THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH

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There are few theologians, of this century, who like Paul Tillich manage to speak the language of our time while speaking of that which is timeless.

Tillich is equally at home in the cultural and philosophical genre of his day and in the biblical roots of his theology. Therefore in order to understand something of the role of Scripture in his thought and message, we must hold together these two tenses; the past and the present. And it is not simply a matter of bringing the past up to date; the Bible, as it were, translated into modern psychological concepts. Though that is certainly part of Tillich's approach to biblical interpretation. Neither is it simply a case of transferring the present back into the Prophetic-Apostolic ages in order to let the scriptures work over the events of today and clarify their meaning. The tension between past and present in Tillich's theology is much more complex than that, as we shall see when we investigate his thinking more thoroughly.

There are, of course, those critics who dismiss Tillich as being a 'biblical' theologian in any sense of the term 'biblical'. They argue that he has found prominence simply because many people unhappy with what appears to them as the old fashioned voice of biblical prophets like Barth and Niebuhr, have reacted by preferring prophets who have no biblical voice at all! /1 Among whom they would, no doubt, also number contemporary theologians like Jurgen Moltmann and those of the so called 'liberation' school.

That Tillich has a burning desire to speak to modern man in the midst of his secularism and technology, and present a theological assessment that is both relevant and necessary to his situation is beyond dispute. And this emphasis may appear to overshadow the biblical one.

It is equally true that he devotes no large section of his three volumes of systematic theology to what we might call 'the doctrine of the word of God'. And the role of Scripture in his theology is not therefore clearly defined, which makes the task of describing that role all the more difficult. It cannot be lifted out en bloc, but rather has to be disentangled from his theology.

However it is a very superficial criticism indeed, though often made, that fails to recognise the scriptural material that threads its way through Tillich's published works. And it is in fact this biblical texture of his theology, I feel, that makes it so preachable; as his three volumes of sermons illustrate so brilliantly.

Two Concepts of Religion

It is vital at the outset to get clear in our minds the double-edged nature of Tillich's understanding of religion. This understanding is crucial for his theology, fundamental in his thinking, and a controlling and determining element in his approach to Scripture.

Tillich works with what he describes as 'the fundamental concept' and 'the traditional concept' of religion. /2

By 'the fundamental concept' he means the state of being grasped by Ultimate Concern; that is, living in such a way that we are aware of the fact that there is something that we take with unconditional seriousness. This is akin to Soren Kierkegaard's famous phrase about living with an 'infinite passion'! It is not that we possess this Ultimate Concern, but rather that it is an awareness of being possessed by it. /3

We may use the term God in this connection if we wish, providing we understand that what we mean by God is this Ultimate Concern, and not merely certain images associated with the term God.

If Tillich is pushed to a definition of God then he reluctantly defines God as 'being itself' and as such the 'ground of our being'. God therefore holds us in 'being' and so possesses us rather than us ever possessing Him; indeed every attempt to define God which is an effort to possess Him inevitably lapses into idolatry. Hence Tillich's reluctance to provide any definition at all, and his insistence that at best such definitions must be understood as being symbolical. For this reason too Tillich is unhappy to speak of God as 'existing'!

He prefers to speak of God then in this experimental way; our Ultimate Concern which grasps our lives filling them with an unconditional seriousness and passion.

Religion in its truest, highest, and fundamental meaning is this spiritual dimension of being 'grasped'.

There is however also a secondary sense in which we can understand religion; the concept that is 'traditional'. By this Tillich refers to the various ways we seek to express and make visible our response to our Ultimate Concern. In other words the emergence of the traditional symbols and rituals which provide the vehicles for conveying Ultimate Concern and sustaining our 'infinite passion'.

This is, if you like, the moveable furniture of the religious scenery and Tillich's theology allows for considerable freedom in the whole area of 'traditional' religion. It is a freedom capable of re-interpreting basic Christian symbols when they cease to function as they should. Though more of this later when we look at the importance of symbolism in general in relation to the scriptures.

