for faith (based on a particular historical tradition) and is not a product of philosophical reflection. "Hence there is no Christian 'philosophy of

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>For this reason, Dawson says "The discontinuous conception of history is nearer to our own than is the unitary ideal of the liberal philosophy of history." ("Edward Gibbon: Annual lecture on a Master Mind," British Academy Lectures, XX, 19.)

<sup>3</sup>"On the Meaning of History," in Religion and Life, XIV, p. 32 f. (Article by Karl Lowith); C.E. Lewis, "Historicism," in The Month (October 1950).

<sup>4</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 312.



history' in the strict sense of the word. There is, indeed, a Christian history and a Christian theology of history, and it is not too much to say that without them there would be no such thing as Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Now philosophical idealism, the parent of the idealistic interpretation of history, grew up on the soil of German protestantism, and so Protestantism, Dawson believes, is indirectly responsible for many false historical interpretations of the past century or so. There is another false interpretation of history for which Protestantism is responsible, and that is the view of extreme millennialism. One family of Protestant sects sought to strip off all the non-Jewish, mystical, and philosophical elements of Christianity in their emphasis upon the historical time element of apocalyptic literature in all its crudity and simplicity.<sup>2</sup> It was this view that, as secularized, developed into the modern doctrine of progress which "ended in emptying Christianity of all supernatural elements and interpreting history as the progressive development of immanent principles."<sup>3</sup>

On the one hand, then, Protestantism produced philosophical idealism and Socinianism which attempted to separate religion from history and to recover the "pure timeless essence of Christianity."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Protestantism gave birth to the millenarian tradition in which an attempt was made to separate the historical elements of Christianity from their philosophical accretions. Both views, Dawson believes, represent

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<sup>1</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 313.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 211 f.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.

<sup>5</sup>Dawson sees both tendencies more or less combined in Joseph Priestly, a Socinian who developed a secularized milleniarism (The Kingdom of God and History, pp. 211 f.)

extremes which Catholicism has always tried to avoid. The Catholic interpretation of history sees the uniqueness and particularity of historical events while at the same time avoiding an extreme millenarian apocalypticism. On the other hand, Catholicism appreciates the universal aspects of Christianity (in contrast to anything national, provincial, or fanatical) while at the same time avoiding the false universalism of the Socinians and Originists (who eliminate history in favor of metaphysics) and <sup>of</sup> the idealistic historians who attempt to force history into a rational pattern. To express it in another way, Catholicism, according to Dawson, makes allowance both for the discontinuity of history (as seen especially in the Augustinian dualism between the two cities) and the divine ordering of history into a unified pattern (which, however, is mysterious and is not rationally discernible). Because of this balanced interpretation, Dawson believes that Catholicism is particularly equipped to make a needed contribution to the present search for a meaningful interpretation of history.

Nevertheless, Dawson does not develop a philosophy (or theology) of history in any systematic fashion. His judgments on this subject appear only incidentally in the midst of his more concrete analyses of various religions and cultures and political and sociological problems. It is impossible, therefore, to construct anything that might be called Dawson's philosophy of history in a purely theoretical way. Since many of Dawson's views, however, parallel those of Tillich, it may prove helpful to use Tillich's structure as a skeleton framework upon which to hang some of Dawson's ideas. Although it is admitted that this is an artificial procedure, it will perhaps at least provide a basis for discussing a few of Dawson's major philosophical and theological observations in reference to the nature of history.



## 2. The Interpretation of Man

A convenient starting point for Tillich's analysis, as we noted, was in his doctrine of man. The proper understanding of history drove him to the necessity of constructing a more adequate anthropology. And, conversely, his understanding of the clefts within man's nature served to throw light on his understanding of history.

Dawson, similarly, states that the interpretation of man precedes the interpretation of history, especially in regard to man's eschatological destiny and the creation of a new humanity through Christ. In regard to the eschatological goal, he says,

If this be the essence of the Christian doctrine of man's nature and destiny, it is clear that it must determine the Christian conception of history and social order.<sup>1</sup>

Further, with Tillich, Dawson speaks of man's nature as a microcosm of the universe. He quotes with approval from the Times Literary Supplement the comment that

The mind of man seems. . . to assimilate itself to the universe; we belong to the world and the world is mirrored in us. Therefore when we bend our thoughts on a limited object, we concentrate facilities which are naturally endowed with infinite correspondences.<sup>2</sup>

With Tillich, Dawson sees man's deeper level of consciousness as a gateway to an understanding of existence itself as basically spiritual. "Men of religious experience," he says, "have always taught that the further man penetrates into the depth of his consciousness and of what lies below his consciousness the nearer he approaches to spiritual reality."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. xix; also quoted in Enquiries, etc., p. 125.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 31; Cf. Tillich, "Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," p. 4 and "What is Wrong with the Dialectical Theology?", p. 140 where he speaks of proceeding "through the self beyond the self."



Dawson, however, has comparatively little of Tillich's awareness of the clefts in man's nature, his self-estrangement from the good and the perfect,<sup>1</sup> his finite creaturliness and his necessary involvement in anxiety, the awful responsibilities of human freedom and the consequent threat of non-being and meaninglessness. In short, Dawson has little of the existential motif in his thought. He does, however, utilize the demonic category in a fashion somewhat comparable to Tillich. Dawson speaks of spiritual forces (both good and evil) higher than reason and of forces lower than reason (forces of nature) that play upon man and make human life a "warfare against unknown powers. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Following St. Paul's figure of the "Cosmocrats of the Dark Aeon," Dawson says that man is besieged by "powers which are more than rational and which make use of lower things, things below reason, in order to conquer and rule the world of man."<sup>3</sup> With Tillich, Dawson sees the demonic as a necessary category for expressing the supra-individual power of evil - the fact that evil is not just material or "the abstract generalization of the faults and weaknesses of individuals" but rather an organized spiritual power.<sup>4</sup> Dawson, however, speaks of the demonic primarily in terms of the blind, sub-rational forces of destruction and the spirit of uncontrollable power,<sup>5</sup> rather than in terms of demonic pretention and the claim to unconditional significance on the part of contingent beings. Nevertheless, as with Tillich,

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson does, however, comment that man's awareness of eternity is based on the consciousness of his mortality ("The Christian View of History," p. 326.).

<sup>2</sup>Beyond Politics (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), pp. 121 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>4</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 102

<sup>5</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 111; The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 2,5,8,11,19,87,102,154.

Dawson considers the demonic a perversion of the good. When the non-rational forces of man's make-up are starved or refused legitimate social expression in an acceptable way (as in mystical emotion), they turn against society and assume destructive and violent forms (as in nihilism, sensationalism, and eroticism).<sup>1</sup> Thus, although Dawson does not go to the extent of Tillich in analyzing the existential predicament of man, he is certainly not unaware of the "uncovering of the abyss" that has taken place in recent decades.

### 3. The Interpretation of Nature

Although Dawson does not carry out the microcosmic analogy as a basis for disclosing how the cleft within man's nature is the key to a deeper understanding both of the predicament and the redemption of nature and history, he does elaborate an idea that leads to similar doctrinal consequences - that of man as a bridge between the spiritual and the material worlds.<sup>2</sup> Man, he believes, occupies a unique position as the lowest of all spiritual natures and the highest of all animate beings. This role places him in a special relationship both to nature and supernature so that he becomes the point at which the spiritual world comes into conscious contact with the world of sense.<sup>3</sup> Man thus becomes a potential channel through which the whole material creation may be lifted into self-consciousness and divine-consciousness. In other words, through

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<sup>1</sup>Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1931), pp. 228, 230; Christianity and the New Age, p. 49; "The Renewal of Civilization," (National Peace Council Pamphlet, London, 1943), p. 9; "Education and the Crisis of Christian Culture," (Human Affairs Pamphlet, Chicago: Regnery, 1949), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>"The Revolt of the East and the Catholic Tradition," Dublin Review (July, 1928), pp. 13 f.; Progress and Religion, p. 158; Enquiries, etc., 311 f.

<sup>3</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 319. There is no attempt to draw a parallel with Tillich at this particular point, for Tillich's idea of the spiritual world (the ultimate) is vastly different. Dawson here follows Thomistic supernaturalism whereas Tillich rejects altogether the concept of a second realm of being paralleling this one.



man, the whole material creation is destined to become spiritualized and redeemed.<sup>1</sup>

Man was created to be the soul of the material world, the link between the two creations; that through him, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, the divine might shine as through a glass into the earthly world, and the earthly, elevated with the divine, might be freed from corruptibility, and transfigured.

All of this assumes, of course, that nature now exists in a fallen state and needs to be redeemed. Dawson does not attempt to analyze the cause of this situation although, with Tillich, he seems to think that the fall of nature is closely tied up with the fall of man. He does have quite a bit to say, however, about man's responsibility for the present degraded state of nature in many parts of our world. For primitive man, nature had a religious atmosphere. Primitive agriculture therefore "was not a sordid occupation; it was one of the supreme mysteries of life" - a kind of divine liturgy.<sup>2</sup> Man once lived in close contact with the soil, realizing his interdependence with nature (as Tillich would put it - assuming an eros attitude toward it. Even the scientists of not too distant decades "sought knowledge for its own sake because knowledge is good. They regarded nature not as a slave to be mastered, but as a mistress to be served in a spirit of almost religious reverence."<sup>3</sup> Modern technology and industrialism, however, have changed all of this. Nature no longer possess a religious significance, but exists only to be exploited by man. Nature, according to Dawson, has lost its "latent powers"<sup>4</sup> and has been

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<sup>1</sup> Enquiries, etc., p. 346; See also Progress and Religion, p. 158 ff. Roman Catholicism thus has a world-affirming as well as a world-denying aspect, for it holds that the divine purpose involves not the destruction or the negation of nature but its completion and fulfillment. The Catholic position is thus mid-way between oriental ascetism (in which the natural world is negated) and occidental materialism (in which the spiritual world is negated). See "The Revolt of the East, etc.", p. 14 f.

<sup>2</sup> Christianity and the New Age, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> The Modern Dilemma (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932), p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Dawson's idea here with Tillich's concept of the "power of being."



made to serve human ends so that it "no longer exists except as a part of the life of man."<sup>1</sup> But the real tragedy of this situation is that the degradation of nature has led to the enslavement of man.<sup>2</sup> Modern industrialism has uprooted man from his natural relations to the soil and herded him into unhealthy cities.<sup>3</sup> Through time clocks, efficiency experts, and conveyor belts man's temp has been accelerated so as to keep time with the world of the machine rather than with the life of nature, with its more leisurely cycles. With the upsetting of man's organic and biological equilibrium, a whole new rhythm of life has been created which, Dawson believes, must finally involve a biological change in the character of the human race itself!<sup>4</sup> Worst of all, the mechanization of nature has resulted in the mechanization of man. The end result of man's self-affirmation and control over nature is that man is now slipping back into nature and becoming a part of the great mechanical system he has created. Dawson believes, therefore, that a profound truth is expressed in St. Paul's intuition that the whole material creation is groaning in travail, awaiting its deliverance from corruption and its share in the liberty of the perfected supernatural order.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Tradition and Inheritance, etc." Part II, p. 13. Dawson's final appraisal of the role of science and technology, however, is far from negative. See page 84 f.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Tillich's view here, Chapter Three.

<sup>3</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 68.; "Progress and Decay in Ancient and Modern Civilizations, Sociological Review (January, 1924) XVI, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 345.

#### 4. The Interpretation of History

Now this estrangement and quest for redemption that can be seen in nature is even more apparent, Dawson believes, in the realm of history. With Tillich, Dawson says that it is "when we look at the history of mankind in the mass that the evils of human existence are most apparent,"<sup>1</sup> for history is full of tyranny and oppression, and the lust for power and pleasure. Dawson's view of history is far from optimistic liberalism in which sin and evil are neglected or at least progressively and automatically overcome. He sees history as a profoundly tragic process, with disillusionments, frustrations, and irrationalities. Although he does not use Tillich's concept of the "ambiguity of the good" he notes that every human achievement carries with it the possibility of evil as well as of good, and that evil itself is a progressive force.<sup>2</sup>

As Dawson sees it, nearly every great historical achievement has had negative consequences and results opposite from what its designers had imagined. The Industrial Revolution, for example, has led to slums, unemployment, and the mechanization of life; miracles of science have only made wars more destructive; colonial expansion has produced hostility and racial war; capitalism has led to exploitation and unrest; political revolution and the quest for freedom have issued in the absolutism of the modern State.<sup>3</sup> There is thus a tragic contradiction between human aims

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<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, etc. p. 323.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson's Preface to Maritain's Religion and Culture, xiv ff. ; Christianity and the New Age, p. 16; Beyond Politics, pp. 126 ff.; "Religion and Mass Civilization: The Problem of the Future," Dublin Review (January, 1944) p. 1.



and historical results. Dawson could thus easily say with Tillich that history, too, longs for deliverance and salvation.

But how are man, nature, and history to gain redemption?<sup>2</sup> We have already noted that Dawson, with Tillich, believes that the turning point is in man. The salvation of man, therefore, is the indispensable prerequisite for the salvation of nature and history. Yet for both Dawson and Tillich, man is unable through his own resources to redeem nature and history, let alone himself. Although as a bridge between the spiritual and material worlds (he is endowed with a type of knowledge that transcends the sensible world, he is too closely tied to nature to be able to rise above it and reach the intuition of the divine.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for him to free himself from the limitations of nature through human intelligence.<sup>2</sup> The divine Word must therefore come to man "in a form appropriate to the limitations of his intellectual powers." This, for Dawson, provides the background for the Incarnation.

##### 5. Christ and the Redemption of Existence (Man, Nature, and History)

Although Dawson does not use Tillich's concept of the "New Being," that term adequately expresses the key element in Dawson's Christology. Dawson's stress, too, is on Christ as the new creation; Christ introduces into the world a "new spiritual principle which gradually leavens and transforms human nature into something new."<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup>"The Revolt of the East, etc.", p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Medieval Religion, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), p. 77; "The Dark Mirror," Dublin Review (October, 1930), p. 180 f. Dawson's observations here on the limitations of human reason more or less parallel Tillich's.

<sup>3</sup>"The Christian View of History", p. 314.



includes for Dawson, as for Tillich, the insistence that Christ is not simply a moral ideal, a teacher or prophet, or even simply a theophany or a revelation of God to man but that he is God made man.<sup>1</sup> As Dawson puts it, "In Him God is not only manifested to man but vitally participated."<sup>2</sup> Through Christ a new spiritual principle is introduced into the world, a new order of life embracing man's total being (body, mind, and spirit) in a vital synthesis.<sup>3</sup> This in turn creates a new humanity.<sup>4</sup> Through Christ, humanity acquires a fresh beginning. Christ's work is thus genetic and creative in an absolute sense.<sup>5</sup>

The redemption of humanity is, for Dawson, correlated with the redemption of nature. For through Christ man's role as the bond between the material and the spiritual worlds is restored and extended. The new humanity created by Christ is brought into closer relationship with nature (through realizing its interdependence with nature) and thus becomes a channel for nature's spiritualization. Since this requires a proper understanding of nature, man's scientific knowledge comes to have a decisive part to play. Dawson's negative judgment upon industry and technology should not therefore be taken as indicating a denial of the importance of the modern scientific achievement. According to Dawson, the intellectualization of the material world is a potential vehicle for the spiritualization of nature. As Dawson sees it, "The organization of the

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<sup>1</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 203. "The Christian View of History," p. 314; Enquiries, etc., p. 327.

<sup>2</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 309.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Tillich's concept of the "community of the New Being".

<sup>5</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 327.

<sup>6</sup>"Revolt of the East", etc., p. 12; Christianity and the New Age, p. 105.

material world by science and law which has been the characteristic task of modern European culture is in no sense alien to the genius of Christianity. For the progressive intellectualization of the material world which is the work of European science is analogous and complementary to the progressive spiritualization of human nature which is the function of the Christian religion."<sup>1</sup>

The redemption of humanity leads on to, and is a constituent factor in, the redemption of history. In spite of the fact that history is a tragic process, redeemed man may know, through faith, that there is a spiritual purpose being fulfilled through historical tragedy, failure, and suffering, and that the true meaning of it all will someday be revealed. Although God's victory over the evil forces in history is not susceptible to scientific demonstration, the spiritual renewal of man, according to Dawson, has consequences which are in some ways outwardly manifested in the historical process.

Thus, although we cannot trace in society. . . the clear evidence of the progressive development of the divine life in mankind, we can still see in every age new manifestations of the charismatic activity of the Spirit in the Catholic Church. Every age sees the Kingdom of God conquering fresh territory - the supernatural order more closely interpenetrating the natural world. Sometimes the conquests of one age seem to be lost by the next, but this loss is superficial. The achievement remains to be drawn in and represented as some future period.

The Church, then, is moving forward ceaselessly and irresistably (though not visibly or without interruption) toward the more perfect society.

The complete redemption of man, nature, and history, however, must await the eschaton. Dawson differs from Tillich at this point in

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<sup>1</sup> Progress and Religion, p. 247; "The Revolt of the East, Etc.", p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Enquiries, etc., p. 344 f.



anticipating a real end to history. The eschaton for him is not just a transcendent reference point or a symbol for the completed meaning of history against all fragmentary actualizations.<sup>1</sup> Still, he does not become involved in the self-contradiction, against which Tillich cautions, of positing an end in a temporal sense. The end of history, he says, "is not found in history itself, but arises from the raising of history to a supertemporal plane."<sup>2</sup> In addition, he comments that the end of history (as well as the beginning and "center") transcends history and is not an historical event in the ordinary sense of the word but rather an act of "divine creation to which the whole process of history is subordinate."<sup>3</sup> But although Dawson is more realistic and objective in his conception of the eschaton, he also makes place for a spiritualized interpretation of the "end" and of the coming Kingdom. "For The Christian," he says, "the world is always ending, and every historical crisis is, as it were, a rehearsal for the real thing."<sup>4</sup> With Newman, he believes that history is "continually verging on eternity."<sup>5</sup> The Kingdom of God, consequently, must be seen as both internal and spiritual as well as external and cosmic.<sup>6</sup> We await an objective end while at the same time living in that end as it is present, in germ, in history as we know it.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson thus has more of the apocalyptic note than has Tillich.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 315.

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 333.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Tillich's "already" and "not yet."



The ultimate transformation of man, nature, and history may be expressed for Dawson, as with Tillich, by the phrase "the restoration of all things in Christ." Both Tillich and Dawson make a place for the Neo-Platonic conception of the return of all things to their origin. Dawson looks forward to the day when, as in the words of the Easter liturgy, "the whole world may experience and see what was fallen raised up, what had grown old made new, and all things returning to unity through Him from whom they took their beginning."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 113. See also The Judgment of the Nations, p. 115.

CHAPTER TEN  
RELIGION AND CULTURE

1. A Definition of Terms

The term "culture" has been so bandied about that a definition is essential.<sup>1</sup> For the common man, culture means a sophisticated appreciation of the "higher things of life." It means going to the opera, visiting the art galleries, holding a lorgnette to the eye—the type of activity that produces from the common man a sneer of contempt.<sup>2</sup>

By "culture" Dawson means something far different. He understands culture in the anthropological and sociological sense as the way of life of a particular people.<sup>3</sup> Taken in this sense culture is quite the opposite of sophistication and refers to the "grass roots" elements of society, such as family, region, and religion, and to common traditions and customs which link a people into a living community having a real continuity with the past.<sup>4</sup> Culture in this sense is not an intellectual

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<sup>1</sup>T.S. Eliot gives a lucid description of the misuse of this term in his Notes Toward the Definition of Culture, p. 13 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Arnold is largely to blame for this state of things in England, Dawson believes. In attempting to popularize culture he actually produced a Philistine reaction because he himself was a "highbrow." In the past, however, the leaders of society shared a common life with the peasant. Both were united, says Dawson, in a common allegiance to the Bible and the Christian tradition which was the core of the whole culture. (Understanding Europe, p. 250 f.).

<sup>3</sup>Dawson would say that there is no such thing as culture in general, but only particular cultures of individual human groups.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson, following LePlace, gives full weight to the physical influences behind culture such as Place (the geographical factor), Work (the economic factor) and People (the genetic factor). But he by no means falls into materialistic determinism. Beyond these three factors he emphasizes the place of Thought (the psychological factor) which includes religion and the life of the spirit (Age of the Gods, pp. xiii, xx; Progress and Religion, p. 75). Culture, he says, has a material substructure but it also has a spiritual superstructure which is the real mainspring behind culture and makes man superior to the animal. Although environment conditions culture, it does not cause it! Culture, then, is neither a purely physical process, as Spengler would have it nor a purely subjective creation as in Collingwood (Progress and Religion, pp. 44 f., 46).

abstraction carried on by the elite but is the way of life borne by the common people.<sup>1</sup> It is in the common people and he folk traditions, says Dawson, that we see the essence of culture. And consequently it is in the common people that we find the most sublime union of religion and culture. Now it is this social unit along with its expressions in art, literature, institutions, and social traditions that forms the spiritual community which Dawson calls a culture. (The term "spiritual community" does not necessarily mean that the community has to be religious in the ordinary sense of the word but points to the fact that the community owes its unity to its common beliefs and ways of thought far more than to any identity of racial type.)<sup>2</sup> Defined in this manner, "culture" is almost interchangeable with what is usually meant by the term "civilization." "Civilization," however, usually indicates a more conscious and rationalized manifestation as over against the natural, spontaneous, and common way of life we have been describing.<sup>3</sup> The term "culture" on the other hand is a term having a wider connotation than "civilization." It can be used to describe the way of life both of civilized and uncivilized peoples, whereas the term "civilization" could not be applied to the society of uncivilized peoples.<sup>4</sup> Further, the term "culture" usually includes a large area incorporating a number of different societies. There are only four great contemporary cultures in this sense: Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and European.<sup>5</sup> It is in these cultural units as wholes that Dawson is particu-

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>"Christianity and Culture," Dublin Review (April, 1941), p.137.

<sup>5</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 67.



larly interested, especially their relationship to religion and common ways of thought around which they have been formed.

It will not be as necessary to give an extensive definition of religion. By "religion" Dawson simply means, firstly, "the belief in the existence of divine or supernatural powers whose nature is mysterious but which control the world and the life of man" and, secondly, "the association of these powers with particular men or things, or places, or ceremonies. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Yet, for a full discussion of the religious aspects of culture, a broader definition is needed. Dawson, like Tillich, does not restrict religion to its institutional or objectivied forms but sees religion as manifested in the whole of life. Although he does not use the term "theonomous analysis" he does at times disclose, in Tillichian fashion, the basic religious motives operating behind apparently non-spiritual movements. He sees in the French Revolution, for instance, an essentially religious movement in spite of its apparent rationalism, <sup>2</sup> in totalitarianism a religious attempt to subordinate the whole of life to a higher, supra-personal end, <sup>3</sup> and in modern social planning an unconscious quest for salvation. <sup>4</sup> (A variety of these movements will be discussed in a later chapter.) Also, with Tillich, Dawson sees the style of a period as a reflection of its true spiritual character. Architecture, literature, customs, and the plastic arts all manifest, to the discerning eye, the spirit of the age. <sup>5</sup> The study of styles provides for Dawson,

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, etc., p.303.

<sup>3</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 131.

<sup>4</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup>"Progress and Decay in Ancient and Modern Civilizations," pp. 3 f. Dawson, like Tillich, sees art as a sensitive barometer of spiritual change and also comments on the significance of abstract painting (The Modern Dilemma, p. 101; Enquiries, etc., pp. 70, 83).

as with Tillich, an awareness of the spiritual significance of secular movements and institutions and is part of what we have been describing as Dawson's broad view of religion.

## 2. The Relationship Between Religion and Culture

Perhaps it will be necessary first to indicate that there is a relationship between religion and culture as over against those who, considering religion as a superficial cultural accretion, deny any vital relationship between culture and religion, and, on the other hand, those who believe that religion deals with a transcendent realm that has nothing to do with culture. Or again, it might be necessary to defend the relationship between religion and culture against those who think that the two are so identical that the term "relation" is inappropriate.<sup>1</sup>

The first error is perhaps not so popular now as it used to be. The older sociologists stressed much too exclusively the material aspects of culture and regarded religion as a late arrival on the scene (as a cultural by-product). In order to counteract such views, Dawson emphasizes the fact that religion and culture have always been closely related and demonstrates that the further back into history we go the more closely we find religion and culture joined. The two, then, are organically, and not just superficially, related.

The second error - that of denying the relationship of religion and culture through a religious transcendence - has been dealt with in

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<sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot, Notes Toward the Definition of Culture, p. 33 f.

regard to the Roman Catholic criticisms of Tillich's views and will also be discussed further on in this section.

The third error - that of denying the "relationship" of elements so identical as religion and culture - is perhaps now becoming more popular in certain circles. T.S. Eliot, for instance, speaks of religion and culture as, after all, just "different aspects of the same thing: the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people."<sup>1</sup> The dangers which Dawson sees resulting from such views will be indicated later. This will suffice, however, to call attention to another extreme equally rejected by Dawson and to establish the fact that, in his view, religion and culture are at least related.

Now this relationship may be expressed in several different ways. It may be considered firstly as a relationship of mutual dependence. Religion, for example, is dependent upon culture for the forms in which it expresses itself. Dawson is close to Tillich at this point in his idea that religion cannot escape embodiment in culture<sup>2</sup> and is by nature a cultural phenomenon. But if religion is dependent upon culture, culture is even more dependent upon religion. It is through religion that culture attains its foundation, its unity, and its dynamic. "In the last resort," Dawson says, "every civilization is built on a religious foundation. . . ."<sup>3</sup> A civilization must have some vision of reality to give it meaning and purpose. Without such a vision, a civilization soon perishes. So it is true, Dawson believes, that

A civilization lives by its faith in its ideals no less than by its wealth and its material organization.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>"Religion and Mass Civilization, etc.", p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 42.



As he says elsewhere, "the world religions have been the keystones of the world cultures, so that when they are removed the arch falls and the building is destroyed."<sup>1</sup> By providing a vision of reality, a set of ideals and purposes, a society's religion is at the very soul of its culture and may be considered as its true foundation. Again, common beliefs and attitudes supplied by a common faith make for cultural unity. Such common ideals and principles are indispensable, for if a society makes no moral or spiritual appeal to the loyalty of its members, it must inevitably disintegrate.<sup>2</sup> Besides providing a foundation for culture and a center of unity, religion also serves as a great cultural dynamic.<sup>3</sup> By virtue of its transcendence and its judgment upon culture, religion provides a fruitful tension in life between the ideal and its realization which ever beckons culture onward and upward.

Throughout the history of humanity the religious impulse has been always and everywhere present as one of the great permanent forces that make and alter man's destiny.<sup>4</sup>

All of these observations serve to underscore the mutual dependency of culture and religion.

The relationship of religion and culture can also be expressed as one of mutual conditioning. Sociologists, it seems, never tire of calling attention to the conditioning of religions by the cultures in which they appear. There is, as Dawson admits, the religion of the peasant, the religion of the warrior, the religion of the city dweller -

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson recognizes that religion also has a conservative function, but believes that the dynamic element is primary and has been far too much neglected.

<sup>4</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. 22.

each with its own characteristics reflecting an adaptation to its particular environment.<sup>1</sup> Dawson does not disparage the study of cultural influences upon religion and in fact declares that no particular religion can be fully understood apart from these factors. Yet he insists that this is not the whole truth. If religion is conditioned by culture, culture is even more conditioned by religion. In fact, culture might be described as a deliberate effort to bring society into line with the higher ways of life made known through religion.<sup>2</sup> Thus religion has a profound influence upon the whole of life, and even an other-worldly religion has its cultural manifestations.<sup>3</sup> The impact of religion upon culture is dramatically seen in those instances when a culture has taken on a new faith and has had its most basic institutions thereby transformed as in the case of the transformation of ancient civilizations by Christianity or of the pagans of Arabia by Islam. The change in the basic conception of reality carried with it a change in the whole character of the culture in question. The interaction of religion and culture, then, is reciprocal: "the way of life influences the religion and the religious attitude influences the way of life."<sup>4</sup>

Dawson's primary interest, however, is in calling attention to the effects of religion upon culture. He is particularly eager to correct the views of those sociologists and anthropologists who regard religion as an obstacle that has to be removed before culture can really come into its own. Religion is not, for Dawson, a leech that saps the

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Tillich makes the same observation (See Chapter Four).

<sup>4</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 57.



energy of culture but is actually its most dynamic force and increases its creative energy. In his various books, Dawson shows in detail how religion has been the motivating force behind nearly all of the basic cultural achievements of the centuries. Agriculture, for instance, probably began in the cult of natural fertility and was a result of the ritual imitation of the processes of nature in devotion to the Great Mother goddess.<sup>1</sup> The domestication of animals originated in the necessity of keeping sacred animals for ritual sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> In both cases, the utilitarian development was a secondary consequence. Likewise the rise of cities can be traced to religious origins, for as agriculture grew up around the shrines to the Mother Goddesses, these shrines became economic centers of Temple Cities, which lie at the roots of the development of all the early high civilizations.<sup>3</sup> (Similarly, the monasteries of the Middle Ages became centers around which cities grew and were the mainsprings of the whole community life.<sup>4</sup>) The calendar also arose as a liturgical necessity, for the religious rites had to be ordered to conform to the pattern of the seasons and the movements of heavenly bodies.<sup>5</sup> The careful observation of the movements of the planets by the Babylonians led to the idea of a fixed cosmic order and, says Dawson, became one of the foundations of modern science.<sup>6</sup> Writing, as the name hieroglyphics implies, arose as sacred symbolism and the making of books and the consequent compiling of libraries were sacred occupations.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. 105; Progress and Religion, pp. 107 ff, 113 f.

