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There is continuous revelation through the church as each new generation transforms it by bringing new potentialities. The practical Jesus is necessary for communicating God to the masses. The Danger of Religion There is this tendency in religion to fashion the finite medium into an idol. It is through such experiences that we discover religious truths. Never in scripture does Jesus encourage his followers to worship His finite being. By getting far enough away to see greed, we come to understand compassion. Karl Marx called every theory which is not based on the will to transform reality "an attempt to preserve evils by a theoretical construction which justifies them". This tendency has produced the three massive volumes that constitute Systematic Theology, of which this is but the first. We must not be imprisoned in the anti-logos of finite conventionalism. Even emotional life is not irrational in itself. The Ultimate Concern is unconditional; it excludes all other concerns and makes other concerns preliminary. We become the New Creature by sacrificing the finite. Thus, it is less about imagining a supernatural being (the trap of fundamentalism) and more about perceiving "Being" itself. We must not be lured into superstitious nonsense. The congregation of those who have experienced this breakthrough constitutes the beginnings of the Kingdom of God, as manifest in the church. It cripples creative life by external rule. Only in the active realization of the truth does truth become manifest. Philosophy is "service of God"; it is a thinking which is at the same time life and joy in "absolute truth" (Hegel). We are restrained from the Kingdom of God only by fear: fear of pain, poverty, loss of tangible items, death, and all the other things that relegate us to finite slavery. We must distinguish Reason in its essential perfection from its present predicament in some stage of actualization among human lives. This is expressed in the fourth Gospel which speaks of "Knowing the truth by doing the truth". Fundamentalism and orthodox biblicism cannot halt this transformation, which is the dynamic revelation of God in history. Citizens of the Kingdom are characterized by the presence of autonomous reason which is actualized in their obedience by volitional choice. This process is actualization of the Ultimate Concern. This latter way is the manner by which our preliminary concerns may become authentic and real. In John 12:44 Jesus says: "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me." Jesus refuses to relinquish the truth for the sake of His finitude and ultimately sacrifices His finitude in favor of the truth, which truth is eternally sustainable and infinite. Sacrificing Finitude For God's Dynamism The difference between God's dynamism and finitude is perhaps best expressed as the difference between believing what someone has told you versus truly believing because of your own experience. The author writes of its manifestation through history as follows: "According to the classical philosophical tradition, reason is the structure of the mind which enables the mind to grasp and to transform reality. Like Jesus, the more that we bear the example of God the more of our finitude we surrender. There are limitations on what we know but these very limitations let us know there exists something infinitely more perfect. Paul experienced a revolution of his whole being. Revealed truths are not ready-made commodities to be distributed to people as something they must accept. We must relinquish the finite in favor of transformation to a new being.Revelation is received via a personal transformation of the receiver. Ignorance attests to the finitude of man's cognitive reasoning; however, recognition of ignorance attests to awareness of the Infinite. The Word is characterized more than it is written and demonstrated more than it is preached. If someone is grasped by the divine Spirit, their personality is transformed. In fact, without analogy and symbology, nothing could be said about God. LogosBecause experience is so important, we must not ask people to sacrifice their reason in order to accept another's preconceptions. Knowledge transforms and heals. Indoctrination encourages an unauthentic belief which is false and therefore characteristic of the demonic. The Bible speaks of "being in Christ" or "Christ being in you". It is Christian experience (not indoctrination with dogma) that makes God reality within us. Zeus has no revelatory significance for Christians and the Virgin Mother Mary has no such significance to Protestants. We must not allow authoritarian systems, conventionalism, cultic religion, or other systems outside ourselves to steal away from us the personal experience of transformation. The longing for its origin elevates soul and mind toward the ineffable power of all meaning (Plotinus). The Ultimate Concern Tillich speaks often of what he terms "The Ultimate Concern", which he defines with the great commandment: "The Lord, our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Man