

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY VOL.3. ~ PAUL TILLICH

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

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

Vol 3, forms parts 4 & 5 of the System

Chapters XXII to XLII:

Life & the Spirit: 22-33

History & the Kingdom of God: 34-42

p vii: 'a system.... should be like a station at which preliminary truth is crystallized on the endless road towards truth'

Part IV: Life and the Spirit:

1. Life, its Ambiguities, & Quest for Unambiguous Life'

Chapter XXII: The Multidimensional Unity of Life

Life is the actuality of being.

Living beings are also dying beings (they include their own negation) When an essence moves beyond potentiality to actuality it is then subject to the conditions of existence – estrangement, finitude, conflict, etc.

The danger of the idea of different 'levels' of existence can lead to thinking that religion is above culture or vice versa, or that divine life is 'above' human life (ie life per se). There is a unity of life which can be seen above its conflicts (but we do perceive ambiguities).

We may think of 'dimensions' of life: inorganic, organic, historical, etc. Then the question arises, how does the inorganic become, through evolution, organic. The philosophical answer can be that essence is potential and actuality is latent within it all.

Spirit: ancients saw breath as the life-giving element – the power of life - and so grew a distinction between body and spirit but it is better to think of spirit as the power of animation itself and not a distinct something which is added to the organic system to give life. This misunderstanding resulted in Descartes and Empiricists who separated body and spirit, substituting 'mind' for spirit and that made them think of it as 'intellect' so idea of spirit was redundant. But 'spirit' was supposed to refer to the *power* of life, not some separate entity. Hence the word 'spiritual' has lost its meaning because the underlying thinking is no longer in our language or conceptual frame. 'Spirited' is one contemporary use which comes close to original meaning.

Similarly, muddle is caused by talk of a 'spiritual world' in Platonic sense. Also talk of 'spirits' as if separate beings whereas Spirit is the Essence of all things and spirit is the life-force.

Similarly, 'soul' has now become seat of the passions and emotions. The word 'mind' is used to mean the consciousness of a being in relation to its surroundings and to itself.

'Reason' is the Logos principle which gives form and structure. Spirit includes all these but is more.

Man is that organism in which spirit is the dominant. Any act of the spirit presupposes a totally centred self, ie one that is free. We take on sensory information or we take on drives, inclinations, desires, trends, ethical traditions etc but then we use freedom to deliberate – an act of the spirit. Nietzsche said, '*spirit is the life which cuts into life itself*'. (Thus Spake Zarathustra)

Chapter XXIII: Self-actualization of life.

Life: in self-integration life drives from self-identity to self-alteration to new self-identity. Also Life produces new centres of life, our life creates because God's life Creates, we speak of Creation because we create. Third, we have life which can self-transcend. It drives towards the 'Sublime'. But all this can disrupt the unity of self and send us into estrangement.

This can happen as disintegration as health and disease, or morality, or personal self, or the ambiguities of sacrifice when we risk disintegration of self for sake of another.

The three functions of the spirit are morality, culture and religion but they are essentially one.

Moral imperative is categorical because it is the essential being over against our state of existential estrangement. It is made concrete by *agape love* which includes justice and *considers every contingency*. Every moral law, even the NT statements, is unable to allow for unique circumstances vs law of love which does. Natural law can be called man's essential nature standing against him in his existential estrangement. So we see that Law as law expresses man's estrangement from himself.

Self-transcendence:

Life strives towards ultimate and infinite being. 'Man is the mirror in which the relation of everything finite to the infinite becomes conscious.' p 92. Yet also he makes things profane. Some fear reaching beyond their finitude, the limits of the ordinary and average but conflicts with the dignity and greatness of life.

Things can reach a greatness and self-transcendence of sorts. Morality can take on an unconditional character when made an ultimate moral aim by religion.

To be aware of oneself is a way of being beyond oneself. It can of course lead to the downfall of hubris.

The holy and the secular: religion is highest expression of greatness and dignity of life when it become holiness. Yet it is also profane when institutionalised so that cultic acts prescribe transcendence, yet pettiness of everyday religion does not mean it cannot be great. Also religion lies within man's cultural captivity.

The claim of the finite to infinity or divine greatness makes it demonic, as with a nation that claims sovereignty over another, which only produces hate and war. The

Roman Empire invested itself with divine holiness leading to persecution of Christians.

Chapter XXIV: Quest for unambiguous life & Symbols of its anticipation

1. Spiritual Presence, 2. Kingdom of God, 3. Eternal Life

2. THE SPIRITUAL PRESENCE:

Chapter XXV: Spiritual Presence manifest in spirit of Man.

We use 'spirit' as the function of life which characterises man as man – actualised in morality, culture and religion. It's the dimension of life uniting power of being with meaning of being. From this we then can put a capital 'S' to talk about divine Spirit.

