

Summary 'Kairos en het eeuwige nu'

In 1990 the Third International Paul Tillich Symposium was held. The central theme of this symposium was the question of Tillich's eschatology. However, the speakers could not help failing in providing us with an unequivocal answer - it was even so that Hummel spoke of the vain attempt to save something like a uniform, "essential" Tillich. Before this it had already been pointed out in the literature on Tillich that his eschatology is ambiguous in nature (Schipper). These insights gave us sufficient cause to speak of a tension or even a contradiction in Tillich's thought in the field of history and especially in that of eschatology. They reveal the horizon of the problem we are aiming at in this research. That's why we have framed the question of our research as follows: Do we really find unsolved tensions in Tillich's way of thinking about history and if so, what lies at the back of these tensions?

In the analysing part of this study (chapters 1, 2 and 3) we examine a selection of Tillich-texts in chronological order. This serves a double purpose: In the first place possible tensions in Tillich's thinking about history should be illustrated from those texts themselves. Secondly we consider the development of Tillich's thought of decisive importance for the interpretation of the problem under consideration. As our research progressed the textual material structured itself into three circles: 1. The early texts on the subject of history in which - as we named it - 'kairotic thinking' finds expression. 2. The texts from the second half of the twenties which testify to the influence of existential phenomenology. 3. The historical texts which are representative of the 'Final Stage' of Tillich's theology.

The first chapter sets in with the study of the texts of Kairos I and Kairos II from 1922 and 1926 respectively. In these writings Tillich summons us to a consciousness of history that takes its roots in the depths of the Unconditioned. Here the central category is the so-called 'kairos'. That is the time of fulfilment, in which man moved by the Unconditioned, comes to the very decisions through which history is made.

In our search for the roots of this 'kairotic thinking' we struck upon the range of ideas of Böhme and Schelling II. In this context two texts are of exceptional importance. We analysed them because in our opinion it is here that Tillich raised kairotic thinking to a program: 'Kairos und Logos' (1926) and 'Philosophie und Schicksal' (1929). According to Tillich, we find in Böhme and Schelling II a dualism in the world of ideas - a dynamic element that leads to history. This in contradistinction to Plato with whom the ideas have no historical fate (destiny). Particularly in Tillich's 'Das Dämonische. Ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte' from 1926 it appears how much in his concept of the philosophy/theology of history he is dependent on his teacher Schelling. We have typified Tillich's thought as an irrational, dynamic, creational way of thinking and have further specified it as an Idealism modified by Böhme and Schelling II. How much Tillich stands in the idealistic tradition already appears from his way of speaking about God as the 'Unconditioned' - a concept we have subjected to further research.

The movement of Religious Socialism may be called a personal kairos in Tillich's own life. He played a leading part in it. In the discussion with Hirsch and National Socialism Tillich felt obliged to delineate the outlines of his kairos-idea more precisely. This resulted in a stronger concentration on christology: Every kairos can only be 'a renewed opening-up' of the definite revelation in Jesus Christ (the Kairos and the kairoi).

Beside the kairotic beginning of Tillich's theology we observe a new element in the second half of the twenties: the impact and influence of existential phenomenology. This datum is the subject in the second chapter of this study. Since 1925 (Marburg) Tillich was undeniably influenced by Heidegger. In the 'Marburger Dogmatik' (1925) ontology becomes an integral part of his thinking, stronger still - ontology is the structure-determining factor. There is a so-called 'double-focus of statements' (Doppelheit der Aussagen) - a treatment of the themes connected with the structure of being and a treatment in the light of Unconditional Being. In the 'Marburger Dogmatik' history is given a central place. In the second, middle part it is introduced as the history of redemption, as a break-through of the definite revelation in Jesus who is the Christ - a break-through which was prepared by religion and assumed in our reality by the church.

'Marburger Dog-matik' for lecture-purposes in Dresden 1927/29), we observe moreover some interesting shifts in the use of language. The 'Unconditioned' changes into 'Being-itself', instead of the demonic we hear of non-being and where through Jesus Christ reality becomes transparent unto God, Tillich speaks for the first time of the 'New being'. All this shows that between 1925 and 1929 Tillich increasingly uses ontologically coloured concepts. We have also seen this confirmed by studying 'Eschatologie und Geschichte' (1927) and 'Chris-to-logie und Geschichtsdeutung' (1929). For these texts we used the original edition in 'Religiöse Verwirklichung' (1930), because in that version we find the final notes, which were left out in the 'Gesammelte Werke'. These notes are so interesting for the very reason that they show how Tillich was involved in a continuous 'conversation' with Heidegger in this period.