<sup>2</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>4</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 113; Age of the Gods, pp. 112, 151.

<sup>6</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. 135.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 112, 132.



temple libraries and schools were the first centers of literary life and education (as were the monastic schools of the Christian era).<sup>1</sup> Without the leisure provided by positions on these temple staffs, the development of intellectual life and science might have been postponed for centuries.<sup>2</sup> Social institutions, too, such as the family, marriage, and kinship all have a religious background, especially the institution of Kingship and the codification of Law. In primitive societies, the King was not so much the political ruler as he was the priest and religious head of his people.<sup>3</sup> In many societies, the city-temple was the "law court and supreme source of jurisdiction, and men brought their wrongs and their disputes before 'the throne of God.'"<sup>4</sup> Other miscellaneous achievements such as art and handicrafts,<sup>5</sup> music and the dance,<sup>6</sup> poetry,<sup>7</sup> the use of metals and engineering (necessary for the construction of temple towers or for irrigation projects as in Babylon)<sup>8</sup> might be mentioned in passing as further examples of the way in which religion has been the driving force behind nearly every major cultural development.

The creative power of religion is especially manifest in the effects of Christianity upon European life.<sup>9</sup> Many of these influences will be traced in detail in the next chapter. Some specific features not treated there, however, may be briefly mentioned. The rise of modern trade

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<sup>1</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>3</sup>Progress and Religion, pp. 110 f.

<sup>4</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 72; The Age of the Gods, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup>Religion and Culture, pp. 68, 52.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 67. ff.

<sup>8</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 100.

<sup>9</sup>Dawson regards Christianity as the chief source of the European dynamic (The Judgement of the Nations, p. 15; Christianity and the New Age, p. 93 f.)

and commerce, for instance, probably began with the pilgrimage routes which, says Dawson, more or less preceded the trade routes.<sup>1</sup> And perhaps the first awakening of world-consciousness was not in the secular explorers, but in the ambassadorial journeys of Friars of the Middle Ages to Egypt and Mongolia.<sup>2</sup> In fact, world exploration itself was closely connected with religious motives, as is seen in Prince Henry the Navigator whose exploration was devoted to religious ideals.<sup>3</sup> And in the imperialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, missionary and monopolistic motives intermingled. Men even as late as David Livingstone felt that the expansion of European trade was one factor in the extension of Christendom.<sup>4</sup> The influence of Christianity can also be seen in the origin of modern craft guilds which trace their line of descent directly back to the religious confraternity - an association under the protection of a saint.<sup>5</sup> Illustrations such as these could be elaborated ad infinitum from Dawson's writings, but these will serve to demonstrate the way Dawson shows how religion has moulded culture through the ages.

### 3. The Ideal Relationship of Culture to Religion

Having traced the interactions between religion and culture we may now turn to the more constructive question of Dawson's conception of the ideal relationship between the two. There are, Dawson maintains, only three possible relationships:<sup>6</sup> the rejection of culture, the acceptance of

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 203, 260. Cf. Lewis Mumford, The Condition of Man (p. 160): "Just as trade in the nineteenth century followed the flag, from the thirteenth century on it followed the cross."

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>4</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 150.

<sup>5</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 203.

<sup>6</sup>In contradistinction to Richard Niebuhr's five-fold classification of the possible relationships in his book Christ and Culture (See Dawson's review of this book in Religion and Life (Spring, 1952), p. 299)



culture, and a qualified acceptance and rejection of culture. We shall consider them in this order.

Firstly, as to the rejection of culture by religion, it is obvious that Dawson disapproves. This he considers as a typical defect, especially in the Lutheran tradition which stresses the extreme transcendence of God, leading to a denial of the world and a consequent separation of religion and culture.<sup>1</sup> This Lutheran dualism, Dawson believes, has its counterpart in the separation of faith and works. For Dawson, religion and culture, like faith and works, are organically related. The transcendent spiritual claims of religion, then, must not be taken to imply a denial of the limited and historically conditioned values of culture.<sup>2</sup>

The separation of religion and culture is, according to Dawson, fatal to both elements. Culture separated from religion loses its social significance and is in danger of becoming "highbrow." If culture is only, as in popular usage, an intellectual abstraction, it possesses absolutely no power of restoring or transforming the life of society.<sup>3</sup> But religion separated from culture is equally impoverished. It is, says Dawson, like a soul without a body. For its very being, religion must

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<sup>1</sup> Tillich criticizes Lutheranism on these same grounds, as we saw. Dawson recognizes, however, that there is also world-affirmation in Lutheranism (See The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 28 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> The emphasis upon extreme transcendence has historically led to sectarianism, Dawson notes. This may be an important reason for Dawson's rejection of the separation of religion and culture.

<sup>3</sup> "The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education" in Our Culture (V.A. Demant, ed.) (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1947), p. 36.



embody itself in vital and living cultural expressions.<sup>1</sup>

Dawson's attitude toward the rejection of culture by religion was, as we pointed out, not very different from what we might expect. His position toward the full acceptance of culture by religion, however, may surprise us. A superficial reading of his Gifford lectures might give the impression that Dawson over-stresses the concordance of religion and culture and fails to maintain a proper religious transcendence. Although he does put the emphasis upon the fusion of religion and culture in these books, he also cautions about the necessity of achieving a proper balance between the acceptance and rejection of culture by religion. And in both earlier and later writings, the tension between religion and culture is even more explicitly pronounced.<sup>2</sup>

Dawson believes that the complete identification of religion and culture is as fatal to both elements as is their complete separation. When religion becomes at one with its culture it becomes tied to a limited social order, loses its spiritual character, and becomes secularized. And

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson, however, is not entirely without sympathy for the religious rejection of culture and recognizes that there are situations, as in the early Church, when it is absolutely necessary for the living elements to separate themselves from the decaying culture. Yet he maintains that our situation today is different and that, since our civilization is still basically Christian, Christians cannot stand by and allow it to disintegrate. They must continually seek to penetrate the culture - even the modern mass civilization that is coming into being - in order to give it spiritual aims. Further, Dawson believes that the attitude of withdrawal and hostility in our time can only lead to the complete extinction of religion. For the modern mass State has at its disposal new techniques of sujugating the will from within so that martyrdom is losing its practical effectiveness (See "Concordats or Catacombs?", p. 909; "It Shall Not Happen Here," p. 7).

<sup>2</sup>See Dawson's reviews of books by Latourette and R.H. Niebuhr. Dawson's analysis of the importance of the great Religion-Cultures of the past in which religion and culture were completely fused is misleading. He does not propose such a complete identification as an ideal for our time (See Religion and Culture, pp. 206-208).

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 206.

when culture becomes completely identified with religion it becomes static, rigid, and lifeless. No longer judged by a religion which stands above it, it loses the attraction of the ideal. When all its forms have become complete religious expressions, the free, experimental development of new cultural forms is discouraged and restricted.<sup>1</sup> Time and again Dawson draws attention to the Byzantine synthesis as an example of the disintegration which results through a complete fusion of religion with culture.<sup>2</sup> For the sake of its own vitality, a culture must not regard its achievements and values as possessing a universal or absolute significance.<sup>3</sup> This temptation applies not only to religion-cultures but as well to secular cultures such as our own. Any culture which attributes finality to its own way of life is in danger of falling into the fixed mould of a Byzantine civilization.

Religion, for its part, must maintain its transcendence above culture and must, as Newman insisted, continually be at war with the world.<sup>4</sup> It must not acquiesce in some facile synthesis of religion with the prevailing ideology. This would be paramount to a compromise of its principles. Dawson seeks constantly to retain the dualism between the city of God and the city of earth (or of man). The two are in unceasing conflict and, although they mingle with one another in the institutions of this world, they are separated from one another by an infinite spiritual gulf and will ultimately be separated at the Last Judgment.<sup>5</sup> With Maritain

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<sup>1</sup>See the discussion on the following pages of the place of autonomous forms.

<sup>2</sup>The Making of Europe (An Introduction into the History of European Unity) (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), p. 184 f; Progress and Religion, 160f.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 209. <sup>4</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup>"The Christian View of History," pp. 317 f; Enquiries, etc., p. 241; The Modern Dilemma, p. 109. The conflict between the two cities assumes different forms through the centuries. The early Christian conflict between Church and world, for instance, later became a conflict between opposing forces within the Christian society (Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 146; The Kingdom of God and History, pp. 206 f.)



and Lotburette, Dawson insists that Christianity must retain its transcendence over culture as much as its transcendence over nationality.<sup>1</sup> Christianity must, in other words, be supercultural as well as super-national.

However completely a culture may seem to be dominated by religion, there remains a fundamental dualism between the order of culture which is part of the order of nature and the principle of faith which transcends the natural order and finds its center outside the world of man.<sup>2</sup>

As over against T.S. Eliot's too facile identification of religion and culture, Dawson insists that the more religious a religion is, the more it asserts its otherness.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Dawson maintains that this element of distance or separation should not be taken to indicate that a religion thus withholds its support and transforming power from a culture. On the contrary, just as the judgment of self-centeredness in an individual is not opposed to the development of his personality, so the judgment of a transcendent religion is not opposed to the development of a culture. It is, in fact, a major element in the healthy survival of that culture.<sup>4</sup> The ideal relationship between religion and culture, then, is neither the complete rejection nor the complete acceptance of culture by religion but rather a qualified acceptance and rejection in which both complete separation and complete fusion are equally avoided.<sup>5</sup> (Actually, says Dawson, it is difficult to find a culture

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<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>"Mr. T.S. Eliot on the Meaning of Culture," The Month (March, 1949) I, 155.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>It may be questioned, however, if Dawson always remembers this principle himself, especially in relation to Catholic culture. He speaks for instance of the "tradition of sacred culture which it has been the mission of the Church to nourish and preserve." ("The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 49, italics mine).

<sup>5</sup>Dawson's review of R.H. Niebuhr's Christ and Culture in Religion and Life (Spring, 1952) XXI, p. 299.



which does not fail at one extreme or the other. It is, of course, a delicate balance and when it is achieved, as in the Middle Ages, it is usually short-lived.)

The necessary tension between religion and culture that Dawson recommends definitely should not be understood as an ontological dualism. The contrast of Christianity and culture parallels, for Dawson, the New Testament distinctions between flesh (as an evil principle) and the spirit (that dwells in the bodily temple) or between the "world" as a kingdom of darkness and the world as an object of redemption.<sup>1</sup> Distinction between these spheres is essential whereas complete separation (as in ontological dualism) is heretical. The world, then, must be "both renounced and remade."<sup>2</sup> Christianity must seek to penetrate its culture in the very act of standing apart from it in judgment.

The goal toward which we must work, then, is neither separation of religion and culture nor their identification, but rather synthesis.<sup>3</sup> But since the term synthesis tends to connote the idea of fusion, perhaps the best term (and one that Dawson frequently uses) is "vital collaboration" - a collaboration in which the secular becomes consecrated to the sacred and in which man's life in every direction becomes "guided and informed by the spirit of religious faith."<sup>4</sup> The mission of the Church, then, becomes that of finding a social means of expressing this religious spirit so that the world may be transformed through "bringing every side of human existence

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson's review of R.H. Niebuhr's Christ and Culture, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 301

<sup>3</sup>V.A. Demant illustrates the ideal relationship of religion and culture as that of marriage as over against hermaphroditism (fusion) and separation, or divorce. (Personal conversation with Demant, December, 1951.)

<sup>4</sup>"Mr. T.S. Eliot on the Meaning of Culture," p. 155.

and every human activity into contact with the sources of supernatural life.<sup>1</sup>

When this ideal is fulfilled and religion becomes the very center of things and the mainspring of the whole social life, it must not seek to dominate every form of expression from without but rather to inspire from within. Any proper synthesis of religion and culture must acknowledge the autonomous values of the given culture. This, Dawson believes, is the true Biblical position. He points out that in the Old Testament secular history and secular culture have a place in God's plan as seen in the role of Cyrus and of the heathen nations as instruments of God's purposes.<sup>2</sup> And in the New Testament there is, he believes, a still further recognition of a limited but intrinsic value ascribed to the social order and social traditions that lie outside the dispensation of grace.<sup>3</sup> Augustine, he notes, rightly carries on this view in maintaining that the earthly city has a place in the universal order and that the social virtues of the world have a real value of their own. Dawson even seems to go so far as to approve of Dante's idea that the temporal city should be regarded as "an autonomous order with its own supreme end, which is not the service of the Church but the realization of all the natural potentialities of human culture."<sup>4</sup> On the basis of this view, Dante speaks of the messianic role of the Italian

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<sup>1</sup>"Concordats or Catacombs?" p. 910

<sup>2</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 316.

<sup>3</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 321. Dante's radical difference from St. Thomas at this point is apparent. Still, as Dawson points out, his idea of the correlation between the secular tradition of the Roman Empire and the sacred tradition of the Church has its parallel in the Thomistic concordance of nature and grace. (See: The Kingdom of God and History, p. 209.)

people as an instrument in the achievement of the goal of history, which is a universal society made one through the political unification of humanity in a single world state. This part of Dante's thought Dawson rejects, for he comments that Dante's idea of the State as a secularized imitation of ecclesiastical universalism led directly to modern idealizations of the State and the consequent decline of the Church's prestige.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Dawson does seem to approve of Dante's appreciation of the independent value and significance of secular culture. Dawson's final word, however, is that "while Catholicism recognizes the distinction and the autonomy of the natural and supernatural orders, it can never acquiesce in their segregation."<sup>2</sup> All of life, he believes, is intended to participate in the eternal and, as he says, "there is not the smallest event in human life and social history but possesses an eternal and spiritual significance."<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. Cultural Polarity

The relationship we have been examining between religion and culture might be called "dialectical" even though Dawson does not use the term in this connection. He does, however, frequently speak of the polarity between religion and culture. All of life, according to Dawson, is a series of polar contrasts which form the very structure and dynamics of culture. He speaks of the "polarity and duality of culture" as "an example of that universal rhythm of life which finds its most striking expression in the division of the sexes."<sup>4</sup> This conflict of opposing

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<sup>1</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 323.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson's introduction to Maritain's Religion and Culture, p.ix.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 121



historical poles naturally leads to abuses and all varieties of tragedy.

Nevertheless, Dawson maintains that

If we condemn the principle of diversity or polarity in history, and demand an abstract uniform civilization which will obviate the risk of wars and religious schism, we are offending against life in the same way as though we condemned the division of the sexes . . . because it leads to immorality.<sup>1</sup>

Without the contrasts of opposites, which are at the roots of historical creativity, life would become a dead-level uniformity. The proper apprehension of the polar structures of life, then, is important not only for understanding the relationship between religion and culture but as well for understanding the relationship between various polar elements within culture, of which religion is but one.

The opposing forces in society usually cluster around the poles of race, religion,<sup>2</sup> or nationality - or sometimes a combination of two or three of these forces. An example of the polarity of races within the same culture is found in the case of the Ionians against the Dorians of ancient Greece. Conservative Anglicanism as over against Non-Conformity in eighteenth century England illustrates the polarity of two religious forces within the same culture.<sup>3</sup> The combination of both racial and religious elements involving also the polarity of national sentiment is seen in the opposition between the Celtic Catholics of Ireland and the Anglo-Saxon Protestants of England. Social tensions such as these frequently lead to destructive ends but, once restrained within a higher synthesis, often become the most creative forces in history. The European

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>It should be apparent that in this context we are thinking of religion not in its transcendence as an element standing over against culture, but in its sociological form as an element within culture.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 202; The Judgment of the Nations, p. 121.

achievement, for instance, "rests on the vital tension that exists between a number of different racial elements that are held together by the dynamic attraction of a common cultural aim."<sup>1</sup>

At the very center of the process of cultural creativity, however, stands the process of contrast, struggle, and fusion which results from the influx of new elements into an established culture. The pressure of foreign influences coming into a culture and demanding incorporation into the old synthesis serves to destroy that synthesis and press toward the creation of a new one. Such external influences, says Dawson, are at the heart of the whole process of cultural change and are the source of practically all of the sudden flowerings of culture that history records.<sup>2</sup>

These outside influences may be of many sorts: intellectual, religious, or racial. The first type may be seen in the impact of Western thought upon Russia during the past century issuing in a remarkable renaissance of literature (Tolstoy, Dostoevski, et.al).<sup>3</sup> The second type - the creative force of a new religion coming into a culture from without - may take two forms. A religion may come into a culture that is already fully formed, as with Islam entering Persia. Or it may enter a culture which is still in the process of formation, becoming a constituent element in the creation of that culture - a process seen at its best in the effect of Christianity upon the formation of Europe.<sup>4</sup> Usually,

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<sup>1</sup>"Interracial cooperation as a factor in European Culture," (Rome: Reale Accademia D'Italia Pamphlet, 1933), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. xvi ff.; Dawson makes his major criticism of Spengler at this point. Spengler, failing to see the importance of cultural interpenetration, imagines that culture is a physical organism which, like a tree, blossoms and decays as a self-contained unit.

<sup>3</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup>The next chapter will deal more fully with this development.



however, the new influences come through a third channel: the invasion, either bellicose or peaceful, of a new people. Such invasions make necessary a radical process of racial fusion and social adaptation. But whatever may be the method of cultural fertilization, the infiltration of foreign elements is the key element in Dawson's analysis of the process of cultural growth.

## 5. Cultural Cycles

Can any over-all pattern be discerned in these continuous movements of cultural polarity and interaction? Dawson attempts to show that there is such a design and that this pattern takes a cyclical form.<sup>1</sup> Every great civilization, he believes, tends to go through three succeeding periods which he labels as follows: 1) Growth, 2) Progress, and 3) Maturity.<sup>2</sup>

The first period (the period of Growth) is, we might say, the period of childhood when the civilization is dominated by a synthesis it has achieved from the previous (parent) civilization. (One of Dawson's main points here is the fact that the decline or death of a civilization is not the end of its influence. Its great achievements of thought and religion are passed on and become the fertilizing principle of a new age.)

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson's perception of an historical pattern should not be confused with philosophical idealism's attempt to trace the pattern of the "Idea mirroring itself in the history of the world" (Hegel). Dawson's approach is sociological; he traces the general tendencies of the social organism as a whole and arrives at his conclusions through the concrete study of historical and social forces. (See Progress and Religion, p. 46.)

<sup>2</sup>This survey is drawn largely from Dawson's chapter in Enquiries entitled "Cycles of Civilization" written in 1922. This paper owes its interest chiefly to the fact that it was written before Dawson's acquaintance with Spengler's Der Untergang des Abendlandes.



During this period of growth, the youthful culture is content to remain under the sway of the older inherited synthesis, although it does express its unity of purpose in creative flowerings of culture from time to time. Eventually, however, new forces within the culture begin to break through the barriers. The child, we might say, becomes an adolescent who is no longer content to remain within parental bonds. He wants to assert himself and discover the world. This brings us, then, to the second period - the period of progress. As the old synthesis loses its hold, the culture turns to external influences. It rejects the traditional guidance from the past and strikes out on new paths. The heritage of the parent culture is abandoned in favor of self-expression and individualism. Occidental elements, such as activism, extroversion, and world-affirmation prevail. All of this sudden progress coupled with the dissolution of the old synthesis produces a state of chaos and spiritual anarchy. The living elements of the culture, consequently, are driven toward the desire for the maturity of a new synthesis. The third period, the period of Maturity, takes place when the achievements and new developments of the adolescent period<sup>1</sup> (the period of Progress) are fully assimilated, coordinated, and harmonized with the values and traditions of the past. This new synthesis, Dawson remarks, is often attained only on the eve of the material decline of the civilization.<sup>2</sup> Yet even though the synthesis is often short-lived, it is of tremendous importance. It marks the creation of a Religion-Culture, an age of social and internal unification. The period of Maturity,

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<sup>1</sup>Although Dawson does not use this term, it seems an appropriate designation for the characteristics of this second period.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, p. 72. There were only eighteen years, for instance, between the closing of the pagan temples by Theodosius and the first attack on Rome by the barbarians. (Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 28.)

then, is more peaceful and serene than the adolescent period and is a time in which oriental elements such as introversion and asceticism predominate over the occidental ones.<sup>1</sup> This period, however, should not be misunderstood as a negative period - an era of petrification and death, as Spengler would have it.<sup>2</sup> It is rather a time when the civilization is most open to external influences and has the possibility of syncretizing diverse elements. And the power of such a Religion-Culture is all out of proportion to the prosperity or transience of the civilization that produced it. When the latter declines and disappears, the synthesis that has been achieved is, as we saw earlier, passed on to a new people and becomes the seed of a new social order. This observation, then, brings us back to the beginning of the cycle.

The complete cycle of Growth, Progress, and Maturity comprises what Dawson calls a World Age.<sup>3</sup> There have been three such ages in the history of the world, each lasting roughly a thousand to fifteen-hundred years<sup>4</sup> and we are now in the midst of a fourth. The first age was the age of the early Egyptian and Babylonian civilizations and the second, the age of the late Egyptian and Minoan cultures. The third age was the age of the Ancient World from the rise of the Assyrian Empire and the Homeric period through the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. Each of the societies living during any one of these ages experienced parallel movements of

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<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Progress and Religion, pp. 41 f.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson calls attention to his dependency upon Vico at this point. Vico distinguished between what he called The Age of the Gods (the source of the title for one of Dawson's books), The Age of the Heroes, and The Age of Men. Vico, however, failed to realize the important part played by the Religion-Culture of the final period (Enquiries, etc., p. 74).

<sup>4</sup>Dawson comments that the remarkable similarity in the duration of cultural cycles may be due to the fact that the process of racial fusion and cultural assimilation requires a "fixed number of generations in which to work itself out" ("Progress and Decay, etc.", p. 7; Progress and Religion, p. 60).



Growth, Progress, and Maturity. Dawson traces the details of these cycles in reference to the civilizations of India, China, Islam, etc. as well as to Europe.<sup>1</sup> The fourth age, in the midst of which we are now living, also evidences a similar cyclical tendency. It began with the fertilization of the daughter culture (the embryonic Christian Europe of A.D. 500-750) by the parent culture (the Christian Empire of the Patristic-Byzantine age). It had its period of Growth and the accompanying flowerings of culture (based on the inherited synthesis) in the Carolingian Empire and in the Middle Ages. The Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and Era of World-Discovery comprise its Adolescent period (or period of Progress). Now our civilization is in an intermediate period, perhaps tending toward a new synthesis and certainly in quest of it. Whether or not our age will culminate in a great Religion-Culture, as did the three previous World Ages, remains to be seen. If this does come about, it will not be the result of any mechanically-determined historical "laws." For Dawson there are no such deterministic structures.<sup>2</sup> The periods of Growth, Progress, and Maturity are not stages through which every civilization must necessarily pass but are only tendencies (although, indeed, having remarkable consistencies). China and Islam, for instance, have had no adolescent period paralleling that of Western civilization.<sup>3</sup> A new synthesis for our civilization, then, remains an open possibility. The likelihood of such a synthesis will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, following an analysis of the historical background of the present world crisis in terms of the principles discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>See Dawson's elaborate chart of the parallel movements in the various world civilizations in Enquiries, etc., facing page 67.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, pp. 81 f.

<sup>3</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 73.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## THE SOURCE AND SOLUTION OF THE PRESENT WORLD CRISIS

Dawson has much more than just an antiquarian interest in the past. Like Tillich, he is keenly aware of living at a great turning point in history. Our civilization, he believes, is going through a period of great trial and testing, a veritable "Judgment of the Nations." In order to meet the present crisis and know what remedies to apply, we must, he feels, properly understand it. And in order to understand any situation, we must know something about its historical roots. "It is only by understanding our past that we shall ever be able to recover our inheritance in the future."<sup>1</sup>

This is especially true in reference to the complicated problems of modern Europe. Dawson is particularly interested in the European problem and, through his intensive study of the various periods of European history, is particularly qualified to speak about Europe's present needs.<sup>2</sup> Europe, he feels is a microcosm of the world situation and is thus the key to the whole problem of social reconstruction for our time. It was in Europe that the world crisis originated and achieved its most acute form, and it is Europe, he believes, that possesses the greatest resources for dealing with the problems involved in this crisis. Economic and political leadership may be passing from Europe to younger lands; nevertheless, the European problem remains central and a solution of the European problem would carry with it the solution to the world

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson's review of Ramsey and Hervey's Small Houses of the Late Georgian Period (Sociological Review, January, 1924, XVI, p. 76.)

<sup>2</sup>Although primarily interested in Europe, Dawson shows a remarkable acquaintance with other civilizations. See especially Enquiries, etc. pp. 79-94, 128-138, 159 ff.

problem. These problems, as already indicated, cannot be met and conquered unless they are thoroughly understood in the light of their antecedents. Therefore, Dawson argues, the understanding of the European past is of utmost importance for "it is only by understanding Europe that we can understand what is happening to the world."<sup>1</sup>

Dawson, as we have already noted, is somewhat of a dialectician in his approach and discerns various polar processes at work in the history of culture. Since this approach offers the closest parallel to Tillich's construction,<sup>2</sup> an attempt will be made to bring into relief these particular elements of his thought. This chapter, then, will center on the major polar forces which Dawson sees at work in the creation and dissolution of the medieval synthesis.

#### A. The Creation of Europe

For our purposes we shall consider Europe as beginning with the coming of Christianity to Greece. Dawson recognizes, of course, the existence of cultures on European soil long before this event and has a good deal to say about pre-Christian cultures of the Latin and Greek worlds as well as about the pre-historic cultures of Europe.<sup>3</sup> Still he believes that Europe did not really become an entity until the Christian era and that it is Christianity that has made Europe a cultural unity. Europe, he argues, is not a geographical or physical unity. It is not a

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson, however, emphasizes a social rather than an ontological polarity.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson sees the development even in the prehistoric period as a polar process. The foundation of ancient Europe, he says, was created by the interaction and combination of two elements: the neolithic peasant culture of central Europe and the metal-using culture of the Mediterranean in contact with the near East. (Age of the Gods, pp. 60, 169 ff.)

continent at all but rather a peninsular extension off the great land mass of Asia. And its unity is not a racial one, for there have always been diverse stocks populating it. The real force which pulled Europe together and made it a self-conscious unity was a religion coming in from the outside and from the cultural fringes. It was Christianity and the Church that made "Europe" possible and it was only by entering the society of the Church that the various people comprising the European synthesis came to acquire a common culture and tradition. Thus, if we wish to point to one event which more than any other marks the foundation of Europe, it would be the journey of St. Paul from Troy to Macedonia in A.D. 49. In this event Paul "brought to Europe the seed of a new life which was ultimately destined to create a new world."<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, the understanding of European history demands above all an understanding and appreciation of the Christian faith which made Europe what it is.<sup>2</sup> What Dawson says of religion in general is all the more true of Christianity in relation to Europe - that "Religion is the key of history."<sup>3</sup> "We cannot," he goes on to say, "understand the inner form of a society unless we understand its religion."<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Three Basic Polarities

The penetration of Europe by Christianity is an example of that process already noted of an outside religion coming into a growing culture and becoming an important element in the development of that

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Roman Catholics, Dawson believes, have the best vantage point for understanding Europe's past because of their living continuity with that past. The Monastic movement, for instance, serves as a living bridge by which the mind can travel back to the Middle Ages (The Making of Europe, p. xviii).

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.



culture. This process can best be seen as a three-fold one involving 1) Christianity coming into Hellenic civilization, 2) Hellenic Christianity mingling with the Roman civilization, and 3) the transmission of Latin Christianity to the barbarians of northern Europe. Each of these facets will now be discussed in detail.

The debt that Europe owes to Greece is immeasurable. From the Greeks has been derived all that is distinctively Western (as opposed to oriental) in the traditions of European science, art, philosophy, literature, and political thought. "Apart from Hellenism, European civilization and even the European idea of man would be inconceivable."<sup>1</sup> But the debt that Europe owes to the Christian Church for preserving and transmitting this Hellenic tradition is equally as great. Apart from the Church, these great achievements may never have become an inherent part of European culture. The Christian Church came in to Greece at a time when Hellenic culture was in decline and was responsible for taking over and preserving the best of its tradition. It was, in fact, through the Church that Hellenism "saved its soul" and became transmitted to future generations. Although the Church was for several centuries hostile to the Classical tradition, it gradually assimilated it and used it in the formation of a new Christian culture. This mutual penetration of Hellenism and Christianity "has left a profound mark on our culture, and their mutual influence and interpenetration has enriched the Western mind in a way that no single tradition, however great, could have done by itself."