When these come together we get 'Ecstasy' – man grasped by Divine Spirit. (we cannot ourselves grasp it)

Paul is theologian of the Spirit: 'being in Christ', 'unspeakable sighs', but does not allow spiritual infusion to negate logical structure (speaking in tongues) It's not chaos! Catholics replaced it with Office, Protestants with Doctrine or Morality. Neither is it psychologically determined excitement.

Media of Word and Sacrament: words become the Word, objects become Sacrament when infused with Spirit. Does a church sacrament operate without faith? Or does it induce faith? Opus operatum. The intellectual is not always Spiritual apprehension. Question is always: are they able to mediate Spiritual Presence?

Our words are fundamental expression of our spirit, so Word is obvious medium of Spiritual connection. Any words can therefore become Word of Spirit but we can judge by comparing with biblical words about Jesus Christ – the 'final' revelation.

But God is not bound by his manifestations. Spirit means God Present.

But we can speak to ourselves and must therefore discern lest we fall into the traps of self-delusion.

Faith and Love: Transcendent Union is a quality of unambiguous life.

FAITH: state of being grasped by transcendent unity of unambiguous life. It is not a matter of believing something. Christians believe that all faith is driving towards the fuller faith of being grasped by the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

Faith without love would be a continuation of estrangement in self-transcendence.

To say 'Being called God exists' is a nonsense not an assertion of faith, since there can be no evidence. Faith does not do duty for evidence. I can say however that I have a relationship of faith with that which concerns me most – God. This is 'assent'. This means that faith is not a function of intellect or mental function like will. But the ultimate (God) can grasp these functions and raise them beyond themselves by the creation of faith. (Faith is created by Spiritual Presence)

LOVE: takes us further, Spiritual Presence takes us into transcendent unity of unambiguous love. Love is the drive towards reunion. This agape is impossible for human spirit alone for as Luther said: 'faith is receiving and nothing but receiving'. This drive for reunion is experienced as Joy, Pleasure, Blessedness, and this love carries emotions with it. The wall of separation cannot be pierced without Love. – see

the two commandments. Agape characterises the divine life itself and so is greater than faith.

Chapter XXVI: Spiritual Presence in Historical Mankind

The encounter with divine in Spiritual Presence is for all so how is it evident in human history? 1. Through group story & community, 2. Through personalities and movements.

Breaks into Jewish history in revelatory experiences – *kairoi*. Fragmentary. Discernment is difficult, finding meaning in chaotic or false (mystery cults etc) and this is why ‘Devil’ symbols arise to give expression to the chaotic. Mysticism and monotheism are basic expressions of Spiritual Presence.

The Spirit was in Christ and this Spirit Christology is rife in synoptics. Baptism adoption by Spirit, elected as Son of God. The Presence drives Js into desert. It was symbolised in Virgin Birth (but Docetic reduction of Js’ humanity excluding human father)

Christ Event is therefore unique (total indwelling) but not isolated since HS always present in history.

The Spiritual Community: John replaces Spirit Christology with Logos Christology. In RC the Spiritual Presence is legally circumscribed but Orthodox *filioque* argue that Spirit being from Father alone means that the Spirit continues after Jesus to lead us into all truth. We want to say that where Christ Event is the central appearance, the anticipation is the OT revelation and the ongoing life of the ‘body of Christ’ is the reception through medium of the sacraments (fuller use of the word).

Caesarea Philippi: Spirit grasps Peter to see Spirit in Jesus and so begins the Spiritual Community.

Pentecost: shows unity of ecstasy and structure (beginning of community). Shows they are grasped by. Shows they must therefore respond lovingly. Shows it creates unity. Shows it creates universality.

Latent and manifest forms of Spiritual Community:

Spiritual Community is determined by appearance of Js Christ but does not only include ‘church’. Spiritual Presence can impact Sufism, political groups, youth alliances, movements etc. even if antagonistic to religion. They are secularly latent, the church is religiously manifest. Latent Spiritual Community may express the two marks of SC love (it participates in divine love) and faith (for ultimate concern), but the ultimate criterion is Jesus as the Christ and they are unconsciously driven towards him but cannot actualize the radical self-negation and self-transformation as symbolised by Cross, for that is through Christ.

III. Divine Spirit & Ambiguities of Life

Chapter XXVII: Spiritual Presence and ambiguities of Religion

‘Spiritual Community’ is not a group but the power and structure within religious communities. But they still show the ambiguities of being within Existence, so there

are distortions of the true meaning of 'churches', but the Spiritual Community fights against those ambiguities and gives the churches their meaning and *telos*. The Invisible Church is the character of the character of the Visible Church.

Church is biggest sociological group for good but it is more than that.