In 'Eschatologie und Geschichte' Tillich introduces the concept 'escha-ton', in which he is not concerned with the last events in time, but with the trans-cendental meaning of the things that take place. In 'Christo-logie und Geschichtsdeutung' we find beside the influence of Heidegger also an important reference to the work of Kierkegaard viz. where he (K.) expounds his doctrine of the contemporaneity with Christ. The Existentialist Kierkegaard has also had a strong influence on Tillich.

The second chapter closes with a further study of the concept of correlation. We come to the conclusion that the method of correlation became the way along which Tillich integrated existential phenomenology in his thought. By the grace of this 'double-focus of statements' onto-log/existential phenome-nology has been able to unfold itself widely on the side of questions. This is where we are confronted for the first time with the question if it isn't true that through the method of correlation elements of different origin are inter-related.

The third chapter deals with the 'Final Stage' of Tillich's theology. We consider Part V of the 'Systematische Theologie', the 'Religiöse Reden' and 'Der Mut zum Sein' consecutively as representative of his ultimate view of history. The fifth part of the 'Systematische Theologie' was the last to be written, but we are putting it first. We may assume that Tillich had set out the main lines of his system at the publication of the first volume in 1951. Overlooking the draft of Tillich's theology of history as it has found expression in his 'Systematische Theologie', we must come to the conclusion that his eschatology is not 'of one piece'. He goes out of his way to come to a description of the genuine historic processes. The dynamics of history is closely connected with the kairos-doctrine, which assumes that something absolutely new may be realised in history. Nevertheless Tillich refuses to speak about the eschata. There is never going to be a definite end, but it seems very likely that Tillich thought of an end not in a temporal sense. There is the 'eternal now': the transition from existence to essence as a permanent source of essentialization and judgement. Here history seems to be drained off into 'nunc aeternum'. Tillich has transformed this tension in a dialectic. In this connection he speaks of a continuing line, which also goes through the depths. We wonder, however, if this construction has any value in reality, or in other words: How much reality can be ascribed to it? We found the same tension in Tillich's collections of sermons ('Religiöse Reden').

'Der Mut zum Sein' occupies a special place in the corpus of Tillich-texts. In this work Tillich distinguishes not only three types of anxiety, but also three periods of anxiety. First of all we have exposed the trinitarian foundation of 'Der Mut zum Sein' and then we have asked ourselves if we find a trinitarian construction of history here. We can't help concluding that the Trinity is laid out on time. However, this presupposes a real end to history again, because otherwise we drop 'over the edge of the Trinity'.

In the fourth chapter we arrive at an interpretation of the problematic and we come to the following thesis: In the 'Final Stage' of Tillich's theology we find an unsolved tension between his kairotic thought and the 'eternal now'. It is a matter of two concepts of heterogeneous origin. The kairos-concept attached itself to the dynamics of history. In the 'eternal now' an existential way of thinking about being manifests itself. This attached itself to the eschatology. This 'unevenness' in Tillich's thought is to be explained from the fact that he had to operate on the boundary between two worlds: viz. Idealism and Existentialism. The kairotic (=idealistic) beginning of his theology continues to be felt in the 'Final Stage'. Side by side with it an existential way of thinking asserts itself from ± 1925. This way of thinking is integrated in the system through the method of correlation. The consequence of all this is a 'con-fusio regnorum'.

A detailed study of Tillich's concept 'anxiety of non-being' shows that concepts of different origin are connected. The contaminations in the field of history, as we described them, have therefore to be explained from a 'flowing together' of idealistic and existentialistic influences. At the same time this has a bearing on the process of growth of Tillich's thought,

who wanted to be both an Idealist and an Existentialist: 'Zwei Seelen in einer Brust'!

In the last chapter 'Evaluatie en relevantie' we are going further into the difference between a totalising and a diastatic theological concept. By way of counter-survey we contrast Tillich with some outstanding positions of the reformed (Calvinistic) tradition, in which a preference is shown for diastatic rather than synthetic thinking. We are aware of the fact that Tillich's totalising concept of reality puts a heavy burden on our own tradition. Nevertheless we are prepared to consider his theology further, because especially one of its great presuppositions has intrigued us very much: 'God and man as two foci of one ellipse'.