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An Analysis of Revelation in the Thought of Paul Tillich and Wolfhart Pannenberg

Theodore Kepes
Loyola University Chicago

AN ANALYSIS OF REVELATION IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL TILLICH AND WOLFHART PANNENBERG

by

Theodore Kepes, Junior

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VITA

The author, Theodore Kepes, Junior, is the son of Theodore Kepes and Prudence (Iannotti) Varro. He was born May 15, 1966, in Chicago, Illinois.

His elementary education was obtained in the public school system of district 62 in Des Plaines, Illinois. His secondary education was completed in 1984 at Main Township High School West, Des Plaines, Illinois.

In August, 1984, Mr. Kepes entered Lewis University, Romeoville, Illinois, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science in aviation maintenance/management, religious studies, and philosophy.

In August, 1988, Mr. Kepes entered Loyola University of Chicago. In 1989 he was granted a full scholarship and assistantship in theology, enabling him to complete the Master of the Arts in 1991.

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CHAPTER I

REVELATION

It is precisely the focus upon the experience of the divine, the transcendent, the holy, the numinous, which distinguishes theology from all other disciplines of thought. Whether a theologian is concerned with the role of the transcendent in aspects of human knowing, the historical critical and literary analysis of Scripture, or the ramifications of humanity's ethical choices upon the integrity of the environment, there must be some reference to the divine or else it would not qualify as *theo-* logy. I will use the term "revelation" because it has traditionally been understood as the communication or mediation of experiences of the divine. The word is derived from the Latin verb *revelare,* the past participle, *revelatus* meaning unveiled, uncovered, or revealed. Why is the *unveiling* of the divine an essential element of theology?

First, the very comprehension of another's theological reflection depends upon one's ability to recognize those elements of thought which reveal aspects of the divine. These aspects of revelation are the primary cornerstones upon which the rest of theological thought can be built. The following statement will serve as an example: God is love; therefore we should care for our neighbor. Questions that directly relate to aspects of revelation

are primary, i.e. Why is God love? What is love? How are the two related? Questions that relate to the corresponding effects and implications are secondary, i.e. Why should we care for our neighbor? Who is our neighbor? In attempting to provide an answer to the question, Why should we care for our neighbor?, it is first necessary to understand why God is love and what we mean by love. Likewise, in attempting to understand theological thought, it is first necessary to grasp the underlying fundamental elements of revelation. Secondly, the act of constructing theological reflection, also demands that one be able to recognize the elements of revelation in experience. The identification of revelation in experience is essential if one hopes to construct critical, theological thought. Thus, this focus on revelation is essential in the development of one's ability to understand and analyze as well as to construct theological thought.

In this thesis, I will provide an analysis of aspects of revelation in the thought of Paul Tillich and Wolfhart Pannenberg. There are two primary reasons why I have chosen to focus on these two theologians. First, their thought is still an active element within contemporary theological discussion. Thus, I hope my research will function as a helpful contribution to this discussion. Second, both focus on different aspects of revelation which I hope to demonstrate, if brought together, would provide a more complete understanding of the experience of revelation.

I will attempt this analysis with the following two objectives in mind. First, I hope to provide an explication of the significant aspects of revelation in the thought of both Tillich and Pannenberg which will provide the necessary foundation from which a more authentic understanding of their thought can be achieved. Second, by focusing on aspects of revelation in the

thought of both Tillich and Pannenberg, I will attempt to construct a fuller, more adequate understanding of the experience of revelation.

It will be helpful if I first provide a general analysis of revelation. I will begin by attempting a brief overview of various ways revelation has been understood by focusing on Avery Dulles' *Models of Revelation.* By starting with Dulles' broad survey of revelation, I hope to establish some breadth in the horizon of significant elements and issues involved in the thought about revelation as a topic in Christian theology. Second, I will rely on the thought of John Baillie in his book *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* and attempt to provide a brief historical outline of some of the significant developments in the thought of revelation that will give some historical perspective to our continuing discussion of revelation as well as to establish the historical location of Tillich and Pannenberg that will be essential in the analysis of their thought that will follow. Third, I will turn to the thought of H. Richard Niebuhr in his book *The Meaning of Revelation* and attempt to establish some depth in the horizon by identifying some of the significant historical elements involved in revelation. Fourth, I will focus on the thought of John Macquarrie in his book *Principles of Christian Theology* and attempt to give some depth to existential and ontological elements of revelation. Fifth, I will analyze the thought of Gordon D. Kaufman in his book *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* highlighting some of the important interrelations involved in thinking about revelation. Finally, I will turn to the thought of Michael L. Cook, S.J., in his article "Revelation as Metaphoric Process" and attempt to identify some of the more detailied elements involved in the interrelations that Kaufman suggests. By providing both a general description of the historical situation in which Tillich and Pannenberg are

involved, as well as focusing on the significant issues and problems that exist in examining the general notion of revelation, I hope to provide a more thorough analysis of their thought which will contribute to a better understanding of theological thought today.

Typological Survey

In his book, *Models of Revelation,* Avery Dulles provides five distinct models to account for the ways revelation has been understood. He uses the criteria of how and where revelation occurs to establish the general parameters of his models. Dulles maintains that a typological analysis of revelation may be helpful in attempting to understand revelation in the complex plurality of our times, but cautions against the uncritical placement of a theologian's thought within a particular model. He suggests that a variety of models, as in physics, may be necessary in order to account for the complex and diverse experience of revelation adequately.

In Dulles' first model, revelation is characterized as doctrine. Doctrine is traditionally understood as a formal teaching or statement of belief. Dulles also refers to this model as the "propositional" model which indicates the act of expressing doctrine, or what is to be believed. This model suggests that revelation does occur in nature, but as a result of the transcendence of God and the reality of human sin, a special source of revelation is necessary. Thus, a supernatural conception of revelation is a characteristic element of this model. For Christians accepting this model, Jesus Christ as well as the Bible are thought to be sources of this supernatural revelation. "What God has revealed, they insist, is truth and is capable of being communicated to human minds

through articulate speech."[1] This model maintains that authoritatively formulated dogma and aspects of tradition are understood to be divinely revealed truth. The proper response to this understanding of revelation is faithful assent to truth understood to be revealed in authoritative sources. It is understood that the Holy Spirit, working in the heart of believers, is an important element in this process.[2] The Holy Spirit allows the believer to grasp divine truth. The primary advantage of this model is in its recognition of the importance of tradition as an interpretive medium. A significant disadvantage is its failure to understand and speak meaningfully to much of human experience.

In his second model, revelation is understood as history. There are varying degrees to which the proponents of this model identify revelation with history. Dulles remarks that Pannenberg argues for the closest identification of history and revelation. Pannenberg rejects the nineteenth-century salvation school, also represented by this model, as being inconsistent and stopping halfway. For him revelation is not to be found in a special segment of history but rather *is* universal history. In his view, revelation is understood to be deeds and events rather than words. Information within doctrine and the Bible is understood as signposts and documentation rather than revelation.[3] Pannenberg understands God to be revealed in and through the events of history. By stressing that it is the events themselves which carry what is necessary for revelation to take place, Pannenberg attempts to overcome the dichotomy between event and interpretation. "When the events

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[1] Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), p. 39.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

are taken seriously for what they are, and in the historical context to which they belong, then they speak their own language, the language of facts."[4] As we shall see, the historical events, for Pannenberg, are "self-interpreting." What is needed to grasp revelation is the use of ones natural reason directed at the universal events of history. By "universal" Pannenberg means the entire history of the world as it moves ahead toward its final aim. Faith is not required for understanding revelation, but rather it is revelation encountered within universal history which brings about faith. These elements of Pannenberg's thought represent significant aspects of the second model which are important in Dulles' analysis of revelation understood as history. Later we shall analyize these elements of Pannenberg's thought as well as a variety of others that are essential in understanding his conception of revelation as history. For now it is important to keep in mind the typological placement of Pannenberg's thought in Dulles' schema so that we may more objectively question the veracity and integrity of his view by grasping its distinctions as well as similarities with the various elements of Dulles' five models of revelation. A significant value of this model is its ability to capture the richness of revelation by referring to historical events rather than mere words. However, "it commonly neglects the factors which control the selection and interpretation of past events on the part of the biblical writers or the Church."[5]

Dulles' third model understands revelation as inner experience. By stressing an internal, personal understanding of revelation, this model is free from theories that describe mediation. "The content of revelation in this

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[4]*Ibid.*, p. 59.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 123.

model, is neither information about the past nor abstract doctrinal truth. Rather, the content is God as he lovingly communicates himself to the soul that is open to him."[6] A primary characteristic of this model is that revelation exists as an experience and not only as an idea. A value of this model is its insistence that what matters is not deeds or words, but God himself. However, this model has a difficult time attempting to communicate this transcendent experience of God.

The fourth model understands revelation as a dialectical presence. This model stresses that as a result of divine transcendence and human sinfulness, God's presence and activity can never be immediately discovered in doctrinal statements, historical fact, or religious experience. Yet, at the same time, it is convinced that God, through faith, can choose to present himself to us in language, history, and experience. This model is characterized by the mystery of a simultaneous yes and no. The stress is on the will and choice of God. Whereas in the model of history, faith is a result of revelation, this model maintains that faith is the essential requirement in order for revelation to take place. The primary value of this model lies in its reminder of the distance between us and God. Also, it illustrates our sinfulness and constant need for humility and forgiveness. A problem with this model, resulting from its contradictory statements, is its inability to provide a coherent, intelligible message.[7]

The fifth and final model understands revelation as new awareness. In this model, revelation is not understood as outside or separate but occurs rather "when human powers are raised to their highest pitch of activity.

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[6]*Ibid.*, p. 77.
[7]*Ibid.*, p. 123.

Rather than going beyond experience, revelation is itself an experience of participation in divine life."[8] This model views God as the horizon of religious experience rather than as the object. "The form of revelation in this model is that of a breakthrough into a more advanced stage of human consciousness, such that the self is experienced as constituted and empowered by the divine presence."[9] In referring to Tillich, Dulles says, "Revelation, for him, did not derive from experience as a source, but it could not occur unless mediated by experience."[10] According to the doctrinal model, the word and dogma are sources of revelation. The historical model emphasizes that it is history itself which is the source of revelation. This model differs from both of these in that it stresses the source of revelation is God while maintaining that the medium of its mediation is human experience. Tillich certainly maintains this position but does so through the use of ontological categories. For Tillich, what is mediated through all aspects of reality (i.e. doctrine, history, language, people, events, etc.) is being-itself. Being grasped by being-itself mediating through some aspect of reality, humanity is faced with an ultimate concern. By representing the primary characteristics of the fifth model of revelation, Tillich functions as an important element in Dulles' schema. In the following chapter we shall see, in detail, Tillich's understanding of revelation as ultimate concern. For now, it is important to keep in mind that Dulles uses Tillich's thought to illustrate the general parameters of his fifth model of revelation as new awareness. We should keep the aspects of Dulles' other models in mind in analyizing Tillich so that we may consider aspects of his thought which he

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

may not necessarily consider. In this way it will be possible to provide a more objective and authentic analysis of his understanding of revelation as ultimate concern. A value of this model is its emphasis on the value of revelation for the human person. It has a difficult time, however, reflecting on revelation for other times and places and is often charged with relativity.[11]

These five models characterize ways revelation has been thought about and understood. With regard to Tillich this analysis is important in identifying his understanding of revelation as a mediation of the divine by means of experience through aspects of reality represented by Dulles' fifth model of revelation. Within the development of Tillich's analysis of revelation as new awareness we will need to explain in greater detail how Tillich views doctrine as a medium of revelation rather than as revelation itself (what Tillich will call the demonic). We will need to focus on how Tillich understands the interrelation between history and revelation (we shall see that an identification of history with revelation is not possible for Tillich because of the distinction between the transcending character of being which cannot directly participate in the subject-object structure of finitude). We will need to focus on the possibiltiy of Tillich's understanding of revelation as an immediate experience (revelation, for Tillich is humanity's ultimate concern which is mediated by experience rather than identical with it). And finally, we will need to explain how Tillich's conception of revelation relates to a dialectical understanding (we will see that there is a close identification of this view with Tillich's in the sense that he stresses that we are grasped by revelation rather than grasping it).

With regard to Pannenberg, this analysis of Dulles' models of revelation

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[11] *Ibid.*, P. 123.

is important by identifying his understanding of revelation as an element of universal history represented by the second model. Within the analysis of Pannenberg's understanding of revelation, we will need to focus on the way he views the function of doctrine (we will see that doctrine functions as a record of revelation rather than revelation itself). We will need to focus on the role of experience in Pannenberg's view of universal history (for Pannenberg, revelation is an external experience of universal history rather than an internal personal feeling). We will need to examine how his view of revelation accounts for the dialectical presense of God (for Pannenberg, God is experienced within the whole of history by means of natural reason). Finally, we will need to see how Pannenberg's view of revelation takes into account the understanding of revelation as a new awareness (we will see that for Panneneberg God is not revealed through experience, but is the experience of universal history). By focusing on these aspects of revelation developed by Dulles, we will be able to bring a more expansive variety of questions to our discussion of ultimate concern and universal history as aspects of revelation in the thought of Tillich and Pannenberg which should allow for a more adequate analysis of their positions. Before providing some depth and detail to some of these aspects, I will attempt to establish some historical perspective.

Historical Survey

John Baillie notes, in his book *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, that for the greater part of Christian history revelation was understood as either the knowledge of God discerned by reflection upon nature by actions of the human intellect, or the direct self-disclosure of God. He says,

"This way of defining revelation as communicating a body of knowledge, some part at least of which could be independently obtained, or at least verified, by 'the light of reason and nature,' while the remainder was supplemental to what could be so obtained or verified, was long to remain unchallenged."[12]

Baillie suggests that after the end of the middle ages, there were two significant shifts in the emphasis of these categories of revelation. The rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries relied more and more on reason as a source of truth and less and less on divine self-disclosure. Those holding extreme positions maintained that it was by reason alone that we could grasp revelation. We see here the foundation of Dulles' first model characterizing revelation as doctrine. By maintaining that revelation could unerringly be grasped by reason, it was possible to establish an authoritarian "doctrine" of revelation. Spinoza demonstrated somewhat more of a middle position. Although he accepts reason as the primary authority of truth, Spinoza acknowledges that revelation is involved with obedience and piety. Baillie notes that a significant function of revelation for Spinoza is its assurance that the common man as well as the philosopher could achieve blessedness.[13]

The other significant shift in emphasis was brought about by the early leaders of the Protestant reformation. They maintained that human reason was so corrupt that it was not able to grasp revelation. Consequently, there was a corresponding shift from understanding revelation to be present in reason and natural theology to an almost exclusive reliance on scripture

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[12]John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (New York: Columbia, 1956), pp. 5 ff.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

alone. We see here the underlying factors contributing to the development of Dulles' fourth model of revelation understood as dialectical presence. For the proponents of this model, human reason is too corrupt to grasp adequately the revelation of God. This model maintains that, on the one hand, God cannot be known, but on the other, in faith, God can choose to be revealed. This explains the characteristic "yes and no" element of this postion.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century rationalist theology was faced with the challenge of the developing Romantic movement. Rationalist thinkers like Immanuel Kant set out to contain revelation within reason altogether. This, according to Kant, was necessary in order to distinguish it from faith which should not be associated with reason at all.[14] Thus revelation was abolished from natural as well as rational theology. This understanding comes close to Dulles' fifth model of revelation as new awareness. Proponents of this theory do not wish to identify revelation with experience at all but rather as a participation in the divine which is mediated through experience.

Well immersed in the stream of German romanticism with pietistic undercurrents, Schleiermacher struggled to take a path that steered between the traditional dichotomy of reason and revelation. For Schleiermacher, the source of religion was not the authoritative truths nor the result of cognitive activity, rather the source of religion was the feeling of dependence on God. Here we see traces of Dulles' third model of revelation understood as an individual, personal experience. Attempting to avoid the problems associated with understanding revelation identified either with reason or within nature, Schleiermacher choose to identify it with the internal experience of feeling.

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[14]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

Likewise, Ritschl followed a path that did not identify revelation with either of the elements of the traditional dichotomy. For Ritschl, revelation is identified with the value judgements of faith.[15] Thus, toward the end of the nineteenth century there was great diversity in the meaning and function of revelation. This diversity accounts for the wide variety of conceptions of revelation outlined within Dulles' five models of revelation.

