

## SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY VOL.2. ~ PAUL TILLICH

**Vol 1 (1953) Vol 2 (1957) Vol 3 (1964) Combined Vol 1968 James Nisbet**

These books are works of intensely complex philosophical theology and so these notes are thin & selective by comparison. I have used quotations extensively

### **Vol 2, forms part 3 of the System**

#### **Chapters XII to XXI: Existence and The Christ:**

NOTE: from intro to vol 2:

Is this 'Ground of Being' talk all abstraction? No, it is not the highest abstraction but the expression of the experience of being over against non-being. For some it is mostly the sound of the word 'being' which produces this concern of abstraction, but suprapersonal is not impersonal. It is the power of being in everything that has being!

This question is not asked in Eastern religious circles but is important to those who adopt Biblical base of faith. Biblical personalism vs. philosophical ontology. But there are no concepts or symbols in Bible which do not have ontological implications.

#### ***I: Existence and the Quest for the Christ:***

#### **Chapter XII: Existence and Existentialism.**

So 'treehood' does not 'exist' even though it has being – potential being – but a tree in my garden 'exists' because it's not just potential. It stands out from its being, although it still has it. So to 'exist' is to stand out of one's being and non-being because one is within finitude.

Hegel saw the world as the self-realisation of the divine mind so existence is the expression of essence and not a falling away from it. Coined the term 'estrangement'. But the Existentialists argued with him, seeing 'estrangement' still with us and not overcome automatically. "Reconciliation is a matter of anticipation and expectation, but not of reality." p.27. "The world is not reconciled, either in the individual – as Kierkegaard shows – or in society – as Marx shows – or in life as such – as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche show. Existence is estrangement and not reconciliation. Existentialism got that far but did not try to give an answer to this alienation.

#### **Existentialism and Christian Theology**

Existentialism has analysed the estrangement which Christians believe is between God and Man, Man and Man, Man and himself (*Tillich uses male pronouns throughout text*) Many say it's too pessimistic.

#### **Chapter XIII: Transition from Essence to Existence. Symbol of 'the Fall'.**

The Fall is symbol of human situation universally, not an event. No 'before or after'.

Man is excluded from the infinity to which he belongs. Man is free to ask questions of the world he inhabits but it is finite freedom, even free to separate himself from God. We thus contradict our essential nature.

## Chapter XIV: Our estrangement. Concept of Sin .

So Man is estranged from his true being and is not as he essentially is or ought to be. (so Gen 1-11; Paul's anthropology – so it's biblical concept thought not the term) We use the word 'Sin' for this – 'sins' is altogether different – to show its tragedy.

God wants reconciliation *in spite of* .

Augustine say this happening through power of grace in sacraments and church for God reconciles with his Love, the power to overcome estrangement.

Protestants stress personal reconciliation with God and love follows.

We think we can achieve this. *Hubris* is self-elevation to divine sphere (eating fruit of the Tree), and if we acknowledge our sins we take pride even in that.

*Concupiscence* is to Love for one's own sake. Nero draws world into himself. Freud speaks of Libido, Nietzsche of 'will to power' – all assuming that we can effect fulfilment.

Sins actualise the fact of universal existential estrangement.

But the universal state is described variously. Physicist: mechanistic determinism, Biologists: decadent power of life, Psychologists: force of unconscious, Sociologists: result of class domination, Culturalist: lack of educational adjustment.

God's graceful reconciliation is unconditional – despite our total guilt!

## Chapter XV: Existential Self-Destruction. Doctrine of Evil.

Man is driven by anxiety of mortality. Genesis: we come from dust and return to dust. Sin does not produce death but it is the estrangement of Man's finite nature.

TIME: Man tries to prolong finite life, with distractions, memorials, or idea of endlessness without Eternity. Time's threat is fear of non-being.

SPACE: Lack of belonging, remains a pilgrim, 'wind goes over it and place remembered no longer'. Not living in Eternal here.

CAUSALITY: Man tries to be absolute cause.

SUFFERING: confounded by its loneliness and so sense of meaninglessness.

"The structure of finitude is good in itself since it is the actualisation of being, but under conditions of estrangement it becomes a structure of destruction." p 82.