must be most concerned about the infinity to which he belongs. Through every preliminary concern, the Ultimate Concern can actualize Itself, i.e. pictures, poems, music, insights, social ideas, projects, procedures, politics, decisions, etc. In this volume, the third and last of his Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich sets forth his ideas of the meaning of human life, the doctrine of the Spirit and the church, the trinitarian symbols, the relation of history to the Kingdom of God, and the eschatological symbols. The Ultimate Concern is that which transcends everything else we can think of in importance. We defeat finitude by sacrificing it openly and fearlessly. I definitely have to describe this as laborious reading (and re-reading), with dictionary at hand. This sort of deception has affected millions and made Christianity more narrow and superstitious. Advanced embedding details, examples, and help! © 1996-2014, Amazon.com, Inc. By experiencing liars, we better understand truth; and on and on. The breakthrough must happen in a personal life. This makes man a mere cog in the dominating machine of conventionalism. It is through the questions arising out of our experiences that we come to understand the answer as the "Logos of Being", as materialized in Jesus Christ. We must relinquish the fear that restrains us from becoming transparent enough for the divine to shine through us. This is why the message of the church must be in the context of the cultural situation in which the church lives. When the mind becomes impregnated with its methodological demands, most every cognitive attempt is met with presuppositions and distrust, such that the receipt of new knowledge is too often disregarded. Jesus refused to impose Himself as a finite being upon other finite beings. We usher in the kingdom of God by letting our faith and love be our utmost concern and existing as examples for those who might similarly grasp God's power and creativity. The correlation between the sacrifice of the fear of finitude with the emergence of the Kingdom of God is fascinating, may all be experienced but only to an imperfect level, beyond which we must intuitively perceive the perfection of God. We must not allow the desire for social acceptance to direct our morality. ... or, as we have seen, in a man such as Jesus. Fundamentalism makes its adherents fanatical because they are forced to suppress questions about things that really don't make sense to them, thus destroying their honesty. This sacrifice has permanently inserted infinite truth into our history. This is how practical and theoretical theology are interdependent. We endeavor to take sacred texts literally and to transform events described therein into rituals. The Word is exhibited by grace, forgiveness, love, unselfishness, community, compassion, and all the attributes of what concerns us ultimately. We cannot represent it with icons, statuary, or buildings. It is effective in the cognitive, aesthetic, practical, and technical functions of the human mind. Living beings are attempts of nature to actualize in accordance with the demands of objective reason. Anti-LogosTheologians have called man the "image of God" because of his rational structure and charged man with the task of grasping (receiving) and shaping (reacting to) the world. In this way, man discovers the finitude in which he is imprisoned, but also sees that his reason protests this bondage and strives toward the Infinite. Love for the perfect form moves all things (Aristotle). Experience can transcend the letter of the Bible and the doctrines of the church by teaching us first hand. Eros drives the mind toward the true (Plato). It has been clearly demonstrated by Jesus (and many subsequent martyrs). Because the Ultimate Concern transcends finitude, It is beyond reduction to the mere finite languages we have devised. These perceptions point us to God. We don priests in elaborate costumes and encourage them to embark upon the effectuation of spell-like ritualistic endeavors contrived to satisfy our superstitious natures. To know is to do; to know is to be united, or its affiliates Introduction Certainly this is a very difficult read, perhaps intended for advanced students of theology. Peter had to leave his fishing environment to follow Jesus. In contrast, Christ sacrificed finitude for the infinite. Hence, in order to see, we must first be separated from God and perceive God. Jettisoning fear introduces freedom and transformation. Experiencing God Experience is the medium through which we receive truth. This is fully reflected in cult communities. The divine-human relationship changes with the stages of history and with the stages of personal development. We gain knowledge of the infinite by first becoming detached from it, which is symbolized in the "Adam" story: the plunge out of infinity into finitude. Yet, we know It by the way in which It manifests Itself to us and to our society. There must be a creative and transforming participation of every believer. The "appetites" of