Prominent Twentieth Century Approaches

More recently, there has been much emphasis on the element of history within theological discussion. Because of this, H. Richard Niebuhr believes there has been a re-evaluation of the meaning of revelation in the twentieth century. It is within his analysis of revelation that we find the historical placement of revelation as history. Thus, Niebuhr continues the historical discussion of revelation that was begun by Baillie and allows us to place Dulles' remaining model in its historical perspective.

H. Richard Niebuhr

In his book, *The Meaning of Revelation*, H. Richard Niebuhr notes the conflicts that were involved throughout the Christian Church apart from Baillie's emphasis in the development of revelation particularly in continental Protestantism. Niebuhr notes that what was at stake in the debates about miracles, prophecy, and between reason and revelation by the deists and supernaturalists in the eighteenth century, was the traditional right of the

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Church to exercise its authority over society.[16] Reason, on the other hand, was taken up by the rebellious, democratic, mercantile civilization. As a result of the conflict, both the understanding of reason as well as revelation were badly damaged. The supernaturalists, stressing the divine authority of the Church, viewed the rationalists with scepticism as unfaithful to the tradition. The rationalists viewed the supernaturalists as naive and close minded for not taking into account much of the developments of the enlightenment. The period was characterized with much scepticism and misunderstanding.

The obvious question that Niebuhr asks is why has the twentieth century seen such an interest in revelation when the very thought of the term brings to mind these unfortunate conflicts of the past? The answer, for Niebuhr, has to do with the development of the idea of spatial and temporal relativity which he believes has profoundly affected twentieth century thought.[17] Developing from this idea, a wider manifestation of its principles has also significantly affected historical and social relativity. Today, western culture generally recognizes that reason is limited by the field of experience and also by its historical and social character. For us, there is no escaping historical and social relativity. Niebuhr suggests that the modern turn back to the emphasis on revelation is not to re-hash the traditional conflicts, but rather to re-evaluate and reflect on religion in light of contemporary experience; particularly, the discovery that one's point of view has a profound influence on the understanding of religious as well as any other aspect of reality.[18] This development was the spark which ignited the emphasis on the

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[16]H.Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (Macmillan, 1960), p. 1.
[17]*Ibid.*, p. 5.
[18]*Ibid.*

close interrelation between revelation and history. Out of it, the various elements of Dulles' second model, including Pannenberg's understanding of universal history, developed.

For Niebuhr, God is the being upon whom we are dependent for our worth and existence. His claim, however, differs from that of Schleiermacher's in that his emphasis is on God rather than the experience of the subject. In fact, Niebuhr criticizes both Schleiermacher and Ritschl for putting the emphasis on the subject rather than God. Their positions, he maintains, are certainly an improvement over the rationalists focus on the object; however, they still fail to recognize the true source of revelation.

Emphasizing that it is God and not the object or subject whom we are dependent upon, the question arises, "How can we come to know and understand this God?" Niebuhr insists that any experience of the numinous must be interpreted experience. "Religious experience and moral sense are to be found in may different settings and can be interpreted from many different points of view."[19] However, in stressing that revelation is history, which has already been recognized as relative, there is an apparent paradox: Revelation cannot mean history, which is relative, and God!! The gap between the two is conveyed by Lessing's well known "ugly, broad ditch." If revelation is history then people today commit the same error as the Rationalists and Romantics by putting their trust and faith in the here and now and not in God. At the same time however, Niebuhr maintains that faith is not possible apart from history which is the medium in which we live. Niebuhr attempts to solve the classical faith/history problem by providing a more detailed examination of the nature of history.

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[19]*Ibid.*, p. 39.

For Niebuhr, there is an important distinction between the impersonal objects of ideas, interests, and movements in "external history" and the personal subjects of selves in community within "internal history." According to him, revelation can never be located in external history but must, as it has in the past, be located in the internal history of one's community.[20] He suggests that this position is supported by traditional emphasis in the past on revelation in subjective events-- events in the lives of the subjects within a community. The events of this internal history cannot be objectively observed, rather "the history of the inner life can only be confessed by selves who speak of what happened to them in the community of other selves."[21] Within this understanding of the internal history of a community lies the key that Niebuhr uses to unlock the door that separates history and faith. He says:

> An inner history, life's flow as regarded from the point of view of living selves, is always an affair of faith. As long as a man lives he must believe in something for the sake of which he lives; without belief in something that makes life worth living man cannot exist. . . Such faith in gods or in values for which men live is inseparable from internal history.[22]

Thus, Niebuhr understands faith as the recognition of meaning and unity in the personal lives of members within a community. Faith is intrinsically involved in the workings of inner history.

By discussing internal and external history separately, Niebuhr does not wish to suggest an extreme dualism exists between them; rather, he emphasizes that the external happenings of history are directly contributory

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

to the events of internal history. It is the elements of external history which form the foundation and structure of the world in which we live, communicate, and function. External history has "reminded the church of the earthen nature of the vessel in which the treasure of faith existed."[23] According to Niebuhr, God is not only the being which is revealed through the internal history of a community, but also the creator of all things. As a result of this, it is also necessary to attempt to look beyond the limited confines of one's particular internal history into the more universal existence of all things and all events. Internal and external history are integrally related in that the very existence of internal history is dependent upon external history which provides its embodiment. " 'Words without thought never to heaven go' but thoughts without words never remain on earth."[24]

For Niebuhr, there is also an integral relationship between revelation and reason. It is reason, with the continuing conversation between sensation and imagination, that allows us to understand and communicate revelation within the internal structure of our history. On the other hand, it is revelation itself, discovered within internal history, that guides the process of reason. "Without revelation reason is limited and guided into error; without reason revelation illuminates only itself."[25] This circular understanding of revelation is summarized by Niebuhr:

> Revelation means the moment in our history through which we know ourselves to be known from beginning to end, in which we are apprehended by the knower; it means the self-disclosing of that eternal knower. Revelation means the moment in which we are surprised by the knowledge of someone there in the darkness and the void of human life; it means the self-disclosure of light in our darkness.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

> Revelation is the moment in which we find our judging selves to be judged not by ourselves or our neighbors but by one who knows the final secrets of the heart; revelation means the self-disclosure of the judge. Revelation means that we find ourselves to be valued rather than valuing and that all our values are transvaluated by the activity of a universal valuer.[26]

This understanding of revelation itself taking the active role and the individual taking the passive role is taken up by John Macquarrie's focus on the Heideggerian modes of conceptual knowledge. Before turning to Macquarrie, who gives existential and ontological depth to Niebuhr's conception of history, it will be helpful if we take a moment to highlight the significant issues that Niebuhr raises in his analysis of revelation.

Clearly the central issue of revelation for Niebuhr is history. He takes a great deal of time to point out the complex nature of history and its relationship to revelation. For him, history is made up of both objective, non-personal, external elements which embody the subjective, personal, internal aspects. It is within the internal history of a community that one recognizes and is recognized by faith as having meaning and unity. Finally, Niebuhr stresses the importance of reason which is necessary for understanding and communicating revelation, but also being dependent, along with action, upon revelation for guidance and direction. Niebuhr, as well as Pannenberg, having been influenced by the historical/critical movement of this century, have similar views of history. Both Niebuhr and Pannenberg view history as a unity. Niebuhr stresses the integration of the internal and external elements of history for the recognition of its unity; Pannenberg stresses the universal observation of history as a whole for the recognition of its unity. For Tillich, history is comprized of an immanent and a transcendent element.

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[26]*ibid.*, pp. 111-112

The immanent is life within the temporal limits of time and space. The transcendent is being-itself which can be mediated through all of reality. As we shall see, Tillich stresses that both elements are necessary in order to interpret and understand historical events.

John Macquarrie

Whereas Niebuhr focuses on the historical aspects of revelation, Macquarrie is concerned with the ontological foundation underlying the historical process. He recognizes that the historical experience of a community is the source of any recognition of revelation, however, he maintains that this understanding of revelation is mediated through the relatively objective aspects of scripture and tradition which the community has founded.[27] Macquarrie stresses that in order for this to occur, it is first necessary for one to be existentially aware of the mood of anxiety. This mood, which can be understood as a certain "mode of awareness" is the result of realization of the polarities and tensions in human life. Thus, faced with possibility and responsibility, on the one hand, and finitude and death on the other, anxiety and concern about existence develop. Macquarrie says:

> This mood may be said to constitute our capacity for receiving revelation. It predisposes us to recognize the approach of holy being. In other words, I am asserting a continuity between the quest for sense and grace that arises out of man's existence, and the directionally opposite *quest for man* to which experiences of grace and revelation bear witness, a quest that is initiated outside of man and remains beyond his control.[28]

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[27]John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), p. 9.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 87.

As a result of this mood of anxiety we experience *being*.

Most of the time we are only aware of particular things: color, sound, shape, etc. However, as a result of the mood of anxiety, we become aware of being, which is no particular thing but the condition for any-*thing* to be at all. "Being is all the time around us, but for the most part it does not get explicitly noticed."[29] It is not possible to conceptualize being because it does not participate in the subject/object interchange of our temporal spatial reality. Rather being is experienced more as a presence and manifestation. Thus one who experiences revelation is aware of the same *things* as one who does not, but in a different way.[30] The difference lies in the recognition of the universal being in and through all particular things. Macquarrie states that this understanding of being as revelation is similar to Rudolf Otto's conception of *mysterium tremendum fascinans* (the mystery that is at once overwhelming and fascinating) in his well know book *The Idea of the Holy*. The *mysterium* refers to the incomprehensible depth of the holy, the *tremendum* emphasizes the otherness and transcendence of the holy, and the *fascinans* represents the unveiling of the grace of the holy as the source and strength of our being.[31]

In attempting to locate this experience of revelation in our cognitive activity, Macquarrie relies heavily on Martin Heidegger's understanding of levels or modes of thinking. There are generally three modes of cognitive experience. The first mode is concerned with the objective observation of external things. Heidegger refers to this mode as calculative thinking. The

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[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

ideal goal is to become a pure spectator of objective happenings. In a sense, we subject the external objects of our world to our rational objectification by attempting to master their essence and reality. The human is the active subject, the thing is the passive object.

The second level of thinking is the existential mode. In this mode, one does not take what is thought about as an object, but rather recognizes what is thought about as another subject having the same kind of being as the one doing the thinking.[32] Whereas in the previous mode fear is understood as the physiological changes in heart rate, respiration, etc.; here fear would be understood as the "existent's own first-hand participation in the experience of fear, and, prior to that, on his participation in a finite existence for which fear is a possibility."[33] The human is the active subject engaged with other active subjects. There is activity on both sides grounded in mutuality and reciprocity.

The third and final category of thinking is the primordial/essential mode. The primary characteristic of this mode is much more meditative than calculative. It is thinking which answers to the demand of being. In describing this mode of thought, Macquarrie says:

> What would seem to happen both in the primordial thinking of the philosopher and in the revelatory experience of the religious man (if indeed these two can be definitely distinguished) is that the initiative passes to that which is known, so that we are seized by it and it impresses itself upon us. But what is known is not another being, but rather being itself, the being which communicates itself through all the particular beings by which it is present, by which it manifests itself, and not least through the depth of our own being, for we too are participants in being and indeed the only participants to which being opens itself, so that we not only are but we exist.[34]

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Macquarrie identifies his ontological understanding of revelation within this mode of cognitive experience. For him, the reality of being resembles gift-like knowledge. Whereas in the first mode of cognitive experience we are active subjects directing our observations upon passive objects, and the second mode in which we are mutually active subjects, within this third mode the category of being, for the most part, is the active subject which directs the awareness of its manifestation upon us, who, have become the objects of its revelation. Although there is certainly an element of passivity in our disposition with regard to this final mode of thinking, Macquarrie points out that we are not fully passive. He suggests that there is an element of appropriation in which being "reveals itself not only in otherness but also in kinship, so that even as we are grasped by it, we can to some extent grasp it in turn and hold to it."[35]

In summary, Macquarrie acknowledges the notion of the historical mediation of revelation but directs his focus on the existential, ontological interrelation between cognitive experience and revelation. For Macquarrie, this understanding of revelation demands involvement, participation and concern. Macquarrie's understanding of revelation as concern strongly resembles Tillich's notion of ultimate concern. Both have been influenced by Heidegger's ontological theory and share the understanding of revelation as being-itself which can become our ultimate concern. On the other hand, Pannenberg is much less concerned with ontology and much more concerned with history. As we shall see in our analysis of Pannenberg, revelation is not a sense of concern stemming from the presence of being in reality, but rather

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[35]*Ibid.*, p. 95.

a universal conception of history as a unified whole. For Pannenberg, all of reality is revelation. But in order to accurately recognize it, one must be able to place it within the universal schema of history as a whole.

By providing some depth to the ontological elements of revelation which were preliminarily exposed within Dulles' fifth model of revelation as new awareness, we will be able to approach the thought of Tillich and Pannenberg more objectively. In the following analysis of Tillich, we will need to focus on how the ontological categories outlined here by Macquarrie relate to the historical elements stressed by Niebuhr. In our analysis of Pannenberg we will need to see how he is able to focus on history with little regard to ontology.

Gordon D. Kaufman

Whereas Niebuhr provided the emphasis and detail on the historical aspects of revelation and Macquarrie focused upon some of the existential and ontological elements, Gordon D. Kaufman, in his book *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective*, sets out to emphasize that the correlation of both historical mediation as well as ontological depth is necessary in order to understand revelation adequately. He does not provide the historical depth of Niebuhr nor the existential depth of Macquarrie, but rather provides breadth that manages to tie together a variety of some of the significant elements and interrelations involved in understanding revelation. Like Niebuhr, Kaufman recognizes that all knowledge is relative to the historical situation of the knower.[36] He also maintains that "the ontological foundations of our deepest

[36]Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles

convictions are in history."[37] He believes these ontological foundations are the sources of meaningfulness that are grounded in individual historical events or processes. Kaufman stresses that there are various shades of meaning present within history. This meaning relates to either a moment of conversion or formation of self-structure or the events within a tradition that have central significance for a tradition. Thus there are two levels of revelatory experience: the personal-individual and the cultural-historical. These are existentially correlated in such a way that a given tradition has ultimate meaning for a person or gives meaning to history.

Kaufman distinguishes between scientific and historical knowledge by focusing on their epistemological foundations. Whereas science attempts abstract "inferences" and "imaginative leaps" to form meaningful unities of "great varieties of observations drawn from widely separated tracts of experience," events in history "can be known in their particularity and detail only through evidences given by eyewitnesses and inferences based on these evidences."[38] Thus it is the conviction of Kaufman that God is present and working in the words and deeds of people in history. He maintains that there are three roots of our knowledge of the Christian faith in historical events. The Bible holds the collection of primary witnesses of the original events. The history and tradition of the church form the collection of secondary sources and interpretations of the events within the Bible. And finally, the apprehension and conviction of truth within doctrine forms the third source of knowledge. Along with these historical events, Kaufman suggests that a

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Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 14.

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 25.

[38]*Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

second norm guiding our theological work must be our contemporary experience. He says, "It is with reference to the historical norm that we can adjudge whether a given position or claim is 'Christian;' it is with reference to the experiential norm that we adjudge whether it 'makes sense.'[39] In a footnote Kaufman explains that the interrelation between these two elements is much more complicated than he suggests. In it, he gives some dimension to several of the more complex historical and existential elements that are at work (i.e. the dependence of the historical dimension on criteria of method, conception of truth, etc. He also notes that historically created categories have considerable influence on one's existential view).[40] Kaufman is not as concerned with the complex details of the interrelation, rather, he stresses that one should recognize that these two elements exist and are distinct and important aspects involved in understanding revelation.

Thus, Kaufman's stress on the correlation between the existential as well as historical elements in understanding revelation shows the interrelation of Dulles' second model of revelation as history and fifth model of revelation as new awareness. This analysis will allow us to ask questions of Tillich and Pannenberg relating to this corelative understanding of revelation. As far as emphasizing the significance of history as well as experience in attempting to grasp revelation, Kaufman resembles Tillich. Whereas Kaufman maintains that historical events can directly convey meaning and revelation; Tillich stresses that history only functions as an indirect medium through which revelation is understood as ultimate concern. Pannenberg is not as interested in a correlation between experience and

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[39]*Ibid.*, p. 76.
[40]*Ibid.*, p. 78.

history. He is convinced that history is one with experience. It alone is the essential element necessary to experience revelation. Kaufman's stress on the necessity of encorporating both elements in one's understanding of revelation is something we shall keep in mind in analyizing the thought of both Tillich and Pannenberg. With regard to Tillich, we will need to focus on how this interrelation takes place. With Pannenberg, we will need to understand why there is no necessity for the ontological, existential element.

