

# THE EXISTENTIALISTS AND GOD

*Being and the Being of God in the Thought of* SØREN KIERKEGAARD KARL JASPERS  
MARTIN HEIDEGGER JEAN-PAUL SARTRE PAUL TILlich ETIENNE GILSON  
KARL BARTH

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# **PREFACE**

THIS BOOK contains the lectures I delivered as guest professor of the Robert Foundation chair of the Philosophy of Religion and Christian Ethics at Presbyterian College, Montreal, during the fall semester of 1954. In the course of their preparation I became convinced that the central and basic problem for theology today is that of distinguishing between the various concepts of being held by existentialists inside and outside the Church and the Christian doctrine of the being of God revealed in Jesus Christ. It seemed to me that almost all of the crucial issues for theology go back to the fundamental question of the ultimate reality in relation to which man's life is lived. Before there could be a fruitful discussion of hermeneutics, in particular of the problem of the "demythologizing" of the New Testament, and before there could be a meaningful presentation of other Christian doctrines for our day, it was imperative to clear up, if possible, the widespread confusion of theology with existential ontology. These lectures on the thought of Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Tillich, Gilson, and Barth are intended as a contribution toward such a clarification.

I wish to record my profound appreciation of the honor which Principal Robert Lennox and the board of Presbyterian College bestowed upon me by inviting me to be the first to deliver the Robert Foundation Lectures. I am also indebted to Professor F. H. Anderson, head of the department of philosophy at University College, University of Toronto, and the Rev. Dr. George B. Ehlhardt, librarian at the seminary of the University of Dubuque,

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for reading my manuscript and for their helpful criticisms. Needless to say, I alone am the one responsible for what appears in the pages of this book.

ARTHUR C. COCHRANE.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

**THERE** is a story in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of *The Book of Judges* which affords a particularly apt description of the spiritual exhaustion of our Western civilization and of what Richard Wagner prophetically called *die Götterdämmerung*: the twilight of the gods. It is the story of Micah -not to be confused with the prophet of the same name. Micah was an exceedingly religious man who lived "in those days when there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." There was no one to govern the people according to God's grace and truth. For reasons not given, God had withdrawn himself from his people. Left to themselves, men followed the dictates of their own consciences. They became a law unto themselves. They were their own gods. When God does not rule in the hearts of men, they govern themselves.

In an absence of the knowledge of the true God, men become very religious. They manufacture gods. Images and symbols are set up. Micah had a house full of such gods: an ephod, teraphim, and a graven image and a molten image of silver. In addition he hired a young man of the priestly family, the Levites, to be his priest. The fact is that when there is no king in Israel, and men are ignorant of divine grace, they devise a religion of grace which is an almost exact copy of the true religion. A merciful deity is fashioned to comfort them. Religious and moral laws are established. When men fall short even of what is right in their own eyes, they are stricken with a sense of sin and guilt. Then they seek to justify themselves before the god of their own mak-

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ing. Sacrifices are offered to atone for sin or to placate an angry god. A priest is engaged to make intercession and to pronounce absolution. Thus do men simulate the Christian religion when there is no king in Israel.

By and by a band of robbers came to Micah's house and stole his cherished idols and carried off his priest. (Actually the priest was willing to accept a call to a larger field of endeavor at a higher stipend.) Micah was distraught. At first he made a show of resisting the robbers and demanded the return of his gods. His enemies were too strong for him. He turned back to his house in great bitterness of spirit. When the robbers said to him, "What ails you?" he replied, "Ye take away my gods which I made, and the priest, and go away, and what have I left?"

It was a cruel and callous thing those robbers did to Micah when they robbed him of his religion, his faith, and his gods. It is always heartless to deprive a man of his religion even when it is a false one; that is, unless he can be given something to take its place. For Micah's gods and Micah's faith were his only comfort and hope in life and in death. They lent meaning and purpose to his existence. The natural man's philosophy of life or the pagan's religion -- be it Mohammedanism or Buddhism, Communism or the American Way -- is what gives meaning and content to his life. It is therefore cruel to leave a man spiritually naked and destitute.

Micah's heart-rending cry: "Ye take away my gods, . . . and what have I left?" is the cry of millions of spiritual orphans in our generation, men and women who once had something they believed in, albeit a crude and false faith, but now find that their gods have disappeared and their faith is destroyed. They are left with a terrible emptiness, an aching void.

The greatness and the misery of Friedrich Nietzsche lay in the fact that in his writings, and in his own life and death, he was prophetic of the "death of the gods" in our generation. He wrote:

"Have you not heard as yet of that madman who on one bright forenoon lighted a lantern, ran out into the market place and cried out again and again: 'I seek God! I seek God!' Because there were standing about just at that time many who did not believe in God,

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the madman was the occasion of great merriment. Has God been lost? said one of them. Has he lost his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding himself? Is he afraid of us? Has he boarded a ship? Has he emigrated? Thus they cried and laughed. But the madman pierced them with his glance: 'Whither had God gone?' he cried. 'I am going to tell you. We have killed him -- you and I. We all are his murderers. But how have we accomplished this? How have we been able to empty the sea? Who gave us the sponge with which to wipe off the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither does the earth now move? Whither do we ourselves move? Away from every sun? Are we not constantly falling . . . ? Are we not groping our way in an infinite nothingness? Do we not feel the breath of the empty spaces? Has it not become colder? Is there not night and ever more night? . . . How do we manage to console ourselves, we master assassins? The most holy and the most mighty being that the world possessed . . . has bled to death under our knives. Who is going to wipe this blood off our hands? Where is the water with which to purify ourselves? What feasts of atonement, what sacred rites shall we have to invent? . . . Must not we ourselves become gods to make ourselves worthy of such a deed?'"<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche's phrase, "God is dead," was prophetic of a philosophy of nothingness which is spreading over our world like the icy winds of winter. It is reflected in so much modern literature, music, and art. It finds expression in various ways in the plays and novels of Kafka, Auden, Hemingway, and Sartre; in the poems and plays of T. S. Eliot; in Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman* and Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. All express either the utter hopelessness and meaninglessness of existence or the longing for new hope and meaning against a background of despair.

Contemporary existentialism is the philosophical expression of Micah's ancient lament in our generation: "Ye take away my gods which I have made, . . . and what have I left?" It is, of course, patently true of the atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, and perhaps of the early Heidegger. This is the school described by the Report of the Advisory Commission of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches as follows:

"There are those among us, who, having rigorously purged their minds and their philosophies of every variety of temporizing and ill-

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grounded optimism, of every illusion of progress, of every utopian expectation, of every shoddy or shadowy idealism, and having accordingly faced without blinkers the desperateness of the human situation in a godless world have found a new courage coming to them from the very clarity and depth of their despair. . . . Here we have what is the most honest of all forms of anthropocentrism and perhaps the only consistent form of it. In its open-eyed realization

of the desperate plight of those who are without God in the world, it repeats what is a central Christian affirmation; while its talk of a courage that can emerge only out of the darkness of the complete renunciation of hope seems to echo, even if only in a perverted form, the Christian teaching that only through the darkness of the cross, with its cry of dereliction, can hope ever be reborn."<sup>2</sup>.

The existentialists -- and Sartre especially -- are painfully aware of what it means to live "having no hope and without God in the world." Sartre announces that he is an atheist, yet, as Wilfrid Desan has observed, "more than any other philosopher he has emphasized the extreme need of the absolute without, however, conceding the existence of an Absolute Being as a remedy to this obsession."<sup>3</sup> One cannot read Sartre's play *Lucifer and the Lord* without sensing the author's almost fanatical preoccupation with the problem of God. The truth is that existentialism suffers from "God-sickness" -- tortured by the thought that God might not be and yet must be.

Micah's lament also echoes through the literature of avowedly religious and Christian forms of existentialism. (The so-called existentialism of the neo-Thomists is excepted.) Although it arrives at a new affirmation of God, it does so in the face of despair and the ultimate situations of life. All are agreed -- Marcel, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Tillich -- that the foundations of being have been shattered, that the old objective knowledge of God, and of the values and principles associated with him, is no longer valid, and that as a consequence modern man is spiritually uprooted. Moreover, the existentialist preoccupation with the the problem of the Nothing, which determines human existence, fulfills the Nietzschean prophecy that we are "groping our way in an infinite nothingness."

The modern Micahs are not confined to literary and philosophi-

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cal circles. The poets and philosophers simply express in words the mood, and the often unconscious sentiments, of our contemporaries. We grievously err if we imagine that our Christian congregations have been untouched by this blighting spirit of the times. It is true, of course, that in young America we can still energetically carry on the oldtime religion. Like Micah, we can resist the theft of our gods. We can try to preserve our creeds and confessions and ancient forms of worship. We can hang images on the walls of our churches and light the candles on the altars. But the candles will go out one by one, and then in the cheerless darkness we iconoclasts will wish they were back on again. Better candles than the darkness! Truly the twentieth century has been rough on the gods by which our fathers lived: honor, thrift, industry, honesty, and brotherly love. For with the death of the gods have disappeared a heaven of values and ideals. Surely anyone who is sensitive to our times can hear the plaintive cry: "Ye take away my gods, . . . and what have I left?"

Now if theology is aware that it is to serve the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, it will know that it has only a word of tenderness and comfort to speak to a generation of Micahs. The very last thing the theologian should utter is a word of reproach: "It is your own fault. You fashioned gods for yourselves and they have turned out to be devils. You are reaping what you have sown. You have only yourselves to blame." That is not the attitude to take to the followers of Jean-Paul Sartre and Karl Marx, and to the thousands who never darken a church door. It is too much like the attitude of the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Theologians should be more loving. Nor should it be the task of theology to meet our

contemporaries with a law, with exhortations to repent, to believe in God, and so to become religious once again. On the contrary, the Church may say to these modern Micahs -- and that includes all of us: "There is a King in Israel and his name is Jesus. He is born King of the Jews. No man needs to live by what is right in his own eyes. No man needs to fashion gods for himself. For we declare to you the living and true God who is Christ the King! You may believe in him. He is your great High Priest! He is the only sacrifice for

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your sins. He intercedes for you. Therefore, be of good courage. Life has meaning and purpose. Jesus is alive. There is a King in Israel forevermore!"

Existentialism, however, is not simply nihilistic and negative. It is not just symptomatic of a breakdown of faith in God. Religious existentialism celebrates in its way a "resurrection of God." It sees clearly that the "God" of the Hegelian system is dead -- put to death at the hands of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and perhaps anticipatively by Hume and Kant. But in the minds of the religious existentialists God has come alive again. There are, we are told, new and sufficient grounds for believing in God. True, God is no longer an object, and cannot be an object of thought. Yet somehow men can become aware of him, and in that that awareness have the courage to face up to Hamlet's question, "To be, or not to be." Thus religious existentialism constitutes a new faith in God which, in its various forms, is contending for the souls of men both inside and outside the Church. While Sartre is preaching an old but ever new gospel of humanism, Martin Heidegger calls upon men to realize their authentic being. Karl Jaspers' book *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy* was originally entitled *Der philosophische Glaube (The Philosophical Faith)*. It is advanced as a true faith in God in opposition to the exclusive claims of Christianity. Thus existentialism must be seen as a rival, if not indeed as an enemy of Christian faith. The recognition of this fact, however, need not make the Church's attitude any less loving.

Now the recovery of a faith in God by religious existentialists has been by way of ontology. Aristotle had defined metaphysics as "a science which takes up the theory of being and of what 'to be' means, taken by itself." To which he immediately added: "It is identical with none of the sciences whose subjects are defined as special aspects of being. For none of these looks upon being on the whole or generally, but each, isolating some part, gets a view of the whole only incidentally, as do the mathematical sciences."<sup>4</sup> Being qua being has been the grand theme of philosophy, and to a very large degree it has also been the theme

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of theology. Contemporary existentialism stands squarely in the main stream of philosophy. It is not simply a recapitulation of Greek and medieval metaphysics. It takes full account of the objections of Kant and Hume to an objective knowledge of being. But it seeks to establish the reality and knowledge of being on grounds other than those employed by Aristotle and Saint Thomas. There are, it is true, aspects of present-day existentialism that appear to announce the bankruptcy of philosophy. In a very deep sense it is the logical outcome of Kantian criticism. Yet at the point of intellectual despair a new affirmation of being emerges. Thus existentialism is no fly-by-night philosophy, no intellectual fad. Whatever its excesses may be, it is basically a serious and strenuous quest for being. It is fundamentally ontology.<sup>5</sup> But it is ontology that has assumed the color of theology. That is to say, the being-itself which

existentialists believe they have discovered is equated with God ( Jaspers, Tillich) or is regarded as the dimension of the divine and the holy ( Heidegger).

It is taken for granted that the being of God is a legitimate concern of theology. But if the being about which ontology inquires is equated with God, what is the difference between ontology and theology? Are they merely two different ways of approaching the same ultimate reality? Should theology look upon ontology as an ally or as an enemy? There are not wanting those in the Church who are persuaded that existentialism has something indispensable to offer if the Church is rightly to understand its own message and if it is to communicate it successfully to others. We indicated earlier, rather cryptically to be sure, that the Church is to bear witness to Jesus Christ as Israel's King and the Lord of the Church. But now the issue is whether Christian faith in Jesus Christ is to be interpreted in terms of existentialist philosophy. In a word, this new philosophy represents a temptation to the Church to confuse its message with existentialism or at least to base its message upon existential principles. To the degree in which theology succumbs to this temptation it will be unable to speak its own authentic Word of comfort to the present situation.

The revival of theology in our generation has been marked by

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a vigorous effort to recover the special and peculiar theme or subject matter of theology which would distinguish it from philosophy and science. Since the rational orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, theology had increasingly become the captive of philosophies of one kind or another. The turning point was roughly the 1920's, when the early writings of the so-called "Dialectical" or "Crisis" school of Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, and Gogarten appeared. Karl Barth's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans and his volume of addresses, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, Emil Brunner's *The Theology of Crisis, The Word and the World*, and *The Mediator*, and Rudolf Bultmann's *Jesus and the Word* were serious attempts to purge theology of the historicism, psychologism, moralism, and rationalism with which it had become encrusted. They were efforts to restore to theology an independent existence. It was perhaps a bit egotistical when some hailed this venture as the re-establishment of theology as the "queen of the sciences." Actually the theology of the twenties had no desire to lord it over other disciplines, but neither did it wish to be subject to them. Theology was fighting for its existence in a day when Christian faith had been well-nigh naturalized and humanized. God and his works were virtually identified with history and experience, so that the theologian, thinking he was speaking about God, was actually talking about man. It seemed impossible to speak about God, except in terms of man's religious self-consciousness ( Schleiermacher) or of human value-judgments ( Ritschl). Religion was variously defined in terms of reason, will, and emotion. Christianity was looked upon as one religion among many, albeit the highest. The righteousness of God, having been subordinated to judgments of value, became, in fact, little more than the highest form of human righteousness. Theology had become the handmaid of philosophy. Not Augustine, Anselm, and Calvin, but Descartes, Kant, and Hegel inspired students for the Christian ministry. The chair of the philosophy of religion well-nigh usurped the honorable place once accorded systematic theology. Courses in psychology, pedagogy, and Church music seemed more important than the study of Greek and Hebrew. And in the field of Old

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and New Testament studies, Biblical theology, now coming into its own, was virtually unknown.

Such was the plight of theology when Barth, Brunner, and others took up their work. They were intent upon recovering a theology of the Word of God. One cannot say that they were entirely successful. They were still too much the children of their age. They were still too close to the epoch from which they wished to free themselves. Nevertheless, they did take decisive steps toward the liberation of theology from its "Babylonian" captivity. And since the 1920's there has been a continual struggle, through ever more precise demarcations and refinements, to secure the liberation of theology and to endow it with a peculiar task and dignity of its own.

Quite early in this struggle for the integrity of theology, Karl Barth sensed the danger of theology's becoming subservient to an existentialist anthropology, and of existentialism's replacing the theme of theology.<sup>6</sup> But today the danger is more acute in the "Christian" existentialism of Paul Tillich, which resembles in so many ways the philosophies of Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. Perhaps even more perilous is Rudolf Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*. Although he does not lay down a full-blown ontology, as Tillich does, he believes that ontological reflection belongs to the business of theology. He makes the Heideggerian analysis of Dasein (for Heidegger, broadly speaking, this means human existence) a prerequisite for interpreting the New Testament. It underlies much of his program of demythologizing the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> Put Tillich, the "theologian," and Bultmann, the "exegete," together, and we have a powerful combination, reinterpreting, if not transforming, the Christian message into existentialism. If theology is to succeed in resisting the existentialist temptation, if it is to preserve its independence as a theology of the Word of God, it will be able to do so only by a patient examination of the existential ontology of Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre. Only then will it be in a position to see clearly the philosophical presuppositions of Tillich's "theology." At the same time theology, by a renewed reflection upon God's revelation in Jesus Christ, will be obliged to define the being of

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God over against existential ontology. To that task the present book is devoted.

Our research will be limited to the various ontologies in the thought of Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Paul Tillich, and Etienne Gilson. The selection of these writers has been dictated by the conviction that their ontologies bear most acutely upon the problem of the being of God for Christian theology today. The inclusion of men like Miguel de Unamuno, Nicolas Berdyaev, Martin Buber, and Gabriel Marcel, all of whom bear existential traits, would have entailed an almost endless expansion of the present work and would have militated against the unity and coherence of the argument it seeks to sustain.

Since the field of inquiry has been restricted to the ontology of existentialism, one must not expect to find here a complete picture of the existentialism of the authors selected. Though ontology is, we believe, the basis of existentialism, existentialism is much more than ontology. It is anthropology and ethics. It is a philosophy of history. The anthropological and ethical implications of existentialism will be dealt with only incidentally. Our prime interest lies in the way in which existentialism has defined the reality which ultimately qualifies and



determines human existence. Hans E. Fischer tells us in the introduction to Karl Jaspers' *Existentialism and Humanism* that "existentialism, whether atheistic or religious, rests on the awareness that our existence is founded upon something that transcends it, or, to put it differently: existence proper is essentially a pointing and striving beyond itself." It may be assumed tentatively that we have here a definition sufficiently broad to cover the contemporary schools of existentialism. It is a philosophy that sees the being of man -and herein lies its superiority to either a materialistic or an idealistic view of man -- in its movement, in its action in relation to another than itself, instead of being grounded in itself. In these chapters our attention will be concentrated upon that which constitutes man's counterpart. What is it that at once transcends and grounds his existence?

Unless theology is but another name for a philosophy of God,

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or for metaphysics, it is obliged to make a clear-cut distinction between being in general and the being of God. It must sharply distinguish between the revelation and knowledge of being in general and the revelation and knowledge of the being of God in Jesus Christ. Thus the task before us is to set down as faithfully as possible the ontologies of the authors under consideration, to follow the argumentation by which they arrive at them, and to review their direct and indirect effects upon theology. In pursuing our task we shall refrain from passing philosophical judgments, not only because we do not possess the competence to do so, but because we should thereby forsake the position of a theologian. The theologian qua theologian is not able to refute the philosopher with "enticing words of man's wisdom" ( I Cor. 2:4, K.J.). The theologian is essentially a witness. He can only repeat the Biblical witness to revelation. Consequently, he can only present what he believes to be the Scriptural testimony to the being of God. Whether that testimony is accepted in preference to some un-Biblical faith is an issue that does not lie at the disposal of the theologian. His task ends with the confrontation of unbelief with faith.

But the matter is not so simple as it sounds. The theologian is by no means able to set forth a pure and undiluted Biblical faith over against some philosophical or religious faith. Theology has never been infallible, and never will be until the dawn of the Kingdom of glory. It can only *aim* at setting forth the Biblical witness to Jesus Christ. Theology, even in its purest forms, has suffered from a heavy admixture of philosophy. This is particularly true in the history of the Church's doctrine of God. Doubtless the doctrine of the being of God offered in these chapters will not be entirely free from the influence of the existentialism against which it contends. The Church's doctrine must be reformed in the light of Holy Scripture. Criticism of this book by that standard will be cheerfully entertained. But at least we can make it clear that we do not wish to base theology on ontology, much less to equate them.

Secondly, it needs to be remembered that theology, in bearing witness to the being of God, is obliged to use human language,

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and that means the language of philosophy. It is no accident that many of the concepts employed by existentialism -- being, existence, essence, decision, actuality, transcendence, and such like -have found their way into theology. Here the Pauline rule applies: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not

be brought under the power of any" ( I Cor. 6:12; cf. ch. 10:23). Theology uses the thought forms of philosophy in order to bear witness to Jesus Christ, and in the service of the Word of God. It must constantly be on guard lest it come under the power and spell of the concepts it employs. It is comforted, however, by the assurance that its language, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will truly speak of Christ.

Thirdly, theology need not feel that its task is to oppose ontology as such. The science of being, like other sciences, exists in its own right, and theology has no prerogative to question its methods or results. Metaphysics, as Aristotle had said, is the investigation of being in general. There is no reason why theology should dispute its legitimacy any more than it would dispute the legitimacy of mathematics, biology, etc., which investigate special aspects of being. On what ground could theology deny the existence of an immanent principle or power in the visible and invisible created cosmos? A conflict between theology and philosophy arises only where theology forsakes its own subject matter and becomes ontology, or where ontology claims that the being it has discovered is the being of God which is revealed only in Jesus Christ. Moreover, a conflict could arise at a point -- not developed in this book -- where the Christian doctrine of man becomes scientific or philosophical anthropology, or where ontology imagines it knows the real man whom the Church believes has been revealed in the man Jesus. Ontology can investigate the metaphysical aspects of man, but it cannot disclose the man who is elected, created, preserved, and redeemed by God in Christ.

At first glance Heidegger appears to respect this distinction in the area of anthropology when he states: "*Verfallen* is an ontological concept of movement. Ontically, it is left undecided

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whether man is sunk in sin, the *status corruptionis*, or walks in the *status integritatis*, or is in the in-between stage, the *status gratiae*."<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, therefore, makes a distinction between ontological and ontic, the latter being a matter of man's relation to God.<sup>9</sup> And this distinction appears to respect the boundary between ontology and theology. But when Heidegger goes on to say that both faith and *Weltanschauung* must come back to the existential structures of being if their pronouncements make the claim to be understood conceptually; when he and Bultmann insist that because the philosopher asks the existential questions about being in general and *Dasein* in particular, he alone is able to say what are the real possibilities for man; or when Tillich declares that ontology provides the existential questions that are answered by revelation, it would appear that ontology has become determinative for theology. Is this not the case when we are told that the New Testament interpreter has to keep in touch with the philosopher because only he can tell what the real possibilities of *Dasein* are?"<sup>10</sup> Does this not make the ontological prior to the ontic? Is man first an ontological creature and *then* a creature who stands in relation to God? Or is the truth not that *the* being of man is just his relation to God, and that whatever his ontological structure may be, as discovered by science or philosophy, it is only a phenomenon of *that* being or *Dasein*? Does not the Christian belief that man is created in the image of God mean that *the* being or existence of man is inseparable from his relation to God and that ontology qua ontology cannot know this, and therefore cannot know of his possibility of a decision for God?

Finally, theology engages in a conversation with ontology not as if it had a better knowledge but a different one. In this conversation, theology is induced to be more exact in the prosecution of its own task. I would guardedly concur in the observation of one reviewer of my translation of Otto Weber's book on Karl Barth's *Dogmatics*, that Barth owes many of his

insights to contemporary existentialism. There is no doubt that philosophy renders theology an inestimable service in suggesting aspects of Christian truth that have been overlooked. For instance, the

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existentialist concern with the problem of nothing may have induced Barth to rethink the problem of evil in the light of the Christian revelation. But this has resulted in a clarification of the *difference* between the Christian doctrine of the Nihil (*das Nichtige*) and the existential theory of the Nothing. On the other hand, the service theology renders ontology, and philosophy and science in general, is to remind them of the limits of their field of inquiry. When theology and ontology are confused, both suffer. Theology indirectly serves the cause of sound science and philosophy best when it frees itself from philosophical accretions.

The chief concern of theology is for the purity of the Church's witness, because it realizes that there the very existence of the evangelical Church is at stake. The Church is founded upon the prophets and apostles, "Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone" ( Eph. 2:20). Since no man can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, "which is Jesus Christ" ( I Cor. 3:11), theology need not and must not countenance any other support for the gospel. To the extent to which the Church finds another source and criterion for its message, it falls into the service of alien gods and becomes an apostate Church.

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# I

## PURE BEING AND EXISTENCE

Søren Kierkegaard, 1813-1855

AN EXAMINATION of existential ontologies, with a view to comparing them with the Christian doctrine of the being of God, properly begins with the man who has been commonly regarded as the "father of existentialism" -- Søren Kierkegaard. Whether a man who never married -- philosophically or otherwise -- should be blamed for such an offspring remains to be seen. But it must be admitted that when Kierkegaard demolished the Hegelian deity, he opened up new avenues to the knowledge of the divine being, and indirectly paved the way for the ontologies of contemporary existentialists.

It may seem strange to speak of Kierkegaard's ontology, as Michael Wyschogrod does in his excellent book *Kierkegaard and Heidegger, The Ontology of Existence*.<sup>1</sup> For it has been generally supposed that Kierkegaard was not interested in ontology, nor in theology as such, nor even in a philosophy of existence, but in what it means to exist as an individual before God. Nevertheless the phrase "before God" is the clue that betrays Kierkegaard's implicit ontology, especially when one realizes the ontological way in which he defined God. It is certainly true that Kierkegaard never developed a metaphysical ontology, nor an ontology of existence. To do so would have been foreign to his whole purpose. The reason Kierkegaard does not concern himself directly with the problem of being is because he would have then be-

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<sup>1</sup>

Søren Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen in 1813 and died in 1855. Walter Lowrie has provided us with an excellent biography, *Kierkegaard*, Oxford University Press. London, etc., 1938.

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come an objective thinker -- the very thing he fought against. For Kierkegaard the subjective thinker is infinitely involved in the problem of his own eternal happiness, in which his very life is at stake. His attitude is far removed from that of a spectator. But the fact remains that underneath Kierkegaard's existentialism lies a definite ontology. It is the distinction and relation between pure being and existence.

It is well known that the fundamental principle in Kierkegaard's thought is the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity, the finite and the infinite, man and God. There is an absolute difference between God and man. "The absolute difference between God and man," he writes, "consists precisely in this, that man is a particular existing being . . . while God is infinite and eternal."<sup>2</sup> The dialectic in this case is not just a relative or quantitative distinction, but an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man. God is wholly other. God is eternal, man is temporal. And eternity is not time elevated through dialectic, as Hegel had thought, but is a never-changing presence. Kierkegaard writes:

"Time itself in its totality is the instant; eternally understood, the temporal is the instant, and the instant eternally understood is only 'once.' In vain would the temporal assume an air of importance, count the instants, and add them all together -- if eternity has any say in the matter, the temporal never gets farther than, never comes to more than, the 'once.' For eternity is the opposite; it is not the opposite to a single instant (this is meaningless), it is the opposite to the temporal as a whole, and it opposes itself with the power of eternity against the temporal amounting to more than that."<sup>3</sup>

Thus eternity is nothing more than the present forever, and, as Wyschogrod shows, is identical with pure being.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Kierkegaard explicitly states that pure being and eternity are the same.<sup>5</sup>

Following after Wyschogrod, to ask what proofs Kierkegaard can muster for the existence of eternity or pure being is to ask what is inadmissible from Kierkegaard's point of view. Kierkegaard frowns on proving the existence of anything, because "reasoning always proceeds from existence and not toward it. . . ."

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The question that is legitimate in connection with pure being concerns the relationship of the existing, subjective thinker to it. . . . Kierkegaard's justification for giving a place to pure being in his thinking is to be sought in the light it sheds on the tensions of the subjective thinker."<sup>6</sup> One wonders whether Kierkegaard simply took over this ontological framework from Greek and modern philosophical tradition, namely, the distinction between time and eternity, the infinite and the finite, spirit and matter, without seeking proofs for it, because to do so would have contradicted his main purpose. Wyschogrod, commenting on Heidegger's assertion that "in the ontological respect he [Kierkegaard] is completely under the sway of Hegel and the philosophy of antiquity as seen through him," admits that Kierkegaard did not destroy Hegel's concept of pure being but restricted himself to an attack on the identification

of the thinker's point of view with that of pure being.<sup>7</sup> One wonders again whether Kierkegaard's ontology, though formally derived from philosophical sources, is not just the thought form in which he gave expression to the individual's relation to the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. Is it not possible to agree with Hermann Diem who argues in his book *Die Existenzdialektik von Søren Kierkegaard* that Kierkegaard simply accepted the fact of revelation from the Christian tradition and made use of it to develop the categories of existence? After all, Kierkegaard endeavored to become a Christian, and there is abundant evidence in his writings that his faith in Jesus Christ was more fundamental than the ontology in which he cast his thought. Indeed, I am not sure that it would not be more correct to speak of Kierkegaard's implicit theology rather than of his implicit ontology.

We have spoken about Kierkegaard's concept of pure being or eternity. Our next question is, What did he understand by existence? The basic answer is that existence is the personal existence of the subjective thinker. But the existence of the individual is eternity in time. Eternity or pure being is not the being of man, yet it is part of the being of man. This view of man's being is brought out in Kierkegaard's delineation of the "moment" in which eternity is present in time. He writes:

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"And now the moment. Such a moment has a peculiar character. It is brief and temporal indeed, like every moment; it is transient, as all moments are; it is past, like every moment in the next moment. And yet it is decisive, and filled with the eternal. Such a moment ought to have a distinctive name; let us call it the *Fullness of Time*."<sup>8</sup>

Existence is therefore eternity in time, and, as Wyschogrod comments, the whole tension and striving of existence comes about because of this dichotomy between eternity and time.<sup>9</sup> Time and eternity, existence and pure being, are irreconcilable. This is shown by Kierkegaard's assertion that in eternity there is no either/or, in time there is; in eternity there is no becoming, in time there is.<sup>10</sup> Wyschogrod remarks that Kierkegaard could have reconciled these antitheses by dissolving eternity in time or by enabling man to enter the realm of eternity, thus making time ontologically illusory, as the mystics do. Because Kierkegaard rejected both these alternatives, he maintained a genuinely dynamic situation. "Without such a basic ontological dichotomy most of Kierkegaard would be impossible."<sup>11</sup>

Since the purpose of this chapter is to set forth Kierkegaard's implicit ontology or theology and not to expound his thought in detail, we are not undertaking to show how the dichotomy of pure being and existence, eternity and time, prevails in his delineation of the categories of existence -- of paradox, pathos, choice, despair, indirect communication, faith, contemporaneity, the divine incognito, and the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages.<sup>12</sup> It is, however, in keeping with our purpose to trace the influence of Kierkegaard's ontology upon theology, especially in its contribution to a polemic against objective philosophical and theological knowledge.

As is well known, Kierkegaard's polemic was directed against the prevailing Hegelianism of his age. He violently opposed intellectualism as such, that is, a philosophic contemplation of the world or what he called the spectator attitude to reality. In his introduction to the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* we find him contending against what he ironically calls the "System." What he has in mind when he uses this term is the type of philosophical system that presumes to embrace reality, or a type of

theological system that purports to describe Christianity objectively. Kierkegaard himself is concerned with the question of the individual's relationship to Christianity. He despises "the systematic zeal of the personally indifferent individual to arrange the truths of Christianity in paragraphs."