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<sup>1</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

Rome also had a great part to play in the preservation of Hellenic ideals and it was perhaps more from Latin than from Greek sources that European Christianity derived its Hellenic traditions. Rome's great achievement was more than of transmission than of origination. Its place in the European development was to serve as a bridge between the Hellenic East and the rising culture of the North and West. The Roman roads, the Roman peace, and the Roman cities all played a major part in the diffusion of Christianity to the barbarians. The Roman walls at the outskirts of the Empire, says Dawson, "were the shields which protected the west-ward advance of the classical Mediterranean culture."<sup>1</sup> Dawson approvingly quotes Prudentius as saying,

This is the meaning of all the victories and triumphs of the Roman Empire: the Roman peace has prepared the way for the coming of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The intermingling of Christian and Latin traditions produced a process of creative interaction and interpenetration similar to that which occurred in the meeting of Christianity and Hellenism. It was from the Roman tradition that Latin Christianity got its organizational genius and its specific forms of law and justice which so profoundly affected the later canonical developments.<sup>3</sup> Further, the influence of the Roman tradition was especially widespread through its heritage of the Latin language which was to become the "sacred" language of the Church and the foundation of the literatures and vernacular cultures of the North.<sup>4</sup>

If we were dealing, however, with the most conspicuous flowering of Christian culture for the moment we would have to look to the Greek

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 29

<sup>2</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 29

<sup>3</sup>Understanding Europe, pp. 29 f.

<sup>4</sup>"European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages," The Dublin Review (January, 1950), p. 31.

world. Latin Christianity was poor and barbaric as compared to the simultaneous flourishing of culture in such centers of the Hellenic world as Alexandria, Athens, and Antioch. For the time being, the eastern expansion of Christianity was far more rapid and impressive, but in its importance for the succeeding centuries and the development of Western civilization, Latin Christianity and its movement out into the barbarian world proved ultimately of greater consequence. The expansion of this tradition, therefore, will occupy our major attention.

Upon the collapse of the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries, Christianity again served as a transmitter of the best of the classical traditions. The Church, under Constantine, had already begun to gain prestige and power. During the succeeding decades its status grew until, upon the fall of the Empire, the Church stood unchallenged as the only real basis for social unity. For the Church was not entangled with the civic institutions of the Roman-Hellenic urban culture. It could therefore survive the disintegration of that culture and adapt itself more readily to the new social conditions.<sup>1</sup> As people began more and more to look to the Church for leadership, the Church increasingly found itself in the position of being the creator of the new organs of culture. Just as Rome had been the intermediary between Hellenism and the West, the Church now became the intermediary between the Latin West and the barbaric North.<sup>2</sup>

But as the Gospel was moving out on the Roman roads, barbarism was moving in. The final victory, however, was not with the forces of darkness. Barbarianism may have conquered the Empire, but the religion

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<sup>1</sup>"Edward Gibbon," pp. 22f.

<sup>2</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 30.



of the Empire ultimately conquered the barbarians. This victory over the barbarians, Dawson remarks, was no simple uniform process of advance and conquest, but was interrupted by successive waves of barbarian advances from the North and from the East, principally in the ninth century.<sup>1</sup> The clash between the Church and the barbarians took the form, in the early centuries of the Dark Ages, of a crude conflict of opposing forces. The Church was out to convert the barbarians and the barbarians were out to destroy the Church and the Empire. The conflict is perhaps seen in its sharpest form in the ethical dualism between the ideals of the barbaric warrior and those of the Christian monk. Each had his separate standard, and the vices of the warrior were the virtues of the monk and the virtues of the monk were the vices of the warrior. It was a conflict between two spiritual worlds. On the one side was the cult of war, violence, heroism, and aggression; on the other side was the peace society of the Church with its renunciation and asceticism. The resulting tension created an atmosphere of eschatological dualism between the present world and the world to come.<sup>3</sup> The final victory of the monks over the barbarians was not achieved, Dawson insists, through the success of any sort of civilizing mission. The monks had no such intention. They came bearing a message of divine judgment and salvation. Any civilizing results were definitely by-products.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the great impression of Christianity upon the barbarians seems to have been made not through the teaching of any new doctrines but through the manifestation of a new power. The saints

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, pp. 31 f.

<sup>2</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 287.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 33 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson does not, of course, minimize the important role the monks played in keeping alive the torch of learning and the traditions of higher culture during the Dark Ages. He does comment, however, that this role is rather ironic, for monasticism really began as a withdrawal from culture.

and their miracles play a decisive part here. Although the atmosphere of many of the miracle-legends seems utterly alien to Christianity as we know it today, we must remember, Dawson cautions, that the Church was confronting the barbarian mind and that

In such a world religion was able to maintain its power only by the awe inspired by its supernatural prestige and the spiritual violence it opposed to the physical violence of barbarism.<sup>2</sup>

But as the barbarians became Christian, Christianity tended to take on barbaric elements. Much that is unacceptable in medieval Catholicism is due, Dawson believes, to these barbaric elements and is not necessarily a part of Catholicism or of Christianity as such.

Dawson speaks of the transformation from barbarism to Christianity as a transformation, in Freudian terms, from the Id to the Super-Ego. In pagan barbarism there was, he reasons, no individual consciousness of guilt or personal responsibility. Guilt was associated with the cult and religion centered in "an instinctive homage to the dark underground of the Id."<sup>2</sup> Christianity, however, brought a whole new mentality centering in a conscious moral faith demanding conformity to the standards of spiritual perfection - an emphasis, in other words, on the Super-Ego. This transition, Dawson says, is at the roots of the whole Western development and is the real source of the moral activism of Western society.

The victory of Christianity over barbarism <sup>h</sup>whether it be described in psychological or sociological terms, was of decisive influence for the whole future of Europe. The young peoples of the North, through the acceptance of Christianity, acquired a new culture and a new soul. The most vital thing in the whole medieval development, Dawson believes "was not

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 31

<sup>2</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 15.



the conversion of the Empire and the union of Church and State, but the gradual penetration of culture by the Christian tradition, until that tradition embraced the whole of the life of Western man in all its historic diversity and left no human activity and no social tradition unconsecrated."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The Carolingian Synthesis

Perhaps the most momentous single step toward the establishment of such a tradition which would "embrace the whole of life" was the Carolingian Synthesis. Prior to the time of Charlemagne, the two great forces of medieval life (barbarian and Christian) had clustered about separate poles. In proportion as the Papacy grew in power and prestige, the Christian peoples of the West increasingly found their principle of organization in the Roman curia. The barbaric peoples, at the same time, were finding their principle of organization in the German monarchies. As a result, the Dark Ages were characterized by a struggle between these two powers - the Germanic Empire and the Papacy. But this dualism was not permanent. Through the missionary activities of the Northumbrian monks, especially Alcuin of York and St. Boniface, the barbarians of northeastern France and northwestern Germany were converted to the Christian faith and an alliance was formed between the Frankish Kingdoms and the Papacy. This achievement was dramatically symbolized by the crowning of Pepin as the King of the Franks by St. Boniface in A.D. 752, and marks the foundation of what was later to become the Carolingian Empire. This alliance was later reinforced by the crowning of Charlemagne by the Pope at Rome in A.D. 800.

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<sup>1</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 206.



The aim of the Carolingian rulers was to establish a Christian theocracy - a Latin Christian empire - in which Christianity along with the classical tradition could be diffused to the peoples of Western Europe and serve as a bond of union between diverse peoples. Although the experiment lasted for less than a century, it marked, according to Dawson, a "true renaissance and the starting point of Western culture as a conscious unity."<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the fact that it collapsed later under barbarian attacks, it marked the organic union of the Latin and Germanic traditions and the cooperation of both elements in a common social unity. And it succeeded in establishing a commonwealth of Christian peoples which served as the basis of the whole medieval development.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Carolingian synthesis served as an ideal which was repeatedly sought in various political experiments. An attempt was made to revive it under German hegemony by Otto I and his successors in the tenth century, at a time when the North was again brought back into contact with the Mediterranean world. The guiding idea of the German emperors was to establish a commonwealth of Christian peoples governed by the independent authorities of King and Pope. Although this was never fully realized in practice, it preserved, like the Carolingian synthesis, "a kind of ideal existence like that of a Platonic form, which was continually seeking to attain material realization in the life of medieval society."<sup>2</sup> Thus, regardless of the external failure and instability of these syntheses of Latin and Germanic elements in the political experiments of the Frankish, Carolingian, and Germanic empires, two polar elements were brought together whose interaction and fusion were, Dawson believes, largely responsible for the great creativity of the Middle Ages. Like flint and steel, they lighted a conflagration which spread from one

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 282.

end of Europe to the other. For in the eleventh century, Western civilization began to expand from its Carolingian nucleus in all directions so that during the next three or four centuries "it transformed Europe from a barbarian hinterland into a center of world culture which equalled the older oriental civilizations in power and wealth and surpassed them in creative energy."<sup>1</sup>

The results of this mutual interaction of barbaric and Latin (Christian) elements is visible in nearly every cultural expression of the age. Their meeting and blending produced an especially creative flowering of culture in northern France. Three social expressions of this synthesis stand out conspicuously: Knighthood, the Crusades, and Christian Christian Kingship. The medieval institution of Knighthood represents in a dramatic way the fusion of barbaric and Christian elements, for the knight was essentially a barbaric warrior inspired by Christian ideals. Through Christian chivalry, the aggressive instincts of the barbaric peoples were sublimated and brought into the service of God and the Church.<sup>2</sup> The knight was a consecrated person and, when he died on the field of battle, was not just a "hero" but also a "martyr" for the faith. St. Louis provides us with the classical example of this type. The institution of knighthood was closely connected with the crusades which represent in even more striking manner how the war-like energies of feudal culture were turned from civil war toward external enemies threatening the life of Christendom, such as the Moslems. The crusades, Dawson believes, represent the most successful attempt of the Church to Christianize medieval society in its most vital but least Christian aspect.<sup>3</sup> Through

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Medieval Religion, pp. 105 ff.

<sup>3</sup>"Medieval Christianity" in Studies in Comparative Religion, E.C. Messenger, ed. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1935) IV, 8.

the idealism of the Church, war took on a more honorable character and warriors were sworn to the protection of non-combatants and to the observation of the "Truce of God" and the "Peace of God." And finally, the synthesis of the Christian and barbaric elements is seen in the institution of Christian Kingship. Kingship as it has been known in Western Civilization is primarily based on the barbaric pattern of the priest-king who was not so much a law-giver as he was the symbolic representation of his people - the hierophant of a sacred tradition.<sup>1</sup> In the consecration of Pepin, for instance, the barbaric King had conferred upon him a new sacred character which was to serve as a model for nearly all the later European sovereigns.<sup>2</sup> The earlier dualism represented by two sharply contrasted types of rulers (the war-king and the peace-king) was now overcome and henceforth the kings of the Western tradition were to be more of a mixed type representing both elements of the Carolingian synthesis. Perhaps the greatest literary expression of this whole social transformation is found in the chanson de geste - the feudal epics originating in northern France.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the centuries of interaction and fusion of the Christian and barbaric elements, the former sharp dualism between the two poles was transformed into an internal, psychological tension.<sup>4</sup> Both elements came to be represented in the same class, or even in the same family, producing at once both knights and monks.<sup>5</sup> As we have indicated, Dawson

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 78 ff.

<sup>2</sup>For the influence of this development upon the British conception of Kingship, see Dawson's essay "On the Coronation of an English King," in Beyond Politics, pp. 95-115.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 172 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 180 f.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 180 ff.



that this tension underlying medieval culture was the source of most of the creative heights it reached. As long as the barbaric impulses were mastered and held in check by Christian ideals, they were a source of great energy and vitality.

But the synthesis of Latin and Barbaric elements in medieval chivalry may itself be regarded as one pole in still another polarity - that between the Christian chivalry (of northern France) and the secular chivalry (of southern France). The crusades had brought the Christian knights into contact with the older oriental traditions of the Moslem and Byzantine worlds. The Moslem civilization itself, having reached the western mediterranean during the late Dark Ages, had produced in Spain and southern France a new secular type of chivalry centered in the cult of woman and romantic love and expressing itself in an extraordinary flowering of music and poetry. In its gay and exotic love of life, its cult of hedonism, and its stress on wealth and beauty, it served as somewhat of an anti-crusade.<sup>1</sup> It became, in fact, anti-clerical and gave birth to the Albigensian heresy. Through the crusades and the drive to stamp out the Albigensian heresy, the Christian chivalry of the North came into contact with the secular chivalry (and courtly culture) of the South, particularly in Provence. But, as with the other polarities of medieval culture, the initial conflict and opposition gradually gave way to interpenetration and fusion. The feudal warrior class of the North gradually took over the courtly manners of the South so that, in spite of its secular character, Provençal culture had a civilizing influence on a wide area of European life.<sup>2</sup> The attempt to bring both elements together in a

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<sup>1</sup>Medieval Religion, pp. 107 f, 126 f.; Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 105 f, 170 ff., 186 f.

vital synthesis is seen in the cycle of Arthurian legends dealing with the knight Lancelot and his quest for the holy grail.<sup>1</sup> But most dramatically we see the two elements blending in the life of that greatest of medieval heroes, St. Francis.<sup>2</sup> Here, says Dawson, we see the best elements of courtly culture de-secularized and spiritualized. In St. Francis the gay troubadour of the courts becomes the joyful servant of the Lord - "God's troubadour." Although Provençal culture was not strong enough physically or morally to withstand the crusader's attacks, its influence spread from one end of Europe to the other and left a lasting mark upon European culture and literature.<sup>3</sup>

The fusion of Christian and courtly (Islamic) cultures is one aspect of the second great polarity underlying the medieval synthesis - that between the oriental and occidental elements. One aspect of this is the recovery of the Greek scientific tradition through contact with the Moslem world of the western mediterranean. Hellenic science was the one important element left out of the heritage of Greece taken over by Christianity in the early centuries of the Christian era. Dawson tries to show how this was really the fault of the Romans and not of the Christians for, as he says, the Greek tradition which Christianity received was largely that which had previously been assimilated by the Romans.<sup>4</sup> During the Hellenic period of Roman culture, the Latin rhetoricians, in their one-sided emphasis on the literary tradition, never evidenced much interest in assimilating Greek scientific thought. Consequently, says Dawson, "the true responsibility for the failure of

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 186 f.; Medieval Religion, pp. 111 f.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 186 f.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson credits the art of the troubadours as being the starting point of modern European literature (Medieval Religion, p. 128).

<sup>4</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 61.

medieval culture to preserve the inheritance of Greek science rests not on the church, but on the rhetoricians."<sup>1</sup> Hellenic science, however, had been preserved during these centuries by the Arabs and, through contact with the Moslem world in its far western flank on the mediterranean basin, this thought (colored of course by the medium of its transmission) made its way into medieval culture. The re-discovery of Aristotle was especially of decisive importance for the medieval development. For Aristotelianism with its antipathy to the doctrines of creation, immortality, and personal deity came as an intrusion into the balanced system that had already been achieved.<sup>2</sup> This clash of ideas consequently produced a ferment of new thinking. In the ensuing conflict, Aristotelianism was banned from the universities and its adherents excommunicated. But finally, in Aquinas, an attempt was made to assimilate this new thought and bring it into correlation with the truths of Christian revelation. Thus the recovery of Hellenic science (made possible through the interaction of Christian and Moslem cultures) had an important part to play in the development of the medieval synthesis.

The crusades also brought medieval culture into renewed contact with the Byzantine world. During the Dark Ages, the Papacy had undergone a gradual process of reorientation from the Byzantine East to the Germanic North. The establishment of the Carolingian Empire, for instance, was one important event serving to turn the gaze of Western Christendom away from its old ties with the East. Upon the decline of that Empire, the Roman pontiff stepped more and more into a position of authority and leadership,<sup>3</sup> and Byzantine spirituality gradually lost its appeal. But

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<sup>1</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Medieval Religion, pp. 69 f.

<sup>3</sup>As might be expected, Dawson stresses the fact that "the new position of social hegemony in Western Europe that the Papacy acquired at this period was thrust upon it from without rather than assumed by its own initiative" (The Making of Europe, p. 264).



through the opening of new channels of trade and communication and thought (during the crusades) the Byzantine tradition was again brought into relation with occidental thought. Through such trading centers as Venice, Ravenna, Salerno, and Naples, Byzantinism gained a new foothold in European life. The assimilation of elements of Byzantine and oriental spirituality was, Dawson believes, of basic importance for the medieval achievement. And conversely the dissolution of this oriental-occidental polarity in the later Middle Ages led, as we shall see, to an impoverishment from which Western civilization has never quite recovered.

Still another polarity which helps to round out the picture of the social processes underlying the medieval synthesis is the interaction between Eastern and Western Europe. During the greater part of the Middle Ages, many of the "nations" of Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, and parts of Russia and the Balkans) shared in the common life of medieval Christendom.<sup>1</sup> These peoples, Dawson believes, are therefore no less European than those of Western Europe and the failure to realize this has led to various false racial theories of the past centuries (Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Turanianism) which have contributed directly to the world wars of our century and their chaotic aftermath.<sup>2</sup> Eastern and western Europe, Dawson insists, are "not rival representatives of conflicting traditions of culture but members one of another."<sup>3</sup> Dawson has little to say about the specific results of this process of interaction between eastern and western Europe during the Middle Ages. He does comment, however, that the mutual enrichment of each tradition through cultural interpenetration was tragically lost through the Mongol and Turkish invasions of the Middle Ages, and, in our time, through the erection of the Communist "wall of partition."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Christian Culture in Eastern Europe," Dublin Review, Spring, 1950, p.18.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson's Preface to Halecki's Limits and Divisions of European History, p. ix.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. x f.

<sup>4</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 84.

In summary, the great achievement of the Dark Ages consists essentially in the transmission by the Church of the best of the Hellenic-Latin tradition to the barbaric peoples of the North. The great achievement of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, was the synthesis of these various strands (along with Moslem and Byzantine elements) and the incorporation of the peoples of eastern and western Europe into one spiritual community.

### 3. The Medieval Synthesis

The chief characteristic of the Middle Ages was its unity of spirit. The Carolingian ideal of Christendom as a social unity was at last in process of being realized, although now the primary expression of the unity was not the Empire, as in the Carolingian system, but rather the Church.<sup>1</sup> The underlying dualism of Christianity and barbarism and of the Church against the world which had characterized the previous centuries had been transcended. The Church no longer took a hostile attitude toward secular culture but had learned how to use the forms of secular culture to the glory of God.

But this achievement of unity of spirit was not due just to the conquest of the barbarians and the Christianization of life or to the fact that Christianity had become the established and accepted religion. It was due above all to the influence of Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle had taught that Reason is the cosmic principle that is active in the symmetrical arrangement of the natural and social life as well as in the ordering of the heavens. In this emphasis upon the basic harmony of the universe, the conflict between nature and grace, reason and faith was transcended. Reason came to be seen as a spiritual principle not in-

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 210 f.

congruous with faith but rather an anticipation of it. Reason, it was now thought, could provide a type of knowledge which is confirmed and developed by revelation.<sup>1</sup> Thus, although the medieval synthesis sought to retain the distinctions between reason and faith, nature and grace, the world and the Church, it stressed the essential harmony and concordance of these spheres. The whole medieval system, inspired by Aristotelian philosophical, ethical, and sociological principles, was based on the idea of a systematically arranged hierarchy of spiritual substance from reason up to divinity. Aristotelianism thus provided an ideology for the "complex corperative development of medieval society in which every religious and social function finds its autonomous organic expression. . . ." <sup>2</sup> The chief operating idea characterizing the age as a whole was the progressive incorporation of the different levels of society into one great divine order. As a result, says Dawson, "nowhere else in the history of mankind can we see such a mighty stream of intellectual and moral effort directed through so many channels to a single end."<sup>3</sup>

This singleness of purpose manifested itself in a remarkable flowering of culture which gives this age perhaps a greater claim for the title Renaissance than that of the fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Mankind was one great society and the organic unity of religion and culture was everywhere visible. Nearly every aspect of life was given a religious significance from the trade guilds and the communes to the universities. Philosophy and literature were dedicated to the medieval ideal. Above all, the gothic cathedral symbolized the great spiritual achievement of the age. Although a complete and final synthesis was not attained, there has never

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, pp 210 f.; Medieval Religion pp. 77 f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>"The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>"Medieval Christianity," p. 7.



been an age, Dawson says

in which Christianity attained so complete a cultural expression as in the thirteenth century. Europe has seen no greater Christian hero than St. Francis, no greater Christian philosopher than St. Thomas, no greater poet than Dante, perhaps even no greater Christian ruler than St. Louis.<sup>1</sup>

## B. The Disintegration of Europe

Beneath this great unity and completeness of system achieved in the Middle Ages was, as we have noted, a network of polar tensions. The new covered these as in a palimpsest, but the new was never quite able to efface the old. Now it was these very tensions between the old and the new (particularly in the Latin-nordic polarity) which were the source of medieval creativity. Nevertheless, the source of vitality was at the same time a source of disruption - as a crater from which destructive forces might at any moment erupt.

The two chief dangers which constantly threatened to disrupt the medieval synthesis, were 1) the complete fusion of polar elements, and 2) their complete separation.<sup>2</sup> If the first had ever been accomplished, it would have amounted to an obliteration of the original creative forces. The underlying diversities and polarities with<sup>in</sup> the European culture were, as we have seen, the very fountainhead of Europe's creativity. The overcoming of these dualisms through the complete fusion of diverse elements would have meant the blocking of European creativity at its source. Now medieval Christendom, especially in its quest for theocracy, strove for this kind of complete unity. Fortunately for Europe, however, a complete synthesis was never achieved. If it had been, medieval Christendom would have become a closed system, static, lifeless, and non-progressive, such as we see in the oriental and Byzantine worlds. And the next step after the complete fusion of Religion and Culture, according to Dawson, is

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<sup>1</sup> Medieval Religion, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion, it is apparent, is a concrete application of the principles set forth in the previous chapter.

secularization. When no line is kept between the sacred and the secular, the secular soon comes to control the sacred as we see so well in Byzantine theocracy.

The other danger (which ultimately proved a more substantial threat to the medieval synthesis) was the pulling apart of the elements comprising the synthesis. This disintegration, as might be expected, could take two different forms. In reference to the Christian-barbaric polarity, for instance, the barbaric elements could pull apart from the synthesis refusing any longer to be subservient to the social unity.<sup>1</sup> The Christian elements, on the other hand, fearing too complete an identification with the existing culture, could pull apart from the synthesis and become more transcendent. Both trends can be seen running all through the Middle Ages.

The medieval synthesis depended, then, upon a delicate balance between complete identification and complete separation of the polar elements. As long as the various elements could be held together in tension, the society remained healthy. When the balance finally was upset, it was through a combination of both threats.

### 1. The Dissolution of the Medieval Synthesis

The danger of a complete identification of religion and culture and the consequent secularization of life was the earliest temptation medieval culture had to face. Dawson calls attention time and again to the various reforming movements of the Middle Ages which attempted to keep this from happening. "The real age of Reformation," he writes, "was not the sixteenth century but the whole later medieval period from the eleventh century onward."<sup>2</sup> Dawson is, for a Roman Catholic, unusually aware of the evils in the medieval Church and of the pressing need for

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson notes that there is a general tendency for the submerged barbaric elements to reassert themselves. It happened in the case of Rome and in modern Germany as well as in the Middle Ages.

<sup>2</sup>Medieval Religion, p. 191.



reform. Although the scandals and abuses within the Church were not chronologically limited, there are two periods in medieval Christendom which were particularly hazardous to its spiritual life: the first in the tenth century and the second in the fifteenth century. Both periods, Dawson comments, were characterized by a flourishing of secular culture.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier period, it was the crusades and the opening of new trade routes which brought with it a new influx of secularism. This spirit soon permeated the whole of culture. Moral laxity, avarice, and unchastity were widespread. Bishops and arch-bishops had their mistresses and wasted their episcopal revenues on frivolous entertainments.<sup>2</sup> Even the monasteries succumbed to these evils, and finally the Papacy itself became so morally bankrupt that the French bishops were openly declaring that the Papacy was the embodiment of the anti-Christ.<sup>3</sup> As in the later period, the reforms came from the North but they did not, as in the fifteenth century, turn against the Papacy at this time. In fact, one of the reforming French bishops himself became the Pope. Henceforward, for the next two or three centuries, the Papacy itself became the champion of reform and the natural leader of all those dissatisfied with the moral decadence of the times. <sup>But</sup> The major reform, it should be understood, was not so much directed against moral laxity as it was against the secularization of the Church which had taken place through the seizure of ecclesiastical authority, property, and offices by secular rulers. The wealth of the churches and monasteries, it is to be admitted, provided a great temptation for plunder and appropriation.<sup>4</sup> Such activities led in many cases to the secular control of ecclesiastical appointments and to all

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<sup>1</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>4</sup>"Medieval Christianity," p. 16.



kinds of abuses, especially among the Germanic prince-bishops. It was against these practices that the Reforming movements of the Middle Ages, under the leadership of the Franciscans, primarily fought. The most important single aspect of the whole period was the two-or three-century long struggle between the Empire and the Papacy over the rights of the State in the appointment of ecclesiastical offices and the control of the episcopacy (the "Investiture controversy"). Through the persistence of its reformers, the Church finally won and grew in international prestige in proportion as the Empire declined in prestige. But the heightened position and power of the Church was, ironically, a source of new temptations in the abuses of power and wealth. As an international organization, the Church increasingly made use of the temporal means at its disposal to extend its power through Papal taxes and revenues.<sup>1</sup> Soon the Friars themselves, who had been the spearhead of the reforming movement, became "subordinate to the demands of ecclesiastical power politics. . . ." <sup>2</sup> In addition, the tremendous international power of the Church was a temptation for the secular powers to try to conquer and dominate it. The success of this attempt is seen in the Avignon captivity in which the Papacy, according to Dawson, reached its lowest depths and lost its international prestige.

The charismatic aspect of the Papacy fell into the background, and Avignon came to be regarded simply as the center of a vast bureaucratic and fiscal organization which was governed by financial rather than spiritual motives.<sup>3</sup>

The spiritually sensitive, such as St. Bernard, attacked these abuses with a feeling of an impending crisis and judgment, and many, like Joachim of Flora turned to apocalyptic speculations. Dante in his Divine Comedy

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>3</sup>Medieval Religion, p. 191.

classically expresses this revolutionary criticism of the Church in the spirit of the Franciscans and Joachimites. The Franciscan movement itself was split within over the question of lax as over against strict observances and could no longer back the Papacy in its drive for reform<sup>1</sup> Henceforward the reforming movements began to abandon the Papacy, looking increasingly to the secular powers for aid in the fight against the evils in the Church, sometimes allying themselves with definite national movements (as did the Hussites in Bohemia). Some of these movements became increasingly anti-Papal and were in danger of turning anti-Catholic. From this time on, the line becomes increasingly difficult to draw between those reforms inside and those outside the Church - between genuine reform and heresy. It is, says Dawson, the delicate line between Wycliff and Langland, between St. Francis and the Waldensians.<sup>2</sup> The spiritual Franciscans were sometimes on one side of the line and sometimes on the other. The whole situation demanded the utmost skill of the Papacy in order to know when to apply techniques of repression and when to be discreet and tolerant.<sup>3</sup>

The second wave of secularization, the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, presented even greater temptations to the Church. The rebirth of secular culture coincided with an even more complete loss of opposition between the Church and the world. The Church of Renaissance Italy had entered into a whole-hearted acceptance of the new humanist culture which, according to Dawson, "stretched the medieval synthesis to its breaking point."<sup>4</sup> Even the Papacy, now deserted by the reformers, became inextricably absorbed in humanist culture. The Curia, says Dawson, was thronged with "bright young men" who "regarded the whole medieval

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<sup>1</sup>Medieval Religion, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 254 ff.

<sup>4</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 109.

development as an unfortunate episode that was best forgotten and who looked back to pagan antiquity with romantic enthusiasm."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the last great reforming activity, the Conciliar movement, was proving ineffective because "it based its action on a kind of ecclesiastical constitutionalism which was inconsistent with the divine authority of the Holy See."<sup>2</sup> Through the combination of secularism, political "captivity" of the Church, heresy, nationalistic movements, anti-Papal reforms, and ecclesiastical power politics, the last two centuries of the Middle Ages saw the gradual disintegration of the unity that so laboriously had been built up.

The sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, then, is seen by Dawson not as a sudden event but as the culmination of a long process in which the various elements of the medieval synthesis had been pulling apart. One of Dawson's most interesting analyses is that in which he describes the Renaissance and the Reformation as two aspects of a single movement of disintegration: the breaking up of the old Carolingian synthesis which had brought together Christian and barbaric (Latin and nordic) elements - southern Europe and northern Europe.

The Renaissance represents the breaking of the synthesis in, we might say, its southern hemisphere. It was the peculiar reaction of the Latin peoples to the thrill of recovering their lost traditions and the glory of their ancient past. Though in its origin it was not hostile to Christianity (and was, in fact, a product of the desire for spiritual renewal) it soon became a purely secular movement.<sup>3</sup> It was also prompted

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<sup>1</sup>"Medieval Christianity," p. 13

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 12 f.

<sup>3</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 95; Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 9; The Judgment of the Nations, p. 70. With Tillich, Dawson believes that the Renaissance was much more than a discovery of pagan antiquity. Both say that the author of the discovery was Christian man.



in part by a nationalistic reaction to the barbaric, gothic culture of the North. The Italians felt that their own native culture had been too long sacrificed to the universalism of Christendom. They were becoming aware again of their own higher traditions which could be tapped and asserted once more against the encroachments of the less civilized culture of the rest of Christendom. The return to classical tradition, therefore, was not just a scholarly interest in the dead past, but a truly national awakening. The desire for new life for Italy thus expressed itself in a mystical type of patriotism.

