The Protestant Era by Paul Tillich

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Chapter 6: Philosophy and Theology

(Address delivered on assuming the chair of Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary)

Philosophical theology is the unusual name of the chair I represent. It is a name that suits me better than any other, since the boundary line between philosophy and theology is the center of my thought and work. But has the term "philosophical theology" more than a personal meaning? Has it an objective meaning? Is it a justified combination of words?

Some will give a decidedly negative answer to this question. Theological supra-naturalism of Continental, as well as of American, types will denounce philosophical theology as a contradiction in terms or, even more, as high treason against theology. On the other hand, philosophers and theological humanists may denounce philosophical theology—although perhaps with less fanaticism than the opposite group—as an impure mixture of two incompatible methods of thought. They may admit the right of dealing philosophically with religion as with any other subject. But philosophy of religion is not philosophical theology. Can our name be defended against this double attack?

The answer is implied in the answer to the old question of the relation between philosophy and theology. After at least two thousand years of thought dedicated to the solution of this problem, it is not easy to offer a new solution. Nevertheless, it must be attempted in every generation as long as theology exists, for the question of the relation of philosophy and theology is the question of the nature of theology itself.

The term "philosophical theology" points to a theology that has a philosophical character. What does this mean? First of all, it implies that there is a theology that

has *not* a philosophical but some other character. This, indeed, is the case. As long as theological thought has existed, there have been two types of theology, a philosophical one and—let me call it—a "kerygmatic" one. Kerygmatic is derived from the New Testament word*kerygma,* "message." It is a theology that tries to reproduce the content of the Christian message in an ordered and systematic way, without referring to philosophy. In contrast to it, philosophical theology, although based on the same *kerygma,* tries to explain the contents of the *kerygma* in close interrelation with philosophy. The tension and mutual fertilization between these two types is a main event and a fortunate one in all history of Christian thought. The fight of the traditionalists of the early church against the rising logos-Christology, the struggle between the mystics and dialecticians in the early Middle Ages, between Biblicism and scholasticism in the later Middle Ages, between the Reformers and the Aristotelian scholastics, the attack of the Ritschlians on speculative theology, and of the Barthians on a philosophy of religion—all this and much more was the consequence of the existence of a philosophical and a kerygmatic theology. The duality is natural. It is implied in the very word "theology," the syllable "theo" pointing to the *kerygma,* in which God is revealed, and the syllable "logy" pointing to the endeavor of human reason to receive the message. This implies further that kerygmatic and philosophical theology demand each other and are wrong in the moment in which they become exclusive. No kerygmatic theology ever existed which did not use philosophical terms and methods. And no philosophical theology ever existed—deserving the name "theology"—which did not try to explain the content of the message. Therefore, the theological ideal is the complete unity of both types, an ideal which is reached only by the greatest theologians and even by them only approximately. The fact that every human creativity has its typological limitations makes it desirable that theological faculties should include a representative of kerygmatic and one of philosophical theology, whether the latter is called apologetics, speculative theology, Christian philosophy of religion, or philosophical theology. The church cannot do without this type, just as, of course, it cannot dispense with the kerygmatic type.

It is not my task to enlarge on the nature of kerygmatic theology. The most radical attempt to create a merely kerygmatic theology in our period has been made by Karl Barth. But he, in contrast to some of his fanatical pupils, is honest enough to acknowledge that he cannot avoid philosophical language and methods completely, since even our daily-life language is shaped by philosophical terminology and philosophical ways of thought. Neither is it my task to deal with the difficult question as to whether there is a third type, namely, mystical theology, as has often been suggested; or whether mysticism, as I should prefer to assert, is an element of any religious message and therefore a substantial element in both types of theology.

Now, what is the relation of philosophy and theology and, consequently, the exact meaning of "philosophical theology"? In order to answer this question, as far as it can be answered at all, we must try to traverse some difficult ways of abstract thought for which I must beg your patience.

Philosophy asks the ultimate question that can be asked, namely, the question as to what being, simply being, means. Whatever the object of thought may be, it is always something that *is* and not *not is.* But what does this word is mean? What is the meaning of being? Santayana, in a very fine analysis of experience, derives all experience from shocks which we receive and which disturb the smooth flux of our intuition. I think he is right. And his insight should be used not only for the sake of stopping the vague and detrimental use of the word "experience" which we find in popular philosophy and theology but also for a more profound, more Aristotelian description of the experience out of which philosophy is born. It is the philosophical shock, the tremendous impetus of the questions: What is the meaning of being? Why is there being and not not-being? What is the structure in which every being participates? Questions like these may be late in their explicit and rational form, although they underlie the most mythological creations. In any case they are essentially human, for man, as the German philosopher Heidegger says, is that being which asks what being is. This question and the shock with which it takes hold of us is especially human. It is the foundation of humanism and the root of philosophy. For philosophy asks the question concerning being itself. This implies that philosophy primarily does not ask about the special character of the beings, the things and events, the ideas and values, the souls and bodies which share being. Philosophy asks what about this being itself. Therefore, all philosophers have developed a "first philosophy," as Aristotle calls it, namely, an interpretation of being. And from this they go on to the description of the different classes of beings and to the system of their interdependence, the world. It is easy to make a simple division between philosophy and theology, if philosophy deals only with the second realm, with sciences, and attempts to unite their last results in a picture of the world. But philosophy, before attempting a description of the world in unity with all kinds of scientific and nonscientific experience, tries to understand being itself and the categories and structures which are common to all kinds of beings. This makes the division between philosophy and theology impossible, for, whatever the relation of God, world, and man may be, it lies in the frame of being; and any interpretation of the meaning and structure of being as being, unavoidably has consequences for the interpretation of God, man, and the world in their interrelations.

This concept of philosophy may be challenged from different angles. The establishment of a first philosophy may be attacked with the popular argument that it entails a return to old-fashioned metaphysics. The presupposition of this argument is

the magic of the syllable "meta" in metaphysics, which, in spite of the testimony of all textbooks and lectures on philosophy that it means the book after the physics in the collection of Aristotelian writings, has received the meaning of something beyond human experience, open to arbitrary imagination. But the question of being, the question of a first or fundamental philosophy, is the question of what is nearer to us than anything else; it is we ourselves as far as we *are* and at the same time as human beings are able to ask what it means that we are. It is time to dismiss this abused and distorted word "metaphysics," the negation of which has become an excuse for a terrific shallowness of thought, in comparison with which primitive mythology was extremely profound.

Another criticism may come from the claim of epistemology to be the true first philosophy. I would admit that this claim is justified to a great extent. Parmenides, the first and greatest of the ontologists, knew that being and the logos of being, that is, the rational word which grasps being, belong together, or, as we should say, that being is always subjective and objective at the same time. Epistemology is wrong only if it pretends to exist without an ontological basis. It cannot do so. And this insight has caused the breakdown of the epistemological period of philosophy in the last decades. You cannot have appearance without a being that appears, or knowledge without a being that is known, or experience without a being that is experienced. Otherwise, appearance or experience become only other words for being, and the problem of being is only stated in different terms.

There is a third criticism which we have to face. It may be said that there is no approach for man to the structure and meaning of being, that what being is, is revealed to us in the manifoldness of beings and in the world in which they all are united and interrelated to one another. It could be said: Look at minerals and flowers, look at animals and men, look at history and the arts, and you will learn what being is, but do not ask for being itself above all of them. To this we must answer: You cannot prohibit man from asking the most human question; no dictator can do so, even if he appears in the gown of humble positivism or modest empiricism. Man is more than an apparatus for registering so-called "facts" and their interdependence. He wants to *know*, to know about himself as thrown into being, to know about the powers and structures controlling this being in himself and in his world. He wants to know the meaning of being because he is man and not only an epistemological subject. Therefore he transcends and always must transcend the "No trespassing" signs cautiously built by skepticism and dogmatically guarded by pragmatism. The meaning of being is his basic concern, it is the really human and philosophical question.