Accordingly, Kierkegaard sets out to demonstrate that neither historical nor philosophical truth can produce faith. He claims that the greatest attainable certainty with respect to anything historical is merely an approximation. For him the material of history is infinite, and the setting of any limit to it is "arbitrary." The knowledge of it is being continually enlarged and revised by new discoveries. Not that Kierkegaard derides science or historical criticism. He simply contends that they "cannot yield a result for faith." Even if the Scriptures could be proved to be authentic, they would not produce faith. That would be to confound faith and knowledge. If the truth of Christianity were only a historical datum, it would be something entirely past. But "Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and at its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness."<sup>13</sup>

Kierkegaard goes on to show the absurdity of trying to find objective truth in the Church either on the ground that it is eight hundred years old (as if it were the same Church) or on the ground that truth is contained in certain articles. Turning from the historical to the speculative view of truth, Kierkegaard asserts that the speculative philosopher, with his objectivity, cannot know Christianity. For Christianity is essentially subjective, and it is necessary for its knower to be subjective, that is, to be passionately interested in his eternal happiness. Kierkegaard's contention is that while objective thought is indifferent to the thinking subject and his existence, the subjective thinker is an existing individual essentially interested in his own thinking, existing as he does in his thought.<sup>14</sup> Wherefore Kierkegaard concludes that "an objective acceptance of Christianity is paganism or thoughtlessness."<sup>15</sup>

"Truth," Kierkegaard teaches, "is the conformity of being

with thought. Whether it is now defined more empirically as the conformity of thought with being or more idealistically as the conformity of being with thought, it is, in either case, important to note what is meant by being."<sup>16</sup> As Diem observes, by the concept "being" nothing else can be meant than the being (*Dasein*) of the existing thinker himself.<sup>17</sup> But since the cognitive subject is always in a process of becoming, truth can be only an approximation.

When Kierkegaard asserts that truth is an approximation, he does not mean that it does not exist. He means that since finite man exists in a state of becoming, it is approximate for him. If an individual were able to transcend himself, the truth would be for him something final and complete. As it is, only momentarily is the particular individual able to realize existentially a unity of the finite and the infinite. Kierkegaard explains that the fact "that essential knowledge is essentially related to existence does not mean the . . . identity which abstract thought postulates between thought and being (Hegel); nor does it signify, objectively, that knowledge corresponds to something existent as its object. But it means that knowledge has a relationship to the knower, who is essentially an existing individual."<sup>18</sup>

Hence truth is paradoxical. The fact that the truth becomes a paradox is rooted precisely in its having a relationship to an existing subject.

Kierkegaard takes as an example the knowledge of God. Speculation proposes to portray God objectively. But God cannot be an object of knowledge, one object among many. God is Subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness. The man who pursues the subjective way to the knowledge of God is painfully aware of the dialectical difficulties. He is passionately concerned about his personal relationship to the truth while at the same time he eschews all objective certainty. Hence the necessity for faith. But for Kierkegaard faith is not the acceptance of an objective truth or fact. It is the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and objective certainty.<sup>19</sup>

Eternal and essential truth, Kierkegaard teaches, is not a para-

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dox in itself. The paradoxical character of truth is its objective uncertainty, and is due to its relationship to an existing individual. The paradoxical character of truth is further stressed by the fact that it is eternal and essential truth in relation, not merely to an existing individual, but to an individual who is a sinner, and who -- unlike Socrates -- cannot put himself into a direct relationship with the truth by means of recollection. Finally, Kierkegaard deepens the paradoxical character of truth by the insight that God, the eternal, essential truth, entered into a relationship with an existing creature: was born, grew up like any other human being, quite indistinguishable from other individuals. Faith now means to believe this paradox, this absurdity. Christianity "has proclaimed itself the paradox and it has required of the individual the inwardness of faith in relation to that which stamps itself as an offense to the Jews and a folly to the Greeks -- and an absurdity to the understanding."<sup>20</sup> Speculative philosophy, on the other hand, removes the paradox. It reduces the thesis and antithesis into a synthesis. But Christianity is not a matter of doctrinal propositions, "as if Christ were a professor, and as if the apostles had formed a little scientific society." To which Kierkegaard added the biting observation: "The speculative philosophy is perhaps at the farthest possible remove from Christianity, and it is perhaps far better to be an offended individual who nevertheless sustains a relation to Christianity than a speculative philosopher who assumes to have understood it. . . . In the earliest days the Christian was a fool in the eyes of the world. . . . Now we are Christians as a matter of course "-- speculative philosophy having triumphed in the eyes of all.<sup>21</sup> Such was Kierkegaard's attack upon the "System."

What was the effect of Kierkegaard's implicit ontology of pure being and existence upon subsequent philosophy and theology? As for philosophy, Kierkegaard's preoccupation with human existence led to the development of various philosophies of existence. In this sense he may be said to be the "father of existentialism." Actually, however, Kierkegaard was not interested in a philosophy of existence, but in what it means to exist before

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God. The elaborate systems of Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre are utterly foreign to his spirit. To call Kierkegaard the father of contemporary existentialism, therefore, is surely to abet a gross misunderstanding.

We have stressed the fact that Kierkegaard did not develop an ontology. It appeared incidentally in his delineation of the categories of existence. He did not define the nature of pure being. His refusal to work out an elaborate ontology has been accepted by philosophers, however, as an invitation to do just that. Kierkegaard may be said to have fathered the current interest in ontology only indirectly, only by default. It was perhaps inevitable that thinkers should go on and ask more precisely about that reality in relation to which man's life is spent. At any rate this has been done by existential ontology and evangelical theology in our day. It was not enough to accept the ontological categories of Hegel and then to juxtapose them in a new way so that they would yield the tensions of existence, as we saw above. Those very ontological categories had to be called in question. The result has been the existential ontologies of the present. We repeat: This outcome was not intended by Kierkegaard, nor would it have been to his liking. This outcome, namely, the growth of ontology, will be surveyed in succeeding chapters dealing with the leading existentialists.

But if Kierkegaard did not work out an ontology, neither did he develop a theology, that is, a doctrine of the being of God. He rather na?vely identified God with his pure being or eternity, the never-changing present. He made no attempt to define the nature of God except as qualitatively different from man. The effect of this upon theology has been twofold. First, the principle of an infinite qualitative distinction had, at the outset, a liberating effect upon theology, freeing it from philosophy and restoring to it an independent existence. Secondly, and at a later stage, the very principle which had proved so salutary to theology proved a nemesis. Theology was threatened with being yoked to the Kierkegaardian ontology, the qualitative distinction between eternity and time, or pure being and existence. This situation forced theology to rethink the being of God and the being of man

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Christologically. These two effects of Kierkegaard's ontology upon theology will be discussed in the remaining part of this chapter.

In our introduction we spoke of the struggle in the 1920's to free theology from philosophy. Now the man who was most responsible for this revolution in Protestant thought was the Danish philosopher. Kierkegaard's works were published in Denmark over a ten-year period in the middle of the nineteenth century. But they were translated into German during the 1920's, and played a dominant role in the theological movement of that period.<sup>22</sup> Their influence upon Barth, Brunner, Gogarten, and Bultmann was prodigious. While, of course, other factors entered into the thought of these men, Kierkegaard's contribution was decisive. Consequently Barth could write in the preface to the second German edition of his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1921) that "if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.' The relation between such a God and such a man, and the relation between such a man and such a God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy." While it is true that even at that time Barth did not wish to be known as a "dialectical" theologian and desired to be recognized simply as a servant of the Word, an expositor of Scripture, nevertheless his exegesis was colored by Kierkegaardian dialectics. Hence he hammered away at the theme: God is not man, and man is not God. God is not an object of knowledge; God is Subject. He called a halt to the easygoing synthetizing of God and man, time and eternity, revelation and history, nature and grace and thereby forced his readers to rethink the language of Holy Scripture. Barth refused to identify God and his



revelation with anything human, with nature, history, or experience. Consequently he wrote in tantalizing paradoxes. God touches our world without touching it, as a tangent touches a circle. God is the wholly Other, *totaliter aliter*. Moreover, Barth's eschatology at that period reflects Kierkegaard's powerful influence. He maintained that at every moment of time men are confronted by the

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last hour, the Parousia of Jesus Christ. Not time, but eternity lies beyond. He therefore argued - in an effort to come to grips with the problem posed by Albert Schweitzer's "consistent eschatology"--that it was foolish to talk about the delay of Christ's Second Advent, since at every moment it was secretly pressing in upon us. "What *delays* its coming is not the *Parousia*, but our awakening. Did we but awake; did we but remember; did we but step forth from unqualified time into time that has been qualified; were we only terrified by the fact that, whether we wish it or not, we do stand at every moment on the frontier of time . . . then neither should we expect some magnificent or terrible finale nor should we comfort ourselves by its failure to appear."<sup>28</sup>

Of course, these sentences do not reflect Barth's thinking today. Not only has his teaching concerning eschatology been greatly modified and enriched, but right in the field of Christology --the heart of Christian faith - he has taken leave of Kierkegaard. Why he has done so we shall consider presently. Meanwhile let us understand that from the vantage point of the Kierkegaardian dialectic, time and eternity, Barth was able at the start to make a sweeping attack upon the historicism, psychologism, moralism, and rationalism in which theology was entrenched. Thus Kierkegaard must be credited with liberating theology. The indebtedness of Gogarten, Brunner, and Bultmann to Kierkegaard, though not so striking as it was in Barth, is plainly evident in their books. Indeed, it is a question whether to this day they have succeeded in getting free of him.

The second effect Kierkegaard has had upon theology in our times arose out of the very ontological picture which had proved so fruitful. The question arose, What is the point of contact between pure being and existence? How can eternity be part of man's being? How can there be any contact, any connection between a God who is wholly other and man who is finite? It was not enough to say with Kierkegaard that eternity enters time in the present moment or even that Jesus Christ is that relationship as an insoluble paradox to be believed. That amounted to accepting blindly a contradiction, or, as Kierkegaard himself

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admitted, belief in the absurd. Nor was the stubborn assertion of a paradox sufficient when there were others who were offering to solve the problem on grounds that implied a betrayal of evangelical theology. For example, Erich Przywara, the Roman Catholic theologian, was explaining the *analogia entis*. He held that the creaturely is like Deity "through the possession of a unity of essence and existence, but even in this similarity it is unlike him, because in Deity the unity of essence and existence is that of identity, whereas in that of creation the unity is one of tension."<sup>24</sup> Barth replied that the true *analogia entis*, the continuity between the Creator and the creature, "cannot belong to the creature itself but only to the Creator *in his relation* to the creature," and that "only as a second marvel of God's love, as the inconceivable, undeserved, divine bestowal on his creature."<sup>25</sup> Apart from its implications for

epistemology and soteriology, for theology proper it meant that in the end the doctrine of God would be based upon anthropology or upon a metaphysics of being.

Emil Brunner fancied he saw in Kierkegaard's work a justification of his own *eristic* theology. He contended that even if Kierkegaard is not a dogmatic theologian, he is nonetheless an eristic theologian, and it is doubtful whether the Church has had a second like him. His whole work was devoted to the distinction between the existentiality of faith and the nonexistentiality of idealism--and of orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup> Brunner understood eristics as "the other task of theology," preliminary and preparatory to dogmatic theology as reflection upon the Word of God. He distinguished eristics from apologetics in that apologetics placed itself on the same ground as that of the opponent, namely, on that of theory. It gave the impression that Christian truth is a theoretical statement like the theoretical propositions of reason. In doing so it not only betrayed the gospel but committed itself to the desperate situation of having to prove the gospel as speculative truth. The three great eristic theologians of modern times--Pascal, Hamann, and Kierkegaard -- did not fall into this error, Brunner contends, but forced their opponents "to pose the question in the way that it has to be raised from the standpoint of Christian faith and, at least as a question, can be raised on the ground of reason, that

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is, as an *existential* question, as the question about the understanding of one's own life."<sup>27</sup> Whereupon Brunner went on to argue that anthropology, the self-understanding of man, is the common ground of faith and unbelief, and hailed Gogarten as the successor to Kierkegaard because of his intense application to anthropology and existentiality. He claimed that the self remains, in spite of all theory, the point in existence at which one is passionately interested, that is, existentially interested. On the other hand, it is the only point at which theology is not in danger of succumbing to objective theoretical proofs. One can prove to a man, Brunner believed, that he is not what he would like to be, that he lives in contradiction to himself, and that he has no prospect of extricating himself from this contradiction. Moreover, Brunner was persuaded that this proof could be made without abandoning the existential realm, that is, without recourse to Christian faith. Kierkegaard, Brunner declared, had built his apologetics on the idea of man's self-contradiction and despair. In keeping with his eristic theology Brunner proceeded to find the "point of contact " of the divine message in man -- in man's question about God. The error of Pelagianism was not that it sought a point of contact in man, but that it sought it in something positive rather than negative. Thus the proper task of eristics, according to Brunner, is to teach man to understand his own question about God. It is to make him aware of the ambiguity and contradiction of his existence. Man's question about God arises because man is related to God, and this is the *imago Dei* which is not destroyed by sin. Man is "a creature who somehow knows about God. His knowing about God is his humanity--however perverted and questionable this knowledge may be."<sup>28</sup>

Three years later -- 1932 -- Brunner again took up the question of a point of contact, and insisted even more emphatically: "It is senseless to dispute the significance of the natural knowledge of God. Debatable is not the fact itself but its quality. Religion is -- even when it is the wildest heathenism -- the undeniable sign of man's relationship to God, and at the same time the necessary point of contact for the true knowledge of God."<sup>29</sup> The natural man is not free from God but stands under his wrath.

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And this is "objectively the same as that which is subjectively an evil conscience or despair."<sup>30</sup>

It is to be borne in mind that these two articles and a third, *Theologie und Kirche*,<sup>31</sup> were written several years before Brunner issued his famous brochure, *Nature and Grace*, in 1934, which provoked Barth's *No! Answer to Emil Brunner*. It is not our purpose to review the arguments of that debate pro and con. What interests us is Barth's attitude toward what he called the earlier, more tempting, and more dangerous Kierkegaardian form of Brunner's doctrine. For this sheds light upon the paradoxical role that Kierkegaard has played in regard to theology. Although Barth believed that Brunner had gone farther by attributing a "capacity for revelation" to the natural man and by giving not merely a negative but a positive definition to the point of contact, he was convinced that "this depressing result could be achieved even via Kierkegaard." He insisted that "the doctrine of the point of contact and the whole of Brunner's teaching on nature and grace, even in its earlier forms and irrespective of its later developments, has to be most categorically opposed on the score that it is incompatible with the third article of the creed. The Holy Ghost . . . does not stand in need of any point of contact but that which he himself creates."<sup>32</sup> Consequently Barth argued that the natural man's so-called knowledge of the wrath of God is not the wrath of *God*, that His judgment is the judgment of grace, and that hence it is by no means identical with any fundamental condition or "negative point" of our existence. Man's consciousness of the ambiguity, uncertainty, and contradiction of his existence and his consequent despair, anxiety, or dread is not a factor which co-operates with the judgment of God and which, therefore, is indispensable for its execution. Nor is it indirectly identical with the judgment of God, as being its subjective manifestation. He wrote:

"*That* sorrow which really is possible to us is always that sorrow of which it is said in II Cor. 7:10, that it 'worketh death.' . . . It can never be the sorrow 'after a godly manner' which works 'repentance . . . not be repented of,' which leads to salvation. . . . *That* loss of certainty of the natural knowledge, *that* destruction of the

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'fictions of *Weltanschauungen*' which I can with my little piece of despair undertake and carry out, is bound to issue in the worst of all idols, namely, a so-called 'truth,' from the throne of which I consider myself able to see through all gods and to unmask them as idols. The better I succeed in despairing, the more certainly this must be the end. The world which I have cleared of gods is truly neither the Kingdom of the living God nor even a preparation for it, but probably the worst of all forms of diabolism, by which I can oppose that Kingdom. . . . Is there any form of pride worse than that of a certain type of Kierkegaardianism? Has there ever been a more explicit Prometheanism than that of the philosophy of an existence despairing of itself?"<sup>33</sup>

Quite apart from the question whether Barth wrongly attributed to Brunner the phrase "capacity for revelation," as John Baillie suggests in his introduction to the English translation of their controversial brochures, the question whether man's natural knowledge of the negativity of his existence and consequent despair are identical with or even preparatory to the knowledge of *God's* wrath and judgment in the grace of his Word and Spirit, is the real issue which still exists between Barth and Brunner. And this is the issue which we shall be constantly facing in our examination of contemporary Christian and secular existentialism.

Moreover, in this issue it is ultimately decided whether theology can enjoy an independent existence or must lean upon eristics and existentialism.

But now we need to ask whether Brunner was justified in finding in Kierkegaard a precedent for his eristics. Hermann Diem believes that Brunner was mistaken. When Kierkegaard declared that he had wanted to "deceive men into the truth," he did not mean that he wanted to explain to men what it means to exist as a Christian by an explication of their natural knowledge of themselves. One will look in vain in Kierkegaard, Diem asserts, for an attempt to drive reason to the wall. Instead, Kierkegaard would have asked whether the eristic theologian, who is busy driving man into a corner, had not confused the offense of faith with a simple *sacrificium intellectus*, and whether, in arguing directly with the natural man, the new "eristics" is essentially different from the old "apologetics."<sup>34</sup>

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Diem then inquires what Kierkegaard himself meant by "deceiving men into the truth," and finds the explanation in Kierkegaard's books *The Point of View for My Work as an Author* and *On My Work as an Author*.<sup>35</sup> Kierkegaard was speaking in a situation in Christendom where everyone was captive to the illusion that he was Christian, and where it was therefore difficult to communicate directly what Christianity is. In this situation Kierkegaard sought to compel men "to take notice." In order to do this Kierkegaard believed that "an entirely new military science permeated through and through by reflection" was needed. The method had to be indirect. Apologetics served only to betray Christianity. A battle had to be waged against a conceit, an illusion. And the illusion had to be removed by deceiving a man who is in the illusion.<sup>36</sup> The illusion consists in the fact that a man thinks he is a Christian while actually he is living in aesthetic categories and therefore confuses the aesthetic and the Christian.

"What, then, does it mean to 'deceive'? It means that one does not begin *directly* with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money. So . . . one does not begin thus: I am a Christian; you are not a Christian. Nor does one begin thus: It is Christianity I am proclaiming; and you are living in purely aesthetic categories. No, one begins thus: Let us talk about aesthetics. The deception consists in the fact that one talks thus merely to get to the religious theme."<sup>37</sup>

Now doubtless Diem is correct in pointing out a difference between Kierkegaard's and Brunner's approach. Brunner comes as a Christian to non-Christians and endeavors to destroy their idealistic and naturalistic illusions by showing them the contradiction of their existence and thus bringing them to despair, where they will be ready to hear the gospel. Kierkegaard comes feigning to be a non-Christian to those who imagine they are Christians. His idea is to win and captivate them with aesthetic works and then "to introduce the religious so promptly that with the momentum of their (his) abandonment to the aesthetic the man rushes straight into the most decisive definitions of the religious." Now the question in our minds is whether either of these

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approaches is to be commended, whether both are not essentially dishonest. Would not anyone who was handled in this way afterward feel that he had been cheated? Is it ever really right to misrepresent ourselves to other men as, for example, Kierkegaard did when he

pretended to Regina Olsen that he was a "scoundrel" who had won her without loving her, in order to free her from her attachment to him?

Yet another question. Can we really deceive and trick a man out of his illusions? Is not the shattering of illusions just the work of God's grace, of his Word and Spirit? And therefore is it not the task of a Christian to give his witness to Christ straightforwardly -- not, of course, as one who in himself is wiser and better than others, but as one who with them hungers and thirsts after Christ -- and then to *wait* for an outpouring of the Spirit upon his testimony and upon those who hear, that the praise and the glory may be to God alone and not also to one "well-versed in dialectics"?

Kierkegaard speaks of his "deception." Well, he certainly succeeded in deceiving men about his true purpose, and his deception would have been well-nigh impenetrable if *The Point of View* had not been published posthumously. As it is, he succeeded so well that many scholars besides Brunner have apparently misunderstood him. Is that good pedagogy? Would it not have been better -- even in his day, which after all is not so different from our own -- would it not have been better to *begin* with the Christian production and then to let the light of revelation fall upon men in their aesthetic, ethical, and religious modes of existence? Starting with the aesthetic stage and moving through the ethical to a religion of immanence and thence to a religion of transcendence (Christianity), did not Kierkegaard invite the interpretation that there is an advance from lower to higher forms and that the lower are necessary preparations for the higher?

Again we ask: did Brunner really misunderstand Kierkegaard? In spite of Kierkegaard's own *Point of View* and Diem's exposition of it, the fact is that Kierkegaard did regard the ethical and "Religion A" (immanence) as a law that leads to the gospel. This emerges clearly in his book *Purity of Heart*. He forces his

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reader to ask himself whether he really wills one thing. In the conclusion he raises the ominous question, What shall we do if the questions sound like accusations? "If as an individual he admits to himself that the questions . . . are accusations, then he confesses."<sup>38</sup> This is the place to which Kierkegaard would bring men, to the place where they feel accused and judged. By a relentless probing, by an insistent questioning, he has sought to lay bare the nakedness of men and to prevent any possibility of evasion. One must concede that if sin can be proved and demonstrated by logic, by the law, Kierkegaard has succeeded. But the query Barth put to Brunner applies even more so to Kierkegaard. Do we come to know what sin is apart from the grace of God in Jesus Christ? Throughout this whole book, *Purity of Heart*, there is no mention of Christ or the Holy Spirit. Purity of heart is represented as an act of will which brings men to despair and under judgment, and, as Reidar Thomte states, is the transition to Christianity.<sup>39</sup> No, Emil Brunner did not misunderstand Kierkegaard altogether. He seized upon the Lutheran doctrine of the law in Kierkegaard's thought according to which man is brought to despair independently of, and preparatory to, hearing the gospel.

Thus we see the reason why Barth took leave of Kierkegaard. He sensed the danger of theology's being undergirded by an existentialist anthropology. However, there was a far deeper reason than that: he could no longer concur in Kierkegaard's Christology, in his fundamental thesis, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Paradox. The paradox of the God-man, as we have already seen, rested upon the ontological proposition that there is an infinite

qualitative distinction between God and man. Just this proposition, which he had once accepted, Barth now calls in question.

The acknowledgment of a qualitative distinction between God and man is not entirely objectionable in itself, but, as we shall see presently, it needs to be qualified. Kierkegaard erred in conceiving this distinction in terms of a difference between an infinite God and finite man, an eternal God and temporal man. God was defined as the Infinite, the Eternal, the Absolute; and Jesus Christ was said to be the Paradox because in him there

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is a unity of eternity and temporality, the infinite and the finite. If we grant for a moment for the sake of argument, that the incarnate Word is a paradox, then the question before us is whether Kierkegaard was right in understanding the incarnate Word as a paradox of time and eternity, finiteness and infinity. Is the God who became man the "wholly other," the transcendent, in the sense of being infinite, eternal, and absolute?

Let us look for a moment at this concept of infinity as applied to God and eternity. If eternity is said to be infinite, that could mean either that it is endless time -- an infinite number of finite moments -- or that eternity is not time at all. The first would involve defining the nature of God in terms of man with a vengeance. The second is obviously Kierkegaard's intention. But in asserting that eternity is not time, is not finite, have we really yet said anything about God or about his eternity? What does infinity as such and in itself tell us about God? Have we not been still talking about ourselves, even if negatively? Is not the concept of infinity just a concept of limitation and origin which appears to be unavoidable in thinking about space and time as two of the presuppositions of creaturely existence as such? And, of course, if the finite is limited by infinity, the reverse is also true. At any rate we have not yet said anything positive about God or his eternity. Such a view of eternity is simply timelessness and spacelessness. Consequently when Jesus Christ is said to be the paradox in this way, we have simply asserted that he is the unity of opposites, of positive and negative, of that which is and that which is not.<sup>40</sup> He has been dragged down into an innerworldly dialectic. We are therefore obliged to declare that when Kierkegaard was content to go no farther than saying that God is qualitatively different from man he in fact fathered modern existential ontology, which speaks in various ways of man's vis-?-vis, of that in relation to which man's life is lived out--be it the "comprehensive" or the "transcendent" in Jaspers, "being" in Heidegger, or the "nothing" in Heidegger and Sartre.

No doubt it was such considerations as these that led Barth to define God's nature and eternity not *via causalitatis*, *via negationis*, and *via eminentiae*, as scholastics in all ages have done,

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but positively and intrinsically in terms of God's act in his revelation. Accordingly he was at pains to defend the doctrine of the ontological or immanent Trinity at the very outset of his *Church Dogmatics*, and later, in *The Doctrine of God*, to insist that all divine attributes or perfections are to be explained realistically in terms of God's existence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus for Barth eternity is not endless time, nor yet timelessness, nontemporality.<sup>41</sup> Eternity is God himself because in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit there is at once Beginning, Succession, and End and because in him past, present, and future are one. Eternity is a preform of time. Consequently the possibility of the creation of

creaturely time and of the eternal God assuming creaturely time in the incarnation, lies in God's own triune nature. Thus even in this respect Jesus Christ is not a paradox, as if there were an opposition, a conflict, between time and eternity.

Hermann Diem points out that Kierkegaard derived the fact of revelation from the Christian tradition and made use of it to develop the decisively Christian categories of existence over against the understanding of existence in ethical and religious immanence. He in no way rejects dogmatic work, but does not believe that his own task lies in this field. The question for Kierkegaard is how to communicate the fact of revelation so that it will qualify the existence of the one who receives it. Diem, we may be sure, is correct in his appraisal of Kierkegaard's relation to the doctrine of the Church. However, Kierkegaard was in error when he assumed that traditional Christology, the Chalcedonian creed, defined Jesus Christ as the paradox of an eternal, infinite God and temporal, finite man. That was an oversimplification, to say the least, and overlooked the formulation of the doctrine of the ontological Trinity in the Early Church. The God who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself is not just a wholly other transcendent and infinite being but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who has revealed himself as such in his revelation. Wherefore theology need not base its teachings upon philosophical speculations about time and eternity. It may and should pursue its own independent function of reflection upon the Biblical witness to Jesus Christ alone.

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But now we must also see that not only is there no paradox in Jesus Christ with respect to time and eternity; there is no paradox at all no matter what the respective natures of God and man may be, or, rather, just because of what their two natures actually are as revealed in Jesus Christ. Here we propose to sketch the argument set forth by Karl Barth in the *Kirchliche Dogmatik IV*, 1, pp. 201-210, the first volume of the doctrine of reconciliation. He is seeking an answer to the question, *Cur deus homo?* from the side of God. He begins with the admission that there seem to be two alternatives. The first conceives the incarnation as a "*novum mysterium*," an absolute paradox, a pure antinomy, as a cleft, a breach in God himself between his being and nature in himself and his activity as the reconciler of the world he created. It pleased God, not to change himself, not to deny his unchangeable divine nature, not to become at variance with himself, not to put himself in opposition to himself. In that case he would then be in himself the omnipresent, omnipotent, eternal, and glorious One, but at the same time among us and for us a wholly other, not omnipresent or eternal but spatially and temporally limited, not omnipotent but impotent, not glorious but lowly. Then his self-identity would consist in his resolve to be our God in this opposition to himself. The possibility of the incarnation would then consist in this resolve of God to be "God against God" in his free will and fathomless mercy.

Let us not conceal from ourselves the fact that the incarnation, the assumption of the form of a servant, not only means that God became a creature, a man, but that God delivered himself over to man's contradiction against him, his placing himself under the judgment man had incurred. Consequently, the more earnestly one takes Jesus' words from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" the more one is tempted to cherish the idea of a contradiction and conflict in God himself. But here the supposedly highest praise of God threatens to turn into the greatest blasphemy. For when God becomes man he does not enter into any conflict with himself. He makes man's contradiction to him his own, but he does not take part in it. He takes man's contradiction upon himself but, in order to remove it, he

acts as Lord over the contradiction by submitting himself to it. He overcomes the flesh when he becomes flesh. How else could there be a reconciliation? Thus this alternative of understanding the possibility of the incarnation may not be selected. But it can be excluded only when it is replaced by the other alternative, which in reality is not another but the only possibility.

We have to begin with the insight, Barth contends, that "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" ( I Cor. 14:33). In him there is no paradox, no antinomy, no schism, no unfaithfulness to himself, and no possibility of such a thing. (Here we might remind ourselves that Kierkegaard had also taught that in God himself there is no paradox but only in Jesus Christ, only in his relation to a finite being. But Kierkegaard fancied that he could know of another God apart from God revealed in Christ.) What God is and does, he is and does in complete unity with himself. And he is in complete unity with himself in Christ, when he takes upon himself our contradiction and all its consequences. When we think that such is irreconcilable with the divine nature, it is because of a too narrow, all too human, conception of God. We have to learn who God is and what is divine where God has revealed himself and his nature. It is not for us to be wiser than God and to assert that such is in contradiction to the divine nature. Instead, it is up to us to let our ideas about God's nature be corrected. Our view that God can be the absolute only in contrast to all that is relative, infinite only to the exclusion of all finiteness, exalted only in contrast to all that is lowly, transcendent only in contrast to all immanence, and so divine only over against all that is human, in short, can only be the "wholly other," is proved to be false and pagan in the fact that God actually is and does such things in Jesus Christ.

For precisely when God was in Christ he affirmed the freedom of his divine love, the love in which he is divinely free. He did what corresponds to his divine nature. He asserted his divinity in the incarnation. For his omnipotence (in distinction to all abstract conceptions of power) is just that it can assume the form of weakness and helplessness and in that form can triumph. God does not forfeit his glory when he takes upon himself the form

of a servant. Rather, precisely in this hiddenness he is truly glorious, in contrast to the loveless glory of all the gods invented by men. Everything therefore depends upon our seeing the true, majestic nature of God in the divine nature of Jesus Christ. It tells us that the *forma Dei* consists just in the grace in which God himself assumes the *forma servi* and makes it his own. There is therefore no ontic, inner-divine paradox which we have to recognize, honor, and adore as the mystery of the divinity of Christ. Such ideas have their source in our own contradiction to God and in our false images of God in keeping with it.