Now this twofold understanding of religion enables Tillich, to use a phrase of the late John F. Kennedy's, to 'hold firm the centre while prodding around the edges'. And specifically in his treatment of Scripture it means that he seeks to retain its central message about the relationship between man and his Ultimate Concern, and the focus of this relationship in what Tillich calls 'the unique event of Jesus the Christ'. While at the same time he exercises a spirit of venture in his interpretation of biblical 'myths' and 'symbols'.

The Basic Sources of Theology

The Bible is authoritative for Tillich and is, he argues, the basic source for systematic theology because it is the 'original document' about the events on which Christianity is founded.

No one can read his sermons and fail to appreciate the profound biblical exposition which forms the core of his preaching. But that said, Tillich certainly sits loose to the historical questions that concern so many biblical scholars. He regards the biblical material as important not so much for the historical facts it may contain, but primarily because it presents what he calls 'theologically interpreted facts'. /4

As a document recording pure historical facts the Bible would undoubtedly be of interest to historians, but would have little relevance for faith and its significance today. It is therefore essentially in its presentation of 'theologically interpreted facts' that it becomes 'word of God' for us.

As a result Tillich together with Bultmann, to whom he acknowledges a great debt, would not consider it necessary to be certain of a sound historical basis for these 'theologically interpreted facts'. Which in turn leads on to his view that the exegesis of Scripture cannot do the whole work of theology. For this we need the authenticating tools of 'the philosophy of life'.

Therefore Tillich calls into service the interpretative elements in Culture and Tradition to assist the biblical message becoming a message of Ultimate Concern for us today.

By Culture, Tillich would include art, literature, philosophy and science and everything which has 'aesthetic value' and the power to enable the biblical word to become incarnate in human experience.

One of the main planks in Tillich's argument in relation to the role of Culture in theological interpretation is that aesthetic values transcend any one discipline and so provide a correlation between disciplines.

Tillich, as a result, is not afraid to embrace philosophy, especially Existentialism in its twentieth century form, and to employ (to great effect) the insights of modern psychology in his presentation of biblical material.

Much of this goes back to his early days of enchantment with Kierkegaard, the influence of Schelling, and a romanticism which gave him a very sensitive and, as he says himself, an almost 'pagan' feeling for life; an openness to nature and the world around him. He had a particular love of trees and a kind of mysticism creeps into his language when he talks about them.

Culture then in its many aspects is an integral part of Tillich's hermeneutic when he tries to interpret the biblical message for his generation.

Alongside Culture we must also set Tradition. And the importance of Tradition for Tillich lies mainly in the guidance found through Church history and within the sacramental community of the contempory Church.

Tillich, who is so often an iconoclast with regard to institutionalised Christianity and the various ecclesiastical models that have developed over the centuries, nevertheless values Tradition highly. He

is well aware of the obstructive nature of Tradition at many points in its bearing on theology, but considers it nonetheless an invaluable interpretative source.

'No one' he writes

> is able to leap over two thousand years of Church history and become contemporaneous with the writers of the New Testament, except in the spiritual sense of accepting Jesus as the Christ. Every person who encounters a biblical text is guided in his religious understanding of it by the understanding of all previous generations. Even the Reformers were dependent on the Roman tradition against which they protested... /5

Tillich's theology demonstrates again and again the importance of what he calls 'the Protestant principle', but in this matter of Tradition and its living relevance through one's engagement with it in the community of the Church today, we can see how he had a leaning towards Roman Catholicism; not in its structural expression but in its magisterial depth. It is a leaning that Tillich himself readily admits.

The basic sources of theology then, as Tillich perceives them, lie in the first instance in Scripture; indispensable for our understanding of Scripture however are these twin resources of Culture and Tradition. The Christian message in both its content and communication draws from these three wells; as such there is no pure biblical water but only that which is at the same time filtered through human conditioning.

That there is no pure biblical word, however, is not to be regretted for without its human conditioning it could not become incarnate! It could not be received by the world, in the world, for the world.