But this statement brings us to the turning-point—to the point, namely, in which philosophy shows a kerygmatic and therefore a theological character, for this is the task of theology: to ask for being as far as it gives us ultimate concern. Theology deals

with what concerns us inescapably, ultimately, unconditionally. It deals with it not as far as it *is* but as far as it is *for us.* In no theological statement can the relation *to us* be omitted. Without the element of ultimate concern, no assertion is a theological one. As a theologian you can speak and you must speak about everything between heaven and earth—and beyond heaven and earth. But you speak of it theologically only if you show how it belongs to our final concern, to that which decides about our being or not being in the sense of our eternal, ultimate meaning and destiny. This is the truth in the much misunderstood assertion that theology is a practical discipline. If "practical" is understood in contrast to theoretical, that statement is entirely wrong, since truth is an essential element in what concerns us ultimately. If "practical" means that theology must deal with its subject always as far as it concerns us in the very depth of our being, theology is practical. But since by popular distortion the word "practical" has received an antitheoretical flavor and since the Ritschlian school created that definition of theology in order to cut off theology from philosophy, sacrificing truth to morals, it is more adequate to use another term, for instance, to use with Sören Kierkegaard the word "existential." Existential is what characterizes our real existence in all its concreteness, in all its accidental elements, in its freedom and responsibility, in its failure, and in its separation from its true and essential being. Theology thinks on the basis of this existential situation and in continuous relation to it. Asking for the meaning of being, theology asks for the ultimate ground and power and norm and aim of being, as far as it is *my* being and carries *me* as the abyss and ground of my existence, it asks for the threatening and promising power over *my* existence, for the demanding and judging norm of *my* existence, for the fulfilling and rejecting aim of *my*existence. In other words: In asking for the meaning of being, theology asks for God. In asking for the powers and structures constituting the being of self and the world, their interrelation and their manifoldness, theology asks for the appearance of the ground, power, norm, and aim of being in these realms of being. It asks for the way in which man receives or resists the appearance of his ultimate concern. It asks for the way in which nature reveals or hides what concerns us ultimately. It asks for the relation of what concerns us historically to what concerns us ultimately. In other words, it asks for the divine and demonic powers in ourselves, in our world, in nature, as well as in history. This is existential thinking; this is theology. But now we have again reached a turning-point, this time the point in which theology shows its philosophical character. Dealing with the meaning of being as far as it concerns us ultimately, dealing with man and the world, with nature and history, as far as our ultimate concern appears in them, we must know the meaning of being, we must know the structures and powers controlling the different realms of existence.

We have searched for the object or question of philosophy, and we have discovered that a theological element, an ultimate concern, gives the impulse to philosophy. We have searched for the object or question of theology, and we have discovered that a

philosophical element is implied in theology—the question of the meaning and structure of being and its manifestation in the different realms of being. Philosophy and theology are divergent as well as convergent. They are convergent as far as both are existential and theoretical at the same time. They are divergent as far as philosophy is basically theoretical and theology is basically existential. This is the reason that philosophy is able to neglect its existential basis and to deal with being and beings as if they did not concern us at all. And this is the reason that theology is able to neglect its theoretical form and to become mere *kerygma*. But as theology always has created a philosophical theology, so philosophers always have tried to reach existential significance, to give a prophetic message, to found a sect, to start a religious-political movement, or to become mystics. But in doing so they were philosophical theologians and were considered as such by followers and foes. Most creative philosophers have been theological in this sense. Only noncreative philosophy cuts itself off entirely from its existential basis. It has in its hands the shell, not the substance, of philosophy. It is school and not life and therefore not philosophy, but the trading of old philosophical merchandise.

Both philosophy and theology become poor and distorted when they are separated from each other. Philosophy becomes logical positivism prohibiting philosophy from dealing with any problem which concerns us seriously—political, anthropological, religious—a very comfortable flight of philosophical thought from the tremendous realities of our period. Or it becomes mere epistemology, always sharpening the knife of thought but never cutting, because cutting toward a truth that concerns us demands venturing courage and passion. Or it becomes history of philosophy, enumerating one philosophical opinion of the past after the other, keeping itself at a noble distance, faithlessly and cynically— a philosophy without existential basis, without theological ground and power. In the same way theology, denying entirely its philosophical concern, becomes as poor and distorted as philosophy without a theological impulse. Such a theology speaks of God as of a being beside others, subject to the structure of being as all beings are, stars and men and animals, the highest being but not being itself, not the meaning of being and therefore a merciful tyrant limited in power, who may concern us very much, but not ultimately, not unconditionally; whose existence, doubtful as it is, must be argued for as for the existence of a new chemical element or a disputable event in past history. Or such a theology separates man from nature and nature from man, the self from its world and the world from the self to which it belongs. It must do so because it does not know of the powers and structures of being which control man *and* nature, the world *and* the self, subjecting both to tragedy and working in both for fulfillment. The unity of being between man and nature is more basic than their difference in consciousness and freedom. A theology that is unable to understand this necessarily oscillates between moralism and naturalism. But being is more than nature and more than morals.

All this is not supposed to be a challenge to a genuine and consistent kerygmatic theology. It is said only against a theology that is not kerygmatic enough to restrict itself from the use of a shallow popular philosophy or that is not philosophical enough to accept the fundamental concepts of a serious first philosophy.

We have found a convergence and a divergence between theology and philosophy with respect to the question asked by both of them. There is another convergence and divergence with respect to the way the question is answered by both of them. The meaning of being manifests itself in the logos of being, that is, in the rational word that grasps and embraces being and in which being overcomes its hiddenness, its darkness, and becomes truth and light. Truth in Greek is *aletheia*, "what is not hidden." In the word—the logos—being ceases to be hidden; in the rational form being becomes meaningful and understandable. Being and the word in which it is conceived cannot be separated. Therefore, wherever beings are, there is logos of being, a form and structure in which its meaning is manifest. But, although logos is in every being, it is outspoken only in that being which has the word, the rational word, the worth of truth and light—that is, in man. In man the meaning of being can become manifest because man has the word revealing the hiddenness of being. But, although every man has the word of truth potentially, not every man has it actually and no man has it perfectly. Therefore, philosophy asks for the way in which man can find the revealing word, the logos of being. Only in a vision can a few elect find it, Parmenides answers. Only noble aristocratic souls are able to look into the infinite depth of the soul, Heraclitus indicates. Only he who is guided by a blessed demon can make the right decisions, Socrates confesses. Only for the initiated does the idea appear and the darkness of the cave in which human reason is enclosed disappear, Plato prophesies through the mouth of Diotima. Only those who are free citizens can reach the happiness of pure intuition, Aristotle asserts. Only a few wise men reach the state of reason in which the logos of being can reveal itself, the Stoics pronounce. Only in one man—the Christian philosophers continue—has the logos appeared completely, full of grace and truth. This is the point in which the convergence of philosophy and theology is most powerful. It was a theological impulse that drove all these philosophers to a statement about the concrete situation in which the logos of being can appear. An existential concern is involved in all those limiting assertions. And, on the other hand, it is a philosophical concept in which the theology of logos expresses its unconditional concern about the message of Christ. Therefore, philosophical theology is and must be logos-theology, while an exclusively kerygmatic theology, like that of Barth, denies the logos-doctrine.

I stopped naming philosophers who have asked the question as to the place where the logos of being is manifest. One could continue up to the present. For the medieval philosophers, the Christian church is the only place where the logos appears at its very

center. For the mystics from Plotinus to Spinoza and for all mystics in India, it is the mystical and ascetic elevation over all beings in which the logos of being itself appears. For the philosophers of the modern Enlightenment in all European countries, it is the third and final period of history only, in which the educated and well-balanced man has grown mature for reason. For Fichte, only the blessed life and, for Hegel, only the fulfillment of history guarantee truth. For Marx, it is the participation in the proletarian struggle and the victory in this struggle in which mere ideology is overcome by truth. In all these men, especially in Marx, the question of the place in which the logos of being appears is taken seriously. In all of them theological passion, existential asking, is obvious. In face of this cloud of philosophical witnesses, those school—and textbook—philosophers who pretend that philosophy is merely a matter of learning and intelligence vanish into complete insignificance, even if they constitute a larger number than those mentioned. There is no philosophy deserving the name without transformation of the human existence of the philosopher, without his ultimate concern and without his faith in his election for truth in the place to which he belongs.