We can have essential solitude or existential loneliness, the latter is way to destruction the former the way to essential unity.

DOUBT: no finite being has the whole, and truth is in the whole (Hegel). Doubt is questioning and science can flourish only with doubtful questioning/questioning.

DESPAIR: Here Man comes to end of his possibilities, loss of meaning of his existence and unable to reclaim it. In conflict with oneself ~ suicide?

WRATH OF GOD: The only way Love can operate in the one who rejects Love is to show that one the horror of it and this is experienced not as the Love which it is but as a negative threat.

"Only the acceptance of forgiveness can transform the image of the wrathful God into the ultimately valid image of the God of Love." p 89.

## **Chapter XVI: The Quest for the New Being. The Meaning of 'Christ'.**

Only what is essentially free can come under existential bondage, so only Man has this negative capacity since other elements in creation do not have existential freedom. Grace never takes away or denies Man's existential freedom but reunites the estranged with God.

Self-salvation is the road to failure:

Religion can sometimes be used in this way, as can 'keeping the Law' or asceticism. As can also mysticism.

Mysticism finds divine to be within experience and can be felt, experienced, which is crucial element of religion, but can be deadening if 'used' to conquer estrangement. Indeed, mystics themselves readily acknowledge that God is also beyond/mystery in which God initiates and not the mystic.

Sacrament can also be used as self-salvation by which manifestation of the New Being in Christ is distorted into ritual or, in sacrament of the Word, intellectual 'work'. Faith is being grasped by, not grasping.

Similarly we can use Emotion as a self-salvatory tactic when created to do so rather than emotion being initiated by the divine.

The New Being is a universal quest. Often (mis)understood (Buddhism) as outside history where history is circular and miserable, achieving nothing new, and one transcends this historical existence and is encompassed by the Ground of Being

Western religions have understood expect the New Being within historical existence (Zoroastrianism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity).

THE SYMBOL OF 'CHRIST'. Historical and transhistorical meanings.

Symbol taken from Egyptian and Semitic world where New Being conquers the estrangement of existence from within existence. In Christ the claim is that this happens in history but also has non-historical 'significance' while maintaining that non-historical cannot change the historical. So the Messiah is elevated to cosmic significance, the Law declared eternal, Wisdom a principle of creation. Danger here leading to Gnosticism.

Christ as Mediator:

God wants Man reconciled to him, Man cannot do this, so the Mediator is not 'in between' the two or it would be a demi-god. Christianity claims that in One personal life essential manhood has appeared under conditions of existence without being conquered by them.

God 'Incarnate':

Careful! God does not become Man – i.e. turn into something not God. Polytheism goes in for that nonsense. Johannine 'Word became Flesh' the word flesh stands for historical existence it does not mean a material substance but the whole cosmic order. It is the eternal relation of God to Man which is manifested in the Christ. It happens in one place to imply its operation in all places. God loves the universe.

## **Part II: The Reality of the Christ .**

### **Chapter XVII Jesus as the Christ. [and historical Jesus]**

Caesarea Philippi: Disciples accept Jesus as Christ at moment history's powers reject him. He has to die for his acceptance for his acceptance of title 'the Christ'.

He who overcomes existential estrangement must participate in it to the full. This is the central message of the Gospel.

This story means that Jesus as Christ is a historical fact and at the same time the subject of being received as such.

Quest for Historical Jesus seemed to deny biblical authority and undercut faith. But the biblical record is one of reporting Jesus already understood as the Christ and to separate the reception by disciples from the facts of Jesus would make nonsense of the genre gospel, and the status of the documents. So the 'Lives of Jesus' are more like novels than historical fact. (note that recent quest is different) Similarly to look only at 'the Teachings of Jesus' is a genre mistake, reducing the words to OT genre. Bultmann does this by reducing Jesus to his message which is then expected to demand a response and this situation of requiring a response before reconciliation has reduced gospel to Law. Proper historical research however protects faith and theology from superstition and absurdity.