In the foregoing we have sought to show how theology had to free itself from the threat of an existential anthropology and a dialectical Christology as these stemmed from Søren Kierkegaard. Yet Hermann Diem repeatedly insists throughout his book that Kierkegaard was not primarily interested in anthropology or Christology, but in how the life of a sinful man is concretely lived so that he realizes in existence what is said in these doctrines. He urges that although Kierkegaard's work may not be divorced from philosophy and theology, it is not of itself either of these. It performs an indirect service to both by seeking to understand their principles and dogmas as existence categories. Kierkegaard was simply concerned to oppose



both philosophical and theological speculation, and therefore the familiar question of the relation between philosophy and theology did not interest him.<sup>42</sup> Consequently many important considerations are missing in his treatment of dogmatic definitions, notably the fact that the resurrection of Jesus is nowhere mentioned.<sup>43</sup> Diem tells us that for Kierkegaard that which philosophy and theology have in common, their *Einheitspunkt*, is the fact that "it is the *same person* of the existing thinker who in the inseparable unity of himself *as a Christian* and *as a man* reflects about his being a man. . . . Hence the *difference* and the relation between philosophy and theology can no longer be that of *two* separated or related sciences, but only yet the question whether man takes the *fact of revelation* up into his life, and that means *whether* he does or does not want to submit to the resultant *qualification of*

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*his existence*. . . . With him [ Kierkegaard] it is not a matter of a doctrine *about* the proper mode of existence, but of this *mode of existence itself*; that is, the dialectical procedure with which this mode of existence is to be achieved and communicated.<sup>44</sup>

In the light of Diem's explanation it would appear that the criticism of Kierkegaard's anthropology and Christology has missed the mark. For this reason we have one last question to raise. Can the question " whether man takes the fact of revelation up into his life" and "whether he does or does not want to submit " to its qualification of his existence be answered outside of the fact of revelation itself? Can a man avoid philosophical and theological speculation by himself? Is man free to choose the alternatives or possibilities of the aesthetic, ethical, religious, and Christian modes of existence? Is he free to choose absolutely, to despair, to repent, and to believe? True, man must do these things. But wherein lies his capacity to do them? Wyschogrod, if I understand him aright, would reply on Kierkegaard's behalf that it lies in man's freedom in virtue of the presence of eternity, pure being (God) in human existence. But such ontology needs to be replaced by a Christology which sees human existence encompassed by Christ and not standing over against Christ. In the light of the incarnation human existence is to be seen within the grace of God. Jesus Christ is not only God's freedom for man but man's freedom for God. He is not only God's election of man but man's choosing God. *The* man who chooses, repents, and trusts is Jesus. He is the man who lives existentially in relation to God. In ourselves we men cannot and do not have a passionate concern for our eternal happiness. Subjectivity and inwardness are precisely what we do not have. But Jesus Christ, the gospel tells us, is the man who chooses, repents, believes, and obeys *for us*. I therefore may hear that I have my existence in Christ and nowhere else. My life is "hid with Christ in God" ( Col. 3:3). Kierkegaard's problem of how to become a Christian has been answered once and for all in Christ for us. In him I repent, choose, and believe. True to Luther, Kierkegaard preached the law first and then the gospel. But it is not so that Christ is first the Pattern who brings us to despair and is then

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the Reconciler. Rather Christ is first the Reconciler by whom I may and must trust and obey God. In so far as I look to myself, I shall never escape an aesthetic or ethical mode of existence. I must look exclusively to Christ. This requires, not subjectivity, but the strictest objectivity. Objectivity does not necessarily mean neutrality and disinterestedness. Objectivity is the attitude in which one sees oneself changed in and by the Object -- namely, Jesus Christ. In Christ we have become Christians -- his members -- and by the Holy Spirit we know it. True subjectivity, true existentialism, the event in which I am a person, is in the Subject Jesus

Christ. So far as *my* subjectivity is concerned, I am one of those builders who rejected the stone. But the stone which we builders rejected has nevertheless become the chief cornerstone, the chief cornerstone of those who believe and obey. This is marvelous in our eyes. That we despair of ourselves, that we choose God, that we believe and obey, *that* we shall be able to understand only as a miracle wrought upon us in Christ. Man's opposition to God is immeasurably greater than even Kierkegaard saw. The dichotomy between pure being and existence, eternity, and time -- to revert to the language of Kierkegaard's implicit ontology -- is far more irreconcilable than he imagined. Otherwise he would have given prominence to the fact that it is breached and overcome only in Christ, rather than teaching that purity of heart is to will one thing. Purity of heart is indeed to will one thing. But who is pure of heart save Christ and those for whom he willed one thing?

Karl Barth in his theology stresses objectivity in the twofold sense: (1) that God becomes an object of knowledge in Jesus Christ, and (2) that the believer must look away from himself to Jesus Christ to see in him the reality of his life. But unless I grievously misunderstand Barth his objectivity retains in it the subjective concern of Kierkegaard.<sup>45</sup> Barth today is just as much opposed as Kierkegaard was to the idea that knowledge of God is possessed in intellectual propositions as such. He would still subscribe to the Kierkegaardian thesis that objective knowledge of Christianity is paganism or thoughtlessness. The Kierkegaardian concern is preserved by Barth, first, by his insistence that

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God becomes an object of our knowledge in the *freedom* of God. We never have the knowledge of God in our possession or at our disposal. Secondly, the knowledge of God is indirect; it is never identical with our theological perceptions and conceptions as such. Thirdly, when Barth exhorts us to look away from ourselves and from our decisions to Christ, he in no way believes that we are to be spectators of a drama that has been played out on our behalf. On the contrary, to look to Christ means to see our existence, our subjectivity in him. One simply cannot look to Christ without being involved *in his* decision for God. In this sense Barth's insistence upon objectivity is for the sake of true subjectivity. For this reason we do not perceive any *fundamental* opposition between Barth and Kierkegaard, though we acknowledge the necessity of the Christological corrective Barth has given to Kierkegaard.

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## II

### A PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH IN BEING ITSELF

Karl Jaspers, 1883-

IN THE foregoing chapter we endeavored to set forth Kierkegaard's implicit ontology or theology and to show how it worked out in his attack upon objective philosophical and theological knowledge. In addition we traced the twofold effect of the Kierkegaardian dialectic upon theology in our generation. Initially it led to the liberation of theology from the fetters of philosophy. Later theology was obliged to free itself from the threat of an existential anthropology and a dialectical Christology as these stemmed from Kierkegaard. We contended that the Danish philosopher did not develop an ontology, much less a philosophy of existence. As a matter of history his refusal to do so has been accepted by contemporary

existentialists as an invitation to do just that. Whereas Kierkegaard's work was a protest against the "System," Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre have elaborated philosophical systems concerning the nature and meaning of existence. For this reason it is doubtful whether present-day

Karl Jaspers was born February 23, 1883, in Oldenburg, Westphalia, the son of a bank manager. He studied law at Heidelberg and M<sup>n</sup>ich before he turned to the study of medicine at Berlin, G<sup>o</sup>ttingen, and Heidelberg. He first attained renown as a psychiatrist with the publication of his 748-page *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* in 1913, a fifth edition of which appeared in 1948. In 1921 he was appointed professor of philosophy at Heidelberg where, deserting psychiatry, he proceeded to found the German existentialist school. He was dismissed for political reasons by the National Socialists in 1937 and was reinstated in 1945. Since 1945 he has been professor of philosophy at Basel Switzerland.

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existentialists may be described as existentialists in the Kierkegaardian sense at all. Guido de Ruggiero has well said:

" It is interesting to observe that this philosophy, originally a protest against the spirit of system in the name of contingencies, the *hic et nunc*, the personal singular, should have become more and more systematic, until its original protest against the philosophical Churches has been transformed into a new Church even more dogmatic and rigid than those it aimed to expose. So it has passed from the fragmentary, tortured notes of Kierkegaard to the large though still limited work of Heidegger and eventually to the massive, corpulent systematization of Jaspers."<sup>1</sup>

The systems developed by contemporary existentialists consist of somewhat varying ontologies. Karl Jaspers, with whom we begin, informs us that whereas science deals with objects, philosophy is concerned about what is being; that is, about " the being which holds everything together, lies at the base of everything, the being from which everything issues."<sup>2</sup> Philosophy, for Jaspers, has meaning only if it leads men to an awareness of being and to their place in it. He believes that the reason why many answers have been given to the question about being is because thinkers have not always been aware of the subjectobject dichotomy, in which we objectify ourselves and objects. Being as a whole, he teaches, is neither subject nor object but must be the comprehensive, which is manifested in this dichotomy.<sup>3</sup> Being as such cannot be an object, although it is said to become transparent only through objects. Nor can being be an object of thought. We can get only an " intimation " of it. It is not manifested to us, but everything else is manifested in it.

Now it is important for us to understand at the outset that this being itself, which is the concern of philosophy, or " authentic being," the " nonobject," the " comprehensive," the " transcendent " -- terms Jaspers uses interchangeably -- is for him identical with God. Thus the philosophical concern for being is at once the religious concern for God. Jaspers' philosophical faith is a religious faith. God, as being itself, is " situated in an entirely different dimension from empirical sensible objects." Consequently Jaspers contends that even when we think of

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God or the comprehensive in philosophical terms we are making an object of what is essentially not an object. Philosophy and metaphysics cannot provide us with any objective knowledge about God. Metaphysics yields its content only when it understands itself as a symbol. The reason is that in our experience of the comprehensive there is a " discontinuity of our philosophical thinking."<sup>4</sup> Authentic being evades all psychological as well as logical knowledge.

How, then, do we become aware or conscious of being? Several answers are given. But first Jaspers concedes that Kant has radically confuted the proofs for the existence of God. Yet he claims that it is false to infer that since all proofs of the existence of God can be refuted, there is no God. " For the nonexistence of God can be proved no more than his existence. The proof and their confutations show us only that a proved God would be no God but merely a thing in the world."<sup>5</sup> The proofs are attempts to express the experience of man"s assent to God in terms of thought. They are roads of thought by which we come to limits at which the consciousness of God suddenly becomes a natural presence. For example, the cosmological proof, in the form of inference, "expresses awareness of the mystery in the existence of the world and of ourselves in it." For the nonexist<sup>6</sup> Thus for Jaspers knowledge of God takes the form of an awareness of his mysterious presence, of which philosophical thought and language are mediums. Consequently he claims that the Old Testament command not to make any graven images expresses the true attitude to God because images cannot portray God. On the other hand, he justifies images because human thought and human vision cannot dispense with them.

But what if the mystery is the mystery of nothing? What if we ask with Schelling, why is there something and not nothing? Jaspers replies that we then find that " our certainty is such that though we cannot determine the reason for it we are led by it to the comprehensive." God can only be believed in, and faith emerges out of the awareness of the possibility of nothingness. In defining philosophical faith -- which Jaspers espouses over against an exclusive revealed faith on the one hand and science

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on the other -- he explains that the act of faith and its content are inseparable. If faith is regarded only from the subjective side, it remains merely a believing state of mind, a faith without an object. If faith is taken only objectively, the content of faith is reduced to an object, a proposition, a dogma. But God, as we have seen, is not an object and not an object of thought. Jaspers claims that philosophical faith realizes (with Kierkegaard?!) that faith is not an experience, not something given, but "a primal awareness of being through the mediation of history and thought." It cannot become a creed or dogma. And therefore the universality of true faith cannot be a universally valid statement. The universality of faith lies in the universal awareness of the transcendent, of which the creeds are expressions. "Faith is the consciousness of existence in reference to transcendence."

Consequently Jaspers argues that we can understand what faith is only by elucidating the comprehensive. This brings us back to his ontology. The comprehensive is "either the *being in itself* that surrounds us or the *being that we are*."<sup>7</sup> We become conscious of our own being, Jaspers tells us, through *Dasein* (being there), consciousness as such, and mind. These are what he calls the "three modes of the comprehensive" in which we are objects in the world and therefore objects of biological, psychological, and historical inquiry. But the primal source of our life lies beyond these three modes in the comprehensive itself. And this aspect

of our nature is revealed (1) in man's experience of *dissatisfaction* with himself, his sense of inadequacy; (2) in the *absolute* to which he subordinates his empirical existence as to his own authentic selfhood; (3) in the unremitting *urge for unity*; (4) in the consciousness of an indefinable *memory*, as though he shared in the knowledge of creation (Schelling), or as though he remembered something beheld before any world existed (Plato); and (5) in the consciousness of *immortality*, which is not a survival in another form, but a time-negating immersion in eternity.<sup>8</sup>

A moment ago we spoke of Jaspers' view that faith emerges from the question about the possibility of nothingness being the mystery that envelopes the world. The same idea is brought out

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in his definition of dialectic. He explains that dialectic can mean the logical progress through antitheses to a solution in a synthesis, as Hegel taught. But it can also denote "the exacerbation of antitheses into insoluble antinomies . . . a process that leads to the frontiers where being seems absolutely torn apart . . . where faith becomes the apprehension of being in the seemingly absurd."<sup>9</sup> Here Jaspers introduces a theme to which Heidegger, Sartre, and Tillich have given great prominence: the inseparability of being and nothingness. Faith, we are told, emerges from an experience of nothingness to begin once more to elucidate all the modes of the comprehensive.

Now the place where man emerges from an experience of nothingness to faith in being itself (God) is the ultimate situations of life (*Grenzsituation*). The concept of an ultimate situation is of central importance in Jaspers' thought and in existentialism generally. They are the inescapable realities in relation to which human life alone can be made genuinely meaningful. Such ultimate situations are death, chance, guilt, suffering, and uncertainty in the world. In these situations man is said to become aware of the transcendence of being and nothingness.<sup>10</sup> Jaspers is persuaded, moreover, that the spirit of an ultimate situation pervades our generation. In his book *Man in the Modern Age*<sup>11</sup> he declares that the present situation is not the same as the one Kierkegaard and Nietzsche faced when men were confident and optimistic in their possession of objective truth, but a situation of nihilism and despair of which they had been prophetic. Man today has been uprooted. He realizes that he lives in a changing situation. Everything is in a state of flux, in virtue of which changing knowledge enforces a change in life. "It is as if the foundations of being had been shattered. . . . We have become able to see things as they really are, and that is why the foundations of life quake beneath our feet." The modern mind has become aware of the loss of the sense of transcendence or of a divine presence in the world.

Jaspers' philosophy, however, is not ultimately pessimistic. For man's extremity is God's opportunity, or perhaps we should say, man's opportunity. The "transcendent," "being itself" the

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"comprehensive," or "God" meets us in the ultimate situations of life and demands faith. This, in brief, is Jaspers' "philosophical faith." It is a genial and warmly human philosophy. Yet Churchmen should realize that it is advanced with something like evangelistic and militant fervor against Christianity. Jaspers is convinced that philosophy in our day is being attacked

by the advocates of an exclusive revealed faith and by the proponents of a "science" that has developed into a superstition. He accepts the challenge in the belief that philosophy must not abdicate, least of all today. Whether it is the task of philosophy to equate a transcendent, metaphysical reality with the God who, according to Christian faith, is known only by revelation, would of course be questioned by many philosophers themselves. Jaspers has no worries on this score. While he admits that "to speak of religion without being personally involved in it is questionable," he declares that it is "indispensable as a means of expressing one's own clear deficiency, as a means of seeking after the truth, and also of testing religious faith by the questions that thus arise."<sup>12</sup> Yet in spite of his acknowledged deficiency and the questionableness of his understating, Jaspers goes on to make a withering attack upon Christ's claim to exclusivity, His claim that whoever is not for him is against him. He imagines that when "innumerable Christian believers" have taught that all men who lived before or without Christ are lost, they have acted in keeping with Christ's claim to exclusiveness. Therefore Jaspers "cannot understand how anyone can maintain an attitude of neutrality toward the claim to exclusivity. . . . It stands forever in readiness to kindle new fires in which to burn heretics."<sup>13</sup>

After one has read Jaspers' views on "Biblical religion,"<sup>14</sup> to which no reputable Biblical scholar today would subscribe, one is not surprised at his conclusion: "We must abandon the religion of Christ, that sees God in Christ and bases the doctrine of salvation on an idea of sacrifice found in Deutero-Isaiah and applied to Christ. . . . No man can be God, God speaks exclusively through no man, and, what is more, his speech through every man has many meanings." Hence Jaspers proposes to restate the elements of truth in Biblical religion in terms of a return to the

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primal source of life, that is, to an awareness of the transcendent through faith in the midst of ultimate situations.

Now obviously the exclusive claims which Christ made for himself, as the unique revelation of God, and the Church's acknowledgment of these claims, would fall to the ground if Jaspers' thesis can be sustained that the transcendent meets men independently of Christ in the crises of existence. It is just at this crucial point that Karl Barth addresses his questions to Jaspers.<sup>15</sup> Is it really true that *the* transcendent meets us in the frightful and frightening experiences of life? Of course, there is a sense in which we are bound to admit that if the transcendent, if God, is ever to come to us, he must do so in the midst of suffering, death, guilt, and uncertainty, since these are characteristic of man's whole life from the cradle to the grave in every age. But what Jaspers has in mind are special extreme crises in human experience. Yet one wonders whether millions of our contemporaries have come to an awareness of the transcendent as a result of the horrors of war, mass bombings, concentration camps, famine, and pestilence. Have they evinced a consciousness of guilt? Has there been a return to faith and new hope? In view of the indifference of masses of our generation, are we not driven to the conclusion that if any have been changed it has not been because of the catastrophes of our time? It is not necessarily true that suffering leads men to repentance.

In this connection the fourth chapter of Amos is most instructive. First God gave his people "cleanness of teeth," a scarcity of bread, nothing to chew on. "Yet you did not return to me," says the Lord. Then God withheld the rain, "*Yet you did not return to me.*" The plague of the blight and mildew and the locust had the same result, "*Yet you did not return to me.*" This was

followed by pestilence and war. Finally the worst in a grim series of tribulations, which reminds us of an atomic war. "I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; *yet you did not return to me,*" says the Lord. Five times those heart-rending words have sounded in this chapter of Amos -- outstanding proof that "ultimate situations" can leave men unmoved. But there is one

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thing more that God will do for his people. He himself will come to them. He will reveal himself to them. And his revelation will be at once his judgment upon them and his justification of them. And his coming will be infinitely more terrible than the temporal judgments they had experienced. Then in his coming, war, famine, pestilence, and earthquakes will be recognized as signs of the *last*, the divine, judgment. "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" Not catastrophes in nature and history and in the personal lives of individuals as such, but the coming of God himself is the revelation of the transcendent. This coming was fulfilled in the coming of the Son of God to suffer God's eternal wrath on the cross. There the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ( Rom. 1:18). Not an atomic war but an encounter with God in Christ can bring men into genuine anguish and despair and then into genuine comfort and hope.

The Lord who appeared to Elijah was not in the wind that shattered the rocks, not in the earthquake, not in the fire. The sign under which God reveals himself is a "still small voice" or the voice of a still wind. The Hebrew expression signifies the voice of an enforced silence. As Jesus stilled the raging sea, the tumult of the wild rebellious elements must first be silenced before God's voice is heard. The clamor of the fearful events of our day, and all that men imagine they can learn from them, must subside that men may become attentive to his Word. For, contrary to the opinion of John Greenleaf Whittier, the "still, small voice of calm" does not "speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire."<sup>16</sup> Nor does the text actually say that God was in the silence, any more than he was in the earthquake, wind, and fire. Rather he utters his Word out of the silence. He was present to Elijah in his Word. Neither periods of tranquillity nor days of crisis are indispensable to the revelation of the "transcendent." God is not bound to any signs. He is free to reveal himself with or without "ultimate situations."

But now another question. What guarantee have we that it is the true "transcendent" that meets us in judgment or in grace

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in the "ultimate situations" of life? Why could it not be a demon? "It is not only God's, but the devil's privilege to be in his way strange and unapproachable to us and incapable of being objectified and defined" ( Barth). And even if it were not the devil himself, how many more or less dangerous divinities, principalities, and powers might not encounter us as that which transcends all empirical and psychological knowledge? In our next chapter we shall see how easily in existentialism being and nothing can be regarded as interchangeable entities. What assurance can we have that the "wholly other" is anything but the abyss of nothingness? Can we really say that this "transcendent" has anything at all to do with God -- with the God revealed in Jesus Christ? In a later chapter we shall have an opportunity to show from the side of the revelation attested by Scripture that the "transcendent" or "being itself" envisaged by existentialists is in no sense the God and Father of Jesus Christ, but one

of the idols devised by men. Here it is sufficient for us to point out that gods and demons can also be indefinable and beyond objectification. The weakness of existential ontology lies in the fact that it lacks any concrete certainty in regard to the counterpart in relation to which man's life is lived. For this reason the exhortation to faith and trust in the midst of the negativities of life, in the despair before the abyss of nothingness, could be the Satanic temptation to leap from the pinnacle of the Temple. To describe faith as a "risk," as a "leap" in the dark, is surely to tempt or to make trial of the grace of God.

Jaspers tells us that in ultimate situations man either perceives nothingness or senses true being. Man is either defiant or believes. He is therefore exhorted to repose absolute trust in the transcendent and warned against obstinacy. But, as Barth again observes, is it not so that in the face of ultimate situations man can also become apathetic, indifferent, and callous? Can he not be seized by lethargy and boredom? Indeed, was not this largely the mood of the German people immediately following World War II? If this is so, is it not a proof that even in these dire situations one has not been confronted by the real transcendent? For when the transcendent God encounters men they are "born

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anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" ( I Peter 1:3).

Barth presses his interrogation of Jaspers' doctrine farther. Let us suppose for a moment, he argues, that there are such negative situations in which the mystery of transcendence awaits us. And let us suppose that it is the true transcendence, God himself, who comes to us in them. But now we hear that man may, should, and can decide in the struggle between faith and unbelief. Man can give his unconditional trust to the "other" who meets him in the darkness of his negative experiences. Man is capable of such unconditional trust. It is part and parcel of his own nature. He has a capacity for transcendence. Does this not mean, Barth asks, that actually man already brings with him the transcendence which up till now he thought he lacked? The transcendence was only apparently beyond his reach. In truth, it was already present as an element of his own existence, as man's possibility of unconditional surrender and trust. Actually it is not necessary for man first to ask about transcendence. What is necessary for him and what he can do is simply to make clear to himself that he himself is the answer to this question. Nor is it necessary for the transcendent first to come to man, and, strictly speaking, it cannot do this. On its part, all that can be done is that it reveal itself as man's transcendence, as his capacity for transcendence. Wherefore Barth concludes that in Jaspers' philosophy "here and there, inner and outer, now and then, existence and transcendence are in the last analysis one. It is not shown how the breach running through human existence in virtue of its historical connection with genuine transcendence is overcome and closed. Instead we see that at bottom this breach does not exist at all, that an opposition between existence and transcendence does not obtain."<sup>17</sup> What is presented to us is a picture of a reality grounded in man himself. It is in no sense a genuine transcendence which is distinct from man and his world. The dialectic in Jaspers is clearly an inner-worldly dialectic. Here transcendence is just an aspect or phenomenon of man's nature.<sup>18</sup>

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# III

## BEING AND/OR NOTHING AND DASEIN

Martin Heidegger, 1889Jean-Paul Sartre, 1905-

WE CONCLUDED our chapter on Karl Jaspers by noting the lack of any concrete certainty in regard to the counterpart in relation to which man's life is lived. This lack is accentuated in the ontology of Martin Heidegger, not only because he never succeeds in giving positive content to that reality, but because there is a discrepancy between the earlier and later Heidegger. In the part of *Sein und Zeit* that has been published

Martin Heidegger was born at Messkirch in the Black Forest in 1889. As a Roman Catholic he was well trained in the thought of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus -- a factor that is significant for his later philosophical interests. His first published work dealt with "Duns Scotus' doctrine of categories and concepts," his thesis for a lectureship at Freiburg which he obtained in 1915. There he came under the influence of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. In 1923 he was appointed to the chair of philosophy at Marburg. During this period he produced and, in 1927, published his principal work, *Sein und Zeit*. He returned to Freiburg in 1929 as Husserl's successor. He was elected rector in 1933 during the National Socialist regime, and resigned the following year. Heidegger now spends much of his time in the solitude of the mountains of the Black Forest.

Jean-Paul Sartre was born in 1905, his mother a Protestant, his father a Roman Catholic who died when he was four years old. He graduated from *École Normale Supérieure* in 1928. He taught until 1942 when he devoted himself to literary work. From 1939 to 1941 he was in the army, and spent nine months as a prisoner of war in Germany. After his release he took a prominent part in the resistance movement from 1941 to 1944.

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Heidegger endeavored to analyze *Dasein* (which is the equivalent for human existence) purely existentialistically, that is, without any reference to a transcendent being. He wanted to dissolve the Kierkegaardian dichotomy of pure being and existence into a conception of *Dasein* which is rooted in its own nature, and thus to be more existentialistic than Kierkegaard. It was to be existentialism with a vengeance. It is this aspect of Heidegger's thought that has had a profound influence upon Jean-Paul Sartre.

Heidegger's later works, however, such as *Of the Essence of Truth, What Is Metaphysics?*, his essay on Hölderlin's poetry, and above all his letter on "Humanism" appended to *Platon's Lehre von der Wahrheit*, reveal a shift to a view of being which sees being as transcendent to *Dasein* and to which *Dasein* is related. Instead of rooting being in *Dasein*, *Dasein* is rooted in being.<sup>1</sup> Kurt F. Reinhardt rightly points out that Heidegger himself has repeatedly disavowed his association with existentialism, insisting that his philosophy is primarily concerned with "being" rather than with "existence."<sup>2</sup> "I am not primarily concerned with existence," Heidegger told Stefan Schimanski on the occasion of the latter's visit with the recluse of the Black Forest. "My book bears the title *Being and Time*, not 'Existence and Time.'"<sup>3</sup> Heidegger may be said to be an existentialist, and to have given impetus to the existentialist movement, to the extent that he set out to analyze *Dasein* (human existence) ontologically, preparatory to a discussion of being. But whether one follows the earlier or the

later Heidegger, one arrives at essentially the same place, namely, where existence is seen to be related to nothingness or to being as nothingness.

Heidegger agrees with Jaspers that being cannot be comprehended as anything that is (*Seiendes*) or as an object of thought. In his inquiry concerning being Heidegger does not start, as did the Greeks, with perceptible things, but with human *Dasein* in its ontological structure. *Dasein* is not there as all other things are said to be either at hand (*vorhanden*) or at one's disposal (*zuhanden*), as, for example, an egg or man-made tools. The basic aspect of *Dasein* is being-in-the-world. This aspect is then analyzed. Heidegger distinguishes several modes or existentialia of

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*Dasein* which we will do no more than mention here. These are its *Befindlichkeit*, man's being placed or thrown into the world; *Verstehen*, the understanding of the reason and purpose of existence; and *Rede*, the faculty of speech in which understanding expresses itself. The existentialia or existentialities, together with the traditional categories, constitute the possibility of *Dasein*.

It is important to note that in *Sein und Zeit* a distinction is made between being and a being. The mode of being of *Dasein* is unique. The being itself, to which *Dasein* can relate itself in one way or another and always relates itself in some way, is called existence. This mode of being is thoroughly anthropological because only man can relate himself to himself. In other words, it is a matter of *Dasein* relating itself not to something transcendent but to its own self. What, then, is the nature of this self-relating *Dasein*?

The basic aspect of *Dasein*, we said, is being-in-the-world. But being-in-the-world is for Heidegger not merely a matter of being spatially in the world as, for example, a table is in a house. It is being in a situation in which *Dasein* has the possibility of nonbeing. Nonbeing is of the essence of *Dasein*. In death man sees the possibility of his not being. However, death is not simply the end of life. That would be an unauthentic view of death. An authentic attitude toward death recognizes that it qualifies human existence all along. Moreover, Heidegger is not primarily concerned to show the finitude of human existence, but that death, as integral to *Dasein*, constitutes its possibility. For if *Dasein* is to become something, it must not be. Nonbeing, therefore, guarantees the freedom of *Dasein* to determine and to choose itself as possibility, and thus to realize its being. Whereas in *Kierkegaard* it was the presence of pure being or eternity (God) in human existence that provided the tension and the possibility of choice and despair, in Heidegger this is replaced by death. And death is of the essence of *Dasein*.

For this reason human *Dasein* differs from all other modes of being in that it is constantly concerned about its being and its possibilities. So an ontological characteristic of *Dasein* is care (*Sorge*). Care defines *Dasein* as a kind of being which is con-

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cerned for its own being. The concept of dread in Søren Kierkegaard's book by that name prepared the way for the analysis of care by Heidegger. Both Kierkegaard and Heidegger distinguish "dread" (*Angst*) from "fear" (*Furcht*). "Fear," Kierkegaard said, "is always fear of

something definite<sup>4</sup>. Dread, as Kierkegaard explained, is the reality of freedom as a potentiality, before this potentiality has materialized, and its object is the something which is nothing.<sup>5</sup> What threatens, Heidegger states, is to be found nowhere in particular, yet is everywhere. What dread dreads is the "being-in-the-world." This dread of being-in-the-world arises from the necessity of fending for oneself in the world and from the fact that *Dasein* is a "being-toward-death" (*Sein zum Tode*). Death -- my own death -- is part of the being of *Dasein*. As soon as *Dasein* comes into being, it is "thrown" into this possibility, and this "thrown-ness" reveals itself in "dread." Hence man "cares" or is concerned for his being.

Wyschogrod shows that in Heidegger care not only defines *Dasein* as a being that is concerned for its being but also -- and for this reason -- is the possibility of *Dasein* being ahead of itself. This difficult yet fundamental point becomes clear in Heidegger's view of time. For him time is not a series of moments intersected by eternity, as we saw in Kierkegaard. The moment is not the "now" of the presence of eternity but the moment is a point in which *Dasein* is revealed to be ahead of itself. For Heidegger time is the field or extension of *Dasein*. Consequently whereas for Kierkegaard man chooses in the present in relation to eternity, for Heidegger man chooses in his future because he is his own future or extended time. The point is that Heidegger is intent upon excluding any nonexistentialistic element in time, such as eternity, and hence upon seeing time as inherent in *Dasein*. He wishes "to extend the field of being unendingly and thereby make it something that is ahead of itself in an unending way."<sup>6</sup>

However, as already indicated, the later works of Heidegger reveal a different emphasis and approach. The change is clearly discernible in his inaugural lecture *What Is Metaphysics?* on his appointment to the chair of philosophy at the University of Freiburg as successor to his teacher, Edmund Husserl. Werner Brock

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observes: "In *Being and Time* dread is analyzed, as it were, as the steppingstone to care (*Sorge*), representing the transition from the 'nothing and nowhere' to the being of any *Dasein*. Here the emphasis lies on the phenomena of dread and care themselves. In the essay (*What Is Metaphysics?*) the phenomenon of 'nothingness' is in the center throughout, though it is shown to be grounded in dread."<sup>7</sup> While Brock's observation is correct, it should be immediately added that Heidegger was concerned about the problem of the nothing in order to get at the reality of being.