But here also the divergence must be stated. Philosophy, although knowing the existential presuppositions of truth, does not abide with them. It turns immediately to the content and tries to grasp it directly. In its system it abstracts from the existential situation out of which they are born. It does not acknowledge any bondage to special traditions or authorities. It transcends them in asking for being itself beyond all singular beings, even the highest, even the asker himself. Philosophy asks on the existential basis of the Greek city-state and the religion of Apollo and Dionysus; but it asks for truth itself and may be persecuted by them. Philosophy asks on the existential and concrete basis of the medieval church and civilization. But it asks for the truth itself and may become martyred. Philosophy asks on the existential and concrete basis of bourgeois or proletarian society and culture. But it asks for truth itself and may be expelled. Philosophy, in spite of its existential and concrete basis, turns directly to the meaning of being. This is its freedom, and this brings it about that a thinker who intentionally subjects himself to ecclesiastical or national or class bondage ceases to be a philosopher.

Quite differently, the theologian is bound to the concrete and existential situation in which he finds himself and which is not only the basis but also the subject of his work. As a theologian he is bound to the appearance of the logos after he has acknowledged its appearance at a special space in a special time. As a theologian he deals with the transformation of existence in man’s individual and social existence, he deals with what concerns us ultimately. As a theologian he cannot transcend his existential situation either in a personal or in a social respect. His faith and the faith of his church belong intentionally to his thought. This is true of the philosophical, as well

as of the kerygmatic, theologian. But the philosophical theologian, as a Christian, tries to show in his work that the existential situation of the Christian church is, at the same time, the place where the meaning of being has appeared as our ultimate concern. In other words, he tries to show that Jesus as the Christ is the logos.

The methodological way in which this must be done cannot be explained here. It cannot be shown how conflicts between special forms of philosophy and the Christian message might be overcome if they are not rooted in ultimate existential decisions. This is a matter for concrete elaboration. Neither can it be shown why, in a philosophical theology, philosophy must provide the concepts and categories and the problems implied in them, to which theology gives the answers drawn from the substance of the Christian message. I only want to give the following indications: Philosophical theology deals with the concept of reason and the categories belonging to it and leads to the existential problem implied in reason, to which the answer is: revelation. Philosophical theology deals with the concept of being and the categories belonging to it, and it leads to the existential problem implied in being, to which the answer is: God. Philosophical theology deals with the concept of existence and the categories belonging to it and leads to the existential problem implied in existence, to which the answer is: the Christ. Philosophical theology deals with the concept of life and the categories belonging to it and leads to the existential problem implied in life, to which the answer is: the Spirit. Philosophical theology deals with the concept of history and the categories belonging to it and leads to the existential problem implied in history, to which the answer is: the Kingdom of God. This is the task and the way of philosophical theology following from the basic definitions given above. It is a permanent work, going from century to century as philosophy goes on and the life of the church goes on. The end of this kind of philosophical theology would be the end of the universal claim of the Christian church, the end of the message that Jesus is the Christ. What has appeared as our ultimate existential concern has appeared at the same time as the logos of being. This is the fundamental Christian claim and the infinite subject of philosophical theology.

Chapter 13: The Protestant Message and the Man of Today

I. The Man of Today

The man of today, with whom this discussion is concerned, is not simply the man who happens to be a member of our generation but rather the man whose whole outlook is molded by the present cultural situation and who, in turn, determines, preserves, or transforms it. If we wish to characterize him in a very general way, we may describe him as the man who, on a Christian background that has been qualified by Protestantism, has built an autonomous culture and lives in it, influencing it and being influenced by it. He is the man who consciously carries within himself humanism and the Renaissance, idealism and romanticism, realism and expressionism, as elements of his own intellectual character. This man is, even if he may by actual count be in the minority, the decisive spiritual type of our day. The tensions of his life represent a creative energy that is active in all the spheres of life.

If we look closer to determine his particular characteristics, we must say: *he is the autonomous man who has become insecure in his autonomy.* A symptom of this insecurity is that the man of today no longer possesses a world view in the sense of a body of assured convictions about God, the world, and himself. The feeling of security in a system of theoretical and practical ideas about the meaning of his life and of life in general has gone. Even as recently as two decades ago, our literature was full of discussions concerning the modern world view or dealing with the conflicts between the various tendencies within it. Nothing more of this is to be seen. Only the pieces of former world views are to be found now. Idealism, for instance, concentrates on questions concerning education and has become embodied in movements like neohumanism. But none of the neohumanists has developed a philosophy which, in comparison with German classical idealism, could be called an integrated world view or even a convincing interpretation of human life. Neohumanism has remained a quest without fulfillment. While neither Marx himself nor the main representatives of Marxism accepted metaphysical materialism (Marx attacked it in his *Theses against Feuerbach* as a bourgeois ideology), popular Marxism has largely confused the so-called "historical materialism" with a materialistic world view. But nobody who would deserve to be called a "man of today" accepts such a metaphysics.

It would be inadequate to call certain other attempts to penetrate into the riddle of existence "world views." I refer to the so-called "philosophy of life" whose most brilliant representative was Nietzsche and which has a large group of adherents in

Germany and France; or to the philosophy of the unconscious, initiated by Freud, whose influence is growing daily; or to the philosophical and theological movements determined by the rediscovery of Kierkegaard. They all contribute to the destruction of the old world views more than to the building of a new one. They are powerful just because they are not world views. Modern man is without a world view, and just because of this he has the feeling of having come closer to reality and of having confronted the problematic aspects of his existence more profoundly than is possible for the man who conceals these problematic aspects of life by means of a world view.

Obviously, the man of today takes the same attitude toward the message of the churches as he takes toward the autonomous philosophies. He opposes it though, not as the representative of one world view attempting to overcome another one; he sees in it problems and solutions that are in part outmoded but in part significant even for our day. He treats the religious doctrines neither worse nor better than he does the interpretations of the world and life from which he takes his spiritual descent and which he has left behind him—perhaps rather better than worse, for he finds in them more recognition of the mystery of life than he does in much autonomous philosophy. But he is not yet ready to abandon autonomy. He still stands in the autonomous tradition of recent centuries. But his situation is different from that of former generations in that he no longer possesses an autonomy in which he is self-assured and creative; rather he possesses one that leaves him disturbed, frustrated, and often in despair. It is understandable that some churches have used this situation for an appeal to the people of today to return to the authority and the tradition of the churches. This is especially true of the Roman Catholic church; in this view the last act of autonomy should be self-surrender to heteronomy.

II. The Catholic Church and the Man of Today

In such a situation the Catholic church is naturally in a favored position, for it alone is consistently heteronomous. It alone has an unbroken tradition and authority. Consequently, the Catholic church has a great attraction for the man of our day; and it has also a strong sense of triumph in the face of his broken autonomy. This is due not only to the fact that autonomy is shattered but also to a sense of the spiritual "substance" resident in tradition and authority. When the individual possesses free decision concerning things and occurrences around him, he loses his immediate connection with their meaning. The gift of freedom, including religious freedom, is paid for by a loss in living substance. The loss of spiritual substance since the end of the Middle Ages, both intellectual and religious, has been tremendous; and some day the substance might become completely exhausted. Few are the springs of life that are left and that are uncontested. The springs of the past are almost exhausted—the substance has almost wasted away.

The Catholic church, however, has manifestly been able to preserve a genuine substance that continues to exist, although it is encased within an ever hardening crust. But whenever the hardness and crust are broken through and the substance becomes visible, it exercises a peculiar fascination; then we see what was once the life-substance and inheritance of us all and what we have now lost, and a deep yearning awakens in us for the departed youth of our culture.

It is not surprising that the Catholic church exercises a powerful influence upon the modern man, since it both provides an emancipation from the burden of autonomous responsibility and offers to the man of today the age-old life-substance that was once his. Much more striking is the fact that this influence is not *more* powerful, that the church's sense of triumph is not more clearly borne out by the facts, and that, instead, the number of conversions to Protestantism is always on the increase rather than on the decrease. It is especially surprising that the spokesmen for modern man, on the whole withstand so well the temptation to sacrifice an autonomy that has become feeble and hollow. One cannot dismiss this situation with the explanation that the petrifying of the Catholic church and the mechanizing of her hierarchical apparatus obstruct access to her. But, if these structures were recognized as valuable and necessary, they would be an inducement to men of creative power to break away the crust. Nor does the explanation suffice that the strongly Latin coloration of Catholicism weakens its appeal to the Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic north. In Latin countries the opposition to it is usually stronger than in the northern countries. The situation is rather that the man who enjoys autonomy— however feeble and empty it may be—has experienced something that he cannot easily surrender even if he wished to respond to the appeal of the Catholic church. This "something" which unites the Protestants and those who live in secular autonomy must be examined and understood. Upon it depends the religious and also the intellectual integrity of our day.