RC church pretends that its visible form is no less than its invisible form – ie The Spiritual Community – and therefore cannot be criticised. However all churches are holy in that in the midst of ambiguity the Spiritual Community is fighting for the good. The holy church is the distorted church.

The creeds for example were developed within the power ambiguities of their time so must receive criticism now. If we accommodate too much to the cultural powers of the day the Christian message can be surrendered. 'danger of forsaking the pole of veracity for the pole of adaptation.' (p 198) (eg Polytheistic trends of saints, BVM which were necessary in mission) But sticking with those accommodations is demonic absolutism.

Chapter XXIX: The Spiritual Presence and the Ambiguities of Morality.

Chapter XXX: Spiritual Presence and life in general.

If Spirit, for example, generates embryo without male agency it makes Spirit finite cause, physical matter or substance, which is impossible.

Spiritual healing: illness is holistic so healing must be directed to whole person. So no one method must claim exclusive authority. Psychotherapy can sometimes try to denounce medical and Spiritual influences. The psychoanalyst may claim that s/he can overcome negatives of existential situation (anxiety, despair etc) as well as neurotic anxiety, despair etc.

It can even be that health in one dimension is brought on my disease in another and vice versa. Only universal healing is total healing.

IV: THE TRINITARIAN SYMBOLS

Chapter XXXI: The Motives of the Trinitarian Symbolism.

Trinitarian thinking was brought on by tensions: 1. between absolute and concrete of God, 2 our symbolic applications to God, 3 God manifests self as creative power, saving love, and ecstatic transformation.

PART 5. HISTORY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This will include I. History and quest for KgdM

II. KgdM within History

III. KgdM as End of History

Intro: 'natural history' is about every process in nature. 'history' human history.

Kingdom of God: inner-historical is about Spiritual Presence.

Transhistorical is about Eternal Life.

Relation of temporal to eternal is Eschatology.

Chapter XXXIV: Life and History

The dialectical structure of historical events: Hegel observed that whenever life conflicts with itself a new dynamic occurs – dialectics. But to force universe into that pattern goes too far and is not verifiable. Hegel actually meant his dialectics to be religious symbols of estrangement and reconciliation, reduced to empirical descriptions. He raised the correct observation to the status of law, making it a quasi-religious principle..

History stands under ambiguities of existence All history progresses to the new.

In religion we talk of progress towards Christ as final revelation, but each religion claims this absolute moment for itself. [but.. can't one say, 'I'll tell you this much.' Which is a partial revelation. LG] But a revelation is a revelation not 'better than' an old one or it would be only partial revelation, but conditioned by the receptor's ambiguity. So Christianity as a religion is not absolute, but the revelation on which it depends is.

In world of technology there is 'progress' but when one considers ends not means it may not be so. (eg Atomic power)

Chapter XXXV: Ambiguities under historical dimension.

History drives towards all-inclusiveness. Rome Empire under principle of Law, Germanic of Body Christian, British of progress to civilisation, Russian of human value over machine, American of liberty. History runs towards new – great but tragic. The struggle between prophetic new and the sacred old was also seen as religious progress.

Chapter XXXVI: History and Quest for Kingdom of God.

Myth and Legend is our history interpreted, and this depends on what history is chosen to interpret, motivation for it, philosophy of interpreter, how the events are seen (unconsciously even) in light of meaning of existence. So ~

False answers to meaning of history:

Greeks interpreted history as contrast of Greek and Barbarian, Jews, as victory of Jahweh over nations, Christians interpret under symbol of Kingdom of God. And since 'history' is all-embracing, Kingdom of God refers to all life.

Most beings live lives without awareness that it is within history with eternal *telos*. Greeks saw circle of history having nothing beyond, so individual heroes praised but all tragic.

Mystics of Vedanta Hinduism & Buddhism, history cannot create new nor be truly real. We live in history but rise above it. History does not run towards anything, with emphasis on individual. No impulse therefore to transform history for justice since no aim. Enlightenment is conquering ones involvement in historical reality. So symbol analogous to Kingdom of God. Often though compassion for the suffering of all creation.

Scientific approach sees history as series of happenings in a mechanistic manner, without a transhistorical aim.

Inadequate answers to meaning of history:

Positivism has fuelled passion for revolution, as with utopianism, but these beliefs were undermined by 20th century experiences.

Separation of the two worlds, the justice of the Kingdom of God and the justice of existential power structures are distinct. Revolutionary attempts to change society according to this are against God's will. All will be well after history. But this contrasts individual salvation with transformation of universe.

Some believe Kgd of God is a static transcendent reality which individuals enter after death. This contradicts NT and Lord's Prayer.

Kingdom of God as symbolic answer to meaning of History.

Kingdom manifests itself within history and in Eternal Life as the answer to the ambiguities of life universal.