In order to get around "the formal impossibility of an inquiry into nothing," in his essay *What Is Metaphysics?*, Heidegger makes a neat distinction between the nothing and mere negation. The former, he asserts, is not only prior, but "the very possibility of negation as an act of reason, and consequently reason itself, is somehow dependent on nothing."<sup>8</sup> He argues that if nothing, as such, is still to be inquired into, it follows that it must be "given" in advance. We must be able to encounter it. Whereupon Heidegger raises the question whether the definition, "Nothing is the complete negation of what-is," might not direct us to the totality of what-is in order to learn about nothing. But, he says, a law of logic again blocks our path. For to think the whole of what-is as an idea and then negate what we have thought is not to arrive at nothing itself. How, then, in Heidegger's mind, do we encounter the nothing? The mood "through which we are brought face to face with nothing itself" is dread (*Angst*). By dread he does not mean "anxiety" (*Ängstlichkeit*) or fear (*Furcht*). The object of dread is indefinable. "In dread, as we say, 'one feels something uncanny.' . . . We are unable to say what gives 'one'

that uncanny feeling. 'One' just feels it generally (*im Ganzen*). . . . Dread reveals nothing. In dread we are in suspense . . . because it makes what-is-in-totality slip away from us."<sup>9</sup>

According to Heidegger, the nothing is revealed in dread, but not as something that is. It is not an object. Nothing shows itself rather "as essentially belonging to what-is." It is at one with what-is as this slips away in totality. Consequently nothingness

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is the background against which what-is is revealed, and only through nothing is *Dasein* brought face to face with what-is as such. For *Dasein* means to be "projected into nothing." Or, as we would say, the awareness of nothing through dread is the revelation to man of existing reality. "Nothing is that which makes the revelation of what-is as such possible for our human existence. Nothing not merely provides the conceptual opposite of what-is but is also an original part of essence (*Wesen*). It is in the being (*Sein*) of what-is (*Seiendes*) that the nihilation of nothing (*das Nichten des Nichts*) occurs."<sup>10</sup>

Now another important aspect of nothing, according to Heidegger, is that man, under the impact of nothing in dread, "transcends" what-is and is led "straight to metaphysics," that is, to being itself. This is the new emphasis in Heidegger's thought. Thus Werner Brock concludes that in Heidegger's thought "nothingness "is" not merely the counterconception to anything that is, but, more fundamentally, belongs together with 'being,' the essence and ground of what-is."<sup>11</sup> For Heidegger, therefore, metaphysics is an inquiry over and above what-is. And his own quest for nothing, he tells us, is a similar "going beyond" what-is. Thus it turns out to be a "metaphysical" question. He points out that the question about nothing has persisted throughout the whole history of metaphysics: in classical metaphysics, which conceived nothing as signifying not being (*Nichtseiendes*); and in the Christian dogma of *creatio ex nihilo*.<sup>12</sup> According to Heidegger, nothing is not "the vague opposite of what-is; it now reveals itself as integral to the being of what-is." He therefore affirms Hegel's famous dictum that "pure being and pure nothing are the one and the same."<sup>13</sup> Heidegger argues that if the question of being is the all-embracing question of metaphysics (as Jaspers had also claimed), then the question of nothing necessarily spans the whole metaphysical field. Heidegger in a postscript endeavors to refute the misconceptions that "nothing" is the sole subject of his metaphysics and that a "philosophy of nothing" is the last word in "nihilism"; and that dread is a morbid, chance mood replacing logic. He insists that being is his theme. But being is the purely "other" than everything that "is." It is that-which-is-

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not (*das Nichtseiendes*). Yet this "nothing" functions as being. "It would be premature," Heidegger states, to stop thinking at this point and adopt the facile explanation that nothing is merely the nugatory, equating it with the nonexistent (*das Wesenlose*).<sup>14</sup> In nothing we experience being itself. "Without being, whose unfathomable and unmanifest essence is vouchsafed us in essential dread, everything that 'is' would remain in beinglessness (*Seinlosigkeit*)."<sup>15</sup> Dread is not one feeling among many: it is to be "attuned" to being. Nor is it morbid. One can be courageous in the experience of dread because it leads to the experience of being.<sup>16</sup> Courage, we are told, can endure nothing, presumably because it stands "in secret union with the serenity and gentleness of creative longing."<sup>17</sup>

Wyschogrod detects the shift in Heidegger's thinking from being rooted in *Dasein* to *Dasein* rooted in being in his varying treatments of the nature of truth in *Sein und Zeit* and in the essay, *Of the Essence of Truth*. But it is in the letter on "Humanism" that the new emphasis in Heidegger's thought is most explicit. Here being is said to be before everything. Thought is the thought of being in the twofold sense that it occurs through being and listens to being. Man is now described, not as *Dasein*, but as ecstatic, as ex-istence (in contrast to existence). By this Heidegger means that man stands in or open to the lighting up of being. It means standing forth in the truth of being, whereas existence (*existentia*) refers to reality as distinguished from mere possibility. Consequently man is called the "shepherd of being" and his language the "home of being." Heidegger flatly states that Sartre's proposition that existence precedes essence "has nothing in common with his philosophy." On the contrary, man exists in the "neighborhood of being" in which God and the gods and the dimension of the "holy" either disclose or withhold themselves.<sup>18</sup> Thus Heidegger actually leaves room for the revelation of God, or at least of the gods, but -- be it noted -- within the confines of his ontology.

From the above it might appear that Heidegger had completely reversed himself. But it is important that we realize that his concept of being in 1946 is just as ambivalent as his concept of

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nothing had been in 1929. For "evil appears as a blessing in the lighting up of being. . . . Both blessedness and evil (*das Grimmige*) can exist only in being in so far as being itself is in conflict. In it the original nature of negation (*Nichten*) is hidden."<sup>19</sup> The negation exists in being. And the negating element in being is what Heidegger calls the nothing. Being, then, is Heidegger's theme. Whether it is seen to be rooted in *Dasein* or vice versa, the result is the same. Being and nothing become virtually interchangeable, or at least ambivalent, terms. "Nothing, conceived as the pure 'other' than what-is, is the veil of being. In being, all that comes to pass in what-is is perfected from everlasting."<sup>20</sup>

Turning our attention now to Jean-Paul Sartre, he appears at first glance to be the only consistent existentialist today. For he insists, with a fierceness that evokes our admiration, that "existence precedes essence."<sup>21</sup> Although he fancies that, like himself, Jaspers and Heidegger are primarily interested in existence, we have seen that actually they are chiefly concerned about being as the ground of existence. Not so Sartre. For him man's destiny is within himself. He sees man grounded in himself. In answer to the question. What is meant by saying that existence precedes essence, Sartre answers that it means that "first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterward defines himself. . . . Thus there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence."<sup>22</sup> Sartre admits that he is an atheistic existentialist and fancies that Heidegger belongs with him in the same class, though Heidegger himself denies it. "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism. . . . For man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future. . . . Man is at the start of a plan which is aware of itself . . . nothing exists prior to this plan; nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be."<sup>23</sup>

Thus, as we have stated, Sartre appears to be the only truly consistent existentialist among the three. And yet -- is he? Is not

the whole pathos of his philosophy just that he too sees human existence related to something that transcends it, precedes it, grounds it? But in his case it is unequivocally the nothing. And Sartre believes that the nothing he speaks of is that which Heidegger had described, and that therefore in this respect he is a good disciple of Heidegger. No doubt this is true with respect to the earlier Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit*, in spite of Heidegger's protestations to the contrary. But whereas Heidegger, with the profundity characteristic of German philosophy, goes on to a view of the nothing as an aspect of being, Sartre, with the practicality more typical of French and even English thought, is primarily interested in human existence, which is bounded by the nothing. Sartre does not go on to metaphysics as Heidegger proposes to do, but draws the anthropological implications of Heidegger's analysis of the ontological structure of *Dasein*. His purpose is to describe man who has nothing back of him but the nothing, who knows he must live without God, and who knows the dread and the despair of such a fate. For this reason Karl Barth is correct when he states that Sartre has behind him what Heidegger has before him; that in Heidegger we have the premises of Sartre's view and in Sartre the consequences of Heidegger's view. Whereas, for Heidegger, the source of optimism in the face of the nothing rests in the ultimately peaceful character of the nothing, its oneness with being, for Sartre it rests exclusively in man: in his self-willed courage, in his stubborn affirmation of human reality in the face of nothing. Consequently he insists that "existentialism is humanism." Not without reason, therefore, does Barth characterize Sartre as the most masculine among contemporary existentialists. One may disagree strongly with his presuppositions, but one is obliged to admire his robust faith. It is no accident that Sartre took an active part in the resistance movement from 1941 to 1944.

If existence really precedes essence, man is responsible for what he is. Sartre is therefore concerned to let the full responsibility of man's existence rest upon himself. Because our decisions involve all humanity, we are responsible for ourselves and for everyone else. In choosing and creating myself, I am creating

and choosing man. The man who realizes this cannot escape "the feeling of his total and complete responsibility" or "anguish" -like an officer whose decisions involve the lives of other men. Sartre sees very clearly that with the nonexistence of God the possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappeared along with him. Since existence precedes essence, there is no a priori determinism. Man is free, is freedom. He is on his own and has no excuses. "Man is condemned to be free, condemned because he did not create himself." But "once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does."<sup>24</sup> At every moment he is condemned to invent man. We choose our being. Being does not precede man's choice and action. Nor can we say that the choice of our being is the outcome of deliberation. As Paul Foulqui? comments: "Having rejected the world of ideas or essences, Sartre draws the logical conclusion from his position. The choice of our ends is also absolutely free."<sup>25</sup> It is made without any basis; it is founded on no reason for the good reason that all reason comes into the world by free choice.<sup>26</sup> Everyone freely chooses the norms of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Consequently when an existentialist of the Sartrean variety writes about a coward, he says that this coward is responsible for his cowardice. He does not try to blame it on heredity, environment, society, or on biological and psychological determinism.<sup>27</sup> Ordinarily we think of men being responsible to something -- to God, to society, to the bar of history, or to an

ideal or law. But in Sartre's view man is responsible to himself for what he makes of himself. "There remains," as Foulqui? points out, "only the crude datum of inner experience. 'We do not do as we like, and yet we are responsible for what we are: this is the plain fact.' A fact inexplicable, gratuitous, absurd, like everything else."<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless Sartre does not believe that his atheistic existentialism is pessimistic. Man can be courageous and confident because his destiny is within himself. Furthermore, Sartre is not afraid of the charge of subjectivity. He revels in it. "There can be no other truth to take off from than this: I think, therefore, I exist. . . . Outside the Cartesian *cogito* all views are probable."<sup>29</sup>

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Underlying Sartre's thesis that existence precedes essence and his philosophy of freedom is a highly sophisticated ontology which resembles in many ways that of the early Heidegger. The subtitle of *L'Être et le Néant* is *Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*. "It has been claimed that both Heidegger and Sartre have been influenced by Edmund Husserl's phenomenological method."<sup>30</sup> But Maurice Natanson contends that Sartre did not follow Husserl's method.<sup>31</sup> Sartre set out to show the differentiation of being into the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi* which correspond roughly to Heidegger's distinction between a being and *Dasein*. This dualism permeates Sartre's ontology. The *en-soi* is being in-itself. It refers to the world and things in it which are self-identical. It is "solid," without any vacuum, "opaque to itself," and hence devoid of consciousness. As Foulqui? explains: "The *en-soi* is not to be referred to anything other than itself that might be regarded as its beginning or its end or the plan it is realizing. . . . Its only being is one of fact, without any necessity of being, and without the intervention of a creative power that might explain it; its contingency is absolute; its existence is absurd; it is a superfluity."<sup>32</sup> The *pour-soi*, on the other hand, is being-for-itself. It is human consciousness which, like Heidegger's *Dasein*, and lacking the self-identity of the *en-soi*, is able to relate itself to itself. Why? Because consciousness implies the possibility of being present to oneself. But "presence to oneself supposes the possibility of being at a distance from oneself, that is, of escaping from the identity in virtue of which the *en-soi* is absolutely present to itself. . . . Thus the *pour-soi*, in so far as it is not itself (i.e., does not coincide with itself in the *en-soi* fashion), is a presence to itself (in *pour-soi* fashion) which lacks a certain presence to itself."<sup>33</sup> This lack of presence to itself in the *pour-soi* is equivalent to the nothing which belongs to the nature of *Dasein* in Heidegger. The nothingness which belongs to consciousness possesses the power of negating in the sense of making an abstraction of something.

According to Sartre, the *en-soi* can neither conceal nor reveal being, since there is no hidden being (or in Kantian language, no noumenon) behind the appearance of the object. Rather than

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revealing itself to us it is simply there *to be revealed*. Sartre employs no Husserlian *epoche* or reduction. The revelation of being is through the *pour-soi*, that is, in the world becoming "for me." Natanson and Foulqui? concur that if Sartre's ontology is to be described as phenomenological, then it is more on the Hegelian order than that of Husserl. Foulqui? informs us that Heidegger discarded Husserl's parenthesis and insisted that phenomenology should devote itself to the very being of what is, and thus become an ontology; for man knows only one kind of being: the phenomenon. Sartre did likewise. For Sartre, being has appearance, meaning, nature, essence only for me, or only as I give it such. He declares: "The

being of an existent entity is precisely what it appears. . . . Our theory of the phenomenon has replaced the reality of the thing, by the *objectivity* of the phenomenon."<sup>34</sup> Before the consciousness reduces the *en-soi* to meaning, its existence is absurd. Its contingency is absolute. It is without any necessity of being. It is like the earth which was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. But it is not God's Word that brought forth the revealing light to banish the darkness. It was my consciousness by which the world became intelligible and built itself up in the phenomena which constitute the true being of the Sartrean phenomenology. Thus the crude world emerges out of the hideous, meaningless shadows only through consciousness. The only world that exists for me, then, is the work of my consciousness. As Heidegger says, "I am the being by which there is (*es gibt*) being."<sup>35</sup> Or as Sartre puts it: "It is the uprising of the for-itself (the *pour-soi*)" -- that is, of consciousness -- "that brings it about that there is a world."<sup>36</sup> Thus man, man's consciousness, is "God" the Creator, the "Giver" of all meaning, purpose, and value.

The similarity between the ontologies of Sartre and the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* is obvious. It is a distinction between a being and *Dasein* or the distinction between the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*. In both *Dasein* and the *pour-soi* we have being that participates in nonbeing and realizes its being in freedom through determination ( *Entschlossenheit* -- Heidegger) and in choice ( Sartre). Into

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the place of Kierkegaard's pure being (God) and Jaspers' being-itself (God) has come the nothing. Sartre is frankly atheistic and believes that, since the nothing he speaks of is also Heidegger's, Heidegger is to be numbered among the atheistic existentialists. Heidegger denies this, and proposes to go on to metaphysics. Yet one has the feeling -- which Karl Barth has also voiced -- that it does not matter much. The affirmation of God is not essential to Heidegger's system of philosophy, just as on the other hand Sartre does not go to any pains to disprove the existence of God. Moreover, Heidegger's being, being virtually identical with the nothing -- "pure being and pure nonbeing are one and the same" -- is scarcely distinguishable from Sartre's nothing. Into the place of the being of God in Christian theology has come the nothing. The nothing in the thought of Heidegger and Sartre is, in fact, a substitute or another name for God. Our existence, we heard, is constituted and determined by the nothing. It is that from which we come and to which we go. All that exists only as the nothing is in and with it. *Dasein* only knows about what-is (*Seiendes*) through the nothing. Even though Heidegger does not explicitly deny the existence of God, in his system the place of God is occupied by the nothing. Heidegger, it is true, does not expressly state that the nothing is God. But when he makes the nothing virtually identical with being, and when he makes the nothing to be the ground, the criterion, and the illumination of all that is, it amounts to the same thing. Of course, the Christian Church, following the witness of Holy Scripture, will never be able to recognize God in the substitute Sartre and Heidegger have made for him. It is more likely that the Church might confuse the nothing of these philosophers with what the Bible calls evil.

While both Heidegger and Sartre look upon the nothing as the possibility of man's realizing his being, they also recognize, especially Sartre, that the nothing is man's great enemy. They have seen, perhaps more clearly than any of their predecessors, that man is faced with a dreadful and dreaded evil. However inadequate and mistaken their views of it may be, the fact remains that they have experienced something of its demonic power.

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They realize that evil cannot be rationalized away. The nothing is at work. It is there. It is no mere phantom of our imagination. As Barth has observed, these men think in and from a real encounter with the nihil. The cold breath of death is upon their writings. It will do no good for us to dismiss their insights as European pessimism in the wake of two world wars. It could be that these philosophers prophetically discern that the nothing is the future of our civilization in terms of an atomic war. *That* dread hangs heavily upon the American people, even if it is only symptomatic of ontological dread. It is even less becoming for Christian thinkers to minimize the power of the nothing. They should rather be at pains to show that the power of evil is vastly greater than either Sartre or Heidegger have shown, and that deliverance from it is infinitely more difficult than they have dreamed. Theologians should take the position, not that the existentialists have taken evil too seriously, but that they have not taken it seriously enough! A theologian who has not experienced what Paul Tillich has called "the shock of nonbeing" will not be able to understand or to speak to his contemporaries. For our generation has encountered what Walter Lippmann once called "ice-cold evil."

Christian theology knows the enemy which the Bible calls Satan, the devil, or the evil one. From its thrall the whole Church prays: "Our Father who art in heaven, . . . lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." Churchmen are asked by these existentialists, in effect, how seriously they take this prayer, whether they are still inclined to regard the devil as a relic of primitive mythology, and whether evil, as depicted in Scripture, is identical with the nothing of existentialism. It is fortunate that the two leading theologians in Protestantism today have accepted the challenge and have tried to come to grips with the problem. We shall hear now what Karl Barth has to say on this subject. The next chapter will deal with Paul Tillich's contribution.

Barth takes up the problem of the nothing in connection with the doctrine of Providence in a section of the *Church Dogmatics*. The section is entitled, *Gott und das Nichtige*, which I have trans-

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ated, *"God and the Nihil."*<sup>27</sup> The problem for Barth is the fact that there is an element in the world that stands in contradiction to the Creator and the creature. This element is the nihil. Barth insists that the Creator is good and his creature is good, and that therefore under no circumstances may the nihil be explained either from the side of the Creator or of the creature. To do so would slander the Creator and the goodness of his creation. Moreover, the nihil must not be confused with the dark or negative aspect of creation. His reason for taking this stand is the fact that "in Jesus Christ there is revealed, not only the goodness of God's creation in its twofold (positive and negative) aspect, but also the real nihil, the enemy, with whom there can be no peace, the negative which is not simply the complement of a positive over against it, the Left which is balanced by no Right, the opposition which is no mere inner-worldly and therefore no mere dialectical opposition. It is an opposition which is directed against the totality of the created world because it is directed first and above all against God himself."<sup>38</sup> No Hegelian synthesis overcomes this opposition. Because the nihil is radically opposed to God's will and work, any inclusion of it in God's good creation, and hence any relativizing of it, is out of the question.

Whence do we know that the nihil exists, and yet not as an element in God or in the creature? Because the Word became flesh! "The nihil is the 'reality' for whose sake (that is, in opposition to which) God himself willed to become a creature in the world, to which he willed

to subject himself in order in this way to overcome it. It is therefore the reality that contradicts and opposes God, and on the other hand, is subject to God's contradiction and opposition to it. In this twofold definition -as negating God and as negated by him -- it is a reality distinguished from God. What brought Jesus Christ to the cross and what he conquered on the cross is the real nihil."<sup>39</sup> The nihil is the real evil, real death, the real devil, and the real hell.

At this point Barth warns against seeing the source of the knowledge of the nihil elsewhere than in the revelation in Jesus Christ. It is not known in the consciousness of our finite exist-

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ence, in our consciousness of sin, in an immediate consciousness of the nihil, or in some abstract law. It is in this connection that Barth offers his critique of Heidegger and Sartre. He grants that they speak out of a genuine encounter with the nihil. But that does not mean that they have advanced into that dimension in which the nihil is to be seen and described according to Christian knowledge.

Sartre, Barth admits, recognizes the evil and misery attending the nothing. Yet Sartre is superior to the nothing. One can admire the courageous, masculine way in which he masters it. But it is man who stubbornly chooses, creates, and wills himself in the face of the nothing. Such stoicism is commendable. But it is evident that the nothing that I can overcome with my little bit of human courage is not the real nihil. It may be a very menacing, very powerful thing, but as long as I am able to withstand it, I ought not to imagine that I have had to do with the enemy of mankind. No, Sartre has not known the nihil. Otherwise he would not have invented the myth that man himself is the God who is superior to the nothing. His nothing is relatively harmless. He can make it the theme of plays and novels to delight and to intrigue the public. He can make the old but new gospel of humanism fashionable again. "With this message one can give to the man who has two world wars behind him a little courage for the second half of this strange last century of the second thousand years after Christ. Good intentions and well done! . . . But precisely the fact that one can do this, or at least can try to do it, proves that the matter, in spite of everything, is not so dangerous as it at first appears."<sup>40</sup>

Turning now to Heidegger, Barth is of the opinion that he has before him what Sartre has behind him. Heidegger is no hero. He has not finished with the nothing. He doesn't play with it. He treats it with religious solemnity. He gives one the impression that he is much more serious than Sartre. It is understandable, Barth says, that Heidegger and his friends are incensed at the idea of their being mentioned in the same breath. One cannot say, however, that Heidegger's nothing is the nihil either. For although it is revealed in dread, it is a dread that is overcome

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in peace and tranquility. For Heidegger the nothing is not something abominable, but ultimately a saving, illumining power. Man is not to shut himself off from it; he is to hold himself open to it because, without being open to it, metaphysics and science are impossible. Barth also observes, as we have done, that Heidegger's concept of the nothing is ambivalent. With his acceptance of the Hegelian identification of being and nothing, he could just as well have inserted the concept of being for the nothing without altering his meaning in the slightest.

Barth also takes account of the apparent reversal in Heidegger's thought in his later works which we saw above. But he declares that actually no essential change has taken place. His concept of being in 1946 is just as ambiguous as his concept of the nothing was in 1929. At any rate Heidegger's being and/or nothing has nothing to do with the Christian doctrine of the nihil. Barth writes:

"The concept of the nihil is not ambivalent. If Heidegger had in mind the real nihil, he would have refrained from describing the dread, in which according to him the nothing is revealed, as ultimately not dread at all, but peace, tranquility, and serenity. The sickness unto death in which man is confronted with the real nihil has a different appearance. And the dialectic in which the nothing manifests itself as being, and being as the nothing, would have proved unusable. Then he would have had to speak of the relativity and inferiority, yes, of the overcoming of the nothing. . . . He could never have thought of identifying the two. Above all he never would have dreamed of ascribing to the nothing that royal constitutive role it has for what-is (*Sciences*) and for *Dasein*. He would then have realized that in this case he had proclaimed the devil to be the principle of all that is and of all *Dasein*."<sup>41</sup>

It now remains for us to state briefly how Barth himself understands the existence of the nihil. The difficulty lies, of course, in speaking of the "existence" of the nihil. What truly is can only be God and the creature. But it does not follow, Barth argues, that the nihil is nothing, that it is not. For God reckons with it and overcomes it. Consequently we are unable to say that it is nonexistent or that it is a nonentity. Moreover, the nihil is not identical with what is not, that is, what is not God

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and not the creature. God is God and *not* a creature. From this it does not follow that there is any nihil in God. On the contrary, this "not" belongs to God's perfection. Moreover, the creature is a creature and *not* God. But again it does not follow that there is anything nihilistic in the creature. If the relationship between the Creator and the creature includes a "not," then this negative belongs to the perfection of that relationship. Moreover, within the creaturely world there are innumerable negatives as, for example: This house is not a man; or, The man is not here (illustrations mine).

"What we called the 'dark side' of creation is constituted by the 'not' which in this twofold respect -- its differentiation from God and its own differentiation -- belongs to the nature of the creature. . . . But this 'dark side' of creation has nothing to do with the nihil. From a Christian standpoint all those views and doctrines are intolerable which look upon the nihil as an essential determinant of what-is and of *Dasein*, and thus of the creature, or even as an essential determination of the original, creative being of God himself."<sup>42</sup>

Hans Urs von Balthasar, the eminent Jesuit theologian, has therefore rightly pointed out that Barth's concept of the nihil is a strictly theological concept and a new one. "Barth's theological dialectic starts where Hegel's leaves off, for where the Hegelian dialectic of contraries operates, the Barthian dialectic of good and evil no longer exists."<sup>43</sup>

Since the nihil is only known in God's action against it in Jesus Christ, it follows, Barth teaches, that the nihil is what God does *not* will, and it exists solely as the object of his negative will (*Nichtwollen*), of his judgment and wrath. It has no independent existence. It is not a second God and it has not created itself. Of course, Barth too has no explanation for the

origin of evil. He can only affirm with the Bible that the nihil is the evil God hates, negates, and rejects. However, Barth stresses that God has so completely destroyed the nihil in Christ's death that it is in no sense God's eternal counterpart. In the knowledge of Christian faith, and that means in looking back upon Christ's resurrection and forward to his Second Coming, the nihil is the old threat and corruption which has passed away in his death.

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Such an assertion can be made only in faith in Jesus Christ. But in faith in him it may and must be made. It is the "good news" the Church has to proclaim to all men. This does not imply that the nihil is now to be taken lightly. It means to take it desperately in earnest in view of the fact that here only Jesus is Victor. Man of himself is utterly helpless before the nihil; indeed he has already succumbed to it, as Gen., ch. 3, teaches. The overcoming of the nihil is exclusively God's affair, the work of his grace as man for man. And the kingdom of the nihil *has* been destroyed. It is no longer a genuine peril. However, in view of the fact that the general revelation of its destruction at Christ's coming in glory has not yet occurred, and because of the blindness of our eyes, the nihil continues to exert the power of a lie. It can fill us with dread at its pseudo power. But even its present power to deceive is subject to God's fatherly providence; it is made to serve his Word and work, the preaching of the gospel, which unmasks it as a lie.

In the section of the *Dogmatics* on "God and the Nihil," Barth has by no means given us a complete picture of the Biblical teaching about evil. Many questions remain unanswered. Succeeding volumes of the *Dogmatics* will deal with the doctrines of sin, death, the devil, and hell. But there can be little doubt that he has provided us with a distinctly theological approach to the whole problem of evil.

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## **IV**

### **BEING, NONBEING, AND BEING-ITSELF**

Paul Tillich, 1886-

OUR STUDY of Kierkegaard's implicit ontology or theology, and of its effect upon contemporary theology and philosophy, has served as a preparation for understanding the thought of Paul Tillich. In particular the ontologies of Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre form the intellectual background. Indeed, it is our conviction that Tillich's philosophy and theology can be evaluated properly only in the light of religious and atheistic existentialism. The three leading concepts in Tillich's system are being, nonbeing, and being-itself. They correspond roughly to Heidegger's *Dasein*, nothing, and being. However, there is a dominant principle in Tillich's thought which is perhaps the key to his whole system: the idea of correlation. In his *Systematic Theology* he explains his "method of correlation." Primarily it is epistemological. "There is a correlation in the sense of correspondence between religious symbols and that which is symbolized by them. There is a correlation in the logical sense between concepts denoting the human and those denoting the divine. There is a correlation in the factual sense between man's ultimate

Paul Tillich was born in Germany in 1886. He studied at the universities of Berlin, Tübingen, and Halle, and received his Ph.D. degree from Breslau. A member of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, he was ordained in 1912 in Berlin. He taught theology and philosophy at various German universities before coming to the United States in 1933. He was naturalized in 1940, and since 1933 has been professor of philosophical theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

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concern and that about which he is ultimately concerned."<sup>1</sup> However, it is important that we understand that the "method of correlation" is "an element of the reality itself." Epistemologically the method of correlation is justifiable because the "subjects" studied are ontically correlated. Unless this point is constantly kept in mind the student cannot do justice to Tillich's thought.

We stated that the three leading concepts in Tillich's philosophy are being, nonbeing, and being-itself. We shall be obliged to examine each of these concepts separately -- as Tillich himself does. At the outset it is well to bear in mind that none of these concepts or realities "exist" in isolation. They "exist" in correlation and interdependence. We discern three pairs of correlation in Tillich's system: being and nonbeing (finite being), being-itself and nonbeing (God), and finite being and being-itself. There is thus a dialectic in man, a dialectic in God, and a dialectic between God and man. All three are interdependent and interpenetrable. Being reveals nonbeing and nonbeing reveals being. Together they reveal being-itself and at the same time being-itself (God) reveals finite being.

With his principle of correlation, Tillich is able to be both a philosopher and a theologian at the same time. Philosophy asks the question of being as being, whereas theology is concerned about the question about God. "Systematic theology cannot and should not enter into the ontological discussion as such. Yet it can and must consider these central concepts from the point of view of their theological significance."<sup>2</sup> This implies that theology is obliged to take ontology into account not only for its doctrine of man but also for its doctrine of God. Contrary to the program upon which Barth, Brunner, and others embarked in the 1920's for an independent theology of the Word of God, Tillich holds that theology cannot and ought not to be independent of philosophy. True, each has its own function. But they are correlated, interdependent.

At the same time one ought not to be misled by the distinction Tillich makes between philosophy and theology, that is, of assigning ontology to philosophy and the question about God to

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theology. For Tillich theology is not confined to Biblical theology or to an exposition of the implications of Christology. His definition of theology is much broader than that. It is in the widest sense the question about God: *theos-logos*. It is the question about being-itself. This question, however, has also been asked and answered by philosophy in much the same way that Tillich himself does. Philosophers will therefore object to being excluded from an inquiry about God, and theologians will protest against theology being confused with philosophy.

Nevertheless, the principle of correlation enables Tillich to create a system that embraces philosophy and orthodox Christian theology and that transcends mysticism and theism to the "God above God." Tillich's thought has a comprehensiveness and finality that evoke profound admiration even where it fails to gain assent. There is something "Hegelian," something distinctly "Germanic" about his achievement. A man who can assimilate Greek and Judaeo-Christian traditions to his system, who can survey the realm of human learning and see it whole, and who can then offer us a reasoned, logically consistent, and unified philosophy of history and of religion, deserves unstinted praise. Although Paul Tillich may not be the greatest living Protestant theologian, he is surely one of its profoundest thinkers.

## 1. Being and Nonbeing: Finite Being

Like Jaspers, Tillich teaches that an investigation of the structure of being reveals a polarity or dichotomy of self and world, subject and object. This is the basic ontological structure. The elements of this structure are individualization and participation, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny.<sup>3</sup> Man, however, is not just being. He participates in nonbeing as well as being, and this constitutes his finitude and creatureliness. "Being, limited by nonbeing, is finitude. Nonbeing appears as the 'not yet' of being and as the 'no more' of being."<sup>4</sup> The categories of finitude are time, space, casualty, and substance. But finitude involves the threat of the disintegration of the ontological elements and of the loss of the categories of finitude.<sup>5</sup>

What drives man to ask the question about being? It is the

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shock of possible nonbeing. What is the possibility of man asking about being? Man alone is able to look beyond his own being because he is free to transcend every given reality. He has a capacity for self-transcendence. He can envisage nothingness. For man is "separated from his being in a way which enables him to look at it as something strange and questionable. And such a separation is actual because man participates not only in being but also in nonbeing. Therefore, the very structure which makes negative judgments possible proves the ontological character of nonbeing. Unless man participates in nonbeing, no negative judgments are possible, in fact, no judgments of any kind are possible."<sup>6</sup> This interesting quotation bears a striking resemblance to Heidegger's thought. Indeed, Tillich goes on to remark that it is not by chance that in the recent rediscovery of the ontological question there has been "an overwhelming emphasis on the problem of nonbeing." We recall that Heidegger also teaches that the nothing is not a mere intellectual negation but the very possibility of negation as an act of reason. Furthermore, Heidegger teaches that the awareness of nothing is the revelation to man of existing reality. And this is because *Dasein* (Tillich's being) "encounters" and is "projected into" nothing. Nothing, we recall, is not the vague opposite of what-is; it is . . . integral to the being of what-is." Tillich, however, is of the opinion that the existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre has "encountered nothingness" so radically that it has replaced being-itself by nonbeing and has no way of conquering the threat of nonbeing.<sup>7</sup> In Tillich's thought the threat of nonbeing is overcome by being-itself, or God, which is the question implied by human finitude.