The Reformation, on the other hand, represents the splitting off of the northern hemisphere from the medieval synthesis. It marks the separation of the barbaric elements (just as the Renaissance marks the splitting off of the Latin elements) from the old Carolingian synthesis. Dawson sees the Reformation primarily as a barbaric resurgence<sup>1</sup> which "gave free scope to the centrifugal tendencies of the Western mind."<sup>2</sup> He sees it also as a nationalistic movement. The Germans, along with the Italians, were beginning to react against the universalism of the Middle Ages and to assert their cultural autonomy. The peoples of the North, however, had no older cultural traditions (as did the Latin peoples) to which they could return. Therefore, Dawson reasons, they directed their energies toward the transformation of the Christian tradition itself.<sup>3</sup> Mixed with national sentiments, this reaction tended to become a revolt

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<sup>1</sup>"Interracial Cooperation as a Factor in European Culture," p. 7; Progress and Religion, p. 178. Dawson is, of course, not using the term barbarism in a crude sense but only as an expression of the essential nature of that racial element (the gothic or nordic element) in the Carolingian synthesis.

<sup>2</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>Progress and Religion, pp. 178 ff.

against the whole tradition of Latin-Christian culture.<sup>1</sup> This, Dawson believes, explains the vernacular character of the Protestant Reformation, the enthusiasm for translating the Bible into German, and the popularity of the national hymns. The Reformation was, in fact, an attempt to create a new and simpler form of Germanic Christianity based on the Bible and individual conscience.<sup>2</sup> This theory of the Reformation as a nordic renaissance is confirmed, Dawson believes, by the fact that the Reformation failed to advance outside the boundaries of northern Europe. He calls attention to the fact that the religious divisions follow the lines of the old frontier of the Roman Empire. The Latin peoples remained solidly behind the Mother Church while the newer barbaric peoples to the North were the ones who revolted against the Church and Latin culture. Therefore, says Dawson, we find Lutheranism to the North and Catholicism to the South, with Calvinism (which, of all the Protestant groups, stands closest to Catholicism and has more appeal to the Latin mind<sup>3</sup>) along the border territory at the Rhine, the Danube, and in Switzerland. The two intermediate regions, France and England which were always more nationalistic, retained their traditional faiths while remaining at the same time more national than either Protestant or Catholic.<sup>4</sup>

Dawson believes that the Protestant schism was primarily a result of these sociological forces and that the basic tension between the Latin and nordic elements was far more important than any difference in faith, dogma, or rite.

Underlying the theological issues that divide Catholicism and Protestantism there is the great cultural schism between Northern and Southern Europe which would still have existed if Christianity never had existed, but which, when it exists, inevitably translates itself into religious terms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson notes that even the French Protestants showed Germanophil and anti-Latin tendencies ("Interracial Cooperation, etc.", p.7).

<sup>2</sup>Nationalism, Dawson believes, has always been a characteristic of German Christianity - from the days of St. Ambrose to the Nazi movement.

<sup>3</sup>Both Catholicism and Calvinism stress the supremacy of the Church above the State and the claim of the Church upon the whole of life.

<sup>4</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 178 f.      <sup>5</sup>Judgment of the Nations, p.120.



This is, Dawson believes, a general pattern with all schism. Hidden sociological conflicts such as those between races, nationalities, or economic entities in competition with one another are the real motive power behind schism.<sup>1</sup> Heresy, then, is just an excuse for schism (not the cause of it) and doctrinal disputes are really a camouflage for the deep-seated desire to revolt. Behind the Donatist movement, for instance, was social discontent and national fanaticism. The primary impulse at the roots of the great oriental heresies of the fifth century (e.g. monophysitism) was the political conflict between the Greeks and the Arminians.<sup>3</sup> At the background of the Arianism of the Goths and Vandals was the political and national desire for self-expression.<sup>4</sup> Bohemian nationalism was the driving force in the Hussite movement,<sup>5</sup> and the awakening of national consciousness in the assertion of the State against the claims of the Church was the real cause of the English Reformation.<sup>6</sup> Behind the division of Non-conformists and Churchmen in the England of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the conflict of culture between liberals and conservatives.<sup>7</sup> The Protestant Reformation, then, is for Dawson just another example of how sociological conflicts masquerade in religious clothes. It was the passion for revolt of a whole people that drove Martin Luther into schism and heresy.<sup>8</sup> The motive here, Dawson holds, was "not purely religious in origin but was the outcome of a

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 118, 124; Enquiries, etc., p.ix.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 235.

<sup>3</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 130; The Judgment of the Nations, p.118

<sup>4</sup>Medieval Religion, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p.124.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>Dawson's notion that cultural differences mask themselves in religious forms seems to presuppose the psychologically doubtful category of a "group mind" on the part of the societies in question which, through the operation of unconscious forces, enables those societies to cover their real differences (cultural, economic, political) with a religious facade.



spiritual conflict in which religious motives were hopelessly confused."<sup>1</sup>  
 (Dawson recognizes that non-spiritual motives, such as avarice and the protection of vested interests, were operating just as powerfully from the Roman Catholic side causing the Church to oppose necessary reforms.<sup>2</sup>) If these motives had been recognized for what they really were, the great schism, Dawson believes, could have been avoided.<sup>3</sup>

The Renaissance and the Reformation can also be seen as a splitting off of the occidental and oriental elements from the medieval synthesis. As we observed, the Middle Ages held together both elements through its ties with the Moslem and Byzantine cultures. The ultimate and unfathomable gulf which had separated Greek and Roman as well as modern Europe from the orient had temporarily disappeared. But since the Renaissance and the Reformation, modern civilization has increasingly emphasized the specifically occidental characteristics of activism, extroversion, and material organization which had previously characterized Greeco-Roman civilization. Protestantism, says Dawson, "gave free scope to the development of the occidental mentality"<sup>4</sup> in its elimination of asceticism and monasticism, its substitution of action for contemplation, its divorce of intellect from dogma, and its pragmatic morals.<sup>5</sup> Protestantism thus joined hands with the secularism of the Renaissance in affirming the extroversion of life and denying the validity of absolute metaphysical principles.<sup>6</sup> This occidental emphasis is seen especially, Dawson believes, in Calvinism and its influence upon the Industrial Revolution, which will be discussed later.

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgement of the Nations, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>For a criticism of Dawson's sociological determinism, see Chapter Twelve.

<sup>4</sup>"The Revolt of the East," p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>"The Revolt of the East," pp. 10-13; Christianity and the New Age, pp. 89 ff.

<sup>6</sup>"The Revolt of the East," pp. 11 f; Progress and Religion, p. 181

## 2. The Aftermath of the Dissolution of the Medieval Synthesis

Dawson tends to attribute most of the present evils of society (especially secularism) to the dissolution of the medieval synthesis and the Protestant revolt. When the unifying factor of Catholic Christendom was broken, the whole edifice, he believes, began to crumble. The completed effects of this process were not immediately perceptible; nevertheless, the disintegrating process has proceeded relentlessly until the present century in which it has reached its fullest destructive force.

According to Dawson, there are three major ways in which Protestantism has contributed to the rise of modern secularism.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, he attempts to show how the religious strife generated by the Protestant schism was a major cause of secularism. The century of religious wars following the Reformation, Dawson believes, discredited religion in the sight of the masses and paved the way for religious indifference. While the sides were at war, it was necessary for the world of affairs to carry on as best it could. It was soon discovered that men could meet for business and trade regardless of their religious affiliations. As the wars dragged on men increasingly came to feel that the real world was the world of business and social life in which they could meet one another in the spirit of tolerance. Thus a neutral territory was created which, serving as an opening wedge between religion and culture, gradually expanded to include the whole of life.<sup>2</sup> During the stalemates of the religious wars it was further found that men of differing faiths could cooperate for common political action. Religious wars, then, stimulated the rise of

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<sup>1</sup>It should be mentioned that Dawson nowhere launches into a wholesale attack on Protestantism, as the above seems to indicate. These criticisms of Protestantism are culled from a number of different inferences. A real attempt has been made, however, to keep from forcing a pattern on his thought from the outside.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 72.

new political parties championing national unity as over against religious divisions. This in turn led to a new attitude toward government. The duty of the government, so it came to be believed, was not to defend the faith but to secure toleration, to keep peace, and to protect the rights of private property.<sup>1</sup> Religion, meanwhile, more and more came to be considered a private affair which must not be allowed to become too major a social phenomenon lest it only generate further strife. All of these tendencies served to strengthen the arm of the secular State which increasingly displaced the Church as the center of life. The Protestant Church, especially in its Lutheran form, only augmented this movement in its reliance upon the secular powers. The religious strife of the seventeenth century was therefore detrimental, Dawson believes, to Protestantism and Catholicism alike, for it drove society at large to the necessity of constructing some working compromise upon which social life could continue to function. It is apparent that any new ethos would have to avoid an explicit doctrinal foundation, for that would only accentuate social strife. The result of this quest for a new basis for society was the Liberal creed built upon Christian moral ideals divorced from Christian doctrines - a sublimated Christianity.<sup>2</sup> But such a make-shift foundation could not support European society permanently. Although Liberalism did succeed in holding society together for a considerable period, the great European ideals could not perpetually survive apart from their doctrinal foundations. The Liberal Compromise, then, was doomed to fall, The

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<sup>1</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>This must not be taken to indicate that Dawson has no appreciation of Liberalism and its contribution to Western society. The importance of the Liberal Creed will be discussed later in this chapter.



catastrophe of our century, Dawson believes, is basically tied up with the collapse of that compromise resulting in an almost complete secularization of life. Much of the onus for this state of affairs, according to Dawson's analysis, goes directly back to the religious strife engendered by the Protestant Reformation.

Another way in which Protestantism paved the way for secularism was through its puritanical reforms. Dawson believes that, as a rule, puritanical reforms are self-destructive and that all radical attempts to de-secularize religion culminate in the secularization of culture. And this, in turn, leads directly on to a secularization of religion!<sup>1</sup> The attempt to purify religion and free it from its cultural accretions necessarily involves an alienation of that movement from its culture. Such separation of religion and culture leads, as we saw in the previous chapter, to the impoverishment of both elements, for culture apart from religion becomes secular and religion apart from culture ultimately becomes ineffective. This was the error of Protestantism and especially of Lutheranism. Luther posited an extreme dualism in which Nature and Grace, Law and Gospel had nothing whatever to do with one another. His extreme supernaturalism, in which the Gospel has no word for earthly, political affairs, could not help but lead to secularism, according to Dawson.<sup>2</sup> This, of course, was far from the intention of the Reformers. Nevertheless, as we saw earlier, Dawson believes that there is a straight line from Luther to modern secularism and from the Lutheran idea of the State as a God-given order to the Nazi regime.<sup>3</sup> If we were to reply with

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson, of course, does not believe that all reforms are futile. We have noted that he heartily approved of the reforming movements of the Middle Ages. These reforms he considers as constructive because they remained within the Church which, in turn, kept in close touch with the contemporary culture. Reforms become destructive, he believes, only as they revolt against the Church and in doing so separate themselves from culture.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 94 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 28 f.

John Baillie that the aim of the Reformers was "not the creation of a sect that would achieve purity by separating itself from the life of the community, but a thoroughgoing reform of the community itself,"<sup>1</sup> Dawson would reply that that attempt to reform the community as a whole actually produces a reaction opposite from its intention. The attempt to popularize asceticism by making it binding on everyone, he says, only serves to render it more unattractive and repulsive. Thus it has been historically that every fresh assertion of the Puritan claim was followed by a reaction that only increased the secularization of society.<sup>2</sup>

Where Puritanism was defeated, as in eighteenth-century England and Germany, the state-churches became more secularized than the medieval Church at its worst, and where it was victorious, as in Scotland and New England, it had a narrowing and cramping effect on the life of culture.<sup>3</sup>

The mistake of the Puritans, then, was not in attempting to reform or to transform life but in trying to make their high standards binding upon everyone rather than making perfection a vocation of a minority.<sup>4</sup> Since the attempt to universalize asceticism could not permanently succeed, ascetic practices unfortunately became the mark of a sect rather than a vocational expression within the Church.<sup>5</sup> Dawson, of course, does not condone the easy acceptance of the world by the Church. He insists that

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<sup>1</sup>John Baillie, What is Christian Civilization? (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson is supporting here the view of monastic asceticism.

<sup>5</sup>Dawson's attitude toward monastic asceticism seems equivocal. On the one hand he lauds William Langland's "inner-worldly asceticism." "For Langland," he says, "the other-world is always immediately present in every human relationship, and every man's daily life is organically bound up with the life of the Church. Thus every state of life in Christendom is a Christian life in the full sense - an extension of the life of Christ on earth." (Religion the Rise of Western Culture, pp. 270 f., italics mine). On the other hand, as in the discussion above, he speaks of Christian perfection as the vocation of a minority and says, for example, that it is "only in the saints that the Christian life is completely realized." (Enquiries, p. 297)



Christians must not compromise their Gospel or shut their eyes to the evils of the world. But, as he goes on to say,

it is also easy, and it is a more insidious temptation, to adopt an attitude of negative hostility to the spirit of the age and to take refuge in a narrow and exclusive fanaticism which is essentially the attitude of the heretic and the sectarian and which does more to discredit Christianity and render it ineffective than even worldliness and time-serving. For the latter are, so to speak, external to the Church's life, whereas the former poisons the sources of its spiritual action and causes it to appear hateful in the eyes of men of good will.<sup>1</sup>

Large sections of Protestantism, Dawson believes, succumbed to this latter temptation and thus contributed directly to the disintegration of post-Reformation society.

A third way in which Protestantism has been responsible for the secularism of our time is, indirectly, through the impetus it gave to the rise of Capitalism and Industrialism. Dawson follows the theories of Troeltsch and Weber in reference to the manifold social consequences of the Protestant (especially Calvinistic) "innerweltlicher" asceticism. The moral drive, the conscientiousness, the unremitting industry and thrift so firmly implanted in the Puritan tradition have had, Dawson believes, a great influence upon the rise of capitalism and industrialism and have been the moral power behind the technical achievements of the past two or three centuries.<sup>2</sup> The Industrial Revolution, Dawson believes, "would have been impossible without the moral earnestness and sense of duty that were generated by the Puritan ideal. . . ."<sup>3</sup> The Protestant emphasis upon the occidental elements, of which mention has already been made, stressed moral activism as over against contemplation and served to stimulate the more practical and utilitarian aspects of life. Closely correlated with this was the Protestant interest in Biblical education

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<sup>1</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 26; "The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 42; Enquiries, etc., pp. 277 f.; Progress and Religion, p. 204 "The Crisis of the West," Dublin Review (October, 1927), CLXXXI, 263.

<sup>3</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 94.



which encouraged literacy and intellectualism and gave additional support to the tendency toward the creation of a utilitarian culture.<sup>1</sup> Now all of these forces, Dawson recognizes, have been productive of great good and have contributed to the advancement of science and an amazing rise in the material standards of life. Nevertheless, they have also been responsible for most of the harsh and unattractive characteristics of modern life. Industrialism led to the rise of the great factory towns "huddled together at the mouths of the coal pits,"<sup>2</sup> and, worst of all, to the creation of a techno-centric mass civilization which has had an overwhelming secularizing influence. Thus Protestantism through its contribution to the rise of industrialism, capitalism, and technology has been indirectly responsible for much of modern secularism.

### C. The Quest for European Reintegration

The centuries of modern history subsequent to the dissolution of the medieval synthesis have been marked by repeated attempts to recover the unity, direction, and sense of purpose which characterized the Middle Ages. A civilization needs to have some unifying center, some spiritual purpose to direct it and give it meaning. Without some common ideals and principles which can appeal to the loyalty of its members, a society falls to pieces. "Normally," Dawson says, "this dynamic is supplied by a religion, but in exceptional circumstances the religious impulse may disguise itself under philosophical or political forms."<sup>3</sup> The whole post-Renaissance, post-Reformation era has been one of such "exceptional circumstances" and has been characterized, Dawson believes,

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<sup>1</sup>"The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 51. Dawson has a great deal to say about the disintegrating effects of urbanization both in ancient and modern cultures. Urbanization leads to the loss of the agrarian foundations and, as we saw in the last chapter, once man's ties with the soil and the life of nature are severed, his life becomes artificial.

<sup>3</sup>Progress and Religion, p. viii.

by a whole series of such extra-ecclesiastical movements toward integration. We shall now turn to a discussion of these movements and shall consider them in their double aspect as substitutes for the Christian faith and as quests for the social unity that had once been the product of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Post-Renaissance Scene

What was it that held Europe together following the religious disunity precipitated by the Reformation? Why was it that Europe remained a cultural unity and was not divided into various compartments according to religious lines of demarcation? The answer is that the humanism and scientific culture of the Renaissance had provided a new bond of unity between the various nations, classes, and religions of Europe.<sup>2</sup> For nearly two centuries following the dissolution of Catholic Christendom, Renaissance humanism served as a common unifying center so that in spite of religious controversy and persecution, Europe could remain a cultural whole. The splitting of Europe into two hostile religious camps, then, did not succeed in dividing it into two mutually alien cultural spheres (as it would have done had the Reformation occurred a few centuries earlier.)<sup>3</sup> To the contrary, Europe, following the Reformation, became even more conscious of its unity, its self-sufficiency, and its destiny.<sup>4</sup> This new bond of unity, however, was not entirely independent

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<sup>1</sup>This aspect of Dawson's thought reminds us of Tillich's method of theonomous analysis. Dawson goes a step farther, however, in his attempt to show how even Protestant movements are a quest for the unity and wholeness of the Catholic faith. Following Canon Lacey, Dawson holds that "the sects in Protestantism correspond to the religious orders in Catholicism." "But," as he goes on to say, "whereas the religious order was part of a universal whole, and had its *raison d'être* in the life of the whole, each sect set itself up against its predecessor and existed as an end in itself." (Enquiries, etc., p. 302; Cf. "Religious Enthusiasm," in The Month (January, 1951) V, 12 f.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and Culture, pp. 3 f.

<sup>3</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 289.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.



from Christianity - or as independent as <sup>its</sup> advocates believed. The Renaissance itself, as we have seen, was not originally hostile to Christianity, but actual drew much of its inspiration from Christian ideals. And the unity achieved during the post-Reformation period was greatly dependent upon the underlying "spiritual substance" (as Tillich would call it) which was carried over from the previous age. Dawson calls the classical education of this period, for example, "an intellectual superstructure that was built on a common spiritual tradition."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the recognized basis of cultural unity was no longer religious, but intellectual.<sup>2</sup> A common allegiance to classical traditions especially in art, science, and literature, took the place of the liturgy, holy days, and ecclesiastical festivals as the center of interest. The Latin grammar replaced the Latin liturgy, and the scholar and gentleman usurped the place of the monk and the knight as the typical figures of the age.<sup>3</sup> This second European synthesis, as it might be called, was a new type of internationalism based on Renaissance scholarship and art rather than on the religious internationalism of the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Latin and Germanic traditions, whose interaction and interpenetration had contributed so much to the flowering of medieval culture, were still able, in this new Renaissance-humanist synthesis, to meet in a common intellectual world.<sup>5</sup> In this humanist compromise, there was no complete break with the past or with the religious tradition. Giordano Bruno and Machiavelli, for instance, "gave

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<sup>1</sup>"Interracial Cooperation as a Factor, etc.", p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Thus Natural Theology which had previously existed as part of the total Christian tradition came to have a new significance as a separate discipline. It quickly came to acquire "a new value as the one certain and universal foundation of religious truth in a world where everything was disputed" and where society no longer possessed a religious unity. (Religion and Culture, pp. 6 f.)

<sup>3</sup>The Making of Europe, p. 299.

<sup>4</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 208

<sup>5</sup>"Interracial Cooperation as a Factor, etc.", p.8.



their whole-hearted support to Naturalism, but for the most part both statesmen and philosophers endeavored to serve two masters, like Descartes or Richelieu. They remained fervent Christians, but at the same time they separated the sphere of religion from the sphere of reason. . . ."<sup>1</sup> It was not until the eighteenth century (in the period known as the Enlightenment) that this separation became complete and conscious.

The Enlightenment, according to Dawson, was the fulfillment of the Renaissance, for in it the various rationalistic and humanistic tendencies of the Renaissance finally reached their culmination.<sup>2</sup> These elements had been somewhat subdued during the age of intense religious controversy, but in the age of the Enlightenment they finally came into their kingdom. Certain aspects of the Enlightenment evidence a quest for the unity and purpose of Christendom comparable to that found in Renaissance humanism. Two of these may be considered here: Deism and the doctrine of Progress.

The Enlightenment had sprung from the courtly culture of post-Renaissance Europe and was entirely lacking in religious foundations. As the culture of the Church grew weaker, the culture of the courts grew stronger. Movements attacking the truths of Christianity, the moral values of humanism, and even the historic achievements of European culture grew in popularity and, by degrees, the attack on religion was transmuted into somewhat of a counter-religion.<sup>3</sup> As we have noted, Dawson believes that men must have some sort of a religion or an ultimate. When the supernatural faith of Christianity seemed impossible to hold any longer, the rationalists tried to manufacture a religion of their own.<sup>4</sup> The Deism

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<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>"On the Development of Sociology" (Reprinted from Sociological Review) (Manchester: Sherratt & Hughes, 1921) p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson surveys other similar attempts to create an artificial religion and declares that "every attempt to create a new religion on purely rational and human foundations is inevitably doomed to failure." ("The Dark Mirror," p. 178).

that resulted was not as successful as its proponents had hoped in de-supernaturalizing religion or in purging it of its supposedly obsolete elements. Its utter dependence upon reason was in itself a type of faith. Dawson quotes Whitehead as saying that "While the Middle Ages were an age of faith based on reason, the eighteenth century was an age of reason based upon faith."<sup>1</sup> Deism, then, was but a ghost or a shadow of Christianity. Nevertheless, it retained many Christian doctrines especially in reference to its optimistic and teleological conception of life. The doctrine of progress, for instance, is a good example of how a basic Christian ideal can be retained by a secular society through a process of sublimation. The doctrine of progress also gave a unity of purpose to the new age and thus helped fulfill the unconscious quest for one of the important elements lost in the dissolution of the medieval synthesis.

As the modern world gradually lost touch with the organized Christianity which had been the governing spirit of European civilization in the past, it began to find a new inspiration for itself in the ideal of Progress.<sup>2</sup>

Thus through the channel of the Enlightenment and its optimistic rationalism, the doctrine of Progress entered the mainstream of Western thought and became the new working religion of modern civilization.

The barren intellectualism and rationalism of the Aufklärung,<sup>1</sup> however, produced a reaction in the movement known as Romanticism. Romanticism is an elusive term which can mean a number of different things. In this context we shall be concerned with the movement of the third quarter of the eighteenth century centering in Rousseau and having the worship of nature as its keynote. Rousseau's doctrines of the perfection

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<sup>1</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup>"On the Development of Sociology, etc.", p. 75

of nature and the original goodness of man have had a profound influence on the history of modern Europe. "This moody neurotic dreamer," Dawson comments, "was one of the few men who have moved the world profoundly."<sup>1</sup> Rousseau turned away from the rationalism of the Enlightenment (and the attempt to transform the world by external organization) toward the laws of nature written on the human heart and toward the emotional and the subjective. Nevertheless he was very close to the rationalists of the Enlightenment in his passion for social reform. His doctrine of the perfection of nature in its original forms led to a radical criticism of the corrupting influences of civilization. Particularly under attack as an institution out of harmony with the essential laws of nature was the State. So what appears at first sight to have been a reactionary movement turned out to be an unparalleled source of revolutionary dynamism.<sup>2</sup> Rousseau's optimism and faith in the perfectibility of man and society was another contributing factor. Thus through the impact of the emotional forces generated by Rousseau, the rationalists found new power to carry through their reforms and Romanticism thus joined forces with rationalism and liberalism in a "new Reformation," as Dawson calls it, this time directed against the State rather than against the Church.<sup>3</sup>

Rousseau's doctrine of the Sovereignty of the General Will as over against the autocratic ideals of the enlightened despots of his age was truly a revolutionary doctrine. It aroused a wave of enthusiasm and fanaticism which finally culminated in the French Revolution. Through that revolution, Rousseau's doctrines became one of the great driving forces in the transformation of the modern world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 150 f.

<sup>3</sup>Progress and Religion, pp. 193 f.

<sup>4</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 150.



The French Revolution, according to Dawson, brought together two currents of thought: 1) the gospel of Progress from the Enlightenment, and 2) the nature worship of Rousseau involving a radical criticism of the State.<sup>1</sup> The convergence of these two streams created what Dawson calls an attempt "to restore the unity of European society on the foundation of new ideas" and rational principles<sup>2</sup> thus evidencing another type of hidden longing for the spiritual community of the Middle Ages. The aim was to found a perfect society on the basis of pure doctrine. (The introduction of a new calendar is symbolic of the extreme to which these designs were carried.<sup>3</sup>) This required, of course, a clean sweep of the past and an unfavorable attitude to ecclesiastical as well as to political traditionalism. As with the Enlightenment, however, the hostility to Christian dogma could not disguise its dependence upon Christian foundations. Although the Revolution was outwardly anti-Christian, it passionately adopted much of the Christian moral teaching and social intention.<sup>4</sup> The Revolutionary slogans of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" are, Dawson affirms, just secularizations of Christian principles.

Notwithstanding its high moral idealism and its efforts to vindicate human rights and freedoms, the French Revolution ended in a denial of these rights in the "Reign of Terror." In the midst of confusion, disorder, and disillusionment, totalitarian techniques were introduced and within a very few years the average man was more enslaved than he had ever been under an enlightened despot.<sup>5</sup> As a result, society

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<sup>1</sup>"On the Development of Sociology, etc." p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Progress and Religion, pp. 194 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 196 .

<sup>5</sup>Dawson claims that nearly all the essential characteristics of modern totalitarianism were anticipated by the first French Republic. (Religion and the Modern State, p. 47; Beyond Politics, p. 71).

turned with gratitude to the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte and hailed him as a Savior and second Caesar.

As a successor to the unfulfilled quest of the French Revolution for a new spiritual community, the Napoleonic Empire itself, Dawson believes, was another attempt to re-establish Europe's lost unity.<sup>1</sup> This attempt, however, was foredoomed to failure, for Europe, with its long tradition of freedom, could not ultimately succumb to a military dictatorship no matter how beneficent it might be or how productive of peace and unity. Further, it was too much at odds with the idealism of the French Revolution to be able to endure.

The failure of both the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire precipitated a liberal reaction which found its major expression in the nineteenth-century Liberal State. The abuses of French totalitarianism and imperialism naturally led to a desire to limit the power of the State to its minimal functions. But the reaction against liberal ideals following the Reign of Terror was only temporary and the optimism and belief in social progress, coupled with the liberal doctrines of free trade and individualism came back into full force in the middle of the nineteenth century. Especially in England, through the creative friction of utilitarianism and non-conformity, moral idealism and the passion for reform became great motivating forces.<sup>2</sup> The result was that Liberalism and Humanitarianism became the practical substitutes for religious orthodoxy and, for large sections of society, provided a center of meaning and purpose for life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>"Devotion to Compromise" in series "Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians," The Listener (February 5, 1948) p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Nineteenth-century Liberalism, however, was a half-way house to secularism. Its ideals were based on a Christian foundation and could not be preserved apart from that foundation (Religion and the Modern State, p. 63f).

The nineteenth century was also characterized by what we might call a second romantic movement. This movement originally had no ties with Rousseau but derived its impetus from the recovery of chivalric poetry and the consequent renewed appreciation of medieval literature.<sup>1</sup> It was only in its later stages that it mingled with Rousseauian nature-worship and became a vague sentimental movement. In its origins it was a purely literary movement and its attempt to recover the literature of the Middle Ages forms a strict parallel to the return to classicism during the Renaissance. Previously the scholars of the Enlightenment were so absorbed in the absolute value of their own civilization and in their optimistic prospects for its future that they passed lightly over the whole era of the Dark and Middle Ages as beneath their concern. The Romantic movement, however, discovered the beauty, majesty, and riches of ancient Christendom with something of the same enthusiasm Renaissance scholars had shown in reference to the classics. Now for the first time there was an interest in one's national heritage and in the origin and diversity of national traditions.<sup>2</sup> This deep interest in the past, coupled with a genuine concern for social tradition marks the birth of the full historical consciousness as we know it today.<sup>3</sup> Although this historical consciousness is a fruit of Christian culture, it also owes a great debt to the humanist's interest in classical tradition and above all to the romanticist's interest in medieval culture. Both traditions

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<sup>1</sup>Medieval Religion, pp. 124 ff.

<sup>2</sup>The Romantic movement also stimulated an extensive investigation into oriental religions in their diversity and uniqueness. The research was dominated by a willingness to see other cultures and religions according to their own laws and principles. This led to the rise of a systematic study of comparative religions which soon displaced the study of Natural Theology in most seminaries.

<sup>3</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 199.



taught the European mind "to study the achievements of . . . civilization and to value human nature for its own sake."<sup>1</sup>

The revival of interest in the Middle Ages naturally expressed for many a nostalgia for the unity and wholeness of medieval culture. This tendency was especially strong among Roman Catholics and, as Dawson realizes, often led to an idealization of the Middle Ages and its achievements.<sup>2</sup> History, in other words, was made into a department of apologetics.