Michael L. Cook

Adding some depth and detail to this complex relationship between the texts of history and contemporary experience is Michael L. Cook, S.J. By stressing the necessity of using a metaphoric process in order to grasp revelation, Cook provides some detail to the use of symbol outlined by Dulles' fifth model of revelation as new awareness. Whereas the previous analysis provided detail to the function of history and ontology in revelation, Cook demonstrates some of the cognitive, hermeneutical elements involved in attempting to interpret and understand revelation. In his article "Revelation as Metaphoric Process,"[41] Cook turns to revelation, which he views as the foundation of all Christian theologizing, in an attempt to answer the "crucial but unanswered question of contemporary theology:" What is the relationship between the universal salvific will of God and the absolute uniqueness of Jesus? Cook attempts to answer the question by relying on what he understands to be a more unitive and universal ground for resolving such

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[41]Michael L. Cook, S.J., "Revelation as Metaphoric Process" *Theological Studies* 47 (Sept. 1986).

questions in the primary language of symbol, metaphor, and story.[42] In his article he lays out a metaphoric process by which he attempts to intertwine the specifically Christian with the more universally human. In comparing his metaphoric process with Dulles' *Models of Revelation*, Cook explains that all models are metaphoric in the sense that they possess comprehensive, organizational potential. Cook stresses that root metaphors (i.e. those metaphors which express the most basic assumptions about reality), which he uses, are more fundamental and pervasive and thus subordinate all other models of revelation.[43] Cook provides excellent insight into the essence of revelation and the necessity of using metaphoric language in attempting to understand the complex interrelationships involved. He says:

> The question of revelation is finally a question of *truth*. In terms of the models, it is a question of the interrelationship of propositional truth, historical truth, personal truth (in the sense of direct experience, whether immediate or mediated), transcendent truth, and immanent truth. Such an interrelationship depends upon how one understands symbol as related to the language of metaphor and story (particularly myth and parable), on the one hand, and more conceptual forms such as simile, allegory, and analogy, on the other. I suggest that an analysis of these relationships will affirm the primacy of story in the revelatory process, a primacy that reflects the narrative quality of all human experience.[44]

According to Cook, symbol has the power to invoke mystery because it is able to address itself to the whole person: the imagination, will, emotions, and intellect. It is deeply rooted in human experience and history and emerges from the depth of human consciousness both individual and collective. "This symbolic rootedness in life (*bios*) must come to expression, the level of articulation (*logos*), as metaphor."[45] Symbol and metaphor are integrally

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[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 388-389.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 389.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 390-391.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 392.

related: symbols need metaphors for expression and meaning, metaphors need symbols in order to be rooted in life. Cook refers to Paul Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory* in explaining the relationship between symbol and metaphor. Ricoeur says:

> Everything indicates that symbolic experience calls for a work of meaning from metaphor, a work which it partially provides through its organizational network and its hierarchical levels. Everything indicates that symbol systems constitute a reservoir of meaning whose metaphoric potential is yet to be spoken.[46]

The value of metaphor is in its ability to place two active thoughts in tension with one another which leads to mutual interaction between them. Cook stresses that a metaphor is represented by A=B.[47] A Yiddish saying will serve as an example: "To a worm in horseradish the whole world is horseradish." This tensive interaction between the elements of a metaphor can result in new possibilities. Metaphor cannot be literalized or it will die. Also, it requires participation in its referent (i.e. using the above example, one must, to some degree, know what a worm and horseradish are in order to become aware of the metaphoric possibilities). "In the final analysis, one cannot understand a metaphor unless one knows the story (or game) that gives the metaphor its context."[48] This necessity to refer to stories is related to the nature of human experience. Relying on Gerhart and Russell's *Metaphoric Process,* and their employment of Bernard Lonergan's distinction, Cook stresses that human experience is always interpreted and either immediate (knowledge of objects as bodies in their relations to self) or mediate (knowledge of objects as things

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[46]*Ibid.*, p. 392.
[47]*Ibid.*, p. 393.
[48]*Ibid.*

in relation with one another).[49] Relying both on Lonergan as well as the hermeneutical theory of David Tracy, Cook states that human experience "implies the theoretical activity of human minds, both of the human community that proceeds and surrounds us and of our own theoretical and imaginative capacities."[50] Because of the essential "durational" character of experience in the continuing dialectic between past, present, and future, the best way to talk about it is to tell stories.

There are a great variety of stories all of which attempt to show us how the world works. Cook points out that it is the religious stories characterized by the tension of myth (stories that set up worlds) and parables (stories that disturb worlds) and actions (stories that explore the world halfway between myth and parable) that "give us the opportunity to explore, to rethink, to stretch the imagination."[51] For Cook, symbol, metaphor, and story, although distinct, form a unity. Symbolic experience must express itself with metaphor if it is to become meaningful and coherent to human consciousness, and metaphor must come to narrative expression if it is to come to full contextual meaning in human experience.[52]

In returning to Dulles' models, Cook maintains that revelation on the level of primary language is best understood in the interaction between model four (dialectical presence) and model five (new awareness). Revelation is primarily a correlation between word and faith.[53] What is important in this correlation is the emphasis on divine initiative as well as the involvement of

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[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 394-395.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 395.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 398 ff.

God in human history and experience: "the God who dialogues." The "definitive example" according to Cook is the death and resurrection of Jesus. God took the initiative of sending his son to express the fullness of his love to humanity. The free human response on the part of Jesus was faithful obedience to the will of God; on the part of his contemporaries it was either to accept or deny God's offering of love. God's response and initiative in the face of the rejection was to raise Jesus from the dead expressing a continual initiative of love despite the rejection. Cook says, "The point is twofold, the initiative is always God's (this is what it means to call God Creator, Alpha and Omega), but God's initiative is always mediated through the free response of His creatures. Revelation occurs in this dialectical unity and comes to expression primarily as narrated metaphor."[54] Cook points out that Dulles recognizes the close correspondence between the new awareness model and symbolic communication. This model does not view God as an outsider, but rather as one working from within in the creative, unitive, dialogic process of divine initiative and human response.

Cook emphasizes that this metaphoric process is dependent upon the primacy of symbol. He discusses the threefold process of Ricoeur's understanding of the function of symbol in the process of interpretation between the text of a tradition and contemporary experience.[55] First, there must be a precritical and unreflexive experience of symbol in an openness to what the text might say to the experience of the interpreter. Second, there must be a move from a vague, subjective understanding symbol to a more critical, conceptual understanding formed by some method (i.e. biblical

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[54]*Ibid.*, p. 398.
[55]*Ibid.*, pp. 400-401

criticism, historical, literary, etc.). Cook places Dulles' first three models of revelation (propositional, historical, experiential) within this second step of symbolic interpretation. He notes that these conceptualizations are intrinsic to revelation, but are subordinate to revelation. This is the case because a conceptualization can never exhaust the possibility of content within a mystery. The third and final step is a return back to the symbol. By going through this process and experiencing the symbol in a new and distinct way, we experience new possibilities. With these new possibilities one must return back to the first step. It is a continual process.

This emphasis on metaphoric process is essential, for Cook, in understanding the relationship between the universal will of God and the particular revelation in Jesus Christ. By conceptualizing revelation as metaphoric process, one can understand the stories, metaphors, and symbols of Christ in a way that makes them appropriate for humanity as a whole. By focusing on these elements, Cook gives some depth to the interrelation between historical elements, outlined by Niebuhr, and experiential aspects, outlined by Macquarrie. By stressing the need to bring together elements of history and experience, Cook's objectives resemble Kaufman's. They differ from all our previous analyses in the sense that the focus is on elements of human knowing, interpretating, and understanding revelation. In our analysis of Tillich and Pannenberg it will be necessary to identify the hermeneutical elements outlined by Cook. In the case of Tillich: how is it that one can know, interpret, and understand being-itself both in history as well as contemporary experience? For Pannenberg: what exactly allows people to accurately know, interpret, and understand universal history? How does story, symbol, and metaphor function in their respective understandings of

revelation?

Thus we have come from a broad overview of revelation outlined by Dulles' five models of revelation, given it some historical perspective with the analysis of Baillie and Niebuhr, provided some detail and depth to the significant elements involved in the interrelation of history and revelation with the analysis of Niebuhr, demonstrated the significance of the ontological, existential elements in revelation by analyzing Macquarrie, shown the value of correlating both the historical as well as the experienctial aspects of revelation by focusing on Kaufman, and finally provided a somewhat detailed description of the function of metaphoric elements in interpretive theory important in understanding revelation in history as well as contemporary experience. All of these elements are important factors in attempting to analyze and comprehend the extremely complex and diverse concept of revelation.

CHAPTER II

ULTIMATE CONCERN AS REVELATION IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL TILLICH

Before attempting to analyze Tillich's understanding of revelation as the manifestation of ultimate concern, it will be helpful if we first clarify some of the significant questions which have developed from chapter one which we will need to bring to our analysis of Tillich's notion of ultimate concern. Stemming from Dulles' analysis of revelation we will need to see how Tillich's notion of ultimate concern relates to the understanding of revelation as doctrine, as history, as internal experience, as dialectic and as new awareness? Arising from Niebuhr's analysis we will need to focus on how Tillich attempts to deal with the relativity of one's particular historical point of view with regard to theological thought? Also, how is it that Tillich attempts to deal with the universality of faith and the particularities of history? As a result of Macquarrie's analysis of revelation we will need to focus on how revelation is mediated by history through ontological categories? Stemming from Kaufman's analysis we will need to examine how ultimate concern accounts for the interrelation of historical and ontological elements? Finally, arising out of Cook's analysis of the hermeneutical elements of attempting to grasp revelation conceptually, we will need to see how Tillich's notion of ultimate concern allows one to know or interpret revelation in both history as

well as contemporary experience? With these questions in mind we now turn to Paul Tillich's understanding of revelation as ultimate concern.

In this analysis of revelation as ultimate concern in the thought of Paul Tillich we will focus, primarily, on his *Systematic Theology*. It is within this system of thought that the foundational character of revelation as ultimate concern is described. In this section I hope to provide an accurate description of Tillich's understanding of ultimate concern by focusing on the elements of its ontological structure as well as its interrelations with other elements of his systematic thought which reveal significant aspects of the meaning and function of ultimate concern as an element of revelation. Before attempting to do this, it may be helpful if we outline some of the preliminary objectives, presumptions and criteria that function in the thought of Tillich. This introduction will help us to understand the underlying disposition of Tillich's thought necessary to grasp the overall direction of his systematic analysis of Theology.

Underlying the whole of Tillich's *Systematic Theology,* is his conviction that theology functions between what he calls the "eternal truth" and the "temporal situation" in which this truth is received. Thus, Tillich continually strives to address the questions implied within humanity's dynamic situation with the answers found by maintaining contact with the essence and identity of the kergyma within tradition which comes from beyond and is mediated through experience. This apologetic or "answering theology,"[56] deals with the interrelation and correlation of questions and answers and provides the structure of Tillich's simplest ideas as well as the tremendously complex

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[56]Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* vol I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 6.

constructions of entire sections of his work.

On the one hand, the method of correlation must focus on humanity's existential situation. The situation, for Tillich, is not concerned with the particular state of individual as individual or group as group but rather with the forms of creative cultural interpretations of these states (i.e. scientific, artistic, political, etc.). For example, Tillich explains that theology would not be concerned with mental illness itself but rather with the psychological interpretation of the illness.[57] Implied within these cultural interpretations are the multitude of questions of humanity's existential situation.

On the other hand, the method of correlation must focus on what Tillich calls the "eternal truth." The source of this answer side is outlined in his two formal criteria of theology. The first is that the object[58] of theology is ultimate concern.[59] It is a concern that is ultimate, unconditional, and infinite. This ultimate concern can be manifest in every preliminary concern which becomes an object insofar as it points to ultimate concern (e.g. pictures, poems, music, etc.). What is significant about this first formal criterion is the emphasis on the infinite nature of ultimate concern. It can never be anything in particular, but particular things can point to it. The second formal criterion establishes the ontological structure of ultimate concern. In it, Tillich describes ultimate concern as "that which determines our being or

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[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[58] The term "object" in this context should be understood as that to which theology directs itself, not to be confused with a finite "object" existing within the temporal limits of time and space. This ontological character of ultimate concern will be developed in much greater detail further in the section.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

not-being."[60] Anything that is of ultimate concern for us must have influence on our *being*. This understanding of "being" is not to be confused with temporal existence. Rather, it is that which includes the whole of human reality-- its structure, meaning, and aim of existence. I will attempt to demonstrate that it is Tillich's understanding of ultimate concern understood as revelation which becomes the foundation of the answering side of his method of correlation underlying the whole of his theological thought.

These are some of the primary objectives and criteria that are at work in Tillich's thought. In what follows, I will attempt to analyze the meaning and role of ultimate concern in the theological thought of Tillich. I will generally follow the structure of the five main sections of his *Systematic Theology* dealing first with the questions implied in the situation and secondly with the way ultimate concern functions as the answer. In several cases I have relied on other works of Tillich in order to clarify or add substance to specific elements of my analysis.

Ultimate Concern and Reason

Within this first section of his system, Tillich attempts to correlate the questions implied in existence dealing with humanity's finitude, self-estrangement, and the ambiguities of reason with the answers derived from our ultimate concerns. He begins by pointing out that the classical philosophical tradition understood reason as the structure of the mind that allows one to grasp and transform all aspects of reality (cognitive, aesthetic,

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[60] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

practical, and technical). According to Tillich, all that remains of this diverse understanding of reason in the popular mind is the technical aspect which is concerned with cognitive activity alone.[61]

Tillich makes a distinction between what he considers controlling knowledge and receiving knowledge.[62] In controlling knowledge, technical reason unites subject and object so that the subject can gain control over the object (detachment). Because of this detachment, the substance of controlling knowledge is fairly secure and objective. With receiving knowledge, the subject attempts to take the object into itself (union). This union of subject and object involves the element of emotional participation whereas controlling knowledge attempts to separate itself as much as possible. As a result of the focus on union, receiving knowledge involves understanding which stems from participation and gives it the potential for becoming ultimately significant.[63] The problem, however, is that controlling knowledge, although it possesses objective certainty, lacks the potential for becoming ultimately significant because it lacks the necessary element of participation. On the other hand, receiving knowledge, although possessing the element of participation, and consequently, the potential for being ultimately significant, lacks the certitude that stems from the objective detachment of controlling knowledge. For Tillich, any attempt to understand a

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[61] *Systematic.*, p. 73.

[62] It is interesting to note the similarity between these two categories of reason with Heidegger's understanding of the calculative and existential modes of cognitive experience.

[63] By "ultimately significant" Tillich means that intimate participation within the object is a necessary step in allowing the element of *being-itself* to influence our *being*. Thus, receiving knowledge can become our ultimate concern. As we shall see, Tillich maintains that the fulfillment of complete union is only possible as a result of revelation. See *Systematic*, vol. I, pp. 98-100.

person, historical event, text, etc. must involve an amalgamation of controlling and receiving knowledge (a paradoxical coming together of detachment and union).[64] The solution of this paradox of reason is found in the ontological structure of revelation as our ultimate concern. Only revelation can allow the elements of reason to become certain as well as ultimately meaningful.[65]

Thus, reason is only meaningful as an expression of ontological reason.[66] Ontological reason is concerned with the universal structure of being, and consequently, the depth of being.[67] It is not reason itself but rather precedes it and is manifest through it. Ontological reason in the cognitive realm is concerned with truth itself; in the aesthetic realm, beauty itself; and in the legal realm, with justice itself. It is a mystery in the sense that it precedes the subject/object structure of reality. In this sense, ontological reason is understood as revelation. "The word 'revelation' ('removing the veil') has been used traditionally to mean the manifestation of something hidden which cannot be approached through ordinary ways of gaining knowledge."[68] Because knowledge is dependent upon the subject/object structure of reality, revelation is an experience which cannot be dissolved into it.[69] Thus, even in its manifestation, revelation still remains

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[64]*Systematic.*, vol. I, p. 98.

[65]*Ibid.*, p. 105.

[66]This is Tillich's equivalent to Heidegger's ontological mode of thought. Macquarrie describes it as thinking which answers to the demand of being.