III. The Human "Boundary-Situation"

It is the awareness of the human "boundary-situation" or of the ultimate threat to human existence that prevents the modern man from surrendering to heteronomy. The first element in Protestantism is and must always be the proclaiming of the human boundary-situation, of the ultimate threat confronting human existence. And the modern man is ready, in the brokenness of his autonomy, to give heed to this message and to reaffirm it in the face of the temptation of many offers of religious or nonreligious safety.

In speaking here of the Protestant element in Protestantism we mean to imply that this is not the only element in Protestantism. Protestantism is not *only* Protestantism, it is also—and first of all— Christianity. It is also and above all the bearer and mediator of

the "New Being" manifest in Jesus as the Christ. It is also imbued with a spiritual substance, discernible by everyone who knows genuine Protestant piety and unbroken Protestant Christianity. It is a reality that flows through the veins of all the peoples nurtured by Protestantism, although it is mixed with much other blood. Even if the idea of a church that actually determines the morals and world view of the whole nation is only a hope (or an empty claim), this influence is present and working among the Protestant peoples, and it ought not to be overlooked, as it so often is. Almost all creations of modern autonomous culture show traces of the Protestant spirit. As we have said, Protestantism is, above all, Christianity. It has never wished to be anything else, and (in Germany) the Protestant churches prefer to call themselves "Evangelical" rather than Protestant. But the name "Protestantism" has, nevertheless, remained and has been transformed from a political into a religious concept. It represents the characteristic element of this manifestation of the Christian substance.

The Protestant element in Protestantism is the radical proclamation of the human border-situation and the protest against all attempts, through religious expedients, to evade it, even though this evasion be accomplished with the aid of all the richness and depth and breadth of mystical and sacramental piety.

Protestantism was born out of the struggle for the doctrine of justification by faith. This idea is strange to the man of today and even to Protestant people in the churches; indeed, as I have over and over again had the opportunity to learn, it is so strange to the modern man that there is scarcely any way of making it intelligible to him. And yet this doctrine of justification by faith has divided the old unity of Christendom; has torn asunder Europe, and especially Germany; has made innumerable martyrs; has kindled the bloodiest and most terrible wars of the past; and has deeply affected European history and with it the history of humanity. This whole complex of ideas which for more than a century—not so very long ago—was discussed in every household and workshop, in every market and country inn of Germany, is now scarcely understandable even to our most intelligent scholars. We have here a breaking-down of tradition that has few parallels. And we should not imagine that it will be possible in some simple fashion to leap over this gulf and resume our connection with the Reformation again. It seems to me that the theological attempts which have been made in this direction and which we may subsume under the slogan "the Luther Renaissance," have more significance in their academic aspects than in their effect upon the contemporary religious situation. There is in the educated groups a complete alienation from Luther and in the proletariat a determined hostility to him. Hence, what we should do is to discover anew the reality which was apprehended in that earlier day and which is the same today, and then present it in new terms to the man of today. For this reason, then, we speak of the boundary-situation of man and assert that those struggles which at one time split a continent in two, so far from being

struggles about backwoods problems, as Nietzsche says of Luther's efforts, were struggles bearing upon the human problem in general, the problem of the human boundary-situation.

The human boundary-situation is encountered when human possibility reaches its limit, when human existence is confronted by an ultimate threat. This is not the case in death. Death may, to be sure, point toward the boundary-situation; but it does not do so necessarily, and death is not itself the boundary-situation. This is the reason that we feel death cannot give release from despair. The spiritual cleavage that is experienced in despair is not eliminated with the cessation of bodily existence. The boundary-situation that is encountered in despair, threatens man on another level than that of bodily existence. Anyone who knows the threat that lurks in the roots of his own being knows that the idea of death brings no relief. He knows that he may, so to speak, take despair into death with him. This is true, regardless of how he thinks about "after death" or regardless of whether he thinks of it at all.

The border-situation of man is possible because he is not identical with his vital existence. It is possible because man as man stands above his vital existence, because he has in a sense broken away from his vital existence. To be a man involves this transcending of vital existence, the freedom from himself, the freedom to say "Yes" or "No" to his vital existence. This freedom, which is an essential part of him and from which he cannot escape, carries with it the fact that he is radically threatened. Man is in a genuine sense the threatened creature because he is not bound to his vital existence, because he can say "Yes" and "No" to it. This is manifest in the fact that man can raise the question of the true and that he can demand the fulfillment of the good. Anyone who raises a question about *true* reality is in some way separated from reality; whoever makes a demand upon reality presupposes that it is not at hand. Man *must* raise the question, however, and *must* make the demand; he cannot escape this fate, that is, the fate of being man. If he did not wish to raise the question, his not doing it would itself be an answer to the question. If he did not choose to make a demand, his not making it would be obedience to a demand. Man always acts, even when inaction is the content of his action. And man always makes his decisions in the exercise of his freedom, even when the escape from freedom is the content of his decision. This inevitability of freedom, of having to make decisions, creates the deep restlessness of our existence; through it our existence is threatened.

The inescapable element in freedom would not be a threat to us if it ultimately made no difference for our existence which way we decide. To live in freedom, however, means that it is not a matter of indifference; it means that we must accept the unconditional demand to realize the true and to actualize the good. If this demand is not fulfilled—and it is not—our existence is driven into discord, into the hidden agony that infects all life, and even death cannot free us from it. Wherever this situation is

experienced in its unconditional and inescapable character, the human border-situation is encountered. The point at which not-being in the ultimate sense threatens us is the boundary line of all human possibility, the human border-situation.

The seriousness of the human situation can, to be sure, be covered over or weakened by our relying upon truth that we have already achieved or upon demands already fulfilled, thus evading the unconditional threat. This is a possibility that is always present; in one way or another all of us try to make this escape. Absolute seriousness can be attributed only to the man who scorns this possibility of escape, who views his whole existence from the point of view of the border-situation, and who knows, therefore, that his existence can at no time and in no way be made secure, neither through his submerging himself in the vital life-process, through intellectual or spiritual activity, through sacraments, through mysticism and asceticism, through right belief or strenuous piety, nor through anything that belongs to the mundane substance of religion. The seriousness and force of Old Protestantism is evident from the fact that it did not try through priests and church and sacraments to evade the ultimate threat of the border-situation. In contrast to this, mystical-sacramental religion easily gives the impression of lacking seriousness, of presuming to possess a human guaranty against the ultimate threat to everything human. The lesser importance which the Protestant attributes to the church, to the service of worship, and to the religious sphere in general is at bottom bound up with this awareness of living on the boundary, a boundary that involves the limit not only of secular but also of all religious possibilities. Because religion and the church are in themselves no guaranty to the Protestant and must not be allowed to become such, he confronts them with the same independence with which he confronts every other human possibility, not with the proud independence of one who makes himself superior to everything else but rather with the independence of one who finds himself in a situation in which he shares the lot of everything human to be subject to the ultimate threat of not-being. It is not a question of convictions or of the opposition between individual and common conviction; it is rather a question of being and not-being on the deepest level of man's existence. Perhaps Catholicism is right in thinking that the religious substance is better preserved in an authoritarian community. But certainly Catholicism is wrong in thinking that Protestantism is to be explained as an attempt of the individual to become himself the bearer of the religious substance. It is rather the boundary-situation that is involved, a situation in which the religious substance with all its richness and depth and traditional wisdom is recognized as inadequate if it is supposed to provide security in face of the ultimate threat. On this plane alone is the opposition between the two Christian confessions to be understood, not on the basis of the clash between subjectivism and ecclesiastical allegiance. The choice lies between either the radical acceptance of the boundary-situation or the attempt by means of church and sacrament to secure man against the unconditioned threat.