But, now, *how* does man know that he is finite being? How does he become aware of his finitude? How does he know nonbeing in which he also participates? Anxiety, we are told, is the ontological quality by which man is aware of finitude. "Anxiety is independent of any special object which might produce it; it is dependent only on the threat of nonbeing -- which

is identical with finitude. In this sense it has been said rightly that the object of anxiety is "nothingness" -- and nothingness is not an

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object." Objects are feared. A danger, a pain, an enemy, may be feared, but fear can be conquered by action. Anxiety cannot, for no finite being can conquer its finitude."<sup>8</sup> Once again the agreement between Heidegger's and Tillich's thought is evident. Incidentally Tillich clears up a language difficulty when he points out that the German word *Angst* should be rendered by "anxiety" and not by "dread." For "dread" points to a sudden reaction to a danger whereas "anxiety" is experienced in the threat of nothingness.<sup>9</sup>

In the second and third chapters of his book *The Courage to Be*, Tillich develops at length the concept of anxiety, and carefully distinguishes between ontological and pathological anxiety. In doing so he sheds more light on the nature of man. He definitely states that being has nonbeing within itself, and that "anxiety is the *natural* anxiety of man as man."<sup>10</sup> However, nonbeing is said to be dependent on the being it negates in two ways. Being is ontologically prior to nonbeing, and nonbeing is dependent on the special qualities of being. That is to say, nonbeing derives from being those negative qualities about which man is anxious. Consequently, the three types of ontological anxiety are in keeping with the positive structure of being. Nonbeing threatens man's being (and his ontic self-affirmation) relatively in terms of fate, absolutely in terms of death. It threatens him with emptiness and meaninglessness, and it threatens him with guilt and condemnation. All three types of anxiety are rooted in man's nature as man, in his finitude. "They are fulfilled in the situation of despair to which all of them contribute."<sup>11</sup>

We have been discussing the correlation, the interdependence of being and nonbeing at the level of the creature, or in the area of anthropology. Our first question to Tillich at this point runs as follows. It is difficult to see how one can affirm that the creation is good if nonbeing belongs within being, if man as man participates in being and nonbeing, and if anxiety is an ontological quality of man as man. Tillich appears to identify finitude and evil. Our question is substantially the one Reinhold Niebuhr raised in his article *Biblical Thought and Ontological Speculation in the Theology of Paul Tillich*.<sup>12</sup> In his *Reply to Interpretation and Criticism*

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tion and Criticism in the same volume Tillich expresses surprise that Mr. Niebuhr, and R. H. Daubney and David R. Roberts as well, should reproach him in this way. The reason why he could not make such an identification, Tillich argues, is because his whole system is constructed in view of the distinction between essential being and disrupted existence. He admits, however, that the criticism is understandable because of his assertion that the "actualization of creation and the beginning of the Fall are, though logically different, ontologically the same. . . . The Fall is the work of finite freedom, but it happened universally in everything finite, and therefore unavoidably. . . . If words like 'universal sinfulness' have any meaning, they point to something in finite freedom which makes the Fall unavoidable, though something for which we are responsible at the same time."<sup>13</sup> Thus Tillich strives to meet his critics by grounding man's responsibility for sin upon his freedom and to establish

the universality and inevitability of the Fall ontologically in finite freedom. He appeals to the fact that the "supralapsarian" Calvinists were not afraid of asserting that God had foreordained Adam's Fall, and explains that this means that if God creates, he creates that which will turn against him. Actually the supralapsarians vigorously denied this implication of their doctrine. God was not the author of evil. They did not hesitate to be logically inconsistent, doubtless because they realized that the problem of evil is the reef on which all our theological and philosophical systems are shipwrecked.

In order to avoid any possible "calumny of creation," Barth, on the other hand, insists that sin, godlessness, is an ontological impossibility. Sin is not a possibility of the humanity God has created. Human being does not include, it excludes, sin. Sin is sin against our humanity. If we define human being as freedom, then this freedom is not to be confused with neutrality.<sup>14</sup> It is freedom to be responsible to God. It is the freedom in which man chooses the right; that is, that which corresponds to God's free choice. The freedom of God's creature is not a freedom to choose between two possibilities given to him, but between the one and

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only possibility and his own ontological impossibility, between his being and nonbeing, and therefore between the continuance and denial of his freedom. The freedom of the creature is not freedom to sin. When man sins, he loses his freedom. That is to say, he does something which may *not* be derived from the freedom in which he was created, *not* from his creation by God, not from his creatureliness, not from his finiteness. For man's being is grounded in God, in God's gracious election and in a hearing of God's Word. In Barth the correlation of God and man is considerably stricter than in Tillich. For God and man are so intimately together that godlessness is an ontological impossibility. The weakness of Tillich's position, and even of Niebuhr's who protests against him, appears to lie in the fact that they find the possibility of sin and the Fall in the freedom in which man was created. A further weakness is the fact that both believe that man can know his finiteness and nonbeing (evil) in virtue of a natural capacity for self-transcendence.

Of course, Barth too has no solution for the "mystery of iniquity." But he insists, as we saw in the preceding chapter, that evil (nonbeing, the nothing, *das Nichtige*) must not be derived either from the side of God or from the side of the creature. The nihil does not exist as the Creator and the creature do. It exists in a dimension of its own. It must not be confused with the negative or "shadowy" side of creation. The nihil is not merely the complement of a positive standing over against it. It is not merely an inner-worldly, dialectical antithesis. Thus the nihil, which is *the* real and dreadful threat to man, is not a power that man can somehow be aware of naturally and about which man as man is anxious. The real nihil is not something man can know in virtue of a concept of potential infinity and the fact of death. The nihil is known only in revelation! The nihil is not known by any analysis of the structure of being, not by an awareness of finiteness, but only in God's action upon it in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we perceive that the nihil is radically opposed not only to the being of man but also to the being of God. Moreover, we see in Jesus Christ that the nihil exists as that which has been negated

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and overcome by God. It is not a second God. It exists solely from the fact that it is what God does not will, does not affirm, and therefore does not create.



Now it needs to be affirmed that man's finite existence is actually a blessing. For man's being is not limited or bounded by nonbeing. True, he comes from nonexistence; but not *out of* nonexistence. He comes from God. God is the boundary of man's life. God is the whence and the whither of man's life. God, the Creator and Redeemer, posits man's life as finite; it is not nonbeing or evil that does this. And God's revelation is the possibility of man's knowledge of himself as a finite creature, not an awareness of nonbeing. Moreover, God's revelation is the source of the knowledge that man's finitude is God's good, gracious will for his creature. Death itself is not an evil. What constitutes death an evil to be dreaded is our sin and guilt and God's just anger which we encounter in death. "The sting of death is sin" ( I Cor. 15:5, 6). But if God mercifully forgives us for Christ's sake and even becomes our life in death, then death - - as the end of our life -- need not be feared. Therefore "anxiety is not the natural anxiety of man as man," as Tillich states. Anxiety is unnatural, inhuman, demonic. Anxiety is ingratitude.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Being-Itself and Nonbeing: God

The purpose of Tillich's analysis of being and nonbeing, together with anxiety, has been to see the question about God implied in human finitude. We have seen that man is a being threatened by nonbeing. His life is lived over against nonbeing. But is this all? Is Sartre right? No, man lives in relation to God who is the answer implied in the finitude of being threatened by nonbeing. However, before we consider this correlation between man and God, let us hear Tillich's definition of God. "The being of God," we are told, "is being-itself" or the "ground of being." Instead of saying that God is first of all being-itself, it is also possible to say that he is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being. "As being-itself, God is beyond the contrast of essential and existential being."<sup>16</sup> This proposition leads Tillich to make the now famous statement that

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"it is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it." For, as the power of being, God transcends all essential and existential being involved in finitude. In other words, Tillich cannot conceive of a divine being which possesses essence and existence and which is yet distinct from creaturely finite being. Another reason why he clings to the concept of God as being-itself is because of the difficulties associated with the meaning of "life." "Life," he informs us, "is the actuality of being, or, more exactly, it is the process in which potential being becomes actual being. But in God as God there is no distinction between potentiality and actuality. Therefore, we cannot speak of God as living in the proper or nonsymbolic sense of the word 'life.' We must speak of God as living in symbolic terms. Yet every true symbol participates in the reality which it symbolizes. God lives in so far as he is the ground of life."<sup>17</sup> Similarly, for Tillich, God is not a person in himself, but in the sense that he is the ground of everything personal and is the ontological power of the personal. It should be carefully noted that Tillich does not deny that God exists and lives, and is personal. He simply states that God cannot be said to be this in himself. He lives and is personal in his relation to the creation of which he is the ground. In himself God appears to be, in Tillich's thought, naked, lifeless, impersonal being-itself.

Tillich admits that he is "not disinclined to accept the processcharacter of being itself. . . . But before this can be said, being *qua* being must have been posited."<sup>18</sup> For one can only speak of a process in God, of potentiality and actuality (life) in God, symbolically and analogically. Process, potentiality, and actuality are not really or intrinsically in God. Similarly past and

future are not really in God, though these have their roots in God. God is not a being, a person in himself, but becomes such in the I-Thou relationship of man and God. The striking contrast here between Tillich's and Barth's doctrines concerning the being of God will be evident in a succeeding chapter. However, one needs to realize that Tillich is motivated by profoundly spiritual concerns. He is opposed to all idolatry, to equating God with any object or with any anthropomorphic proposition about God. To say that God is a person, or that he exists, amounts to saying that God is a crea-

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ture. Tillich wishes to safeguard God against all such blasphemy. Hence, only symbolically and metaphorically will he speak of God in human terms.

We have seen that God can be said to be the living God only as the ground of all life, the power of being, and not in himself. However, one wonders whether Tillich is not able to speak of God as the living God on another basis, namely, because in God, in being-itself, there is a correlation of being and nonbeing, even as we saw in the creature. He declares: "Nonbeing belongs to being; it cannot be separated from it."<sup>19</sup> He argues that being without nonbeing would be an immovable self-identity. That is to say, it would make God into what we concluded above -- a naked, lifeless, impersonal being-itself. "Nothing would be manifest, nothing expressed, nothing revealed. But nonbeing drives being out of its seclusion, it forces it to affirm itself dynamically."<sup>20</sup> That is to say, it is the presence of nonbeing in being which enables being-itself to actualize itself, to be life and process, or, as Hegel would say, to become. Moreover, Tillich seems to say that the fact that being "includes" nonbeing is the basis for the Trinitarian symbolization of the inner life of God. "Nonbeing (that in God which makes his self-affirmation dynamic) opens up the divine self-seclusion and reveals him as power and love. Nonbeing makes God a living God. Without the 'No' he has to overcome in himself and in his creature, the divine 'Yes' to himself would be lifeless. There would be no revelation of the ground of being, there would be no life."<sup>21</sup>

The above sentences have been taken from the book *The Courage to Be*. However, over against this correlation of being-itself (God) and nonbeing, indeed, the inclusion of nonbeing in being-itself, we have the clear statement: "Being-itself is beyond finitude and infinity. . . . There is no proportion or gradation between the finite and the infinite. There is an absolute break, an infinite 'jump.' On the other hand, everything finite participates in being-itself and in its infinity. Otherwise it would not have the power of being. It would be swallowed by nonbeing, or it never would have emerged out of nonbeing."<sup>22</sup> At first glance these statements appear to contradict the thesis that nonbeing and

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anxiety are in God. But let it be observed (1) that beings emerge out of nonbeing, and therefore, like being-itself, nonbeing is prior to beings; (2) that although being-itself is said to be beyond finitude and infinity (that is, creaturely finitude and infinity), being-itself is said to be infinite. But surely on Tillich's own premise it is meaningless to assert that being-itself is infinite except in polarity to finiteness. Thus the togetherness of being and nothing is Tillich's definition of God! At the same time it is to be remembered that Tillich intends this to be a metaphorical or symbolic statement about God. Being-itself is nonsymbolic. Yet because of the antecedent character of nonbeing out of which beings emerge, the point is exceedingly obscure. It seems to indicate how unsatisfactory is the definition of God as being-itself.

Several remarks are in order at this point. First, once again, the reader will be struck with the unanimity between Heidegger and Tillich. Both see the nothing or nonbeing as integral to being. Nothing is the veil of being, and through nothing being is vouchsafed to us. Secondly, a doctrine of the being of God which is derived from God's act in his revelation and which is therefore trinitarian does not need to presuppose the inclusion of nonbeing in God. This point will be explained more fully in a subsequent chapter. Thirdly, unless nonbeing is a relatively harmless thing, it would seem to be monstrous to say that it is in God, and in fact makes God to be a living, loving God. Tillich, however, does not shrink from grounding the divine blessedness upon the presence of nonbeing in God. "If we say that nonbeing belongs to being-itself, we say that finitude and anxiety belong to being-itself. Wherever philosophers or theologians have spoken of the divine blessedness they have implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) spoken of the anxiety of finitude which is eternally taken into the blessedness of the divine infinity. The infinite embraces itself and the finite, the 'Yes' includes itself and the 'No' which it takes into itself, blessedness comprises itself and the anxiety of which it is the conquest. All this is implied if one says that being includes nonbeing and that through nonbeing it reveals itself."<sup>23</sup>

One must admit that in Tillich's doctrine of God a strenuous effort has been made to do justice to the problem of the relation

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of God and evil. But since he has been informed by an analysis of the structure of being, by the dialectic of plus and minus, positive and negative, rather than by God's act in Jesus Christ, he has not seen that the relation between God and evil is not that of inclusion but of exclusion. The being of God radically excludes the nihil. Hence, the nothing, nonbeing, the nihil, or the evil one -call it what you like -- can in no sense serve to reveal what is in God. Earlier we noted that Tillich had observed that the existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre has "encountered nothingness" so radically that it has replaced being-itself by nonbeing and has no way of conquering the threat of nonbeing. Yet one wonders whether Tillich himself has "encountered nothingness" so radically that without it being-itself is helpless to be a living, personal, loving, and revealing God. Is not Tillich's nonbeing too dependent on being, and vice versa, for it to be anything but a caricature of *the* power that truly threatens man? What actually is the difference between Tillich's doctrine and that of the later Heidegger concerning being-itself?

### **3. Being-Itself and Being**

Having considered the dialectical character of finite being and the dialectical character of being-itself, let us now examine Tillich's correlation of being and being-itself. This correlation is ontological and epistemological. Being-itself is the ground and power of being, and everything participates in being-itself. The basis of knowledge of God is the relationship that obtains between being-itself and created being. Since God is the ground and power of being, the structure of being can speak symbolically of God. A segment of finite reality can become the basis for an assertion about that which is infinite "because everything participates in being-itself. The *analogia entis*. . . gives us our only justification of speaking at all about God."<sup>24</sup>

Let us not think, however, that in Tillich the *analogia entis* is the property of a questionable natural theology which attempts to gain knowledge of God by drawing conclusions about the infinite from the finite." He insists that, "the *analogia entis* is in no

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way able to create a natural theology. It is not a method of discovering truth about God; it is the form in which every knowledge of revelation must be expressed."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Tillich stresses that "a religious symbol is true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation. . . . One cannot arbitrarily 'make' a religious symbol out of a segment of secular reality. . . . It [must] be elevated into the realm of the holy." As charitably as possible we assume these statements to mean that according to Tillich, symbols point to God in the event of revelation. This appears to be Tillich's meaning when he assures us that "the ontological structure of being supplies the material for the symbols which point to the divine life. However, this does not mean that a doctrine of God can be derived from an ontological system. The character of the divine life is made manifest in revelation."<sup>26</sup>

What, according to Tillich, is revelation? "Revelation, as the revelation of the mystery which is our ultimate concern (that is, being-itself), is invariably revelation for someone in a concrete situation of concern. . . . Revelation always is a subjective and an objective event in strict interdependence. Someone is grasped by the manifestation of the mystery: this is the subjective side of the event. Something occurs through which the mystery of revelation grasps someone: this is the objective side." The mystery appears objectively in terms of "miracle," that is, a "sign-event." Wherefore, we may conclude that for Tillich a miracle is the event in which something becomes "transparent," symbolic, of the mystery of being-itself. The mystery appears subjectively in terms of "ecstasy," that is, a state of mind in which reason is beyond itself, beyond its subject-object structure. However, neither miracle nor ecstasy destroys the structure of reason, and so is not irrational or antirational. Ecstasy, Tillich explains, unites the experience of the abyss (of nonbeing) to which reason in all its functions is driven with the experience of the ground in which reason is grasped by the mystery of its own depth and of the depth of being generally. In *The Courage to Be*, Tillich defines the subjective side of revelation as "absolute faith." Faith is the state of being grasped by the power of being-itself. It is the ex-

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perience of the power to affirm one's being in the face of the threat of nonbeing.

Now in the above statement about the objective and subjective event of revelation no mention of Jesus Christ has been made. The truth is that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is not essential to Tillich's system. Tillich can come to a knowledge of being-itself and of finite being in much the same way that Heidegger and Jaspers came to it. (It is significant that Tillich's polemics against the existentialists invariably apply to Sartre!) Tillich does not need Christ and his revelation in his system -- as his book *The Courage to Be* demonstrates. Biblical exegesis and theology are not indispensable. It is incontrovertibly clear that Tillich can and does arrive at his view of God independently of the Christian revelation attested in Scripture, just as the secular existentialists have arrived at the concept of being-itself outside of the Church and Scripture. Churchmen should be thoroughly aware of what is at stake here. It means that theology cannot claim any independent existence for itself, that is, of having its own unique source and norm. It means that Church proclamation need not be based upon the

Bible. It is true that the Bible could still be employed, but only as symbolic testimonies to truth -which man can know apart from the Bible by other symbols, even as Jaspers teaches. In that situation the Bible will be bound to recede in importance. The Church, as "built upon . . . the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone" ( Eph. 2:20), would become superfluous. The Church would be reduced to a religious society cultivating the manifold symbols of being-itself. Churchmen, therefore, should not be deceived by a book entitled *Systematic Theology*, when it is actually a systematic philosophy -- by a book which is not a witness to Jesus Christ, but to "being-itself," to which he is subordinate and of which he is only a symbol.

Nevertheless, Tillich does devote considerable attention to Christianity's claim "to be based on the revelation in Jesus as the Christ as the final revelation. There can be no revelation in the history of the Church whose point of reference is not Jesus

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as the Christ. . . . But final revelation means more than the last genuine revelation. It means the decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable revelation, that which is the criterion of all the others."<sup>27</sup> As we shall see presently, Tillich does not mean that Jesus as the Christ is the *only* revelation, and that there are not revelations of being-itself apart from him and apart from the witness of the Old and New Testaments to him. He means simply that no revelation can surpass him, and therefore he is the criterion of all others.

Why does Tillich accord Jesus as the Christ this highest rank? His answer is that "a revelation is final if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself. . . . He who is the bearer of the final revelation must surrender his finitude -- not only his life but also his finite power and knowledge and perfection. In doing so, he affirms that he is the bearer of final revelation (the 'Son of God' in classical terms). He becomes completely *transparent* to the mystery he reveals the medium of final revelation."<sup>28</sup> The reason why Jesus is able to surrender his finitude is given as follows: "Only he can possess -- and therefore surrender -- himself completely who is united with the ground of his being and meaning without separation and disruption."<sup>29</sup> For Jesus Christ is essential being, whereas other men are existential beings in which there is separation and estrangement from being-itself.

The concept of transparency, which is determinative for the above statement of the position of Jesus as the Christ in revelation, is the key concept in Tillich's view of revelation. The revelation, or mystery, its content, is that of which Jesus as the Christ is "transparent" or of which he can be the "medium." But Jesus is not the only one who is "transparent." Tillich holds that "revelation can occur through every personality which is transparent for the ground of being."<sup>30</sup> Jesus is not the only "medium" of revelation. While historical events, groups, or individuals as such, are not mediums of revelation, they can become so when they point beyond themselves. "If groups of persons become *transparent* for the ground of being and meaning, revelation occurs."<sup>31</sup> Hence the men of the Bible, as well as "the priests and seers and mystics in paganism," have been such media. Indeed "there is no

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reality, thing, or event, which cannot become bearers of the mystery of being" because "every being and every thing participates in being-itself."<sup>32</sup>

Tillich also applies the idea of transparency to human language. Revelation cannot be understood without the word as a medium of revelation. The knowledge of God cannot be described except through a semantic analysis of the symbolic word. The symbols 'Word of God' and 'Logos' cannot be understood . . . without an insight into the general nature of the word. . . . Language is a medium of revelation . . . has the 'sound' and 'voice' of the divine mystery in and through the sound and voice of human expression and denotation. Language with this power is the 'Word of God.' . . . The Word of God as the word of revelation is transparent language." However, the Word or Logos of God must not be identified with revelation and every divine self-manifestation subsumed under it. For then "the specific sense of the term 'word' is lost" and "God is prevented from any nonvocal selfmanifestation, and this contradicts not only the meaning of God's power but also the religious symbolism inside and outside the Biblical literature, which uses seeing, feeling, and tasting as often as hearing in describing the experience of the divine presence."<sup>33</sup> For these reasons, Tillich rejects Barth's attempt "to reduce the whole of theology to an enlarged doctrine of the Word of God." In reply, it might be asked whether one has not lapsed into a Docetic Christology when one does not affirm that the Word, which was with God and was God, is identical with revelation; that the Word is Jesus and Jesus is the Word; and that according to I John 1:1 it was the Word which was seen and handled, because the Word, without losing its vocal character, is also a person and an event. The Word became flesh.

Having seen that, for Tillich, Jesus is by no means the only or indispensable medium of revelation, since there is no reality which cannot become a bearer of the mystery of being in virtue of its participation in being-itself, let us take a last look at his conception of Jesus as the final revelation. It will be recalled that Tillich states that the one nonsymbolic statement we can make about God is that he is being-itself. He is perfectly consistent

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when he speaks of "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" as symbols. "Father" is a symbol for God as the creative ground of being. God as Father is the origin upon which man is continuously dependent because he is eternally rooted in the divine ground. . . . 'Father' is a symbol for God in so far as he preserves man by his sustaining creativity. . . . 'Father' is a symbol for God in so far as he justifies man through grace and accepts him although he is unacceptable."<sup>34</sup> Tillich insists in the last paragraph of his book, "that the possibility of using the symbols 'Lord' and 'Father' . . . is provided for us by the manifestation of the Lord and Father as Son and Brother under the conditions of existence." This plainly implies a denial of the Church's doctrine of the ontological or immanent Trinity. God is not Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in himself, and antecedent to his revelation of himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is only this in his manifestation under the conditions of existence. In himself, he is being-itself. Thus Tillich's position is essentially that of modalism. When he characterizes Jesus as merely a "medium," a "symbol" of revelation, and not God incarnate, not identical with the being of God, he seems to deny that Jesus is truly God. Jesus is divine only in his capacity to be "transparent" for the divine. When he treats the persons of the Trinity as symbols behind which stand the nonsymbolic being-itself, Tillich appears to have resurrected the Sabellian doctrine of the one being which assumed three aspects in the course of redemption.

In his contribution to the Tillich symposium, A. T. Mollegen argues that Tillich's theology is "Biblical, Christocentric, and critical . . . radically Christocentric." One wishes one could believe it were so. It is significant that in order to make his case Mollegen has to go outside Tillich's *Systematic Theology* to two articles, "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the

Incarnation," published in the *Church Quarterly Review*, January-March, 1949, and an unpublished manuscript, *"The Bible and Systematic Theology"*. Much is made of the fact that Tillich's Christology and doctrine of the Trinity will be presented in the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*. However, even Dr. Mollegen has a scruple concerning the core of Tillich's Christology. Tillich

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makes a distinction between the Word of God manifest in himself, and the Word manifest in creation, in the history of revelation, in the final revelation, etc. That is, he distinguishes between the Word in God and the Word embodied in existence. The question Mollegen raises is: What is the relation between the Word of God manifest in himself and the Word of God which is equated with essential God-manhood? Or: What is the relation between the divine Logos and the human logos? Mollegen cannot see how Tillich can avoid Nestorianism, that is, a denial of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ. The doctrine of *anhypostasis* declares that the human nature of Christ does not have its existence in and for itself, but in virtue of the event of God's Word assuming flesh. The human nature of Christ has *enhypostasis*, that is, it acquires existence, or better, subsistence, in the being of God in the event of the union of the Word and flesh.

We agree that the above is a legitimate question to put to Tillich. But our own query goes deeper, namely, how can one speak of a Word in God -- except potentially -- if the divine Logos is only actualized in creation and completely in Jesus Christ? How can there be a Logos in God if in God there cannot be potentiality and actuality, that is, life? And if there is no Word in God except as the ground of creation, how can there be an incarnation? How can there be revelation, a coming of God to Man? Or rather: How can revelation be anything else than a manifestation of an already existing relationship, or correlation between God and man and which, as we have seen, can be known elsewhere than in Jesus Christ? It would therefore seem that Tillich's "theology" challenges the Church to decide whether it must confess that Jesus Christ is just a symbol of God or God himself. It is asked whether Tillich's doctrine of revelation does justice to the Biblical meaning of revelation: Immanuel, God with us. Was Jesus a man in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily, or was he just a vehicle pointing beyond himself? If Tillich's theology is taken seriously, the Christological and trinitarian debates of the first four centuries will be revived.

Tillich is fully aware of the problem he has raised. He specifically alludes to the fact that "in the history of the Christian

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doctrine of the Trinity there have been vacillations between trinitarian and binitarian emphasis . . . and between trinity and quaternity (the question about the relations of the Father to the *common divine substance* of the three *personae*). . . . The trinitarian problem is the problem of the unity between ultimacy and concreteness in *the living God*.<sup>35</sup> When we realize that, for Tillich, God is not the living God in himself but only as the ground of all created life, it is clear that he is not the Triune God in his being, but only in his manifestation under these modes or phases. And the "common divine substance" underlying his threefold (and manifold) manifestations is "being-itself."

But now, what is the *knowledge* of revelation according to Tillich? "Revelation is the manifestation of the mystery of being for the cognitive function of human reason. It mediates knowledge -- a knowledge, however, which can be received only in a revelatory situation, through ecstasy and miracle. . . . The knowledge of revelation can be received only in the situation of revelation. . . . The knowledge of revelation . . . is knowledge of God, and therefore it is analogous or symbolic. . . . This certainly refers to the classical doctrine of the *analogia entis* between the finite and the infinite."<sup>36</sup> The decisive thing in these statements is not, we believe, the assumption of the *analogia entis*, but what is meant by a "revelatory situation." For we too grant that without the use of analogy it is impossible to speak about God at all. The dilemma is that if our words mean exactly the same when applied to God and the creature, God has ceased to be God in order to be a creature or vice versa. On the other hand, if our words bear an altogether different meaning when applied to God, such a difference would mean that we did not know God. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are therefore agreed that there must be a relationship of analogy between our words and God. The all-important question is how such an analogy comes about. Whereas Catholicism teaches that there is an analogy of being between God and man since God is "the beginning and end of all things,"<sup>37</sup> an evangelical doctrine must assert that there is an analogy between our words and God, yes, even between man and God, in the event of grace in which God

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adopts man and his language. In revelation, that is, by grace, God creates, or rather re-creates, a similarity in man to himself. When God adopts human words for knowledge of himself, he gives to them the meaning they originally and intrinsically have in him. In the light of God's revelation it is seen that we use words improperly and figuratively, when we apply them to creatures. The words "father" and "son," for example, do not possess their original truth in their application to the two male members of physical generation but in their application to God in the Trinity. When we refer these words to God, we do not deprive them of their real meaning, nor do we speak "as if" God were Father and Son. God is really Father and Son in himself, and these words, therefore, possess their intrinsic meaning when applied to God and not to the creature. Of course, we do not have the capacity to give our words the original and intrinsic character they possess in God. In his revelation, God elevates our words to their original meaning. He gives himself as their real object.<sup>38</sup> It is evident that Barth's interpretation of analogy given above is not that of Tillich. For Tillich it is just the other way round. Human language has its original meaning when applied to the creature and is only used symbolically when applied to God - "as if" God were Father and Son. For God is not Father and Son in himself; he is Father and Son only in relation to the creature. However, Tillich also admits that human words can only be analogies in a "revelatory situation." What is a revelatory situation?

"Man experiences his present situation," Tillich believes, "in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life. This experience is expressed in the arts and in literature, conceptualized in existential philosophy, actualized in political cleavages of all kinds, and analyzed in the psychology of the unconscious. . . . The question arising out of this experience is not, as in the Reformation, the question of a merciful God and the forgiveness of sins . . . it is the question of the reality . . . of 'new being.'"<sup>39</sup> It will therefore be seen that for Tillich the revelatory situation today is the question implied in man's current awareness of finitude arising out of the "ulti-

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mate situations" ( Jaspers) in which he finds himself. Furthermore, it is clear that the answer of "new being" which is said to be given in Christ is already determined by the question. Is it, then, too much to say that the answers given in Tillich's theology are not simply implied but also derived from his analysis of finite being and the present situation? There is no doubt that Tillich is right in diagnosing the mood of modern man. But all that we said in previous chapters in refutation of the Kierkegaardian doctrine (as understood by Emil Brunner) that man knows the judgment and wrath of God in the ambiguity, contradiction, uncertainty of his existence, and the consequent despair, anxiety, or dread, and all that we said in refutation of Jaspers' teaching that we come to know the transcendent in ultimate situations, applies equally to Tillich. For man is not able to ask the right questions, nor does the "situation" yield those questions. That is the work of the Holy Spirit -- and it is significant that the Holy Spirit has virtually no place in Tillich's system. Man is unable to ask the right question, the question about which the Reformers and the men of the Bible asked, until he has first heard the answer they proclaimed, namely, the forgiveness of sins.<sup>40</sup> The question about righteousness which was the "ultimate concern" of Martin Luther did *not* arise out of the historical situation of the sixteenth century, but out of his confrontation with the grace of God that appeared in Jesus Christ as testified to in Holy Scripture. Jesus Christ is not the answer to man's self-discovered, and selfformulated questions. He reveals himself as *God's* question and answer to man. He exposes man's need and meets it. And, according to the Apostles' Creed, that need now and in every age is "the forgiveness of sins." Moreover, as we strove to show in our evaluation of Jaspers, man can be completely oblivious to the question about a transcendent, *merciful* God in ultimate situations. It is possibly true that man's consciousness of finitude may offer an explanation for the religions of the world or, in common parlance, of the fact that "there are no atheists in the fox-holes." But these gods are but the projections of men's fear and *anxiety*, or of their ultimate concern. They have nothing to do with the living God revealed in Jesus Christ. And Tillich's naked being-

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itself, revealed through innumerable symbols, of which Jesus as the Christ is said to be final, is obviously just another of the idols which men can construct of themselves. There is nothing essential in Tillich's alleged theology that has not been said by the existentialists we have studied. They too know about being-itself. And Jaspers in particular can readily avail himself of symbols of the comprehensive, the nonobject, the transcendent, or God.