everything fine drives it toward the good itself (Aquinas). This awakening of "Being" is associated with the "New Being" that one becomes. It is the revelation that we have nothing of ourself but have received everything from God. And in order to look at a thing one must be at a distance. The divine manifestation is seen, touched, and heard from the incarnation of the Logos within us. Every process of life has its contrast within itself, thus driving man to the quest for unambiguous life or life under the impact of the Spiritual Presence. We must first take a step back, at least once, in order to see. We must learn to reflect the ground of being within our physical dimension without allowing the seductions of the physical environment to extinguish our rational message. If nature does not follow these demands, its products are unsuccessful trials. When fear is extinguished there emerges a new man, a new society, and a new world order. Under capitalism this is manifested in insatiable labor for pathological production and pathological consumption, which dehumanizes man and makes him an object of tyranny. The Christian claim is that the universal Logos (infinite Reason manifest physically as our Ultimate Concern) became concrete in Jesus. The realities of touching, tasting, seeing, hearing, and smelling allow us to sense the essence of "being". REVIEW CONTINUED BELOW IN COMMENTS SECTION ...more The Problem With Fundamentalism Tillich begins by first dismantling fundamentalism. Forgiveness, compassion, honesty, peace, truth, sincerity, grace, integrity, justice, forgiveness, etc. Humanity progresses in its quest for God. Such ones are thirsting for a reunion with that to which they belong. Conventionalism has been a tragic force throughout human history. If we give into finitude, we stay imprisoned by it and sacrifice our ability to morph into spiritual oneness. The Logos is the Christian message spoken to human existence from beyond It, which is, quite simply, that God is the answer to the question of human finitude. Jesus never tried to make himself superior to God and He sacrificed everything he could have gained for his finite self. After successfully resisting power, riches, wealth and all manner of self-inflation He even refused His own finite life. It is a radical transformation; it is the transforming power of Logos. And yet, in order to "know", one must look at a thing. ChristChrist succeeds in personifying this perfection and providing for us a visible manifestation of the Absolute. Back to top Loading PreviewSorry, preview is currently unavailable. Quite frankly, this is nothing less than confusing the medium with the revelation. It is only then that we can grasp the revelation that all which is irrelevant cannot stand in the light of pure rationality. Finitude is nothing but a temporary medium that we must conquer and not let possess us. We are thwarted in our quest for the Kingdom by the problem of heteronomy (an authority which falsely claims to represent reason and issues commands from outside our reason). The Word of God contains neither revealed commandments nor revealed doctrines but is nevertheless the "Good News" delivered into the world and made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. We cannot excuse ourselves from representing it internally by trying to construct it with finite, external building blocks. Reason is the Logos of being. God is love and the purpose of his love is the moral organization of humanity in the Kingdom of God, without conflict, murder, greed, inequitable hoarding, abject poverty, hunger, addictions, suffering, and the other characteristics of hell. That which succeeds in manifesting Reason is retained and that which is unreasonable diminishes, much as set forth in the "Parable of the Weeds" from the 13th Chapter of Matthew. Want more? Heteronomous authorities may be represented by myth, cult, government, an over-bearing spouse, social convention, unjust laws, etc. Instead, Jesus calls his followers to something beyond the finite, to God, as that which should be of the most ultimate concern. We can represent it only within ourselves. Conventionalism exerts great power of destruction upon the mind. It transcends our ability to reduce it to any list of rules. Instead, we must seek to embody it within ourselves that nature which others can see for themselves. It is dynamic. Fundamentalism destroys the humble honesty inherent to an independent search for truth. He handles this subject matter with powerful conceptual ability and intellectual grace.The problem of life is ambiguity. Tillich has a fetish for profusely defining words, phrases, and concepts, as well as deeply exploring contradictions and contrasting every minute detail. It is not mere technical reasoning, which can become sterile and dehumanizing by turning religion into superstition. This tendency has produced the three massive volumes that constitute Systematic Theology, Introduction Certainly this is a very difficult read, perhaps intended for advanced students of theology. Such ones experience