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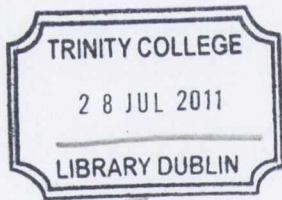
**Immanuel Theology:
Retrieving a Theology of Presence
from
the Writings of Paul Tillich**

by

Fergus McAteer

A thesis submitted to the University of Dublin in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of PhD.

2009



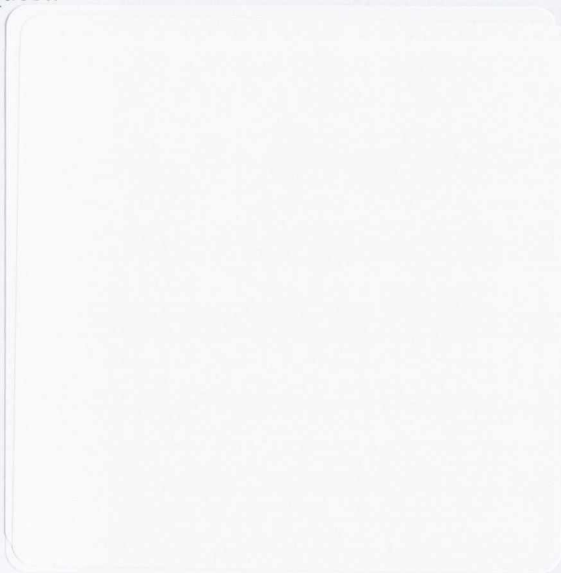
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SUMMARY

This work introduces the concept of “Immanuel Theology”, a phrase synonymous with a theology of presence which seeks to reconcile panentheistically divine transcendence and immanence as inclusive transcendence. Presence theology highlights Immanuel as God Present to and in creation in manifold ways. Panentheism and Immanuel theology are deemed to be compatible. Divine presence generates relationality and is formative of the God-world relationship in general, and the divine-human encounter in particular. Our thesis proffers a threefold proposition. Firstly, it argues that Immanuel theology is and should be a legitimate and relevant branch of study within the broader spectrum and disciplines of theology, that its key importance for theology in general deserves due recognition and that it provides us with a wide but reliable context within which to examine critically Tillich’s work on God’s presence. Secondly, it contends that divine presence is a foundational theme at the heart of Tillich’s theology, that Tillich is an essentialist in that he privileges essence over existence, a panentheist with eschatological pantheistic tendencies, and that his work qualifies as a form of Immanuel theology worthy of retrieval and capable of being represented in a modified and modernised neo-Tillichean way. Thirdly, it asserts that our own post-Tillichean theology of presence, panentheistic in character and formulated within the development of the thesis in response to Tillich’s position, is itself an expression of Immanuel theology which sometimes converges with, and sometimes sharply diverges from, Tillich’s views, and which seeks to correct perceived inconsistencies in Tillich’s presence theology by proposing an alternative panentheistic and ontologically holistic protology, christology, anthropology and eschatology.

Counter-proposals are framed in reaction to Tillich’s ontology and his ontotheology, both of which pivot crucially around the central interplay between the three great “E’s” of the Tillichean system, namely essence, existence and essentialisation. In comparison to Tillich’s essentialist position, our Immanuel theology adopts a holistic ontological approach based positively on whole finite beings, including whole human persons, in whom there is an indissoluble union of created essence and God-given existence, a union sealed by Immanuel the Creator. Tillich’s negative view of existence as estrangement is identified and critiqued as a major source of problems for his theology of presence and his reinterpretation of the Incarnation. By contrast, our Immanuel theology presents existence

as divine gift, God as the ground of existence, and offers a different understanding of the Incarnation based on the concept of a finite-infinite God (christological panentheism) and on a doctrine of two finitudes (panentheistic christology).

The difficulties which propositional theology poses for Immanuel theology in general and Tillich's Immanuel theology in particular, are considered. To systematise Tillich's own references to, and explications of, divine presence, we implement a new modelling process that, faithful to Tillich, enables us to see and track a panentheistic theology of presence unfolding within his theological system. Thus, we devise three models of presence, collectively trinitarian in character, that clarify Tillich's own presence theology, and advance our thesis that Tillichean theology is a form of Immanuel theology. Taken together, the models are an interpretative device which offers a structuring principle for our examination of Tillich. Immanuel Theology, with its focus on presence, provides us with a specialised lens through which we critically scan and closely scrutinise Tillich's work, all with a view to assessing the scale and complexity of his theology of presence, and the relevance of that for presenting afresh key Christian doctrines today. Tillich's basic panentheistic principle of the finite in the infinite and the infinite in the finite, is used to frame the three models which are identified as ontological (Being-based model of *God Without*), existential (New Being-based model of *God With*) and phenomenological (Spirit-based model of *God Within*), and which are consolidated into one comprehensive macro-model centred on Immanuel as panentheistic Life-Giver.

Tillich's ontological theory of life, a process of actualisation manifest as the potentiality-to-actuality shift, is used to equate being with presence, life with being and, therefore, presence with life. Thus, Tillich's theology of life is shown to be an integral part of his Immanuel theology. However, his narrow equation of existence with actuality and estrangement is replaced by the broader concept of existence inclusive of potentiality and actuality over which Immanuel acts as both the power and the Actualiser of being. Finally, death and the nature of eternal life are taken as the eschatological testing-ground for Immanuel theology. Tillich's pantheistic idea of the ultimate "return" of the essential devoid of existence, to God, is rejected in favour of the eschatological self which "lives" dynamically and eternally in the presence of Immanuel as the finite-infinite God of panentheism.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ATR** *Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*, Edited by Ronald H. Stone & Matthew Lon Weaver. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).
- BR** *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).
- CE** *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).
- CP** *Christianity and the Problem of Existence* (Washington, D.C.: Henderson Services, 1951).
- CHR** *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy: Its Presuppositions and Principles*, Trans. Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974).
- CTB** *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
- D** *Dogmatik: Marburger Vorlesung von 1925*, Edited, introduced, annotated, and indexed by Werner Schussler. (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1986).
- DF** *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).
- EN** *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963).
- ERQ** *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, Edited by Terence Thomas. (Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).
- FR** *The Future of Religions*, Edited by Jerald C. Brauer. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).
- HCT** *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, Edited by Carl E. Braaten. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).
- IH** *The Interpretation of History*, Translated by N.A. Rasetski and Elsa L. Talmey. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).
- IR** *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, Edited by Durwood Foster. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1996).
- LPJ** *Love, Power & Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954).
- MB** *Morality and Beyond* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963).
- MG** *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, Trans. by Victor Nuovo. (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974).
- MH** *The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion* Edited by Perry Le Fevre. (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984).

- MSA** *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).
- MTD** *My Travel Diary: 1936: Between Two Worlds*, Edited and with an introduction by Jerald C. Brauer. Translated by Maria Pelikan. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
- NB** *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).
- OAA** *On Art and Architecture*, Edited by John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. (New York: Crossroad, 1987).
- OB** *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966).
- P** *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*, Edited by Carl E. Braaten. (London: SCM Press, 1967).
- PE** *The Protestant Era*, Translated by James Luther Adams. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).
- PI** *Philosophical Interrogations*, Edited by Sydney & Beatrice Rome. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) "Interrogation of Paul Tillich" conducted by William L. Reese, pp.355-409.
- Pol Ex** *Political Expectation*, Edited with an introduction by James Luther Adams. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- RS** *The Religious Situation*, Translated by H. Richard Niebuhr. (New York: Meridian Books, 1956).
- SD** *The Socialist Decision*, Translated by Franklin Sherman. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).
- SF** *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).
- SS** *System of the Sciences* (Luxembourg: Bucknell University Press, 1981).
- SSTS** *The Spiritual Situation in Our Technical Society*, Edited by J. Mark Thomas. (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988).
- ST** *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963).
- TC** *Theology of Culture*, Edited by Robert C. Kimball. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, 1965).
- TP** *Theology of Peace*, Edited by Ronald H. Stone. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).
- UC** *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*, Edited by D. MacKenzie Brown. (New York: Evanston, 1956).

- VS** *Visionary Science: A Translation of Tillich's "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture, with an Interpretative Essay"*, Translated and introduced by Victor Nuovo. (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1987).
- WR** *What is Religion?*, Edited and with an introduction by James Luther Adams. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

INTRODUCTION

In theatrical action, dramas which deal with relationships are usually most interesting and engaging. In our theological presentation, the main characters are Immanuel as God Present and the Lutheran theologian Paul Johannes Oskar Tillich (1886 – 1965), with the rest of humanity playing the supporting cast on the world stage. The God-world-self relationship provides the dynamics of the theological story-line narrated and interpreted by Tillich but, in part, reinterpreted by us through a form of “audience participation” or participative retrieval, as suggested in the subtitle of our thesis. A process of retrieval with attendant interaction, implies recovery, rescue, restoration, and even repair and renovation to make good again something valuable but previously neglected and set aside as wholly or partly redundant and outmoded. With retrieval comes reinstatement. The thrust of our work is to bring back Tillich, a challenging master of his art, onto the centre-stage of theology for one more encore, to interact with him and to provoke audience reaction from the reader.

Immanuel Theology is considered here, in the context of Tillich’s theology, as both proposal and product of this thesis. It reflects our claim that the issue of divine presence, that is the relationship between God and all creation, is central to Christian theology. “Immanuel Theology” is not a phrase used at any stage by Tillich. It is a designation coined for the purpose of this piece of research and will be used interchangeably with the phrase “theology of presence”. “Immanuel Theology” is a generic title employed in this work to refer to the theology of the God near to us, the God permanently present to creation. It is the theology of divine presence, of the God present to every form of finitude. Immanuel theology explores the character of the relational God, the God related to and intimately present in all of creation. It ponders the great dual mystery of the presence of the infinite to the finite, and the presence of the finite in the infinite. It examines how, or in what mode, finite human beings, albeit anthropomorphically, can consider and explain the reality, nature and relevance of God’s presence to all finite beings. Immanuel Theology simply connotes presence theology. It is theology under the rubric of divine presence. This terminology will be deployed in relation to Tillich’s work to highlight and encapsulate the distinctiveness of his theology. It will be utilised to advance the argument being promoted here, namely, that Tillich is a theologian of presence who takes God’s presence as a central premise and starting-point of his theological enterprise. “Immanuel” is used, not in an exclusively christological way, but as an inclusive name for God as

present to the world in manifold ways. We will expand more on the Immanuel theme shortly (section 1.2, below).

The interchangeable expressions “theology of presence” and “presence theology” occur frequently throughout this work as synonyms for Immanuel theology. What exactly is theology of presence or presence theology? It is not easy to define succinctly. However, it would be evasive and trite to point to the fact that the whole thesis is to be interpreted as an elaborate definition and exposition of the nature of presence theology. Theology of presence is the discipline which emerges from the study of the immediacy of divine presence in the order of being, and the mediacy of divine presence in the order of knowing and experience. It is an expression of relational theology because it is the result of theological research predicated upon the ever-present reality of God centred on the God-world relationship in general, and the divine-human encounter in particular. Presence theology is theological discourse focused on the mystery of God present to and in creation in manifold ways.

This thesis proffers a threefold proposition. Firstly, it argues that Immanuel theology is and should be a legitimate and relevant branch of study within the broader spectrum and disciplines of theology, that its key importance for theology in general deserves due recognition and that it provides us with a wide but reliable context within which to examine critically Tillich’s work on God’s presence. Secondly, it contends that divine presence is a foundational theme at the heart of Tillich’s theology, that Tillich is an essentialist in that he privileges essence over existence, a panentheist with eschatological pantheistic tendencies, and that his work qualifies as a form of Immanuel theology worthy of retrieval and capable of being represented in a modified and modernised neo-Tillichean way. Thirdly, it asserts that our own post-Tillichean theology of presence, panentheistic in character and formulated within the development of the thesis in response to Tillich’s position, is itself an expression of Immanuel theology which sometimes converges with, and sometimes sharply diverges from, Tillich’s views, and which seeks to correct perceived inconsistencies in Tillich’s presence theology by proposing an alternative protology, christology, anthropology and eschatology. As a matter of deliberate choice, our Immanuel theology is not assigned to a separate and disparate section of this work. Its growth is organic in that it develops spontaneously through natural interaction with Tillich’s theology of presence. Its strands are threaded through the thesis in response to Tillich’s writings and thought. It has sprung up alongside his theology and, therefore, it is

not just post-Tillichean: it is unavoidably and agreeably part-Tillichean. To avoid blurring of the lines between the three component elements of the thesis, every effort will be made through exposition, critique and counter-proposal to distinguish clearly between all references to Immanuel theology in general, to Tillich's Immanuel theology as retrieved by us, and to our own post-Tillichean Immanuel theology being advocated here.

Although Immanuel theology is a useful referential framework within which to position the thesis, there are some limitations and disadvantages which emerge from our interaction with Tillich's theology as source material. Tillich was a man of his times. We are only too aware that many of the quotations from Tillich's writings used in the thesis, show that his God-language and his constant references to "man" are exclusivist and concede nothing to the gender-conscious readers of today. Furthermore, Tillich believed in a fruitful marriage of philosophy and theology. This gives rise to much abstract philosophical terminology which is unappealing to many engaged currently in theology and philosophy. While Tillich rejected the old western metaphysics of substance as applied to theology, he did favour metaphysics of the subject. However, many today resist involvement with metaphysics of any kind because they consider it to be redundant, user-unfriendly and of an age now past. This makes Tillich's particular dependence on ontology and on ontotheology problematic for some theologians. Equally unpalatable for some would be his notion of immediacy, his dialectical theology, his search for absolutes as antidote to relativities and pluralisms, and his love of the "complete" system as a theology of everything which some others might consider should come under suspicion as grand narrative. Even his existentialism and his essentialism seem outdated, although his application of phenomenology to theology would still resonate well in certain circles. Conceptually, Tillich is a deep and challenging thinker who does not shrink from deconstructing and demystifying traditional Christian doctrine in order to debunk and highlight common misconceptions and misunderstandings. The tools of his trade include the use of rigorous logic, paradox, ambiguity, dialectics, symbol, metaphor and analogy, all of which characterise his approach to theology. Despite the limiting factors cited above, Tillich has much of value to give us and we have taken a strategic decision to write this thesis by meeting like with like. In order to gain full access to Tillich's world and to interact with his theology on his level, we have judged it necessary to deploy similar ontological and other philosophical language and thought categories to guarantee meaningful discourse with Tillich as a dialogue partner. Furthermore, in an effort to maximise precision in the refining of certain concepts, particularly when dealing with more

abstract issues, our script suffers from adjectival plenitude where nouns are sometimes qualified by more than one adjective. Equally, to ensure clarity of reference and to reduce ambiguity of meaning, close repetition of some words and phrases is unavoidable. On all these matters, we ask for the reader's indulgence.

This current study, concentrating on Tillich's works, interprets his writings as primarily and pointedly articulating his implicit Immanuel theology. Tillich's theology of presence is central to his thinking and is woven, both implicitly and explicitly, into his many published texts. This thesis will demonstrate the truth of this assertion by analysing and deconstructing his key concepts and themes in order to bring forward evidence to show that Tillich's whole system is based on his conviction that the mystery and the paradox of God as present relationally, lies at the heart of every aspect of creation.

Phrases such as 'divine presence', 'the presence of God', or terms like 'God-Present' and 'Immanuel', are all linguistic conveniences, theological shorthand, for ideas which are intended hermeneutically to pack a powerful theological punch. The use of this apparently simple, almost naive, language and terminology runs the risk of disguising the richer, deeper, sometimes multi-layered, meanings of the underlying theological concepts. The recurring use of words like 'Immanuel', frequently deployed here, is intended to provide conceptual markers for more profound theological ideas underpinning our exploration of the mystery of presence. Along the way, we will draw liberally from the writings of Paul Tillich, using that resource as a preliminary map to guide us for part of the route towards a formulation of some of the elements of a theology of presence, an Immanuel theology. At various stages we will endorse Tillich's work, and at other times we will mildly or strongly disagree with specific elements of his theology.