Two Criticisms

Perhaps after this rather rapid run along some of the major highways in Tillich's approach to Scripture, it might be opportune at this point to pause and catch our breath! And in pausing we will glance briefly at two persistent criticisms that are raised against much of this theological scheme.

The first criticism concerns the reduction by Tillich of the importance of the historical element in Scripture. The second refers to the apparent lack of any real interest in the work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture.

Personally I feel that neither criticism can be easily dismissed. But I also feel that they often arise out of a failure to grasp Tillich's view of history, and certainly a failure to recognise that orthodox views of the Holy Spirit (if we can even delineate such views accurately and consistently) simply cannot handle Tillich's highly complicated perception of what is meant by Spirit.

Certainly with regard to the first criticism Tillich would want to say that Jesus of Nazareth was an historical figure, but that that is relatively unimportant in comparison to his theological (and existential) significance for faith as the Christ. When we call Him the Christ we are making an affirmation of faith not passing a judgement on historical facts or non-facts.

Tillich argues that it is enough to know that there was such a man, Jesus, who walked this earth many centuries ago, and that is about as much as can be said, historically speaking, for we cannot retrace our steps back to those days in the Middle East. What we gain from the Gospels is a 'picture' of Him because the scriptures do not provide historical records such as we might find about Caesar. The New Testament provides rather a testimony to the power in Him that impressed itself upon His disciples as the Christ. /6

Tillich would maintain however that there is an inner consistency between this belief in the Christ and the historical reality in Jesus that gave rise to it; he does not separate the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith.

In all of this Tillich is simply saying what most New Testament scholars would maintain, namely, that there is no historical Jesus available to us who step out from behind the Christological imagery in which He is presented in the Gospels. But that said there will remain a wide variation in the degrees of historical scepticism that we bring to the Bible. Father Dulles, for example, one of Tillich's leading critics argues that Tillich reduces the historical elements in the Bible down to such a bare minimum that the question must arise whether such a weak historical base can in fact support the Christian Gospel at all!

That however raises the further question about how far our faith is tied into a literal acceptance of the biblical presentation of events.

For myself I must confess that I find I am left with the impression that Tillich's historical scepticism is not always justified, and that

sometimes it is the outcome more of his philosophy of history than a careful assessment of the biblical documents and a detailed exegesis of the texts.

On the second matter of the Spirit I would find this a less well founded criticism.

Clearly Tillich is not concerned with theories of 'verbal inspiration' when he addresses himself to the Bible, but he would certainly see the Spirit active both within the witness of Scripture itself and in the reception of that witness in the believer. And while he has no simple view of what is meant by the Spirit - how could he? - nevertheless he is quite succinct in one of his sermons: 'Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ.' /7

Perhaps in all of this Tillich is a good guide in that his theology bears its own testimony to the work of the Spirit by its very refusal to attempt any academic definition.

That said however, these criticisms will continue as a kind of defiant background noise in the remainder of this paper!

The Human Situation

We have so far looked at a sketchy outline of some of the main factors in Tillich's approach to Scripture.

Let us double back now to the starting point and see where this approach in fact leads us in the actual treatment of the Bible. And the starting point for Tillich is unashamedly 'anthropological'. He regards the starting point in theology as the human situation. We hear the Word always where we are today.

This is quite a different approach from that of Karl Barth, for example, who would disown any such anthropological basis for the theological task. Though this generalised way of putting it may be an injustice to Barth who does speak about interpretation of Scripture as necessitating the Bible in the one hand and the newspaper in the other.

Tillich's human starting point obviously affects how he deals with Scripture. Barth comes to Scripture from above, as it were, regarding the Bible in terms of Divine revelation; the revelatory word 'written'. Tillich, on the other hand, comes to Scripture from below; from where

man finds himself in the world. He sees questioning man coming to the Scriptures listening for answers and then sifting these answers through his religious, cultural, and historical existence.