In the light of the foregoing it is not surprising that Tillich sees no fundamental difference between theology and philosophy. Indeed, they are united in asking the question of being. While claiming that "neither is a conflict between theology and philosophy necessary, nor is a synthesis between them possible," Tillich asserts that their underlying unity rests upon the following assumption: "The Christian claim that the logos who has become concrete in Jesus as the Christ is at the same time the universal logos includes the claim that wherever the logos is at work it agrees with the Christian message. No philosophy which is obedient to the universal logos can contradict the concrete logos, the Logos who 'became flesh.' . . . The same Logos who taught the philosophers and legislators is the source of final revelation and teaches the Christian theologians."<sup>41</sup> Philosophy and theology diverge in that the philosopher "tries to maintain a detached objectivity toward being and its structures," whereas the attitude of the theologian is "existential" and one of commitment. They diverge also in that the philosopher assumes that "there is an identity between objective and subjective reason, between the logos of reality as a whole and the logos working in him," whereas the source of the theologian's knowledge is the universal logos which has become concrete, which became flesh, and is

received in believing commitment rather than through rational detachment. Finally, philosophy and theology diverge in that the former deals with being cosmologically, the latter soteriologically.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, theology and philosophy converge, according to Tillich, in that the philosopher is "a theologian in the degree to which his existential situation and ultimate concern shape his philosophical vision." It is evident that because of the identity, or at least analogy, between the universal logos and the concrete

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logos, philosophy can arrive at truth independently of faith in Jesus Christ, the concrete logos. There is therefore in Tillich's thought no absolute need for Christ, no absolute need for theology. But theology must insist, we believe, that, although the Logos or Wisdom of God is the meaning and preserving power of the cosmos, it is known only in the concrete revelation of God and received in the fear of God. It has nothing to do with a Stoic rational principle immanent to the world. According to Prov. 1:20 f. and 8:1 f. wisdom does not appear in the character of a logical-ethical principle, but as a person. Nor is it symbolically a person in relation to the cosmos (Tillich). It is an *eternal* person before the creation of heaven and earth (Prov. 8:22-31). Moreover, Job 28:20 ff. makes it perfectly clear that precisely *this* Wisdom, *this* Logos, is not accessible to man save in the action of the holy and righteous God upon Israel in his revelation. "Whence then comes wisdom? And where is the place of understanding? It is hid from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air. Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.' God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth, and sees everything under the heavens. . . . And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.'" In the New Testament the Logos or Wisdom of God bears the name of Jesus of Nazareth, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" and whom God made our wisdom" (Col. 2:3; 1 Cor. 1:30). He is the Logos by whom "all things were made . . . , and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3).

Tillich's contention that philosophy and theology have the same object is untenable because his identifying of a universal logos accessible to reason with Jesus Christ is irreconcilable with a sound exegesis of Scripture. Theology, therefore, retains its unique function within the Church which is called to bear witness to the being of God revealed in Jesus Christ as attested by the prophets and apostles, and not to the being-itself of ontological speculation.

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## V

### BEING AS EXISTENCE AND ESSENCE

Etienne Gilson, 1884-

THOMAS AQUINAS has often been regarded as an "essentialist" whose metaphysics has been discredited by idealism, necessitating the new approach to the problem of being we have witnessed in Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, and Tillich. Now we are told by Neo-Thomists like Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain that the opponents of Aquinas have missed their mark: the attacks upon essentialism do not apply to him. Indeed, if Aquinas had been properly understood, especially by his admirers, the history of modern philosophy would probably have taken a different course. Gilson is opposed to that tradition among Thomistic

commentators according to which merely essences are said to be the objects of the human mind. For him the *being* of the thing, and not merely its essence, lies within the realm of knowledge per se.

Gilson thus contends that Thomistic metaphysics is existential in its own right and that it is not "existentialism, at least as the word is now understood, unless one prefers to say that it is existentialism as it should be understood."<sup>1</sup>E. L. Mascall in the Anglican communion, who freely acknowledges his indebtedness to Gilson, describes the existentialism of Aquinas as "the funda-

Etienne Gilson was born June 13, 1884, in Paris. He was educated at *Petit Séminaire de Notre Dame des Champs*, and attended the Sorbonne. Gilson has taught at the universities of Lille and Strasbourg and, from 1921 to 1932, at the University of Paris. Since 1929 he has been the founder and director of the Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada.

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mental principle" of his metaphysics which completely revolutionized Aristotelianism.<sup>2</sup> Jacques Maritain refers to his book *Existence and the Existents*<sup>3</sup> as "an essay on the existentialism of St. Thomas Aquinas" which is utterly different from that of the "existentialist" philosophies propounded nowadays. He insists that he is not trying to "rejuvenate" St. Thomas or deck him out in a costume fashionable to our day. He is giving authentic Thomism, that is to say, a Thomism which, unlike the Platonic, Cartesian, and Wolffian systems, accords a primacy to existence and to the intuition of existential being.

One of the differences between contemporary existentialism and the alleged existentialism of Aquinas consists in the difference between their definitions of existence. Another difference lies in the contrast between a subjective and an objective view of existence. We may say that whereas the Thomists are concerned with the objective existence of all kinds of existents, contemporary existentialists are concerned with human existence. However, the difference between these two groups of existentialism will become clear after we have sketched the Neo-Thomistic ontology.

It is a striking fact that both Gilson and Maritain can say, as Sartre does, that "existence precedes essence." But any further resemblance is purely coincidental. Whereas Sartre means that his personal existence, his consciousness, the *pour-soi*, precedes all essence and gives to all things their essence, the Thomists mean that existence, as the primary and constituent element in being, precedes the essence of any existent. Essence or form makes any being to be this or that being, but existence makes it to be. Thus "to be" or to exist is the supreme act of all that is. The form of a horse, for example, makes it "to be a horse"; it does not make it to be. It is in this sense that these men can speak of existence preceding essence and of being first in the constituent elements of being. To be, according to Aquinas, is the actuality of all acts, of all things, even of forms.

With the insight that existence precedes even the forms of existing things, Gilson believes that Aquinas revolutionized Aristotelianism. He grants that if we ask Aquinas, What is being? we receive first an Aristotelian answer, namely, that being is sub-

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stance. But although it is true that being is substance, being entails more than mere substantiality.

"In the world of Aristotle the existences of substances is no problem. To be and to be a substance are one and the same. . . . Aristotelian substances exist in their own right. Not so in the Christian world of Thomas Aquinas in which substances do not exist in their own right. . . . Aristotelian being is one with its own necessity. . . . The created world of Thomistic substances is radically contingent in its very existence because it might never have existed. . . . Whereas the substances of Aristotle exists *qua* substance, existence never is of the essence of any substance in the created world of Thomas Aquinas."<sup>4</sup>

Gilson points out, however, that in Thomas creatures are conceived as being at the same time indestructible in themselves. Yet this, he admits is one of the most difficult points to grasp in the whole metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas. They are "substantially eternal and existentially contingent." God is free, it is true, to create or annihilate substances. But there is no reason why substances in themselves should perish. No special act is required on the part of God to keep them in existence. In immaterial substances there is no potency to nonbeing. (In composite beings there is, of course, the possibility of decomposition or corruptibility, but the matter of a man's body and the pure spiritual substance of his soul cannot pass away.) "There is, for all creatures, a possibility not to be or, as Thomas himself says it, a potency to nonbeing (*potentia ad non esse*), but that possibility is not in them."<sup>5</sup> Gilson explains that "'To be' belongs by itself to the forms of creatures, supposing, however, the influx of God. Hence, potency to nonbeing (that is, the possibility not to exist), in spiritual creatures as well as in heavenly bodies, lies more in God, who can subtract his influx, than it is in the form or in the matter of such creatures."<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Aquinas reformed Aristotelian metaphysics, Gilson declares, first by a clarification of efficient causality, and secondly, by a clear-cut distinction between the orders of formal and efficient causality. The formal cause makes things to be what they are, the efficient makes them "to be." The two above orders cannot be deduced from each other. We cannot know what a thing

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is from the fact that it exists, and, conversely, we cannot know that a thing exists from what it is. On the other hand, efficient causality can give existential being to substance, just as formal causality can impart substantial being to actual existence, that is, to an existent. "Existence is a consequence which follows from the form of essence but not as an effect follows from an efficient cause." This seeming paradox, like the one noted above of things being "substantially eternal and existentially contingent," is due to the fact that the form of an existing substance is the cause of its existence, but substance itself needs to be given existence by an efficient causality.

Aristotelianism had been a dynamism of form, but Aquinas, we are told, deepened it into a dynamism of *esse*. Corporeal beings are "no longer the automatic self-realizations of forms merely hampered by the indocility of matter."<sup>7</sup> Form becomes an end to be achieved by its own *esse*. For Aristotle the "whatness" of a thing is its very being. But Aristotle knows of no act superior to the form. He knows, of course, that things exist, but their existence could be taken for granted.

Gilson's insistence upon the substantial eternity of things and their existential contingency, and upon the fact that creatures in themselves do not have any potency for nonbeing, stands in considerable contrast to the Heideggerian and Tillichian doctrine that *Dasein* or finite being participates in nonbeing and in considerable proximity to Barth's doctrine of the goodness of the created world and its created freedom to exist. The nothing does not enter into the Neo-Thomist definition of existence. The Thomists are not perturbed by the question of how *I* can exist in the face of the threat of nonbeing. While they do not exactly take existence for granted as Aristotle did, yet for them existence is given and once given imparts substantial eternity to creatures. For this reason the whole existential pathos which we find expressed in various ways in Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, and Tillich is missing in the Neo-Thomists. Their approach to existence is impersonal and objective.

Gilson, however, warns us against thinking that "to be" (*esse*) is a thing. "To be" is what makes an essence to be a being or a

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thing. Opponents of Aquinas have argued that unless the essence of a substance had already received actual existence, it could not be distinct from its own existence since otherwise the essence would be nothing. Nevertheless essence is really other than its own existence in virtue of its very act of existing. Essence and existence are distinct, but not as "things," for it is just the composition of essence and existence that makes a thing to be a being. Consequently,

"if there is a distinction between essence and existence in each and every thing, then any being is distinct from God in virtue of the composition which makes it to be 'a being.' In purely spiritual substances, such as angels, for instance, there is at least one composition, namely, that of its essence with its act of existing. In corporeal substances, such, for instance, as men, there are compositions: that of form with matter, which makes up substance, and that of the thusconstituted substance with its own act of existing. Thus, in a purely spiritual substance, in which substance is pure form, the composition of form with existence is enough to make up an actual being."<sup>8</sup>

Essence or form makes any being to be this or that being, but existence makes it to be.

Opponents of Aquinas have persistently asked, How can essence enter into composition with existence, if, apart from existence, essence is nothing? Gilson grants that so formulated the objection is irrefutable. But Aquinas takes his stand on entirely different ground from that of his adversaries. "He is not composing an essence which is not with an existence which is not a thing . . . because he does not consider existence as an essence."<sup>2</sup> The essentialism of his opponents makes it impossible for them to think of anything otherwise than as of an essence. "Hence their faultless argumentation: all that which is real is essence; existence is not an essence; hence existence is nothing." But this argumentation rests, Gilson contends, upon the assumption that "there can be no real distinction where there is no conceptual representation." But, Gilson argues, existence can be more than an empty logical concept or a relation in the thing, if it is an act of the form which is not itself a form or an essence. Hence it "can be neither perceived nor even conceived apart through any kind of con-

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ceptual representation. . . . As a concept, 'to be' is indeed a pseudo concept, but 'to be' might well escape representation in virtue of its own very transcendence."<sup>10</sup>

But now if existence is not an essence and cannot be conceived, and yet is not nothing, how does one become aware of existence at all? Gilson replies that existence lies beyond abstract representation because it lies beyond essence, but it does not lie beyond the scope of intellectual knowledge; for judgment itself is the most perfect form of intellectual knowledge, and existence is its proper object. This, in brief, is Gilson's epistemology. He distinguishes between judgment and abstract conceptualization. He claims that the concept which expresses an essence is not a complete expression of the thing in question because "there is, in the object of every concept, something that escapes and transcends its essence. . . . What it contains over and above its formal definition is its act of existing [which] . . . can be reached only by means of judgment."<sup>11</sup> Gilson declares that judgments always affirm that certain essences are in a state of union with existence or of separation from it. The judgment of existence answers to the existential act of the known thing. Wherefore abstract knowledge bears upon essence, but judgment bears upon existence. Both operations are equally required for knowledge. Abstraction and judgment, he states, are never separated in the mind, because essence and existence are never separated in reality. One can abstract essence mentally, but actually *essentia* always belongs to an *esse*. Aquinas expressed this truth as follows:

"Since a thing includes both its quiddity and its existence (*esse*: to be) truth is more grounded on the existence (*esse*) of the thing than on its quiddity itself. For, indeed, the noun *ens* (being) is derived from *esse* (to be) so that the adequation in which truth consists is achieved by a kind of assimilation of the intellect to the existence (*esse*) of the thing, through the very operation whereby it accepts it such as it is."<sup>12</sup>

The existentialism of the Thomist school may be summed up quite simply. It is intent upon establishing the objective being of things. Their being consists in the composition of existence and essence in which existence is the primary element. The objec-

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tive being of any thing is known by the twofold faculty of the intellect to form judgments and conceptualizations.

On the basis of this existence-essence ontology, Gilson offers a critique of essentialism and contemporary existentialism. His thesis is that "just as essentialism is a philosophy of being minus existence, existentialism is a philosophy of existence minus being." Gilson regards the essentialism which grew out of Aristotle, was fathered by Avicenna, and was carried on by Duns Scotus, Suarez, Christian Wolff, Kant, and Hegel as the main disease of European philosophy. He gives a penetrating analysis of the thought of these men. We shall be content to note his criticism of Hegel as the last in this line of essentialists. For it is relevant to some of the existentialists we have had under consideration.

Gilson observes that Hegel saw no objection to assuming that because something is being thought it is being known in itself. Hegel managed to get around the Kantian objection by positing the unity of being and thought. Gilson does not appear to condemn Hegel on this score. Gilson himself sees no discontinuity between thought and being. He has established that being can be apprehended through the twofold faculty of judgment and conceptualization. Indeed, Gilson is harshest in his criticism of those philosophers like Plato, the Neo-Platonists,

John the Scot, and Kant, who posit an ultimate principle -- be it the one or the good or the noumenon -- beyond intelligible being. We, on the other hand, are inclined to say that the deepest thing in these philosophers is just their recognition that there is something beyond being. But Gilson argues that if God is first, and if he is being -as Ex. 3:14 teaches, "I Am He Who Is" -- then being is first, and no Christian philosophy can posit anything above being. To which we would reply that it is true that God is a being. God is, God lives. But may we identify his being with created being, with that which Plato had said is the common property of all that is, and which can be known by intellectual judgment and conceptualization? Are God and the creature to be subsumed under "all that is" and therefore under being? Gilson seems to think that if one denies being to God He becomes nonbeing. Yet surely one can say - on the basis of the Christian revelation -- that God is,

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without seeing a continuity between his being and the created being we are capable of knowing. Kierkegaard's attack upon Hegel's identity of thought and being has been lost upon Gilson. Moreover, in citing Ex. 3:14, Gilson overlooks the fact that the God who here announces himself as "He Who Is," as being, is an "I," a person who speaks and acts. He is not an impersonal, abstract principle. His being is his being a person. Moreover, he is a person and a being who is known only in his speaking, in his act of revealing himself.

Gilson's own criticism of Hegel's philosophy is that in it we have a revival of essentialism. Gilson comes to this conclusion because Hegel declared that being is the most abstract of concepts and deprecated the existence of God as of slight importance. For Hegel, God is essence, the most concrete and fullest of all essences, because he is the unity of an infinite number of determinations. The way in which Hegel arrived at his definition of God as essence -- and essence which is the ground of existence -was highly dialectical. He argued that since being is totally abstract and void of content and cannot be perceived or represented, it is absolute nothingness. But to say that being is nonbeing is to unite these two terms in a third, namely, becoming. And becoming qua becoming is a "given," a *Dasein*. But where there is a "given," there is a quality. The possibility arises of *what* it is. Furthermore, just as we cannot think of being without nonbeing, so we cannot think of essence without thinking of appearance. For essence is the very appearance of reality to its own self. Concrete essence is in Hegel, Gilson states, the unity of being qua being with its own appearance to itself.<sup>13</sup>

From Gilson's analysis of Hegel's philosophy we may legitimately infer that his criticism of the later Heidegger and of Tillich would take the same line. With their ambivalent conception of being and nonbeing, and especially Tillich's refusal to ascribe existence to God in himself, Gilson would say that in these existentialists we have really a revival of essentialism. Since they do not accord a primacy to existence, they are not genuine existentialists at all. Heidegger, of course, would admit this; but whether he would concede that he is an essentialist is doubtful. If, on

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the other hand, Gilson were criticizing the early Heidegger and Sartre, he would charge them with having a philosophy of existence minus essence, or at least minus any essence except one we give to it. Therefore he claims that it is not surprising that for contemporary existentialism to experience existence is to experience nausea, anguish, and the utter absurdity of everything.

Gilson believes that it was natural that the Kierkegaardian reaction to Hegel would set in. It had happened before in Bernard of Clairvaux against Abelard, Pascal against Descartes. For Kierkegaard it was more important *to be* a Christian than to know what Christianity is. And his chief objection to Hegel was that he had eliminated existence. "The very origin of contemporary existentialism is there," Gilson writes, "and one might wonder if pure existentialism did not cease to be immediately after the death of Kierkegaard."<sup>14</sup> Gilson thus sympathizes with Kierkegaard's reaction. But his criticism is that whereas "in the case of Wolff and Hegel we had ontologies without existence . . . in Kierkegaard's own speculation we seem to be left with an existence without ontology, that is to say, without any speculative metaphysics of being."<sup>15</sup> Kierkegaard was convinced, Gilson states, that there could be no objective philosophy of existence. The truth of subjective knowledge lies in its very subjectivity. It does not aim to know the object as such, nor objective knowledge about its object. It was a devastating criticism of Hegelian essences. "But there is a heavy bill to pay," Gilson avers. For how is Kierkegaard able to reach another existence than his own? Can we rightly ascribe existence outside the only being which we experience from within? Gilson thinks that Kierkegaard turns existence into a new essence, all of whose determinations are negative.

One regrets that it must be said that Gilson's criticism of Kierkegaard betrays an almost complete misunderstanding of him. In the first place Kierkegaard is able to make the same distinction that Gilson makes between essence and existence in any object. In short, there is everything of Gilson in Kierkegaard and a good deal more. As Wyschogrod points out, Kierkegaard has read in Spinoza that the more perfect a thing is the more it is. But

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Kierkegaard argues that the existence of a thing cannot be proved from its essence. Moreover he claims that Spinoza does not distinguish "between factual being and ideal being. . . . Factual existence is wholly indifferent to any and all variations in essence, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being, and participates in the same degree. Ideally, to be sure, the case is quite different. *But, the moment I speak of being in the ideal sense I no longer speak of being, but of essence.*"<sup>16</sup> Thus Kierkegaard is quite aware of the distinction between essence and existence which Gilson sees in Aquinas. Moreover, Kierkegaard is quite able to know of an existence outside his own. And he also knows that existence cannot be demonstrated. Hence, he states: "I always reason from existence, not toward existence. . . . I do not for example prove that a stone exists but that some existing thing is a stone."<sup>17</sup> He realizes that existence cannot really be defined because by definition it is then turned into an essence.

Kierkegaard, however, was not primarily concerned with the Thomistic distinction between essence and existence on the objective plane. He was waging a battle at a deeper level. We have described this deeper level as Kierkegaard's implicit ontology or theology, namely, the infinite qualitative distinction between eternity and time, God and man. Just because of this implicit ontology Kierkegaard was radically opposed to the claim that God or pure being could be apprehended as an existent by abstract conceptualization or by what Gilson calls judgment. Perhaps the charge of essentialism might be turned around against Gilson, inasmuch as his discussion of existence is impersonal, detached, and objective. Gilson has recovered, it is true, the existence of things, be they inanimate, human, angelic, or divine. But he has eliminated the existence of the subjective thinker with his passionate concern for his eternal happiness. Whereas Gilson can apply the essence-existence distinction "in a



completely objective way to all kinds of beings, among which the thinker himself had no pre-eminence, the Kierkegaardian existence is that of the subjective thinker whose thinking proceeds from his personal involvement in his thought."<sup>18</sup>

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Wyschogrod explains that the Kierkegaardian concept of existence does not imply that his existence is a direct continuation of the nonpersonal interpretation of existence. That would be to deprive Kierkegaard of his originality. "What is claimed is that, given the concept of existence, and coupled to it the subjective interest of Kierkegaard, the central problems that arise reflect on a subjective plane the previous problems on the objective level."<sup>19</sup> Wyschogrod discards the rather extreme view that the subjective interest that Kierkegaard adds to existence is not an extraneous addition, but actually nothing more than taking seriously the concept of existence as applied to the thinker. One wonders why Wyschogrod discarded the latter view. For he himself goes on to show admirably that the thinker realizes his existence, perhaps one might say his authentic existence, in becoming subjective, and loses himself by becoming objective. Of course, Kierkegaard knows that man has an objective existence in the Thomistic sense, and this, in fact, is what Kierkegaard means by the aesthetic mode of existence. But Kierkegaard perceives that man realizes genuine existence, eternal existence, in the moment in which God resolves to come into relation with man and to reveal himself in His great love. The Platonic doctrine of recollection taught that a man could learn the truth without any ontological change in himself. All that is necessary is for him to be reminded of truth he has forgotten. But Kierkegaard sees that the learner has to be re-created, something no man can do for himself; it must be done by God himself. The learner must become a "new creature." This change, he says, may be called "conversion." The grief occasioned by the knowledge that his ignorance was his own guilt may be called repentance, and the transition to knowledge of truth rebirth.<sup>20</sup> It is obvious, therefore, that there is a world of difference between Kierkegaard's and Gilson's views of existence. Genuine existence is, for Kierkegaard, a gift of God's grace which is appropriated in repentance, decision, and faith.

In our chapter on Kierkegaard we offered a Christological corrective of his implicit ontology or theology, and of his doctrine of existence. But in spite of its shortcoming in this respect, it may be said that Kierkegaard's teaching concerning human exist-

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ence and the knowledge of God is immeasurably superior to Gilson's objective and impersonal philosophy. Kierkegaard knew that knowledge of God is dependent upon God's act of revelation and upon man's act of repentance and faith. All other knowledge of God is pseudo knowledge.

In this chapter on Gilson's exposition of Thomistic existentialism we have been concerned, for the most part, with his definition of an existent, of an objective, being. But how does he define God in relation to whom man's life is lived? How is God to be distinguished from creaturely beings? He answer Gilson gives stands in marked contrast to the answers we have received from Jaspers, Heidegger, and Tillich, and formally at least, in greater proximity to Barth's doctrine of the being of God, which we will take up in the next chapter. According to the Neo-Thomists God differs from all other beings in that he is "a self-subsisting *to be*," the "very *natura essendi*," as Anselm had already said, in which each and every being, so to speak, participates."<sup>21</sup> In saying that God is only *to be*, we are not falling into the error, Gilson

contends, of those who have said that God is universal being (being taken as a mere universal), owing to which everything is said to be through its form. On the contrary, God alone is "to be" in absolute purity. Since "to be" is in itself the supreme and absolute act, it cannot be a universal. In God his essence is one with his existence. Thus in God there is no becoming, as with other beings. Since he is pure existence, there is nothing he can become. He is. If God is *esse*, He is he whose own "to be" constitutes his own essence. To posit essence as the supreme degree of reality, Gilson believes, is "the most disastrous of all metaphysical mistakes." Moreover, because *to be* is to *be* act, it also is to be able to act. Because God is pure act of existence, his first effect is existence, and he is the first cause why anything else exists. Thus existing things are images of God inasmuch as they exist, and inasmuch as God imparts to them power to exert causal actions of their own. This is what Gilson calls the dynamism of existential being.<sup>22</sup>

Comment on this Thomistic definition of God as pure existence will be reserved till the next chapter on Barth's doctrine of the

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being of God. Let it be sufficient to note that the traditional doctrine of the analogy of being between the Creator and the creature is here interpreted as an analogy of existence. The difference is that the Creator exists by himself and his existence is his own essence, whereas the creature exists as a result of God's creative act of existence and as a combination of its existence and essence.

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## **VI**

### **THE BEING OF GOD**

Karl Barth, 1886-

IT WAS STATED in the introductory chapter of this book that we would be concerned with the various definitions of the ultimate reality in relation to which man's life is spent. In Kierkegaard this was seen to be God as pure being or eternity; in Jaspers, as being-itself, the comprehensive or the transcendent; in Sartre, as the nothing; in Tillich and the later Heidegger, as being and/or nonbeing; and finally, in Gilson, as pure existence. Our study of these thinkers necessitated an examination of their ontologies of existence. Expressed succinctly, in Kierkegaard it was the existence of the subjective thinker as the locus of eternity in time; in Jaspers, human Dasein in relation to the transcendent; in Heidegger, Sartre, and Tillich it was finite being participating in nonbeing; and in Gilson it was an objective existent composed of existence and essence. In the course of our inquiry we were also obliged to take note of the epistemologies of these philosophers -their pathways to the knowledge of finite and ultimate being. In Kierkegaard we had faith as the contradiction between man's passionate concern for his eternal happiness and objective uncer-

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Karl Barth was born in Basel, Switzerland, May 10, 1886. He studied theology in the universities of Berne, Berlin, and Marburg until 1909. For two years he was assistant minister to Adolph Keller in Geneva, and for ten years minister in the Reformed Church

in Safenevil ( Aargau, Switzerland). He taught theology in the German universities of Göttingen ( 1921-1925), Münster ( 1925-1930), and in Bonn ( 1930-1935). In 1935 he was dismissed by the Nazi regime because he refused to take an unconditional oath of allegiance to Hitler. Since 1935, Barth has been teaching at the University of Basel.

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tainty; in Jaspers, faith in the face of the ultimate situations of life; in Heidegger, the experience of dread before the nothing; in Tillich, anxiety as well as ecstasy or faith; and in Gilson, conceptualization and judgment as the two faculties of reason.

If in this chapter we were to supply from Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* a theological equivalent for existentialist epistemology, it would be necessary to set down Barth's doctrine of revelation, which includes the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, and Church proclamation. His doctrine of man would have to be outlined to parallel the philosophical view of human Dasein or existence, and what has been said about the nihil would have to be repeated. Such an exhaustive program would go far beyond the scope of this book. Our chief purpose is to compare and contrast Barth's doctrine of the being of God with the existentialist doctrine of being as God. However, in the course of our critiques of Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, and Tillich much has been reported concerning Barth's position in the areas of epistemology and anthropology. With this we must be content.

When we turn at last to Karl Barth's doctrine of the being of God, we enter an entirely new world -- " the strange new world within the Bible," as Barth himself describes it in one of his early addresses.<sup>1</sup> We take leave of the world of philosophy, whether it be essentialist, existentialist, or Thomist, and enter the portals of theology. For Barth insists at the very outset of his doctrine of God's reality that we are not asking about being but about God -about the being of *God*. God is being, but being is not God. If we wish to answer the "existential" question, what it means that God is, or the "essentialist" question, what or who God is, we must look exclusively to God's act in his revelation. It will be worth while to quote immediately and at some length a crucial passage from the *Church Dogmatics*:

"We stand here before a source of error that has prevailed almost along the whole line in the doctrine of God in both classical theology and Protestant orthodoxy. The doctrine of God, at least for a large part, strove elsewhere than after God's act in his revelation, and it had its source elsewhere than in his revelation. This was due to the

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fact that, with a remarkably universal thoughtlessness, it was customary to place the doctrine of God before the doctrine of the Trinity for formal and logical reasons, although theoretically it was claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity is the basis of all theology. In the empty space in which one found oneself, nothing else than general reflections about what God might be could possibly result -- reflections which proceeded from certain human views and concepts, regarded as incontestable axioms, and then, a little feebly, mixed up with all kinds of Biblical reminiscences. In this way a doctrine of God was formulated which could have no meaning, or only a fatal one, for the rest of the content of dogmatics. And at the same time the basis was unintentionally laid upon which an anti-Church philosophy (and simultaneously and subsequently an heretical theology) could all too easily attack the dogmas of the Trinity, and with it all important articles of faith and its knowledge of the Word of God. It was in itself quite correct when the nature of God was defined: *Essentia Dei ipsa Deitas, qua Deus a se et per se absolute est et existit* (Polanus, *Synt. Theol. chr.* 1609, col. 865). But precisely in the definition of this a *se et per se* one ought not to have been permitted under any circumstances to stray from the Trinity, and that means from the act of the divine revelation. Resolutely separating ourselves from this tradition . . . we will have to keep before our eyes that a Church dogmatics always proceeds from the dogma of the Trinity, and that it therefore has no possibility of reckoning with the being of another God or with another being of God than that of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in God's revelation and in eternity; and that therefore, no matter how it may designate and explain God as He Who Is, it does not have to make some sort of free reflection about the nature of being, but, whatever the ideas and concepts to be used may be, it must under all circumstances acquire and explain their special meaning in this context with a view to the revelation of this being, the being of the triune God."<sup>2</sup>

Barth's contention that the being of God is to be found only in the act of his revelation, and that ontological speculation has been to a large degree the source of error in the Church's doctrine, is of course in striking contrast to the views not only of Jaspers, Heidegger, and

Sartre but also to those of Tillich and Gilson. It should also be realized that Barth parts company with the traditional doctrine of God in Protestant orthodoxy. One has only to read the fourth chapter of Heinrich Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics* to be reminded how unchristologically and philosophically the

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being or existence of God was treated by the seventeenth century divines. It was customary for them to speak of God as a Spirit existing by himself," as an "independent substance," *as ens perfectissimum*," or as " *actus purissimus et simplicicissimus*." The tradition was faithfully adhered to by nineteenth century orthodoxists in America, such as Charles Hodge, G. T. S. Shedd, H. B. Smith, and A. H. Strong.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore ridiculous to refer to Barth as a " neo-orthodoxist," whatever may be meant by the term. The fact is that liberal theology is a natural outgrowth of the rationalism with which so-called orthodoxy abounded. Barth's theology is a corrective to both liberalism and orthodoxy in that it challenges theologians to advance to a Christological interpretation of all doctrines of the Church.

No teacher in the history of the Church has seen so clearly as Barth that the existence and nature of God is known exclusively in God's act upon us as Lord and Saviour in Jesus Christ. "The act of God's revelation," he writes, "includes in itself the fact that man as a sinner can pursue of himself only false ways. He is called away from all attempts of his own to answer the question about true being. He is bound to the answer given by God himself."<sup>4</sup> Consequently the first definition of the proposition that "God is" must be: "God is Who He Is in the act of his revelation."

It is a question of God's act in Jesus Christ which is at once past, present, and future. For God's being is identical with his life. Accordingly Barth agrees with the earlier theologians who defined God as *actus purus, actus purissimus*. (In this respect he comes closer to Thomas Aquinas and to Gilson than to Tillich.) But he immediately explains that when, on the basis of God's revelation, we define God as event, act, and life, we do not identify God with the sum or essence of event, act, and life in general. God's revelation is a special event, not identical with the sum or essence of all events in either nature or history. Wherefore it is not sufficient to denote God as pure act. God is, to be sure, the origin, reconciliation, and goal of all other events. But this is true and manifest in that God distinguishes himself from all other actuality, not only in that he is actuality itself, its principle or nature, but in that he is *free* event, free act, free life, in himself.