The objective is to establish the credentials of divine presence as a central, if not *the* central, issue of Tillich's theology. Every effort will be made to excavate the foundations of Tillich's substantial system to assess whether or not that process genuinely uncovers the immediacy of divine reality as foundational for his theological edifice. Apart from archaeology and critique, investigation and evaluation of Tillich's own work, our Immanuel theology is pointing towards a partial deconstruction and then a possible reconstruction of the Tillichean *summa* that, faithful as it intends to be to Tillich, is also a corrective. The prospect and promise of an Immanuel theology is being offered here as a

contribution in its own right. This thesis combines a critical meditation on Tillich with a constructive proposal for a particular Immanuel theology.

The notion of divine presence has a universalising, totalising and unifying effect on theology. Our hope is that it can be nudged further up the theological agenda and kept there. However, this particular project aims not to promote a narrow monothematic theology. On the contrary, we consider that the issue of God's presence is broad enough, strong enough and central enough to have a synthesising effect on the development of a holistic, inclusive Christian theology. Indeed, it could be that presence theology, Immanuel Theology, points the way towards a clearer and fuller understanding of the core issues of Christianity. Tillich's own theology of presence reveals a struggle with questions and issues of universal and enduring significance. In the course of the thesis, we undertake to keep Tillich at the centre of our study, in focus and in the foreground for as long as possible. At times, we will seek to amplify and accommodate Tillich's theological contribution, pointing out the importance and relevance of his work. At other times, we will be obliged to scrutinise and interrogate his work, highlighting areas of serious disagreement. At all times, conscious of our debt to Tillich and his legacy, we will endeavour to value his contribution and articulate it with integrity.

This thesis can justify its conclusions only after taking a wide sweep through the evidence as presented by Paul Tillich's range of intellectual interests. The mission being accepted here is to trace, and thereby establish, the preponderance of presence theology in Tillich's work, and to show convincingly that, under cover of a wide variety of his most significant ideas and operative principles, he constantly returns to divine presence as the well-spring of his thought. To substantiate our findings we will go well beyond his *Systematic Theology* by drawing liberally on his many other works. The challenge will be to avoid forcing onto Tillich's theology some artificially contrived interpretation and meaning which neither exists nor can be reasonably said to fit or reflect his intentions.

We will be engaged in a process of critical repristination of Tillich, lest his considerable contribution be forgotten. There are problematic issues within Tillich's theology, but we will point a way forward. Our Immanuel theology will open up and critique Tillich's theology of presence. Beyond highlighting some of the theological problems identified in Tillich's system, we will offer a corrective. This thesis argues that Tillich's theology can be explicated as "Immanuel theology" despite some internal elements that prove

incohesive within Tillich's systematic theology. We seek to demonstrate that our Immanuel theology has foundations of which Tillich would have approved. As constructive Christian theology, our work aims to be coherent *in se*, and consonant with the broad parameters of Tillich's theology. Our Immanuel theology will demonstrate that it can identify and, to a certain extent, identify with Tillich's presence theology, augment and amend it where appropriate, and arrive at a point which others would recognise as faithfully Tillichean in character. Furthermore, this thesis research will allow for repairing and restoring elements of Tillich's theology of presence without collapsing his system.

In order to systematise Tillich's own references to, and explications of, divine presence, we implement a new modelling process that, faithful to Tillich, enables us to see and track a theology of presence unfolding within his theological system. Thus, we devise a threefold model of presence that will clarify Tillich's own presence theology, and advance our thesis that Tillichean theology is a form of Immanuel theology. Taken together, the models offer a structuring principle for our examination of Tillich. Immanuel Theology, with its focus on presence, provides us with a specialised lens through which we can critically scan and closely scrutinise Tillich's work, all with a view to assessing the scale and complexity of his theology of presence, and the relevance of that for presenting afresh key Christian doctrines today.

Tillich's writings contain many ideas and lines of thought which relate to divine presence. This thesis uncovers the contours of his Immanuel theology by identifying and collating these features of his work to form three models, each a group of signature concepts which point to and define a particular model. The models are interpretative devices which highlight the multidimensional layers of Tillich's Immanuel theology. They have been formulated here and, as part of this thesis, forged from a personal reading of Tillich's theology, and in that sense they are original. Modelling is a profiling exercise and an aid to understanding Tillichean presence theology, but the models themselves have their limitations. Each model is restricted in that it can give only one picture, a "presencescape", taken and built up from one particular human perspective on a most profound relationship. However, as the models gradually emerge from our specific groupings of selected concepts and strands of Tillich's thought, the various relational features of Immanuel become more evident as they coalesce. We come to appreciate better the richness and diversity of the manifold aspects of Tillich's theology of presence which is shown to be, in our view, an authentic expression of Immanuel theology. Each model

functions in a manner not unlike a relational *Gestalt*, a relational structure of reality, through which Immanuel is manifest as relationally present in one particular way in the God-world, divine-human encounter. In the end, each model is no more than a narrow window from which we view anthropomorphically one specific dimension of our relationship with God Present. Nevertheless, taken together, our Tillichean models develop and enhance Immanuel theology as a whole.

Methodologically, we argue that panentheism offers a wider and more supportive context for our theology of presence. Panentheism can accommodate Immanuel theology well. As indicated earlier, part of the threefold proposition of this thesis includes the claim that Tillich's Immanuel theology, like our own theology of presence, is panentheistic in character. Tillich's basic panentheistic principle of the finite and the infinite and the infinite and the finite, is taken by us to frame the three models respectively as, firstly, the presence of the finite in the infinite; secondly, as the mutual participation and perichoretic presence of the infinite and finite with and to each other; thirdly, as the presence of the infinite within the finite. More is said about methodology and typology in chapter one (section 1.7, below). As a guide to the structure of the thesis, signposting is provided by the title of each chapter, and by section and sub-section headings. However, in order to give the reader a brief preliminary overview of the evolution of the thesis and its threefold proposition, summary mapping of each chapter will point the way.

Chapter One: offers an early opportunity to learn more about Tillich as theologian and God as Immanuel; makes a case for the centrality of presence in theology; recognises the importance of acknowledging Immanuel theology in its own right; hints at a range of themes in Tillich's work which indicate the prevalence of his theology of presence; and expands on the methodology and typology to be utilised in the thesis.

Chapter Two: concentrates on providing more substance to Tillich's search for, and conception of, God; identifies Tillich's portrait of the divine as Immanuel, thereby strengthening the claim that his theology is a form of Immanuel theology; demonstrates the difficulties which propositional theology poses for theology of presence in general and for Tillich's Immanuel theology in particular; and opens up the basis on which Tillich's Immanuel theology can be considered as trinitarian.

Chapter Three: proposes that panentheism and Immanuel theology are compatible and that Tillich himself is a panentheist; displays the in-depth development of each of the three Immanuel models of divine presence as panentheistic and neo-Tillichean, and marshals that evidence as proof of the authenticity of Tillich's Immanuel theology; suggests relevant applications of each of the three models; confirms our own Immanuel theology as panentheistic but shows marked divergence from Tillich's position by critiquing his view of existence and his reinterpretation of the Incarnation; makes an important christological distinction between presence *in* and presence *as*; proposes an alternative panentheistic christology to augment the post-Tillichean Immanuel theology being advanced in the thesis; and summarises the chapter findings but casts some doubt on Tillich's understanding of presence *in* as operative in his Immanuel theology.

Chapter Four: includes an exercise which consolidates the three models into one, comprehensive macro-model centred on Immanuel as panentheistic Life-Giver; uses Tillich's ontological theory of life to equate being with presence, presence with life and, therefore, being with life; confirms and enriches Tillich's Immanuel theology by integrating it into his own views on the dialectics and functions of life; forges important connections between divine life, presence and the dialectical nature of finite life; confirms Tillich's theology of life and his Immanuel theology as compatible; shows that our Immanuel theology adopts and endorses the unified, life-based macro-model as both a valuable panentheistic insight and as a positive contribution to Immanuel theology in general.

Chapter Five: presents an important test case devised in the thesis to explore whether or not presence as life survives death; necessitates an exposition and critique of Tillich's eschatology which, due to the negative impact of his view of existence as limited to historical temporal life, is found to protect the "safe return" of the essential to God but to threaten the life eternal of the individual beyond death; registers our Immanuel theology as in strong disagreement with Tillich's eschatology, and suggests a corrective in the form of an alternative eschatology which envisages the continuation of dynamic individual life after death, not in any attempt to deny the full reality and significance of mortality and death for every person, but to preserve the true meaning of life eternal in the presence of Immanuel and to counterbalance Tillich's drift from existential panentheism to eschatological pantheism.

With chapter maps in hand, we start our journey into Immanuel theology in general and into Tillich's Immanuel theology in particular. We invite our reader to come with us and to consider first our prolegomena on presence in chapter one.

CHAPTER ONE

Prolegomena On Presence

1.1 Identifying Tillich

Tillich's theology engages life which he describes in a multitude of ways, but particularly and pointedly as "ambiguous", "dialectical" and "multidimensional"¹. These three words would not be out of place in a description of Tillich's own life and work. He wore many hats and was given many labels, some of which stuck and some of which were inaccurate and unfair. His personal charisma as friend, military chaplain, academic, lecturer, tutor, university professor, public speaker and preacher is legendary. His multi-disciplinary approach meant that his theology embraced a staggering range of subjects including philosophy, traditional Christian doctrine, science, anthropology, history, politics, religions and religiosity, culture and arts, science and psychology, ethics and morality. Due to the breadth of his interests he was able to conduct a wide range of topical dialogues which has ensured the enduring relevance and also the ecumenical significance of his work today. He responded to secularism and pluralism, and in the latter years of his life he increasingly involved himself with interreligious discourse in recognition of the significance and global importance of the great world religions.

It is not possible to bracket neatly Tillich's theological or philosophical positions. He was a master system builder. His multidimensional, and often dialectical, theology is characteristically systematic. Some of the confusion and ambiguity surrounding Tillich's work stems from the fact that he delighted in being a dialectical theologian. The dialectical method allowed Tillich's thinking to participate in the inner tensions of certain realities. These tensions express themselves in contrasting concepts, which are analysed both positively and negatively, and then synthesised at a deeper level of reality. In the process the dialectician appears to adopt simultaneously contrary positions before reconciling them through a more profound synthesis. Tillich was a correlationist constantly in dialogue, playing-off one thing against another. He valued and relished the struggle for relevance. Tillich was acknowledged as a Christian apologist whose "Apologetic theology is 'answering theology' "² developed as a mediating theology through the application of his method of correlation which we refer to shortly. He was also designated variously as an apostle to intellectuals³, the theologian of the boundaries and the theologian of culture. But

¹ See especially *ST 3*, Part IV, "Life and the Spirit", pp.11-294.

² *ST 1*, p.6.

³ *UC*, p.193.

he was also labelled by others as a humanist and an atheist because he affirmed the “non-existence” of God. Philosophy formed an integral part of his theology because he sought to provide a philosophical, especially an ontological, foundation for the Christian faith. This mix is referred to as ontotheology, and explains Tillich’s frequent use of abstract, ontological terminology. He tried to counterbalance his ontotheology, and reflect his increasing concern for the actual and the concrete, by espousing what he called “self-transcending realism” or “belief-ful realism”⁴, a combination of realism and faith which in an historical context he referred to as “historical realism”⁵. To add to the diversity of his philosophical profile Tillich also drew upon phenomenology, essentialism and existentialism. It is legitimate to wonder: Was he an essentialist, an existentialist or both?

His theological pedigree was also seriously challenged by some, particularly with reference to his unique presentation and explanation of the Incarnation of Jesus as the Christ, one of Christianity’s central doctrines. Given his christology, some even questioned his Christian credentials and implied that he had fallen victim to one or more of a range of christological heresies including Docetism, Nestorianism, Adoptionism and Monophysitism. Many historical influences impacted on Tillich’s work and, on one occasion, he himself summed it up by saying “that his spiritual father was Schleiermacher, his intellectual father was Schelling, and his grandfather on both sides was Jacob Boehme”⁶. What is the correct description for this man Paul Tillich? Tillich’s portrait is certainly multicoloured. Tillichean scholars and commentators could be forgiven for raising the question: Will the real Paul Tillich please stand up?

It is evident that academics greatly disagree on Tillich’s theological identity. In response to this identity crisis, the level of dissension about Tillich’s *oeuvre* and the considerable disagreement on what that Tillichean heritage actually is, we will proceed in this dissertation to present our synthesis and, ultimately, individual interpretation, based on Tillich’s writing and developed from what he actually wrote. The lack of a defined and united interpretation of Tillich gives us a mandate to explore afresh Tillich’s work and, indeed, show an exigency for a new approach to his theology, a theology which seems, even now, to be so “protective” of both the transcendence and the immanence of an ever-present God, committed to an enduring and inclusive Creator-creature, God-world, divine-

⁴ *PE*, pp.66-82; 296.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ N.F.S. Ferré, “Tillich in the Nature of Transcendence”, pp.7-18; p.11 in N.F.S. Ferré (*et al*), *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1966).

human set of relationships described differently by Tillich as vertical, horizontal and circular. Relationality goes to the heart of any theology of presence. Tillich was certainly challenged and exercised by the enigma or mystery of God's presence which, for Tillich, is played out in the searching dual questions of whether and/or how the finite could be in the infinite or the infinite could be in the finite. We consider that Tillich's theology of presence is the key entry point into the foundations of his system and that, without that key, engaging with and understanding the true nature of Tillich's work is difficult and sometimes elusive. For that reason, Tillich's theology of presence goes to the top of our agenda which, in due course, will involve us raising the important question for a theology of presence: Was Tillich a theist, a panentheist or a pantheist?

1.2 Introducing Immanuel

The word "Immanuel"⁷ means "God-With-Us". In the Jewish prophetic tradition it is usually taken as a reference to the Messiah and in the Christian tradition it is normally used as a reference to Jesus as the Christ. In this thesis it is being given the wider and looser connotation of the divine presence as an immediate, pervasive and enduring reality. This does not rule out the application of "Immanuel" to any one person of the Holy Trinity or to all three. The term "Immanuel" can be used in connection with the divine presence, with the deliberate intention of emphasising its special characteristics of proximity, immediacy, constancy and faithfulness. Primarily, it focuses on God's presence as relational.

Our starting-point, taken as a given, is the divine-human-world relationship so central to all theology. This relationship, particularly as exemplified in the divine-human encounter, relies totally upon the essential presupposition that God is not always just present in a disconnected, juxtapositional fashion, but present in the key mode of being "present-with". So Immanuel theology is clearly a theology of presence, in this case, set in a decidedly Judaeo-Christian context. There are many excellent works which deal specifically with the Immanuel theme and with divine presence, with particular reference to their biblical background and roots.⁸

⁷ This is an allusion to Is.7:14 and Matt.1:23. In this thesis preference is given to the Hebrew root spelling "Immanuel" rather than the Greek root spelling "Emmanuel".

⁸ Cf: D.D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See also the extensive bibliography on pp.245-270. Particular reference should also be made to the following study: J.C. Cooper, *The "Spiritual Presence" in the Theology of Paul Tillich: Tillich's Use of St. Paul* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997).