We may wish to argue the theological toss on this difference of approach and perhaps conclude that there is truth in both avenues of which we must not lose sight. It would seem though, on the face of it, that most people begin from where they are and their own human situation in the world, and that this is especially true of secular man. So that Tillich is already on the side of those with whom he is particularly anxious to communicate.

Most, if not all of us, come to the Bible lugging along with us all the baggage of our past and the personal conditioning of our own particular upbringing with its distinctive social mores and cultural setting. We do not come with our mind like a blank page awaiting the imprint of the Word. So, whether consciously or not, we receive and interpret the words of Scripture only by passing them through the intricate tapestry of our own psyche.

Tillich considers this reception of the kerygma not only unavoidable, but also necessary; necessary if the biblical message is to address us where we are and gain an entrance into our lives where we are. This accommodation of the message to the human situation is precisely what is meant, argues Tillich, by the principle of Incarnation.

It must be said though with equal force that while the biblical documents are in the first instance approached from the human situation and received from within it, the outcome of this accommodation is that the human situation is radically changed in the process. The Word does not leave the human situation intact, but exercises a judgement on it while at the same time lodging within it.

In this sense, it seems to me, that it would be more accurate not to describe Tillich's approach to the Bible as 'anthropological' but rather as 'incarnational'.

There is also something more, however, to be said in relation to all of this and it is this 'something more' that leaves many of Tillich's critics uneasy.

The message itself too undergoes a change when it lodges itself within the human situation. And it is this transforming element that

takes place within the message itself that ensures its ability to accommodate itself to the experience of those who hear and believe; who hear and believe within the context of their religious, cultural, historical, temperamental, and social conditioning.

Though at this point, I think, we must differentiate between the interior content of the biblical message and its exterior forms of communication. And here Tillich's distinction between the 'fundamental' and 'traditional' concepts of religion is vitally important. The changes demanded in the message itself and its element of accommodation relate to the exterior forms of the message; to the 'outer edges' of the message, while the 'centre remains firm'.

The failure to make this differentiation can lead to an unjustified accusation that Tillich's theology has, in fact, produced - or at least permits the medium of human experience to produce - what amounts to 'another Gospel'.

It is precisely in this highly delicate area of the accommodation of the Christian message to the human situation that Tillich's theology moves among the biblical documents with what can only be described as a radical freedom. It is a liberty that has accordingly given rise to the question, 'Is Paul Tillich a dangerous man?' /8

Tillich's own unequivocal reply is 'Yes'!

Personally I do not consider that to be an indictment of his theology, as others do, but on the contrary a sharpening of its challenge.

Symbolism

This dangerous liberty in Tillich's method is evident in his willingness to dress scriptural language, even its most basic terms, in modern garments. This is particularly true of his rejection of traditional Christological models, and so central concepts such as those associated with Atonement and Incarnation are often treated in psychological rather than theological terms. Though one must be careful not to state the matter in a simplistic way as there is no clear line of demarcation drawn between psychology and theology; both disciplines overlap and share common territory.

It is this advance on the Christian Gospel on all fronts and with an array of various insights from many quarters that highlights the

importance of symbolism in Tillich's thought. Symbols and their meaning are fundamental in communicating the message. Indeed he regards religious language for the most part as symbolic language. /9

But we must be clear about what Tillich means by symbol in this connection, for he never speaks about 'mere' symbols. Rather symbols are powerful factors, indeed indispensable factors, in Christianity; they are part of the message itself, sharing in the realities to which they also point. In this sense we might describe symbols as sacramental in character, and therefore they are more than just 'signs'. They are part of what is indicated and inseparable from it. For example the name Jesus Christ is both historical reality and symbolic model; the Christ is a symbol, but applied to Jesus it also participates in the facts relating to the person who was a carpenter from Nazareth. Further the historic reality was such as demanded this symbol, while the symbol, of course, would be both empty and meaningless without the reality behind it.

Tillich himself has said that what he means by symbol is essentially what other theologians mean by analogy. But it seems to me that what he means by symbolism is hardly what Aquinas, for example, meant by analogy!