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Moreover, when we speak of God being event, act, life, we are not speaking metaphorically or parabolically, as Tillich does, But realistically.

Philosophers and theologians have made the distinction between divine and human actuality to be the distinction between spirit and nature, soul and body, internal and external, visible and invisible. But this is not, Barth believes, the Biblical view of the matter. The event of revelation possesses natural, corporeal, and visible elements, as testified by the Creation (not only of heaven but of the earth), by the concrete existence of the people of Israel in Palestine, by the birth of Christ, his physical miracles, his suffering and dying under Pontius Pilate, and by his bodily resurrection. All this, Barth believes, cannot be irrelevant for the definition of God's being. Whoever describes God as the absolute or infinite spirit, and by this absolute

means nature purified, should ask whether he has not exchanged the reality of God for the reality of the spirit world. Scripture speaks not only of God as a Spirit but of his nature as well -- of his wrath and mercy, and of his face, arms, hands, and feet. Surely not all of these are to be understood symbolically, nor are the Trinitarian definitions of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be taken as unreal, as if the real were a pure spirit or being-itself ( Jaspers, Tillich) back of these. With Barth it is not a matter of confusing the Creator with the creature, nor of ascribing to God creaturely nature. As God's thoughts are not our thoughts, his Spirit not our spirit, so his hands and feet are not human hands and feet, nor his nature human nature. It is a matter of recognizing from the revelation of the triune God that God exists in a unity of his nature and his Spirit, and that the so-called pure spirit of philosophy and religion does nothing and is, in fact, nothing else than the hypostasis of our own created spirit.

From the above it will be seen how radically Barth departs from all the abstract, impersonal conceptions of the divine being in the existentialists, even from Gilson and his version of Aquinas. For it is not enough to say that God's being is pure existence or pure act. For God's being is that of a living person. "The particularity of the divine event, act, and life is the particularity of

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the being of a *person*. We are speaking of an action, a deed, when we speak of God's being as an event. But the essence of all that happens in revelation, according to the Scriptures, consists in the fact that God speaks as I and is heard by a thou that is addressed. And the essence of this happening is that God's Word became flesh and his Spirit was poured out."<sup>5</sup> The knowledge that God is person is therefore not a deduction or inference from the existence of our own ego, but from God's revelation of himself. The doctrine of the person of God is a derivation from the doctrine of the Trinity -- from what God does in his revelation. "God's being is the being which knows, wills, and distinguishes itself, which is moved by itself. . . . This 'moved by itself' distinguishes his being from the abstractly intuited being of nature, as well as from the abstractly conceived being of spirit."<sup>6</sup> That God's being is an event means that it is his own conscious, willed, and executed decision, and this can be said of no other being. "The being in its own conscious, willed, and executed decision, and therefore the personal being (*Personsein*), is the being of God in the modes of being of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. . . . Therefore we may speak of 'personification' in view of our being, but not of the being of God. Man is not the true person, but God!"<sup>7</sup>

Once again Barth's insistence that God's being is the being of a person, of the original and intrinsic person, stands in marked contrast to the impersonal and nonconcrete being of God taught by Jaspers, Heidegger, Tillich, and Gilson. He is not being-itself, nor is he pure existence. He is really -- not just symbolically -- a being whom in prayer we address as "Thou" and who speaks to us as "I am." Moreover, however fundamental God's existence or his actuality may be in a definition of his being, we dare not stop there. We must immediately speak of his nature ( *Wesen*).

"It would be dangerous and ambiguous [to quote Barth here at length] if we were to delay longer with the description of the divine nature as his being in an act in general, with establishing the [*form* of this nature, namely, his actuality or his life. That God's being is His act . . . is to be taken seriously with the insight that precisely this his act, which is his being, is not actuality in general and as such, but, in his revelation and in eternity, is a quite definite and meaningful

deed. . . . What act . . . so we must ask further . . . is the divine act which is the divine being in such a way that we have to learn from it what is divine? What is necessary for it to be God? What makes God to be God? What, therefore, is God's nature [Wesen]?"<sup>8</sup>

Before we hear Barth's answer to this question, let us notice that here Barth's thought-form is Aristotelian: his concepts include form, matter, nature, and essence. The form for Barth is God's existence, God's act. But God is not pure form; he also is his nature. We might have observed above the same schematism in the composition of *divine* spirit and matter in God. In availing himself of this thought-pattern Barth comes very close to Gilson. Gilson emphasizes the primacy of existence among the constituent elements of being. He also maintains that God's own existence constitutes his own essence because "to be" is to be act. Gilson, however, leaves it at that. He is so afraid of essentialism that he is loath to say what God's nature or essence is, nor does he tell us specifically what God's act is. Thus Gilson's doctrine does not go far enough. It remains in the area of abstraction. Moreover, while at this point both Barth and Gilson employ Aristotelian thoughtforms, it would be a great mistake to conclude that Barth gives us only an Aristotelian metaphysics. That such is far from the case becomes apparent when Barth goes on to explain that God's act in the revelation of his name, in which his inmost hidden nature is revealed, is his act of seeking and creating fellowship with us. Moreover, because God's revelation is his self-revelation, he also does the same in himself, in his eternal nature. This one act is what characterizes his act as divine and his person as divine. We shall not find anything else in God's eternal being. As and before he seeks and creates fellowship with us, he wills and executes it in himself. This is his eternal being. He is the living God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in his own with-one-another, for one-another, and in-one-another. What he seeks and establishes with us is thus nothing else than what he is in himself. God's being, therefore, is to be defined as his loving. It was not necessary for God to create the world in order to have something to love and hence to be the loving God. In himself he is the object of his love. Consequently we do not start with a human idea of love and

apply it to God. God is never identical with what we think love is. God's love is his act of sending his Son ( John 3:16; 1 John 4:9). We may therefore say with John that God is love; we cannot say that love is God.

God's love, Barth teaches, is a seeking and creating of fellowship without regard for an already existing virtue or dignity in the one loved. God loves his enemies, and this is the miracle of his omnipotent love ( Rom. 5:8). Moreover, God's love is for its own sake. It is true that when God loves he seeks and realizes his own honor and our salvation. But he does not love for that reason. He loves in eternity before he accomplishes those purposes. It is God's nature to love. "God is" means God loves. Whatever further will have to be said about the being of God, it will have to be a definition of his being as the one who loves. All further propositions about who or what God is must revolve around this mystery of His love.<sup>9</sup> Thus for Barth the love of God is the basic definition, the core of the doctrine of God.

No other theologian, with the possible exceptions of Gustav Aulen and Anders Nygren, has made the love of God so central to the doctrine of God. It gives it a warm, evangelical ring, a Scriptural ring, in striking contrast to the loveless and lifeless picture of God afforded by

existentialists of every shade. But Protestant and Catholic theologians in the past have also been at fault. They usually began with an abstract conception of being and proceeded to ascribe to this being the attributes of infinity and perfection -- omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternity. The answer to the question, "What is God?" in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is typical. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Because orthodoxy had been dominated by the idea of God's sovereignty conceived as absolute power, knowing and willing, we find here no mention of the love of God, nor of his mercy and grace.

We have said above that Barth teaches that God's being is a being that is moved by itself, that his life is lived from itself, and that he loves for his own sake. This doctrine he now affirms in the proposition that "God's being as the living and loving God is his

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being in freedom."<sup>10</sup> Here he does justice to the Reformed emphasis upon the sovereignty of God. That which distinguishes God from all living and loving creatures is the freedom in which he lives and loves. God is free; he is himself sovereign freedom. No higher or external necessity is laid upon him than his own choosing, willing, and doing. This is what the older theologians called the *aseitas Dei*. Anselm was apparently the first to define it when he said that the supreme nature exists *per se ipsam et ex se ipsa est*. Divine freedom, however, means more than just being unlimited and unconditioned by anything outside of God. That is what Barth calls the negative side of God's freedom. To be sure, this negative freedom is highly significant not only for God's relation to the world but for his own nature. But if that were the only kind of freedom to be ascribed to God, we should first have to posit the existence of the world in order for God to be free. God's freedom would then be a rational deduction from creaturely existence. But in his revelation God manifests himself as positively free. Without surrendering his freedom from all that is other than himself, he is free to enter into fellowship with that reality as its Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. God is able to be free without being limited by his freedom from all external conditionality. He is free in himself. In his unconditionality he can also be conditioned in entering into that fellowship. For this reason Barth holds that it was a backward step when the aseity of God was interpreted as that of the independent or infinite, or as that of the unconditioned or absolute. God has the freedom to prove his existence within the reality of the world distinct from him. It is the freedom of his incarnation in Jesus Christ, prefigured in the election and government of Israel, the freedom of his Word and Spirit. "It is the freedom to prove his existence, which every human proof of the existence of God can only spell out again, if it really wants to prove his existence, and does not want to prove something else, namely, in the last analysis man's own existence from the consciousness of his limits."<sup>11</sup>

According to Barth, the freedom to exist which God exercises in his revelation is the same freedom that he possesses in himself apart from the exercise of it *ad extra*. This is equivalent to the

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trinitarian proposition that God's *opera ad extra* are identical with his *opera ad intra*. The God who begins with himself in his revelation is the God who begins with himself in eternity. Barth writes:



"This is the freedom in which God exists: that he does not 'need' his own being in order to be who he is. For he already always *has* his being, yes *is*; because nothing can be added to him even from himself which he did not already have or was; because his being in act or the act of his being is not the answer to any compulsion laid upon him. . . . Therefore if we say that God is a *se*, we do not mean that God creates, produces, and causes himself, but that (as it is manifest in the relation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and real in eternity) he is the one who already has and is in himself everything that, as his being, would have to be the result of his creating, producing, and causing if he were not God."<sup>12</sup>

What God creates and causes is not himself, but a reality distinct from himself. "If we say that God is free to exist, we do not mean that he, as it were, elevates himself out of nonexistence into existence, or frees himself for existence, but that that existence belongs to him which is not encumbered by any limitation through the possibility of his nonexistence . . . as if he first had to exist in order to be who he is, but who, in his existing, again simply confirms himself."<sup>13</sup> It is here that Barth sounds his caveat against describing God as *ens necessarium*, a doctrine which Gilson also resisted. And, of course, Barth's teaching also contradicts the Hegelian conception of ultimate being as "becoming" and Tillich's dialectic of being and nonbeing in being-itself.

When the first proposition has been established that God is free in himself, we can then say that he is independent of every other reality. This does not constitute God's freedom, but it confirms it. God is absolute; that is, he is free from all that is not himself. If there is any other reality, then it exists only through him, from him, and for him. The existence of a reality different from God cannot signify any embarrassment for him. That would be the case, Barth admits, for an "absolute" which has its absoluteness only over against the reality of the cosmos. This dilemma is removed when God's freedom is understood first of all and intrin-

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sically as God's freedom in himself and then as his freedom from the world.

Now the absoluteness of God possesses, first, a noetic significance, namely, that God and the world outside him cannot be subsumed under any common category or concept. There is no synthesis in which the same thing can be said of God and another reality. God does not stand in a series or sequence with other elements. It was Aquinas who said, "*Deus non est in genere*." But Barth quotes it against Thomas himself and against the practice of Roman Catholic theology -- Gilson included -- of applying the all-embracing concept of being to God and to what is not God, and to explain the relations between God and what is not God in terms of an explication of this abstract concept of being. But because *Deus non est in genere*, Barth also rejects Kant's doctrine of God. For in Kant the idea of God stands in line with the ultimate ideas of freedom and immortality and together with these is subordinate to the all-highest idea of reason.

But back of this noetic absoluteness of God stands decisively his ontic absoluteness. It means God's utter independence of all that is not himself. If there is a connection between him and them, then God is who he is, independent of them even in this connection. He does not share his being with them, he is not blended or confused with them. He does not change himself into them. God's freedom signifies not only his transcendence but his immanence, his capacity to be present to a reality not himself, and to be present in infinite variations. All possibilities of the divine presence, however, have their basis, their meaning, and their criterion in Jesus

Christ. The unity of divine and human being in Jesus Christ is one of the possibilities of divine immanence. But in its uniqueness and once-and-for-all character it is the possibility of all other possibilities. For the Son of God who became flesh in Jesus Christ is the principle of all divine immanence in the world and of what Barth calls the secondary absoluteness of God. In Jesus Christ, God's freedom to be immanent is actual and knowable. "God's freedom is the freedom which exists and is confirmed in his Son Jesus Christ. In him God has loved himself from eternity. In him he has also loved the world, precisely in him, in

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the freedom which makes his life divine and therefore glorious, victorious, and saving life."<sup>14</sup>

Barth's doctrine of the being of God may be summed up in the words of the thesis he sets down at the beginning of this section of the *Church Dogmatics*: "God is who he is in the act of his revelation. God seeks and creates fellowship between himself and us, and in this way he loves us. But as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit he is also this loving God apart from us, in the freedom of the Lord who has his life from himself."<sup>15</sup> God's being, then, is his loving in freedom. But God lives his perfect nature, Barth teaches, in the fullness of many single and distinct perfections, each of which is perfect in itself and together with all the others, in that each, whether it be a form of the love in which God is free or in the form of the freedom in which God loves, is nothing else than God himself -- his own single and simple nature.<sup>16</sup> All God's perfections are the perfections or attributes of his love and of his freedom, and therefore of his being. The being of God in itself or in eternity is anything but an abstract naked being-itself. The perfections of God's love, Barth believes, are his grace and holiness, mercy and righteousness, patience and wisdom. The perfections of his freedom are his unity and omnipresence, immutability (constancy) and omnipotence, eternity, and glory. Strictly speaking, the being of God is the fullness of his perfections, and the being of God is only known in this its richness and variety.

It would go beyond the scope of this chapter on Barth's doctrine of the being of God if we were to report on his exposition of each of the perfections enumerated in the above paragraph. However, it is pertinent for our comparison of the existentialist being with Barth's doctrine of the divine being to see that Barth stresses that the triune God exists *in himself* and in his revelation in each and all of these perfections, and conversely that each and all of these perfections exist only in him. The problem Barth faces is: To what extent may one speak of a plurality of perfections being individually and in their totality the perfections of God's one, indivisible nature? In the past it has been widely disputed that (a) a plurality of perfections exist objectively in God, and (b) that there are single, distinct perfections objectively in God.

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The unity and simplicity of God have been asserted over against such a plurality. A nominalistic interpretation of the attributes,<sup>17</sup> or a modified form of it, has characterized Thomistic and Protestant orthodox theology.<sup>18</sup> Barth claims that the nominalistic tendency was due to the fact that theologians understood God's essence as his "nude essence." Thus in the last analysis his simplicity became his one real attribute. Other attributes had to lose their authenticity in favor of the bare essence, and had to be interpreted in terms of God's relation to us. But as the modes of God's existence in the Trinity may not be understood modalistically, so too his perfections may not be understood modalistically. The reason God's perfections have been explained nominalistically, modalistically, and symbolically is because

it has been thought that God's nature was to be found in a pure being. The concept of God was not derived from the doctrine of the Trinity, but from a general concept of God. When one had started with the notion of pure being, it was inevitable that the concept of the divine simplicity should become the dominant principle. One could only speak equivocally of the reality of God's perfections.

Barth credits certain German theologians of the nineteenth century -- F. H. G. Frank, G. Thomasius, and J. A. Dorner -- with having broken with the accepted tradition. But he himself has been most emphatic in teaching that the plurality, individuality, and diversity of God's perfections are of his one divine nature; that the plurality, individuality, and diversity of God's perfections are of his simple nature, and not of a divisible or composite nature; that every single perfection of God is nothing else than God himself, and therefore nothing else than every other one of his perfections; and that the plurality, individuality, and diversity of the perfections are grounded in God's own nature and not in their participation in other natures.<sup>19</sup>

Now the justification for these propositions is to be found in Barth's view of the knowledge of God. And the knowledge of God is grounded in the Trinity. For in the ontological Trinity, God is first and above all an object to himself. The Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father before either of them becomes an object of creaturely knowledge. This might be called God's

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primary objectivity as distinct from that secondary objectivity in which God becomes an object for us in his revelation in Jesus Christ. In the Godhead, God is directly objective to himself; he is indirectly objective to us -- clothed in the veil and signs of creaturely objects. Now, according to Barth, faith does not arbitrarily choose the creaturely signs or objects in which God is indirectly objective to us. God has chosen and sanctified the humanity of Jesus to be the creaturely object of human knowledge. He reveals himself under the veil of the flesh of Christ. We must begin, however, with God's primary objectivity in the Trinity. For God shares his own knowledge of himself with us in the revelation in Christ. We come to share in that knowledge which the Father has of the Son and the Son of the Father. This sharing by God of his own knowledge of himself with man occurs when he unveils himself in his revelation, that is, in Jesus Christ." No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" ( Matt. 11:27; cf. John 1:18).

Barth teaches that since God in himself and God in his revelation are identical, since the Father and the Son are one, and since in revelation we share in that knowledge God has of himself, it follows that God has not given us a partial knowledge of himself, but a full and complete knowledge. God is known in his entirety or not at all. There is no being, no existence, and no essence of God behind or beyond the totality of his reality given in Jesus Christ. Neither in time nor in eternity is there a possible knowledge of God over and beyond the totality of his being in Jesus Christ. God is indivisibly one; he does not exist in parts. He lives in the unity of his existence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer -- never in just one of his modes of existence, never in just one sphere of his activity. In Jesus Christ we know God himself, and we know him altogether, or we do not know him at all. "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. . . . In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" ( Col. 2:9; 1:19. Cf. John 1:16; Eph. 1:23). Therefore

Barth declares that it is wrong to conceive the knowledge of God as a matter of degree. In the event of revelation God

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gives himself completely. Upon this thesis rests Barth's contention that the perfections or attributes of the divine being revealed in Jesus Christ are the perfections or attributes of his being in eternity.

Barth does not teach, however, that we know God as he knows himself. God knows himself directly, we are reminded; we know him indirectly in creaturely signs and works. We therefore know him by faith and not by sight. We see him as in a mirror and not face to face. God truly reveals his glory, the fullness of his perfections, in the flesh of Jesus. But he reveals it to faith which sees it in its hiddenness, and which therefore perceives the majesty of God in the lowliness and humiliation of the crucified. Yet this limitation of our knowledge in no way signifies that God is not known in the totality of his being.

God is known only through God. His revelation is not only his capacity to make himself known, but also man's capacity for that knowledge. Now if God is actually known by men, that means, Barth states, that we are bound to speak of a *human* knowledge of God, which in its mechanics does not differ from any other human knowledge. Human knowledge takes place by means of perceptions and conceptions. Perceptions are the pictures in which we perceive objects as such. Conceptions are the counterparts with which we make these perceptive pictures our own and in which we relate and order them. This does not imply, Barth insists, that a capacity to know God belongs to human reason. It means that although the knowledge of God does not occur *without* the work of our reason, yet it is never achieved *by* our work. Our perceptions and conceptions -- our ideas -- cannot achieve a knowledge of God. Here, as elsewhere, we are unprofitable servants. What human reason *can* perceive and conceive, are images and ideas of gods. But between God and us stands *his* hiddenness. In faith we confess that our knowledge of God begins with the knowledge of God's hiddenness.

What does Barth mean by God's hiddenness? He explains that it has nothing to do with a Kantian critique of pure reason. We may therefore conclude that it also has nothing to do with the existentialists' thesis that God is not an object and not an object of

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knowledge ( Jaspers, Heidegger, Tillich). The hiddenness of God, Barth holds, is an article of *faith!* It means that in faith we deny to ourselves any capacity to perceive or conceive God. God's hiddenness is not due to the limitations of our finite creaturely minds. It has nothing to do with reflections about time and space, or about the categories of thought. God's hiddenness is one of his perfections -- part and parcel of his own nature. It signifies that the capacity to know God is denied to us by the revelation itself and can only be given to us again by the revelation. Classical and modern theologians have explained God's incomprehensibility as a consequence of man's finite reason being unable to comprehend the infinite or being-itself. Barth teaches, on the other hand, that God's hiddenness implies that he is imperceptible, inconceivable, and inexpressible in so far as he does not belong to those objects which are subject to our perceiving, conceiving, and expressing. God is not in our power, he is not at our disposal. Barth urges that when we endeavor to explain why this is so, we should refrain from explaining it in the way in which Plato, a Plotinus, or a Kant (we might add: an existentialist)

defines the inconceivability of an ultimate being. The infinite, the absolute, or being-itself is not the God of Scripture. God is hidden to us because fellowship between God and man rests upon His grace. He is invisible and ineffable, not as a limitation of our minds, but as a capacity God grants or withholds in his own free decision. God's hiddenness signifies God's judgment upon human perceptions and conceptions. "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes" ( Matt. 11:25). The divine hiddenness has nothing to do with skepticism and agnosticism. For it is precisely the believer who confesses that he has no capacity, of himself, for the knowledge of God.

Once it has been established that the perception and conception of God is not a human possibility but a divine gift, we must take the second step, Barth believes, and affirm that the hidden God makes himself comprehensible, not directly, but indirectly, not without the veil of the flesh but by a miracle of his grace. When God condescends to us in his Word through the Holy Spirit, we receive the permission and the command to know him by

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means of our human perceptions, conceptions, and words. Barth declares that it would be blasphemy against the Holy Ghost if we were to regard our incapacity as greater than the capacity he grants us. Human knowledge of God should not be belittled. It is genuine, true knowledge of the one, complete being of God revealed in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Our presentation of Barth's doctrine of the being of God has been completed. There is surely no longer any need to confuse the being of the triune God with any other being, or the knowledge of the being of God with the knowledge of being-itself. There should be no further excuse for confusing, blending, or synthesizing theology and ontology -- whether the latter be classical, Thomist, or existential ontology. The ultimate reality in relation to which man's life is lived is the being of God that is Jesus Christ.

We have concentrated our attention upon a comparison of the Christian doctrine of God's being with ontological speculations. At the outset of this final chapter we inferred that a separate volume could very well be devoted to a comparison of Christian and existentialist anthropologies. It goes beyond the scope of this work. However, we should be amiss if we left the impression that the being of God can be treated as if God existed in a lonely isolation from the creature, and if we failed to indicate how the divine being is determinative for human *Dasein*.

We saw earlier that God's being is his loving. "God is" means God loves. God's love was defined as his seeking and creating fellowship with us. But before God seeks and creates fellowship with us, he wills and executes it in himself. This is his eternal being. In his triune being he is the object of his love. Now the meaning of this is that the character of the divine being is to be a covenant-making God. The covenant God made with Israel was entirely in keeping with the inmost being of God, namely, to be with-another and for-another. For this reason Barth makes the doctrine of election an integral part of the doctrine of God. Election belongs to the being of God. Indeed, one might say: God's being is his electing. In the original and fundamental decision in

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which God wills to be and is God, he is none other than the God who chooses himself in his Son or Word, and in and with himself an elect people. Election belongs to the doctrine of God because it is not correct to speak *only* of God, only of his being and attributes. Since God has chosen man in Jesus Christ, the doctrine of God must also contain an explanation of God's relation to what is not God. What, then, is the connection between divine and human being?

According to Barth, God does not stand in a direct relation to the world. God's partner is not "man" as idea, not "mankind," not the sum of many individuals, but the one man Jesus and the people represented in him, and then, for his sake, "man," "mankind," and the rest of creation. God has united himself with the man Jesus, and in and through him, with his people. God establishes and preserves a covenant with his people in Jesus Christ. The covenant is two-sided. It consists in God's election by grace and in God's commandment. When God elects man, he elects him for obedience. Grace rules and the one elected acquires a lord. In election we have to do with the gospel; in the commandment with God's law. Thus the covenant of grace established in the election and calling of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is followed by the promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai. Election in Jesus Christ means that men are separated unto a subjection to the Lordship of him who gave his life for them that they "might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" ( II Cor. 5:15). Therefore dogmatics and ethics, the gospel and law, God's electing and commanding may not be divorced. They are rooted in the very nature of the divine being.

It is obvious that we cannot go into Barth's extraordinarily original and revolutionary doctrine of election.<sup>20</sup> But we need to note that it is grounded in the divine being itself and in turn is the basis of all other doctrines. The covenant of grace is the inner presupposition of the work of creation and providence. God creates and preserves heaven and earth in order that they may be the stage for the history of his covenant relationship with man in Jesus Christ. The being of the world and the goodness of its being consist in the fact that the world exists solely for the sake of

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man, or, rather, for the sake of God's will for fellowship with man. The world has no independent ontological validity. God's Word contains no ontology of the cosmos. It does contain an ontology of man -- of man on earth under heaven -- but not an ontology of heaven and earth as such.<sup>21</sup>

What is the Biblical ontology of man? Once again to give anything like a full account of Barth's answer to this question would carry us far afield. But it will be in keeping with our purposes if we indicate how the being of God bears upon the being of man, and how the two are inextricably linked together. Barth declares that "the ontological determination of man is based upon the fact that in the midst of all other men one of them is the man Jesus."<sup>22</sup> Or, expressed otherwise, "Every man is as such Jesus' fellow man."<sup>23</sup> This means, as an ontological definition of man in general, that he is man in that he is placed before his divine counterpart in the person of this one Man. Man is therefore with God because he is with Jesus, and because Jesus has become man's neighbor and brother. The most fundamental and comprehensive definition of human being is that of a being-with-God.

"For this reason," Barth writes, "godlessness is not a possibility but the ontological impossibility of man's being. Man exists with God, and not without him. Sin is a reality. But sin is not a possibility of human being, but its ontological impossibility. . . . Our being does

not include sin; it excludes it. A being in sin, being in godlessness, is a being contrary to man's being."<sup>24</sup> Man can deny his own being as a being-with-God. But the fact remains that man is because God is, or, more concretely, because God's being is identical with the being of the man Jesus. *Ego eimi!* From this basic conception of human *Dasein* Barth never swerves. Upon it rests his confidence in the goodness of man's created being.

Barth realizes, of course, that all creatures may be said to exist with God. But that which secretly constitutes the being of all creatures is revealed in human being because Jesus is a man. God's Word became a man, and not a stone, plant, or animal. The revelation of human being as a being-with God constitutes its uniqueness. But as a being-with-God, man's being is absolutely depend-

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ent upon God's being. Barth, however, refuses to understand this last proposition in terms of an abstract view of the relation between a relative and an absolute being, a conditioned and an unconditioned being. Therefore he would not understand it, as Tillich does, as finite being participating in being-itself. In explaining man's relationship to God and his absolute dependence upon God, Barth does not speak speculatively; he speaks concretely of the man who is with God because the transcendent God is with man in Jesus Christ.

Human being, Barth teaches, as a being-with-Jesus, is a being that rests upon God's election, and consists in a hearing of God's Word. Consequently human being is a being which is responsible to God. As such it possesses the character of a *freedom* granted to it by God. The freedom that constitutes man's being is not merely man's possibility or ability which would first be realized in this or that use of freedom. Man is precisely in that he decides for God -- in that he knows, obeys, and calls upon God. Man's very being is his freedom. It is a freedom of choice, Barth teaches; but, as freedom granted by God, it is a freedom in which the right is chosen. The right is that which corresponds to God's free choice. Consequently man does not choose "between two possibilities given to him, but between his one and only possibility and his own impossibility and therefore between his being and nonbeing, and thus between the continuance and negation of his freedom as well."<sup>25</sup> Barth insists, as we have seen previously, that man's freedom is in no sense a freedom to sin. When man sins, he forfeits his freedom. He does something that cannot be explained on the basis of his creaturely freedom as such. Why not? Because man's being is a good being. Why is it good? Because man's being is from and with the good being of the triune God in Jesus of Nazareth.

A word needs to be added in conclusion. In these chapters a Christian doctrine of God's being has been set down alongside various existentialist conceptions of being. The inference might be drawn that the genuineness of our knowledge of the divine being lies in our theological propositions as such, and that there-

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fore it would be possible to conclude that the Barthian doctrine is objectively true, whereas the Tillichian and Gilsonian answers are objectively false. We therefore need to be reminded that God is true and every man a liar; that *in Christ* "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; and that at best we have these treasures in very earthen vessels ( Rom. 3:4; Col. 2:3; II Cor. 4:7). The being of God is not known in the Neo-Thomist, Tillichian, or Barthian systems, but in Christ, who is both the Truth and the Way to the truth. God's being is known

in Christ, not only because he is the divine "I am" but because he reveals himself as the "I am," the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Ex. 3:13 ff.; Deut. 32:39; Isa. 41:4; 43:10, 25; 48:12). The being of God, as well as the being of man, are known -- not in any theologoumena -- but in what the late Sir Edward Hoskyns referred to as Jesus' "mysterious and majestic" self-witness: *Ego eimi*.<sup>26</sup> He is the sovereign *Ego eimi* before whom the winds cease and the angry seas subside. He is the eternal being in the sense that he is "before Abraham *was*," that he is when the Jews and his disciples are, and that he is when they *will* have lifted up the Son of Man ( John 8:58, 24, 28). Jesus is the *Ego eimi* who is and who was and who is to come ( Rev. 1:8). This *eimi*, this "being," is therefore anything but an impersonal, unhistorical, and inactive being. The is the "I" who has, does, and will speak and act in history. With his " *Ego eimi*, be not afraid" ( John 6:20; el. Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50) he reveals himself to his disciples and removes their fears of a ghostly being walking on the sea. Yet the Jews can be deaf and blind to the presence of this "I am" in their midst. They are warned: "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am."<sup>27</sup> But "when you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am." That is, when you have crucified me, when I have died, then you will know that I am! Then you will know that I am the being who can lay down my human being and take it again in order to become the new human being. Then you will know that my being has overcome nonbeing, the nihil, by voluntarily becoming its victim.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' enemies failed to recognize him. Actually it was not Judas, but Jesus himself, who dis-

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closed His identity to them. "Then Jesus, knowing all that was to befall him, came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' They answered him, ' Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, ' *ego eimi*.' . . . When he said to them, ' *ego eimi*,' they drew back and fell to the ground" - prophetic of that day when at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow! But before that universal revelation of the *Ego eimi*, Jesus must die that others might live. "Again he asked them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, ' Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that *Ego eimi*, so, if you seek me, let these men go' " ( John 18:4-8). Jesus dies because of his claim to be the "I am," the eternal being of God in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, "Fear not, *ego eimi* the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore" ( Rev. 1: 17, 18).

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## NOTES

### Introduction



1. *The Joyful Wisdom*, Sec. 125. Cited by Kurt F. Reinhardt, *The Existentialist Revolt*, pp. [115](#) f. The Bruce Publishing Company.
2. *The Christian Hope*, pp. [39](#) f.
3. *The Tragic Finale*, p. 179.
4. *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book Gamma 1, p. 61. Here metaphysics is synonymous with ontology. Ontology is the science of being; it asks about the basic structures of being. Paul Tillich claims that "ontology is the foundation of metaphysics, but not metaphysics itself .... Ontology is descriptive, not speculative" ( *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 23).
5. Surely Guido de Ruggiero's forceful polemic, *Existentialism-Disintegration of Man's Soul*, does not do justice to the existentialist contribution to ontology.
6. See *The Doctrine of the Word*, pp. [21](#) f.; pp. [41-43](#); pp. [141](#) f.
7. Cf. *Kerygma and Myth*, and Ian Henderson, *Myth in the New Testament*, pp. [21-28](#).
8. Bultmann follows Heidegger in observing the same distinction. See *Kerygma and Myth*, pp. 195 f.
9. Cited by Ian Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. [36](#), from *Sein und Zeit*, p. 180.
10. *Op. cit.*, p. [38](#).