“Immanuel” is the title being utilised to connote the immediate reality of divine presence as relational. With reference to the use of the name “Immanuel” in this thesis, it needs to be pointed out that Tillich did not consider that God was a person. It follows that he did not believe that God could be “named”. In his earliest view, God could be spoken about only symbolically with the exception of the statement that God is Being Itself. Even that was later qualified, following critical comment and dialogue with other theologians, until he reduced the only non-symbolic assertion about God to “the statement that everything we say about God is symbolic”⁹, and then qualified the matter further by reference to the state of being ultimately concerned.¹⁰

Tillich acknowledged the value of metaphor when speaking about God but he would not readily recognise the title “Immanuel” with reference to his work. The designation “Immanuel” is not being used in this dissertation to personify God in any way. In any case that would have been wholly unacceptable to Tillich. Rather it is intended to function as a signifier, a convenient referential characterisation, indicating the divine presence, God Present in every dimension of reality. Using a term that is scriptural has theological weight, though it is to date not heavily burdened in other discourses of meaning. In Hebrew Scripture the title “Immanuel” reflects Israelite, Shekinah theology, conveying the idea of God pitching a tent and living among us. This carries deeper, theological meaning, through the associated history of the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple, of making God’s presence overt, and of the promise of presence that will endure even in times of trial and tribulation. In Christian scripture this connects well, panentheistically, with incarnational theology, the cosmic Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, all of which give theological substance to trinitarian divine presence centred on the God-world relationship. The accepted fact of God’s presence as operative everywhere is pivotal in Tillich’s system and, using our term “Immanuel theology”, this thesis interacts with what is perceived here to be Tillich’s own theology of presence. The word “Immanuel” is deployed as shorthand for “God as present and related”. It does not “personalise”. Instead, it is being used to “ontologise” God as Presence at the heart of all

⁹ *ST 2*, p.9.

¹⁰ “On the other hand, if we make *one* non-symbolic assertion about God, his ecstatic-transcendent character seems to be endangered. This dialectical difficulty is a mirror of the human situation with respect to the divine ground of being. Although man is actually separated from the infinite, he could not be aware of it if he did not participate in it potentially. This is expressed in the state of being ultimately concerned, a state which is universally human, whatever the content of the concern may be. This is the point at which we must speak non-symbolically about God, but in terms of a quest for him. In the moment, however, in which we described the character of this point or in which we tried to formulate that for which we ask, a combination of symbolic with non-symbolic elements occurs” (*ST 2*, p.9).

that has being. In this work we are broadening out the connotations of the term “Immanuel”. For Tillich to be at ease with this name he would expect that it be refined and qualified to reflect his idea of God as ever-present divine reality, not as a person or individual being of any kind.

The “Divine Other” is not *a* being, nor *the* Supreme Being. Immanuel is the ground and source of otherness, of diversity, of plurality, of manifold. God is not a person, thing, entity or a reality, present to or over against the self-world reality. There is only one reality which is divine, human and cosmic. To think of God as separate reality is to individualise God. ‘Immanuel’ as a term is simply a metaphorical way of personifying God, an unavoidably anthropomorphic reference to God. It is not intended to imply that God is a separate person, individually distinguishable from other people. Rather, God is the bearer of personality. Immanuel is the origin and ground of otherness, selfhood and relationality, the three elements which, in our view, make manifest the mysterious phenomenon of presence. Equally it should be emphasised and recalled frequently as qualifying the language and thought of this thesis, that Immanuel, who is epitomised here as God-Present, is in fact the ground of presence. Immanuel is prior to the subject-object reality structure which is the discernible framework of all presence.

1.3 Engaging Tillich’s “Presence”

Compared to the period of about thirty years which spanned the nineteen sixties to the end of the nineteen eighties, less has been written specifically on Paul Tillich’s work in the last fifteen years or so.¹¹ His extensive and attractive theology is rich in themes and concepts on which, in the past, a host of highly accredited experts and their students have commented and carried out detailed critical analysis. Yet, during all that time little has been produced on the question of presence in the work of Paul Tillich. There has been some generalised reference to Tillich’s own more specific idea of Spiritual Presence, which figures prominently in volume three of his *Systematic Theology*, but there has been little concentrated research on that particular topic, and apparently no research at all on the wider question of presence, especially divine presence, as the key prevalent theme and as the fundamental underlying structural element on which he systematically built his theology. This lack of academic attention to Tillich’s theology of presence forms part of

¹¹ However, the work and activities of the North American Paul Tillich Society (NAPTS), the Deutsche Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft, the Association Paul Tillich d’Expression Française and a series of International Conferences and Symposia in Germany and U.S.A. have all kept discussion and interest in Paul Tillich’s work alive and relevant today.

the justification for examining Tillich's "presence" and bringing this essential aspect of his theology to the forefront for its own sake. It also provides the motivation for advancing Immanuel theology which, though built on Tillich, can correct and go beyond incoherent aspects of his theological system.¹²

The purpose of this thesis is not to repeat slavishly or repackage the same material. The intention is not to polish or buff up well-known elements of his systematic theology. Neither is it enough to restate Tillich's ideas for a new millennium, nor to craft some entirely new and useful theological artefacts by simply building on top of Paul Tillich's existing theology. Rather this project has a more archaeological character. It aims carefully to unearth important connections between many of Tillich's key theological and philosophical principles and his central driving concern to demonstrate the essential presence of the mystery of God to all creation. Allied to this is the intention to highlight the continuing relevance and the enduring significance of Tillich's theological legacy. This is not to put any personal "spin" on the theological evidence that indicates the role of presence in Tillich's theology, but to carry out honestly a form of investigative theology by locating, tracking and connecting the trace elements of presence scattered throughout Tillich's writings.

1.4 The Centrality of Presence

Presence holds a key position in theology and thereby provides an excellent starting-point from which to launch an exploration of many other theological issues. Consideration of presence draws the theologian directly into the mysteries of creation, incarnation, redemption and human salvation. It raises the most challenging points about the reality of God and helps to balance the tension between important and prevailing dichotomies such

¹² There are a few theses which make some reference directly or indirectly to the notion of presence, especially Spiritual Presence, in the writings of Paul Tillich. D.P. Abbott, *Divine Participation and Eschatology in the Theodicies of Paul Tillich and Jürgen Moltmann*, (University of Virginia, 1987. Ph.D. Dissertation); W.M. Cieslak, *Gabriel Marcel's Notion of 'Presence' and Paul Tillich's Concept of 'Religious Symbolism': Toward an Ecumenical Understanding of Eucharistic Memorial and the Manifold Presence of Christ*, (Graduate Theological Union, 1979. Ph.D. Dissertation); J.C. Cooper, *The Significance of the Pauline Spirit-Christology for the Doctrine of the Spiritual Presence in the Theology of Paul Tillich*, (University of Chicago, 1967. Ph.D. Dissertation); R.A. Dyal, *The Function of Spiritual Presence in Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture*, (Boston University, 1968. Ph.D. Dissertation); J.P. Muringathery, *Theonomous Unity of Life: Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Spiritual Presence in the Context of His Apologetic Theology*, (Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven, 1975. Ph.D. Dissertation); M.J. Niedenthal, *Preaching the Presence of God Based on a Critical Study of the Sermons of Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and Herbert H. Farmer*, (Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, 1969. Th.D. Dissertation); S.J. Tilak, *Nature, History and Spirit: A Theological Investigation on Nature, History and Spirit in Dialogue among Western Secularism, Hindu Spiritualism and Christian Trinitarian Faith*, (Lutheran School of Theology, 1977. STD Dissertation).

as grace and nature, sacred and secular, infinity and finitude, transcendence and immanence, self and other, faith and science, and, of course, God and creation. It permeates the nooks and crannies of theological discourse, raising important issues such as the nature of spirit, sacramentality, embodiment, prayer, religious symbolism, revelation, religious experience, mediation, mysticism and communion. It exposes the difficulties and inadequacy of all human God-language and the limitations of spatio-temporal terminology. Presence, as a theological question, signals danger when an attempt is made to reify or objectify any dimension of the mystery of the divine reality. To mitigate the chances of the concept of presence being open to the charge that it also reifies the divine reality, it is advisable to use sparingly, if at all, the definite article “the” and the indefinite article “a” in conjunction with it. It will be apparent later that Tillich has much to say about the word “presence” in relation to divine presence, and when using his symbol “Spiritual Presence” he would always spell “Presence” with a capital “P”. He says,

In capitalising it, we indicate that it is supposed to express the divine presence in creaturely life.¹³

The concept of presence offers special insights into a wide variety of theological approaches such as those reflected in mystical, apophatic, narrative, relational and process theologies and, as we shall see later, it can speak helpfully and ecumenically in the areas of inter-church and inter-faith dialogue.

Big claims are being made here for the role of divine presence in the theological enterprise. The mystery of God’s presence provides a framework which holds together a theology of memory and a theology of hope. It acts as a grid which connects the theologies of space and time as it encompasses both in a theology of dimensionality. Pneumatology and christology can each benefit by a positive contribution from a developed theology of presence. The theological tension between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith can be eased by a proper understanding of Jesus Christ as the self-revelation of the ever-present God. Biblical focus on God’s presence to, and enduring relationship with, creation throughout history, helps to accommodate covenant and encounter theologies within an Immanuel theology which can also be used to reconcile history and eschatology. Theology of nature, especially ecotheology, can be solidly founded on the bedrock of divine presence which draws creation and *parousia* together in God’s presence plan. The conception of presence helps to align philosophy and theology but, on the negative side, the divine, immediate and ever-present reality of God greatly sharpens the dilemma of theodicy in its

¹³ ST 3, p.107.

affirmation that God is present even when evil, pain and suffering are experienced in creation, both in the natural world and in human affairs.

The question of the divine presence is then, arguably, the central issue of Christian theology. Theology does not set out “to prove” the existence of God. Some philosophers, and even a few theologians, have attempted such a daunting task. Yet theology, by definition, is predicated on the existence of God. It takes the existence of God as a given. Theology is discourse about *theos*. It presupposes the reality of God and it launches its project from the platform of faith, faith as acceptance of the existence of God. Although analogous, God’s existence is different from our existence. By contrast we will see later that Tillich has a firm view of God’s “non-existence”.

If God’s existence is accepted as a reasonable starting-point for theology then the first challenge is framed in the sceptic’s question “Where is your God?”. The theologian is immediately compelled to start the search to “locate” God. Perhaps it is reasonable to turn to human experience but that can be done only on the presumption that God can be “experienced”. Presence and experience are correlative, in that God’s prior presence is the basis and object of the human experience of the divine reality, and that experience is the medium through which the divine presence is engaged. This, however, does not preclude the ever-present reality of God being always there for humankind, even when not experienced. God can be unexperienced, and yet present. Human experience can only be registered on the basis that someone or something impacts upon or is present to the person who experiences. The invisible God is encountered by humans through human experience.¹⁴ Presence, then, is the key mode of all religious experience.

The absence of God is keenly “felt” by many today. But this experience is not necessarily a denial of God’s existence. This “perceived” absence registers as a form of emptiness, or distance, or even a lack of communication with God. The relevance of or need for God is constantly under challenge. God’s existence and God’s “location” are not two separate issues. They are two aspects of the one question. Locating God is the same as accepting the existence of divine reality. Yet in real faith-life it is not simple to affirm the continuing reality of the divine presence as immediate and intimate. Perhaps there is a case that all

¹⁴ Cf. D. Lane, *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1981). Lane, connecting human experience, revelation and faith, issues: “An invitation to do theology in a new key ... to discover in faith the reality of God co-present in human experience. ... Theology, in truth, is about life, the experience of life in all its spiritual implications, especially those that point towards the presence of God at the centre of life itself” (pp.3-4).

theology should start from the conviction and belief that we are not alone, and that someone else is with us. This is certainly the foundational assumption of all prayer and spirituality. Theological enquiry can be reasonably launched from an appreciation and awareness of the divine, transcendent Other, Who is so radically different and yet so intimately close. Acceptance that we are not alone is the bedrock of belief on which any Christian theological system can be built with confidence. The Christian God, always protective of human freedom, is personal and close, supportive but never domineering. The Hidden God (*Deus Absconditus*) is at one and the same time also God Revealed (*Deus Revelatus*).

The God of Christianity is Immanuel, God-With-Us. Essential to Christian revelation is that there is no distance between God and humankind, even though God is so utterly other than us. The human existential sense of estrangement is eased by the realisation that God is near, alongside anxious humanity. Human awareness of God's presence to us and with us is the sweetest fruit of Christian faith and the surest foothold for the most daring theologians. Christian consciousness of the immediate companionship of God available to all humanity uplifts the human condition into the company of God.

1.5 The Primacy of Presence in Tillich's Key Theological Themes

Tillich has frequently been called the theologian of the boundaries and he identified himself as such in some of his own work.¹⁵ He was fearless in pushing at the boundary between Christian faith and ordinary life as lived out by human beings. Tillich worked tirelessly at meshing faith with life. He aimed to show that such a division should not exist and that any such perceived boundary should and could be dissolved through the development of a theology of integration.

The gulf between faith and life was all too evident to Tillich whose lifetime's work was his contribution to filling in this gulf between faith expressed as religion and real practical, sometimes bitter, human experience expressed as a search for the real meaning of existence. Tillich sought to fuse life and faith together and developed his own unique theology of Christian relevance and realism. He was determined to demonstrate that theology can enter into a meaningful discourse with culture as expressed in such apparently diverse spheres as art, philosophy and science.

¹⁵ P. Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1966). See also M.K. Taylor (Ed.), *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), especially p.13.

While Tillich's project was aimed at the boundaries between faith and life, he launched his campaign from the heartland of his own theological system. The mysterious reality of God's presence to creation is the core of Tillich's whole theology on which he built and developed his theological programme. This comprehensive theology of integration is constructed upon the empowering reality that God, out of love, has unilaterally and unconditionally formed a close and abiding relationship with all of creation in general, and with human beings in particular.

Tillich desires to demonstrate the meaning and significance of the immediate divine presence for all that exists. Tillich uses this central reality to network and co-ordinate many aspects of his systematic theology. At almost every turn he wires key ideas and dimensions of his extensive theological thinking back to the central core of his system, plugging them into the energising reality of God's dynamic presence throughout the cosmos and in every individual life.

Thus, Tillich's important and prominent theological concept of theonomy (see section 3.4.2, below) is really a thinly disguised restatement of God's universal and influential presence at work throughout creation. Theonomy is one of Tillich's co-ordinating and integrating expressions for God's presence and it permeates much of his work. Another instance is Tillich's famous statement that God is the ground of being, for everything that exists has being which originates from God and is sustained by God. This is the ontological character of all creation as maintained by the continuing divine presence. Every creature has being and having being places it alongside every other being. Each individual or created entity is ontologically present to every other created entity. This ontological presence is from God as ground of all being.

Furthermore, if God is the ground of being, then the divine presence is the groundswell of being. It is God welling-up into every life in concerned love, surging through creation and bonding every creature to its source. God continually bodies forth the divine, supportive presence, and the whole cosmos heaves with the immediacy of the Spirit God. Of course the ultimate epiphany of God's proximity was demonstrated dramatically in the Incarnation itself when God's *Logos* embodied forth as personal immediate presence.

Some Tillich scholars have written and commented upon the significance and importance of Tillich's method of correlation within his theological system.¹⁶ It is certainly a key connecting piece which helps to bridge the gap between life (culture) and faith (religion). It is an important methodological tool used by Tillich in developing his theology of integration. Here again presence, that vital element in Tillich's theology of fusion, is not far from the surface. The method of correlation provides a framework which is both dialectical and dialogical, and within which the questions raised by the human existential condition are matched or correlated with the answers and explanations offered by the Christian faith illuminated by Christian revelation, especially the Gospel message.