However only if Jesus is existential fact does he reconcile existence to essence as New Being. But this fact is mediated to us in the writings of those who encountered it and were reconciled through it. Bible stands therefore as adequate expression of the transforming power of the New Being in the historical Jesus.

The expressionist painter enters deeply into the influence of the referent and paints not the surface traits but such are used in painting to express what painter has experienced through his participation in the being of his subject.

We know other people better than we know Jesus in terms of historical documents but we know Jesus better than we know others by our participation in his Being.

### **Chapter XVIII: The New Being in Jesus as the Christ**

Disciples' difficulty with Jesus' death is that he promised so much yet suffered. Synoptics claim he foretold this. Paul talks therefore of a Second Coming with the New Being already in believers – he is the Kingdom of God. New Being is living under conditions of existence and yet conquering the gap between essence and existence. Christ is 'realised eschatology'. For this Paul uses 'new creation' and 'new creature' and the conquest of the situation under the Law – which is the old situation. The Law helped him with existence but did not free his being and so the new creature now no longer bound by that law. Christ, the New Being is the end of existence lived in estrangement.

The New Being in Jesus as Christ expresses itself in Word (the final manifestation of God to Humanity), in Actions (note however that not his actions but the being out of whom they come makes him the Christ), and in his Suffering. So Bible does not psychologise him but does ontologise, speaking about his unity with Father and Spirit. They are the encounters of Being with existence. God is the 'power of Being'..

New Being conquering Estrangement:

He only has finite freedom yet is not estranged from Ground of his Being. There is no hubris in him about this, and he points always to the Father, even rejecting 'good' ascribed to himself.

Jesus is finite: The Temptations are crucial because he could not represent essential unity between God and Man without possibility within finitude. They are real. He Concupiscence is love of another for one's own sake (exploitation), true love is for their sake. Fruit of tree was fine but was then coveted for own sake. Bible stresses Jesus' finitude – even anxiety of having to die. John says he is all truth but does not imply he knows everything – e.g. Error is evident in his understanding of universe. Also existential tragedy is evident for Jesus – witness the pious Jews not responding to Messiah. He chooses Judas – a mistake? So these existential negatives are taken by Jesus into the essential will of the Father/the Ground of Being.

The Preparatory Revelation. New Testament takes this seriously – Son of David, Twelve Apostles.

### **Chapter XIX: Valuation of the Christological Drama:**

Early Church used Greek symbolism and so Logos-Christology the norm. Did these symbols succeed in expressing the Christian message? Church adapted itself: became a mystery cult, a philosophical school, a legal system, but persisted in basing all on Jesus as the Christ. We must be free from a confusion of our concepts and the substance of faith, and free to use every tool which becomes more useful than those in the tradition.

Divine mystery remains always thus. The Councils could never therefore succeed. Nicaea is Christological, Constantinople adds Spirit to Logos, but must be understood within their experiential roots – experience of living God, and experience of New Being in Christ. But popular piety wanted supernatural miracle not paradox which landed us with picture of a man in whom God is uniquely manifested rather than a man whose being was the New Being conquering existential estrangement. God has no essence separated from existence but is beyond them both – although Jesus is not beyond but bound in. There is no static essence of 'two natures' but one dynamic relationship as described in gospels.

"It is a community between God and the centre of a personal life which resists all existential attempts to disrupt it." p. 171.

Adoptionist ideas help incarnation ideas fill out in that they show the tensions, risks and freedoms of the relationship.

### **Chapter XX: Universal Significance of the Event, Jesus Christ.**

How is Jesus as Christ 'saviour'? Biblical material uses anecdote, legendary form, symbols & myths (often overlapping) but they only corroborate. They are the ways the historical fact of Jesus has been received by those who see him as Christ. So we must 'deliteralise' (not 'demythologise' which is to substitute the bible's language with scientific which would silence the experience of the spirit.). The question is rather 'do they still express what they are supposed to express – the New Being in Jesus the Christ? So subjection to existence is expressed in the Cross, its conquest in symbol of Resurrection. The real experiences made it possible for the disciples to adopt the symbols.

p 179: "It is the certainty of one's own victory over the death of existential estrangement which creates the certainty of the Resurrection of the Christ as event and symbol; but it is not historical conviction or the acceptance of biblical authority

which creates this certainty. Beyond this point there is no certainty but only probability, often very low, sometimes rather high.”