[67] In discussing the ontological element of reason, Tillich necessarily uses metaphoric language (i.e. being itself, depth, ground, abyss, etc.). The significance of using symbols and metaphors in discussing revelation as ultimate concern will be explained later in much greater detail. For now, it is important to recognize that revelatory language is metaphoric in nature and not to be confused with a literal understanding.

[68]*Systematic.*, vol. I, p. 108.

[69]*Ibid.*, pp. 108ff.

a mystery. In a negative sense, mystery is experienced as an abysmal element, as the threat of non-being. In the positive sense, it appears as that which conquers the threat of non-being, it appears as ultimate concern. It is this sense of mystery which becomes the first step to experiencing ultimate concern. Only when reason is driven beyond itself out of the subject/object structure of reality to the realization of being and non-being can one experience the mystery of ultimate concern.

Revelation is that which concerns us ultimately. It is an ultimate concern for us because it concerns the very ground of our being. If Revelation exists only as an ultimate concern for a particular individual or group, then there is no general revelation. For Tillich, there is no revelation if there is no one to receive it as an ultimate concern.[70] Thus, revelation always involves the union of a subjective and objective side: subjectively, someone is grasped by ultimate concern; objectively, there is that which grasps someone. There is no experience of an ultimate concern without being in the state of ecstasy-- literally, "standing outside oneself."

The state of ecstasy does not negate reason but is the state of mind in which reason is outside the subject/object structure of reality. "Ecstasy unites the experience of the abyss 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."[71] Ecstasy is the form in which ultimate concern manifests itself within humanity's psychological condition. It is important to note that it manifests itself through them and is not created by them. The ecstatic experience of the ground of being in events,

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[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 110ff.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 113

persons, and things becomes humanity's ultimate concern.

Thus, all reality-- things, people, and events can become the media for that which concerns us ultimately. Tillich describes the experience of this occurrence as a revelatory constellation.[72] There is a qualitative difference between the significance and truth of the revelation mediated through different elements of reality. The criteria for this significance is the ability of the particular aspect of reality to point to its ground and meaning. For Tillich, the person represents the central qualities of revelation, and by implication, all qualities. However, other things can become supporting elements of revelation (Tillich uses the example of the power of resisting and enduring in a stone which is used in the metaphor of God as "rock of ages"). Tillich stresses that all natural things and events (e.g. stars, plants, people, natural catastrophes, birth, death, danger, etc.) can become media and bearers of revelation. Finally, even language can become a medium of revelation. Tillich describes language that enters a revelatory constellation as transparent language which allows the depth of being and meaning to shine through. This demonstrates his conviction in the mediatory nature of all reality with regard to revelation. Tillich says, "In all these cases it is not the thing or the event as such which has revelatory character; they reveal that which uses them as a medium and bearer of revelation."[73] By entering the special conditions of a revelatory constellation they can become the medium through which revelation is experienced as an ultimate concern.

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[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 118ff.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Ultimate Concern and Being

In the previous section we focused on Tillich's understanding of reason and its interrelation with revelation as ultimate concern. It, as well as the final section on history, are, in a sense, separate from the central part of the system. The epistemological as well as the historical elements of theology are involved within the whole of the system, but for matters of expediency and coherence Tillich treats them separately. Thus section two "Being and God," forms the first part of the central structure of his system. In it, Tillich analyzes humanity's essential nature (what one ought to be vs. what one is) in unity with the essential nature of everything that has being. There is a correlation between the questions implied in the ontological structure of finitude with God understood as humanity's ultimate concern.

The ontological question is what is being itself? In his book, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality,* Tillich discusses the Socratic "paradox of knowledge" in relation to humanity asking the question of being. Because we ask the question there is something about being which we do not possess, otherwise we would not ask the question. Also, there must be something of being which we must possess, for, if not, it could not be the object of a question.[74] Thus, we are somewhat of a mixture of being and non-being: this is what is meant when we say we are finite. "He who is infinite does not ask the question of being, for, as infinite, he has the complete power of being. He is identical with it; he is God."[75] In our quest for the "really real" or the essential substance and meaning of things and people we find ourselves

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[74]Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (The University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 11.
[75]*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

delving into deeper and deeper levels of reality. In our attempt to discover the ultimate reality of a thing we discover that it is no longer *a* thing along side other things, but rather, it participates in the ground of all levels: the power and substance of *being*. This quest for the ultimate meaning in all things is the quest for being itself. It is in being itself that everything that is, can become an ultimate concern for humanity. All things are "elements of an encounter, namely, the encounter with the holy. They are parts of this encounter, not as things or values, but as bearers of something beyond themselves."[76] This something beyond is described as "the holy, the numinous presence of that which concerns us ultimately."[77] Holiness is the name Tillich gives to this quality of that which concerns us ultimately. Ultimate concern is an experienced phenomenon which can only become actual in the mediation of being itself through things.[78]

The ontological structure of being as ultimate concern underlies all of reality; it is present whenever something is experienced. "The truth of all ontological structures is their power of expressing that which makes the subject-object structure possible. They constitute this structure; they are not controlled by it."[79] It is this ontological structure of being which remains a relatively static element underlying all historical change.[80] This does not mean however that there is a fixed human nature in history. On the contrary, Tillich argues that human nature is dynamic in history. Despite this universal character of the structure of being, humanity is limited by the

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[76]*Ibid.*, p. 24.
[77]*Ibid.*
[78]*Systematic*, vol. I, pp. 215-216.
[79]*Ibid.*, p. 169.
[80]*Ibid.*, pp. 163ff

experience of non-being. This experience of being limited by non-being is finitude.

For humanity, the finite limits of time and space participate in the ontological structure positively as courage and negatively as anxiety.[81] With the limit of time there is both the anxiety of having to die as well as the courage of being in the present moment.[82] With the limit of space, there is the anxiety that stems from the insecurity of not having an absolute and certain place to be as well as the courage that comes from affirming one's being in space at any given moment. For Tillich, the questions that are implied in our situation in which we are limited by finitude but yet participate within elements of the infinite are answered with the reality of God experienced as our ultimate concern.

God is the name for that which concerns us ultimately. As *a* being, God does not exist. In order to exist as *a* being God would be limited by the subject/object structure of finitude. God is beyond this structure. God is the experience of being itself which concerns us ultimately.[83] Tillich explains:

> God would not be God if he were not the creative ground of everything that has being, that, in fact, he is the infinite and unconditional power of being or, in the most radical abstraction, that he is being-itself. In this respect God is neither alongside things nor even 'above' them; he is nearer to them than they are to themselves. He is their creative ground, here and now, always and everywhere.[84]

Being itself is the link connecting the finite with the infinite. It can be

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[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 189ff. Note that Macquarrie as well stresses the the mood of anxiety in the experience of being. See John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), pp. 86 ff.

[82] For a full discussion of the aspects of anxiety and courage see Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 205ff.

[84] *Systematic*, vol. II, p. 7.

experienced in all things as that which influences the essential structure of our very being, and consequently, concerns us ultimately. It functions as both that which is experienced as the infinite, the unconditional, and as ultimate concern but is manifest through the concrete elements of reality. Thus, any concrete assertion about God, which is forced to use finite experience and elements, must be symbolic.

Tillich expresses his understanding of "symbol" by distinguishing it from the term "sign".[85] For him, both a symbol and sign share in the function of pointing to something beyond themselves. For the sign, there is no other function than to represent something else. This is illustrated by Tillich with the example of the letter "A" pointing to the sound of its pronunciation. On the other hand, a symbol, although pointing to something other than itself, also participates in the meaning and power of the reality to which it points. The example that Tillich uses is a flag that points to and participates within the reality and power of a king or nation. Thus, ultimate concern can only be expressed with symbols that, on the one hand point to it, but also function and participate within it. This essential relationship between the use of symbol and ultimate concern is demonstrated by Tillich's understanding of God. He says:

> We could not be in communication with God if he were only 'ultimate being.' But in our relationship to him we encounter him with the highest of what we ourselves are, *person* . And so in the symbolic form of speaking about him, we have both that which transcends infinitely our experience of ourselves as persons, and that which is so adequate to our being persons that we can say, 'Thou' to God, and can pray to him.[86]

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[85]Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 61ff.

[86]*Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

For Tillich, God understood with the symbol of being itself is the underlying structure of all reality and provides the solution to the problems implied in the finitude of humanity. By bridging the gap between our finite limits and the infinite, the experience of being-itself is one of ultimate concern.

Ultimate Concern and Existence

In the second section we analyzed Tillich's understanding of humanity's essential nature as manifest in the ontological categories of being. There was a correlation between the limits of finitude with the presence of God as being itself. In this section I will focus on Tillich's analysis of humanity's self-estrangement within existence (in a sense, what one should not be). There is a correlation between the questions that arise out of humanity's self-estranged existence and the answers that come from the Christ (one who is in existence but not estranged from his essence). Thus, I will identify the questions implied in humanity's self-estranged existence and illustrate how Christ - paradoxically existing in essential being - as the New Being is an ultimate concern.

As with being in the state of finitude, being in existence means having being that stands out of non-being.[87] Naturally, the question is how do they differ? In finitude, humanity's essential being is separated from self because the self, bound to the subject/object structure of time and space, is limited by elements of non-being. In existence, essential being is separated from self because of humanity's decision to actualize its potential power of being into

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[87]*Systematic*, vol. II, pp. 20ff.

the finite structure of existence. For Tillich, potentiality is the power of being which has not yet realized its power. All things have being and the potential to actualize it; only humanity has actualized this potential, and thus, entered into existence. Tillich discusses the relationship between the potentiality in the being of "treehood" and the actualization of the "tree" in his back yard:

> Treehood does not exist, although it has being, namely, potential being. But the tree in my back yard does exist. It stands out of the mere potentiality of treehood. But it stands out and exists only because it participates in that power of being which is treehood, that power which makes every tree a tree and nothing else.[88]

The instant some-*thing* becomes *a* thing it is actualized into the finite limits of existence. Humanity, possessing the ability to recognize being and its potential for actualization combined with the freedom and ability to do so, has chosen to "come into being" (exist). Tillich points out that this is what the Genesis creation myth is attempting to convey.[89] The serpent, representing the actualization of the power of being into existence, tempts humanity into choosing to exist apart from its essence (metaphorically illustrated by acting against the God, or essential being).

Tillich does make a further distinction between finitude and existence. He maintains that finitude, in itself, is good, but under the conditions of existential estrangement it is destructive.[90] The question: how is it that we can exist limited by finitude and hope to come closer to our essence is answered by the reality of the Christ.

For Tillich, Christ is the "New Being" which conquered the

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[88] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-44.
[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 71ff.

estrangement of existence and paradoxically existed essentially. The term "New Being" simply reflects Christ's unique ability to eliminate the gap between existence and essence.[91] Tillich points out that this is similar to Paul's use of the term "new creature." Jesus is the Christ precisely because he was one-- there is no trace of separation between him and his essential being (God). He has finite freedom under the conditions of time and space, but is not estranged from the ground of his being.

The reality of Christ, for Tillich, cannot be experienced as a result of historical data alone. For Tillich, "Faith itself is the immediate (not mediated by conclusions) evidence of the New Being within and under the conditions of existence."[92] Thus, for him, the foundation of Christianity is not historical but rather existential. The issue here is the way existential awareness of the Christ is manifest in present reality as well as in history. Later I will focus specifically on the role of ultimate concern and history, for now, it is important to recognize that Tillich's emphasis is upon faith in the existential experience of Christ as the New Being rather than historical evidence. He says, "The risk of faith is existential; it concerns the totality of our being while the risk of historical judgments is theoretical and open to permanent scientific correction."[93] It is important to keep in mind that Tillich understands historical criticism as well as philosophy to be scientific disciplines that attempt an external objective analysis of reality. What makes Jesus the Christ is the unity of his existence with his essence. And as mentioned before, essential being cannot be understood objectively; it

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[91] *Ibid.*, p. 119.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

transcends the subject/object structure of finitude. Thus, Tillich stresses that Jesus, as the Christ, can only be experienced existentially in faith. This existential experience of Christ as the New Being is what bridges the 2000 year gap between the original Christian event and the contemporary Christian.[94]

What makes Jesus the Christ ultimately significant for humanity is the verity of his existence as well as the experience of his essence. Thus, in discussing the cross and resurrection event of Christ it is important to maintain elements of fact as well as symbol. Facts are needed to convey the existential elements of the reality of Jesus and symbols are needed to convey the essential experience of Christ as revelation, being and ultimate concern.[95] Christ, overcoming the gap between existence and essence gives humanity ultimate hope and meaning. This realization of Jesus becoming united with the New Being in an ecstatic experience is what is conveyed with the symbol of the resurrection. For Tillich, this realization is what characterizes faith.

> Faith is based on the experience of being grasped by the power of the New Being through which the destructive consequences of estrangement are conquered. It is the certainty of one's own victory over the death of existential estrangement which creates the certainty of the Resurrection of the Christ as event and symbol; but it is not historical conviction or the acceptance of biblical authority which creates this certainty.[96]

This faith in the experience of the Christ as New Being is of ultimate concern for humanity. It concerns the totality of our very being. It concerns the ultimately new toward which history is moving. Christ as the New Being is the end and aim of history.

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 154ff.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

Ultimate Concern and Life

In section two, we analyzed Tillich's understanding of humanity's essential nature in the correlation between being and ultimate concern. In the last section we focused upon the humanity's estranged existence correlated with the unity of Christ. However, these are both abstractions of the complex interrelation between essential and existential characteristics in reality. In this section we will need to analyze Tillich's conception of the complex and dynamic unity of life. There is a correlation between the questions implied in the ambiguities of humanity's essential nature intertwined within existence and the answers given by the Spirit which is our ultimate concern.

Tillich maintains that it is through the evolutionary process that humanity acquired the ability to recognize the potentialities of being and with it, the freedom to actualize them.[97] The inorganic as well as the organic, grounded in being, has the potential for becoming our ultimate concern; and consequently, is of immense theological significance. However the very attempt to recognize these ultimate concerns is distorted by the ambiguities of our existentially estranged condition. Because humanity is bound to the finite subject/object structure of reality there is always the temptation of identifying the particular bearer of an ultimate concern with the ultimate concern itself. Tillich refers to this as the demonic.[98] The demonic is manifest whenever there is a distortion of the self-transcendent experience of an ultimate concern. The demonic differs from the profane which resists self-transcendence. For Tillich, humanity continually strives to overcome these

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[97]*Systematic.*, vol. III, p. 16.
[98]*Ibid.*, p. 102.

ambiguities of life and seeks the unambiguous life. This quality of unambiguous life is represented with the symbol of the Spirit.

The Spirit manifests itself in the human dimension of the spirit. Tillich defines spirit (with a small "s") as that function of life which characterizes humanity as humanity and is actualized in morality, culture and religion.[99] It is also understood as the symbol which represents the manifestation of the Divine Spirit in humanity. Within the spirit, power of being is united with the meaning of being and can be defined as the actualization of the power and meaning of being in unity. Under the presence of the Spirit, it is the human spirit which is grasped by ultimate concern and experiences ecstasy. The human spirit in life is ambiguous. When this human spirit is grasped by the Divine Spirit, life becomes unambiguous. Tillich gives this manifestation of the Divine Spirit, which creates unambiguous life, the name of faith.

Faith in this sense is the state of being grasped by ultimate concern.[100] In this sense, all people have faith because all people have ultimate concerns. This faith occurs in the dynamics, structure and functions of the human spirit. In the receptive character of faith, the human spirit is opened up by the presence of the Spirit. In faith's paradoxical character, the human spirit accepts the presence of the Divine Spirit despite the tremendous gap between them. And in faith's anticipatory character, the human spirit expects to participate in the transcendent unity of the unambiguous life created by the presence of the Divine Spirit.[101] These characteristics of faith demonstrate the correlation between the ambiguities in the life of the human spirit and the

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[99] *Ibid.*, p. 111.
[100] *Ibid.*, pp. 130ff.
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

unambiguous presence of the Divine Spirit which is experienced as ultimate concern.

Ultimate Concern and History

This final section of Tillich's *Systematic Theology,* as with the first section on reason, is treated somewhat separately from the central portion of the system (sections 2-4). Despite the fact that history is a significant element throughout the whole of the system, Tillich believes it is helpful to treat it separately. There is a correlation between the questions implied in the ambiguities of history with the answers within the symbol of the Kingdom of God. We will first analyze Tillich's understanding of the historical dimension in general which belongs to all life processes and realms of life. Secondly, we will turn to what Tillich calls "history proper," that is, history which is dependent on the human spirit and occurs in humanity alone. We will focus on the questions implied in both of these aspects of history and attempt to correlate them with the answers in the element of ultimate concern in the symbol of the Kingdom of God.