At this stage it is sufficient for the purposes of this present work to highlight briefly the dimensions of presence involved on both sides of the correlation. For Tillich, the human condition is one of estrangement. Despite the proximity and company of countless other human beings, each individual feels essentially alone, isolated and unfulfilled. Despite the presence of fellow human beings, every individual profoundly experiences existential alienation. Human company, in the end, is not enough. It does not provide ultimate satisfaction. The human search for ultimacy, for ultimate meaning and fulfilment, goes on even in the midst of millions of other human beings. Existential loneliness afflicts the human race.

Driven by ultimate concern and dogged by the many unanswered fundamental questions about the real meaning of life and existence, each and every individual is invited by the Christian Gospel message to turn to God who is always present and immediately available to everybody. The message is that God is Immanuel, God-with-us, who is present to every

¹⁶ J.P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980). Tillich's concept of correlation has been criticised by some authors such as David Tracy and Carl Armbruster. "Many critics find Tillich's own formulation of how the method of correlation actually functions neither intrinsically convincing nor consistent with the task of theology which he himself articulates. The fact is that Tillich's method does not call for a critical correlation of the results of one's investigations of the 'situation' and the 'message'. ... Such a correlation, in fact, is one between 'questions' from one source and 'answers' from the other. ... For if the 'situation' is to be taken with full seriousness, then its answers to its own questions must also be investigated critically. Tillich's method cannot really allow for this. ... Tillich's method does not actually correlate; it juxtaposes questions from the 'situation' with answers from the 'message' ", D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.46. Suggesting a reverse approach to Tillich's method of correlation by proceeding from revelation to the human condition, Armbruster writes: "Tillich's method of correlation neglects the fact that existential questions arise not only from the human situation, but also from the very presence of divine revelation. Revelation is an unmerited gift, and we can never be sure that our human questions exhaust its riches. Man is not merely a questioner. He is also a hearer of the Word, and he must open himself to its full impact. ... Tillich's method of correlation directs a constant stream of question marks at the Christian revelation, but they should be balanced by a few exclamation points", C.J. Armbruster, *The Vision of Paul Tillich* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), pp.292-293.

single person and who can satisfy the human need for ultimacy. In Tillich's theology of presence God does not just provide answers. Rather, the ever-present God is the only adequate answer to all the most fundamental questions that arise from within the human condition. Only God as relational can complete and fulfil each individual human being and can ultimately satisfy the human craving for an explanation of the meaning of existence itself. However, in this life, this need cannot be fully satisfied. It can merely be acknowledged and named as unfulfilled longing and desire.

So the method of correlation is Tillich's theological response to the human need for ultimate presence and the fulfilment of that need by a God who, out of infinite love, has come into such an intimate relationship with all that has been given being. "It correlates questions and answers, situation and message, human existence and divine manifestation".¹⁷ Tillich never relents in his theological drive to maintain the linkage between life and faith, and to co-ordinate or match the crucial questions constantly emerging from the estranged human condition with the presence of God particularly as revealed in Jesus as the Christ. Human estrangement must in Tillich's existential anthropology give way to human engagement with the divine presence. Essentially, Tillich's theology of presence is his own unique brand of encounter theology.

Ultimacy has often been identified as a prevailing element in Tillich's theological thinking, and so it is.¹⁸ It describes a key characteristic in addressing the reality of God, with special emphasis on divine transcendence. But Tillich never promotes ultimacy at the expense of immediacy. He carefully avoids any impression of distance in his theological treatment of divine transcendence and ultimacy. Otherness and immediacy can be carefully balanced in a theology of presence. Tillich succeeds in doing this by developing his own theology of presence.

Even though most of his theological works are profoundly academic, and he has been called a theologian for intellectuals, Tillich was forever the pragmatist whose driving theological ambition was to make Christianity relevant to modern anxious humanity. Using such tools as his method of correlation, he endeavoured to make and maintain that vital connection between life and faith. Despite the abstractions of his ontotheology, Tillich never lost sight of the fact that the key to all the paradoxes of life and existence was

¹⁷ *ST I*, p.8.

¹⁸ *ST I*, pp.211-215.

the immediate divine presence. It provides the cornerstone of his own systematic theology and is a vital cohesive element. Tillich acknowledges the centrality and overriding importance of the immediacy of God in the construction of his own style of Immanuel theology. Although Tillich originates his theology from a searching examination of the human condition, he quickly anchors it to the immediate divine presence and, taking a theonomous view of reality, he declares that his own universal theology, which encompasses both God and the world, “expresses a theocentric vision of the meaning of existence”.¹⁹

While Tillich has constructed a comprehensive theology of divine presence, many readers of his work will automatically identify that with his concept of *spiritual* presence. However, Tillich’s flexible idea of spirit-based presence is a wide category, embracing both the human and the divine, and does not exclusively refer to the divine presence in general nor to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in particular. Spiritual presence, though one of many Tillichean formulations connoting divine presence, is a vital connecting piece of his theology because it helps to thread together many of the key concepts of his system into a coherent whole. This combining effect of the notion of spiritual presence assists Tillich in his development of an integrated theology of presence, but he makes it clear that the difficulties and challenges of the human existential condition are not resolved by mere human spirit-based presence. Tillich emphasises the divine/spiritual quality and effectiveness of God’s presence, and encourages humanity to strive towards the unambiguous life which he envisages as the perfection of presence, as the zenith of human enjoyment of and participation in the divine ever-present reality in all its fullness.

We argue that Paul Tillich, over the course of his prolific theological career, both developed and heavily depended upon a comprehensive theology of divine presence, and that this theology of the mystery of God’s presence is the cornerstone on which he built his theological system. Noting the failure of separate efforts to elaborate theology either inductively (empirically) or deductively (idealistically), Tillich identifies mystical experience as the *a priori* which is essential for giving direction to theological enquiry and to the philosophy of religion. He names this the “mystical *a priori*”, which is “an awareness of something that transcends the cleavage between subject and object ... its

¹⁹ ST 3, p.422.

discovery is possible only because it was *present* from the very beginning”.²⁰ For Tillich the starting-point is the same as the finishing-line. The alpha and omega of theological enquiry are identical. He labelled this phenomenon the theological circle.²¹ The presence of ultimate reality emerges as both the implicit presupposition of theological questing and also the explicit final objective of theological discovery. Ultimate concern provides the dynamism within the loop of the theological circle.

Tillich’s thinking has many rich seams, some covertly and some overtly, connected to his core theology of God’s presence. These seams, all of which can be profitably mined during theological exploration of his main ideas, are related to and criss-cross each other to form and to point to his pivotal theology of presence. These themes can be shown to be networked into a coherent whole, Tillich’s full-blown theology of divine presence, often packaged as a theology of mediation and integration, an interlocking theology of culture.

1.6 Methodology and Typology

The thrust of the preceding opening sections inevitably dictates the shape and character of the methodology at work in this thesis. It is written against the background conviction that presence is mysterious, God’s presence is paradoxical, and that the theme of divine presence is or should be a central issue in Christian theology. It is recognised that the perspective of the thesis reflects the fact that it is written from within the context of Christian belief in God. Obviously this work does not try to prove but rather accepts the existence of God, and by inference, the reality of the divine presence. Both God’s existence and presence, then, are taken as given. The thesis is written by a Christian critical realist who believes in the God revealed in Jesus Christ and who accepts the objectivity of reality even though it is encountered as a mediated experience which is coloured by contextuality and which is subject to a plurality of interpretations.

The emphasis is on relationality and relational thinking as reflected in phenomenology. There is no tidy independent self, insulated from the world, who looks out at that world from splendid isolation. Equally, there is no empty world bereft of selves. The self and the world exist in relationship, not individually, and there is a mutual participation of self in the world, and the world in the self. “We *are* selves only in relationship – relationships with the world of which we are a part and with other selves who respond to us as well as

²⁰ *ST I*, p.9 (our italics).

²¹ *ST I*, pp.8-11.

influence us".²² The phenomenological slant in the present work is deliberate because of the close association drawn earlier between presence and relationality, the latter being symptomatic and expressive of presence. Relationships and relational thinking form a most helpful category when considering presence.

It seems natural then to approach the question of God's presence using relational theology. But even here there are restrictions. The finite cannot grasp the infinite. Human beings cannot know God. They can never know God's nature. At best God can only be "known" analogously, spoken about, through an all-too-human experience and understanding of relationship with God. Championed by Aquinas and others, the medieval doctrine of analogical predication, based on the analogy of being, is one way of trying to recognise the difficulties and to assess the possibility of speaking about God at all.²³ As Tillich was aware, human discourse about God is restricted to the use of analogy, symbol and metaphor. It follows that these limitations will be evident in the language used in this thesis.

God ought not be objectified, spoken about as an object. There is always the danger of reifying God, just as there are always insuperable difficulties in using finite, spatio-temporal language and thought categories with reference to God and the divine attributes. For an exercise such as this, vigilance in language usage and repetitive linguistic qualifications are a necessity when endeavouring to speak about the divine presence. We can know God only in relationship to us, *pro nobis* as Luther puts it, and yet we proceed on the basis that God's presence to creation is a relational question. We can accept and believe that God is present, even though we are consigned to struggle with any discourse about *how* God is present. The question of God's presence is the question of divine reality *in relation to us*.

We are trapped in finitude. All God-talk is shot-through with anthropomorphism and relies heavily on limited human imagery, metaphor and symbolic expressions. Imagination, both analogical and theological, is an absolute necessity.²⁴ Assistance can be drawn from the use of analogical language and from the search for appropriate models to be used in any

²² S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), p.96.

²³ McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, pp.96-97 and footnote 13 on p.197.

²⁴ See D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) and G.D. Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

theology of presence.²⁵ Using a typology, as referred to earlier, might usually indicate the range and variety of presence, but such a clarification has limited value only. More useful is the search for appropriate models to envision the relational character of all presence, and here passing reference should be made to the *ontological* model, the *existential* model and to the *phenomenological* spirit-based model, all three of which will be developed and explored in chapter three, below, with specific reference to Tillich's theology. No model will perfectly or adequately reflect the mystery of God's presence; nevertheless models help to refine, although not fully resolve, the problem for human understanding. "Theological models are for religion, in an analogous way, what theoretical models are for science".²⁶

This thesis does not propose that the question of divine presence be elevated to the status of single-issue theology. Rather, we promote the idea that God's relationship, and therefore by implication God's presence, to creation be taken as a central issue in theology. We contend that the divine presence is legitimate subject matter for the development of a motif-theology based on "motif-research" and that God's presence be treated as a "fundamental motif"²⁷ within the perspective of Christian theology. In this particular case, the motif-research is targeted at Paul Tillich and the agenda includes the identification of divine presence as a fundamental motif of his theological work. A recurring motif signals that a model is in use, and "models are dominant metaphors: they retain the tension of metaphor – its 'is and is not' quality which refuses all literalisation."²⁸ God's presence to and in creation is a profound and dominant metaphor, an all-important model, a root-metaphor²⁹ at play in the body of Paul Tillich's writings.

There is ambiguity about all human effort at visualising and conceptualising God. The *presence* of ambiguity and the ambiguity of presence make matters more complex. A mystery such as God's presence can never be fully grasped or penetrated. Acceptance of ambiguity is not an acknowledgement of irrational confusion. Rather, it is a realisation that the human mind is approaching mystery in its search for ultimate meaning. Ambiguity is an indication that the searcher is on the right road and travelling in the right direction. It

²⁵ See I.G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1974), A. Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992) and S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, Ch.4, pp.103-144.

²⁶ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*. p.32.

²⁷ A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, Translated by P.S. Watson (London: SPCK, 1953), pp.34-35.

²⁸ McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, p.28 (nn. 34, 37).

²⁹ McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, p.28 and p.201 (n.27).

is evidence that fundamental issues related to the mystery of God's presence, as reflected in Tillich's theology, are at least being identified and addressed. The resources of apophatic theology, and also the dialectical approach, so beloved by German philosophers of the nineteenth century and by Tillich, can be usefully deployed where appropriate in an exploration of the mysterious reality of God's presence to and in the world. Dialectical methodology can promote cogent analysis and synthesis. Candidates for early dialectical scrutiny would have to include being and nonbeing, presence and absence, God and evil, and also the finite-in-the-infinite and the infinite-in-the-finite.

Methodologically, divine presence presents challenging problems. It cannot be adequately described, analysed or atomised into parts for closer examination. A heuristic approach will be adopted in an effort to explore the meaning and significance of God's presence as creative. Such an approach will also be teleological, focusing on the purpose and goal of the continuing divine relationship with creation. This helps to highlight the kenotic, redemptive and ultimately the salvific characteristics of divine presence. Personalism, in contrast to individualism, will also become evident in the language and thinking used, while presence, especially divine presence, is under the microscope of theological research. The interplay between the key constitutive elements of presence, that is the self, the other and relationality, can be observed in the holistic terms of personalism which places such emphasis on the composition and development of personality. When applied to a relationship involving divine presence this will force a consideration of the question of the feasibility of talking at all about God as a person. In any event, these related issues can be viewed only from a human perspective. The starting-point is the universal experience of presence, an experience which is real, but often intangible. From their faith perspective, Christian personalists³⁰, when considering presence, particularly divine presence, lay stress, not only on *union* (individual presence to God), but also on *communion* (group / ecclesial presence with God). Immanuel is divine presence-with-us on both an individual and a collective bases.

Hermeneutics needs to be included as part of the methodology required to open up a theology of presence. Hermeneutical enquiry involves discernment and interpretation. Apart from identifying and locating presence, the approach being adopted here

³⁰ Personalism, as a philosophical approach, considers persons and self-conscious experience as fundamental to reality. However, in our opinion, it needs to be balanced by the inclusion of historical context. Christian personalism is centred on God as person, and particularly on Jesus Christ as perfect divine-human person. Christian personalists emphasise the reality and importance of personal relationship and person-to-person encounter with the divine.

acknowledges that presence itself can be used as a critical principle to evaluate a whole range of theological concepts and unpack their meaning in a unique and fresh way. In this way it becomes legitimate to speak of a hermeneutics of presence. The presence of God has a critical power of its own and can be used as a hermeneutical key to open up new insights into many important aspects of theology. Presence can be both the subject of study as well as the method of study. It can provide theological content and, simultaneously, offer a different and fresh approach to theology itself. As methodology, divine presence can provide a referential framework which helps to reassess, reinterpret and revision significant areas of the theological enterprise. It is a different but authentic way of identifying and naming the mystery of God, and it has the added advantage of being able to draw, in a multidisciplinary way, on the resources of diverse fields such as science, psychology, philosophy and the arts. The ever-present relationship of God to creation in its manifold dimensions throws out challenges in all directions.

With specific reference to Tillich, the methodology employed in this present work must be suitably adapted in order to unlock and critically evaluate the Tillichean theological heritage on the specific topic of presence. It is not enough simply to identify, in a disjointed way, a range of presence-related concepts in Tillich's work. That would be to concentrate on content only. There is a two-tier mission here, because the scrutiny must deal with the issues of both content and structure. Having uncovered a series of Tillich's ideas and principles linked to presence, this review must question whether or not these elements are deliberately connected in such a way as to be deemed co-ordinated. If they form a cohesive whole, they are infrastructural and ultimately programmatic. Given that situation, we would conclude that, for Tillich, presence is programmatic for his constructive theology. Interestingly, in his latter years and following increased contact with world religions like Buddhism, Tillich himself came to a self-critical recognition of the limitations of his own exclusively Christian theology. He wrote about the dangers of theological provincialism and, later, the need for interreligious dialogue based on the study and acceptance of *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*³¹.

If divine presence is the hub of Tillich's theology, then the subsidiary elements are like spokes which run in radial fashion to and from the centre rounding out the great wheel of

³¹ This was the title of Tillich's last public lecture delivered on 12th October 1965, ten days before his death. See *FR*, pp.80-94 for full text.