The recovery, through the Romantic movement, of the richness and diversity of national traditions went hand in hand with the rise of nationalism.<sup>3</sup> Originally nationalism was not hostile to the Christian tradition or to the common cultural unity of Europe. In Ireland and Poland, for instance, nationalism was closely tied up with the sense of a Christian vocation and mission for the nation. And even in Italy where nationalism was not so definitely Christian, it was far from being secular and was inspired "by a thoroughly religious ideal of the nation as a spiritual community."<sup>4</sup> And even in later centuries when it became more aggressive, nationalism was nearly always regarded as a Messianic vocation which was exercised for the good of Europe as a whole. At one time or another each of the major European powers - France, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, Russia, Poland, and Ireland - regarded itself as the heir and guardian of the universal ideal of Christendom.<sup>5</sup> It was only when nationalism became detached from the romantic idealism that had nursed it and

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<sup>1</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>While evidencing a great admiration for medieval culture, Dawson nevertheless tries to guard against this danger and believes that history should be studied for its own sake and not for apologetic purposes. (The Making of Europe, p. xvii; The Spirit of the Oxford Movement (London: Sheed and Ward, 1945), p. 8; Cf. Halecki, Limits and Divisions, etc., p. 192 for a similar approach.)

<sup>3</sup>We are speaking here of the modern variety of rampant nationalism. Dawson would probably say that nationalism has always been a European social phenomenon.

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 142.

became reinterpreted in terms of popular Darwinian biology that it acquired a definitely anti-European character.<sup>1</sup> The result was a series of pan-racial theories which, especially in Eastern Europe, have been so destructive. Nevertheless, in each case of its inception, nationalism was a hidden quest for the social and spiritual unity Europe had once known. Although Nationalism and racialism are atomistic and individualistic in relation to the European society as a whole, within their own national borders they represent movements toward social solidarity and spiritual integration.<sup>2</sup> Thus nationalism may be added to our total list along with humanism, rationalism, romanticism, and liberalism as one further attempt to recover some of the lost elements of the medieval synthesis.

Now all of these movements we have been considering have been largely spontaneous and sporadic. But the disintegration of Western civilization in our century (accelerated by the shock of World Wars, the collapse of the economic structure, and the failure of all spontaneous movements of integration) has led to the need for more deliberate and planned attempts to reintegrate our civilization.<sup>3</sup> The remainder of this chapter will be concerned with an assessment of the major movements of this type within our century.

## 2. The Modern Scene

One valiant attempt to reintegrate our civilization and usher in an era of international peace was the League of Nations. This attempt failed, Dawson believes, primarily because it was founded on a basic

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 144 f.

<sup>2</sup>Totalitarianism will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Tillich's analysis of the transformation our civilization is witnessing from automatic harmony to planned unity.

sociological misconception - the idea that nation-States are the ultimate social and political units.<sup>1</sup> States, according to Dawson, are only temporary and artificial political entities. Any peace which attempts to preserve existing state boundaries as ultimate in the midst of a rapidly-changing world is foredoomed to failure and is bound to be considered by the defeated nations as an injustice. Just why the boundaries of 1918 should be considered as final instead of those of 1848, for instance, was not asked by the makers of the Versailles treaty. But the question as to why the clock should be stopped at a time unfavorable to them was asked by the have-not nations, and with some justification.<sup>2</sup> Such grievances would not have arisen had the League paid sufficient attention to the real cultural unit which is not the State but the nation.<sup>3</sup> In reference to Europe this means Europe as a whole (as a cultural unit) in comparison to other great cultural units such as India, China, and Russia. Such large cultural units or confederations of states are what Dawson means by "nations" - cultural areas with permanent, long-standing traditions.<sup>4</sup> A realistic international order, Dawson believes, would take account of these five or six world cultures and build its system around them.<sup>5</sup> Failing to realize the basic significance of these national cultures, the League of Nations, in spite of its name, was only a League of States. It mistakenly regarded every de facto State as a de jure Nation and thus attempted to treat them all alike as having having equal abstract rights.<sup>6</sup> This juridical standard of equality for all sovereign states naturally

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 54 ff.

<sup>2</sup>"Symposium on War and Peace," The Colosseum (March, 1937), III, pp. 33 f.

<sup>3</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup>Enquiries, etc., pp. 58 f.; "Europe and the Smaller Peoples," Dublin Review (July, 1943), pp. 4 f.

<sup>5</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup>"Europe and the Smaller Peoples," pp. 4 f.



does an injustice to the larger oriental civilizations which are much more than "States." Dawson maintains that if it is to be realistic, the structure of world organization must consider the cultural (national) unit which acutally stands mid-way between the State and the world society.<sup>1</sup> The most natural form of world organization, then, would be a Confederation of confederations.<sup>2</sup> China and India, for instance, are such Confederations and Europe should also be treated as such a unit. The major mistake of the League, according to Dawson, was the failure to recognize Europe as a cultural unity. And since European disorder is at the heart of international disorder, he argues, international organization should not have been attempted until Europe had found political expression for its basic unity.<sup>3</sup> In putting first the organization of the world, the League was premature and idealistic.

The League also failed because of its false cosmopolitan internationalism. It made the mistake of asking people to transfer their loyalties to a formless, nebulous world society that did not as yet exist.<sup>4</sup> The League, then, was too all-embracing in its superstructure and so was no more than a "juridicial skeleton." The largest unit which as yet possesses sufficient community of culture and historic tradition to arouse a real sense of loyalty is the cultural unit. Cultural unification, Dawson argues, must therefore come before international political unification.

Another defect of the League was its failure to reconcile its cosmopolitan idealism with its political-military basis. In spite of its high idealism, the League was dependent in practice upon an alliance of the victorious powers of World War I. In order to carry out its program,

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 149 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>4</sup>Dawson cautions that "there is no such world community and [the attempt to by-pass all existing real communities in order to reach [such an ideal will] only land the world in some kind of super-totalitarianism . . . ." ("Two Currents in the Modern Democratic Tradition," p.16)

Dawson comments, it was necessary for it to preserve the status quo and the military supremacy of those powers whose union was the only real foundation of the system.<sup>1</sup> Changes in the political and economic scene led to a decline in power of the victorious States and consequently to an undermining of the foundation of the League. But apart from this the original political-military basis had been too narrow, for the largest power units, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. had not been included. To summarize, in Dawson's words, "the failure of the League was due to its real political-military basis being too narrow and one-sided and its ideal superstructure too universal and all-embracing."<sup>2</sup>

Are any of these defects overcome in the United Nations Organization? What does Dawson think of this latest attempt at international cooperation? Although he has not yet written much about the United Nations, he does comment in his latest book that the same structural defects are repeated. The United Nations, he believes, is essentially a cosmopolitan structure just like the old League and is "the organ of an ideal world community which does not as yet exist."<sup>3</sup> As with the League, it has failed to take account of the organic cultural communities which are the real sociological realities. And even more than the League, the United Nations has failed to realize the basic importance of the European cultural community. "The European peoples," he notes, "have a smaller share in this organization than in any of its predecessors, and the existence of Europe as an organic society of nations is completely ignored."<sup>4</sup> Out of a total membership of fifty-nine, Western Europe has only eight members and can easily be outvoted by much smaller cultural units as well as by separate States.<sup>5</sup> Dawson therefore believes that

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<sup>1</sup>"Symposium on War and Peace," pp. 33 f.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 62.      <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 57.



the Christian principles of liberty and international justice must find expression in an international order which is at once more realistic than the League (and the United Nations) in its recognition of the historic cultural complex and more spiritual, taking into account man's deepest longings for a community of justice and love which can only be fulfilled in reference to the transcendent spiritual order.

Another type of deliberate attempt to reintegrate modern life in our century is evidenced in totalitarianism. Behind modern totalitarianism lies a whole gamut of forces<sup>1</sup> such as the decline of Liberalism and Capitalism, the revolt against the nineteenth-century State, the rise of militarism, the failure of the treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, the development of mass communication, and the scientific control of public opinion. But most basically, the appearance of totalitarianism on the modern scene marks a radical and dramatic attempt to re-establish the spiritual community which has been lost since the end of the Middle Ages. The vacuum caused by the disintegration of the religious and humanistic unification of Europe had to be filled and the various totalitarian movements set about this task in what Dawson calls the most deliberate approach since the French Revolution. "Human nature," says Dawson, "needs a holy community,"<sup>2</sup> and when this spiritual community is not provided by religion, men must turn to

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson is not fully consistent in his various analyses of the origins of totalitarianism. In one place he insists strongly that the "totalitarian idea was not Fascist or Italian or German in origin" but rather "a distinctively Russian reaction which could not have arisen without centuries of cultural segregation and politico-religious unity which formed the Russian national consciousness" (The Judgment of the Nations, p.25). From Russian, he maintains, the totalitarian idea spread westward into the very heart of Europe. But elsewhere he insists with equal vigor that it was in Prussia that the totalitarian pattern of military and economic efficiency and scientific mass organization of a people was first born and that Russia (and other nations) borrowed Prussian methods! ("Religion and Mass Civilization," p.3; "Christian Culture in Eastern Europe," pp. 22-24).

<sup>2</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 131.



political substitutes. Dawson sees Nazism, Fascism, and Communism as attempts to create secular substitutes for the broken unity of Christendom. All were trying to find a substitute for it "in some primary social element which is permanent and indestructible"<sup>1</sup> such as race or an economic group. All of these movements represent a reaction to nineteenth-century Liberalism which, as we saw, attempted to set up idealism and positivism as substitutes for the Christian faith. But the ethos of liberalism was too artificial and failed to satisfy men's minds. The reaction was particularly strong against the liberal State which, according to Dawson, had been a broker, a policeman, and sometimes a hangman but never a king or a priest.<sup>2</sup> Men felt the need for a political community which would be more than just the legal framework of an individualistic society and thus turned to the totalitarian State.

The revolt against the liberal State which had become separated from the community had its counterpart in a revolt against the Church which had likewise become isolated from social reality in its individualistic sectarianism. The Church, too, was often regarded as a stronghold of privilege and an ally of capitalism. It is no wonder, then, that the trend toward community left the Church as well as the (liberal) State to one side. This does not mean, however, that the totalitarian movements have been lacking in spiritual dynamic. As an attempt to fulfill a basic human need for a spiritual community, these movements have quite naturally

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>As well as being a reaction against liberalism, totalitarianism also represents the last stages of liberalism! Dawson shows how capitalism (or economic liberalism) led to the mechanization of life and how mass society in turn necessitated a type of State which would assume mass control. Through this process, the liberal State was gradually transformed into an anti-liberal State. (Beyond Politics, pp. 75 f.)

been driven to religious forms of expression. Dawson thus refers to Nazism and Communism as "Church-States."<sup>1</sup> Their "religious substance" can be seen for instance in the fact that these movements have aimed at the subordination of material and selfish interests to a higher end. They try to see life as a whole and refuse to divide it - which is more than can be said, Dawson believes, for the average brand of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Totalitarianism, then, is not an evil to be condemned outrightly. Its quest for a spiritual community, as we have seen, is an attempt to satisfy a basic human longing.

If therefore Christians take up a negative attitude to this movement. . . they may find that they are fighting against God and standing in the path of the march of God through history.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, as Dawson says in another place, totalitarianism

"is not irrelevant to the work of grace nor impenetrable to its influence. If it does not destroy itself, it may be transformed and reconsecrated as the power of the barbarian warrior became transfigured into the sacred office of a Christian King."<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, Dawson is far from blind to the evils of totalitarianism. The fact that totalitarianism aims to fulfill a spiritual need does not make it any less the enemy of Christianity. The distortions of its spiritual aim classify it as a type of heresy or apostasy which must be vigorously combatted by the Church. Thus, although Dawson may be sensitive to the hidden spiritual quest evidenced in totalitarianism, he declares unequivocally that it must be denounced as the anti-Christ of our time.<sup>5</sup>

One specific totalitarian attempt to create what Dawson calls a "spiritual community" must be considered at greater length, and that

<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 57; Beyond Politics, pp. 9, 83;

<sup>2</sup>"Concordats or Catacombs?" p. 909; Beyond Politics, p. 131. Arnold Toynbee, in similar fashion, says that totalitarianism at least teaches us that religion is indispensable to a culture. If the choice is between a society based upon individualistic freedom (with no religious support) and one based upon the claim of a corporate Juggernaut demanding, in religious terms, the sacrifice of the individual to the whole, the latter is bound to win. (Toynbee's review of Dawson's Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 8 f.)

<sup>3</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 132.

<sup>4</sup>"Concordats or Catacombs?" p. 909.

<sup>5</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 112 f.



is Communism. As with the other movements we have been considering, Communism made its appeal to the Russian people largely because of its disguised spiritual forces and its answer to the longing for a spiritual community. Dawson therefore sees Communism primarily as a creed rather than a political movement. He shows how the essential elements of Jewish propheticism and eschatology coming out of Marx's Jewish background, were transmuted into Communist forms. The gentiles of the Old Testament, for instance, have become the bourgeoisie of the Marxist system and the poor have become the proletariat; the Day of Jehovah has been transformed into the Marxist dialectic and the Messianic Kingdom into the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>1</sup> Marx's conception of abstract justice as well as his sense of community, Dawson declares, has been taken directly from the Jewish faith. But not only has Marxian theory a definitely religious background but the major institutions of Communism as well evidence strong religious affinities. The old theocratic traditions of ancient Russian have been carried over in revised form, Dawson believes, so that the Communist ideology corresponds directly to the old orthodoxy. In similar fashion, the Communist Party corresponds to the Church and the Communist State to the old Empire under the orthodox Czar.<sup>2</sup> Communism, then, has not succeeded in banning religion but only in erecting a substitute one equipped with its own form of inquisition, excommunication,

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Modern State, pp. 86-89.

<sup>2</sup>This quasi-religious character of Communism (its absolutism and apocalyptic millennialism) is, of course, incongruous with Marxian materialism, relativism, and determinism. This provides, according to Dawson, a basic contradiction in Communist thought which no amount of rationalizing has been able to bridge. ("The Christian View of History," p. 325).

<sup>3</sup>"What is Russia?" (Changing World Series pamphlet, London, 1942), p. 5.



and infallible scripture.<sup>1</sup> As Dawson so adequately puts it,

What drives men to communism is not merely economic discontent nor even dissatisfaction with the external social order. It is something deeper than these - a discontent with human life itself; a divine discontent that can only find full satisfaction in the sphere of religion.<sup>2</sup>

It is unnecessary to analyze the defects of Communism in order to show why it is an unsatisfactory means of unifying Europe and restoring the spiritual community for which Europe secretly yearns. Its despotic methods conflict too greatly with the traditions of European freedom to allow it to be considered seriously. Further, its claim as the necessary "next step" in the development of Industrial civilization is, according to Dawson, entirely without foundation. Contrary to Marxist theory, Communism was accepted originally and fully only by a backward agrarian nation and not by a highly industrialized one. Communism in Russia was a new experiment that grew up with the advance of industrialism, science, and technology and was not a panacea for a society already suffering from the diseases of industrialism, as Marx had predicted.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the Russian experiment can be of little guidance for Europe as a whole, for Russia has not had to face - and consequently has not had to solve - the great problem of modern society: how a modern mechanized society can become a closely-knit community without sacrificing its ideals of justice and freedom.<sup>4</sup> To this problem, Communism is unable to give an answer. We must therefore look elsewhere.

In a less spectacular way, socialism also aspires to meet the modern quest for the reintegration of culture and the establishment of a true community. With communism, it marks a turn of the tide away from

<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 12; Religion and the Modern State, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 79 f.; Enquiries, etc. p. 12.

liberal individualism and an effort toward social planning for the benefit of the masses. Socialism, Dawson believes, is to be commended for its attempt to translate the abstract ideals of liberal democracy into social reality and to extend liberal ideals to the spheres of economics and culture.<sup>1</sup> Dawson fears, however, that socialism has acquired some definitely anti-liberal elements such as its concern for the mass instead of for the individual and its condoning of the use of power by the State in order to smother opposition. And in a final analysis, Dawson believes, socialism is just another form of secularism and materialism. This, he feels, is the real basis for its appeal to the common man and the reason why it is so difficult to check once it gets in power. It is easier, Dawson says, to resist a totalitarian State that relies on concentration camps than it is to resist a benevolent State that relies on free clinics and free milk.<sup>2</sup> But the greatest threat of socialism, especially for Great Britain, is that it tends to undermine the Parliamentary system of government. This system rests, according to Dawson, upon a basic conformity of interest among all the political parties and factions in which there is room for an agreement to differ and a chance to effect a balance of conflicting interests. Through the rise of the Labor party, however, class conflict has entered into the picture and, as a result, the opponents of the Laboring class are seen as sinister forces which have no right to exist.<sup>3</sup> Socialism, in this respect, is like a religion which cannot sacrifice its principles in the interests of a political compromise. For it to regard the constitutional order as a sacred one to which it must conform "is like asking a religious fanatic to postpone the millenium in the interests of the London Stock Exchange!"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 45; The Modern Dilemma, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>"The Future of National Government," Dublin Review (April, 1935) p. 237 ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 240.



Further, under socialism, the political order becomes subordinated to an organization based on industry and governed by purely economic considerations.<sup>1</sup> And finally, when the government, through socialism, is given power over large sections of the industrial system, elections are likely to involve fundamental changes in economic policy. Such issues as these, Dawson believes, cannot properly be solved by the ballot box and no nation, on the basis of such decisions, can afford to vacillate from one economic system to another every few years.<sup>2</sup>

Dawson's hostility to socialism does not mean that he favors laissez-faire capitalism. He recognizes the need for large-scale social planning for the modern mass society, but differs from the socialists in that he prefers to see this planning less under the control of a central government. Dawson seeks to maintain a position somewhere between capitalism and socialism. He would like to see socialism purged of its totalitarian tendencies and capitalism purged of its ties with narrow economic individualism.<sup>3</sup> He criticizes both capitalism and socialism (and communism as well) for their bias toward materialism. They are all, he believes, typical products of nineteenth-century industrial society with its secularism. What is needed instead is

a political philosophy that is more catholic and more humane - one which does not exclude or depreciate the non-economic functions and values, but which treats man as a free personality, the creature of God and the maker of his own destiny.<sup>4</sup>

Of all the existing political and economic systems, Dawson gives priority to fascism (not so much as materialized in Italian practice, but rather as a theory). Fascism, too, is an attempt to re-establish the old tradition of European unity and is even more conspicuously reminiscent

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<sup>1</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>"The Future of National Government," pp. 250 f.



of the medieval political system, particularly in the alliance it sought between the Church and the State. Fascism, according to Dawson, is based on the idea of a corporate or co-operative State composed of a federation of a large number of local organizations and functional units.<sup>1</sup> It involves the incorporation of both employers and employees in a series of great corporations and national syndicates. Although Mussolini took a good many of his ideas from Georges Sorel (who had a great influence as well on Lenin), he put aside Sorel's idea of class war and advocated instead a policy of national unity. Dawson describes Fascism as Sorel's Syndicalism purged of its Marxist elements and reorganized on a national and cooperative basis.<sup>2</sup> Rather than liquidate whole classes as in communism, fascism stresses the union of all the creative forces of the nation. It thus arrives at a high degree of political efficiency and economic control without sacrificing the existing social structure.<sup>3</sup> Among the other advantages cited by Dawson are that it puts an end to competition, subordinates private profits to the national interest, retains a large margin of individual initiative, and allows for self-government on the part of each industry.<sup>4</sup> Fascism thus meets most of the criticisms levelled against both capitalism and communism. With the decline of liberalism and parliamentary democracy, Fascism, Dawson believes, may increasingly become the pattern for the future.<sup>5</sup>

Even though fascism may be good in theory and may actually recover much that was good in the medieval corporate life,<sup>6</sup> Dawson admits that it has, in practice, become but another totalitarian instrument involving the ruthless suppression of opponets and the utilization of mass

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<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, pp. 8 f.

<sup>3</sup>Enquiries, etc., pp. 13 f.

<sup>4</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Visser T'Hooft levels a major criticism against Catholicism at this point. He holds that Catholicism's apparent liberalism in reference to

propaganda.<sup>1</sup> Dawson's writings during the late war show a waning sympathy with the fascist state (in its Italian form). At one time he called it "a unitary mass driven by an aggressive will to power."<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Dawson believes that these defects were due primarily to the nationalistic form in which the fascist idea was expressed. He feels that if the fascist concept of a corporate state could be internationalized into a society extending, for example, over Europe as a whole, it would be close to the Christian ideal and would be a real step toward peace.

Our survey to this point has considered a number of different movements in modern Europe, each of which has, in its own way been a quest for unity and an attempt to restore the foundations of the European community. All of them, however, have only served further to disrupt the few remnants of that original unity. Thus the chaos and confusion of modern Europe is, paradoxically, a result of the clash and life-and-death grapple between the various competing revolutionary movements (communism, nationalism, socialism, liberalism, fascism) which were all equally inspired by a belief in social progress and the hope of a more ideal European order!<sup>3</sup> The result is that the achievement of a European order and spiritual community based on common ideals is actually more distant and more impossible of fulfillment than it has been for centuries. Europe thus all the more urgently cries out for a solution to its predicament.

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the cause of labor is deceptive and that in reality it is acting on the principle that whatever is reminiscent of the pre-capitalistic order of the Middle Ages is to be encouraged. For this reason, he says, Roman Catholicism opposes movements of the social and political left-wing and especially anything challenging the rights of private property or the increasing control of the State over life (The Church's Witness to God's Design, Amsterdam World Council Series, II, 61).

<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, etc., pp. 13f.

<sup>2</sup>"Peace Aims and Power Politics," Dublin Review (April, 1944)



## D. Meeting the Crisis

The present crisis confronting Europe, Dawson believes, is of world-shaking proportion and is equally as serious as that confronting the Roman Empire in the years of its decline.<sup>1</sup> Dawson frequently calls attention to the close parallel between the forces at work in the decline of Rome and those besieging our civilization today.<sup>2</sup> Among these are the vast development of material resources and luxuries, the physical unification of the world,<sup>3</sup> world-wide economic expansion involving the exploitation of natural resources and subject populations; the opening of vast systems of communication, extensive urbanization and the consequent loss of agrarian foundations,<sup>4</sup> the collapse of the family, and the failure of the citizen class to reproduce itself,<sup>5</sup> the increase of State control and governmental bounty, and the development of a standardized cosmopolitan civilization.<sup>6</sup> Our civilization, of course, is infinitely richer and more powerful; yet, like Rome, in conquering and organizing the world it seems to have lost its own soul. If anything, our civilization is even more threatened today than in the age of Rome. For the fall of Rome, Dawson believes, was an external disaster which could be complacently accepted by Christians, whereas the civilization being threatened today is a Christian civilization and the values under attack are Christian values.<sup>7</sup> The adversaries of higher civilization are not barbarians but rather the totalitarian State "armed with modern scientific techniques and

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<sup>1</sup>Although Dawson constantly reverts to this analogy, he is careful to point out that it is not a fatalistic one involving predictions according to any cyclical "law." (The Judgment of the Nations, p. 23).

<sup>2</sup>Dawson also points out that the decline of our civilization parallels that of Greece in the loss of an agrarian foundation and in the fact that a high degree of intellectual and scientific achievement co-exists with a stage of decline. (Progress and Religion, pp. 45, 65 ff; "Progress and Decay, etc.", p. 5)

<sup>3</sup>"Crisis of the West," pp. 262-268.

<sup>4</sup>Enquiries, pp. 45 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>6</sup>Beyond Politics, pp. 88 ff. There is a general tendency, Dawson notes, for culture to decrease in quality as it increases in quantity.

<sup>7</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 9.



a religion of its own."<sup>1</sup> Even worse, it is not just the outward structure of society which is at stake but also the soul of man.

### 1. Europe's Role and Responsibility

These threats to our civilization must be met and conquered.

And this victory, according to Dawson, must first of all be won in Europe, for Europe is at the very heart of the world problem. It therefore has both a peculiar responsibility for and a distinctive role in this crisis. Its responsibility is due to the fact that world civilization today (in so far as there is such a thing) is a product of European culture. Moving out from this cradle of modern civilization have been innumerable creative and destructive forces. Although some of the revolutionary forces have become even more revolutionary outside of Europe, their cumulative effect has been most drastic upon the parent civilization itself. If these destructive forces can be conquered in Europe, Dawson argues, there is hope for the world. Europe, secondly, has a necessary role which no other cultural unit can fulfill. The new world that is emerging, says Dawson, can realize itself only in and through Europe.<sup>2</sup> In spite of its material and economic disintegration, Europe still leads the world in science and in thought and retains, although in crippled form, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. "Europe," Dawson believes, "still remains the greatest center of world population and the richest and most highly cultured area in the world."<sup>3</sup> Whatever the situation may be a century or two hence, there is no force outside Europe today capable of taking her place.

Even the United States, for all their wealth and prosperity are in a very real sense dependent on the civilization of Western Europe, and if the latter were to disappear it is at least highly doubtful whether American civilization would be able to carry on.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>"Europe - A Society of Free Peoples," Catholic Truth Society Pamphlet, London: 1946, p.5.

<sup>4</sup>The New Decline and Fall, "Commonweal," (June 20, 1932), XV, 320.

The other great world civilizations such as China, Russia, and India are even more spiritual exhausted and open to the invasion of anti-spiritual forces than either Europe or the United States.<sup>1</sup> The world therefore is still greatly dependent upon Europe's leadership. If Europe fails in this responsibility and role, it may spell doom for the civilization of the world as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. European Unity: Necessity and Actuality

Europe, however, cannot lead the world in its present divided and disintegrated state. The moral, spiritual, and political unification of Europe, then, is absolutely indispensable for the continuation of Western civilization. The idea of European unity is no longer a vague utopian ideal, according to Dawson. It is a pressing political necessity.<sup>3</sup>

In the deepest sense, of course, Europe is already a unity. One of the greatest disintegrating factors in modern times, as we have already noted, has been the failure to take this basic unity into account. The fact that Europe has never been a unified political State has led many to believe that Europe is, after all, just a convenient abstraction. But, Dawson argues, just as Germany and Italy were nations long before the German Empire and the Italian Kingdom existed, so Western Europe has been for centuries a real social unit even though this fact has not yet attained political expression. Europe is not an abstraction; the real abstractions are the various national cultures which owe their very existence to their participation in a spiritual society common to all the Western peoples.<sup>4</sup> Germany, France, and Italy, for instance, are nothing apart from Europe; they draw their very life from their membership in the wider European society. This

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<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 215

<sup>3</sup>Dawson's preface to Halecki's Limits and Divisions, etc., p. viii.

<sup>4</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 15.



is shown, Dawson believes, by the fact that those nations which try to withdraw themselves from the common European culture in order to accentuate their own traditions end up by destroying the roots of their own higher culture and become immeasurably impoverished.<sup>1</sup> The same thing is true physically as well as culturally, for in the wars of the past the European States have stood or fallen together.<sup>2</sup> This is apparent in the case of the smaller states which have been so quickly absorbed by the larger ones. But the last war has shown that even the larger states such as France and Italy could not stand alone. The essential unity of Europe is also seen in the rapid diffusion of intellectual and revolutionary movements from one end of Europe to the other. Even those movements most closely connected with particular states such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the French Revolution have had European-wide repercussions. Dawson further points out that the typical representatives of European civilization, such as Erasmus, Leibnitz, and Goethe were first of all citizens of Europe and not of any particular state.<sup>3</sup> The failure to recognize this unity has been the root cause, Dawson maintains, for the disasters of the last fifty years which threaten to destroy Western civilization. Now the essential unity of Europe has not ceased to exist because it has been disregarded. On the contrary, says Dawson, it has gone on developing and is actually more complex and highly organized today than at any time in the past.<sup>4</sup> If further disasters

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<sup>1</sup>"European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages," *Dublin Review* (January, 1950), p. 32. T.S. Eliot speaks of the decline of British literature during World War II when contacts with continental movements of thought were restricted and uses this as an example of how international cooperation and the process of mutual fertilization is absolutely necessary for the flourishing of national cultures. (*Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, pp. 116 f.)

<sup>2</sup>*Understanding Europe*, p. 55. Because of this close interdependency, Dawson maintains that every European war is either a civil or a revolutionary one.

<sup>3</sup>"Europe and the Smaller States," *Dublin Review* (July, 1943) p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>*The Modern Dilemma*, p. 15.



are to be avoided, Europe must become conscious of its organic unity and create some form of political expression which will embody this common European consciousness.

What political form shall this expression of European unity take? At present there are three live alternatives: 1) European unity under the hegemony of the United States, 2) European unity under the hegemony of Russia, and 3) a United States of Europe. The first two solutions must be ruled out at once, even though they may seem the most likely. If Europe should come completely under the control of outside powers, it would no longer be Europe. The notion of a United States of Europe, however, immediately raises many problems. The term "United States" is, first, a misleading one and suggests a tightly-knit federation such as found in the U.S.A. This would be entirely out of line with the whole European tradition of wide diversity within an underlying unity.<sup>1</sup> The term further seems to imply the abolition of nationality in the creation of one giant super-State. But this, Dawson believes, would be no solution, for nationality is at the very heart of the European tradition. All that is strongest in European life has its source in the local traditions and "to destroy nationality would be to cut the roots of our social vitality."<sup>2</sup> The only realistic solution is a loosely-knit federation which allows for great diversity and which is especially mindful of the autonomous traditions of the smaller states. Now what are the chances of arriving at such a federation? A number of difficulties stand in the way. First there is the possibility that if each state retains its sovereignty, fresh struggles of power among the member states of the federation might break out. Again,

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 149 f.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, etc., p. 8.

the union might become so big and powerful as to be a threat to the rest of the world. There is, in addition, the extreme national sentiment in each of the States which would block any proposed amalgamation.<sup>1</sup> And finally, there is the problem of the present division of Germany creating a great cleft right through the heart of central Europe. This tragic division would seem to make the unification of Europe completely out of the question. Dawson believes, however, that this division has still not destroyed the unity of Europe and that it will ultimately prove to have been only temporary and artificial.<sup>2</sup> Thus regardless of the fact that this solution is difficult to achieve, Dawson believes that we must press toward some kind of European federation.