Further Tillich argues that symbols must be self-communicating, they should need no explanation if they are still vibrant. The passage of time however does mean that they may need to be restated in new ways. Some may even become redundant and need to be replaced. Such replacement will not come about by setting out deliberately to invent new ones, new symbols only come into being as they 'grasp' us. They evolve, as it were, out of religious expression and are not constructed and then implanted into religious expression.

By and large however Tillich is not keen to talk about the necessity of new symbols so much as the interpretation of those that have belonged to the Christian message from the beginning.

Symbols then are part of the 'moveable furniture' belonging to the biblical scenery. The play, as it were, remains the same and its inner message, but the sets are not fixed structures.

This is not the same as saying that the biblical symbols are dispensable. And it is on this point that Tillich would take issue with Rudolf Bultmann. As far as Tillich is concerned the central symbols of

Christianity remain; symbols like, for example, 'the Christ', 'Son of God', 'Son of Man', the Resurrection and the Ascension.

But Tillich's insistence is that when they cease to function for modern man in a literal sense, then they must be reinterpreted in a 'nonliteralistic way'. In this sense they are not dispensable, but rather capable of being viewed from new angles and reassessed in the light of the human situation today, which in so many ways is different from the world of the New Testament situation of the First Century.

What we encounter here is something of the same spirit as that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he proposed his 'nonreligious interpretation of biblical concepts', or what came to be popularly known as 'religionless Christianity.'

Bultmann's programme of 'Demythologization' is much more radical. He argued that the biblical message, in so far as it employs mythological or meaningless symbolic language and ideas, must be purged. This can mean abandoning such terms and concepts altogether if the message is to be heard and understood by the world today.

Tillich does not go so far, he insists that the language remains, but must where necessary undergo reinterpretation. This reinterpretation will often mean the baptising of ancient biblical images into the waters of contemporary philosophy and psychology. His two books The Courage To Be and Dynamics of Faith are classic demonstrations of this baptism at work; bringing biblical themes alive for those who can no longer accept them without a great many questions and doubts, or who have simply rejected them as inaudible or meaningless voices from a primitive religious past.

Tillich however (and this is often overlooked) is also insistent that where the biblical symbols can be accepted in a literal way by unquestioning believers then they should not be disturbed. Many of his sermons indeed can be read by fundamentalist Christians without any acute discomfort.

But when questions are asked then theology, argues Tillich, must have the freedom to 'move' the 'furniture'. The answering theologian must be liberated, and not least liberated in his treatment of Scripture.

That said, Tillich is nevertheless emphatic that when the answer-

ing theologian has done all he can to assist in communicating the biblical message, he depends in the final analysis on the power of the Word to communicate itself.

So it is to this final aspect that we turn our attention.

Scripture as Word of God

All of this work that is carried out with the freedom that theology creates, is also carried out within discipline, otherwise liberation becomes licence.

This discipline is determined by two principal factors; absolute integrity to the biblical message itself accompanied by a constant search after the 'interior logic' of the texts, and secondly the obligation of working within the community of the Church.

I quote from Tillich himself when in the First Volume of his Systematic Theology he describes the theologian's task in these words: 'He must stand in the atmosphere of the religious reality of which he speaks.' And in other places in his Systematic Theology he writes about 'the circle' as being essential in providing the theologian with the disciplines of his work and so saving him from the dangers of 'individualism'.

This discipline, which accompanies the freedom, is an important element in Tillich's understanding of how the words of Scripture can become for us the word of God.

He maintains that the basic criterion is always the relation of the biblical words to the Word become flesh in Jesus as the Christ. So that it is not just any word that can become word of God for us, or even any biblical word, but only those words that bear witness either directly or indirectly, to Jesus the Christ.

These words in turn become God's word depending then in the first instance on their Christological content, and then on their being received by someone.