Tillich's system, giving it strength and holding the hub firmly in its central position. As the theologian of the boundaries, Tillich adopted the role of theological frontiersman, probing into a vast array of other more secular topics and subjects, but at the same time he never ceased being the stout defender of the mystery of God's presence as the central issue in theology. He saw his task as that of connecting and harmonising the most disparate dimensions of reality with the most fundamental relationship of all, that of God to creation. The theonomous view is offered by Tillich as the complete explication of all reality. Meaning and intelligibility are sourced in that vital connection of creation to the ever-present God.

Any exploration of Tillich's work will be theological; but because of his ontotheology the journey will, *en route*, involve traversing some philosophical territory. Within the context of his *Systematic Theology* the question of the divine presence is mostly implicit in the content of the first two volumes. In volume three, this central underlying theme breaks the surface and receives explicit treatment in his development of Spiritual Presence by reference to the Divine Spirit and the ambiguities of life. But the Tillichean sources used for this thesis will not be limited to Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. The broader issue of the whole mystery of God's presence, apart altogether from the specific and narrower concept of Spiritual Presence, can be found scattered throughout Tillich's writings, including his sermons, and his lectures and articles on such subjects as science, technology and culture (particularly the arts), politics and philosophy.

In trekking with Tillich through his *Systematic Theology* it becomes obvious that he is using a trinitarian compass of a most unusual kind. Certainly it does not, at first sight, resemble the established schema normally associated with the more traditional format of trinitarian doctrine. Out of the five parts or divisions used by him in his *Systematic Theology*, the second, third and fourth sections relate to God, Christ and Spirit respectively. But "this 'trinitarian' structure is determined rather by the moments of being, existence and life in the dialectic of the Absolute".³² In part echoing that Tillichean trinitarian theme, and taking a close look at Tillich's theology and its significance today through the critical interpretative lens of divine presence, this thesis is developed in stages and its methodology deployed as our theological project evolves gradually over the succeeding four chapters of this work. The chapter titles signpost the way forward.

³² C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jensen (Eds.), *A Map of Twentieth Century Theology: Readings from Karl Barth to Radical Pluralism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p.64.

1.7 Conclusion to Chapter One

The presence of God for Tillich is shaped by his conception of the reality of God, and so we start our search in chapter two (section 2.2, below) by tracking Tillich's own quest for God. These sightings of Immanuel, while only outline glimpses at this stage, will start to focus on Tillich's conviction that God is not a being or person of any kind. This will challenge us to check Tillich's "missing person" report on God, and to ponder the paradox of the "missing" but present God who is other than a person. This will equip us to move deeper into Tillich's doctrine of God, the broad outlines of whose profile then starts to appear as we begin mapping the heights of transcendence and the depths of immanence in the emergent divine reality. At this point we will take an informative detour as we contemplate the question: If God is not a person, can God be personal? This issue has important implications for any theology of divine presence.

We will then launch our own awareness exercise by noting how our space-time conditioned finitude creates considerable anthropomorphic difficulties as we struggle to achieve more precision in our God-language, being all the while mindful of the dangers of spatial terminology and the negative impact of prepositional thinking on the formulations of much divine presence theology. Drawing liberally on Tillich's work, we will hear and try to heed his warnings about spatial metaphors as we register his approach through the use of symbolic language which helps to refine the reality of God as relationally present to creation. Conscious of the distortions of prepositional theology, and following Tillichean guidelines, we will make our first thumbnail sketches of each of our three models of divine presence. Then, by reviewing Tillich's theology of the Trinity, we will find a basis for reinforcing the triadic structure of our models and identifying them, not just as relational, but also as trinitarian. Emerging from this at the end of the next chapter, we will have an early indication of the shape of the macro-model capable of encompassing the three individual models of presence as proposed in our Immanuel theology.

CHAPTER TWO

Tillich's Immanuel: Modelling Divine Presence

2.1 Introduction

So far we have briefly alluded to a small selection of Tillich's theological themes, and indicated how at this stage they were only preliminary findings which might point to the existence of a substantive theology of presence in Tillich's work. In this chapter we argue that these and other such presence-related ideas are not disjointed concepts, but are rather the recurring appearance of a co-ordinated theology of presence. Until now we have only made claims which raise the possibility, using panentheistic conceptual tools and other theological resources, of a retrieval of a theology of presence from Tillich's writings. We must set about the process of retrieval by taking as our starting-point an examination of some of the rich complexities of Tillich's doctrine of God. Only by first discovering who or what God was for Tillich, can we then proceed to assess what God's presence could mean for Tillich.

Each of the three proposed models reflects different aspects and characteristics of the one and only Immanuel who is the same yesterday, today and forever. Is not the total reality of God Present greater than the sum of the three partial images reflected in the three models which are themselves only separate formulations of the one undivided divine presence? If the three identified models of presence are really only micro-models, then, correctly co-ordinated, they could form a macro-model of Immanuel as God Present. If properly configured, the three models might be seen as the substructures of a super-model embodying and supporting Tillich's own universal synthesis which is something he worked towards all his life.

2.2 Tillich's Quest for Immanuel

Trying to "locate" God correctly is an enduring challenge for all theologians, and Tillich is no exception. His theological system can be seen against the background of a long-standing battle, going back several hundred years, between those who supported supranaturalism, with all its dualism and divine cosmology, and those who promoted naturalism which rejected the dualism of God versus the world and which wanted to position God in the world¹. This contentious question gradually developed into more and

¹ See *ST* 2, pp.5-10. For an extensive treatment of these related issues presented as a theological struggle over the last few centuries to balance divine transcendence with divine immanence see S.J. Grenz and R.E.

more contrasting variations, some simplistic and some sophisticated, of divine transcendence in opposition to divine immanence. The nature and character of the divine-human relationship is at the centre of this debate which really involves “placing” or “locating” God with reference to all of creation. The human quest for an understanding of divine presence is the core issue under consideration and the general context of the discussion is an expression of Immanuel theology.

Where and when, how and why, is God present? In response to this discourse Tillich gradually developed his whole systematic theology. Even his earliest writings contribute various component elements which then feed into the final system which is really Tillich’s own “Great Synthesis”.² Tillich’s approach to theology was expressed through his method of correlation which he elaborates at the initial stage of his *Systematic Theology*.³ The message (*kerygma*) and the situation (human creative interpretation of existence) interact dynamically, the Gospel message offering answers to the questions posed by human existence in the here and now. This provides the structure for Tillich’s apologetic or “answering theology”. The question/answer format of this theology presupposes an underlying search for answers to human problems. This search for meaning and ultimate reality characterises Tillich’s theology as a questing theology, a pilgrim theology where Tillich is journeying in search of the ultimate. His travels take him, repeatedly into boundary situations, the meeting-point between the absolute and the relative, philosophy and theology, religion and culture, being and nonbeing, and so on, all in an effort to identify and to engage with ultimate reality, ultimate presence.⁴ For Tillich, searching for ultimacy is seeking to locate God who is present in everything as its ultimate dimension. Tillich’s legacy to theology is literally that – a *bequest* (“be-quest”) or (“being-quest”), a “quest for being” with all its ontological implications for theology. A brief glance at the contents sections of his *Systematic Theology* supports the point. There frequent references are made to “Quest for Revelation”, “The Question of God” (Quest-ion), “The Quest for the Christ”, “The Quest for the New Being”, “The Quest for Unambiguous Life”, “The Conquest of Religion” (Con-quest) and “The Quest for the Kingdom of God”.⁵

Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1992).

² This is an allusion to the “Great Synthesis” which Tillich perceived being attempted by a number of philosophers and theologians over recent centuries, see *P*, chapters III and IV, pp.90-207. This historical background (particularly the work of Schelling) greatly influenced Tillich’s theological development.

³ *ST I*, pp.3-8.

⁴ See both *OB*, especially pp.46-58; 68-74 and *MSA*, especially chapter IV, pp.124-143.

⁵ Cf. K.B. Osborne, *New Being: A Study on the Relationship Between Conditioned and Unconditioned Being according to Paul Tillich* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p.5. In this work Osborne uses the idea of

This search for ultimate reality is possible because of essential human religiosity. But Tillich is quick to point out his opposition to what is called *alongsideness*. The religious function is not one among a number of functions of the human spirit.⁶ Tillich is clear that the notion of religion as a separate function, alongside other areas of human activity, is a gross distortion of the true nature of authentic religion and of God as the ultimate reality and ground of religion.⁷ In Tillich's theology of presence, the "with" in God-with-us does not mean that God-Present is present "alongside" us. Tillich opposes this false view of God as a being, even the highest being, among or alongside other beings. In his view, that perception of divine presence has corrupted traditional theism. For Tillich the "with" is decidedly not spatial. It is relational. As the 1969 book *What is Religion?* is comprised of essays written from 1919 to 1925, it is significant for the study of the early Tillich. These essays articulate key themes and ideas which endure, in one form or another, throughout the development of Tillich's theology. Tillich's view of authentic religion and his outright rejection of "alongsideness" contribute to the unique profile of his Immanuel theology and are directly linked to other important features of his theology of God Present, such as "Kairos", "the Unconditional", "theonomy", "the Holy", "breakthrough" and "paradox".⁸ All of these topics will be taken up later (in chapter three, below) in order to show the integral part they play in the development and functioning of Tillich's implicit Immanuel theology at the heart of his systematic theology. We shall demonstrate that Immanuel, under a host of different names and conceptual variations of divine presence, is the key player in Tillich's theological system.

"quest", in his technically defined sense as "dialectical quest", as the central context for his whole study on Paul Tillich, see especially chapter 1, pp.1-8. In our work, "quest" is being used only to provide an initial background or general setting to the main thesis which is not about quest as such, but about the object of the quest, that is Immanuel as divine presence in the infinite-finite relationship, as expressed in Paul Tillich's writings.

⁶ Tillich states firmly: "There is, therefore, no special religious function *alongside* the logical, atheistic, ethical and social functions; nor is it confined either in *one* of them or in the *unity* of them all. It is rather that which breaks through each and all of them, and it is the reality, the unconditional significance of each of them"(WR, p.143).

⁷ When dealing with Tillich's philosophy of religion, J.L. Adams calls the attempt to keep religion in its own separate compartment, *spatialization* and he writes: "One way in which this spatialization of religion appears is in the effort to assign the religious function to some other function of the human spirit. ... Corresponding to these forms of spatialization is the spatialization of the divine itself; God is understood to be one being alongside other beings, 'the unconditional standing alongside the conditioned' " (WR, p.13). Adams further amplifies his descriptive term "spatialisation" in his book *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp.19-35; 76 ff; 197.

⁸ With reference to "breakthrough" and "paradox" in Tillich's work, the following two recent studies have been published. G. Hummel (Ed.), *The Theological Paradox: Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Centre of Paul Tillich's Thought*: Proceedings of the V International Paul Tillich Symposium held in Frankfurt/Main 1994. (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) and U.C. Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation: Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work 1913-1964* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999).

In the search for Immanuel, being unconditionally concerned is to be religious. The human religious function and the reality of God as present interact and are always there as a universal dynamic, even when this is not manifest. To facilitate the quest for God Present the prevalence of religion is everywhere.⁹ But searching for God is possible only if the finite searcher is capable of detecting the infinite. In his “Autobiographical Reflections”¹⁰, Tillich comments on the question of the infinite in the finite, notes and interprets the contrasting positions of “*Extra Calvinisticum*” (to the effect that the son of God cannot be contained by the human Jesus – the belief that the finite is not capable of the infinite – *non capax infiniti*) and “*Infra Lutheranum*” (the view that the finite is capable of the infinite – *finitum capax infiniti*), and, as a good Lutheran, he opts in favour of the latter position saying “on Lutheran grounds the vision of the presence of the infinite in everything finite was theologically affirmed”.¹¹ Tillich’s questing theology, by its nature and character, is carried along on the Immanuel affirmation of God as present with us. This affirmation is the enduring foundation of Tillich’s theological project.

Drawing further on his early years, Tillich recollects the influences which helped to shape his theological approach. Again, we see that it was experience of the numinous presence of the holy which had a fundamental bearing on the formation of the method chosen by Tillich to elaborate his system. What he actually says justifies the assertion that experience of Immanuel as the divine presence of the holy is the essential starting point for the development of his theological enterprise.¹² This passage is of central significance for understanding Tillich’s basic methodology which, interestingly, as stated above, is in practice the reverse of the approach which Tillich theoretically advocated when presenting the following proposition as the first of ten theses in support of his *Licentiate in Theology* degree in 1912: “(1) The Concept (*Begriff*) of religion must be derived from the concept of

⁹ Tillich explains, using the presence context: “Religion, like God, is omnipresent; its presence, like that of God, can be forgotten, neglected, denied. But it is always effective, giving inexhaustible depth to life and inexhaustible meaning to every cultural creation” (*PE*, p.xv).

¹⁰ Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections”, in *The Theology of Paul Tillich: Volume 1*, (Eds.) C.W. Kegley and R.W. Bretall. (New York: Macmillan, 1952), pp.329-349; p.5.

¹¹ Tillich, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p.5.

¹² Tillich declares: “It is the experience of the ‘holy’ which was given to me at that time as an indestructible good and *as the foundation of all my religious and theological work*. When I first read Rudolf Otto’s *Idea of the Holy*, I understood it immediately in the light of my early experiences, and took it into my thinking *as a constitutive element*. It determined my method in the philosophy of religion, wherein I started with the experiences of the holy and advanced to the idea of God, and not the reverse way. Equally important ... the ethical and logical elements of religion were derived from the experience of the presence of the divine, and not conversely. This made Schleiermacher congenial to me, as he was to Otto ...” (Tillich, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p.6, our italics).

God, and not conversely.”¹³ In any case, it is abundantly clear that, in his lifelong activities as a theologian, Tillich considered that the concept of God, in response to the human experience of divine presence as the holy, was derived from the concept of religion. Ten days before his death in 1965 Tillich gave his last public lecture entitled “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian”. Here, at the end of his life, Tillich was still stressing his belief in the primacy of the view that the infinite is in the finite.¹⁴ This final address from Tillich is important and will be given specific attention below (section 3.3.2.3). For now, we note that he also uses this last opportunity to remind his listeners that authentic religion must have the three vital elements, sacramental, mystical and prophetic, if the Holy is to be experienced. These three essential features of true religion provide useful pointers in the search to identify and encounter Immanuel, God Present, who for Tillich is the basis of and justification for all religious activity. Tillich is certain that Immanuel can be found and the Holy experienced because of the human *Capax Dei*, “*Infra Lutheranism*”, the human capability to engage the divine, and also because of the already available divine presence which precedes all else and which readily offers itself to human experience.

A close study of Tillich’s theological methodology, together with a whole range of ideas characteristic of Tillich’s thinking, will show that for Tillich there was really only one place to look for Immanuel as the God always present with us. That special *locus* where the search was always fruitful and where God could reliably be found was, for Tillich, *the present*. It might at first seem pedantic to state grandly that the divine presence, or any presence for that matter, is not unexpectedly experienced in the present. Yet this was of particular interest and importance to Tillich who always emphasised the present reality of God as experienced in the concrete here and now. Despite all references and discussion by Tillich about ultimacy and ultimate reality, he knew that for us it could be experienced only in a concrete way. Concreteness gives a special character to Tillich’s presence theology, and this will be evident as this present study develops.

¹³ This translation is taken from a lengthy footnote in W. Pauck, *From Luther to Tillich: The Reformers and Their Heirs*, edited by Marion Pauck (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p.205. W. Pauck, noting that Tillich throughout his life used the opposite method, states in the same footnote “It is clear that the sense of the presence of God, that awareness of the Spiritual Presence, and the experience of the holy had priority in Tillich’s thinking. On the basis of this understanding he could say that the concept of God must be derived from the concept of religion”, p.207.

¹⁴ “The universal religious basis is the experience of the Holy within the finite. Universally in everything finite and particular ... the Holy appears in a special way. I could call this the sacramental basis of all religions” (*FR*, pp.86-87).