The development of a common European consciousness in a European confederation is not incongruous with the need for international vision, according to Dawson. For he insists that if a true world civilization is ever achieved it will not be by ignoring the existing historical units of culture but only by an increase of mutual comprehension.<sup>3</sup> If a European confederation could be achieved, it would be a real step toward world unity, for that confederation would be in a position to cooperate with other great federations in the development of a world federation.<sup>4</sup> It is toward this goal that we must work, for, as Dawson puts it,

The world is faced with the choice between world federation or world empire.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Spiritual Foundations for European Unity

Although Dawson insists upon the importance of political and social planning, the analysis just given, if taken alone, would give a

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<sup>1</sup>"Europe and Christendom," pp. 117 f.

<sup>2</sup>Understanding Europe, pp. 43 f. The reconstruction of Europe cannot be achieved without the unification of Germany, Dawson states. (Op.cit. 65 ff).

<sup>3</sup>The Making of Europe, p. xxiii.

<sup>4</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 83.

distorted picture of his thought. He believes that no economic or political system alone can solve our problems. For, as he says, "The foundations of our world are shaken and we shall not save it by replanning the superstructure."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the basic diseases of our civilization must be cured before it can become healthy again. Otherwise they will reappear in new forms. The essential task, then, is to create not a new state machine but new men and a new spirit.

A purely practical and opportunist system of international cooperation is insufficient. Economic and political action can do little without common spiritual aims and a common intellectual culture.<sup>2</sup>

Spiritual renewal and social regeneration, according to Dawson, are not just moralistic platitudes but have become a basic sociological necessity.<sup>3</sup> Some way must be found to restore contact between the life of the spirit and the life of society. As it is, the spiritual forces are existing separately as a soul without a body while the outward life of society has become a body without a soul.<sup>4</sup> A culture cannot long survive with such a dichotomy; it must become spiritually reintegrated or perish.<sup>5</sup>

Now the need for spiritual reintegration has been vaguely felt for a long time, according to Dawson. In fact, ever since the dissolution of the medieval unity there have been innumerable movements, as we have seen, searching for the lost spiritual values of Christendom. Although this quest has usually been a hidden one, sometimes it has been recognized for what it is and men, feeling the need for a spiritual basis for social life, have tried to create an artificial religion. Thus we have the de-supernaturalized religion of the Deists, the sociological faith of Comte, and the various attempts of men of our time such as Aldous Huxley, J. Middleton Murry, and

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<sup>1</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup>"Inter-racial Cooperation as a Factor," p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>"Religion and Mass Civilization," p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Religion and Culture, pp. 216 f. Dawson also describes this as the lack of balance between the inner and the outer worlds or as the dichotomy



D.H. Lawrence to create a religion without revelation.<sup>1</sup> But nothing could be more pathetic, Dawson believes, than the repeated failure of all such attempts to manufacture a religion. Artificially-produced religion naturally fails, says Dawson, because it lacks the essential element of transcendence which alone makes faith both possible and necessary. Man cannot permanently worship himself or something which is the creation of his own mind.<sup>2</sup> But most basically, an artificially-constructed religion will ultimately fail because it is out-of-touch with the long-standing traditions of its culture.

All of these attempts to create a religion to meet our social needs are absurd, says Dawson, for we already have at our finger-tips the spiritual means of reintegration in the Christian faith which has organic ties with the great traditions of the past and is in fact the very soul of Western society. Because of this, Dawson believes that it is sociologically realistic to advocate a return to Christianity as the basis for European order.

The true foundation of European unity is to be found not in political or economic agreements, but in the restoration of the spiritual tradition on which that unity was originally based.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Christian basis of European culture has been obscured and weakened until it is almost invisible, Dawson believes that it is still the only ultimate bond of social unity. The process of secularization, he says, has gone a long way, but it has not yet become complete. There is therefore still a chance of recovering our Christian foundations, for because European civilization "derives its life and unity from a higher spiritual

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between the religious and the scientific traditions (Enquiries, etc., pp. 70, 96; The Modern Dilemma, pp. 42, 71; Progress and Religion, pp. 233 f., 247 f.)

<sup>5</sup>When the deeper spiritual impulses are not given an outlet, Dawson cautions, they turn against life and become destructive. ("The Renewal of Civilization," p. 9; "The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 47; Progress and Religion, pp. 228 ff.; Christianity and the New Age, p. 49

<sup>1</sup>Christianity and the New Age, pp. 50 ff.; "The Dark Mirror," p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>The Modern Dilemma, pp. 105 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

principle, it is not bound to the fatal cycle of birth and death. It has in a sense an immortal soul - at least a possibility of spiritual renewal."<sup>1</sup> If our civilization fails to choose this path, there is but one alternative. The road that leads away from Christianity leads away from humanity also; it leads to the anti-Christian order of the totalitarian mass state.<sup>2</sup> Dawson therefore pleads that

The time has come for us to retrace our steps, to see what we have lost in two centuries of economic progress and world conquest, and to consider how we can recover contact with the essential realities on which the existence of our civilization depends.<sup>3</sup>

The recovery of the Christian foundation for Europe, then, is important not only for Europe but for the whole world, for the spiritual foundation of Europe, according to Dawson, is the only basis upon which a world civilization can be erected. As we saw earlier, Dawson believes that the unity (co-existing with underlying diversity) which Europe achieved at its height is a principle which can be broadened to form the basis for a universal society of peoples. This unity was created by means of the Christian faith. Dawson believes that the faith that brought together Roman and barbarian in a common European society can also bring together the nations and peoples of the world into one universal family. Christianity, is not just a European religion - as if it were only the product of the European past. It came into Europe, made it what it is, and has now passed on through Europe to the rest of the world. Therefore European Christianity is but one phase of the wider movement toward what Dawson believes will be a world civilization based upon the Christian faith. If the faith of Europe, therefore, is destined to be the basis for world order and if

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>With similar emphasis, T.S. Eliot declares: "I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian faith." (Notes Toward the Definition of Culture, p. 122)

<sup>3</sup>"The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 37.

Europe is to be the creative agent in this development, it is of crucial importance that Europe regain that foundation for itself.

#### 4. The Roman Catholic Contribution

It is not, of course, just Christianity in general that Dawson considers as the fountainhead of European culture, but Roman Catholic Christianity. We will want to ask then to what extent the spiritual reintegration of which Dawson speaks implies a return to Roman Catholicism. Does Dawson feel, for instance, that the only approach to European (and world) reconstruction is through the Curia and the Papacy? Although Dawson does not often discuss this issue specifically, he does say that

If Christianity is necessary to Europe, the Catholic Church is no less necessary to Christianity, for without it the latter would become no more than a mass of divergent opinions dissolving under the pressure of rationalist criticism and secularist culture.<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic Church is considered by Dawson as the one remaining center of unity and spiritual order in Europe. For the type of Christianity that is needed is a social Christianity in contrast to the individualism of the sects in their preoccupation with personal salvation. Further, as he goes on to say,

this society must not be merely a part of the existing social and political order, like the established churches of the past; it must be an independent and universal society, not a national or local one. The only society that fulfills these conditions is the Catholic Church. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Again, when Dawson speaks of the indispensibility of a doctrinal foundation if our civilization is to survive, he is really thinking of Roman Catholic

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<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 111. Cf. the statement of T.S. Eliot, "Every culture is dependent upon that from which it is an offshoot. The life of Protestantism depends upon the survival of that against which it protests . . . ." (Notes Toward a Definition of Culture, pp. 74 f.) Tillich agrees with both Dawson and Eliot and holds that the Catholic Church plays an important part in the existence of Protestantism. Protestantism survives, he claims, only through reference to what he calls the "Catholic substance." ("The Permanent Significance of Roman Catholicism," pp. 26 ff.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 110.



doctrine. The only hope for a disintegrating civilization, he maintains, is the recovery of the doctrinal tradition upon which its intellectual and social order was originally based. In the case of Europe, he writes,

this means a return to the tradition of medieval Christendom which, however obscured by centuries of spiritual revolt and social disorder, still survives in the Catholic Church, the only remaining representative of the tradition and spiritual authority in the West.<sup>1</sup>

But above all, Dawson feels that Roman Catholicism alone has preserved intact a real spiritual community having a living continuity with the past. Catholicism, he believes, stresses the incarnational principle "in a fuller, more concrete and more organic sense" than does Protestantism.<sup>2</sup>

As the Christian faith in Christ is faith in a real historical person, not an abstract ideal, so the Catholic faith in the Church is faith in a real historic society. . . .<sup>3</sup>

This, he believes, is as it should be, for Christianity in its origins was not just an intellectual theory of salvation (such as found in Buddhism, the Gnostic sects, or Liberal Protestantism) but was an heir to the Hebrew tradition founded on the idea of a holy society.<sup>4</sup> Christianity, then, was not merely a set of doctrines or a moral ideal, but a concrete messianic society living in expectation of a coming supernatural order. Again, the Church of the Middle Ages, says Dawson, was not just a "pious ideal, but a juridical fact"<sup>5</sup> - a Kingdom with its own constitution and laws. Now in the past, Europe found its cultural unity through entering this concrete spiritual community. It was not just a common faith that welded the various races and traditions into a unity, Dawson insists, but rather their joint

<sup>1</sup>"The Revolt of the East and the Catholic Tradition," p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 79; Enquiries, etc. p. 297; "The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," pp. 48 f.; The Modern Dilemma, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup>Understanding Europe, p. 13; Medieval Religion, p. 24.

participation in an organic society. The Roman Catholic Church of today, says Dawson, is the historical continuation of this same society.<sup>1</sup>

Wherever Catholicism exists there survives some contact with the spiritual roots from which European culture sprang.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Catholicism which was so influential in the making of Europe is potentially just as powerful a force for the re-making of Europe. The return to Catholicism, therefore, would seem to be indispensable for the survival of European culture.<sup>3</sup>

The next question we would want to ask, then, is to what extent does all of this involve a return to the standards and ideals of the Middle Ages? It must be said at once that Dawson is no "mere medievalist" who believes that all our problems would be solved simply by a return to the Middle Ages. For the whole idea of a "return to the Middle Ages" is, for Dawson, self-contradictory. As he says,

it is impossible today to return to the undifferentiated unity of medieval culture. The rise of humanism and the modern sciences has created an autonomous sphere of culture which lies entirely outside the ecclesiastical domain. . . .<sup>4</sup>

In another place he asserts that it is a truism to say that we cannot return to the past, but that it is "an entirely different thing to assert

<sup>1</sup>This factor, it is interesting to note, was an important element in Dawson's conversion to Roman Catholicism. "I followed the usual Anglo-Catholic path," he writes, "very much like Newman, since what tipped the balance was my realization that the Anglo-Catholic conception of a Catholic Church made up of a number of separated "branches" was a modern innovation and that the patristic conception of Catholic unity was not merely a unity of faith but a unity of communion." (Personal letter to the writer, January 19, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>"Europe and Christendom," p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson seems here to be taking a conservative Roman Catholic position in his demand for a return to the Mother Church. His viewpoint, however, is broader than this suggests. He also insists, as we shall see later, that the crisis of our time calls for the union of all Christian and liberal forces in a common front against totalitarianism.

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 20.



that society cannot return to the spiritual tradition on which it was based."<sup>1</sup> The return to a former spiritual tradition does not mean, for Dawson, a return to the medieval pattern of life but instead is closer to what Tillich means by a "theonomous direction of life."<sup>2</sup> Thus, says Dawson,

We are not indeed, going back to the Middle Ages, but we are going forward to a new age which is no less different from the last age than that was from the medieval period.<sup>3</sup>

In an even more explicit reference, Dawson declares that the Middle Ages do not represent a final social expression of Christianity.

We cannot of course regard medieval civilization as the model of what a Christian civilization should be - as an ideal to which modern society should conform itself. It is admirable not so much for what it achieved as for what it attempted - for its refusal to be content with partial solutions, and for its attempt to bring every side of life into vital relation with religion.<sup>4</sup>

In one passage, Dawson comes strikingly close to the spirit of Tillich when he writes,

No age has the right to call itself Christian in an absolute sense; all stand under the same condemnation. The one merit of a relatively Christian age or culture - and it is no small one - is that it recognizes its spiritual indigence and stands open to God and the spiritual world; while the age . . . that is thoroughly non-Christian, is closed to God and prides itself on its own progress to perfection.<sup>5</sup>

One final question in reference to Dawson's conception of the role of Roman Catholicism is, "To what extent does he believe that the Christian forces of our time would be organically re-incorporated into the 'Mother Church'?" From time to time Dawson has had a good deal to say about the necessity of the union of Christian forces in order to meet the onslaught of secularism and totalitarianism. With Cardinal Hinsley, he was one of the founders of the "Sword of the Spirit" movement which tried, as one

<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson's theonomous direction, however, points more toward the institutional church.

<sup>3</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup>Enquiries, (etc.), p. 301.

<sup>5</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 120.



of the features of its program, to promote the cooperation of Catholics and Protestants in a spiritual crusade against the dark forces of our time.<sup>1</sup> But how far this movement aimed at the eventual consolidation of Christian forces within the 'Mother Church' is not clear. We have already seen the importance that Dawson attaches to the Reformation as one of the major causes of the present disorder and secularization of modern life. The logical conclusion of this analysis would seem to be that the re-union of Christendom (under Roman Catholicism) is a necessary step toward the re-integration of Europe and the salvation of our civilization as a whole. This is never stated explicitly as his position, although at times it seems to be implied. The only thing that can definitely be said, therefore, is that Dawson advocates the cooperation of all Christian forces though not necessarily their organic union.

Of course, that in itself is no mean goal, and Dawson has much to say about how Christian cooperation can be furthered. This problem, Dawson believes, has been consistently approached too intellectually, as if a full understanding of one another's doctrinal positions would result in mutual comprehension. But doctrinal and intellectual differences are only superficial, according to Dawson. The real differences are social and reduce ultimately to differences between cultures, races, nationalities, and economic groups. It is here that social conflicts arise which later assume religious forms, as we saw earlier in this chapter. It is one of Dawson's chief contentions that religious differences can never be overcome until these basic social conflicts are resolved. The way to heal divisions

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<sup>1</sup>"The Social Factor in the Problem of Christian Unity," The Colosseum (April, 1938), IV, 7.; The Judgment of the Nations, pp. 118, 123, 125.

caused by heresy and schism, therefore, is not to treat them as intellectual problems but rather to see that all parties concerned understand the basic social causes for their animosity which, in most cases, have long since disappeared or lost their disruptive power. Once these motivating forces are seen for what they really are, the religious issue is freed from all extraneous motives and a new basis for cooperation is achieved. This method, Dawson says, might be called "social-analysis"; it would serve the same purpose for society that psycho-analysis serves for the individual.<sup>1</sup> Because of the great possibilities through this approach, Dawson is quite certain that significant strides toward Christian unity will be made in our time. Whereas in the past national, class, and economic motives had to disguise themselves in the dress of religion, they have now come out into the open as the dominant forces of our time.<sup>2</sup> This has increasingly freed religion from its entanglements and has helped to clear the religious issue. Dawson is therefore of the opinion that "the present age is more favorable to the cause of unity than any time since the Middle Ages."<sup>3</sup> Another indication that Christian forces may be moving closer toward unity and cooperation is the pressing need for a common front against the new anti-Christ: the totalitarian State. This is one enemy, Dawson believes, against which all Christians can cooperate without compromising their principles. But totalitarianism is not just a Christian enemy; it is the enemy of humanity and threatens the basic human values: man's freedom, dignity, and rationality. This danger is so great and so real that it demands the cooperation of all the living forces in our culture which recognize their mutual involvement in the common spiritual tradition of Western civilization.<sup>4</sup> Liberals,

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<sup>1</sup>"On the Development of Sociology," p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. pp. 112 f. (see also p. 125)

<sup>4</sup>Idem.

humanitarians, and Christians alike have become brothers in the common cause of preserving man's basic freedoms.<sup>1</sup> In the past, Liberalism and Christianity have often been hostile to one another, especially on the European continent. But since they are being attacked by an enemy hostile to both religion and humanism, they must join forces and seek to understand one another. Liberals, Dawson believes, must become increasingly conscious of their rootage in Christianity; Christians, on the other hand, must take seriously the present threat to the basic human liberties which liberals seek to defend. Although Christians are justified in criticizing liberalism's "cut-flower" humanitarianism (which often tended to become a rival religion), the liberal ideals are not just empty abstractions but are the very foundations of our civilized life. If these values fall, our civilization falls with them.<sup>2</sup> Both Christians and liberals, therefore, need to realize their deep kinship and understand that in the present crisis "the cause of God and the cause of Humanity are one."<sup>3</sup>

##### 5. Spiritual Regeneration: Sociological Signs and Eschatological Hope

We have continually called attention to Dawson's observation that spiritual regeneration is absolutely indispensable if our civilization is to survive. We have already noted some hopeful signs pointing to the possibility of greater Christian cooperation in the future. But are there any indications that our civilization will witness a general spiritual awakening or a large-scale return to religion?

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<sup>1</sup>Although these thoughts were written by Dawson during World War II, with German totalitarianism particularly in mind, it is certain that Dawson would apply them with equal force today in reference to the totalitarian threat of Russia.

<sup>2</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 4 f.



Dawson's analysis of the social trends of the past four or five centuries points to a number of hopeful signs. The general pattern of action and reaction which Dawson notes in relation to the major movements of recent centuries would seem to indicate that a new age for Christendom lies ahead. All of the characteristic movements of the past four hundred years such as capitalism, individualism, liberalism, rationalism and scientific materialism are, according to Dawson, passing away. Now the rejection of religion (or at least the relegation of it to a secondary place or to a private sphere) was one of the chief characteristics of this whole period.<sup>1</sup> The last two hundred years in particular have witnessed the completion of that process - so much so that Dawson calls them a "post-Christian" age.<sup>2</sup> Hostility to religion, then, is no new thing. But the hopeful sign is that it seems to be tied up with that whole series of movements which have now nearly worked themselves out.

Everywhere we are witnessing a return to corporate ways of thought and action, a new sense of the religious significance of the community, and an increasing interest in the expression of collective consciousness in myth and ritual and art. This marks a great change from the individualism of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

A comparable reaction is to be found in relation to all the other characteristic movements of the past few centuries. Further, the various contemporary movements of revolt, says Dawson, are not directed primarily against the old European culture and its Christian spiritual tradition, but against those movements which themselves revolted against Christendom and the European tradition.<sup>4</sup> Capitalism, it must be remembered, was a revolt

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<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, pp. 100-103.

<sup>2</sup>"Europe and Christendom," p. 113.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson's review of Latourette's Advance Through Storm, p. 363. With Tillich, Dawson finds in art a barometer of spiritual change. He notes, for example, "the tendency of modern art to abandon the naturalistic principles that governed its development from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century in favor of new canons of style that have more in common with the art of Byzantium and of the ancient east" (The Modern Dilemma, p. 101).

<sup>4</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 29.

against feudalism. Although the socialist revolt against capitalism does not automatically bring us back to the medieval tradition, it is not necessarily hostile to it. It is the post-Christian ethical compromise (the vague humanitarianism and facile optimism) and not Christianity that is the real target of the revolutionary movements of our day.<sup>1</sup> The new age that is about to dawn, then, will be far different from the post-Renaissance age and there are good reasons to believe that it will contradict the dominant characteristics of that age. For history, as Dawson sees it, does seem to follow a course of alternate action and reaction.<sup>2</sup> Each generation, each century, and each age to some extent contradicts its predecessor. We are living, Dawson believes, through one of the latter types of transformations - when the ends of the ages meet. Such times as these are "times when the whole spirit of civilization becomes transformed and the stream of history seems to change its course and flow in a new direction."<sup>3</sup> Such movements of alternation, Dawson believes, are the very stuff of history. Therefore, although secularism has become particularly rampant in our time,

there is no reason to believe that it will not ultimately be succeeded by a movement in the other direction toward religious belief and spiritual integration as has been the case with all the more limited movements in the past.<sup>4</sup>

Thus there is the possibility - indeed the likelihood - that the old spiritual tradition of Europe will reassert itself. For this reason Dawson believes that the Church which created Europe may yet save Europe and through Europe, the whole world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 216.

<sup>5</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 113. Tillich, on the other hand, points out that the Church cannot save society, but only Christ.

Another hopeful indication provided by Dawson's sociological analysis is what he calls an historical tendency toward "richer and fuller group consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

The history of mankind, and still more of civilized mankind, shows a continuous process of integration, which, even though it seems to work irregularly, never ceases.<sup>2</sup>

Although Dawson does not hold the old liberal view of progress, he does believe that this movement of integration has proceeded from the dawn of civilization and that it is real and incontestable. It will continue to operate, he believes, until mankind as a whole finds social expression in a common civilization.<sup>3</sup>

Another hopeful sign is found by Dawson even in the comparison we have already discussed between the decline of our civilization and the decline of Rome! The grounds for hope lie in the fact that whereas the cultural unity of the Roman Empire was artificial and shallow, our spiritual heritage and cultural unity has been far richer.<sup>4</sup> The final decline of Rome, he comments, was preceded by centuries of peace; the disintegrating forces of expansion, exploitation, and civil war did not work themselves out for centuries. The Roman decline, in other words, was gradual whereas the decline of our civilization has been swift and sudden. Therefore, Dawson believes, our decline will probably not be permanent or final.<sup>5</sup> And the fall of Roman civilization was followed by spiritual resurrection and radical conversion. Perhaps, then, "the strife and discords of the transitional period of modern Europe may also be the prelude to an age of

<sup>1</sup>"On the Development of Sociology," p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries, p. 125; The Age of the Gods, p. xix.

<sup>3</sup>"On the Development of Sociology," p. 82.

<sup>4</sup>"The Crisis of the West," p. 275.

<sup>5</sup>This argument seems weak in the light of Dawson's analysis of the great disintegrating movements at work since the Renaissance and the Reformation. Further, the fact that our decline has taken place at the "height of our social and educational activity" (Understanding Europe, p. 44) is of little comfort. For as Dawson says elsewhere in reference to the decline of



world civilization under Western leadership."<sup>1</sup>

And finally, there may be grounds for optimism in Dawson's analysis of the great cultural cycles of Youth, Progress, and Maturity. As we noted in Chapter Ten, the three preceeding ages of history have all culminated in a great synthesis which incorporated the achievements of the period of Progress and reconciled them with the fundamental achievements of the synthesis it inherited from the previous age. Whether or not our present age will also culminate in such a synthesis remains to be seen. Only one thing, according to Dawson, is certain: no civilization can continue indefinitely in a state of crisis; "it either achieves its synthesis or it dies."<sup>2</sup> If our civilization does achieve maturity, it will bring together the various polar elements that have been pulled apart through the disintegrating movements of recent centuries. Both oriental and occidental elements will be incorporated, for true progress requires the cooperation of both.<sup>3</sup> If it is truly a European synthesis, it must also involve a renewed collaboration of northern and southern Europe (as in the Carolingian synthesis) as well as eastern and western Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the calculations based upon an analysis of sociological trends if taken by themselves would give a false impression of Dawson's views. His thought also includes a strong apocalyptic element.<sup>5</sup> Faith

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Rome,<sup>1</sup> "Here there was no question of senescence. Society came near to its dissolution while at the height of its cultural activity. . . ." (Progress and Religion, p. 213.)

<sup>1</sup>"The Crisis of Christian Culture: Education," p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Enquiries (etc.), p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>4</sup>"Inter-racial cooperation as a Factor in European Society," p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>To the writer's knowledge Dawson has made no attempt to bring these two levels of thought together. As a sociologist and historian he analyses the great social movements and trends and claims to see general patterns such as the progressive integration of society. Yet as a Christian thinker he holds firmly to what he conceives to be the New Testament eschatology with its antipathy to the calculable progressive achievement of the good.

in the ultimate victory of Christianity does not, for Dawson, depend upon any visible grounds or humanly predictable trends. According to the Christian view of history, the world is not getting progressively better; evil, in fact, increases and grows stronger as the end of history approaches.<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God, Dawson maintains, does not come by the elimination of conflict but by the increasing opposition of the Church and the world.<sup>2</sup> Christians, therefore, must not expect an easy victory for Christianity but must be prepared for persecution. This does not mean, of course, that evil has the last word. But it does mean that the time of darkness, failure, and suffering is the time for the greatest hope, just as the time of the Church's apparent success is actually the time of its decadence and decline.<sup>3</sup> Consequently it is in the dark ages of history when human failure and impotence are most keenly felt that the power of eternity is manifest.

Thus, although Dawson does not believe in the nineteenth century optimistic theory of progress, he does believe that there is spiritual progress through a society's dying and rising again. There is no general law of progress which can be objectively measured, as the nineteenth century thought. Nevertheless, the Kingdom continues to march forward - not through visible and tangible success but through failure, suffering, and defeat. Dawson believes in spiritual progress, then, not as a natural development but as an eschatological fulfillment.

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<sup>1</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 216. Religion and the Modern State, p. 77. Tillich shares this view and comments that as a new *kairos* approaches, the demonic forces tend to acquire increased power. ("Christ the Center of History," Contemporary Thinking About Jesus: An Anthology, Thomas S. Kepler, editor, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1944), p. 221.)

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 215 f.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 120.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

## EVALUATION AND CRITICISM

(Dawson)

The critique of Tillich's thought was largely on the basis of his theology and philosophy because that is the area of his special work. Since Dawson on the other hand devotes his major attention to sociological and historical analyses, these will form the basis for the major criticism of this author.

Dawson's analysis of the source and solution of the modern predicament which we have been discussing in the previous chapter hinges around his interpretation of the disruption of the medieval synthesis and this, for Dawson is seen primarily in terms of the Protestant Reformation. Because he sees the Reformation as the chief disrupting factor, he looks hopefully to the reunion of Christians in the Mother Church as the solution for the crisis of the post-Reformation era. Dawson's view of the Reformation, then, is of central importance in an appraisal of his total social analysis and greatly affects our judgment concerning the proposals he advocates for the solution of "the modern dilemma." We shall therefore need to examine his view of the Reformation in order to form a judgment about the validity of his total thesis. First, we shall consider Dawson's analysis of the causes of the Reformation.

Dawson sees the Reformation largely in terms of his sociological determinism. Although he recognizes the need for reform and does not use his sociological analysis as a means of disguising the evils of the Church, he does minimize the theological controversy and claims that something similar to the Reformation would have occurred whatever the specific theological differences may have been. The real root force behind the



disruption of the medieval synthesis, Dawson believes, was the breaking apart of the Latin and barbaric elements comprising that synthesis, the Renaissance being a nationalistic resurgence in the southern hemisphere and the Reformation the racial and national revolt in the northern hemisphere. To label this analysis a sociological determinism does not intend to suggest that Dawson, by attributing the Reformation to underlying sociological factors thereby deflects blame from the Protestant Reformers. His analysis is, in fact, an additional way of pointing the finger of condemnation for, as Dawson sees it, if the Protestant Reformers had been truly spiritual men they would have realized the social background to their revolt. They would have sensed that the real motivating forces were racial and national and not primarily religious. And, although the Church stood in the need of drastic reform, they would have made that reform from within the Church, thus preserving the medieval unity.<sup>1</sup>

But can the Reformation be so simply described as merely the result of the interplay of sociological forces? Are the Renaissance and the Reformation nothing more than just a separation of the Latin and barbaric elements of the medieval synthesis? Dawson himself recognizes the danger of seeing a phenomenon too exclusively from one standpoint. Theologians, he says, too often neglect the historical and cultural factors and thus come to see life in too abstract and idealistic a fashion. Sociologists, on the other hand, too often see only the social forces at work.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, Dawson succeeds admirably well in combining the theological and

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<sup>1</sup>One defect of this view is that it assumes the Protestant Reformers are guilty because they withdrew from Catholic Europe to found a separate Church. But could not the case be made that the Reformers did not wilfully secede from the Church but were rather excommunicated?

<sup>2</sup>Progress and Religion, p. viii; Enquiries (etc.), p. x.

sociological approaches. But is it not fair to ask whether through a Roman Catholic bias he has not slipped into too one-sided a sociological analysis in reference to the Reformation? Does he give sufficient attention to the spiritual factors involved? As we saw, Dawson believes that heresy and schism are the overt manifestations of hidden sociological conflicts and that the Protestant Reformation is just one additional example in a long history of such conflicts. Could it not be said that Dawson is too eager to see sociological motives as the driving force rather than spiritual idealism? T.S. Eliot seems to have a more balanced view here. While sharing Dawson's observation that religious divisions often become the symbol around which a host of other interests cluster, he maintains nevertheless that

There are, certainly, situations in history in which a religious contest can be attributed to a purely religious motive. The life-long battle of St. Athanasius against the Arians. . . need not be regarded in any other light than the light of theology; the scholar who endeavored to demonstrate that it represented a culture-clash between Alexandria and Antioch. . . would appear to us at best to be talking about something else.<sup>1</sup>

Thus may not Protestants maintain that, regardless of the sociological forces Dawson points out, there were also spiritual issues at stake in the Reformation and that these, indeed, were central? May we not rightly hold that the Protestant Reformation was the only sufficiently radical way that the reform, which Dawson himself recognizes as a pressing necessity, could have been effected? Could not the Reformation then be regarded as within the divine plan?