1. Jesus' platform: 'Kingdom of God is at hand.' It participates as symbol of righteous *power* in the social and transforms our existence. So different from nirvana beyond history.
2. Kingdom also carries values of justice and peace – it has moral imperative of *ethical values*.
3. Every human *individual* find meaning here.
4. Kingdom of God is also *universal* that God is all in all for all creation and multiverse.
5. This symbol addresses demonic in history too.

Chapter XXXVII: Kingdom of God within history.

Saving power breaks into history, not created by it, as in creative moment in dialectic.

Some argue that the intervention is 'supranatural' but then it could not save *within* process of history.

Christianity claims to be based on the central manifestation of Kgd of God – the centre of history. All before is preparation, all after is reception. All after it partakes of its power and stands under its criterion. Mankind had to mature to a point where it could receive the central moment. (OT tells us the story) Whenever the centre is acknowledged it is happening again for as John 1 proclaims, Christ is throughout time.

OT sets it all up by telling of man's original awareness of his estrangement and his failed attempts at reconciliation from his own resources.

History of church is post – reception period. And end of history is when man ceases to ask about his estrangement.

Others make same claim of centrality: Exodus for Jews, Foundation of city for Romans, Revolutionary War for America. The Law for Islam, with education as successor. So Christianity is only religion able to offer centre of History.

Greek term *Kairos* is God's timing – 'at hand'. Reading signs of the times. The central *Kairos* can be experienced through history as *Kairoi*. Vision can discern *kairoi* but not calculated.

Historical Design precludes contingency in process of history, whereas 'providence' may be mistakenly assumed to deny free will. It takes evil into account, as the

Enlightenment progressivism did not. Future justice does not annihilate past injustice! We have freedom for good or evil!

The aim of history is reunion with the divine ground of being and meaning.

Chapter XXVIII: Kingdom of God and the Churches

Kingdom of God embraces more than 'Spiritual Community' because even the churches can represent demonic because they are within the ambiguities of existence. Spirit alerts Church to task of witnessing to Kingdom. Then they are not only 'Spiritual Communities' but representatives of the Kingdom.

III: The Kingdom of God and the End of History.

Chapter XL: The End of History or Eternal Life.

End means finish and aim – that to which temporal process points as its goal.

Telos is therefore not limited to an historical moment. The fulfilment of History lies in permanently present 'end' of history which is the transcendent side of Kingdom of God – that is, Eternal Life.

Eternal Life is not idealised version of existence. Neither is it separated from life by death point.

Eternal Life excludes the negative distortions from positive content of history. Every particle of life is important for God and Eternal Life is participation in Divine Life.

Final Judgement: The Greek *krinein* is separating or judging. The negative is separated and negated. God burns it and transforms being so that the negative no longer can 'exist' in it.

The Eternal is always present and is not some future happening, but it is where negative is not remembered at all for it is ultimate nothing. The individual centres (us) are not dissolved but transformed.

In this state there is no longer need for morality, culture or religion. There is no 'ought to be', no good which is not done, and no need for temple.

Eternal blessedness: transcendent happiness. But this can only be when there is its negative – suffering – so must include it, as eternal life 'despite' suffering. Suffering is within the Divine Life, but in context of fight and victory.

Chapter XLI: Individual and his Eternal Destiny.

Only man is aware of ambiguity and he can waste his potentiality. So ultimate judgement is a serious business. But Original Blessing is as Augustine said: nothing that is can become completely evil, and therefore is within divine love. Eternal Damnation can only be ongoing awareness of a despair at negative of existence. But to square reality of undeserved suffering (babes, etc) requires we realise no one person is separated from all, in that we all participate in Divine universal.

Reject 'immortality' since Eternal life is not continuation of temporal life after death but an ongoing quality which transcends temporality.

Similarly we reject dualism of soul and body for Spirit includes all dimensions of being. Our finitude remains finite but is taken into the infinite – clothe our mortal bodies' (I Cor 15:53)

Resurrection of the body:

Spiritual existence is not naked existence. But flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life – materialistic interpretation – but our whole self can. Resurrection life includes all dimensions of being and our being is expressed particularly in the face (cf icons) so all must be included in the 'me' who is saved. Individual's uniqueness is affirmed.

Chapter XLII: Kingdom of God: Time and Eternity.

Eternal beyond temporality yet includes it. Augustine rejected circle of time/history and replaced it with a straight line. But there is no beginning and end to his line.

God is living and therefore must have within the unity of identity and alteration which characterises life. So Eternal Life is *life* in God. Trinity includes the idea of otherness within God, the eternal act of creation is driven not by whim but love which finds fulfilment in the other.

All this language is symbolic otherwise we'd be trying to extinguish the importance of mystery.