Three ways events might be verified historically: 1. physical – women at the tomb, but not in earliest account in ICor.15. 2. Spiritualistic – Paul describes presence of soul of Christ to disciples. 3. Psychological – inner event in minds of followers

The event impressed upon the disciples the New Being in Christ – do the symbols hit the mark, for them and now for us? The two symbols, cross and resurrection, represent not just two events but whole life experience of Jesus as Christ – it is an eternal principle of divine in Jesus. The other symbols corroborate these two, e.g. virgin birth the resurrection, Bethlehem the cross. But Virgin Birth does not work because excluding human father deprives Jesus of full participation in human predicament.

Miracles: symbolise anticipation of self-destruction conquered, and the coming of the new eon. Here is the power over the enslaving structures of evil. (it is not about interference with ordinary course of the finite and existential). So also Ascension would be a nonsense if taken literally but is reduplication of Resurrection but denoting finality. Likewise the 1,000 year reign has warning against Utopianism – the demonic is not dead! Likewise, Second Coming symbol places the Christian in the now and not yet mindset. Jesus as the Judge is in John’s gospel shown to be symbol of fact that we are all judged constantly if we encounter the New Being and reject it (Matt 25).

So, the New Being is not dependent on the symbols which in each generation seek to express it.

## **Chapter XXI: The New Being in Jesus/Christ as the Power of Salvation**

Looking for ‘salvation’ from utter negativity of loss of meaning or inner telos.

For Greeks salvation was from death and error, Roman Catholicism salvation from guilt and consequences into next life, Protestants saved from Law and its power to condemn. For pietists & relativists, salvation is conversion from godless state, in Liberal Protestants salvation is from special sins and progress towards moral perfection.

Salvation means Healing, made whole – reuniting with that from which estranged (split between man and man, man and God, man and himself).

History of concrete revelatory events through time: ‘Preparatory revelation’ leads to central point/Jesus and from then ‘receiving revelation’ – revelation being not information but ecstatic manifestation of Ground of Being in events, things, persons. This revelation must be given and it must be accepted, and to some extent all participate in this so they can exist, but none are totally healed – therefore eschatology. Jesus is the ultimate criterion by which all salvatory events must be judged for in him it is completed. “wherever there is saving power in mankind, it must be judged by the saving power in Jesus as the Christ.” p. 194.

Mediator: to reunite what is estranged. Not a separate, third being, but God who is eternally reconciled, wants us to be reconciled to him.

**DOCTRINES OF ATONEMENT.** Five principles:

1. Atoning process is God’s act. A divine act demanding a human reaction. But in Christus Victor the human reaction seems missing.

2. In God Love not wrath has the last word, but love that does not include judgement/justice is simply sentiment. Wrath is how it is experienced.
3. Divine removal of guilt does not overlook the estrangement
4. Jesus as Christ takes hold of estrangement by participating in it and transforming it so that those who participate in him experience this transformation.
5. Divine participation in estrangement is manifested in cross.
6. Man/men participate in New Being through participation in the Christ who does this. It is not 'substitution' but 'participation'.

This New State of Being turns things around: faith not unbelief, surrender no hubris, love not concupiscence. It is not simply personal but cosmic. Its reality does not depend on human participation in it but the individual can enter in. It is Objective before it is Subjective. This justifying faith is not human act, faith is the act of the divine spirit – it is done 'in spite of' – in that God accepts that which is estranged and this is Justification.

So those who seek to justify themselves are more estranged still, Man must simply accept he is accepted.

[Justification by grace through faith is wrongly abbreviated to Justification by faith because that gives the impression of being Man's act. The cause is God alone though Grace! Faith is the channel through which this grace is mediated.]

Once thus transformed we call this Sanctification which is the process in which the power of the New Being transforms personality and community, inside and outside the Church.

Man is not only determined by essential goodness and existential estrangement. He is also determined by ambiguities of life and history. The next volume will attend to that fact and this will save the whole theological System from abstraction.