For Tillich, there is a distinction between an historical happening and an historical event. Within reality there is an inexhaustible amount of happenings and occurrences that continually take place. These happenings do not become historical events until they are perceived and interpreted by humanity. "Every event is a syndrome (a running together) of facts and interpretation."[102] The bearers and receivers within a particular tradition

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[102]*Ibid.*, p. 302.

unite the historical happenings with symbolic interpretation. This "historical consciousness" is manifest within the memories and recollections of the members of a tradition that is continually passed from generation to generation. The criteria for realizing and accepting a particular historical happening as an event is dependent upon the particular occurrence's value and meaning for a particular tradition. "In this respect history is dependent on the historical consciousness of a group."[103]

For Tillich, there are four characteristics of human history. The first is its connection with purpose. A historical event is generally characterized by actions with a purpose. The second is its connection with freedom. By striving for the possible purposes, humanity transcends the actual situation and is free. The third is its striving for the new. All historical events are unique. And finally, the fourth characteristic of human history is its universal, particular, teleological significance. Just how it is that a historical happening is recognized and interpreted as an historical event with the characteristics of human history depends upon a specific criteria or key within a group.

Thus, for Tillich the direct bearers of history are groups of centered communities. Because of the limits of finitude they depend upon a particular key to recognize and interpret limitless historical happenings.

> At this point the question is: Which group and which vocational consciousness are able to give a key to history as a whole? Obviously, if we try to answer, we have already presupposed an interpretation of history with a claim to universality; we have already used the key in justifying its use. This is an unavoidable consequence of the 'theological circle' within which systematic theology moves; but it is and unavoidable circle wherever the question of the ultimate meaning of history is asked.[104]

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[103] *Ibid.*, p. 301.
[104] *Ibid.*

The questions of the ultimate meaning of history that arise out of the ambiguities in the dimension of history are answered through symbol of the Kingdom of God which becomes our ultimate concern.

The Kingdom of God has two aspects: an inner historical side which allows it to participate in the dynamics of history, and a transhistorical side which answers the questions implied in the ambiguities of the dynamics of history.[105] These aspects embrace all aspects of reality. The central manifestation of the Kingdom of God is in the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. "The metaphor 'center' expresses a moment in history for which everything before and after is both preparation and reception."[106] The point at which the human situation received this manifestation is understood as the "fulfillment of time"-- the *Kairos*. Tillich stresses that the Churches continually experience *Kairoi* in which the Kingdom of God manifests itself in particular breakthroughs. He defines the relationship between the central *Kairos* to the *Kairoi* as "the relation of the criterion to that which stands under the criterion and the relation of the source of power to that which is nourished by the source of power."[107] The awareness of a particular *Kairos* is not a matter of a detached, objective analysis; but rather, a matter of an involved experience. However, observation and analysis do not produce the experience of the *Kairos*, they are important to the extent that they help to objectify and clarify the experience. The fragmentary victories of the Kingdom of God in history point to the non-fragmentary side of the Kingdom of God above history. For Tillich, it is the central *Kairos* and the various

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[105] *Ibid.*, p. 357.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 364.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

Kairoi that determine the dynamics of history in its self-transcendence.

The Kingdom of God is also understood as the end of history. End is understood in the finite sense as the elimination of history as we know it, and as the aim toward which the temporal process points to as its goal. "History is, so to speak, the earthly realm out of which individuals are moved into the heavenly realm."[108] For Tillich, history is the process by which humanity crosses from the temporal realm of finitude to the essential realm of the infinite. This end or final goal of history is described as "Eternal Life."

In eternal life, all polarities of existence are brought into perfect balance. There is no longer morality, for there is no "ought to be." What is, is only what is. There is no culture, for there is no truth which is not also done. Finally, within eternal life there is no religion, for religion results from humanity's estrangement from its own ground of being. In eternal life, humanity's existence and essence are one. "The eternal act of creation is driven by a love which finds fulfillment only through the other one who has the freedom to reject and to accept love. God, so to speak, drives toward the actualization and essentialization of everything that has being."[109]

From this analysis we have seen that Tillich uses the concept of ultimate concern to account for the complex and diverse nature of revelation. In summary, I will refer back to the questions that were posed in the beginning of the chapter. First, Tillich's notion of ultimate concern could not fall under Dulles' model of doctrine as revelation. For Tillich, the transcendent character of revelation as being itself which is experienced as humanity's ultimate

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[108] *Ibid.*, p. 397.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

concern can not be identified with any particular thing. To say that a particular doctrine is revelation is a misunderstanding which Tillich refers to as the demonic. In a similar way, ultimate concern can not be identified with history. Tillich recognizes that revelation as ultimate concern is mediated through historical events, but to confuse the events themselves for the actual revelation again is a demonic distortion. Ultimate concern is more closely linked with Dulles' third model of revelation as personal experience. Although Tillich certainly recognizes that an ultimate concern stemming from the recognition of being itself transcending the subject/object structure of reality is an internal personal experience, he differs from Dulles' third model by claiming that ultimate concern is mediated through experience rather than claiming that it is experience itself. Ultimate concern is also related to Dulles' fourth model of revelation as dialectical presence. The concept of ultimate concern certainly stresses the transcendent otherness of revelation; however, there is not as much of a void between humanity and God for Tillich. All things are capable of becoming a medium of revelation and all people are capable of recognizing an ultimate concern. Whereas the dialectical presence model stresses that faith is required for one to be grasped by revelation, Tillich's stresses that faith *is* the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern. Tillich's notion of ultimate concern is most similar to Dulles' fifth model of revelation understood as new awareness. The experience of revelation does not stem from any particular source nor is it identified with any particular thing; rather, it is an elevation of one's consciousness allowing the recognition of being-itself to become an ultimate concern.

With regard to the questions arising from Niebuhr's analysis of revelation, Tillich deals both with the relativity of history as well as with the

difficulty of the historical gap by stressing the ontological character of revelation. Even though Tillich recognizes that history is an important element in recognizing ultimate concern, he maintains that what history mediates is not relative, nor is it in need of being interpreted. Being itself, by its very nature goes beyond the subject/object structure of historical events, people, and documents. It is here where we see that Tillich is much more concerned with the end result of revelation and less with the means. There needs to be more detail explaining the interrelation between the dynamic elements of history which function as a medium for the static, universal conception of revelation as being itself. One must question the amount of significance Tillich gives to history itself. Clearly he stresses that what matters is the experience of the divine through history, but this experience is only possible within history. Thus, it is just as important to focus on history as well as the experience of revelation which is manifest through it. We will see in the following chapter that Pannenberg is much more concerned with providing a detailed explanation of how the dynamic nature of history functions in the experience of the reality of revelation.

We have seen in this chapter that Tillich has spent much time dealing with the many issues which we discussed in chapter one with regard to Macquarrie's understanding of revelation with ontological categories. Like Macquarrie, Tillich stresses that revelation occurs as a result of being grasped by being-itself. The experience of this ontological reality which is part of all things, people, and events becomes our ultimate concern.

We have seen that the questions arising from Kaufman's stress on the interrelation of both historical elements as well as ontological elements were discussed by Tillich. He recognizes that history can function as a medium for

ultimate concern, but lacks the necessary detail explaining the interrelation between the universal nature of ultimate concern with the relative ways in which history can be interpreted and understood.

Finally, with regard to the questions stemming from Cook's analysis of the hermeneutical elements involved in attempting to overcome the gap between universal faith and particular history with a metaphoric process, we see that Tillich is not as concerned with the details of *how* it occurs and much more concerned with stressing *that* it occurs. He rightly recognizes the ontological, universal structure of revelation as ultimate concern, but in light of the multitude of recent developments in historical/critical and hermeneutical theory there needs to be a more detailed explanation of the interrelation between interpretation and revelation. Wolfhart Pannenberg is much more concerned with this interrelation.

Thus I will now turn to an analysis of his understanding of revelation as universal history. We will see that he is much more concerned with how we experience revelation rather than exactly what we experience. After examining his theory, I will attempt to demonstrate that a more thorough and complete understanding of revelation is possible by combining elements of Tillich's stress on the ontological structure of experiencing revelation as ultimate concern with elements of Pannenberg's focus on the details of how a universal recognition of revelation is possible in light of recent developments in historical/critical and hermeneutical theory.

CHAPTER III

REVELATION AS UNIVERSAL HISTORY IN THE THOUGHT OF WOLFHART PANNENBERG

In attempting to grasp the way in which Wolfhart Pannenberg understands revelation, one is forced to acknowledge the significance he gives to the term "truth." It is clear that Pannenberg's understanding of truth is at the ground of his understanding of the revelation of God. There are many facets to Pannenberg's understanding of truth: the function of scripture, Christ, finitude, history, tradition, reason, and culture. There are several overarching principles which govern and pervade the whole of his thought. These principles include eschatology as the key to scripture, to doctrine, and to the consummative structure of reality. In this chapter, we will attempt to trace these themes within the historical development of Pannenberg's thought.

From the very beginning, and continuing through today, Pannenberg's theology focuses on eschatology as the key which unlocks ultimate meaning and truth in reality. Pannenberg's initial focus and concern has been on the significance of scripture in light of eschatology. Thus we will begin this chapter by taking a brief look at the role of eschatology and scripture and how they function as elements of universal history. Following this emphasis on

scripture, Pannenberg focuses on the significance of doctrine in light of eschatology. Thus we will look at the role of eschatology and the doctrine of Jesus Christ and how they function as elements of universal history. Following this emphasis on doctrine, Pannenberg focuses on the significance of the consummative structure of reality in light of eschatology. This focus on the consummative structure of all reality continues today and is the most recent position taken by Pannenberg. Thus, we will conclude this chapter by looking at the role of eschatology and the various elements of reality in its consummative structure as universal history.

Revelation as Scripture and Eschatology

With regard to the interpretation of scripture, Pannenberg stresses that Christianity must struggle to unify the particular revelation of Christ available in scripture, and the general, universal revelation of God in all things.[110] Pannenberg notes two significant problems which modern theology must face with regard to itself and scripture: on the one hand there is the distance between a literal interpretation of scripture and its own immediate historical content; on the other is the distance between contemporary theology and primitive theology.[111] Pannenberg emphasizes that the texts of the Bible must be understood primarily in relation to their immediate environment. The exegetical task is to interpret scripture first as it was intended by its authors for its readers. The problem is to bridge the gap that exists between the actual history of Jesus and the multiple New Testament

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[110]*Basic.*, vol. I, p. 1.
[111]*Ibid.*, p. 6.

interpretations of it, on the one hand; and, on the other, the gap between the intellectual milieu of the New Testament and ours.[112] For Pannenberg, these connections are possible within the horizon of the process of history itself. By focusing on the whole of reality present in universal history which encompasses the true place (*sitz im Leben*) of the various authors of scripture as well as the contemporary world one can attempt to bridge the gap. In discussing the act of interpreting the text of the New Testament Pannenberg says,

> Only a conception of the actual course of history linking the past with the present situation and its horizon of the future can form the comprehensive horizon within which the interpreter's limited horizon of the present and the historical horizon of the text fuse together.[113]

This is the only way the past and present horizons can be maintained in their uniqueness. For Pannenberg, all things, events, and people are part of a comprehensive continuity of history. Pannenberg's understanding of history is not primarily concerned with either the record of past events, or the chronological record of events, but rather with the inquiry and discovery of a universal, comprehensive, continuity of meaning which connects all things, events, and people.[114] This unity is understood as the wholeness of truth which is partially manifest within the collective consciousness of humanity.

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[112] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

[114] In briefly looking at the etymology of the term "history," it is interesting to note the similarity between Pannenberg's understanding of the word with the Latin and Greek roots meaning-- inquiry, knowing, and learning. For Pannenberg, it is a universal sense of history which discloses the meaning of events.

Revelation as Doctrine and Eschatology

For Pannenberg, what is essential to any study of Christ is the emphasis on who Jesus was. This focus should be concerned with unfolding the Christian community's confession which is grounded in the activity of Jesus in the past.[115] In the midst of this past, Pannenberg sees the tremendous eschatological hope that was such an integral part of primitive Christianity, and which continues to remain a primary characteristic of the Christian faith. He says, "Thus the task of Christology is to establish the true understanding of Jesus' significance from his history, which can be described comprehensively by saying that in this man God is revealed."[116]

For Pannenberg, the primary significance of the event of Christ's resurrection stems from the eschatological hope which it fulfilled. The experience of Jesus after he was dead was understood as an experience of the end (recalling the Greek *eschatos* meaning "last" or "farthest"). The profound significance that the early Christians found in the resurrection event was the conviction that it was bound to the last event in history (*eschaton*). Pannenberg concludes that "the eschatological event of the appearance of Christ is the summation of the universe from its end in that this event has consummating power in the fullness of time."[117] This event has consummating, or final power, in the fullness, or overall whole of reality. It is this final and future event of history which allows humanity to understand the essence and meaning of all individual occurrences whose "meaning is

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[115]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 28.
[116]*Ibid.*, p. 30.
[117]*Ibid.*, p. 388.

relative to the whole to which it belongs."[118] "Through giving up its particularity, everything is mediated with the whole and, transcending its finitude, with God, who nevertheless wanted this particularity to exist within the whole of his creation."[119] We derive the words with which we speak of the eschatological reality that has appeared in Jesus from the experience of a reality that is not yet the reality of the *eschaton*. For this reason, all statements of Christology have only metaphorical meaning. They are valid only to the extent that they are motivated by thinking through the history of Jesus. They are always only exegesis of the history of Jesus and remain in need of expansion and correction in the light of the eschatological future. Only the *eschaton* will ultimately disclose what really happened in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Until then, we must speak favorably in thoroughly legitimate, but still only metaphorical and symbolic, form about Jesus' resurrection and the significance inherent in it.[120]

As a result of the profound effect this eschatological expectation had upon history, climaxing in the experience of the resurrection of Jesus, Pannenberg concludes that the event of the resurrection should be understood as a historical event. In his well known work *Jesus- God and Man*, he says:

> Thus the resurrection of Jesus would be designated as a historical event in this sense: If the emergence of primitive Christianity, which, apart from other traditions, is also traced back by Paul to appearances of the resurrected Jesus, can be understood in spite of all critical examination of the tradition only if one examines it in the light of the eschatological hope for a resurrection from the dead, then that which is so designated is a historical event, even if we do not know anything more particular about it.[121]

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[118] *Ibid.*, p. 391.
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 396.
[120] *Ibid.*, p. 397.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Out of the early Christian's eschatological hope, which was generated by a set of historical circumstances, arose the powerful understanding and experience of Jesus Christ *after* he was dead. Pannenberg stresses that this was certainly an *experience* which had significant historical repercussions. It is in this sense that the event of the resurrection is to be thought of as a historical event.

Pannenberg's understanding of history is tied with the experience of humanity which goes far beyond the more narrow, focused emphasis that much of contemporary science designates as *reality*. In this respect Pannenberg says, "The judgment about whether an event, however unfamiliar, has happened or not is in the final analysis a matter for the historian and cannot be prejudged by the knowledge of natural science.[122] It is not that Pannenberg discredits the results and truth of the disciplines of science, but stresses that it is in the very nature of science to "declare its own inability to make definitive judgements about the possibility or impossibility of an individual event, regardless of how certainly it is able, at least in principle, to measure the probability of an event's occurrence."[123] For Pannenberg, it is in the very nature of history to focus on a broader horizon of experience than any scientific analysis. Historical analysis is more inclusive and comprehensive, whereas scientific analysis is more particular and precise.

Because the event of the resurrection is understood from a historical point of view rather than a scientific one, it can only be expressed in the

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[122] *Ibid.*
[123] *Ibid.*

metaphoric language of eschatological expectation. The experience of Jesus after he was dead, is expressed using the metaphor of a resurrection from the dead. There is no scientific certainty, nor any complete understanding of what exactly happened 2000 years ago, except for the fact, verified by much historical testimony, that the tremendously profound reality of Jesus was, and continues to be, experienced. Pannenberg points out that this mythological way of describing and thinking about experience "has come increasingly into conflict with the scientific understanding of the world and has thereby become a dead weight hindering the Christian message."[124] He goes on to say that "even the element of truth in the myth can be made valid today only in a way of thinking that is, in principle, unmythological."[125] For this reason, thinking about the point of departure for theology in terms of historical events is increasingly important in modern times. This shift from a mythological to a historical way of understanding truth allows Pannenberg to express the reality of religious truth in a language which contemporary culture can understand. This shift in language is acceptable because it still manages to point to the ultimate reality which is expressed by the original myth.