Concrete reality in the here and now influenced Tillich more than the historical dimensions of events. Tillich was not insensitive to historical impulses.¹⁵ Concentrating particularly on the immediacy and significance of contemporary experience, it is not surprising to see Tillich emerge with a strong “presentist” profile. This is in line with his pronounced existentialist approach to theology and his burning desire to promote the relevance of the Christian message which speaks to people in the present circumstances of their daily lives.¹⁶ The present is all-important for Tillich and its significance heavily coloured his views of major theological issues such as scripture and the word of God, his doctrines of the fall, sin and evil, and his unique christology based on the search for Christ as New Being in the here and now. Tillich’s theology of mediation and his operational use of the method of correlation are all directly affected by his bias as a presentist who gives priority to placing Immanuel as God dynamically present at the heart of everyday human existence. *The present*, meaning both now and immediate, is the only relevant place to seek Immanuel as the living God. As a presentist by preference, Tillich prioritises the present immediate reality of divine presence at every stage in the search for God.

James Luther Adams correctly classifies *the present* as one of Tillich’s basic concepts¹⁷ and notes the connection of this idea with Tillich’s view:

... that Protestantism should in both its protest and its positive realisations be concrete and contemporaneous. ... Thus religious knowledge includes knowledge of the present. ... Without concern for the present, irrelevance, disillusionment, futility and even self-destruction ensue.¹⁸

Adams explains Tillich’s fear that abstractions, though important in clarifying situations, tend to isolate us from the contemporary. The existential approach must prevail. Abstract mystical experience, if divorced from the present and concrete, from space and time, should not be identified with true religion. Tillich makes all of this clear when espousing the merits of historical realism and promoting the primacy of the principle of

¹⁵ However, M.K. Taylor is right in detecting in Tillich’s approach to and treatment of key Christian doctrines: “... *a tension between historicist and presentist interpretations of these doctrines*. ... What I am terming ‘presentist’ impulses move interpretation of sin, evil and of Jesus the Christ, toward focus on Christian believers in their present situation. Certain historicist impulses in methods may here be preserved, but the emphasis is on the present meaning and meaningfulness of the doctrines. ... Tillich located himself within the tension between historicist and presentist impulses, but with what many have read as a leaning towards the presentist side”, M.K. Taylor, *Paul Tillich: Theologian*, pp.24-25 (Taylor’s italics).

¹⁶ See the passion of Tillich’s views as expressed in the Earl Lectures which he gave in 1963 and which were later published as *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, Edited by Durwood Foster (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1996).

¹⁷ J.L. Adams, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture*, pp.18-24.

¹⁸ Adams, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture*, p.18.

contemporaneity in the search for the “really real”.¹⁹ The relevance of this for Tillich’s theology of presence is obvious. For Tillich, the principle of contemporaneity underwrites his theology of God Present:

Self-transcending realism is based on the consciousness of the ‘here and now’. The ultimate power of being, the ground of reality, appears in a special moment, in a concrete situation, revealing the infinite depth and the eternal significance of the present.²⁰

On a more fundamental ontological level, attention must be paid to the dialectical nature of the finite-infinite relationship (the human-divine encounter) and, particularly for Tillich, the meaning and functioning of axial concepts:

There are three sets of axial concepts around which everything revolves: first there is the axis: essence-existence-essentialisation; secondly, the axis: dialectic-paradox; lastly, the axis: immanence-self-transcendence.²¹

These sets of axial concepts are readily identifiable in Tillich’s work, especially in his *Systematic Theology*. This thesis will define and explicate them, together with a range of other connected themes and ideas in Tillich’s writings, and examine their overall operational impact on and contribution to the development of Tillich’s central theology of divine presence. The most important set is essence-existence-essentialisation²², because it underlies the whole of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* giving it the special character of ontotheology. It is operative throughout the system, stamps it with a particular structure and format, and is a key which unlocks his theological system.

As ultimate reality, Being Itself, God is at work dynamically in stimulating the movement from unactualised essence, through existence, and on finally to fulfilment as reunion in the essentialisation process. The distinction between essential and existential being is of consequence for Tillich and therefore requires close attention.²³ Essence is the unifying principle between God and the human being. As potentiality, essence reflects the depth

¹⁹ See Tillich’s essay “Realism and Faith” in *PE*, chapter v, pp.66-82.

²⁰ Tillich, *Realism and Faith* in *PE*, p.78.

²¹ Osborne, *New Being*, p.7.

²² Newport describes the essence-existence-essentialisation in the following terms: “Essentialisation is ... a return to fulfilled essence. ... Tillich’s soteriology and eschatology endeavour to show how the dynamic of creation-fall can be reversed through participation in New Being. He describes this as the process of man’s reunion with his essential unity with God. This is his concept of essentialisation. ... Essentialisation is more than a return to essence. ... In the process from essence through existential estrangement to essentialisation, the world-process gains something. The essences are enriched by a threefold process of actualisation (existence), restoration (New Being), and finally the transition to the eternal (essentialisation)”, J.P. Newport, *Paul Tillich* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), pp.69-70. Tillich’s concept of essentialisation will feature at various stages in our treatment of Tillich’s eschatology in chapter five of our thesis.

²³ See *ST I*, pp.202-204.

and power of a being.²⁴ With existence comes separation and distance into the divine-human relationship, but this is conquered by return through essentialisation to essential unity with God.

This has major implications for understanding Tillich's theology of presence. It offers an informative framework within which Tillich's theology can be interpreted. Seen from the perspective of divine presence as the dynamic in the divine-human relationship, the essence-existence-essentialisation categories, taken as an integrated process and movement, offer important guidelines for mapping the diverse features and levels in Tillich's theology of presence. For our purposes, various characteristics of divine presence are distinguishable within Tillich's comprehensive theology. Drawing on Tillich's search for God as relational at the centre of his system, and relying on the manifold related concepts and theological themes unique to Tillich's deep understanding of ultimate reality as God Present (in our terms, Immanuel), this thesis identifies and highlights its own *three specific models of divine presence*.

The typology offered here designates the three types of divine presence as *the ontological model*, *the existential model* and *the phenomenological model*. Each model has its own style and particular emphasis. The ontological model points to "God Without" (God outside: transcendence); the existential model promotes the "God With" (God beside: participation); and the phenomenological model highlights the "God Within" (God inside: immanence). Naturally, we do not intend to convey any idea of spatiality in connection with divine presence which should rather be conceived in relational terms. The "withness" of God-with-us is expressive of relationality founded on divine presence.²⁵ All three models are relational even though the philosophical approaches of ontology, existentialism and phenomenology deal primarily with different aspects of reality. However, while each philosophical discipline might deal with a separate dimension of reality, all three philosophical positions deal ultimately with one and the same reality. So an interdisciplinary approach is being indicated here, because the models, as deriving from the theology of Tillich, are not independent of each other. As they function they implicitly

²⁴ "Essence plays a structuring function. Essence and *Logos* are closely related. ... *Logos* provides the principle of structure. ... *Logos* correlates mind and reality. ... It is in the essential structures of reality that God is present. However, these essential structures in existence are never more than partial reflections or expressions of the divine presence. ... Tillich sees the dialectical absence and presence of God in the essence-*logos* structure of creation". J.P. Newport, *Paul Tillich*, p.67.

²⁵ For a particular and recent treatment of "withness" see R. Page, *God with Us: Synergy in the Church*, (London: SCM Press, 2000), Part One, especially chapter 4, pp.51-58.

interact showing that they are actually interdependent and interlocking. The interplay between the three models shows the universality of divine presence networked throughout all levels and dimensions of created reality. The models overlap in a collaborative fashion. For example, features of ontology operate in all three models to a greater or lesser extent, and the use of the phenomenological method will connect with Tillich's ontology. This cross-over is not unhealthy as it all helps to fill out and colour in the full portrait of Immanuel. However, in a preliminary, outline way in section 2.6, below, and in a fuller manner in sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, below, individual examination of each of the models of divine presence facilitates academic analysis, and later will be seen to give added value and importance to the connections between the models. But before this, the special character of Tillich's God, for us Immanuel, must be further clarified.

2.3 Immanuel: The God-With-Us above God

The claim here is that Tillich had developed a pivotal and sophisticated theology of divine presence, that it was central to and evident in his life's work, and that it can be seen as constitutive of both the content and format of all three volumes of his *Systematic Theology* which is the last composite expression of his theological enterprise. The theme of Immanuel as God-with-us, that is as God-present-with-us, is a proclamation that God is, and wants to be, related to all creation in one way or another. Any exploration of this theological notion demands a close examination of the preposition "with". God could be with us in a remote, distant, detached way or God could be with us in a close, intimate, personal manner. While presence is the birthing place of all relationality, the conception of any relationship involves a tension between contrasting elements which, on the one side involve association, linkage, connectedness and on the other side imply the notions of gap, difference, distance and distinctiveness.

As mathematicians are forever condemned to failure in all efforts to square the circle, so theologians like Tillich are compelled to strive relentlessly to balance divine transcendence and immanence. This delicate work is not a trivial matter for believers, nor is it simply a matter of abstract academic pursuit to engage the restless minds of theologians. It goes to the heart of religion and worship because it highlights the nature and quality of the divine/human relationship. Any theology of presence must dig deeply into the question of the simultaneity of divine transcendence and immanence raised by God's relationship to all creation. If it is believed and accepted that God not just knows creation but is dynamically involved and related to creation in manifold ways, then it is crucially important to try to

establish whether God is remote and distant or personally and intimately involved with all that ever was, is or will be. The nature of the divine-human relationship is only the surface of a more fundamental issue, namely, the quintessential quality and expression of the divine presence of God as related to human beings, and indeed to the whole of creation. The divine presence is foundational because it underwrites the creator-creation relationship.

Tillich constantly reminds us that God is not *a* being, but rather being-itself. He sees this as the first stage in solving the problem of upholding both the immanence and the transcendence of God. Being-itself has a dual character because there is a “double relation of all beings to being-itself”.²⁶ God is the power of being and so transcends every being. Indeed, God as being-itself even transcends the distinction between infinity and finitude. So “being-itself infinitely transcends every finite being”.²⁷ There is no degree or proportionality between the finite and the infinite. There is an unavoidable infinite “gap” and as such God is truly transcendent.

At the same time, however, finite being can have the power of being only by participation in being-itself. This is a continuing creative relationship without which finite beings would either never emerge out of nonbeing in the first place, or would be totally submerged and extinguished in nonbeing. Finite beings’ total dependency on being-itself through participation leads to the affirmation of divine immanence because God as being-itself is present as the power of being in everything that is. Similarly, it also leads to the affirmation of divine transcendence because it shows “that everything participates in the power of being in a finite way, that all beings are infinitely transcended by their creative ground”.²⁸ So the necessary participation of finite beings in being-itself points to the conclusion that God as being-itself must be both transcendentally present and immanently present to all finite beings everywhere and at all times. There is no doubt that here Tillich is clearly proclaiming, in his own way, the tenets of panentheism. Despite his trenchant opposition to theism, Tillich is determined to defend and preserve simultaneously both divine transcendence and divine immanence.

This can all-too-easily appear to introduce the notion of spatiality into the apparent tension between transcendence and immanence. It certainly does not mean that there is a spatially

²⁶ *ST I*, p.237.

²⁷ *ST I*, p.237.

²⁸ *ST I*, p.237.

inner presence (immanence) and an outer presence (transcendence). Equally, it does not signify that the divine presence registers with varying degrees of intensity, with God being one moment present in a distant transcendent way and the next moment being present in a close, intimate immanent way. Obviously, the notions of divine transcendence and immanence are metaphors, ways of describing Immanuel's presence to and in creation.

However, not everyone agrees that Tillich successfully holds together the apparently conflictive ideas of divine transcendence and immanence. In *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*²⁹, Adrian Thatcher approaches Tillich's work by using an historical method. Thatcher is sympathetic to the philosophical style of Tillich's theology and he recognises the value of using ontology and the language of being when addressing the core issues in Christian theism. Yet, Thatcher sharply criticises Tillich's attempt to formulate a transcendent notion of God above the God of traditional theism, using at the same time participation in being-itself as the basis for immanence while claiming that God as being-itself is totally removed and different from finitude. He accuses Tillich of harbouring two different or distinctive notions of God and of Being in an effort to maintain both divine transcendence and immanence.³⁰ Thatcher also criticises Tillich's explication and use of the concept "God above God"³¹ to underline the radicality of divine transcendence.³² Other commentators have reluctantly concluded that Tillich's view of God being transcendent as well as immanent simply cannot be upheld.³³ This is unfair to Tillich who uses ontology effectively to hold together in a creative tension both the transcendence and the immanence of Immanuel as God Present. Tillich certainly does not downgrade, devalue or dilute divine transcendence which, together with immanence, helps to define the essential character of the Creator-creature relationship. This is most important for the development and explication of Tillich's implicit presence theology. God is with us in diverse ways and Tillich uses his unique ontotheology, to approach both the ontological problem of the relation between God and the world, and also the religious problem of conceiving correctly the divine-human encounter. In Tillich's system, particularly because

²⁹ A. Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

³⁰ "Is there not one God but two? One is the super-transcendent deity, beyond any predication whatsoever, the other the involved God whose life is strictly analogous to earthly life-processes and which in Jesus Christ became identical with them. The distinction between the transcendence and the immanence of God becomes so attenuated that a danger arises of forming two separate ideas of God" (Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, p.86).

³¹ *CTB*, pp.186-190.

³² Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*, pp.85-86.

³³ "... while attempting to solve the problem of God's transcendence and immanence, Tillich actually tore them apart. ... But which 'God' was Tillich's God? ... his theology leans heavily towards panentheism and thus, in the final analysis, must be judged to be a case of radical immanentism", S.J. Grenz and R.E. Olson, *20th Century Theology*, p.130.

of its ontological dimension, the transcendent element is always prominent and often dominant. Tillich uses a range of transcendental symbols such as the Unconditional, Kairos and theonomy in developing what has been called “hypertheism”.³⁴

Immanuel theology is rooted in the notion of God as related. Tillich deploys ontology, not just analytically, but also analogically in such a way that its unifying character is more obvious. By starting with the ontological question and identifying God as Being-Itself, Tillich is laying the foundations for good Immanuel Theology because he quickly moves to link, and indeed lock, finite being and Being-Itself together ontologically. This provides the solid basis for God as related, and that is the bedrock of Immanuel theology. This is the vital work of constructing a theology centred on the conviction that God, by free and loving choice, is present ontologically and is connected to and continuously involved with finite beings, even while that same divine reality is so transcendentally and distinctively different from creation.

Ultimacy, another important transcendent symbol used by Tillich, contrasts sharply with the idea of concreteness³⁵, and is frequently explicated with reference to Tillich’s central notion of ultimate concern. The polar tension between ultimacy and concreteness will be elaborated further in this study (section 3.4.2). The accent for the moment is on the human search for ultimacy. In Tillich’s theology of presence, God, as both transcendent and immanent, is related crucially to all finite beings because being-itself is the power of all beings. The human ontological quest for ultimate reality is identical with the human desire to be with God as ultimate, because nothing less satisfies the religious hunger for ultimacy expressed as ultimate concern.

In 1955 Tillich published *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*.³⁶ This work of only eighty-five pages provides important clarification of Tillich’s understanding of God’s presence as ontological and historical, as well as non-symbolical and symbolical. In short, it contains key elements of Tillich’s manifesto for the programmed development of his presence theology, and it should be read before, during and after a close study of his

³⁴ See E. Farley, *The Transcendence of God: A Study in Contemporary Philosophical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p.82 and note 7 on p.230, where Farley attributes the word “hypertheism” to John Laird who defines it as the belief that “the evidence which leads to God also leads beyond him”. Chapter 3, pp.75-102, of Farley’s book gives a balanced and sympathetic treatment of transcendence in Tillich’s work, with specific emphasis on the Unconditional.