IV. The Protestant Church and the Human Boundary-Situation

It is clear that a church that stands in this place, or rather at this border line of any and every place, must be something quite different from the churches that refuse to be disturbed in their spiritual possession. Such a church must subject itself to a radical criticism and eliminate everything that diminishes the weight of the border-situation—the sacrament that works magically and thus circumvents the ultimate threat; the mysticism that is supposed to effect immediate unity with the unconditional and thus escape the ultimate threat; the priest-craft that purports to transmit a spiritual guaranty that is not subject to the insecurity of man's existence; the ecclesiastical authority that claims to be in possession of a truth that no longer stands under the threat of error; the cultus that gives ecstatic fulfillment and veils over the unfulfilled character of the divine demand. It is clear that a church that stands in this position, where not an inch of self-provided security remains, should inevitably tend to become empty of substance, impotent in its social reality, secular because of its surrender of all places, things, men, and actions supposed to be holy in themselves. It is clear that such a church has the tendency in itself to become nothing more than an almost amorphous group of men, of secular men without sacramental quality, through whom from generation to generation the consciousness of the human boundary-situation is transmitted. It is clear that such a church would abandon its own character if it should imitate the sacramental type of churches either in cultus or in priestly authority, in doctrine or in spiritual direction. Where it yields to this temptation, it becomes only a weak imitation of those powerful creations. Its power lies elsewhere. It is the power whose symbol has in the past been the cross, for in the cross humanity experienced the human boundary-situation as never before and never after. In this power—indeed, in this impotence and poverty—the Protestant church will stand so long as it is aware of the meaning of its own existence.

The Protestant church is always in danger of forgetting its meaning. Its greatest downfall has been its claim that it has, by virtue of "pure doctrine," become the invulnerable possessor of the truth. It has not understood that to stand at the boundary means to stand not only in unrighteousness but also in error. It has imagined that it held the truth as though it were a possession encased in the letter of Scripture and properly dispensed in the doctrine of the church. In claiming unambiguously to possess the truth and the pure doctrine, it has denied the boundary-situation and thereby its own meaning and power. And then it came about that, just when it no longer questioned itself, it was questioned from the outside radically and destructively. The autonomous culture has, piece by piece, broken down the assumedly untouchable possession of the church, and the church has been forced into a movement of retreat, in which everything that had seemed to be certain has had to be surrendered. The present situation of the church is such that no part of its old

possession is any longer secure. But in this very situation some people in the church have come to realize that its task is not the defense of a religious domain but the proclamation of the boundary-situation in which every secular and religious domain is put in question. The attitude of defense has been abandoned. Attack takes the place of defense; but not with the aim of winning back the lost possession, not in the attitude of a hierarchical will to power (as the talk about "the century of the church" suggests), but rather with the aim of driving to the boundary-situation everything that makes an ultimate claim, cultures as well as religions. The Protestant church does not have the mission to fight in the arena of struggling world views. It must fight from above this level to bring everything under judgment and promise.

If what we have said at the outset is true, namely, that the man of today has an understanding of the ultimate threat to the human situation, he should be able to comprehend the message of the Protestant church, provided that it is presented with reference to this situation. This obviously forbids that the message should be set forth in the terminology of the Reformation or in the ways prevailing in the Protestant church today.

Indeed, the biblical terminology itself, including the term "justification," may become more understandable out of the experience of the boundary-situation. "Righteousness" was the Old Testament word that Paul, and after him Luther, used in order to express the unconditional demand that stands over man as man. Righteousness is something that everyone who has stood in the boundary-situation knows he does not have. He knows that human freedom inescapably involves him in human ambiguity, in that mixture of truth and falsehood, of righteousness and unrighteousness, which all human life exhibits. Luther, the young monk, stood in the depth of this boundary-situation and dared to reject all safeguards that piety and the church wished to extend to him. He remained in it and learned in it that just this and only this is the situation in which the divine "Yes" over the whole of human existence can be received; for this "Yes" is not founded on any human achievement, it is an unconditional and free sovereign judgment from above human possibilities.

This experience of the boundary-situation has been expressed with the help of rabbinical, Roman, and scholastic concepts. The "justification of the unrighteous or of the unbeliever," the "pardon of the guilty," "the absolution of the condemned," "justification without works through faith alone"—these are metaphors, partly questionable and partly no longer intelligible. As more or less adequate terms they do not concern us. But the thing itself which they referred to and which is always real does concern us: the threat to human existence and the "Yes" over it where this threat is recognized.

The man of today is aware of the human ambiguity of which we have spoken. He is aware of the confusion of his inner life, the cleavage in his behavior, the demonic forces in his psychic and social existence. And he senses that not only his being but also his knowing is thrown into confusion, that he lacks ultimate truth, and that he faces, especially in the social life of our day, a conscious, almost demonic, distortion of truth. In this situation in which most of the traditional values and forms of life are disintegrating, he often is driven to the abyss of complete meaninglessness, which is full of both horror and fascination. He also knows that this situation is not the result of a mechanical necessity but of a destiny which implies freedom and guilt. In being aware of all this, the man of today is near the boundary-situation that Protestantism proclaims.

V. The Protestant Message

Now it can be said what the Protestant message for the man of today must be and what it cannot be.

The Protestant message cannot be a direct proclamation of religious truths as they are given in the Bible and in tradition, for the situation of the modern man of today is precisely one of doubt about all this and about the Protestant church itself. The Christian doctrines, even the most central ones—God and Christ, church and revelation—are radically questioned and offer occasion for a continuous fight among theologians as well as among nontheologians. They cannot in this form be the message of the church to our time. So long as the genuine representatives of the Protestant message do not understand this, their work is entirely hopeless in the widest circles and especially among the proletarian masses. It cannot be required of the man of today that he first accept theological truths, even though they should be God and Christ. Wherever the church in its message makes this a primary demand, it does not take seriously the situation of the man of today and has no effective defense against the challenge of many thoughtful men of our day who reject the message of the church as of no concern for them. The modern man might well say to the church, using her own language: "God does not demand that man, in order to experience the unconditional judgment, the ‘No’ and the ‘Yes’ from above himself, shall first accept a religious tenet about God or shall overcome all doubt concerning him." This sort of legalism lays upon man no less heavy a burden than legalism in morals. The one, like the other, is broken through by the radically conceived doctrine of justification. The profoundest aspect of justification, in our situation and for the man of today, is that we can discern God at the very moment when all known assertions about "God" have lost their power.

The message of the Protestant church must take a threefold form. First, it must insist upon the radical experience of the boundary-situation; it must destroy the secret

reservations harbored by the modern man which prevent him from accepting resolutely the limits of his human existence. Among these reservations are the residues of the shattered world views, idealistic and materialistic. The recognition of our situation as indicated by the word "ideology" should alone be a sufficient warning against these doubtful securities. We have learned that philosophical systems often represent the working of subconscious powers, psychological or sociological, which drive in a direction quite different from their conscious meaning. This judgment applies also to the unbroken belief in scientific method as the certain way to truth, which is usually not the attitude of the great scientists but of their half-philosophical popularizers. (Science itself is quite conscious of the crisis of its foundations, in mathematics as well as in physics, in biology as well as in psychology.) This judgment applies also to the pedagogical claim to transform society and to shape personalities. It has become abundantly clear that education as a method presupposes a content, a spiritual substance, to which it must introduce people but which it cannot itself create. The judgment applies to the political creeds, whether they glorify a past tradition or a coming utopia, whether they believe in revolution or reaction or progress. The old traditions have disintegrated; the process has been replaced by horrible relapses; and the utopias have created continuous mass disappointments. The judgment applies to the nationalistic ideologies whose demonic implications have become more and more visible, and it applies to the cosmopolitan superstructure which is envisaged either by pacifistic idealism or by imperialistic will to power. It applies to the recent attempts of all forms of therapeutic psychology to form secure personalities by technical methods which, in spite of their profundity and revolutionary power, are unable to give a spiritual center and ultimate meaning to life. It applies to the widespread activistic flight into job, profession, economic competition, humanitarian activity, as means of escaping the threat of the boundary-situation. The judgment applies to the neoreligious movements offering spiritual security, such as the new forms of mysticism and occultism, will-therapy, etc., which, whatever their merits may be, tend to hide the seriousness of the boundary-situation and to create fanaticism and arrogance. And, finally, the Protestant message should unveil the last, most refined, and most intellectual security of the modern man when he aesthetically dramatizes his shattered state; when, Narcissus-like, he contemplates himself in this situation as in a mirror, sometimes tragically; when he, thus, artfully but self-destructively protects himself from the experience of the boundary-situation. Against all this stands the Protestant message; this is its first function.