Pannenberg is concerned with the language which the contemporary world uses to think and struggles to understand itself. What has changed by understanding oneself in mythological terms to understanding oneself in terms of historical fact and scientific verification may not be the truth of the early Christian experience, but simply the language and terms themselves which we use to think about and understand our experience. Rather than

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[124] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

attempt to rehash the validity and the truth inherent in the mythological way of understanding reality, Pannenberg has provided a re-evaluation of what history and science mean in light of experience in general, and the early Christian experience of Jesus' resurrection in particular. Pannenberg hopes this focus will allow contemporary culture to grasp meaning in the more comprehensive view of history. He, like Tillich, finds it increasingly difficult to express meaningful experience in modern symbols and language.[126] In modern culture, the development of more inclusive, broader ways of understanding the world and reality have become extremely urgent. Pannenberg's solution is understanding the world from the point of view of a universal history.

Revelation as Consummative Reality and Eschatology

Universal History and Truth

For Pannenberg, the primary characteristic of what Christians call God is the universal unity of truth within past, present, and future experience of all reality. Thus, in an attempt to understand his view of revelation as universal history, it is necessary to begin with his broader understanding of truth in general. In volume two of Pannenberg's *Basic Question in Theology* he begins his article, "What is Truth?," by saying, "The Question about the truth of the Christian message has to do with whether it can still disclose to us

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[126]"Since the split between a faith unacceptable to culture and a culture unacceptable to faith was not possible for me, the only alternative was to attempt to interpret the symbols of faith through expressions of our own culture." see Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, (University of Chicago, 1963), vol. III, pp. 4-5.

today the unity of the reality in which we live".[127] According to Pannenberg, it is that characteristic of the Christian message which allows one to grasp the unity of reality which has been present from the beginning and is chiefly responsible for the success of Christianity. He stresses that what is at the core of Christianity is not a variety of particular truths, but truth itself, "which in essence can only be one."[128] Pannenberg refers to this aspect of truth as its "constancy," which is understood as the agreement of truth with itself. In Pannenberg's view, this understanding of truth is grounded both in Hebrew as well as Greek thought. For the Hebrews, the unity of truth was evident in their confidence and faith in the constancy of the self-disclosure of Yahweh. The Greeks, on the other hand, looked toward the constancy of truth by focusing on its agreement with itself. For Pannenberg, this element of the constancy of truth and its self-disclosure, demonstrates the necessity for its unity.[129] This understanding of truth as a unified, constant revelation is the substance of any theology. The very task of any systematic theology is essentially bound to the "construction of the path of the revelation of God and, thus, of the unity of truth."[130]

This unity of truth is one with reality which, for Pannenberg, exists throughout all of history and is not simply in present, empirical happenings, as much of modern science maintains.[131] For Pannenberg, this unity of truth is concerned with everything real, and thus cannot only be limited to things

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[127]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), vol. II, p. 1.

[128]*Ibid.*

[129]*Ibid.*, p. 11.

[130]*Ibid.*, p. 16.

[131]see Alfred J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (London: Macmillian & co., 1962), especially pp. 78ff.

of the present world.[132] "Its unity should instead also embrace the peoples and cultures of distant times, for whom the whole of reality presented itself differently from the way it does for us today."[133] Thus, for Pannenberg, truth necessarily takes on a historical aspect: truth itself has a history. In fact, it is truth itself which functions as the substance of history. "Historical change itself must be thought of as the essence of truth if its unity is still to be maintained without narrow-mindedly substituting a particular perspective for the whole of truth."[134] The problem here is the two handed necessity of isolating particular aspects of truth when referring to particular events and individuals of the present or past, while maintaining the sense of the wholeness of truth that is essential if any attempt to grasp the meaning of any of the particulars is to be made.

For Pannenberg, Hegel's system is the best example to date of a solution to this problem.[135] For Hegel, truth was not viewed as a particular product already complete, but rather as the process of history itself. For Hegel, what governs the movement of the truth through history is the absolute. The definitive difference between Hegel's and Pannenberg's views of the unity of truth within history is Hegel's exclusion and Pannenberg's inclusion of an eschatology.[136] Pannenberg's most significant criticism of Hegel's conception of the unity of truth is directed to his failure to provide any means

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[132]In order to understand Pannenberg here, it is necessary to understand what he understands to be "real." For him, the "real" is not bound to sensory experience of the present moment, nor even in thoughts and ideas within the present moment. Pannenberg's understanding of reality is bound with his understanding of truth. What is real, for Pannenberg, is truth in itself which stretches the span of history.

[133]*Ibid.*, p. 20.

[134]*Ibid.*, p. 20.

[135]*Ibid.*, p. 21.

[136]For a look at Hegel's view see G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* tr. J.B. Baillie, intro. George Lichtheim (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), p. 82.

of understanding the whole of truth. For Pannenberg, any conception of the unity of truth is dependent upon a view of its future. This future orientation, or eschatology, provides the necessary wholeness to any view of the truth as a unity.

Pannenberg points out that for Christians, it is Jesus' resurrection from the dead which provides a sense of the whole of reality and truth by providing a glimpse of the end. This solution is satisfactory because it "protects the openness of the future and the contingency of events, and still holds fast to the ultimacy of what appeared in Jesus, which makes possible the unity of truth."[137] Only by viewing truth with a past, present, and future is the meaning and essence of any of the particulars of experience evident. This view of the whole comes about through the process of history itself. In effect, it is history itself which reveals more and more of the whole and thus gives more and more substance and meaning to all of the particulars of reality. In order to gain a better grasp of the essential function of Pannenberg's eschatology in his view of truth, it will be helpful if we turn to a more detailed analysis of the role and function of Christ in his thought.

Universal History and Hermeneutic

For Pannenberg, any understanding of events or people of the past or present is dependent on the breadth and comprehensive view of a universal history. In discussing interpretation from the perspective of a universal history, Pannenberg points out the need for a more *comprehensive* view of events and individuals. "Even significant individual occurrences and

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[137]*Ibid.*, p. 26.

historical figures require for their evaluation a view of the broader continuities that extend beyond their narrower life-setting and epoch."[138] For Pannenberg, the significance of an individual or event is directly related to the comprehensiveness with which one relates it with other events and individuals. This allows one "to do justice to its true significance."[139] In order to get at the meaning of past events and people, as well as current events and people, it is necessary to place them in the continuity of meaning in which they stand. Pannenberg says, "If the historical distance of what happened in the past is retained, then the link connecting the events and forms of the past to the present can scarcely be found anywhere else than in the continuity of history itself which joins today with yesterday."[140] In order for this to happen, Pannenberg stresses that it is necessary to expand one's horizon to encompass the past, the present and that which joins them both.

The attempt to understand tradition is similar to the construction of a bridge. In constructing this bridge, one is concerned with the construction of the whole of reality which is necessary in order to understand that aspect of reality which is tied with past tradition and culture. For Pannenberg, speaking about the whole of reality and speaking about God are not two entirely different matters, for they mutually condition each other. What is real, true, whole, unified, and "all-determining reality is then - if it be personal - to be thought of as the God of this history."[141]

As discussed above, what is also essential in attempting to understand past or present events is the projection of the future. Only by viewing history

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[138] *Basic.*, vol. I, p. 98.
[139] *Ibid.*
[140] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

in its wholeness, based on the eschatological conception of the future in Christ, can we attempt to gain a better understanding of meaning within all of reality. Humanity's finitude stands in the way of a complete and infinite understanding of history and reality. The problem arises when attempting to speak of a universal history while maintaining the starting point of human finitude: Universal history implies full view of the end-- if this is so, there is no need to discuss human finitude. These limits with which humanity must live results in a less than absolute, finite perspective of the world. For Pannenberg, humanity's finite condition renders any conclusion about the truth and meaning of universal history to be questionable.[142] It is the task of humanity to continually attempt to understand all of reality in light of a universal history, while continually recognizing that the conclusions are always provisional.

> In reflecting on the provisional character of our knowledge of the end of history, the horizon of the future could be held open and the finitude of human experience preserved. It is precisely this understanding of history as something whose totality is given by the fact that its end has become accessible in a provisional and anticipatory way that is to be gathered today from the history of Jesus in its relationship to the Israelite-Jewish tradition.[143]

By maintaining a provisional knowledge, the horizon of the future can be left open while preserving humanity's finite condition.

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[142] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Universal History and Faith and Reason

Pannenberg, in his essay *Faith and Reason,* begins with this question:

> Is it perhaps the case that even the tension between faith and reason is possible only on the presupposition of a unity which encompasses both, namely, the presupposition of the unity of truth?[144]

This question suggests his belief that his theory on universal history (whose foundation is characterized by the "unity of truth") is the bridge which can also link the tremendous gap that has existed between faith and reason. Pannenberg believes that a religious subjectivity exists in our society as a result of the neglect of positivistic science to include this aspect of humanity. For this reason "the task of a rational account of the truth of faith has acquired urgency in the modern period."[145] At the heart of Pannenberg's theory of universal history is the maxim that every individual experience has its meaning only in connection with life as a whole. Because of the fact that we are unable to stand at the end of history, a conception of the future is necessary in order to recognize meaning in any individual event.[146] This conception must link the future with the present and the past. Pannenberg sums it up in this way:

> Only from such a fore-conception of a final future, and thus of the still unfinished

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[144]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), vol. II, p. 47.

[145]*Ibid.*, p. 53.

[146]I realize that we have discussed the role of eschatology with regard to truth and Christ in the above sections; however, because Pannenberg's eschatology again plays a significant role in this section with regard to the relationship between faith and reason, I felt a brief reiteration, applied to the topic at hand, would be helpful.

> wholeness of reality, is it possible to assign to an individual event or being - be it present or past - its definitive meaning by saying what it is. Thus, when someone names a thing and says, "This is a rose," or "this is a dog," he always does so from the standpoint of an implicit fore-conception of the final future, and of the totality of reality that will first be constituted by the final future. For every individual has its definitive meaning only within this whole.[147]

For Pannenberg, it is not faith alone which is dependent upon an eschatological basis in the future.

A conception of the future is also an essential element for reason as well. By maintaining an eschatological conception of the future it is possible to place the meaning of everything individual in a context of meaning which allows us to say what this is or that is. Pannenberg stresses that it is not true that "reason, in contrast to faith, has to do only with what is visible."[148] In the realm of reason, the process of creativity, stemming from imagination, is a result of a conception of the future. For Pannenberg, reason is ultimately concerned with only present things. However, it derives its ability to speak meaningfully about those present things from an eschatological emphasis that faith puts on the future. This emphasis allows for the recognition of meaning in present things giving reason its very origin. Conversely, the creative imagination, stemming from reason's conception of the future things, allows faith to talk of the eschatological future of individuals, humanity and of the world as a whole. Thus, it becomes clear that for Pannenberg, faith and reason mutually assist one another. It is eschatology which functions as the link binding the two together. Reason gives rational substance to conception of universal history stemming from faith's stress on the unity of truth existing wholeness of reality (past, present, and fore-conception of future).

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[147] *Basic.*, vol. II, p. 62.
[148] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Faith, on the other hand can assist reason to focus more on the true meaning of present things by its orientation toward a final eschatological future which gives wholeness to the unity of truth necessary to grasp the meaning of any individual thing.

This whole of reality or universal history to which we have been referring, is not completely different from Pannenberg's understanding of God. He believes they mutually condition one another. "God is immanent in history in the process of the transmission of his eschatological revelation, determining it in its totality from within, from the intra-historical event of the history of Jesus."[149] For Pannenberg, this all determining reality, if it be thought of as personal- is God.[150] In the process of continually attempting to grasp the continuities of meaning that exist in a universal conception of history, one can experience the ultimate, profound, personal revelation of God.

Universal History and God

Pannenberg correctly points out that the very term "God" has appeared to become "dispensable" and even an "interference" in this day and age of science and technology.[151] Western culture, particularly, has increasingly been relying on scientific, empirical evidence to give substance to the whole of reality, but as a result, has experienced a loss of personal identity. Pannenberg, who sees God as one who provides a supportive framework which gives substance and meaning to human life, there is a crisis in the modern

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[149] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[150] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.
[151] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

world. There is a growing absence of meaning and substance in contemporary human life.

The problem, for Pannenberg, began in the eighteenth century and is primarily concerned with the difficulty in understanding God as the all determining power, on one hand, and as a person, on the other. "Every concept of person conceived in this way includes within itself the finitude of man as constitutive element, and therefore is unfit as a designation of the infinite power that determines all reality."[152] The problem is concerned with thinking of God as personal without implying the finite limits which define humanity's conception of person.[153] Pannenberg stresses that Tillich's understanding of God as "being itself" strongly emphasizes the limitless, infinite characteristics of God, but neglects in showing how God can be personal at the same time.

For Pannenberg, the answer is found in eschatology. Because the future provides the necessary missing link to the universal, whole of reality which, for Pannenberg is the revelation of God, God exists as the power of the future over the present.

> As the power of the future, God is no thing, no object presently at hand, which man could detach himself from and pass over. He appears neither as one being among others, nor as the quiescent background of all beings, the timeless being underlying all objects.[154]

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[152] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

[153] It is very interesting to note that Pannenberg suggests a reversal in the common understanding of the issue in that "there is evidence for the view that the phenomenon of the personal was not first discovered in relation to man, but had its origin in religious experience, in the appearance of the numinous object, and was transferred to man only from there." see p. 245.

[154] *Basic.*, vol. II, p. 242.

Pannenberg's eschatological solution attempts to remove the category of being all together. God's full revelation will only occur at the end of time, finitude, and history, when humanity can view reality in its wholeness and totality. In a sense, Pannenberg maintains the simultaneous yes and no position with respect to God. God is present and active in the present, but only as the conception of the future in unity with the present and past. It is as if we can experience God only in a partial, incomplete, not yet way. In contrast to Tillich, Pannenberg suggests that "being" is to be thought of from the point of view of the future rather than as the ultimate, abstract presence in all things. "Man participates in God not by flight from the world but by active transformation of the world which is the expression of the divine love, the power of its future over the present by which it is transformed in the direction of the glory of God."[155] We will turn now to an analysis of Pannenberg's understanding of God with relation to religion in general.

Universal History and Religion

In attempting to understand the phenomenon of religion, Pannenberg stresses that humanity is composed of historical beings who change with the process of history and thus he maintains that only a study of the history of religion can provide an adequate analysis of religious experience.[156] In describing one's relationship with the divine, Pannenberg suggests that it belongs to one's structure to presuppose a mystery of reality which transcends one's own finitude and which allows oneself to relate to this mystery as the

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[155] *Ibid.*, p. 248.
[156] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

fulfillment of one's own being.

> What is at stake for man in his being referred to that mystery is essentially the wholeness of his own being and therefore of the universal truth that unites all men, as well as the unity of the world and the correspondence of his existence with this, it follows that this mystery will confront him particularly in events which illuminate a wider range of his experience of existence and in fact will encounter him as a power over at least one aspect of his existence and of his world as a whole.[157]

For Pannenberg, happenings of divine reality are historical events. He says, "As powerful events they - or the power experienced in them - illuminate the experience of existence of the men who encounter such happenings."[158] Religions are concerned with this reality which is encountered as experience in its totality as the unifying unity which is the world. If this experience manifests itself in a personal mode, it is called "God."[159] Here we see one of the significant differences between Tillich's ontological emphasis on *what* one experiences as divine reality, and Pannenberg's effort to show *how* one experiences God as manifest in the world by focusing on the universal structure of history. For Pannenberg, it is one's particular historical situation which shapes the conceptions of the divine.[160] Naturally, political or social differences and changes in culture play a great role in this since religion is concerned with understanding the world in its wholeness.

In the face of a growing awareness of the shear multiplicity which

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[157]*Ibid.*, p. 104.

[158]*Ibid.*, p. 105.

[159]The substance is elaborated by Tillich's ontological focus on being - the manifestation of it is elaborated by Pannenberg's focus on the universal structure of history.