a vacuum that can only be filled by successful cognition. We must recognize that we live within the medium of experience and that experience filters the character and distortions of all religious understanding. The Spiritual Presence conquers the negativities of religion, culture, and morality, and the symbols anticipating Eternal Life present the answer to the problem of life. Nevertheless, reading Tillich has proven rewarding. This is our quest for the Kingdom. It is the Word within us; not the concrete thing we have fashioned outside of us. In the true realization of the Ultimate Concern, the difference between theory and practice vanishes. In this way, there is awareness of the infinite in everything finite. Conventionalism promotes an automated obedience to accepted ways of behavior. Fundamentalism tends toward finitude: by taking parabolic scripture literally, by erecting dogma, by effectuating rituals, by using intimidation tactics to coerce seekers to blindly succumb to embellished theology, and by seeing concrete things as holy, such as the ink and pages of the Bible, a crucifix, or a painting of Jesus. Conventionalism tends to destroy the inborn vitality and creativity of every new being of every new generation. Nonsense is demonic. To embrace a belief in something without inner justification is essentially idolatry. The denial of reason is antihuman because it is anti divine. -Paul TillichFrom this perspective, we see that Reason is more than just the capacity for reasoning. God answers man's questions within particular space and time; and man must continue to ask questions until question and answer are no longer separated. Classical reason is Logos, whether it is understood in a more intuitive or in a more critical way. Gods revolutionary power is manifest through autonomous use of the intellect, not indoctrination. It is in this way that the Ultimate Concern merges the concrete with the universal so that many might come to validate and worship the truth. That which we are called to worship transcends the finite. This evolution may come on the lives of many martyrs who fall standing firm in the truth, lighting the way with the glare of their disregard for the finite. The best characterization we can have for It are those adjectives by which we would describe ourselves if we were capable of perfection: peace, compassion, truth, serenity, grace, integrity, justice, honesty, forgiveness, helpfulness, caring, etc. Its cognitive nature is one element in addition to others; it is cognitive and aesthetic, theoretical and practical, detached and passionate, subjective and objective. In every act of knowledge they sense that estrangement is conquered. In the "apathy" of the soul the logos manifests its presence (Stoics). We have to look at Christ to see Reason perfectly. You can download the paper by clicking the button above. Tillich cites three ways in which theology attempts to approach the "Ultimate Concern" via "preliminary concerns": (1) The mutual indifference of placing the Ultimate Concern beside other concerns and depriving It of its ultimacy; (2) Elevating a preliminary concern to ultimacy, as in idolatry; or (3) Letting the preliminary concern become a vehicle for the Ultimate Concern without claiming ultimacy for itself. It is the experience of Christ that brings a new reality and New Being. "Intellectual love" unites intellect and emotion in the most rational state of the mind (Spinoza). But even Christ asked: "Why ye call me good? Only God is Good." Yet, through His visible manifestation, Christ allows the average, limited, human mind to grasp the Absolute. We cherish relics that are finite things perceived to possess power. The problem Tillich sees with fundamentalism is that it elevates something finite and transitory to infinite and eternal validity and, in this respect, bears demonic traits. We return willingly into a stronger cohesion with God, as symbolized in the story of "The Prodigal Son". Heteronomy is destructive because it denies to reason the right of autonomy. It is certainly not arbitrary decisions serving our "will to power". There are those who exhibit a passion for knowing for the sake of knowing. Religion attempts to establish sacramental objects, whether it is an object of nature, a human being, a historical event, or a sacred text. John Locke wrote that: "New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common". The thing that restrains such consolidation of people is the difficulty we have in forsaking everything else for what concerns us ultimately. Experience is an inexhaustible source, from which new truths may be taken continually. The Kingdom of God comes when the fear of finitude is extinguished; and when no one can be coerced by fear, pain, or threat and an entirely new and different world emerges. And in so doing, Jesus impressed an infinite message among us that has endured through time. We must not worship things, not even the cross, the Bible, relics, or icons of any sort. Revelation leads to New Being.

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