Second, the Protestant church must pronounce the "Yes" that comes to man in the boundary-situation when he takes it upon himself in its ultimate seriousness. Protestantism must proclaim the judgment that brings assurance by depriving us of all security; the judgment that declares us whole in the disintegration and cleavage of soul and community; the judgment that affirms our having truth in the very absence of

truth (even of religious truth); the judgment that reveals the meaning of our life in the situation in which all the meaning of life has disappeared. This is the pith and essence of the Protestant message, and it must be guarded as such; it ought not to be changed into a new doctrine or devotional method or become a scheme that is used in every sermon; it should not be made into a new form of security—a form that would be an especially disastrous one. It must remain the depth and background of all our pronouncements; it must be the quality that gives to the message its truth and power.

Third, Protestantism must witness to the "New Being" through which alone it is able to say its word in power, and it must do this without making this witness again the basis of a wrong security. The New Being, which for Christian faith is manifest in Jesus as the Christ, is effective in the life of the individual personality as well as in the life of the community, and it is not even excluded from nature, as is indicated by the sacraments. To live out of the power of this New Being is the richness of Protestantism which is the correlate to its poverty; for, just because the Protestant principle, the message of the boundary-situation, breaks down all absolute boundaries before the judgment to which everything is subject, Protestantism can be open for everything, religious and secular, past and future, individual and social. All these differences are transcended through the power of the New Being, which works in all of them, breaking through their exclusiveness and separation. Culture is not subjected to religion, nor is religion dissolved in culture. Protestantism neither devaluates nor idealizes culture. It tries to understand its religious substance, its spiritual foundation, its "theonomous" nature. And Protestantism neither idealizes nor devaluates religion. It tries to interpret religion as the direct, intentional expression of the spiritual substance which in the cultural forms is presented indirectly and unintentionally. In this way the Protestant principle denies to the church a holy sphere as its separate possession, and it denies to culture a secular sphere that can escape the judgment of the boundary-situation.

This attitude of Protestantism toward church and culture implies the answer to the questions: Where is Protestantism to be found? Who proclaims the Protestant principle? The answer is: Protestantism lives wherever, in the power of the New Being, the boundary-situation is preached, its "No" and "Yes" are proclaimed. It is there and nowhere else. Protestantism may live in the organized Protestant churches. But it is not bound to them. Perhaps more men of today have experienced the boundary-situation outside than inside the churches. The Protestant principle may be proclaimed by movements that are neither ecclesiastical nor secular but belong to both spheres, by groups and individuals who, with or without Christian and Protestant symbols, express the true human situation in face of the ultimate and unconditional. If they do it better and with more authority than the official churches, then they and not the churches represent Protestantism for the man of today.

Chapter 15: The End of the Protestant Era?

Protestantism now faces the most difficult struggle of all the occidental religions and denominations in the present world situation. It arose with that era which today is either coming to an end or else undergoing fundamental structural changes. Therefore, the question as to whether Protestantism can face the present situation in a manner enabling it to survive the present historical period is unavoidable. It is true, of course, that all religions are threatened today by secularism and paganism. But this threat, at least as far as pure secularism is concerned, has perhaps reached its culminating point. The insecurity which is increasingly felt by nations and individuals, the expectation of catastrophes in all civilized countries, the vanishing belief in progress—all have aroused a new searching for a transcendent security and perfection. Religion today is stronger than it was before the first World War, at least in the feeling and longing of people. The individualistic atheism of the freethinkers, for instance, has declined in Western countries since the beginning of the present century. The conflict between the natural sciences and religion has been overcome in all important philosophies. But the question as to whether Protestantism in particular has become stronger must be answered in the negative, although sometimes it seems, if one considers the general growth of religious interest and neglects the peculiar situation of Protestantism, that the opposite has been the case.

It is the basic proposition of this chapter that the traditional form of the Protestant attitude cannot outlast the period of mass disintegration and mass collectivism—that the end of "The Protestant era" is a possibility. In order to demonstrate this proposition it must be shown that there is such a tendency toward mass collectivism. In addition, it will be necessary to explain why the Protestant principle is in contradiction to the newly emerging principles of social organization. Finally, it should be asked whether any possibility exists for Protestantism to adapt itself to the new situation without renouncing its essential character.

In speaking of the fact of mass disintegration we refer particularly to the European situation. But, since the cause of this disintegration is the same in the United States and in Europe—namely, the social and intellectual situation of late capitalism—the problem of mass disintegration is relevant in America, too, though more as a threat than as an actually existing reality. By "mass disintegration" is meant the situation in which the group formations which grew up under feudalism and early capitalism break down and give way to amorphous masses, in which the laws of mass psychology operate. In such a situation the individual differentiations and integrations

of groups and personalities are supplanted by identical mass attitudes; special traditions are forgotten, old symbols have become powerless; a meaningful personal life, especially among the masses of industrial workers, has become impossible. Disintegration, in the last analysis, leads to meaninglessness in the economic, as well as in the social and intellectual, spheres. The meaninglessness of existence is perhaps the most characteristic phenomenon of the period of late capitalism.

This can be easily explained. Technological innovations and capitalistic economic organization have created those vast masses which inhabit the great cities of all civilized countries. A great number of people do not, as such, constitute a mass. The mass comes into existence at the moment in which all these men are determined by that fate which is practically inescapable for every individual, e.g., within the working and lower middle classes. Since they work in masses in the big factories; since they, as masses, receive the same low wage; since they live as masses in the same type of rundown houses and poor streets; since, as masses, they have the same slight chances of material or intellectual enjoyment, a mass attitude tends more and more to replace more individuated ones, to subject them to the laws of mass feeling and mass emotion, and to lay them open to the appeals of every agitator who is able to use and to abuse the laws of mass psychology. It is characteristic of the behavior of masses that every individual among them acts under the impulsion of those aspects of his personality which he has in common with everybody else, not according to those in which he is an independent, individualized person. Thus the agitators necessarily stimulate those less cultivated and less disciplined elements in every particle of the mass and use them for their own purposes.

All these things are not very dangerous and cannot of themselves constitute the reason for revolutionary changes in the structure of an epoch as long as the industrial society in which these masses exist is in a state of continuous expansion. Indeed, this drive toward expansion gives to all a feeling of the possibility of improvement in their mode of life and even tends to organize the whole of life around the prospect of improvement in social and economic status. But, as soon as the inner contradictions of the whole manifest themselves in the life of the individual and the possibilities of self-advancement begin to disappear, the disintegration of personal life begins. Or, more exactly, the latent and potential disintegration which lies at the roots of modern industrial society becomes a tremendous actuality.

The contradictions inherent in the social order have become real for everyone in the present crisis. These are, fundamentally, (1) the contradiction between the rapidity of technical progress and the dependence of human life on human work, i.e., the fact of structural, inevitable unemployment; (2) the contradiction between productive power and the buying power of the masses, i.e., the fact of the increasing poverty of the masses in contrast to the increase of unproductive capital in the banks, from which is

to be derived the necessity of an imperialistic foreign policy and the increasing threat of war; and (3) the contradiction between the assumed liberty of every individual and the complete dependence of the masses on the laws of the market or, in other words, the fact that, after man has overcome the fate which was once implied in the powers of nature, he becomes subjected to the fate implied in economic development. In the late capitalist period the insecurity which is implied by definition in the principle of liberalism becomes a permanent menace to individuals and masses. It threatens more and more every class within society—the lower middle class, the clerks, the farmers, and, finally, even the ruling class. New masses grow out of these groups when their older forms of integration break down; and the individual, having lost his aims, becomes accessible to the influence of any appeal. Permanent unemployment produces a new mass attitude of hopelessness and meaninglessness. The old traditions are destroyed in the mass situation, and new ones cannot be created in this state of perpetual flux. The transcendent meaning of life as it is interpreted in religious ideas and symbols disappears with the secularization of every realm of life; and the competition of individuals and of groups-—the fundamental pattern of modern industrial society—emerges more pronouncedly than ever before between individuals, classes, and nations, driving toward race hatred, revolution, and war. The new generation, growing up under these circumstances, is even more hopeless and directionless than the older generation and longs for change, for revolution and war, as the means of change and as the ultimate and only hope. This picture represents the postwar situation in central Europe. It is, of course, not the description of a reality which exists with equal completeness throughout the Western world, and, if taken in such a way, it would be an exaggeration. Nonetheless, it does describe the central tendency of late capitalist society; and in history the strongest tendency is decisive.