[160]This theme relates to Tillich's method of correlation - for Tillich it is humanity's particular situation which shapes the question that one asks - it is the Christian tradition which provides an answer. For Pannenberg, it is the historical situation which shapes both the questions one can ask as well as the answers that arise.

exists with regard to the variety of religions and cultures both in the world today as well as the past, Pannenberg asserts that "it should be tested in every case to what extent the underlying experience of the divine mystery expressed in a religious phenomenon is able to illuminate the reality of existence as it was experienced *then* and as it presents itself in contemporary experience, and therewith to confirm its claim to open up an access to the divine mystery."[161]

Universal History and Secular Culture

In his book *Christianity in a Secularized World* , Pannenberg, relying on the work of the American sociologist Peter Berger, suggests that the process of the development of secular culture in the sense of the constant advance of 'modernization' necessarily comes up against inner limits.[162] This theory maintains that secularization cannot count on an unlimited increase as Max Weber had previously assumed. Berger believes that the inner limit of secularization exists as the individual's need for a meaningful life. He says, "individuals need to interpret the reality in which they live in a meaningful way, in order to be able to feel that their own life is meaningful."[163]

The greatest difficulty with a secularized culture is in its inability to allow individuals to recognize meaning in their lives. This characteristic stems, primarily, from an anonymous atmosphere that exists in the contemporary workplace. By playing their particular roles in the workplace,

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[161]*Basic.*, vol. II, p. 118.
[162]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Christianity in a Secularized World* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 28.
[163]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

individuals remain largely anonymous. Also, few are able to perceive the growing complexity that exists between their particular job and its significance and interconnections with the whole of society. Thus, again a sense of anonymity exists with respect to entire social system. Further, the bureaucratic control over social life, which regards the individual as an abstract category and neglects to take note of one's particular individuality, reinforces this situation. Finally, the pluralization of the world, the division between public and private spheres, and the plurality of institutions within the public sphere, which become individual worlds in themselves, lead to a disintegration of the world as a whole. Whereas religion used to function as a way of maintaining integration in life, the whole of the burden has been placed increasingly on the individual. This situation, according to Berger, leads to frustration, crisis of identity, and the feeling of "homelessness" in the social world. Even religion itself has lost its ability to provide integration and wholeness in family life and culture because of the increasing awareness of religious plurality. For Pannenberg, the question is:

> Whether there can be a renewal of the context of our culture with its religious origins which preserves the values of the modern cultural development while at the same time taking more notice of the Christian shaping of our cultural and political life and restoring its validity as an index of the identity of our culture?[164]

For Pannenberg there is hope. He suggests that the most obvious and effective way of achieving this would be to strengthen the identity of our culture by focusing on its religious roots. What is necessary is the return of the view that God is the creator of the world and thus all phenomena of finite

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[164] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

reality, including human being, is appropriately understood only in light of its relationship to God. This, for Pannenberg, is "the principal counter-position to the secular consciousness which theology has to develop and defend in critical dialogue with the natural sciences and the humanities."[165] He goes on to say that "theology, in dialogue with the sciences, has the task of demonstrating in specific terms the dimension which has thus been omitted from the phenomenon which the sciences are investigating, through which these phenomena are associated with God as the creator of the world."[166] Pannenberg maintains that he has attempted to do the same with the humanities and strongly believes that it is also possible with the natural sciences. Finally he stresses that

> The opportunity for Christianity and its theology is to integrate the reduced understanding of reality on the part of the secular culture and its picture of human nature into a greater whole, to offer the reduced rationality of secular culture a greater breadth of reason, which would also include the horizon of the bond between humankind and God.[167]

It is this task which Pannenberg's theory of universal history strives to accomplish.

By beginning with truth and moving through Christ, hermeneutic, faith and reason, God, and religion, we have analyzed the significant aspects of Pannenberg's understanding of universal history as revelation. In the final section, we briefly looked at the practical application of Pannenberg's theory of universal history to secular culture. In the next and final chapter we will

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[165] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[166] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[167] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

examine both Tillich's understanding of revelation as ultimate concern and Pannenberg's understanding of revelation as universal history in light of our initial analysis of revelation in the first chapter. After a more objective analysis of their thought is made we will look at them together and consider the possibility of using significant elements of both to provide a more adequate understanding of the revelation of God in the world today.

CHAPTER IV

REVELATION AS UNIVERSAL ULTIMATE CONCERN IN HISTORY

As I have maintained throughout, all theological thought has a theory of revelation as its foundation. In focusing on the unveiling of the divine, any thought of revelation must ask who, what, where, when, why and how? It is clear from the first chapter that the various understandings of the answers to these questions are tremendously diverse, almost chaotic. Is it that revelation is simply too complex and unknowable to adequately define in conceptual terms, or have the many attempts to devise a theory which attempts to define and explain the experience of this reality been erroneous? There is a third alternative. I am convinced that knowing is a process; a process that will continue as long as we are bound by the limiting constraints of finitude. Humanity continually strives to grasp the answers to the questions implied in the experience of all reality. At best, however, these answers are only provisional in the sense that they look ahead or beyond that which is apprehended.[168] Despite the fact that we are unable to grasp the meaning of any experience fully, we continually strive to establish increasingly adequate theories that attempt to do so. Why? Beside the will to survive, the desire to

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[168]The Latin *videre* means to see -- *providere* means to see ahead.

understand is among our strongest attributes.

In this final chapter I will attempt to provide a helpful contribution to this process within contemporary theological thought about revelation. I will begin by focusing on the initial analysis of revelation in chapter one and attempt to identify the significant elements that any theory attempting to adequately account for the experience of revelation should contain. I will then evaluate the understanding of revelation as ultimate concern in Tillich and universal history in Pannenberg in light of this previous examination, pointing out those elements which are most helpful in attempting to understand the experience of revelation and those which are inadequately represented in their thought. In the final section, I will consider whether or not a new theory, which incorporates the helpful contributions of both Tillich and Pannenberg, while better accounting for elements not adequately represented in their individual thought, can provide a more adequate account of the contemporary experience of revelation.

Essential Elements in the Experience of the Reality of Revelation

In our initial discussion of revelation in chapter one we looked at a wide variety of ways in which the experience of revelation can be understood. Underlying every theory is the conclusion that the conceptual term *revelation* refers to a recognizable and distinct aspect of reality which can be experienced. What varies from theory to theory are the conditions and limits which are established in attempts to define conceptual terms more clearly. *What* the characteristics of the aspects of reality which are identified with the term "revelation" are; *when* these aspects are experienced; *where* these

aspects are experienced; in *whom* these aspects are experienced; *how* these aspects are experienced; and finally *why* these aspects are experienced are the questions to be addressed.

We have seen from the analysis in the first chapter that the understanding of these conditions varies considerably from thinker to thinker. In what follows, I will attempt to identify conceptual limits of what, when, where, in whom, how and why with regard to the concept of revelation. I will begin by briefly explaining the question and offering an example from our initial discussion of revelation in general from chapter one. Next I will evaluate Tillich's and Pannenberg's answer to the question pointing out their significant strengths and weaknesses. Finally I will suggest that by considering aspects of both Tillich and Pannenberg, a more adequate understanding of the contemporary experience of revelation will result.

What?

Any theory attempting to understand revelation must evaluate what is being experienced. In chapter one, this is most clearly seen in the existential, ontological thought of Macquarrie. According to Macquarrie, revelation is the experience of being. A condition of the experience of this reality is that it is not a thing but rather is necessary for anything to exist. Another condition defining the experience of revelation is its transcendence in the sense that it does not participate in the subject/object structure of temporal spatial reality. Thus the experience of being is more like a presence and manifestation within our experience of immanent things. This experience demands involvement, participation and concern.

Tillich, like Macquarrie, understands revelation as the reality of *being itself* which does not function within the subject/object structure of reality. It is the unconditional, infinite, transcendent, essential foundation of all that exists. Being itself is that which influences the essential structure of our being. In the negative sense, it is understood as the threat of non-being. In the positive sense, it is understood as an ultimate concern.

In the psyche, being itself is experienced as ecstasy ("standing outside oneself").[169] In humanity's finite situation, being itself is understood as that which bridges the gap between the finite and the infinite. In the existential situation, being itself is represented by Christ as the essential/existential New Being. In humanity's combined finite/existential situation, being itself is understood with the symbol of the divine Spirit which manifests itself in the human spirit. In history, being itself is understood by means of the symbol of the Kingdom of God which itself has both inner and trans-historical aspects.

For Tillich, being itself remains relatively static in history despite the dynamic nature of both history and human nature. In this sense, being itself takes on a universal character. Despite the universal character of being itself, humanity is limited by non-being (finitude). The experience of being in the face of non-being in the positive sense involves courage[170], in the negative sense, anxiety.

One of the strengths of Tillich's understanding of what revelation is lies in his focus on the manifestation of revelation in the present within particular experiences of the individual. This experience is open to all people,

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[169]The following five descriptions of being itself in the thought of Tillich come from our analysis of the five books of his *Systematic Theology.*

[170]See Tillich's excellent discussion of this in his work *The Courage to Be* (Yale University Press, 1952).

at any time, with any thing, person, or event. It discloses a universal, limitless, all pervading reality which is experienced in the now. This understanding of God in the present is grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yahweh was revealed to Moses as "I Am" rather than as "I Was" or "I Will Be." Tillich's conception of revelation as humanity's ultimate concern in the face of being provides a good explanation of what is experienced as revelation in present things, people, and events. Tillich, however, is less concerned with the value of revelation that has been experienced in the past and will be experienced in the future for people in the present. Despite the fact that the experience of revelation in present things, people, and events is essential, it is just as important to consider the present experience of past experience and potential experience. Pannenberg's eschatological understanding of what the reality of revelation is attempts to do just that.

Whereas Tillich is primarily concerned with the experience of present things, people, and events; Pannenberg is concerned with the experience of revelation in the past, present and future. For Pannenberg, revelation is a single, unified, universal reality which stretches the span of history. He describes this universal history as truth itself. The essence of this truth is the very process of history. The meaning of any particular event, person, thing, depends upon an understanding of the whole of this reality. In order to understand what things mean in the present, we need to know what they meant in the past and in the future. This essential future orientation is fulfilled with the resurrection of Christ.

God, for Pannenberg, is the experience of universal history in a personal way. This understanding of God is not concerned with past events, chronological records, but with the inquiry and discovery of a universal,

comprehensive, continuity of meaning which connects all things, events, and people. What revelation is, for Pannenberg, is the limited, questionable, incomplete disclosure of reality in its wholeness. It is something humanity must continually strive to understand and experience.

A strength of Pannenberg's understanding of what revelation is lies in emphasis on the whole of reality: past, present and future. Clearly a focus on the present is important, but without recognizing past experience and potential experience, it is not possible to adequately understand present experience. Pannenberg is much more concerned with the manifestation of revelation within humanity as a whole and experience in general (involving eschatology). Pannenberg has a more difficult time accounting for the depth of the revelatory experience.

Both Tillich and Pannenberg understand revelation to be a universal, ultimate reality. What differs are the aspects of reality each has chosen to focus on. Tillich provides the necessary depth of understanding for the experience of revelation in the present, while Pannenberg provides the necessary breadth for understanding revelation throughout all of history. I suggest that a more adequate understanding of the experience of revelation should include the depth of Tillich's ontological focus and the breadth of Pannenberg's eschatological focus. Thus, revelation is the experience of being itself as humanity's ultimate concern within the universal continuity of truth including the present as well as past and potential things, people and events. The experience of revelation is not only humanity's ultimate concern nor universal history but is best understood as a universal history of ultimate concern. The experience of revelation is adequately described with ontology, but without considering ontological experience in the past or possible

experience of the future, the understanding looses its universal, holistic perspective necessary for a truly adequate understanding of the experience. Thus, the understanding of revelation in either Tillich or Pannenberg alone does not account for the experience of revelation as well as a theory which emphasizes the focused ontological aspects of Tillich and the broad eschatological aspects of Pannenberg together.

When?

Understanding when the experience of revelation occurs is also an essential element in attempting to understand it. Within this category there seems to be much more diversity. This diversity is clearly illustrated from chapter one in the typological survey of Dulles' *Models of Revelation.* Those who maintain Dulles' doctrinal model assert that revelation occurs when one comes in contact with ecclesial authority, dogma, and scripture. In the historical model, revelation occurs either when one comes in contact with individual historical deeds, persons, events and traditions or, as in the case of Pannenberg, when one apprehends history in its universal, comprehensive, totality. In the inner experiential model, revelation occurs when one comes in contact with God as a reality communicated within the soul of the individual. In the fourth model, revelation occurs in history, personal experience, and doctrines only when God chooses to be present to those who have faith. And finally, in the fifth model, revelation occurs when human consciousness is raised to the level of being able to apprehend the experience of being through all things.

For Tillich, clearly revelation occurs when one comes in contact with

any thing which has entered the special conditions of a revelatory constellation. Events, people, language, things (e.g. rocks, trees, stars, etc.) doctrine, and history can become media of revelation. It is essential to recognize that it is never the thing itself which is revelatory, rather it is being itself which uses these things as a mode of expression. Tillich wants to be sure that God is not identified within this world. His position puts some distance between humanity and God. Our understanding of God is ambiguous as long as we are finite. For Tillich the problem is humanity's inability to understand the ultimate (essence) from a limited perspective (existence). The significance of Christ is in his ability paradoxically to exist essentially. The experience of Christ teaches Christians how to exist more and more essentially. For Tillich, this experience of Christ must be existential and ontological, and consequently cannot only be historical.[171]

A strength of Tillich's position is in his ability to express the accessibility of the reality of revelation. It is experienced whenever one experiences any aspect of reality. Revelation understood as one's ultimate concern in the face of the experience of being itself, expresses its ultimate, essential, omnipotent character. Christ is the existential experience of the coming together of existence and essence. Although Tillich stresses the necessity of understanding the history (existence) of Jesus as well as the being (essence) of Christ, he is not as concerned with viewing the experience of any ultimate concern in the continuity of its universal history. Tillich provides an essential explanation of revelation as an experience which occurs whenever one has an ultimate concern regarding any aspect of reality, but he is not as

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[171]Recall that historical experience, for Tillich, is objective and is limited by finitude. Thus the experience of the finite/infinite nature of Christ must be existential.

concerned with the necessity of viewing this experience of ultimate concern in the continuity of universal history. Pannenberg suggests that the experience of revelation occurs only when one understands history in its totality.

For Pannenberg, revelation occurs only when one is able to conceive of the universal, comprehensive unity of reality of history. Similar to Tillich, Pannenberg also suggests that human finitude prevents a complete understanding of revelation because humanity is unable to understand history in its totality (one cannot fully understand the future). For Christians, a provisional understanding of God is possible with the eschatological reality of Christ whose resurrected reality provides a glimpse of the future history. This understanding of reality (universal history), even though limited, is required if one desires to understand the meaning of any particular event, thing, or person.

A strength of Pannenberg's position is in his emphasis that an experience of revelation occurs only when one understands history in its fullness. Christ becomes a disclosure of the future which breaks into the past and allows people in the present to grasp a provisional view of the whole of history which is necessary for one to understand the meaning of any particular aspect of reality. Although Pannenberg emphasizes the value of conceiving of a universal history in the understanding revelation, he is less concerned with accounting for the experience of revelation in particular things within universal history.

The moment when revelation occurs, according to Tillich and Pannenberg, differs because they focus on different aspects of reality. For Tillich, it occurs when one experiences the ontological reality of being. For

Pannenberg it occurs when one views history in its totality. Consequently, their corresponding conceptions of the meaning of Christ differ as well. Tillich emphasizes the value of the existential experience of Christ while Pannenberg focuses on the eschatological experience. I suggest that a more complete understanding of revelation should emphasis ontological as well as historical aspects. This universal ultimate concern in history maintains that the fullest understanding of revelation occurs when one focuses on the ontological reality of ultimate concern within the universal continuity of history. Also, the meaning of Christ is best understood when one understands him as an existential experience bringing together existence and essence as well as the eschatological experience providing a glimpse of the future. Viewing revelation as a universally ultimate historical concern provides a more adequate understanding of when the experience of revelation occurs.

Where?