## Chapter I

1. Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1954.
2. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 195.
3. *Christian Discourses*, pp. [103-104](#).
4. See *op. cit.*, pp. [43](#) f.
5. "In modern philosophy the abstraction culminates in 'pure being,' but pure being is the most abstract expression for eternity.... ( *Concept of Dread*, p. [75](#) n. cited by Wyschogrod, *op. cit.*, pp. [43](#) f.)
6. *Op. cit.*, p. [44](#).

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7. *Ibid.*, p. [127](#).
8. *Philosophical Fragments*, p. [18](#).
9. *Op. cit.*, p. [45](#).
10. *Postscript*, pp. 270-2 n.
11. *Op. cit.*, pp. [81](#) f.
12. Paul Holmer has referred to the " stages " more correctly as " alternatives." Cf. *Kierkegaard and Ethical Theory in Ethics*, Vol. LXIII, No. 3, p. [160](#).
13. *Postscript*, p. [37](#).
14. *Ibid.*, p. [67](#).
15. *Ibid.*, p. [116](#).
16. *Ibid.*, p. [169](#).
17. Hermann Diem, *Die Existenzdialektik von S?en Kierkegaard*, p. [35](#).
18. *Op. cit.*, p. [177](#).
19. "If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith, I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith." - *Postscript*, p. 182.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
22. *Attack Upon Christendom*, was translated into German by A. Dorner and Chr. Schrempf, Stuttgart, 1896.
23. *Romans*, English tr., pp. 500 f.

24. *Polarity*, p. [32](#).
25. *The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life*, p. [14](#).
26. *Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie in Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1929, No. 3, p. 271.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 260. Cf. *The Divine Imperative*, p. 587, The Westminster Press, 1947. For an introduction to Hamann, see Walter Lowrie, *Johann Georg Hamann, an Existentialist*.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
29. *Die Frage nach dem "Anknüpfungspunkt" als Problem der Theologie, in Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1930, p. 522.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
31. *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1980, No. 5.
32. *Natural Theology*, p. [121](#).
33. *Ibid.*, p. [120](#).
34. *Op. cit.*, pp. [52](#) f.
35. *The Point of View*.
36. "Indeed, it is only by this means, i.e., by deceiving him, that it is possible to bring into the truth one who is in an illusion. Whoever

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rejects this opinion betrays the fact that he is not overwell versed in dialectics, and that is precisely what is especially needed when operating in this field."-*Ibid.*, pp. [39](#) f.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. [40](#) f.
38. *Purity of Heart*, p. 214.
39. *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*. Incidentally, Paul Holmer is certainly correct when in his review of Thomte's book ( *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LIX, No. 3, July, 1950, p. 408), he observes: "The title of the book is deceptive. The contents bear no resemblance to what historic usage of the expression ' philosophy of religion ' might lead one to expect."
40. Cf. K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik, II*, 1, pp. 523 f.
41. Here Oscar Cullmann errs in regarding Barth's "conception of time . . . as the last but quite momentous remnant of the influence of philosophy upon his exposition of the Bible."- *Christ and Time*, p. [13](#). For a criticism of Cullmann's own linear view of time as infinite, see Paul Minear's article in the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 6, No. 4, "The Time of Hope in the New Testament", pp. 338-840.
42. *Op. cit.*, pp. 188-194.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 191 f.
45. This sentence was written before I read in the latest volume of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*( IV, 1, pp. 844-846) about Barth's own agreement with a certain line of thought in Luther, in early and modern pietism, and in Kierkegaard. They were correct, he states, in teaching that "the question about the individual Christian subject must be raised and it must be answered with the *pro me* of faith. Without the *pro me* of the personal faith of the individual Christian there is no legitimate *pro nobis* of the faith of the Christian congregation and no legitimate *propter nos homines* of its vicarious faith for the unbelieving world." He adds, however, that the "*pro me*, the relation of the action and will of God to individual men as such, may not be made the basis and criterion of everything, as if on the contrary in the last analysis it were a matter of the relation of the individual to the action and will of God, as if the value, truth, and reality of God were to be found only in what you and I- what the individual- regards as true and real, or what he is able to acknowledge and confess as concerning him 'existentially.' With respect to

what can be *pro me*, what can concern me 'existentially,' one will then refrain from laying down an a priori principle ["*Vorverst?ndnis*"] in terms of some anthropology or ontology, into whose framework the God who in Jesus Christ is *pro me* would be fitted, and according to whose

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specifications he would be cut down to size as in a Procrustean bed. Then for the man who believes in him Jesus Christ will mean more and something else than an obscure connecting point or even an example or instance of his personal faith. Then He will be permitted to announce himself as the one who is the object and source of the individual's personal faith. Then it will ever again be left to him to decide whether and in how far he is *pro me* and 'existentially' concerns you and me. Then all anthropology and ontology will have their criterion and law in him rather than the reverse."

## Chapter II

1. *Existentialism - Disintegration of Man's Soul*, p. 45. Cf. the article by J. Heywood Thomas, "Kierkegaard and Existentialism", in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1953, pp. 379-395.
2. *Way to Wisdom*, p. [28](#).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 30. Cf. *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, pp. 27 ff.
4. *Ibid.*, p. [36](#).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 43. Cf. *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, p. 82.
6. *Ibid.*, p. [43](#).
7. *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, p. [12](#).
8. *Ibid.*, pp. [14](#) f.
9. *Ibid.*, p. [19](#).
10. "In ultimate situations man either perceives nothingness or senses true being in spite of and above all ephemeral worldly existence. Even despair, by the very fact that it is possible in the world, points beyond the world." ( *Way to Wisdom*, p. [23](#).)
11. Trs. Eden and Cedar Paul. Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1951.
12. *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, p. [76](#).
13. *Ibid.*, pp. [94](#) f.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. [97-104](#).
15. Cf. *Kirchliche Dogmatik, III*, 2, pp. [133](#) f., [141](#) f.
16. The reference is to the last verse of Whittier's mystical hymn, "*Dear Lord and Father of Mankind*."
17. *Op. cit.*, p. [141](#).
18. It is perhaps necessary to point out that the criticisms of Jaspers' view of the transcendent may not be preferred against Reinhold Niebuhr's view of man as a finite creature with a capacity for selftranscendence. For when Niebuhr declares that man has the power to transcend himself he does not mean that he is thereby able to apprehend the transcendent God. He simply means that man has "the ability to make himself his own object" ( *Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. I, p. [4](#)). The capacity for self-transcendence dis-

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tinguishes man from animals and is said to be the basis of discrete individuality anti also of human freedom. Moreover, Niebuhr regards this capacity as a temptation to man "to megalomania and persuades him to regard himself as the god around and about whom the universe centers" (p. [124](#)). "The self as self-knower may mistake its capacity for self-

transcendence as the proof of having a position as ultimate judge, transcending all things. Yet the self, though standing outside itself and the world is obviously a finite existence within the world" (p. 204). Niebuhr therefore recognizes the need for revelation if man is to apprehend the transcendent. Whether Niebuhr's view of man as a finite creature with a capacity to transcend himself does justice to a Christian theological anthropology, and whether he is justified in grounding man's freedom and individuality in this capacity, and whether his (h)('trine of revelation is wholly adequate, are questions by themselves. But one may not charge him with equating man's self-transcendence with a knowledge of God. For Niebuhr that would be idolatry.

## Chapter III

1. See M. Wyschogrod, *op. cit.*, for a full discussion of the development in Heidegger's thinking.
2. *The Existentialist Revolt*, p. [121](#).
3. Cited by K. F. Reinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
4. *Concept of Dread*, p. [88](#).
5. *Ibid.*, p. [39](#). Werner Brock has remarked that Freud in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* distinguished "dread" from "fear" in a similar way.
6. M. Wyschogrod, *op. cit.*, p. [65](#).
7. Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, p. [62](#).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
9. *Ibid.*, p. ,366.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 375. Here Heidegger appears to misunderstand the Christian dogma *creatio ex nihilo*. He takes it to mean that "the created being is made out of nothing. 'Nothing' is now the conceptual opposite of what truly and authentically (*eigentlich*) 'is ': it becomes the *summum ens*, God as *ens increatum*' (*Ibid.*, p. ,376). But it is a gross mistake to say that God, as the highest uncreated being, is nothing. It is also false to say that man is made, out of nothing, as if nothing were that principle out of which man was formed, as if nothing were co-eternal with God.

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Before the Creation, there was only God, and nothing has no part in God whatever. It is possible to say that we come from our nonexistence, but not from *nothingness*. We come from God. But even that statement requires explanation. For we are not an emanation from God. We have been created by God with a nature distinct from his.

13. Hegel recognized that being is the most universal notion, and for that very reason also the most useless. Being without any determination or definition of being something, he argued, is equivalent to nonbeing. Thus if being were only itself it would be immovable and sterile. But because being is both itself and its opposite, nonbeing, it *becomes* something. The contradiction contained in being is resolved in the notion of becoming or process an idea which, as we shall see later, is so important to Paul Tillich. Becoming is both being and nonbeing. It is the synthesis that contains and reconciles both.
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 884.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 885.
16. "The clear courage for essential dread guarantees that most mysterious of possibilities: the experience of being."-*Ibid.*, p. 386.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 874.
18. *Platons Lehre der Wahrheit*, p. [53](#).

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 85 f.
20. *Existence and Being*, p. 92.
21. *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 15.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 27. For a philosophical critique of Sartre's view of freedom see Wilfred Desan, *The Tragic Finale*, pp. 160-173.
25. *Existentialism*, p. 66. Cf. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, by Simone de Beauvoir .
26. Cf. *L'Être et le Néant*, pp. 588, 567.
27. "The coward makes himself cowardly, the hero makes himself heroic. Neither are men born such, as people would like to believe."- *Op. cit.*, p. 31.
28. *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
29. So Sartre writes in *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 44. But he goes on to explain that "the subjectivity which we thus postulate as the standard of truth is no narrowly individual subjectivism .... Contrary to the philosophy of Descartes, contrary to that of Kant, when we say 'I think' we are attaining to ourselves in the presence of the other, and we are just as certain of the other as we are of ourselves" (p. 45). In *L'Être et le Néant*, however, Sartre rejects the Cartesian *cogito*, or at least radically modi-

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ties it. He declares that "consciousness is the knowing being as far as it is and not as far as it is *known*. This signifies that we have to abandon the primacy of cognition if we want to found this condition itself" (p. 17). He further states that "there is a pre-reflective *cogito* which is the condition of the Cartesian *cogito*" (p. 20, cited by Alfred Stern, *Sartre, His Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*, p. 11). Cf. Wilfred Desan, *The Tragic Finale*, pp. 133-138, on this point.

30. The origin of phenomenology lies in the problem of the relation between the external world and the internal world of psychic life. David Hume had shown that ideas or thoughts were the result of impressions. Kant claimed to reconcile the common-sense view that our images correspond to things and Hume's view that these representations constitute the whole of reality. *For us*, he urges, there are only phenomena. We cannot attain to the noumena, to things in themselves. But these things must be necessary in order to account for phenomena. We do not know the external world as it is, but that world exists. As is well known, Hegel endeavored to get around the criticism of Hume and Kant by teaching that "reason is not the human understanding, a faculty of the soul, a combination of principles, forms, or rules according to which we think things. It is the law according to which being is produced, constituted, or unfolded; or rather, it is both a subjective faculty and an objective reality; *it is in me* as the essence and norm of my thought, and it is *in the things* as the essence and law of their evolution" (Weber and Perry, *History of Philosophy*, p. 407). Accordingly, Hegel was able to say that essence and phenomenon are inseparable; for the essence of essence is to appear, to be a phenomenon. Conversely, it is essential to the phenomenon to imply an essence. Phenomenon without essence is *mere show, mere appearance*. Essence expresses itself in a series of phenomena, and constitutes the thing or object. A thing without phenomena or properties is nothing. This, then, in brief, is the Hegelian phenomenology. The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (see *Ideas, General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, and Husserl's article on "Phenomenology" in 14th ed. of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) represented a different attempt to break down Kant's thesis concerning the rational inaccessibility of "things-in themselves." He sought to get at the *Ding-an-sich* by

"eidetic reduction," that is, by reducing the datum to form, or to essence. He also called it eidetic intuition, or an intuition of essences. What interested Husserl were these essences or essential structures of the activity of consciousness, such as immediate memory, distant recollection, preperceptual expectation, etc., rather than

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particular facts. He believed that this eidetic reduction is accomplished by "bracketing" or "placing in parenthesis" the objects we perceive in the world. What remains is the perceiving, remembrances, and imaginings of consciousness, in short, the essences- the experienced contents of my consciousness. And consciousness for Husserl was always consciousness of something. Obviously there is a world of difference between Husserl's and Plato's essences. "Husserl's essences do not exist in themselves, in a separate world, as ideal types of possible things: they are factual data resulting from the relationship between objects and consciousness" (Foulquié, *op. cit.*, p. 37). But as Foulquié quietly remarks: "It seems indeed that the phenomenological essences thus obtained are nothing more than constructions of the mind, or of consciousness." It is doubtful, then, whether Husserl really succeeded in getting at the thing-in-itself.

31. See *A Critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's Ontology*. Cf. Peter J. R. Dempsey, *The Psychology of Sartre*, and Wilfred Desan, *The Tragic Finale*.
32. *Op. cit.*, p. 75.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
34. Cited by Foulquié, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
35. In the letter on "Humanism" in *Platons Lehre der Wahrheit*, Heidegger states that he did not intend the meaning that has been taken from this sentence in *Sein und Zeit*. He explains that "there is (*es gibt*) being" means that the "*es*" which here "gives" is being itself. The "gives" refers to the nature of being to give itself (p. 80). The sentence: "Only as long as the lighting up of being (*die Lichtung des Seins*) occurs does being adapt itself to man. . . . The statement does not mean that being is a product of man. In the introduction to *Sein und Zeit* it is stated clearly and simply, and even in spaced lettering, that 'being is the absolutely transcendent'" (p. 83)
36. *L'Être et le Néant*, pp. 305, 502. Cited by Foulquié, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
37. *Kirchliche Dogmatik, III*, 3, pp. 327-425. The reader is referred to my translation of Otto Weber's *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* for a brief outline of this section and for a discussion of the difficulties involved in finding an English equivalent for *das Nichtige*. Since my translation appeared, it has occurred to me that the word "naughty" or "naughtie," which once bore nihilistic connotations, would be the best rendering of *das Nichtige*. But if it were used today an explanatory note would still be necessary, for obviously one cannot speak of the devil as one would of a naughty boy. I notice that one writer has translated *das Nichtige* as the "negation." It is true that *das Nichtige* is the negation of God

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and the creature. But this word does not bring out the far greater truth that *das Nichtige* is the "negated" in virtue of God's action upon it. I have decided - with a sigh - to abide by my use of the word "nihil."

38. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 401.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 403.

43. Karl Barth, *Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*, p. 224. Cited by Giovanni Miegge in *A Roman Catholic Interpretation of Karl Barth in Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 67. Incidentally von Balthasar's book is the most serious and appreciative study of Karl Barth to come from either a Protestant or Roman Catholic writer. He writes:

"Barth's theology is beautiful, and not merely in the outward sense that he writes well. He writes well because he unites two things: passion and objectivity. It is a passion for the subject matter of theology, and an objectivity such as is due to so stimulating a subject. Objectivity means to be engrossed in the object, and Barth's object is God as he has revealed himself to the world in Jesus Christ according to the witness of Scripture. Barth speaks well because he looks completely away from faith's competence to the object of faith itself, because he adheres to a strict theological objectivism ('Faith lives from its object'), and because in doing so he separates himself most sharply from the neo-Protestantism of Schleiermacher. For this reason there is no need to fear any pietistic edification. The subject matter is edifying in itself. But the subject matter itself is so charged and so demanding upon the whole man that here genuine objectivity has to coincide with emotion which permeates the whole and yet is quite unintentionally expressed. Consequently the development and presentation of the subject matter differs from the all too frequently disinterested objectivism of many Catholic dogmatics. This combination of passion and objectivity is the reason for the beauty of the Barthian theology. Who else in recent decades has known how to expound Scripture without being 'exegetical' and 'Biblicist,' without being constructive in a biased way, and without indulging in pastoral rhetoric? Who else concentrates so completely upon the Word that it alone begins to radiate in its fullness and glory? And who without wearying has taken a longer breath, a longer look, as the subject matter unfolded and presented itself before him in all its vastness? One has to go back to Thomas to find again such freedom from any strainful and narrow vision, such superiority of intellectual grasp as well

as charitableness - a charitableness which frequently is tinged with humor and acquires above all a definite taste for the proper tempo and rhythm of thought. Barth succeeds in making us understand that for him Christianity is an altogether triumphant matter. He writes well, not simply because he has the gift of style, but because he is bearing testimony, a completely objective testimony for a matter which, because it is about God, possesses the finest style and the best manuscript" (pp. 35 f.). One might add that in reflecting upon the beauty of Barth's theology one will not overlook the combination of passion and objectivity in the music of his beloved Mozart. The present writer associates it also with the incomparable piano-playing of Walter Gieseking.

## Chapter IV

1. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. [60](#). Copyright, 1951, by the University of Chicago Press.
2. *Ibid.*, p. [165](#).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. [174](#)-186.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-201.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
7. Cf. Helmut Kuhn, *Encounter with Nothingness*.
8. *Op. cit.*, p. 191.
9. For an exhaustive study of the notion of dread, see Oskar Pfister, *Das Christentum und die Angst*. Also the theological study, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Der Christ und die Angst*.
10. *The Courage to Be*, p. [36](#). Italics mine.
11. *Ibid.*, p. [54](#). The anxiety of guilt and condemnation requires further elucidation. It might be asked how Tillich is able to introduce a moral element into an analysis of man's being. Must one not presuppose some law, whether of grace or works, by which man is convicted and by which an anxiety of guilt is aroused? Tillich seems to answer in the negative. "Man's being, ontic as well as spiritual, is not only given to him, but also demanded of him. He is responsible for it; literally, he is required to answer, if he is asked, what he has made of himself. He who asks him is his judge, namely, he himself, who, at the same time, stands against him. This situation produces the anxiety . . . of guilt and condemnation . . . . Man is essentially 'finite freedom'; freedom not in the sense of indeterminacy but in the sense of being able to determine himself through decisions in the center of his being" (pp. [57](#) f.). This description of ethical responsibility, based upon man's being "finite freedom," and of anxiety coming over a man because he is

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required "to make of himself what he is supposed to become, to fulfill his destiny" - sounds remarkably like Sartre's view of man. However, when Tillich goes on to say that "it is the task of ethics to describe the nature of this fulfillment in philosophical or theological terms" and to suggest that there is a "norm" of ethics, one is not clear what is really the source of the anxiety and condemnation. Tillich endeavors to solve this problem in his *Love, Power, and Justice* by insisting upon a theonomous (rather than heteronomous) theological ethic. It asserts that "the law given by God is man's essential nature, put against him as law. If man were not estranged from himself, if his essential nature were not distorted in his actual existence, no law would stand against him. The law is not strange to man. It is natural law. . . . Theonomous ethics include ontology. . . . The Ten Commandments are . . . natural law and they are, in principle, rationally recognizable" (pp. [76-81](#)).

12. *The Library of Living Theology*, Vol. I, p. 225.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 342 f.
14. See *Kirchliche Dogmatik, III*, 2, pp. 284 ff.
15. The concepts of dread and fear in the Old and New Testaments need to be investigated by Biblical exegesis. To date, discussions of these concepts have been almost exclusively of an ontological or psychological character.
16. *Systematic Theology*, p. 236.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
18. *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 339.
19. *The Courage to Be*, p. 179.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 179.



21. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
22. *Systematic Theology*, p. 237.
23. *The Courage to Be*, p. 180. Cf. the note on Hegel in this connection, Ch. III, note 15.
24. *Systematic Theology*, pp. 240 f.
25. *Ibid.*, p. [131](#).
26. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
27. *Op. cit.*, pp. [132](#) f.
28. *Ibid.*, p. [133](#).
29. *Ibid.*, p. [133](#).
30. *Ibid.*, p. [121](#).
31. *Ibid.*, p. [120](#).
32. *Ibid.*, p. [118](#).
33. *Ibid.*, pp. [122-124](#).
34. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

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36. *Ibid.*, pp. [129](#), [131](#).
37. *Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*, Chapter II, Of "Revelation," 1870.
38. Cf. K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik, II*, 1, pp. 252-275.
39. *Op. cit.*, p. [49](#).
40. A quotation from none other than Rudolf Otto is relevant at this point: "It is not my existence which Christ's call to repentance places in question but my righteousness before God; it is not assurance of my existence which his message places in prospect but salvation. To reduce the question of salvation to a question of existence, however, or to bring it into the same category, is surely the most fatal of false philosophies and secularizations that can attack fundamentally religious conceptions. Of course, I must exist, if I want to attain salvation and righteousness in the Kingdom of God. But I also exist if I go to hell; and if I am anxious about my existence I shall go there, perhaps with the greatest certainty. . . . Blessed are those, not who hunger and thirst after existence, but who hunger and thirst after righteousness, even if body and soul thereby perish." - *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, p. [51](#).
41. *Op. cit.*, pp. [28](#), [154](#).
42. *Ibid.*, pp. [22-24](#).

## Chapter V

1. *Being and Some Philosophers*, p. 167. Gilson had previously expounded the existentialism of Saint Thomas in his book *God and Philosophy*. E. L. Mascall observes that "the importance that Gilson has come to attribute to this interpretation is most remarkably shown by a comparison of the new edition (substantially dating from 1941) of his work, *Le Thomisme*, with the earlier edition of 1925" (*Existence and Analogy*, p. 44). *Being and Some Philosophers* affords to English readers Gilson's mature thought on the subject. Our own exposition is based on this text.
2. See his books *He Who Is and Existence and Analogy*.
3. Pantheon Books, Inc., New York, 1948.
4. *Op. cit.*, pp. [160](#) f.
5. *Ibid.*, p. [164](#).
6. *Ibid.*, p. [166](#).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
8. *Ibid.*, p. [173](#).

9. *Ibid.*, p. [176](#).
10. *Ibid.*, pp. [176](#) f.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

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12. Cited by Cilson, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. [132-142](#).
14. *Ibid.*, p. [143](#).
15. *Ibid.*, p. [146](#).
16. *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. [32-33](#) n. cited by M. Wyschogrod, *op. cit.*, pp. [25](#) f.
17. *Ibid.*, p. [31](#).
18. Wyschogrod, *op. cit.*, p. [27](#).
19. *Ibid.*, p. [27](#).
20. See *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. [10](#), [13](#)f., [18](#) f. Wyschogrod states that the change from error to truth in Kierkegaard is like the change from nonbeing to being. But this smacks too much of the ontology of contemporary existentialism and is not exactly Kierkegaard's meaning. He speaks of re-creation and rebirth.
21. Cilson, *op. cit.*, pp. [175](#) f.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 180-185. Jacques Maritain quotes Aquinas to the effect that "God contains within himself all the perfections of being because he is being itself, or the very act of existing, subsistent by itself." - *Sum. Theol.*, I, 4, 2, c in *Existence and the Existent*, p. 42.

## Chapter VI

1. *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, pp. [28](#) ft.
2. *Ktrchliche Dogmatik*, II, 1, pp. 292 f.
3. Charles Hedge, for example, defined God as *ens perfectissimum*. "The word *ens* designates him as a being, not an idea, but as that which has real, objective existence, and absolute perfection distinguishes him from all other beings" ( *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 366). Hodge taught that this perfect being is "infinite and eternal spirit." The attributes are treated philosophically, with Scripture brought in to support the conclusions reached. The knowledge of God is innate, universal, and necessary, and the existence of God can be proved by the so-called theistic arguments. Oblivious to the fact that the analogy of being is the basic principle in the Roman Catholic theory of the knowledge of God, Hodge could write: "We are the children of God, and therefore, we are like him. . . . If we are like God, God is like us .... We are therefore authorized to ascribe to him all the attributes of our own nature as rational creatures, without limitation, and to an infinite degree" (p. 339). Yet side by side with this innate, rational knowledge of God, we have Hodge's strenuous insistence upon the verbal inspiration of Scripture. It could be shown without much trouble, however, that in Hedge the inspired Scripture is in reality part of man's natural knowledge of God. A re-

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markable exception to the rational orthodoxy of the nineteenth century in America is E. V. Gerhart's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1891. Concerning the knowledge of God he wrote: "In the person and history of Jesus Christ, God becomes to the Christian the object of knowledge. The living presence and self-manifestation of divine Truth, Christ reveals the Infinite in the finite, Deity in manhood. Hence by union and communion in the Spirit with Christ glorified, the Christian may know God, his being, his attributes, and his relations to the world" (Vol. I, p. 205). Gerhart looked upon his work as "an earnest effort to make answer to

the call for a doctrinal system in which Jesus Christ stands as the central truth; not only as the instrument of redemption and salvation, but also as the beginning and end of revelation" (p. IX). However, Gerhart did not make any polemical use of his insight nor did he deny to the heathen "a knowledge [of Deity] which contains positive elements of truth." This knowledge was said to be "intuitive." Gerhart also taught that "the universal religious life is the human condition of the Christian religion . . . the capability of discerning and receiving a supernatural revelation" (p. 252). Yet in keeping with his Christocentric system, he began with the Trinity and made a strenuous effort to explain the properties of God in Trinitarian concepts. God, according to Gerhart, is not the absolute spirit of philosophy, but as Spirit is "of himself, in himself and for himself." Love denotes "the self-communication and self-communication of love . . . and is most perfectly revealed in the self-communication of God the Father to God the Son in the mystery of the incarnate One" (p. 445).

4. Op. cit., p. 293.

5. Ibid., p. 300.

6. Ibid., p. 301.

7. Ibid., pp. 304 f.

8. Ibid., p. 406.

9. See op. cit., pp. 306-318.

10. Ibid., p. 338.

11. At this point Barth refers to Anselm's alleged ontological proof of the existence of God. "The unique greatness of the proof of God by Anselm of Canterbury lies in the fact that it fulfills this condition. Yet it has been falsely called the 'ontological' proof and, in that context, has been continually misunderstood. Anselm stopped at the brink of the great Neo-Platonic error of a God whose being is simply the hypostasized essence of its nonbeing in relation to all other being, and of a God who, as the epitome of man, can indeed be thought and whose objective Dasein as such can be proved merely by sophisms. Anselm proved God's

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*Dasein* from the fact that God has proved, proves, and will prove himself in that God, being worthy of gratitude and being the hearer of prayer, posits himself as the beginning to which no thought can return or go beyond. All thought must begin with him because God, in that event of his self-proof, is the One *quo maius cogitari nequit*. He is the One through whose holy Name not only his nonexistence is excluded, but also the thought of his nonexistence. For man is prevented from committing this transgression by the fact that God has given himself to be the object of man's knowledge and at the same time has illumined him for the knowledge of this object" (*ibid.*, p. 343). Barth has expounded fully this thesis in the book which he regards as his finest work - *Fides quaerens intellectum. Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes*. The concluding paragraph reads: "That Anselm's proof of the existence of God has been repeatedly called the 'ontological' proof of God; that one did not want to see that it is entirely different from the well-known doctrines of Descartes and Leibniz; and that one could imagine that it has been affected even in the slightest by what Kant adduced against these doctrines that was a thoughtlessness about which no further words need to be wasted" (p. 199). It is unfortunate that Barth's book on Anselm is not available in English for students of philosophy as well as theology.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 361.

22. **Ibid.**, p. 288.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

24. The word "attribute" has a nominalistic ring to it, suggesting something ascribed or

attributed to God which is external to his nature. Barth prefers the term "perfection." But in English ears it suggests some human quality raised to the highest degree: imperfect in us, perfect in God. I Peter 2:9 speaks of the aretus, the virtues or excellencies of God. Perhaps it would be best to speak of the "properties" of God, since it suggests something proper to God.

25. Anselm held that God is compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of his being ( *Proslogium*, VIII). Aquinas taught: "In speaking of God, we use concrete nouns to signify his subsistence, because with us only those things subsist which are composite, and we use abstract nouns to signify his simplicity. In saying therefore that Godhead, or life, or the like, is in God, we indicate the composite way in which our intellect understands, but not that there is any composition in God"

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( *Summa Theol.*, I, 3, 3). "God, as considered in himself, is altogether one and simple, yet our intellect knows him by different conceptions because it cannot see him as he is in himself" ( *ibid.*, I, 13, 12). "If the perfections of all things are in God, they cannot be distinct in him. Accordingly they are all one in him" ( *Compendium* 24). Calvin's position is not essentially different. "In the enumeration of his perfections God is described, not as he is in himself, but in relation to us, in order that our acknowledgment of him may be more a vivid actual impression than empty visionary speculation" ( *Institutes*, I, 10, 2). In Schleiermacher extreme nominalism is revived in the assertion that the properties of God are but elements in the religious self-consciousness ( *The Christian Faith*, Sec. 50). Cf. K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II, 1, pp. 368-371. Among the nineteenth century American orthodoxists, Charles Hodge declared that "to say that the divine attributes differ only in name, or in our conceptions, or in their effects, is to destroy all true knowledge of God" ( *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I, p. 372). He took the position that "the divine attributes differ neither *realiter*, nor *nominaliter* but *virtualiter*." Actually Hodge took the best position possible, having started with the concept of infinite being, rather than with the being of the triune God in himself and in his revelation. Once again it was E. V. Gethart who perceived the truth. He claimed that to resolve God's properties into "subjective modes of human apprehension . . . contradicts the Christological idea of revelation that in Jesus, the Christ, we have the self-manifestation of the Godhead, both of his nature and will" ( *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I, p. 425).

19. *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II, 1, pp. 372-377. Since all perfections exist in God himself, the practice of classifying the attributes as transitive and intransitive, or as communicable and incommunicable, should be dropped. In virtue of the incarnation the omnipotence of God is no less communicable than the love of God especially since they are inseparable, and constitute the one indivisible being of God.
20. The reader is referred to the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II, 2, pp. 1-563, and to Otto Weber, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*, pp. 93-103.
21. Cf. *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III, 2, pp. 4 ft. Admittedly the Scriptural witness to God's Word is bound up with certain cosmologies. But it does not follow that God's Word itself offers a cosmology that the Church would be obliged to teach.
22. *Ibid.*, p. [158](#).
23. *Ibid.*, p. [159](#).
24. *Ibid.*, p. [162](#).

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25. *Ibia.*, pp. 234 f.  
 26. *The Fourth Gospel*, Vol. I, pp. 326 f.; II, pp. 382 f., 605.  
 27. John 8:24. No predicate is expressed or supplied by the context. Cf. 8:28, 58; 4:26; 9:9; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8. As Hoskyns observes, the Jews now demand that a definite predicate be provided for the I am with their question, Who art thou? The very obscurity of the Creek text suggests that only an enigmatic answer can be given, if any answer at all.

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