Naturally, in such a situation one question above all others arises in everyone's mind, namely: How is reintegration possible? And the general answer is: by mass organization within a centralized and collective system. There is no other way out. Mass integration in the economic realm means the guaranty of a certain security; in the political realm it means the exclusion of the endless discussion between struggling parties and classes; and in the intellectual realm, it means the production of a common ideology with common symbols and a dogmatic basis for education and intellectual activity. All this presupposes a centralized power and authority, not only with respect to economic and political organization but also with reference to education and religion. The present tendencies in Europe toward an authoritarian, totalitarian state are rooted in this internal necessity of mass reintegration. These never would have succeeded if a very strong feeling for this necessity had not been alive in wide sections of the masses and, above all, in the younger generation. These people do not want to decide things for themselves; they do not want to decide about their political beliefs, about their religion and morals. They are longing for a leader, for symbols, for

ideas which would be beyond all criticism. They are longing for the possibility of enthusiasm, sacrifice, and self-subjection to collective ideas and activities. Autonomous thinking and acting is rejected as liberalistic and, consequently, as the cause of meaninglessness and despair in every realm of life. These tendencies are strongest in middle Europe, especially in Germany. But, since they are structural tendencies arising on the basis of the present world situation, they are to be found in every section of the occidental world.

Protestantism stands in complete contradiction to this tendency. This may be observed, first, with reference to the religious basis and then with reference to the intellectual and practical implications of the Protestant attitude. The central principle of Protestantism is the doctrine of justification by grace alone, which means that no individual and no human group can claim a divine dignity for its moral achievements, for its sacramental power, for its sanctity, or for its doctrine. If, consciously or unconsciously, they make such a claim, Protestantism requires that they be challenged by the prophetic protest, which gives God alone absoluteness and sanctity and denies every claim of human pride. This protest against itself on the basis of an experience of God's majesty constitutes the Protestant principle. This principle holds for Lutheranism as well as for Calvinism and even for modern Protestant denominationalism. It is the principle which made the accidental name "Protestant" an essential and symbolic name. It implies that there cannot be a sacred system, ecclesiastical or political; that there cannot be a sacred hierarchy with absolute authority; and that there cannot be a truth in human minds which is divine truth in itself. Consequently, the prophetic spirit must always criticize, attack, and condemn sacred authorities, doctrines, and morals. And every genuine Protestant is called upon to bear personal responsibility for this. Each Protestant, each layman, each minister (the minister in Protestantism is a qualified layman and nothing else), has to decide for himself whether a doctrine is true or not, whether a prophet is a true or a false prophet, whether a power is demonic or divine. Even the Bible cannot liberate him from this responsibility, for the Bible is a subject of interpretation: there is no doctrine, no prophet, no priest, no power, which has not claimed biblical sanction for itself. For the Protestant, individual decision is inescapable.

If we consider the situation of the disintegrated masses, which are quite unable to make such a decision, as well as the situation of the younger generation, which refuses to take upon itself the responsibility for such a decision, we can scarcely see a way for Protestantism to triumph over this difficult world situation. Protestantism itself seems to be participating in the increasing disintegration. As far as liberal Protestantism is concerned, the question arises: How can it furnish a principle of reintegration if its own principles do not themselves transcend the disintegrating secularism? This is true of its thought, in which it depends on the increasingly meaningless intellectual life in

general; and it is true of its action, in which it is drawn into the increasingly contradictory social life both within and between national states. Consequently, people who are embarrassed by the meaninglessness of their existence generally prefer the opposing tendencies— fundamentalism, Barthianism, Buchmanism, and many other movements which reject liberalism entirely. These people want to have a principle which transcends their whole disintegrated existence in individual and social life. But the difficulty is that these movements use unintelligible symbols which are powerless for dealing with the present. Barthianism, for example, has shown its power to save the German church from paganization by giving theological aims to a group of struggling ministers, but it has not been able to reintegrate the younger generation or the masses of disintegrated proletarians or even middle-class persons. It is Protestantism merely in the sense of protest and negation. Hence Protestantism still has to discover a possible approach which will enable it to cope with the world situation. The continued existence of Protestantism in the coming era depends on its role in the present and near future.

The consequences of the Protestant principle for intellectual, moral, and social life are obvious. Protestantism is a highly intellectualized religion. The minister's gown of today is the professor's gown of the Middle Ages, symbolizing the fact that the theological faculties as the interpreters of the Bible became the ultimate authority in the Protestant churches. But professors are intellectual authorities—i.e., authorities by virtue of skill in logical and scientific argument. This sort of authority is the exact opposite of the kind that is sought by the disintegrated masses, whose disintegration is to some extent an echo of the endless arguments and counterarguments among their leaders. Bishops, priests, and monarchs have a sacramental authority which cannot be taken away by arguments and which is independent of the intellectual and moral qualities of its carriers. It is a character which can by no means be lost. This sacramental basis is denied by the Protestant protest. The minister is preacher, not priest; and sermons are intended, first of all, to appeal to the intellect. But masses that are disintegrated need symbols that are immediately understandable without the mediation of intellect. They need sacred objectivities beyond the subjective quality of a preacher. The Bible, the dogma, the holy legend, the rites of the holy days as well as of the daily life, the symbolic realities that give meaning to our existence, generally and specially, from birth to death, and the church and its representatives in the past and present were objectivities in this sense. But very few such objectivities remain in the Protestant churches. Instead, under the influence of the Protestant layman, a rationalization of the doctrine—attempts at a reasonable understanding—arose and dissolved the religious mystery more and more. Protestant education in its reasonable and moralistic attitude, although it was capable of educating selected individuals, failed in the education of the masses. More and more individuals became unable to endure the tremendous responsibility of permanently having to decide in intellectual

and moral issues. The weight of this responsibility became so heavy that they could not endure it; and mental diseases have become epidemic in the United States as well as in Europe. In this situation, psychoanalysis has seemed more desirable for educated people than religion, especially Protestant religion. In Catholic countries the situation has been different because the confession has been able to overcome many tendencies toward personal disintegration.(The success of psychoanalysis in Protestant countries has two main reasons: (1) the rigorous moralism which developed in Protestantism after the sacramental grace was taken away and which poisons the personality through repressing vital impulses by moral law and social conventions and (2) the solitude of the deciding individual, who has to hear responsibility and guilt without the help of confession and the related forgiveness which comes from the outside.)

Finally, we have to consider the social and political aspects of the Protestant attitude. The most important point is the lack of an independent hierarchy in Protestantism. While the Catholic hierarchy confers a social and political independence upon its church, Protestantism is dependent either on the state or on certain social groups. It is almost impossible for it to be independent of the state because the entire social existence of the church is based on state support. Since the princes became emergency bishops in the Lutheran Reformation, we have had no real bishops in German Protestantism, but only more or less general superintendents, who in some countries have assumed the title of "bishop." In the United States the trustees are the "outstanding members" of the congregation, corresponding to the princes or state secretaries in central Europe. The danger of this situation is the identification of the outlook of the church with the interests of a special social group and the practical exclusion of opposition groups from influence on the spirit of the churches. In periods of social disintegration this means the disintegration of the church itself. It can offer but slight resistance against destructive tendencies, and it has very little power to provide an independent principle of reintegration. Furthermore, it could not do so even if it had the power, since Protestantism has no autonomous system of social and political ethics which can serve as a criterion for every social order, as Catholicism has in Thomism.