Where revelation occurs is also an essential element in attempting to understand it. This category involves the complex interrelation between an immanent experience of reality and a transcendent experience of reality. I have been using the term "reality" to denote the whole of human experience. Both immanent reality and transcendent reality exist and consequently are real. Those aspects of reality which are immanent are limited by the conditions of time and space and participate within the relationship between subject and object. Those which are transcendent do not. The complexity of where revelation occurs is addressed in chapter one in Niebuhr's discussion of internal and external history. As you recall, for Niebuhr, revelation occurs as

faith or, the recognition of meaning and unity, in the personal lives of members within a community. Thus "internal history" is a transcendent experience in the lives of people. For Niebuhr, the transcendent experience of inner history depends upon what he calls "external history." External history involves the impersonal objects, ideas, and happenings that form the foundation and structure of the world in which we live, communicate, and function. Thus, external history is the experience of the immanent foundation and structure of finite reality. We have also seen in chapter one that Kaufman too maintains the significance of the reality of revelation being experienced within the correlation between historical and existential elements. For him, the first norm of revelation stresses revelation in history, scripture, tradition, and doctrine. The second norm focuses on revelation in contemporary ontological experience.

For Tillich, an ultimate concern emerges when one experiences the transcendent reality of being itself within immanent reality. The reality of what is revealed is not part of the subject/object structure of immanent reality. But because humanity lives, functions and thinks within immanent reality, any experience of the transcendent reality of revelation must involve immanent experience. Tillich does caution against being ultimately concerned with only immanent things without reference to the transcendent component of the reality of being itself. This is what he calls the demonic. Because of human finitude, humanity is unable to fully grasp being itself within the subject/object structure of reality. Within history, revelation is understood with the symbol of the Kingdom of God. Just as the transcendent reality of being itself is understood to be mediated through the immanent reality of the present, the Kingdom of God is understood to have a trans-

historical side, which when manifest within immanent history, is understood as inner history. This trans-historical side allows the symbol of the Kingdom of God to answer the questions implied in the ambiguities of the dynamics of history. For Tillich the central manifestation of the Kingdom is in the Christ.

A strength of Tillich's ontological understanding of revelation is in his ability to maintain the closeness of revelation. Also, with ontology he is able to stress the unlimited, ultimate, omnipotent presence of the divine. He is able to describe God as the foundation of all things, the creator of all things, as that which is ultimate for all to experience. There is no doubt that Tillich's understanding of the reality of revelation is adequately represented with his understanding of being itself. However, Tillich has a more difficult time expressing how the dynamic process of history, involving humanity in the finite condition, relates to the ultimate experience of revelation. For Tillich, history finally becomes transparent to the disclosure of that which is beyond being and non-being. One could argue that Tillich neglects the significance of immanent reality and the history of this reality in order to preserve the ultimate transcendent reality of revelation. I think this is the case because Tillich, from the start, has been more concerned with what the reality of revelation is rather than where or how it is experienced. Pannenberg, on the other hand, is more concerned with expressing how the experience of revelation must include an understanding of the process of history. History, for Pannenberg, is an event which is shared by the individual and God.

For Pannenberg, revelation as universal history is an experience of immanent reality. He recognizes that all human experience is limited by finitude, and thus, any experience of revelation is finite and concerned with immanent reality. Pannenberg is clearly less "Platonically idealistic" than

Tillich in his view of reality. Whereas Tillich was able to maintain the "purity" or ultimacy of the reality of revelation with ontological categories, Pannenberg does so by stressing that our experience of the reality is a process that is not yet complete. The whole exists, but we, because of the limits of finitude, are unable to fully recognize it. For Pannenberg, the essence of truth is one. There is no experience which is not an element of revelation. Revelation does not occur behind things, above things, or through things: all things, events, and people, when understood in the continuity of meaning of universal history, are elements of revelation. This understanding of revelation necessarily includes a conception of the future in order to complete the whole of history. This is fulfilled with the eschatological reality of Christ. Humanity participates in God, with Christ, not by looking away from the world but by transforming the world in the direction of God.

The significant strength of Pannenberg's view of where revelation occurs is that he is able to maintain "as all things" rather than "beyond all things." With Pannenberg, there is a stress in the value of immanent reality. The underlying theme of his theology is that the limited human condition is all we have right now, don't abandon it.[172] Because of this focus, Pannenberg insists that theology be concerned with the research and results of all academic disciplines. For him, God is the creator of all things and is one. Pannenberg manages to express the tremendous value of all things as well as the value of viewing reality in it comprehensiveness. He has a more difficult time expressing the depth of reality. Because of this he is unable to express how, if possible, one can experience God in particular things apart from the

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[172]One could criticize Tillich for setting up the Platonic dichotomy stressing the good of the transcendent and the illusion and imperfection of the immanent.

continuity of history. The problem that inevitably results from this position is that it is unable to explain how billions of people, who are unable to learn, or comprehend universal history, are able to experience God.[173] Although I think it is essential to comprehend universal history in attempting to grasp the experience of revelation in the fullest possible way, I believe that it is also necessary to stress that the experience of revelation can occur in particular things apart from a conception of universal history.

Both Tillich and Pannenberg are careful to stress humanity's limitedness. Although both maintain that the experience of revelation is possible, they are insistent that this experience is incomplete. By focusing on different aspects of reality, Tillich and Pannenberg explain this dialectical presence of God in different ways; Tillich with ontology, Pannenberg with history and eschatology. Tillich discusses the more universal, idealistic ontological experience which is manifest within things, people and events, while Pannenberg stresses the value of things, people and events themselves within their historical continuity. I suggest that the fullest, most adequate understanding of revelation should include Tillich's focus on the reality of revelation within all things as the ontological experience of ultimate concern as well as the experience of a universal history of all things in the continuity that reveals their ultimate meaning. I suggest that one can, in a more than necessarily limited way, experience revelation either by having an ultimate concern or by recognizing the universal structure of history. However, I believe the most adequate and fullest understanding of revelation should focus on the ontological reality of being itself leading to ultimate concerns as well as

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[173]It seems to me that in many cases it is the people who are the poorest and who know the least of universal history who have the strongest faith and experience of revelation.

a focus on the ultimate value of the historical process of immanent reality which leads to a universal conception of reality.

Who?

When attempting to understand revelation, it is important to consider who experiences it. For the most part, this category involves the conditions established in the other categories. For example, Macquarrie maintains that revelation occurs in the one who experiences the mood of anxiety; for the doctrinal advocates it is the one whose heart is open to the spirit of God; for those maintaining the dialectical presence its the one who has faith and whom God chooses to be revealed. It is clear from chapter one that all theories of revelation maintain that all of humanity is capable of experiencing revelation. For Tillich, the one who comes in contact with the reality of being itself experiences an ultimate concern. All people are capable of having ultimate concern. For Pannenberg, any person able to comprehend reality in its totality of its past, present, and future, can experience revelation. All people are capable of viewing history universally.

Both Tillich and Pannenberg maintain that revelation can be experienced by all people. Tillich's suggests that people having an ultimate concern in the face of being itself experience revelation. For Pannenberg, it is those people who have an understanding of universal history that experience revelation. I suggest that it is people who have an ultimate universal historical concern who experience revelation.

How?

How revelation is experienced is another tremendously complex and highly diversified category. Whether revelation is concerned with propositional truth, historical truth or personal truth, there are two general ways the reality of revelation is thought to be experienced: either mediated or immediate. Propositions, history, and personal experience are either thought to *be* revelation or *mediate* revelation. The question is whether the reality of revelation is immanent or transcendent. If immanent, then how one experiences it is concerned with determining which aspects of immanent reality are revelation. If transcendent, then how one experiences it is concerned with which immanent aspects of reality mediate transcendent reality.

The following are examples of mediated and immediate revelation as propositional, historical, and personal experience. Dulles' propositional model suggests that doctrine mediates the supernatural revelation of God. On the other hand, contemporary Christian fundamentalism maintains that doctrine, particularly biblical scripture, is a direct immediate revelation. They are not concerned with attempting to identify what is revealed through the Bible because the *what* and the *Bible* are one and the same. With regard to history, Kaufman maintains that revelation is conveyed through tradition which functions as a medium of the ontological reality of revelation. Pannenberg, on the other hand, maintains that history, when viewed from a universal perspective, is an immediate experience of revelation. All human experience falls within the bounds of universal history. Finally, with regard to personal experience, Schleiermacher, for example, maintains that revelation is

mediated through the person and is experienced as the feeling of dependence upon God. Ascetics, on the other hand, maintain that there is no distinction between the person and the reality of God: they are one and the same.

How revelation is understood, immediate or mediate, is presented by Cook as discussed in chapter one. He maintains that the process of understanding the complex interrelationships between propositional truth, historical truth, personal truth, transcendent truth, and immanent truth, is metaphoric. For Cook, understanding the revelatory process involves metaphor, story, and symbol because of the narrative quality of all human experience. This use of metaphoric process attempts to explain how it is that one can know, interpret, and understand revelation.

Tillich understands the reality of revelation to be transcendent, although it manifests itself through immanent reality. The unconditional, infinite, transcendent reality is manifest in finite reality. Because being itself is transcendent and manifest through immanent reality, it is only possible to discuss it by using symbols. According to Tillich, symbols have the ability to participate within immanent reality but yet can point to the transcendent. Symbolic language manages to bridge the gap between the finite and infinite. Thus all talk of God and to God must use symbols. According to him, we could not communicate with God if he were only ultimate being. In our relationship with him, we encounter him with the highest of what we are -- person. In speaking and thinking of, and to, God with symbols we can involve our limited (finite) nature with the unlimited (infinite) nature of God. For Tillich, the reality of the personal is not confined to the limits of finitude, we are. Because we are finite, our experience of the personal is limited. Thus in speaking of God as unlimited and personal, the problem is not with God being infinitely

personal but with humanity's attempt to understand this conceptually.[174] Tillich attempts to avoid this by suggesting that God can only be thought of symbolically. Remember that for Tillich, symbols are able to participate within limits of finitude while pointing to the infinite.

A strength in Tillich's understanding of how we experience revelation is that it is able to maintain that God is ultimate and infinite and is separate from humanity which is limited, but at the same time, is closer to humanity than we are to ourselves and is able to communicate with us. Tillich's view explains how it is that God can be ultimate and omnipotent on the one hand and allow humanity the complete freedom of choice on the other. If God were "automatically" experienced like a tree, humanity would have no choice but to know God. But by suggesting that God is present only to those who desire his presence allows humanity to freely choose their destiny. For Tillich, the experience of revelation requires faith. Clearly Tillich's focus is on this transcendent experience of revelation. However if the only means of experiencing revelation is through finite reality, then finite reality is just as important as transcendent in understanding revelation. For this needed emphasis on the immediate experience of the finite, we turn to Pannenberg.

Pannenberg maintains that there is no experience of reality outside the limits of finitude. Thus, all experience of reality, including the reality of revelation, is immediate. Because of finitude, humanity needs to use symbols when referring to God. But rather than suggesting that the individual has a difficult time grasping the infinite through the finite, Pannenberg suggests that the whole of reality, which reveals God, is not yet known. In order for

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[174]Recall that for Tillich conceptual understanding necessarily involves the finite limits of time and space.

one to experience revelation, it is necessary to understand the continuity of truth which is history. It is not possible to narrow mindedly attempt to understand a particular perspective (stemming from the experience of a present event, person, thing) apart from the whole of truth. Pannenberg suggests that we must look beyond the particular, precise focus of the scientific method and view reality with the more comprehensive horizon of history. Within this universal history, however, Pannenberg insists that the results of scientific research be included. History without the precise, particular focus of science lacks depth; while history without the comprehensive, unifying, continuity of truth lacks meaning.

Pannenberg perceives a problem with how contemporary secular culture views the experience of reality. He suggests that the problem stems from erroneous conviction that particular, empirical, scientific data is the limit of experience. What much of contemporary secular culture has lost by focusing almost exclusively on science is the meaning which comes from a more comprehensive view of reality. The rectification of this problem does not concern humanity's ability to experience the meaning of revelation, but with convincing people of the veracity of revelatory experience and teaching them the language with which to understand it (myth, metaphor, symbol). By showing that science is part of a more comprehensive reality that makes up a universal history, Pannenberg hopes to expand the horizon of experience for contemporary culture.

A strength of Pannenberg's understanding of how revelation is experienced is that it demonstrates the need for an understanding of a comprehensive horizon of experience in order to grasp revelation. This comprehension is developed, in part, by adding scientific depth to the breadth

of universal history. Most importantly though is the need to understand the whole of history in light of an eschatological focus on a provisional future. This provisional future similarly adds an element of faith in Pannenberg's understanding of the experience of revelation.

Both Tillich and Pannenberg suggest that because of human finitude, the experience of revelation requires faith and the use of symbol. Their focus, however, is on different aspects of reality. Tillich's, on the transcendent; Pannenberg's, on the immanent. I suggest that a better understanding of revelation is possible by combining aspects of both views. Tillich's focus on the transcendent aspects of revelation would provide additional comprehension to Pannenberg's universal history. Pannenberg's focus on aspects of immanent reality would provide the needed emphasis on medium through which revelation is received. Understanding revelation as an ultimate universally historical concern would provide a more authentic explanation of how we experience the reality of revelation.

Why?

The final question that must be dealt with if an adequate understanding of revelation is to be made is why is it experienced? In light of our analysis of revelation in chapter one, it is clear that there are fewer attempts to answer the question of why. The clearest response in Dulles' models is within the understanding of revelation as new awareness. This model suggests that we experience revelation because it is who we are. As a result of a more advanced stage of human consciousness we have come to realize the divine presence within us. Why do we experience revelation is the same as asking why do we

experience a tree -- because we are able, and it exists.

For Tillich, we experience revelation because we are a mixture of being and non-being. Asking the questions involved in being implies that there is something about being which we do not possess, otherwise we would not ask the question. Also, there is something of being which we do possess which allows us to make it the object of a question. Thus, part of who we are involves this ultimate reality which is a part of everything but yet never merely a thing. Being itself is the ground and substance of our being and the being of all things. We must strive to experience revelation because it is our ultimate concern.

A strength of Tillich's view is that it emphasizes the essence of God within all of creation. Because of this essential presence in all reality, humanity's ultimate concern is the experience of revelation. In order to understand more fully who we are, we need to recognize the continuity of truth within universal history.

For Pannenberg, we experience revelation as universal history because it is the only way we can understand the meaning of any particular aspect of reality. Humanity has an innate need to recognize meaning in life. This meaning can only be understood by grasping the continuity of truth which forms the substance of universal history. Whether one is interested in grasping the meaning of a thing, person, event, or word, it is necessary to have an understanding of universal history.

A strength in Pannenberg's view is that it recognizes that an understanding of humanity's historical identity is important in recognizing meaning in life. The comprehensiveness of universal history is humanity's ultimate concern.

Both Tillich and Pannenberg suggest that the experience of revelation is essential and of ultimate value in life. I suggest that a better understanding of why humanity experiences revelation can obtained by looking at aspects of both Tillich and Pannenberg. By including Pannenberg's focus on universal history, Tillich's understanding of the essence of revelation in all creation is expanded to include the whole of history. By including Tillich's focus on the potential for all things to be of ultimate concern, Pannenberg's understanding of the value of historical identity is deepened to include the depth of being. We desire to experience revelation because it discloses our depth of being within the whole of history.

Concluding Thoughts

In this thesis I began with a general analysis of revelation. I began with Dulles' typological survey of revelation. Next, I turned to Ballie in an attempt to gain some historical perspective. I then refered to Niebuhr, Macquarrie, Kaufman, and Cook in order to lay out some of the significant details of thought about revelation. I turned to an analysis of revelation understood as ultimate concern in the thought of Tillich and as universal history in the thought of Pannenberg. And finally, in this section I have analyzed the various ways that the experience of the reality of revelation can be conceptualized. Also, I have discussed the significant aspects of Tillich's and Pannenberg's understanding of revelation in relation to these categories. I pointed out the significant strengths and weaknesses of both Tillich and Pannenberg with regard to these categories. Finally, I have suggested a new way to understanding the experience of revelation which involves elements of

thought in both Tillich and Pannenberg. I suggest that this new understanding of revelation accounts for the experience of revelation more adequately than either Tillich's or Pannenberg's theory alone. Revelation is the cornerstone of all theological thought. By providing a general discussion of the various ways it has been understood, as well as a focused analysis of the way in which Tillich understands it as ultimate concern and Pannenberg as universal history, and finally by suggesting that an understanding of revelation which includes elements from Tillich and Pannenberg would allow for a more adequate understanding, I have contributed to the on going discussion of the meaning and experience of the reality of revelation in the world today.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Theodore Kepes, Junior has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. John McCarthy, Director
Assistant Professor, Theology, Loyola

Dr. Gerald McCulloh
Associate Professor, Theology, Loyola

Dr. William French
Assistant Professor, Theology, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of the Arts.

12/11/90
Date

Director's Signature