³⁵ See *ST I*, pp.211 ff.

³⁶ *BR* was based on the James W. Richard lectures delivered by Tillich in the autumn of 1951 at the University of Virginia.

Systematic Theology. Ontology and biblical religion are twinned fruitfully. Biblical personalism and divine manifestations are expressed in creation, christology, history and eschatology. Tillich explores and justifies the question of being and human existence at the heart of the divine-human relationship so fundamentally expressive of Immanuel as divine presence. God-in-relation can only be such if God is already God-present-with-us. Human experience of the Holy has a personal character, and this is evident in a special way in biblical personalism.

Tillich admits that there is a radical contrast between biblical personalism and philosophical ontology. Biblical religion, so characterised by personalism which stresses the person-to-person relationship between God and man, never explicitly raises the ontological question of being. Yet the question is unavoidable. "There is no ontological thought in biblical religion; but there is no symbol or no theological concept in it which does not have ontological implications".³⁷ Tillich teases out the ontological issues implied both in the subjective side of biblical religion (covering faith, sin, doubt, grace, solitude and love) and also in the objective side of biblical religion (dealing with divine manifestations and with the divine-human relationship as linked to the search for ultimate reality).³⁸ Divine presence, both ontological and personal, is themed throughout this book, and finally is seen as central when Tillich, in masterly style, reconciles ontology and biblical religion, and demonstrates that God is truly relational by identifying God as both the ground of being and the ground of everything personal.³⁹ So too it can be claimed that the God of the Bible and the God of the philosophers is Immanuel, God-with-us ontologically and personally. There can only ever be one ultimate. But the ultimate for Tillich can have both a positive and a negative side, and this he elaborates with the symbols of "ground" and "abyss" as applied to God as Being-Itself. Faced with "the 'stigma' of finitude"⁴⁰ and encountering the threat of nonbeing, the human mind goes into "ontological shock".⁴¹ This is the negative side or the abysmal element in the ground of being. It is always present but is included in the positive side of the mystery of the ground of being. The power of being, while incorporating both sides, always overcomes the threat

³⁷ *ST I*, p.12.

³⁸ See *BR*, chapters 6, 7 and 8, pp.43-85.

³⁹ *BR*, pp.81-85. Finally, Tillich declares: "The correlation of ontology and biblical religion is an infinite task. There is no special ontology which we have to accept in the name of the biblical message. ... There is no saving ontology, but the ontological question is implied in the question of salvation. To ask the ontological question is a necessary task. *Against Pascal I say: The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the God of the philosophers is the same God. He is a person and the negation of himself as a person*" (*BR*, p.85, Tillich's italics).

⁴⁰ *ST I*, p.110.

⁴¹ *ST I*, p.113.

of nonbeing.⁴² No-one could deny the transcendence of the *mysterium tremendum* (abyss) and the immanence of the *mysterium fascinosum* (ground). Equally, it follows, no-one should deny that both are legitimate expressions of divine presence. Immanuel is with us both in the transcendent abysmal mode and as the reality which grounds all things in divine presence. Immanuel, then, is the ground of presence. Despite transcendence, and given participation by the finite, not even Being-Itself is presence-proof.

The term “ground” has, as mentioned earlier, connotations of both creative and abysmal elements because of the dependent participation by finite being in the power of being. The relational categories of causality and substance have been frequently used to explain the connection between Being-Itself and finite beings. It is possible to interpret the term “ground” as being both the cause and the substance of finite beings, but really it transcends both of these categories.⁴³ However, Tillich is uneasy both with the causality category taken up by Leibniz in a Thomistic fashion, because that leads to rationalistic theism, and with the category of substance used by Spinoza, because that leads to naturalistic pantheism. He considers that both these deviations can be overcome by using the “symbolic term, ‘the creative and abysmal ground of being’ ”.⁴⁴

The idea of “ground” is a strong and inclusive notion in Tillich’s ontotheology and it can accommodate the full scope of divine presence. It conveys the transcendental aspect of ultimacy because ground precedes all else which necessarily depends upon it. It is foundational and supportive. Without it, beings would not be. Nothing is more profound than the ground of being which surpasses everything finite. It is truly transcendental, yet its ultimacy is the power of being which holds finite being in being. The “ground” is Immanuel and is a necessary present reality but is not itself contained or delimited in any way by the finitude it sustains. At the same time, this concept of God Present as ground is not static. It is eternally dynamic because it also is the power of being immanent in all finite being. It is “the creative fountain of being, that by which being comes to be”.⁴⁵ Although the ground of being, God, is not a universal essence, nor the totality and unity of all finite beings and certainly not the substance of being, Tillich’s ontotheology can still resolve the problem of becoming (differentiation and creation), and have God proclaimed

⁴² The ontological shock experienced “... is preserved in the annihilating power of the divine presence (*mysterium tremendum*) and is overcome in the elevating power of the divine presence (*mysterium fascinosum*). Ecstasy unites the experience of the abyss ... with the experience of the ground ...” (*ST I*, p.113).

⁴³ Cf *ST I*, p.156 and *ST I*, p.237.

⁴⁴ *ST I*, p.238.

⁴⁵ Farley, *The Transcendence of God*, p.89.

eternally victorious over nonbeing, by pointing to the ever present God Immanuel, not just as being-itself, not just as the enduring ground of being, but also as the creative and dynamic power of being acting like a well-spring gushing from the ground of being-itself.⁴⁶ So it is reasonable to conclude at this point that, for Tillich, God as being-itself is both the transcendent ground of presence and the immanent grounding presence, creatively and dynamically upholding all finite beings in being through their participation in a finite way in being-itself. In short, for Tillich, Immanuel is both transcendentally and immanently present at one and the same time.

Tillich's ontotheology throws out another challenge to our understanding of divine presence. God, says Tillich, does not exist. But, if God does not exist, how can God be present to anything or anyone? It appears that Tillich has declared Immanuel as dead, or should that be absent? The God above God is non-existent. However, Tillich was no atheist. He agreed with the scholastic assertion that in God there is no distinction between essence and existence, but he did not agree that it was correct to talk about the existence of God other than to acknowledge christologically and paradoxically that God reveals divinity under the conditions of existence. Tillich bluntly states that "God does not exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore, to argue that God exists is to deny him".⁴⁷ Tillich is here defending his conviction, held against traditional theism, that God is not *a* being, not even the highest being. Rather, God is the infinite power of being which resists nonbeing. God is the foundation and ground of reality, and the words "exist" and "existence" are reserved by Tillich for finite being labouring under the constraints of estrangement. For Tillich, God is real, in fact the "really real". Arguments for the existence of God do not prove God's existence because they are based on the false premise that God can be derived from the world. Such arguments are only "expressions of the *question* of God which is implied in human finitude".⁴⁸ Some accuse Tillich of being an atheist⁴⁹, but his intention was to use the terms "exist" and "existence" in a restricted,

⁴⁶ So Tillich's hypertheism, the God above God, and the image of "ground" indicate "therefore, in addition to the negative transcendence implied in categoryless being-itself, there is a positive transcendence of the ground of being in that it is the dynamic and creative source of all being, the perpetual power in being" (Farley, *The Transcendence of God*, p.90).

⁴⁷ *ST I*, p.205.

⁴⁸ *ST I*, p.205.

⁴⁹ See for example L.F. Wheat, *Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism: Unmasking the God above God* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970). This book contains a stream of personal interpretations of Tillich's work and many accusations all pointing to the author's central conviction that Tillich was in fact a closet humanist and, as such, an atheist. Wheat cites the views of Alasdair MacIntyre and Walter Kaufmann in support of this view, see pp.17-18 with various footnotes. For a more sympathetic response see S. Hook, "The Atheism of Paul Tillich", in *Religious Experience and Truth: A Symposium* edited by S. Hook (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962).

technical sense with reference to finite being only, so as to emphasise the absolute transcendence of God.⁵⁰ For Tillich, God is present, not just immanently as the power of being, but also transcendentally as the ontological foundation or ground of all being. As transcendent presence, God is the guarantor and protector of finite being against nonbeing. Without the vital supportive presence of the transcendent God as Immanuel, even for one moment, finite being would be instantly annihilated. If Immanuel was not the present transcendent ground of our being, as well as the dynamic immanent power of all being, nonbeing would triumph over everything finite which would simply collapse *in nihilo*. Divine presence expresses itself both transcendentally and immanently and, as Immanuel, God Present, maintains a tensive equilibrium between divine transcendence and divine immanence.

But here we must be careful. There are not two Gods, one transcendent and one immanent. The latter distinction is a symbolic, qualitative one only, never a quantitative differentiation. God as transcendent may be the ground of human experience which itself cannot be experienced, always present but as *Deus Absconditus*, hidden, ineffable and unapproachable. God as immanent can register fragmentarily, breaking through into human experience, always present to us, sometimes as *Deus Revelatus* (God Manifest) and sometimes as *Deus Absconditus* (God Hidden). Immanuel is not limited to or by immanence. God is always with us, transcendentally and immanently. Human experience of God as present fluctuates but divine presence never waivers, never dims. It is facile to associate divine presence with immanence only. Admittedly, by using his ontology, “Tillich posits an ‘out-and-out’ transcendence”⁵¹, but that does not diminish the transcendent presence of Immanuel as the ground of being, as the God-With-Us above God.

2.4 Immanuel as Personal Presence

Tillich emphasises the God who is constantly engaged with creation. While the mystery of the divine is vast and challenging, for Tillich the most fruitful area of theological exploration is based on his view that God is dynamically and immediately present to every being everywhere and at all times. In short, Tillich’s God is Immanuel, the ever-present

⁵⁰ It certainly *is not* the case that Tillich’s “... doctrine of God places such a strain on the immanence and the transcendence of God that the follower of Tillich must choose between them. Further, opting for the nearly total immanence of Tillich’s ‘God above God’ is most consistent with his overall viewpoint” (Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, p.125).

⁵¹ R.S. Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), p.29.

divine reality, who is particularly characterised as relational. Tillich's conviction is that God is in an enduring and close relationship with all that exists and that the divine presence as God-With-Us sustains all.

Such a profound mystery requires careful thought. Tillich, like any theologian approaching such a task, is concerned to choose the best language in order to formulate the least ambiguous concepts when addressing the key issue of God as present to, and in relationship with, all creation, especially human beings. The God-With-Us mystery demands the highest standards of precision thinking, yet Tillich acknowledges that ultimately all human God-language falls far short of the mark. Tillich is aware of the inadequacy and dangers of anthropomorphic images and concepts when these are used to describe and explain God as present and in relationship with us. Yet, he recognises that human language is all we have to hand. Such language is legitimate, provided it is acknowledged that, when speaking of God, our language is always symbolic.⁵² Against the background of God symbolically recognised as the "living God", Tillich considers aspects of God's presence to us in the framework of relationship. Presence, whether immediate or remote, is the precursor and basis of relationality. Relationality, in turn, means relationship which normally involves at least two terms which form, by connection or association, the nexus of the relationship. Tillich is clear that while God is God-present-with-us, God is definitely not a being among other beings. However, he is happy to identify and use *symbolically* the ontological elements⁵³ which constitute the basic ontological structure⁵⁴ of self and world when speaking of God, because these are qualities of being, not kinds of being (such as self or world).⁵⁵ This presents us with a great problem in trying to understand divine presence. God is a "living God" but God is not a "self". While thinking and speaking of God, Tillich is clear that the three polarities of the ontological elements must be used only in their symbolic sense when applied to God. In addition, one side of the ontological polarity must be carefully balanced against the other. This is particularly acute in the symbolism of the polarity of individualisation and

⁵² For example, when speaking of God as the "living God", Tillich strongly defends the use of anthropomorphic symbols by the prophets in the Scriptures. "We must speak of God as living in symbolic terms. ... God lives in so far as He is the ground of life. Anthropomorphic symbols are adequate for speaking of God religiously ... prophetic utterances ... always appear concrete and anthropomorphic ... on the other hand they preserve the mystery of the divine ground ... they never make God a being alongside others. ... Theology should not weaken the concrete symbols, but it must analyse them and interpret them in abstract ontological terms" (*ST I*, p.244).

⁵³ *ST I*, Part II, section 1B, pp.174-186.

⁵⁴ *ST I*, Part II, section 1A, pp.168-174.

⁵⁵ The self/world ontological structure "is transcended in the divine life ... God cannot be called a self, because the concept 'self' implies separation from and contrast to everything which is not self ... both self and world are rooted in the divine life but they cannot become symbols for it" (*ST I*, p.244).

participation with reference to God. “The symbol ‘personal God’ is absolutely fundamental because an existential relation is a person-to-person relation.”⁵⁶ Something of such ultimate concern to human beings cannot be anything other than personal. Yet, if personality includes individuality, it is tempting to consider Immanuel as an individual. Tillich responds by claiming that it is possible to call God the “absolute individual” only if this is counter-balanced by simultaneously calling God the “absolute participant”. In other words, “both individualisation and participation are rooted in the ground of the divine life and ... God is equally ‘near’ to each of them while transcending them both”.⁵⁷

Tillich is clear about the character that God brings to the Immanuel relationship of presence. Thus, while we can symbolically use the expression “personal God”, God is not a person. His presence is not that of one person to another, no matter how supreme one of those persons might be. There is no doubt in Tillich’s mind that “God is the ground of everything personal and that he carries within himself the ontological power of personality”⁵⁸, but he considers that the expression “personal God” is a confusing symbol, arising from a construct of theism which promotes God as a perfect person ruling the world from above.

In other words, God’s presence to us and with us is a most personal presence, but from this it should not be concluded that Immanuel is a person among other persons. Divine presence is qualitatively different from human presence which is based on a one-to-one relationship. Tillich repeatedly asserts that “God is not a being but Being-Itself ... the ‘Ground and Abyss of Being’ ”.⁵⁹ God is not a thing and should not be objectified as such. Tillich also suggests that it borders on the blasphemous to argue for the existence of God as if God was among other beings as a perfect supreme being.⁶⁰ God is not a separate entity no matter how perfect, but rather is Immanuel the all-present power of being in which every being participates. Tillich speaks of the two sides of the relationship between the believer and God. For the believer, it seems logical to approach God as an object, as another “thing”; yet the believer knows that God is, in the divine nature, definitely not a thing and can be prayed to as the “personal” God. In this encounter the believer “must transcend this ‘I - Thou’ relationship in his meditation when he unites with the God who is

⁵⁶ *ST I*, p.244.

⁵⁷ *ST I*, p.245.

⁵⁸ *ST I*, p.245.

⁵⁹ P. Tillich, “The Concept of God” *Perspective 2*, No.3, January 1950, p.12 (one page article).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.12.

transpersonal, abysmal, trans-objective”.⁶¹ Tillich explains that for the believer the first aspect of the relation is “theistic” because it brackets God as an object, while the second side is “atheistic” because it transcends the human notion of God’s objectivity. This distinction and balance in the relation of the believer to God corresponds, says Tillich, to “the classical duality of positive and negative theology”.⁶²

Tillich’s use of the word “atheistic” might seem surprising. Perhaps it could have been spelt better as “a-theistic”, meaning “non-theistic” or “anti-theistic” or, as Richard Grigg describes Tillich’s position, “post-theistic”.⁶³ This adds further complexity to Tillich’s understanding of God’s presence to us, and seems to dilute seriously elements of the personal and the immediate usually associated with divine presence. But Tillich does not stop at the abstract definition of God as Being-Itself, or even Ground of Being, or Ultimate Reality. He conducts a full frontal attack on three different varieties of theism and argues that theism must be transcended using “absolute faith”.⁶⁴ At this stage we come to a proper understanding of Tillich’s famous phrase “God above God”. It names the God above the God of theism. Yet, this seems to distance us further from God as Immanuel. Tillich expresses his dissatisfaction with even traditional theism which uses the more personalistic biblical images of person-to-person relationship and divine-human encounter. For Tillich, this is one-sided but he reserves his severest criticism for what he calls “theological theism” which developed the notion of personal encounter with God into a belief in two people who are separate and independent realities that just might or might not meet each other.⁶⁵

Tillich’s view of God above God becomes clearer. God-with-us is not “a being beside others”, because that would restrict God to the subject-object structure of reality, and make God an object for us as knowing subjects at the same time that it makes us objects for God as the supreme all-powerful and all-knowing subject. Such a God can too easily be seen as

⁶¹ Tillich, *The Concept of God*, p.12.