Another aspect of Dawson's sociological determinism is seen in his appraisal of the value of diversity and conflict in the dialectical movement of history. Polarity, as we noted, is seen by Dawson as an essential element in life and is not to be condemned. He insists that

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<sup>1</sup> Notes Toward the Definition of Culture, p. 76.

to "demand an abstract uniform civilization which will obviate the risk of wars and religious schisms" is an offence against life.<sup>1</sup> Strife, struggle, and conflict, he believes, are far more healthy than complete synthesis or dead-level conformity. But, we may ask, is not all of this inconsistent with Dawson's tendency to criticize the Reformers for disrupting the medieval synthesis? If he believes, as in the quotation cited, that the risk of schism is healthy for a society, why should he be so critical of the schism once it has taken place?

Still another aspect of Dawson's sociological determinism is his analysis of the cultural cycles of Growth, Progress, and Maturity. According to Dawson, one of the characteristics of the second period is the bursting forth of new creative energy and critical experimentation which ultimately breaks the hold of the old synthesis and moves toward the creation of a new synthesis. According to this, schism and heresy are natural concomitants of the adolescent period and have their place in a healthy and growing society. How, then, can Dawson fail to see the Protestant Reformation as an example of this principle? According to his own analysis, such revolt is a necessary part of the complete life cycle of a civilization without which it would stagnate and die.

So much for Dawson's analysis of the causes of the Reformation. Let us now consider his view of its results. Dawson attributes the modern crisis to the dissolution of the medieval unity and implies that the Reformation was the chief element in this disintegrating process. He explicitly says that the Reformation (through the divisive sectarianism it inaugurated) was the chief force behind modern secularization.<sup>2</sup> Is

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson also calls Capitalism the "main cause" of the secularization of our culture (The Judgment of the Nations, p. 137), but does not follow through on this pronouncement as he does in reference to the secularizing effects of the Reformation.



this not another Roman Catholic bias - a disposition to place the blame upon Protestant shoulders? According to Dawson's own analysis of the great social forces at work in the dissolution of the medieval synthesis, did not the southern hemisphere (in the Renaissance) break away first from that synthesis and result in a far earlier secularization of culture? Why, then, should Dawson seek to place the blame for secularization on Protestantism? In another context, Dawson recognizes that the Reformation was in part a reaction against the secularism which had already set in during the Renaissance. He speaks of Luther as coming to Rome and being shocked at the extent of the secularization.<sup>1</sup> Dawson himself is not unsympathetic to Luther's reaction, for he believes that it was "the coming of the Renaissance and the whole-hearted acceptance by the Papacy of the new humanist culture that stretched the medieval synthesis to its breaking point . . . ."<sup>2</sup> Dawson at times admits that the Renaissance had a secularizing influence<sup>3</sup> and notes that with the Renaissance secular culture "emancipated itself from the tutelage of the Church and created an independent order of humanism and science."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, when dealing with the Reformation he seems to forget these facts and inconsistently treats the Reformation as if it were a new beginning toward secularization.

Dawson speaks of Capitalism and Industrialism as among some of the other results of the Reformation (and also as factors contributing to the rise of modern secularism). As we saw, Dawson follows Troeltsch and Weber in tracing the Capitalistic, acquisitive spirit (industry, thrift, prudence, etc.) back to the Protestant ethic. To what extent is this viewpoint justified?

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<sup>1</sup>"Medieval Christianity," p. 14

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Politics., p. 16.

Although Dawson may have the right to hold this view, he is certainly behind the times, sociologically speaking. Contemporary sociologists have largely abandoned Weber's thesis as an exaggeration. There seems to be sufficient proof that Capitalism existed long before the Protestant Reformation. Lewis Mumford, for instance, maintains that "it existed as a mutation at least three centuries earlier and by the fourteenth century it pervaded Italy; a country where Protestantism has never been able to gain a foothold."<sup>1</sup> R.H. Tawney in his introduction to Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism<sup>2</sup> comments that there was no lack of "capitalistic spirit" in the Venice or Florence of the fourteenth century or the Antwerp of the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In fact, there are good grounds for maintaining that Capitalism actually grew out of Catholicism rather than Protestantism. Lewis Mumford, for one, successfully makes this case.<sup>4</sup> He shows how thrift, regularity, and prudence made their first appearance not in Calvinism but in the Benedictine monasteries.<sup>5</sup> Further, medieval trade, he believes, was always moving in the direction of capitalism and the Church itself encouraged this development through the crusades which combined spiritual and material motives with the latter increasingly making a larger claim.<sup>6</sup> And with the growth in the financial power of the Church, its interests became increasingly involved with business, investment, and

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<sup>1</sup>The Condition of Man, p. 159. See also John Baillie, What Is Christian Civilization, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>New York: Charles Scribner's and Son, 1930, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Dawson himself admits in another context that Capitalism had arisen by the fourteenth century (Medieval Religion, p. 159).

<sup>4</sup>These conflicting analyses are all the more interesting because both Dawson and Mumford studied under the same Sociology teachers: Patrick Geddes and Victor Brumford (Letter from Dawson to the writer, January, 1952).

<sup>5</sup>Medieval Religion, p. 160.

<sup>6</sup>Idem.

banking.<sup>1</sup> Not only did the growing financial power and prestige provide temptations to the Church to become engrossed in secular affairs, but as well, according to Mumford,

the very offices of the Church served further to undermine its spiritual authority. Economically speaking the Catholic Church had become a machine for manufacturing salvation. Its churches, its shrines, its art, above all its relics, were so much capital goods devoted to the production of its peculiar form of immaterial wealth. As the institution grew in power, this whole apparatus of production rested more and more upon an elaborate system of credits and debits, cleared through its 'musical banks'.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, as Mumford goes on to say,

If economic historians were as versed in theology as in economics, they would have realized long ago that credit finance has a close affiliation with the system of ecclesiastical accountancy for sins and good works that preceded its establishment.<sup>3</sup>

Now it was against this whole system of ecclesiastical accountancy that the Reformers revolted. For this reason, Mumford holds that Protestantism came into being "not as an ally of capitalism but as its chief enemy. . . ."<sup>4</sup> The original Protestants of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (the Waldensians, Fraticelli, and the Lollards) "were all in opposition to the overheated desire for worldly gain. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Thus at its source, "Protestantism was an attempt to check the commercial spirit and prevent it from getting hold of the Church. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Mumford admits, however, that by the sixteenth century, Protestantism and Capitalism had grown closer together so that the Protestant emphasis upon moral duty and honest work did serve as a handmaid to the rising mercantilism and industrialism. The Protestant contribution to Capitalism and Industrialism, then, was not in respect to its origin but rather to its later development. By preaching the duty of the

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson admits that Avignon came to be regarded by its contemporaries as nothing more than a vast bureaucratic fiscal organization.

<sup>2</sup>The Condition of Man, pp. 155 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>5</sup>Idem.

<sup>6</sup>Idem.



moral life and the holy significance of daily tasks, Protestantism served to make industrialism more tolerable. Drudgery, in fact, "served the Protestant as a valuable mortification of the flesh. . . ." <sup>1</sup> Through Protestantism, men developed a special faculty for deriving pleasure from the industrial grind! <sup>2</sup>

If Mumford is right, Catholicism thus shares with Protestantism any blame that may be deserved for the rise of Capitalism and Industrialism. Although we may agree with Dawson that these have been disrupting forces in modern civilization, we cannot follow him in attributing the major responsibility for this situation to Protestantism.

Let us now turn to another of Dawson's major arguments against Protestantism, that concerning the disintegrating and secularizing effects of sectarianism. Although, as Protestants, we may deplore the endless multiplication of sects and long for the reunion of Christendom, can we agree with Dawson that schism is always wrong because it leads to cultural disintegration? Dawson believes that if our civilization had retained its religious unity it would be much more healthy today. But is there any real basis for this contention? T.S. Eliot's view again seems a more sober and sensible one. He doubts whether sectarianism is always a negative force and points out that Methodist evangelicalism, for instance, prepared the way for the Oxford movement with its positive, integrating effects. <sup>3</sup> As Eliot puts it,

The actual choice, at times, has been between sectarianism and indifference and those who chose the former were, in so doing, keeping alive the culture of certain social strata. <sup>4</sup>

Therefore, says Eliot, the loss of religious unity does not automatically lead to cultural decline. Indeed, as he says elsewhere,

we must acknowledge that many of the most remarkable achievements of culture have been made since the sixteenth century, in conditions of

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<sup>1</sup>The Condition of Man, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>Notes Toward The Definition, (etc.) p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.

disunity; and that some indeed, as in the nineteenth century France, appear after the religious foundations for culture seem to have crumbled away. We cannot affirm that if the religious unity of Europe had continued, these or equally brilliant achievements would have been realized. Either religious unity or religious division may coincide with cultural efflorescence or cultural decay.<sup>1</sup>

This rather negative appraisal of Dawson's analysis of the causes of the modern crisis points to the necessity of raising some additional questions about the validity of the solutions Dawson proposes for meeting the present world crisis. As we have already noted, the analysis of the causes of any crisis greatly conditions one's attitude toward the type of remedy that is required.<sup>2</sup> Since Dawson traces the disintegration of modern times to the disruption of the medieval unity, he naturally longs for a recovery of that religious unity as a basis for the reintegration of our civilization. This, for Dawson, seems to involve a return to the Roman Catholic Church. But, according to Dawson's more general analysis, what is needed most is not an external, legal conformity, but inner, spiritual change and regeneration at the springs of personal and social life - at the "deeper levels of human consciousness."<sup>3</sup> Would not the return to Catholicism that Dawson advocates be an example of the more external and legalistic solution to the problem? May we not rightly claim that Protestantism is much more capable of effecting the type of spiritual change that Dawson desires? In speaking of the popularity of political and economic panaceas, Dawson cautions that "a purely practical and opportunist system. . . is insufficient. . . ."<sup>4</sup> But does not Dawson's proposal for the return to Catholicism smack too much of such practical and opportunistic solutions?

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<sup>1</sup>Notes Toward the Definition of Culture, p. 70

<sup>2</sup>Tillich, for instance, sees modern disintegration largely as a consequence of the capitalistic spirit and naturally, therefore, looks to Religious Socialism as an answer to this situation.

<sup>3</sup>"The Renewal of Civilization," Peace Aims Pamphlet (London: National Peace Council, 1943, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>"Inter-racial Cooperation as a Factor, (etc.)", p. 9.



Dawson is critical of the United Nations and of present schemes for World Government because of their external and abstract framework and their denial of the cultural and religious foundations for unity. What is needed, he believes, is "not a new state machine, but new men and a new spirit."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, could we not say that what is needed is not a new totalitarian Church, but new men and a new spirit? Of course, we would recognize without hesitation that the Church should be the agent for the creation of new men with a new spirit, but would insist, nevertheless, that a Church which requires legal conformity and external obedience is not the best channel for the invasion of the divine spirit. Protestants, too, long for the day when there shall be "One Lord, One Faith, and One Church" but do not believe that external obedience to a heteronomous institution is the way this shall be achieved.

## 2. Protestant Criticism of Roman Catholicism

On the whole, however, it is difficult to criticize Dawson's Roman Catholic position - especially in the usual Protestant fashion, for Dawson either admits the validity of these criticisms or rises above them. Roman Catholicism is usually criticized, for instance, as forsaking its distinctive spiritual vocation in its quest for political power. As Arnold Toynbee points out, the Papacy's downfall was deserved because "it failed grievously to live up to its own sublime ideals. It had betrayed its principles, first in order to fight for power, and then in order to raise the funds that are in indispensable sinews of worldly warfare."<sup>2</sup> Paul Blanchard exhaustively documents ways in which the Roman Catholic quest for power is a present reality as well as an historical fact.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Enquiries (etc.), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Toynbee's review of Dawson's Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 5 f.

<sup>3</sup> Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1951).



Similarly Tillich, speaking of the Roman hierarchy, says

It is an international power, playing the international power game, fighting for the preservation of every stronghold and for the conquest of new positions of power.<sup>1</sup>

But whether or not these criticisms are justified, Dawson at least is careful to indicate that this is not his view of the proper function of the Church. He severely criticizes the attempt of the Church to wield worldly and political power. As he writes,

Whenever the Church has seemed to dominate the world politically and achieves a victory within the secular sphere, she has had to pay for it in a double measure of temporal and spiritual misfortune. Thus the triumph of the Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire was followed first by the loss of the East to Islam and then by the schism with the West. The medieval attempt to create a Christian theocracy was followed by the Renaissance and the destruction of the religious unity of Western Europe. . . .<sup>2</sup>

And again,

It is notorious that ecclesiastics often make the most unscrupulous politicians, as we see in the case of Wolsey, Richelieu, Mazzarin, and Alberoni, and in the same way the political parties which adopt religious programs. . . have always distinguished themselves by their fanaticism and violence; in fact by a general lack of all the political virtues. Political religion is an offence alike to religion and to politics; it takes from Caesar what belongs to him of right and fills the temple with the noise and dust of the market place.<sup>3</sup>

Dawson believes in putting the stress instead on religion as a spiritual power operating from within and transforming social life "not by competing with secular politics on their own ground but by altering the focus of human thought. . . ."<sup>4</sup> Although he believes that the Church is ultimately the greatest power in the world and that it will ultimately be victorious, its power and victory are not manifested openly and visibly, but rather

<sup>1</sup>"The Christian Churches and Europe," p. 334.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and the Modern State, pp. 120 f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 122 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

secretly and obscurely through apparent defeat and persecution.<sup>1</sup>

Again, it is thought by many Protestants that the Roman Catholic quest for power is an attempt to construct a theocracy in which the Church rules supreme over the State. Tillich, for instance, criticizes the Roman Catholic demand

that the hierarchically constituted Church should direct the entire religiously relevant life of the people. The ultimate consequence of this demand is the medieval belief - and it has never yet been given up - that every political hierarchy must subordinate itself to the spiritual and priestly authority.<sup>2</sup>

Dawson admits that the ecclesiastics of the Middle Ages wrongly sought for a theocratic society and that this quest in turn was a factor giving rise to the Reformation.<sup>3</sup> Although he does not renounce the idea that the spiritual principle should reign supreme over the political principle, Dawson does believe that Church and State should not be fused. Each has, according to Dawson,

its own formal principle without which it would not be itself. The State exists for the people, and by the people, but the Church exists for the Divine Word and the Spirit of which it is the Organ.<sup>4</sup>

The ideal arrangement, therefore, is an autonomous spiritual society co-existing with the national political units "without either absorbing or being absorbed by them."<sup>5</sup> In place of theocracy, then, Dawson believes in a dualism between Church and State. The tension and friction between the two is, he believes, a healthy one, for Church and State need to cross swords in order to maintain their vitality. Dawson believes that such a dualism was

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<sup>1</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 130; The Kingdom of God and History, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup>"The Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church," p. 122. As Visser T'Hooft puts it, Roman Catholicism believes in a separation of the Church from the State but not in a separation of the State from the Church (The Church and the World Society, p. 61). Theocracy is perhaps a misleading designation for ecclesiastical domination since it can also indicate a Church-State in which the State dominates (as in Byzantium). "Ecclesioeracy" is perhaps a better designation, as used by John Baillie in What is Christian Civilization?, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Politics, p. 91

<sup>5</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 249.



the very foundation of the medieval achievement. Because the Church in the West was an autonomous order it was able to survive the collapse of the Western Empire. The Church of the Byzantine East, on the other hand, was so closely inter-twined with the Empire that "it formed a single social organism which could not be divided without being destroyed."<sup>1</sup>

A correlative criticism of Roman Catholicism is that it condones the use of force and coercion in upholding what it conceives to be true and that it discourages autonomous creativity. This is probably Tillich's major criticism of Roman Catholicism. Again, whether or not this criticism is justified, Dawson has no hesitation about upholding the rights of full religious freedom and autonomous creativity. He admits that the late medieval inquisition was a black spot in the history of the Church and that the Church's activity here was far less enlightened than anything in the darkest period of the Dark Ages.<sup>2</sup> But although Dawson recognizes that Catholicism has been criticized for its failure to grant religious freedom, he believes that such a criticism of contemporary Roman Catholicism is unfair.<sup>3</sup> His own view of the polarity of life necessitates that he acknowledge that differing spiritual traditions make a definite contribution to social vitality and progress. He believes, therefore, that it is unjust to deprive any sect or religious body of free expression in education and social life.<sup>4</sup> As he says, "only a bigot can demand that the mind of every man should be forced into the same mould, irrespective of the spiritual tradition to which he belongs."<sup>5</sup> Dawson insists that the autonomous values of culture must be recognized and protected.

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<sup>1</sup>The Making of Europe, pp. 46, 185.

<sup>2</sup>"Medieval Christianity," p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>Enquiries (etc.), p. 62; The Judgment of the Nations, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>Idem. It might be noted that this viewpoint comes from an English Roman Catholic living in a country where Catholicism has had to struggle for its freedom. In countries where Roman Catholics dominate, they quite often speak differently in reference to minority groups.



Again, Roman Catholicism is frequently criticized as producing too complete an identification of religion and culture. As Tillich sees it, Catholicism gives unconditional significance to certain limited and particular cultural forms; it idealized a particular philosophy or a particular political form as an absolute.<sup>1</sup> Such procedure necessarily involves, he believes, the denial of the right of autonomous cultural forms to develop according to their own laws. But Dawson is not guilty of this error. He recognizes the value of autonomous forms, as we have seen, and realizes that religion should not "lord it over" culture. His view seems to be that religion should inspire the cultural forms from within, and use these forms without abusing them. And further, as we saw, Dawson does not believe that any particular culture (such as that of the Middle Ages) is the complete expression of Christianity.

And finally, Roman Catholicism is frequently criticized by Protestants as mistakenly identifying the Church with the Kingdom of God or at least considering the Church to be a visible manifestation of the ultimate Kingdom. As a result, according to Karl Heim, the fruitful tension is lost between the ultimate Kingdom and the limited and finite Church. This in turn tends to obscure the contrast and distinction between the Church and the world. To put it in doctrinal terms, the contrast between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism can best be seen, according to Heim, in the differing evaluations given to the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> Roman Catholicism sees the Resurrection as a visible manifestation of power - a miraculous spectacle designed to rehabilitate Christ in the eyes of the world. But for Protestantism, says Heim, the Resurrection is not an infallible proof of Christ's

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<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Spirit and Truth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1935), pp. 78 ff.

claim for Lordship but is an added apologetic difficulty that only serves to heighten the tension between the gospel and the world. The practical consequences of this difference in doctrine are that in the Roman Catholic view, the victory of Christ's resurrection is carried on and enforced by the omnipotent, infallible Church as the agent of Christ's victorious power over the world. But in the Protestant view, as Heim sees it, Christ has not yet won the final victory; He is still at work battling his foes. Therefore the historical tension between the Kingdom and the Church (and the Church and the world) remains and, in fact, increases as the end of history draws near.<sup>1</sup> According to this view, the Catholic claim for worldly power and dominion is the ultimate sinful pretention. Through its identification of the Church with the ultimate Kingdom Catholicism thus, to quote Reinhold Niebuhr, "consistently obscures the contradiction between the historical and the divine. . . ." <sup>2</sup> The result is that the ultimate Kingdom of perfection becomes domesticated into a Kingdom of this world, and the transcendence and otherness of the divine in its judgment upon the world is hopelessly blurred.

But again, Dawson does not leave himself open to this criticism, at least not in its fullest force. Following St. Augustine's tension between the City of God and the City of Earth, Dawson consistently maintains the transcendence of the divine. Accordingly, the City of God, he believes, can never be identified with the visible, hierarchical Church nor with the concrete millennial Kingdom of the old apocalyptic tradition.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult in all of this to say how closely Dawson follows the

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Heim, Spirit and Truth, pp. 86 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Faith and History, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>Enquiries (etc.) p. 247. Yet Dawson does seem to follow Augustine in identifying the Church with the millennial Kingdom so that the prophecies of this Kingdom are believed to have been fulfilled in the Church (The Kingdom of God and History, p. 206; Enquiries, p. 255). And further, although

traditional Roman Catholic view. But at least he does not dissolve the tension between the conditional and the unconditional. Although he sees the Church as in some ways the visible manifestation of the Kingdom, his major emphasis is on the distinction and tension between the two. Even though he says that the society of the Church "is the only Kingdom of God on earth that we have any right to look for. . . ." <sup>1</sup> he insists with equal vigor that it is not the Kingdom of Christ or the City of God. <sup>2</sup>

These observations along with what we have already noted concerning Tillich's immunity to the usual Catholic criticisms of the Protestant position suggest that in Tillich and Dawson we are dealing with representatives of the two great Christian traditions who are large-minded enough to transcend many of the limitations of their particular traditions and to appreciate the unique contributions and dynamic elements in each other's faiths. This in turn gives hope for the possibility of an ecumenical interpretation of history incorporating Catholic as well as Protestant elements. Our survey will close, in the next chapter, with a discussion of the possibilities and conditions of such a development.

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the Church is not to be identified with the ultimate City of God it is, he says, certainly not to be separated from it (Enquiries, p. 248). The Church, although not the City of God, is the visible, sacramental organ of it ("The Christian View of History," p. 319), and the Church and the Kingdom are organically related since the Church is "the future Kingdom in embryo" (Christianity and the New Age, p. 84).

<sup>1</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 119.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC ELEMENTS IN TILLICH AND DAWSON

Tillich and Dawson, as we have seen, are representatives of two great branches of the Christian faith who, although steeped in their own traditions and completely loyal to them, have sufficient breadth and clarity to transcend some of their limitations. In the various levels of social and historical analysis as well as in philosophical and theological doctrines we have noted many comparisons. Although the contrasts at times are sharp, the similarities are far more prominent.

One basic reason for these similarities is the fact that in Tillich we have a Protestant who is much more metaphysically and liturgically-minded than most Protestants and in Dawson we have a Roman Catholic who is less Thomistic and much more Augustinian than most Catholics. A brief analysis of these factors will lead us to a discussion of how an interpretation of history satisfactory to the modern mind must include Catholic and Protestant elements mutually re-inforcing (and mutually criticizing) one another.

#### 1. Reason and Metaphysics

Tillich's concern with metaphysics has resulted in a recovery of ideas and concepts which have usually been regarded as more typically Catholic. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Tillich and Dawson converging at a good many points in the philosophical basis for their respective interpretations of history.

An emphasis upon metaphysics carries with it the demand for a higher evaluation of reason than is usually found in Protestant thought, especially when reason is regarded, as in Tillich, as the very structure of reality.

New products of the historical process are attempts which can succeed only if they follow the demands of objective reason. Neither nature nor history can create anything that contradicts reason. The new and the old in history and nature are bound together in an overwhelming rational unity. . . . The new does not break this unity; it cannot because objective reason is the structural possibility, the logos of being.<sup>1</sup>

Dawson's appraisal of reason is no less lofty.

For reason is itself a creative power which is every organizing the raw material of life and sensible experience into the ordered cosmos of an intelligible world - a world which is not a mere subjective image but corresponds in a certain measure to objective reality.<sup>2</sup>

And the type of human reason praised - the type that corresponds to this basic reasonable structure of objective reality - is for both authors not the discursive reason associated with rationalism and skepticism, but something far deeper. It is not, as in Tillich's terminology, "technical reason" concerned with the discovery of means (the parent of "controlling knowledge"), for this loses the depth and universality of being.<sup>3</sup> "Reasoning" thus separated from reason in its classical sense (concerned with ends) becomes a tool for non-rational purposes such as the will to power. This leads in turn to the de-humanization of man.<sup>4</sup> The type of human reason

<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 79.

<sup>2</sup>The Age of the Gods, p. xix.

<sup>3</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 72-75; 82.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 73. Dawson similarly notes that "The abandonment of the higher knowledge of the pure intellect for that of the discursive reason has inevitably led on to the descent from rationalism to materialism, and so to that final stage of degradation, represented in different ways by pragmatism, vitalism, and behaviourism, in which the mind abdicates its sovereignty, and the obscure forces of unconscious impulse reign supreme" ("The Revolt of the East," p.6).

praised is, to borrow Tillich's terms again, "ontological (or subjective) reason" which has the possibility of transcending itself and confronting the logos structure of reality; it is "the structure of the mind which enables the mind to grasp and to transform reality."<sup>1</sup> For both authors this type of reason has more kinship with the intellectus of the schoolmen and points to a deeper knowledge of reality through intuition, initiation, vital communion, and immediate awareness - in short, through what Tillich calls an eros relationship.<sup>2</sup> Both men therefore lament the current attack on reason and the judgment that reason is an instrument of pride that only widens the gulf between man and God. Tillich for instance believes in "the elevation of reason as the principle of truth above all forms of authoritarianism and obscurantism."<sup>3</sup> As he says,

This is a truly Christian issue even if it be fought out largely in humanistic terms. Christian faith which proclaims Christ as "Logos" cannot reject reason as the principle of truth and justice."<sup>4</sup>

This high evaluation of reason in both authors naturally leads to a tendency to give greater consideration to the place of Natural Theology. Although Tillich believes that "Natural Theology" itself is a misnomer (since there is no "natural" knowledge of God apart from revelation), he insists that reason is indispensable in the construction of theology.<sup>5</sup> While rejecting the Natural Theology of the Enlightenment, he believes that its motive and intention were essentially sound.<sup>6</sup> Reason, although not able to discover theological truth or construct "proofs" of God's existence

<sup>1</sup>Systematic Theology, I, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Tillich: "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," p. 10; The Protestant Era, p. 72; "Existential Philosophy," p. 67. Dawson: Religion and Culture, pp. 33 f.; Progress and Religion, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>"The World Situation," in The Christian Answer, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Idem.; See also Systematic Theology, I, 155.

<sup>5</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 119 f.; "What is Wrong with the Dialectical Theology?" p. 110.

<sup>6</sup>"Natural and Revealed Religion," pp. 166 f; "The World Situation," in The Christian Answer, p. 65.



through arguments from analogy, is needed to analyze the human predicament and to describe the unconditional elements in man, nature, and history.<sup>1</sup> Its role is to provide existential questions and to show how human finitude points beyond itself. Thus, although it cannot construct adequate theological answers, it does provide the needed questions without which the answers given through revelation would be meaningless.<sup>2</sup>

Although Dawson approaches the subject from a different angle and speaks of Natural Theology as important for an understanding of the religious aspects of the world cultures, some of his conclusions about Natural Theology are similar. With Tillich, Dawson rejects the attempt of the philosophers of the Enlightenment "to make Natural Theology the autonomous principle of a purely rational religion."<sup>3</sup> Whenever it has appeared, even outside of Christianity, Natural Theology has always been preceded by a revealed theology and has derived from a supernatural and historical faith. And within Christian civilization, it has always existed, Dawson maintains, as a part of the total Christian tradition.<sup>4</sup> This dependency upon an historical faith, however, does not negate its distinctive role. As we indicated, Dawson sees its importance more in terms of its contribution to cultural analyses than as a preparation for the reception of revelation (as with Tillich). Natural Theology, he believes, is needed to aid in classifying and interpreting the natural knowledge of God possessed by the human mind<sup>5</sup> which is experienced and expressed variously in different cultures. Seen in this

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<sup>1</sup>"The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," p. 12

<sup>2</sup>"The Present Theological Situation," p. 305. Tillich comments, however, that the ability to raise questions about the ultimate rests itself upon prior revelation.

<sup>3</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 3,4,43 f.

<sup>5</sup>Here Dawson seems to be at odds with Tillich who believes that such natural knowledge of God is impossible. Dawson's statement about the priority of historical, revealed faith to Natural Theology, may, however, indicate that the difference is not as great as it first appears.

light, Natural Theology becomes a corrective to the study of Comparative Religions so that the latter does not degenerate into a branch of anthropology. Its task is "to interpret the supercultural and purely religious elements that are contained in the hieroglyphs of ritual and myth" so that religious phenomena may be explained in purely religious terms and not just anthropologically.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless both authors, although stressing the role of human reason in opposition to current theological and philosophical trends, concur in placing certain limitations upon its possibilities. Tillich indicates that reason, although aware of unconditional elements, is definitely finite. It has, he believes, inner contradictions which it cannot overcome and therefore stands in need of salvation.<sup>2</sup> According to Tillich, human knowledge cannot attain the vantage point of "the absolute position of the knowing subject" but is always existentially involved in history.<sup>3</sup> Tillich agrees with Schelling in the analysis that "Consciousness is not capable of turning freely to the eternal forms at all times" but is rather a battlefield of demonic and divine forces.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly Dawson, following Aquinas, says that "human intelligence is not that of a pure spirit" and that "man cannot attain in this life to the direct intuition of truth and spiritual reality."<sup>5</sup> "Man," as he says elsewhere, "possesses a kind of knowledge which transcends the sensible without reaching the intuition of the divine."<sup>6</sup> Dawson is therefore hostile to all arid, rationalistic approaches to God and

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<sup>1</sup>Religion and Culture, p. 61

<sup>2</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 81, 105, 155.

<sup>3</sup>The Interpretation of History, pp. 63, 134, 150, 173 f., 191 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>5</sup>Progress and Religion, p. 173 f.