Hence non-Protestant forces predominate today in the tremendous efforts of mass reintegration which are taking place in the three systems of centralized authority, namely, communism, fascism, and Roman Catholicism. Protestantism is merely on the defensive.

The analysis of the survival possibilities of Protestantism in the present situation may be formulated as follows:

1. Protestantism as a church for the masses can continue to exist only if it succeeds in undergoing a fundamental change. To do this it must obtain a new understanding of symbols and all those things which we have called "sacred objectivities." To continue

to live, it must reformulate its appeal so that it will provide a message which a disintegrated world seeking reintegration will accept. It has to remold its forms of life, its constitution, its rites, and its individual and social ethics. But the precondition for any readjustment is that the Protestant leaders become aware of the seriousness of their situation. Protestantism is still in a position where it can appeal to the needs of the present-day world, but perhaps the world will soon cease waiting and will go over to some type of catholicism—more Christian, like Roman Catholicism; or more pagan, like national socialism; or more humanistic, like communism, all of which movements have more power of mass reintegration than Protestantism has.

2. In making readjustments Protestantism can draw on certain resources which are inaccessible to every form of catholicism, i.e., the power of dealing with the secular world in a more differentiated and direct manner than any other religion is able to do. Protestantism denies in principle the cleavage between a sacred and a profane sphere. Since to it God alone is holy in himself and since no church, no doctrine, no saint, no institution, and no rite is holy in itself, every man and every thing and every group is profane in itself and is sacred only in so far as it becomes a symbol of the divine holiness. This attitude, which contains within itself the danger of becoming exclusively secular, is already understood and realized by the Protestant churches in the United States. The conception of the Kingdom of God as a concern not only for the individual soul but also for social, political, and cultural life is one of those ideas of world Protestantism which have developed primarily in this country. But in Europe, too, Protestantism has certain possibilities which do not exist for Catholicism. Religious socialism was able to emerge in European Protestantism despite the conservative attitude of the churches, while the attempt to arouse such a movement in Catholicism has failed, despite its connection with socialist parties. And we have the same situation in the realms of philosophy, art, psychology, and education. While Catholicism deals with these things from the point of view of having the entire truth and the perfect form of life, Protestantism is always learning, without the claim of being itself the Kingdom of God.

3. The most important contribution of Protestantism to the world in the past, present, and future is the principle of prophetic protest against every power which claims divine character for itself—whether it be church or state, party or leader. Obviously, it is impossible to build a church on the basis of a pure protest, and that attempt has been the mistake of Protestantism in every epoch. But the prophetic protest is necessary for every church and for every secular movement if it is to avoid disintegration. It has to be expressed in every situation as a contradiction to man's permanent attempts to give absolute validity to his own thinking and acting. And this prophetic, Protestant protest is more necessary today than at any time since the period of the Reformation, as the protest against the demonic abuse of those centralized authorities and powers which

are developing under the urge of the new collectivism. It is in this Protestant protest that the eternal value of liberalism is rooted. Without this prophetic criticism the new authorities and powers will necessarily lead toward a new and more far-reaching disintegration. This criticism requires witnesses and martyrs. Without these, the prophetic and Protestant protest never has been and never will be actual.

Concerning these three points of view (the Catholic or sacramental element, the profane or contemporaneous element, and the prophetic or critical element) it should be asked whether Protestantism will be able to unite these elements or whether they will be represented by different groups (the first by the Catholic churches, the second by an independent secular world, the third by individuals or groups of a sectarian character). In the latter case Protestantism as embodied in the churches would come to an end. "The end of the Protestant era would be at hand. Must we then look forward to an occidental world divided into Christian Catholicism, nationalistic paganism, and communistic humanism—i.e., into three systems of authority—as means of mass reintegration? It is not necessary that this be realized in a formal dissolution of the existing Protestant churches. This seems scarcely likely. But the change may go on—and is, indeed, already going on—as a slow, or perhaps not so slow, change of mind in the new generations, a change from an autonomous to a heteronomous attitude, a change toward Catholicism in some and toward national paganism or communistic humanism in the very great majority. To remain a member of a Protestant church does not mean remaining a real Protestant. Those who believe in the divine revelation in a nationalistic leader may be Protestant church members, but they have ceased to be Protestants. Those who believe in the Kingdom of God as something to be realized fully in a coming period of social justice and intellectual truth may never leave the Protestant church, but they are not Protestants in the true meaning of the term. If we apply this criterion we must ask: Where are the Protestants? Where are those for whom the faith of the Reformers is their highest symbol, giving them unity and meaning? There are some with this attitude in all Protestant churches. There are ministers and laymen, professors and students, in all denominations who hold to their Protestantism as the only form in which they can be Christian. But although they themselves are not yet forced into disintegration and meaninglessness, they recognize them as a reality in the masses and as a threat to themselves, and thereby they tend to lose their unbroken Protestant character. Understandably, they try to confirm it through providing a religious reservation beyond the temporal powers of disintegration, decay, and meaninglessness. They cling to the old dogmas or to a belief in a merely transcendent revelation which has no relationship to the temporal or to the salvation of their individual souls. It is a Protestantism of retreat and defense. And though it is often a very strong defense, as the German church struggle shows, it is, nevertheless, a defense and not an attack. Will the survival of Protestantism take the form of a retreat to a reservation, analogous to the way in which the Indians have

survived in the United States? Protestantism could survive by this means, but it would cease to have any serious formative influence on the period of transformation which has been going on since the first World War.

Or is there a chance that the Protestant churches as they are will transform themselves into churches which will be able to give a principle of reintegration to the present world? There are many movements in Protestant churches which are attempting to introduce certain elements of Catholicism, such as episcopal authority or a new understanding of sacraments or an enrichment of rites or new forms of meditation and new symbols. But all these measures encounter the obstacle of having no root in the traditional feeling of Protestants; consequently, they very often give the impression of imitations rather than of original creations, and for this reason they lack the power of conviction. Hence to say that Protestantism, if it is to maintain itself, must draw certain lessons from the history of Catholicism does not mean that it should learn in the ordinary way of imitation and repetition. It must seek a new foundation if it is to survive at all in its essential aspects. And this raises the question of a third possible way. If the transformation of the churches as a whole is impossible and if the way of retreat into a reservation would mean the end of Protestantism as a living power in the present, then we must ask: Is there a third way in which Protestantism can continue to exist? If there is such a way it cannot dispense with the imperative of basing itself on the prophetic principle in Protestantism and its capability of dealing directly with the secular world. If it failed to do so, it would not be the Protestantism that we are speaking about. This third way requires that Protestantism appear as the prophetic spirit which lists where it will, without ecclesiastical conditions, organization, and traditions. Thus it will operate through Catholicism as well as through orthodoxy, through fascism as well as through communism; and in all these movements it will take the form of resistance against the distortion of humanity and divinity which necessarily is connected with the rise of the new systems of authority. But this imperative would remain a very idealistic demand if there were no living group which could be bearer of this spirit. Such a group could not be described adequately as a sect. It would approximate more closely an order or fellowship and would constitute an active group, aiming to realize, first, in itself that transformation of Protestantism which cannot be realized either by the present churches or by the movements of retreat and defense. It would therefore be a group in which the Christian message would be understood as the reintegrating principle in the disintegrating world situation of today. This, in its turn, would imply the following conditions for its members: (1) a decision in favor of the Protestant principle in the interpretation of human existence without the necessity of belonging to a Protestant or even a Christian church; (2) a decision in favor of the application of the principle to the present situation as the reintegrating power without the necessity of belonging to a special philosophical or political party; (3) a decision in favor of a general program containing the foundation

of the group on the Protestant principle (this would exclude the criticism of this foundation itself); (4), a decision for special programs containing the application of the general program to the needs of the special groups within denominations, churches, nations, parties, races, classes, and continents—programs which are adequate to the task of every one of those special groups but from which are excluded all points contradicting the general program. There is no doubt that there are many objections to be made against the possibility of such a group's appearing. But in their very beginning all movements and their ideas seem very unrealistic with respect to a possible realization. The question is whether their roots lie deeply enough and whether their adequacy to the emerging historical reality is great enough. If there were such a movement, the end of the Protestant era would not yet have arrived.