But again not just anyone, but those who acknowledge Jesus as the Christ and therefore who belong to the community of the Christ - or 'the Body of Christ', which is the Church. We might therefore describe the biblical words becoming God's word in terms both of their

'evangelical' and 'ecumenical' setting; their evangelical witness to Jesus Christ within the ecumenical reception of the whole Church.

As this is vital in any examination of the role of Scripture in Tillich's theology it is perhaps pertinent to quote a little more extensively from his Systematic Theology:

> The Bible is the word of God in two senses. It is the document of the final revelation; and it participates in the final revelation of which it is the document. /10

This means presumably that the Bible is not itself the word of God - the biblical words are not 'ipso facto' God's word, but rather the Bible bears witness to the Word who is Jesus Christ while at the same time through its testimony it shares the power of the Word and the community of faith in Christ brought into being by it.

The biblical message then embraces both 'more (and less) than the biblical books'. /11

The precise way in which the biblical message shares in that to which it bears witness, is through the simple fact that there is no revelation unless there is someone who receives it as revelation. So therefore 'the act of reception is a part of the event itself'. /12 Indeed, Tillich argues, that without this reception and the creation of the reality, or community, that bears witness to it there would be no revelatory event.

Scripture then becomes word of God not only in terms of its 'content' and its 'reception' within the discipline and freedom of the confessing community, but it will also require for its 'communication' as word of God those symbols and 'sensuous instruments' that enable us to be 'grasped' by its power and be open to the Spirit. This is the sacramental dimension.

One final comment in all of this.

The theologian, says Tillich, must bring two main attitudes to the Bible if he is to be open to it as a source for systematic theology and word of God for him as a Christian - scholarship and devotion.

This suggests that the Scriptures must be handled dispassionately with all the equipment of historical criticism, and yet at the same

time handled with the committment of one who finds here in the 'kerygma' things that are matters of 'ultimate concern'.

This two-fold approach is well illustrated by Tillich's own sermons where we are aware both of the scholarship lying behind them, though hidden, and yet aware too of the clear personal commitment of the preacher to the message he expounds.

Walter Leibrecht in an essay in honour of Paul Tillich wrote back in the nineteen fifties how when Tillich preached

> the speaker stands forth as a man who in himself, with his whole being, is at one with his subject. This concentration makes a sermon or speech by Tillich ... although it may sometimes be quite involved in its expression - an act of communion. /13

It is in such 'communion' that the biblical words and the Divine Word meet and fuse into the Gospel.

Concluding Comments and Questions

What I have attempted in this paper has not been easy, for Paul Tillich's theology is not a neatly packaged system carefully labelled. As a result this assessment of the role of Scripture in his thinking has been more in the nature of a nomadic wandering, than a confident march which easily recognises its points of departure, its clearly marked signposts along the route, and its point of arrival.

There is therefore an obvious lack of continuity in the treatment of our theme, and a lack too of the kind of precision that dogmatic theologians and biblical fundamentalists cherish. That, of course, can be gain as well as loss for Christian theology does not always pursue its course by rigid principles of logic. When the finite grapples with the Infinite there should always be a random element; Deus comprehensus non est Deus.

Nevertheless some concluding comments are perhaps in order, if for no other reason than to signal the end of our 'wandering'.

William Temple, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, once caricatured professional theologians as 'men who spend blameless lives giving entirely orthodox answers to questions no one is asking.' /14

As a theologian Tillich is in no way open to such scathing criticism, indeed everything about him seems to contradict Temple's 'tongue-in-cheek' portrait. Tillich's personal life was far from 'blameless', as some of his less savoury critics have been quick to point out in recent years. His theological answers certainly were hardly ever 'entirely orthodox', and his deep and abiding concern was always to address himself to the questions that he discerned to be the most important being raised by his contemporaries - both in the religious and secular areas of human existence.

Several critical questions of my own however keep recurring in my reading and reflections on Tillich's whole approach to the Christian message.

His 'anthropological' concern is absolutely basic to everything he has to say to us. The 'human situation' is the arena where he works, and out of which he develops the incarnational answers of Christian theology to man's existential questions.