<sup>6</sup>Christianity and the New Age, p. 33.



frequently quotes Pascal's declaration of faith as his own: "Not the God of philosophers and savants, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."<sup>1</sup>

One further way in which a high appraisal of reason brings both authors together is in their mutual desire to see the gap bridged between Theology and Philosophy. Tillich, as we have seen, lays great stress on the correlation of philosophical questions with theological answers. Dawson, although not expressing it this way, believes with equal conviction that the breach between theology (the world of historical religion) and philosophy (the world of rational thought) is tragic. On the one hand he sees the religious world with all its richness deprived of means of cultural expression and on the other hand the world of rational thought, lacking meaningful consecration and direction, coming under the domination of negative and destructive forces. The result is a conflict between "science without significance and the spirit which can only express itself in self-destruction."<sup>3</sup> But this dualism is not necessarily final. Dawson believes that it can be overcome through a constructive union of the two areas on the basis of a common intellectualism.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Regardless of these observations it must be noted that Dawson's emphasis is more upon the continuity between reason and revelation (following the Thomistic conception of reason as the principle by which the intelligible world can be built up gradually through the senses). As finally supplemented by grace and revelation, reason is not destroyed but completed (Progress and Religion, pp. 174 ff.). Tillich on the other hand, while agreeing that reason is not destroyed by revelation and that revelation makes its appeal to reason, puts more emphasis on the discontinuity between the two. The best that reason can do is not to lead to the divine by climbing upward but rather to lead to the abyss where one confronts the ontological shock and the stigma of non-being. The inner conflicts and contradictions of reason create radical questioning that drives one to the quest for revelation. Reason is thus not so much supplemented and lifted to a higher stage by revelation as it is altogether saved and re-established.

<sup>2</sup>Religion and Culture, pp. 20 f., 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 21; Progress and Religion, pp. 233 f., 247 ff, Enquiries, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Enquiries, (etc.) p. 156; Religion and Culture, p. 217. Natural Theology, Dawson believes, is an indispensable link between the two, although not itself able to bridge the gap (Religion and Culture, p. 44).



## 2. Ontology

The emphasis which Tillich places upon the ontological approach results in the development of many concepts reminiscent of medieval or early Catholicism so that again it is not surprising to find the two authors agreeing on a wide variety of topics.

The emphasis upon God as Being which we noted in Tillich also finds articulation in Dawson's thought. Dawson even occasionally uses the concept "Ground" which is so central in Tillich's thought. He speaks for instance of "the ground of the soul" - that deeper psychological level "to which sensible images and the activity of the discursive reason cannot penetrate."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he comments that

all of the great traditions of the world religions . . . unite in asserting the presence of God in the depths of the soul as its eternal transcendent 'ground.'<sup>2</sup>

Dawson, like Tillich, is eager to transcend the Cartesian split between subject and object, spirit and matter. Both authors thus have affinities with the mystical tradition (especially in its Germanic forms) based on the obscure knowledge of God in the depth of the human soul. Tillich would concur with Dawson in the observation that this basic intuition of God

provides a far more satisfactory basis for an explanation of the facts of religious experience . . . than a theory which leaves no place for any experience of spiritual reality, except a merely inferential knowledge on the one hand and on the other a revelation which is entirely derived from supernatural faith and has no natural psychological basis.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, both Tillich and Dawson are careful to indicate that any mystical union with God is ultimately dependent upon God Himself and not upon any inherent quality of the soul.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Enquiries, p. 195. Cf. Tillich's doctrine of the Unvordenkliche.

<sup>2</sup> Religion and Culture, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Enquiries, p. 197.

<sup>4</sup> Dawson: Enquiries, p. 194 f; Tillich: Review of Meister Eckhart, p. 662.

We have noted previously Dawson's early interest in the mystics and his recognition of the impact upon his thought of such writers as St. Bonaventura, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa, and the seventeenth-century French mystics. Dawson, by the way, calls attention to the fact that there is a traditional link between mysticism and the Christian (and post-Christian) philosophies of history and comments that this is no doubt largely responsible for his own interest in the interpretation of history.<sup>1</sup> The link between mysticism and philosophy of history would seem to be German Romanticism, according to Dawson's analysis given elsewhere, through which the mystical intuition and imaginative vision entered into the thought of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.<sup>2</sup> If so, Tillich's thought has similar roots.

Another aspect of the ontological approach is the emphasis in both authors upon love as an ontological power. Tillich feels that Protestantism has too often considered love as an emotional or moralistic force and has failed to see it as a power that penetrates every moment of reality. Love, according to Tillich, is the movement of the life process itself in its transition from original unity through self-estrangement to reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> Following the young Hegel, Tillich shows how "life duplicates itself in love, creating the other and reuniting him with itself."<sup>4</sup> In this sense love constitutes being as such and is the essence of all life. Although Tillich includes in his definition of love the element of separation through which the new comes into being, he stresses love's uniting power and calls love "the reality of reconciliation."

The richness of life is based on the possibility of infinite contradiction and separations, but only if they are reconciled and do not destroy the original unity. Love in this sense constitutes being. Being is synthesis, namely the synthesis of love.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Dawson to the writer, January, 1952.

<sup>2</sup>Progress and Religion, pp. 25 f.

<sup>3</sup>Propositions, IV, p.7; Systematic Theology, I, 279 f.; "The Protestant Vision," pp. 9 f; The Protestant Era, p. xli; The Shaking of the Foundations pp. 110 ff. This definition includes all the various types of love and transcends the distinction between eros and agape.

<sup>4</sup>Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought, p.9 <sup>5</sup>Idem.

Dawson similarly speaks of how love lost its numinous quality and, especially by the Protestant sects, has been degraded into a sentimental platitute or a moralistic social beneficence "tainted with the suggestion of social patronage and ethical self-satisfaction."<sup>1</sup> As a counter to this, Dawson speaks of love as a dynamic spiritual power that is able to unmake and remake the human personality. Following what he believes to be St. Paul's view on love, Dawson declares that

It is no human power or moral quality, but a supernatural energy that transforms human nature and builds a new humanity.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, although Dawson does not see love as an integrating principle in a whole system of various levels of estrangement and reconciliatn, he does agree with Tillich in seeing the need for a more comprehensive definition of love which includes numinous elements of power connected with the very nature of being.

Another facet of the ontological approach is the basic unity of life which both Tillich and Dawson stress. For Tillich as well as for Dawson, this involves almost a hierarchical ordering of being and value in which everything has its place in a vast system of inter-relationships. Some of the implications of this are seen in such widely-divergent ideas as: man as a microcosm of the universe, the mutual involvement of man, nature, and history in tragedy and the quest for salvation, the perception of spiritual elements in secular movements, the analysis of style as a reflection of hidden spiritual insights and longings, and the doctrine of the return of all things to their source. These have already been discussed and need not be elaborated here.

The centrality of being for both authors also involves, as we saw, an ontological conception of Christ's person and work. This is expressed for Tillich in his doctrine of the New Being and in Dawson involves

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<sup>1</sup>Enquiries, (etc.) , p. 298

<sup>2</sup>Idem.



analogous formulae. It also no doubt accounts for the value both authors place upon the Johannine identification of Christ and the Logos.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Ecclesiology

Perhaps the area of Tillich's thought which brings him into closest approximation with Roman Catholicism is his stress on the importance of the Church and its liturgy and sacraments. Although having a different conception of the Church, especially as concerns its authoritarian and institutional form, Tillich insists as strongly as any Roman Catholic that the Church is the home of all true Christian theology. The theologian who attempts to spin theology out of his own experience or wisdom, Tillich believes, will only produce subjective ideas and private opinions. Christian theology, as well as the Christian interpretation of history, is "the methodical self-interpretation of the Christian Church. . . ."<sup>2</sup> The failure to see this has been, Tillich believes, one of the great errors of Protestant individualism and subjectivism. Tillich, with Dawson, believes that we must recover the corporate aspects of Christianity and put greater weight on the Church as an objective spiritual reality. Over against all nominalistic views of the Church as an association created through the decision of like-minded individuals, Tillich insists, as we have seen, that the Church antecedes individual piety and is not the result of it.<sup>3</sup>

Further parallels may be drawn between Tillich's conception of the Church as the "bearer of history" and Dawson's idea of the Church as a bearer of a living tradition which produces historical consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup>Dawson: Christianity and the New Age, pp. 85 f. ; Tillich: Systematic Theology, I, 15-18.

<sup>2</sup>"The Problem of Theological Method," The Journal of Religion (January, 1947), XXVII, 19; See also: The Kingdom of God and History, p. 129; The Interpretation of History, p. 41; Systematic Theology, I, 48

<sup>3</sup>"A Re-Interpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," p. 147.

The Church, according to Tillich, is ideally a "Gestalt of Grace" (a medium through which Grace is revealed) although it should never be identified with that Grace.<sup>1</sup> As Tillich sees it, Protestantism must have this substantial base in order to make its protest effective and real. Again, both men agree that the Church is the ultimately triumphant principle of society. Says Tillich,

Although the Church can be distorted in existence it cannot be destroyed in its being and meaning since it is based in the new Being which has overcome existence.<sup>2</sup>

As a corollary to this doctrine of the Church, Tillich places a high evaluation on the sacraments and has been one of the leaders in the movement to recover this neglected aspect of the Christian tradition. Too much emphasis has been placed, Tillich believes, on the conscious and rationalized aspects of Christianity. The continual demand for conscious decisions in conformity with conscience has been, as we saw, one of the factors leading to an increase of mental disorder in Protestant countries.<sup>3</sup> The lack of mystical emotion and concrete symbols that appeal to the deeper levels of consciousness accounts, Tillich believes, for the failure of Protestantism to reach and to hold the masses. Especially today, he believes,

the masses that are disintegrated need symbols that are immediately understandable without the mediation of intellect. They need sacred objectives beyond <sup>the</sup> subjective quality of a preacher.<sup>4</sup>

Tillich therefore goes even to the extent (which is remarkable for one expelled from Nazi Germany for his political activism) of saying that liturgy is more important today than any program of Christian action.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup>Propositions, Part V, p. 9. Dawson holds similarly that "the life of the Church never fails, since it possesses an infinite capacity for regeneration" (Christianity and the New Age, p. 111). But whereas Dawson believes that "the Church that made Europe may yet be able to save Europe" (The Modern Dilemma, p. 113), Tillich believes that it is not the Church that is able to save society but only the New Being (The Interp. of Hist., p. 225)

<sup>3</sup>Dawson, too, comments on the error of confining Christianity to

Receiving from the eternal (and participating in the sacramental reality of the New Being), says Tillich, precedes action.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, however, that Tillich does not believe in a simple re-introduction of Catholic sacraments and symbols into Protestant worship (which would be nothing but feeble imitation) but rather the creation of new forms of sacramental expression growing out of the experience of the daily life. As Tillich says,

It is not so important to produce new liturgies as it is to penetrate into the depths of what happens day by day, in labor and industry, in marriage and friendship, in social relations and recreation, in meditation and tranquility, in the unconscious and the conscious life. To elevate all this into the light of the eternal is the great task of cultus and not to reshape a tradition traditionally.<sup>2</sup>

And further, it should be noted that Tillich's concern for a recovery of a strong sacramental element is conditioned by his emphasis upon the need for prophetic criticism as a corrective to the abuses of magical sacramentalism.

A convenient summary of the Catholic elements which Tillich feels must be recovered by Protestantism is given by Tillich in his concept of the "Catholic substance."<sup>3</sup> This term includes most of the elements we have been discussing: the emphasis upon the new reality (or New Being), the sacraments, the need for tradition, authority, and symbols, the Church as a "Gestalt of Grace," reason as a basic structure of reality, and love as an ontological power overcoming existential separation.<sup>4</sup> Tillich

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the inner world of conscience ("Concordats or Catacombs?", p. 910). For a good defense of the Protestant emphasis upon the necessity of conscious moral decisions as the basis for faith over against Roman Catholic sacramentalism and mysticism, see Karl Heim, Spirit and Truth, pp. 113 f.

<sup>4</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 228.

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<sup>1</sup>"Vertical and Horizontal Thinking," pp. 112 f.

<sup>2</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup>Compare Dawson's concept of Catholicism as a "living tradition."

<sup>4</sup>"The Protestant Vision," pp. 8-12; The Protestant Era, pp. 191, 197; "The Present Theological Situation," p. 308.



believes that this "Catholic substance" has often been regarded as something magical and that historically it has increasingly become "encased within an ever-hardening crust."<sup>1</sup> But, as Tillich goes on to say,

whenever the hardness and crust are broken through and the substance becomes visible, it exercises a peculiar fascination; then we see what was once the life-substance and inheritance of us all and what we have now lost, and a deep yearning awakens in us for the departed youth of our culture.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Augustinianism

So far we have been considering the typically Catholic categories behind the historical interpretations of our authors. We shall now survey some of the aspects of their thought more typically associated with Protestantism.

It is not surprising to find a substantial amount of Augustinianism in Tillich. The work of Augustine lies, of course, behind the whole Lutheran tradition in which Tillich stands. Tillich is particularly indebted to Augustine's ontology (being as good and evil as non-being),<sup>3</sup> his insight into the contradictions in existence and his concept of love as the power of overcoming existential separation and re-uniting the whole of disrupted existence,<sup>4</sup> his correlation between empirical freedom and transcendent necessity (which makes the fall both unavoidable and an act of human freedom),<sup>5</sup> and his doctrine of self-transcendence in which there is an immediate awareness of being - a presence within the finite of an element that transcends it.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Idem.

<sup>3</sup>The Courage to Be, p. 115.

<sup>4</sup>"Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought," passim; "The Courage to Be, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup>The Protestant Era, p. 250; The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 342.

<sup>6</sup>Systematic Theology, I, 207, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," pp. 1, 4; "What is Wrong with the Dialectical Theology?", p. 140.

The interesting thing to note is that Dawson, too, has been considerably influenced by Augustinianism (in its apocalyptic, dualistic form) and that this is no doubt one of the major reasons that his writings are so acceptable to Protestant readers. Dawson lists St. Paul and St. Augustine as among his two greatest spiritual teachers.

I cannot call myself a Thomist in the strict sense, but rather an Augustinian, and think my thought owes more to the theologians than to the philosophers; above all to St. Paul.<sup>1</sup>

Although never directly critical of Thomism, Dawson does indicate some of its shortcomings. He points out, for instance, that St. Thomas never developed an adequate philosophy of history since he was too much under the influence of Hellenic and Aristotelian traditions. Dawson himself seeks to help remedy this situation through a stress upon the Biblical and dualistic elements of the Augustinian tradition.<sup>2</sup>

The one aspect of Augustine's thought that has most deeply affected Dawson is his conception of the Two Cities which, as Dawson points out, also had a great influence upon the Protestant Reformers.<sup>3</sup> According to St. Augustine, two spiritual types of men (two wills or two loves) produce two cities (or two types of society) - the city of man built upon self-love and self-will and the City of God built upon the love and service of God. These two cities, says Augustine, have been running their course through the ages behind the natural process of social conflict and tension. As a substratum to the whole of history there is therefore a deep spiritual dualism and conflict between the two cities (primarily between the Church and the world) that gives history

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Dawson to the writer, January, 1952.

<sup>2</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 313. The term Augustinianism is used here with some hesitation. Augustine himself does not always retain the "Augustinian" dualism or tension. Tillich criticizes his doctrine of the millenium as being fulfilled in the Church as a tragic failure to apply prophetic criticism widely enough (The Protestant Era, p. 26).

<sup>3</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 209.

its ultimate significance.<sup>1</sup> Now this conflict, Dawson believes, is the very essence of history and has assumed different forms through the ages. In the early history of the Church, for instance, it was a simple conflict between the barbarians (as an external power) and the Church. Later in the medieval society it took the form of a conflict between good and evil within the Christian society and within the Christian Church.<sup>2</sup> Today the conflict is as great as ever in relation to the spiritual forces of darkness against which the Church must struggle. But it would be a mistake to see Augustine's views solely in terms of this dualism and opposition. An essential element in Augustine's thought is, as Dawson points out, the idea that history is a dynamic process in which the divine purpose is progressively realized. Earthly history, then, is the City of God in the process of formation.<sup>3</sup> Dawson's stress nevertheless, is on the dualistic aspects of the Augustinian tradition. Although he believes that the City of God is progressively realized in the course of the ages, this process, as we saw in the last chapter, is secret and paradoxical, not openly manifested or scientifically discernible. The outward process of history moves, in fact, toward a harvest of evil rather than the progressive realization of the good.<sup>4</sup> Evil, according to Dawson, flourishes right up to the end of history when it will finally be separated at the Last Judgment.<sup>5</sup> There is, further, no thought that man constructs this City of God or that it is realizable within time, for, as Dawson says, "The conflict between the two cities is as old as humanity and must endure to the end of time."<sup>6</sup> There is therefore in Dawson no rationalizing away

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<sup>1</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 125; Enquiries, (etc.), pp. 240 f. "The Christian View of History," p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 205; Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup>"The Christian View of History," p. 319; Enquiries (etc.), pp. 246 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>5</sup>Enquiries (etc.), p. 241.

<sup>6</sup>Religion and the Modern State, p. 79.



of the Augustinian conflict as in the medieval synthesis; Biblical eschatology is not eradicated in terms of Platonic idealism.

This Augustinian dualism is undoubtedly at the roots of a great many more of the similarities which we find between Dawson and Tillich. It is probably responsible for Dawson's awareness of the discontinuity of life and the place he makes in his thought for creative conflict, diversity, and polarity - the necessity for a healthy tension between Church and State, religion and culture. It perhaps also accounts for Dawson's perception of the demonic forces and of the paradoxical action of God in history, his retention of the prophetic and apocalyptic emphasis upon the mystery and irrationality of history.<sup>1</sup> It would also seem to be at the roots of Dawson's rejection, with Tillich, of the liberal view of progress and his insistence, to the contrary, that history is a tragic process with elements of uniqueness and spontaneity.<sup>2</sup>

Further, Dawson's retention of the Augustinian dualism of Church and world has consequences for the similarity between Tillich and Dawson in their analyses of the relationship between religion and culture. Dawson cautions, as we have noted, that religion and culture should not become identified. This means that every particular culture stands under the divine judgment and that it must recognize its human limitations and not attempt to "force its particular historical values into universal divine truths."<sup>3</sup> For religion on the other hand this means that the element of transcendence is absolutely essential. Dawson notes, in fact,

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<sup>1</sup> Religion and the Modern State, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> The apocalyptic element in the Augustinian tradition accounts for Dawson's rejection of an optimistic view of history without becoming pessimistic or losing the element of eschatological hope.

<sup>3</sup> Religion and Culture, p. 211.

that as a general principle, the higher the religion the greater is its "otherness."<sup>1</sup> Christianity, even though the principle of life to civilization, must, as Newman warned, be "continually at issue with the world."<sup>2</sup> Dawson stresses this because he believes that the Church has so often failed at this point. Especially today in confronting the new Leviathans, the Church must "once more take up her prophetic office and bear witness to the Word even if it means the judgment of the nations and an open war with the powers of the world."<sup>3</sup>

And finally, this Augustinian dualism seems to be the basis for Dawson's rejection with Tillich, of the idealistic interpretation of history which, he believes, is at error because

it eliminates that sense of divine otherness and transcendence, that sense of Divine Judgment and Divine Grace which are the very essence of the Christian attitude to history.<sup>4</sup>

Dawson thus prefers, as we have seen, to call his interpretation a "theology of history" rather than a "philosophy of history" since the latter too often indicates a rationalistic or idealistic construction.

Dawson's hostility to idealism, his preference for the theological and Biblical approach, his awareness of the discontinuity of life and the paradoxical action of God in history, and his stress upon the Jewish and prophetic elements as over against the Greek metaphysical views brings him perhaps into closer proximity than even Tillich to some of the contemporary Protestant emphases (as seen, for instance, in Barth and Brunner).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Modern Dilemma, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson's review, "Mr. T.S. Eliot on the Meaning of Culture," p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>The Judgment of the Nations, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 212.

<sup>5</sup>Dawson nevertheless retains a large dose of Thomism in veiled form as seen for instance in his conception of Grace as the agent for the completion of nature, his view of the hierarchical ordering of the universe, and his acceptance of the basic framework of the two orders of nature and supernature.

The prophetic strain in Dawson's thought is so prominent, V.A. Demant believes, that, upon surveying a number of figures in order to form a comparison, he suggests that Dawson is most like Jeremiah.

Not that there is anything gloomy about Mr. Dawson, as this comparison might suggest to those who misleadingly know the prophet only as the symbol of ruin; nor, of course, has Dawson's scholarly urbanity any of the fierceness which struck terror into the hearts of those who heard the Old Testament seer. But there is a close affinity between the problem and the answer in their respective messages. Both are speaking to a nation assured of its own good standing with God and incredulous of any prediction of judgment. Both insist upon the need to disentangle the hidden resources of religion from its external entanglements, especially its stifling connection with the State. Both see the coming destruction of the secular order, and teach that its only power of rejuvenation lies in religious faith which has its roots elsewhere. What is probably the most arresting coincidence is the confidence with which each for his own generation knows what must be given up or helped to die, because he knows what must be kept or recovered and built up into a new structure.<sup>1</sup>

##### 5. Towards An Ecumenical Interpretation of History

The crisis of our century has brought together some of the keenest Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars in a mutual concern for a meaningful interpretation of history. To date, there has been very little collaboration, however, in the investigation of this problem. Each communion has kept more or less to an elaboration of its traditional approaches. The viewpoint of this writer is that both traditions have indispensable elements to contribute to the construction of an interpretation of history. There is a pressing necessity for both "Catholic substance" and the "Protestant principle" - Catholic substance including what we have referred to as the metaphysical, ontological, and ecclesiastical elements and the Protestant principle covering what we might call the more Augustinian emphases on judgment, dualism, and prophetic criticism. These two elements, as Tillich points out, are not separate entities but rather

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<sup>1</sup>A Theology of Society, p. 187.



two facets of the one great Christian tradition.<sup>1</sup> "There are not two realities: here Catholicism and there Protestantism, but there is the Catholic substance and the Protestant principle."<sup>2</sup> And, as he says elsewhere, "both of them represent historical forms of Christianity which do not exhaust its full meaning."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Protestantism has over-emphasized the Augustinian elements of discontinuity, dualism, and tension between God and the world, nature and Grace, faith and reason, the Church and culture, while Catholicism on the other hand has over-emphasized the concordance, basic unity, and continuity between these areas. The truth perhaps lies between these extremes and requires some sort of dialectical correlation.

In so important a realm as the relationship between religion and culture there must, on the one hand, be such traditional catholic<sup>4</sup> elements as the appreciation of culture and the desire to infuse it with religious meaning. Culture must not be seen as an aspect of life alienated from God (as with the Barthians), but rather as having unlimited potentiality for becoming transparent to the ultimate. Society and the State need to be undergirded by spiritual power and brought into vital relationship to the life of the Church. Yet, lest the Church succumb to the temptation of taking society under its wing or wielding political

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<sup>1</sup>Putting it another way, Tillich states that Roman Catholicism has emphasized the sacramental element - the holiness of what is given (i.e. the holiness of being) whereas Protestantism has emphasized the eschatological, prophetic element - the holiness as demand (i.e. the holiness of what ought to be). Neither type can live without the other, for both, according to Tillich, "represent historical forms of Christianity which do not exhaust its full meaning" ("The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church," pp. 23-25.).

<sup>2</sup>"The Protestant Vision," p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>"The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church," p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>The term "Catholic" instead of Roman Catholic is used deliberately in this last section to convey the inclusion of Greek and Anglican forms of thought and worship.

power heteronomously, there is need for the Protestant protest. Prophetic judgment is needed to keep the Church from becoming so closely identified with society that it justifies and sanctions the "powers that be" as final forms of the unconditional. Protestantism permits no premature fusion of religion and culture into a stultifying heteronomy, nor does it allow any final theocracy in which autonomous forms are brought under the subjection of institutional religion. Religion must maintain enough transcendence (so as) to be able to challenge and change the social order and bring judgment to bear upon every social achievement lest it become idolatrous in its claim to perfection. In short, what is needed (and this we have seen as central in both authors) is a view of the transcendent divine order as that which penetrates, but is not exhausted by, the spatio-temporal order. This requires for the Church, then, in its relationship with culture, both a radical attachment and a radical detachment. This can be achieved only through a mutual reinforcement of Protestant and Catholic elements.

The same principle applies to the understanding of Revelation and its relation to the culture through which it is manifested. Here again certain Catholic elements are required for a meaningful interpretation. Each culture, in its own way, must be seen as evidencing a basic quest for God, with certain manifestations that may be appreciated as anticipations of the Christ. This opens the way, if not for certain forms of syncretism at least for seeing cultural history as a preparation for final revelation. It makes possible the viewing of historical tradition as embodying and expressing the New Being "before, in and after its final manifestation in Jesus as the Christ."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the obligation to

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<sup>1</sup>"The Present Theological Situation," p. 308.

see culture in this light must be coupled with a reservation. The history of revelation as taking place in and through cultural history must not be misunderstood as indicating an equation of cultural history with revelation. The Protestant principle alone can prevent tradition and the history of revelation from becoming thus demonically distorted.

These considerations also have significance for the relation of the Church to the historical process. The proper interpretation of history, it would seem, requires an ecclesiology in which the Church is seen as the "bearer of history," having an historical continuity through the ages as a social and sacramental reality. Only as a "Gestalt of grace" can the Church meet the structural power of evil manifested in modern power-concentrations. The Church, in brief, must be understood in its catholicity. Yet this high ecclesiology must be coupled with a radical judgment upon the existential Church, lest history be regarded as "practically consummated in the existence of the Church."<sup>1</sup> The Protestant reservation requires that the "bearer of history" designation be seen more as a demand than as a present reality. The Church, in other words, is always striving toward - but never arriving at - the embodiment of the grace of God in history.

Such a conception of the Church is rooted in the doctrine of the "New Being" as the "center" of history. Catholicism is right in rejecting the Liberal Protestant attempt to construct a rationalized "historical Jesus" as the center of history. This makes the Jesus of history subject to the processes of historical criticism. The foundation of the Church must, instead, be Christ seen as the "New Being." This "New Being" as the center of history is not at the mercy of the historical process or subject to the

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<sup>1</sup>The Kingdom of God and History, p. 105.



relativities of history but rather is One by whom history is constituted and defined (in terms of meaning: beginning, center, and end). While appearing within history, He conquers the ambiguities of history and thus introduces into history a new order of life embracing man's total being. This creates in turn a new humanity which becomes the foundation of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Yet, lest this New Being be regarded as possessed by the institutional Church and contained within its sacraments so that it can be objectivated, controlled, and dispensed as the Church sees fit, there is utmost need for the Prophetic protest against all magical sacramentalism. Here, supremely, the Protestant principle guards against Catholic abuses.

And finally, both Protestant and Catholic elements are needed if the consummation of history is to be seen realistically, avoiding both the rationalization of history into a progressive approximation of the Kingdom and the irrationalism which sees history as devoid of discernible meaning - utterly paradoxical. A satisfactory view of the Kingdom demands a perspective through which the present forms of society are seen as having some organic relatedness to the coming Kingdom. The Kingdom of God must be conceived as more than just an "abstract ethical ideal";<sup>2</sup> history must to some degree participate in the ultimate meaning disclosed at the end of history. The Kingdom which lies beyond history must at the same time be related to secular history - as its completion and fulfillment. The coming Kingdom, in other words, must be interpreted as organically related to the existential, historical Church. All of this is more in keeping with a Catholic approach. Yet the Protestant corrective is also essential. In its stress upon the transcendence of the ultimate and the consequent

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<sup>1</sup>For Dawson's discussion of this see pages 183 f.

<sup>2</sup>Dawson, Christianity and the New Age, pp. 68 f.

refusal to allow the Kingdom to be identified (however correlated) with the visible, hierarchical Church the Protestant principle guards against the premature and prideful deification of the Church as we know it in history. Only such a relationship between the relative and the absolute in history can avoid, on the one hand, extreme apocalypticism (in which meaning is forced abruptly upon history from the outside) and, on the other, the simple identification of the Church and the Kingdom.

In all of these areas, as in the whole span of Christian doctrine directly or indirectly connected with the interpretation of history there is great need for mutual reinforcement (though not hollow eclectic synthesis) of Protestant and Catholic thought. Elements of both traditions brought into mutual interaction cannot help but produce an interpretation of history superior to that found in either tradition. Brought into proper focus, they would mutually supplement (and judge) one another, overcoming the half-truths and partial insights of each. Such an interpretation of history would incorporate both philosophical and Biblical elements. It would be at once sacramental and prophetic, stressing both the holiness of present reality ("the holiness of being") as well as holiness as demand ("the holiness of what ought to be") - the "already" as well as the "not yet." Neither tradition has sufficient resources (either philosophical, historical, theological, or sociological) to do this alone. Both traditions have tended to become hardened into pretentious systems each claiming final validity. It is the opinion of this writer that Tillich and Dawson can show us the way out of this impasse and start us on the road toward an interpretation of history that will be meaningful to the modern mind and significant for the world crisis that we face.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y  
O N  
P A U L T I L L I C H

(For a chronological listing of Tillich's writings in English and German see the Bibliography in The Theology of Paul Tillich (Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, Editors). Only those articles and books used in this dissertation [including many not listed in the above publication] are included here.)

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O N  
C H R I S T O P H E R     D A W S O N

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