My question that will not go away is this: how far does Tillich's theology break out of this circle of concern with the 'human situation', so that it arrests us with 'the New Reality' that Jesus the Christ has come into this world as something that is from beyond it? Does Tillich guard the mystery of Revelation or remove it?

When all is said and done I am often left with the uneasy feeling that Tillich remains trapped within this human circle, which therefore becomes a sign of non-commitment to that Ultimate Concern which he talks so much about!

Does he avoid the ever present danger of putting theology before preaching; the human activity before the Divine proclamation?

There is no doubt that when the 'human situation' becomes a controlling factor to the extent that it does in Tillich's theology, then it runs the serious risk of being the only really important factor.

Helmut Thielicke makes a pertinent observation in this direction in his Preface to his studies in the Apostles' Creed entitled I Believe, when he writes:

> Only after the proclaimed word strikes home do we reflect upon what happened and relate it to the problems of life. Where

> theology forgets its secondary position, the result is spiritual sickness, of the kind of which traces are already at hand. We become almost completely preoccupied with ourselves, inquiring less about what the word of God says and more about who we are and the degree to which we can in our situation understand and appropriate that word. /15

Related to this I wonder too how far Tillich escapes from his own intellectualism and aestheticism. He is, as he himself acknowledges, primarily a theologian for the intellectual and that is part of his greatness, but also of his weakness perhaps as well. So again and again the question crops up; how far Tillich's theology in its urgent desire to communicate, especially through intellectual and aesthetic forms, can concede that there are 'reasons (for faith) which the reason does not know'?

His emphasis upon the need to reinterpret biblical language and concepts if the Christian message is to communicate itself in each new generation, is undoubtedly vital and only the most obscurantist can ignore it; but does Tillich in removing, as it were, the voice of angels from the Bible remove a poetic dimension in the interests of rational explanation without which the biblical message cannot be heard for what it really is?

One can readily admit that Tillich' power lies in his mastery at breaking down and analysing 'the score', but what in the end of the day we most need to hear is 'the music' of the Gospel. Personally speaking for that I find that I have to return again and again to other theologians like Barth and Bonhoeffer, the Baillie brothers, Moltmann, Luther and Augustine. And with them also obscure people I have encountered leading simple lives on isolated farms or in city streets, or caught in the web of social injustices like racism, unemployment, and long bitter historical feuds; theologians all in whose lives the biblical music rings out!

There is of course much in Tillich that would identify itself with all of this, so I must temper criticism with caution. Or better still, allow the accused to speak for himself. He has written describing his theological work in terms of what he calls 'a pervasive sense of joy':

> I have always walked up to a desk or pulpit with fear and trembling, but the contact with the audience gives me a pervasive sense of joy, the job of a creative communion, of giving and taking, even if the audience is not vocal. /16

That maybe is Tillich's greatest argument in his own defence, for any theology that has about it a ring of 'pervasive joy' cannot be far from the Kingdom!

Notes

1. Paul Tillich by J. Heywood Thomas (Fletcher & Son), p.43.
2. Morality and Beyond (Routledge & Kegan Paul), p.30.
3. Tillich derives the phrase Ultimate Concern from Deut. 6.5.
4. Systematic Theology Vol.1 (Nisbet), p.40.
5. Ibid, vol.1, p.42.
6. Ultimate Concern (S.C.M.), p.143.
7. The Shaking of the Foundations (S.C.M.), P.132.
8. Ultimate Concern, p.180.
9. Dynamics of Faith (Harper Torchbooks), p.41 f.
10. Systematic Theology, p.176.
11. Ibid, p.40.
12. Ibid, p.60.
13. Religion and Culture (S.C.M.), p.3.
14. Quoted in I Believe in Evangelism by David Watson. Pub. Hodder & Stoughton, p.14.
15. I Believe, Pub. Collins, p.vii.
16. Ultimate Concern, p.xvi.