⁶² Tillich, *The Concept of God*, p.12.

⁶³ See R. Grigg, *Symbol and Empowerment: Paul Tillich’s Post-Theistic System* (Macon, G.A.: Mercer University Press, 1985).

⁶⁴ “The content of absolute faith is the ‘God above God’. Absolute faith and its consequence, the courage that takes the radical doubt, the doubt about God, into itself, transcends the theistic idea of God” (*CTB*, p.182).

⁶⁵ Such theism “... must be transcended because it is wrong. It is bad theology. ... The God of theological theism is a being beside others and as such a part of the whole of reality. He certainly is considered its most important part, but as a part and therefore as subjected to the structure of the whole. ... He is seen as a self which has a world, as an ego which is related to a thou, as a cause which is separated from its effect, as having a definite space and an endless time” (*CTB*, p.184).

tyrannical and detached, depriving us of our subjectivity and freedom. Existentialism rejected this conception of the deity and Nietzsche demanded that such a God should be killed. But all is not lost according to Tillich. The experience of absolute faith helps us to transcend all forms of theism, such as personal encounter and even mysticism which fails to accommodate the concrete and the doubt and anxiety felt about the concrete, and thus fails to address sufficiently the problem of meaninglessness. The God above God is the real source of the courage to be. Transcending theism in this manner is the only effective way of ensuring that the courage to be absorbs the anxiety of meaninglessness and doubt highlighted so prominently by existentialism.⁶⁶ So Immanuel, God-with-us, is a good description of the divine presence for encounter theology, but it must be stressed that, while the divine-human encounter is obviously personal, it also has, for Tillich, an important transpersonal dimension too because, while “God is the ground of everything personal”⁶⁷, God also transcends every finite person.

Using philosophical language, Tillich repeatedly identifies God as Ultimate Reality or the Ground of Being. These are variations on the statement that God is being-itself. Such a statement is, for Tillich, a non-symbolic statement which asserts the actuality of God. God is not God if God is not being-itself, the absolute. Beyond this, all other theological or religious assertions about God are symbolic statements. For the moment it is sufficient to say that Tillich claims that all concrete assertions about God are drawn from finite experience and are symbolic statements about the divine. Tillich wrestles with this important distinction between symbolic and non-symbolic statements about God⁶⁸, and emphasises the significance of exploring the problem of symbolic or analogous knowledge of God. Intentional presence, presence through knowing, can only have a limited meaning when applied to presence through knowing God as Immanuel. Epistemologically-based presence secures the link between knowledge and reality through intentionality (the identification of the other), but such intentional presence implies the subject/object structure of reality, the knowing subject and the known object. But, as Tillich reminds us, God is not a being, an object to be known, because God is prior to the subject/object

⁶⁶ “The God above the God of theism is present, although hidden, in every divine-human encounter. Biblical religion as well as Protestant theology are aware of the paradoxical character of this encounter. ... They are aware that personalism with respect to God is balanced by a transpersonal presence of the divine. They are aware of the paradoxical character of every prayer, of speaking to somebody to whom you cannot speak because he is not ‘somebody’, ... of saying ‘thou’ to somebody who is nearer to the I than the I is to itself” (CTB, p.187).

⁶⁷ ST 1, p.245.

⁶⁸ ST 1, pp.238-9 and ST 2, pp.9-10. See also R.P. Scharlemann *Reflection and Doubt in the Thought of Paul Tillich* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), pp.76-82.

structure. Human knowledge registers God's presence in a unique way because finite human beings cannot expect "to know" God in any sense which would imply that God's nature or being could be known or understood by knowing finite subjects. Hence the importance of recognising the symbolic nature of all human knowledge of God. Yet, Tillich accepts that to claim that every statement about God is symbolic is, paradoxically, to make a non-symbolic statement about God. This one non-symbolic statement, in turn, seems to threaten what Tillich calls God's "ecstatic-transcendental character".⁶⁹

At the transcendent level, beyond empirically experienced reality, the human image of God is both non-symbolic (because God is being-itself) and symbolic (because God is seen as the highest and most perfect being).⁷⁰ Tillich stresses that both these elements necessarily comprise our idea of God and, while he recognises our non-symbolic awareness of ultimate being-itself, he acknowledges that, in human terms, we cannot communicate with God simply as ultimate being. A meaningful human relationship with God as encountered by us requires the symbolic mode of thinking and speaking of God as *person* who can be addressed as "Thou". Without the symbolic element, we can neither contemplate the divine-human relationship as personal nor experience as personal the divine presence which underwrites that relationship. So Tillich can say, cryptically, that God is symbol of God. "This means that in the notion of God we must distinguish two elements: the element of ultimacy, which is a matter of immediate experience and not symbolic in itself, and the element of concreteness, which is taken from our ordinary experience and symbolically applied to God."⁷¹

While Tillich wants to drive to the heart of the meaning of both the divine reality itself and the term "God" for human understanding, he is anxious that such unique expressions as "God above God" should not be misunderstood as implying "the establishment of a kind of Super-God and a removal of the personal God of living Faith".⁷² Tillich's view is that Immanuel is God of all and God for all, even for those who do not know God or who are separated from God. Tillich explains that such a God above God is not contained within or limited to the Christian Churches and their members; nor indeed is God operative only within the sphere of the holy; God is present in the secular sphere and no particular sphere has any exclusive claim on God. God-with-us is in fact the God-with-all-creation.

⁶⁹ *ST 2*, p.9.

⁷⁰ *TC*, p.61.

⁷¹ *DF*, p.46.

⁷² P. Tillich, "The God Above God", *The Listener* 66 (August 1961), pp.169 and 172.

Anxious humanity feels stressed by finitude and estranged existence threatens to swamp each individual in a sea of constant change. In this situation, human beings feel the need to identify a separate sacred area of reality where the divine manifests itself through temporal finite creation. Tillich sees this human reaction as the basis for the perceived need for religion. Alternatively, “if man were inseparably united with the Ground of his being, he would be without religion, because he would be in the divine Presence at every moment.”⁷³ So, in the human predicament, religion is a necessity.

Yet, if so many people are frustrated in their search for God as an object among other objects, then the temptation is simply to transcend all religion, abandon religious images and symbolism, and attempt to engage the God above God free from the conflicts and competition between different religions and theologies. It is claimed that many mystics have done just that. Recognising that God transcends the world of objects, people in radical doubt search for the God above God. But Tillich accepts that there is a legitimate concern that, if people transcend the concrete and intimate realities of religious life, it might undermine the I-Thou relationship to the personal God and lead to the personal God of every living religion being superseded by the God above God. Here again Tillich quickly affirms the notion of the personal God while simultaneously rejecting the idea that God is a person among other persons. He explains that the idea of person involves separation from every other person, being alongside other beings but never being able to penetrate into the centre of another fellow human being. By contrast, God is closer to each and every human being than that person is to his or her self, and gives life and existence to all. But, says Tillich, we should never assert that God-with-us is a person; he reminds us that neither the Bible nor classical theology ever made such a claim. The Latin word *persona* was used in classical theology to refer to each of the three faces of God as Father, Son and Spirit, while the term “person” (meaning an individual centre of consciousness) was applied to God only in the nineteenth century.⁷⁴

⁷³ Tillich, “The God Above God”, p.169.

⁷⁴ Cf. Tillich, “The God Above God”, p.172. Tillich’s assertion here that “person” was applied to God only in the 19th century would be queried by other theologians such as John Zizioulas who argue that person applies first to God, and then to the human person and as a product of patristic debates. See J.D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, (Ed.) P. McPartlan (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006) p.224 where he writes: “The presence-in-absence paradox, therefore, shows that personal presence *qua presence* is something that *cannot be extrapolated from created existence*. It is a presence that seems to come to us from outside this world – which makes the notion of person, properly understood, perhaps the only notion that can be applied to God without the danger of anthropomorphism” (Zizioulas’ italics). Author’s footnote p.224: “The right notion of the person is of crucial importance for theology. The individualistic and psychological conceptions of personhood which have prevailed throughout the history of Western thought have lead inevitably to a rejection of the understanding of God as person (e.g. Fichte, Feuerbach, Tillich, etc.). This is an additional reason why we should seek an understanding of

The God above God, for Tillich, is not a detached God. Rather, such a God is a God-with-us.⁷⁵ Tillich stressed ontological presence when referring to God in relation to creation. His famous declaration that God is the Ground of Being⁷⁶ is simply another way of asserting that God is always intimately present to us as the foundation and support of our whole being. Despite the abstractions of his ontotheology, Tillich persistently maintains a creative tension between the God of ontological presence (the God above God), and the personal God of personal presence (experienced in religion and prayer). He forthrightly promotes and defends both the personal perspective of Immanuel as the foundation of the divine/human relationship, and the ontological character of Immanuel as the foundation of all beings. Immanuel is closer to us, both ontologically and personally, than we are to each other or to ourselves. Immanuel is neither the distant God of deism nor the suffocating, all-absorbing God of pantheism. God might be God-with-us; but God is also different and the source of distinctiveness just as we are distinctive even in the universal presence of God so close. In Tillich's doctrine of God there is a creative tension between the transcendence of such a God so close and the immanence of such a God above God.

2.5 Immanuel and Prepositional Theology

Human presence is conjunctive because it holds together or relates two or more people. The anatomy of human presence reveals self, other and the linking relationship which conjoins or associates the terms of the relationship. But where does this happen? This structural model of presence is too simplistic and, from Tillich's ontological standpoint, could not be applied to divine presence. For Tillich, God is not a self, an other, a term related through presence to someone or something else. God, as the ground of presence is, in our Immanuel theology, *a priori* presence, preceding all else including the subject-object, self-other structure. However, that begs the further question. Where, then, is Immanuel to be found? Where is "God Present"? Indeed "The word 'presence' has an archaic connotation, pointing to the place where a sovereign or a group of high dignitaries

personhood away from the ideas of individuality and consciousness". See also J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), Chapter 1 "Personhood and Being", pp.27-65.

⁷⁵ "If, however, we say that God as the creative source of everything personal in the universe is personal himself, we are right. He cannot be less than his creation. ... He who is personal is also more than personal; and conversely: He who is more than personal is also personal, namely, personal for us who are persons. ... The God above God and the God to whom we can pray are the same God" (Tillich, "The God Above God", p.172).

⁷⁶ *ST I*, p.156.

is”.⁷⁷ But God is not a sovereign, a being or even the highest being. To think otherwise is to support what Tillich calls “supranaturalism”⁷⁸, yet another spatial conception.

Tillich devotes a short section in the introduction to volume two of his *Systematic Theology* to clarifying this important area of the doctrine of God presented in volume one. This is tellingly entitled “Beyond Naturalism and Supranaturalism”.⁷⁹ He identifies three ways of understanding the term “God”. First, supranaturalism designates God as a being, the highest being, separate “from all other beings, alongside and above which he has his existence”⁸⁰ managing and directing the world. Such a conception qualifies God as infinite by application of the four categories of finitude, space, time, causality and substance. Second, naturalism, closely identifies God with the world and the creative power within it. It blurs the clear distinction between God and the universe and collapses the distinctive difference between both. Supranaturalism, by contrast, accentuates that difference by portraying God as a deity who may intervene in creation but who inhabits a divine supernatural world alongside, but different from, the natural world populated by human beings. Tillich strongly disagrees with the idea that there are separate worlds or spheres, one natural and one supernatural. For Tillich, transcendent does not imply distance and it does not mean supernatural. There is no such thing as supernatural presence, a divine presence hovering above the natural world. It is so difficult, when using theological language, to escape the spatiality of *immanence* (presence in or within) and *transcendence* (presence above or beyond). Propositional theology abounds.

Third, is the interpretation of “God” favoured by Tillich, who uses “self-transcendent” and “ecstatic” to explain its meaning. God is the creative ground of all beings and so God “stands *against* the world”. God is clearly differentiated from the world and the world from God. Equally, God “stands *for* the world” as the power of being which causes it to stand for God. Creative *ground* preserves the distinction between Creator and created, whereas God, as power of being at work in the world, is evidence that God is for the world and the world is for God. The mutual freedom of God and world for each other and from each other is the true meaning of “transcendent”.⁸¹ Transcendence, then, is the

⁷⁷ *ST* 3, p.107.

⁷⁸ *ST* 2, pp.5-10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *ST* 2, p.6.

⁸¹ “To call God transcendent in this sense does not mean that one must establish a ‘superworld’ of divine objects. It does mean that, within itself, the finite world points beyond itself. In other words, it is self-transcendent” (*ST* 2, p.7).

“beyondness” of God. With reference to the “self” of self-transcendence, “[i]t goes beyond itself in order to return to itself in a new dimension. This is what self-transcendence means”⁸². Such is the ecstatic character of this immediate experience generated through encounter with the Holy. Ordinary experience is thus transcended, not displaced.⁸³ Such is the central importance of self-transcendence and ecstasy in Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*. We explore these matters in more detail in section 3.5.1, below. At this stage we can see that Tillich is delicately using phraseology like “stand against” and “stand for” with reference to the relationship between God and world in order to focus attention on the context of “freedom from” (transcendence and differentiation) and “freedom for” (immanence and participation) in the divine/human encounter. This is in order to shake off the spatial prepositions “in” (naturalistic) and “above” (supranaturalistic). His “self-transcendent idea of God replaces the spatial image – at least for theological thought – by the concept of finite freedom”⁸⁴. Now it can be seen that Immanuel as God Present and freedom are compatible: finite freedom means being both united to and independent of the creative ground of being. The finite creature is united to the infinite through its essential being but separated from it through its existence. Its essential unity with the infinite does not prejudice its freedom from the infinite.

Prepositional theology, mentioned earlier, endeavours to “position” God in relation to the world in general and human beings in particular. Prepositional thinking, sourced usually in the space and time categories of finitude, and embellished with spatio-temporal concepts, is prevalent in any theology of presence struggling to determine the “location” of the divine. The idea of presence invites consideration of relationship. Yet, conceptualising the infinite-finite relationship, particularly the problem of entertaining the idea of the infinite in the finite, is constantly “polluted” with the inescapable use of spatio-temporal thinking and language. The category of relation, particularly when applied to the divine-human encounter, readily invites thinking which is quantitative, temporal, positional, directional and geometrically dimensional. The qualitative and personalist modes of conceiving the divine-human relationship, and the idea of divine presence itself, even when tempered by more abstract ontological categories and language, are constantly conditioned by the inevitable and irresistible intrusion of temporality and spatiality.

⁸² *ST 2*, p.8.

⁸³ “Ecstasy as a state of mind is the exact correlate to self-transcendence as a state of reality. Such an understanding of the idea of God is neither naturalistic nor supranaturalistic. *It underlies the whole of the present system*” (*ST 2*, p.8, our italics).

⁸⁴ *ST 2*, p.8.

Tillich constantly reminds his readers, that just about everything said about God is symbolic⁸⁵ and that metaphor prevails in all human God-talk. Reference has already been made to Tillich's outright rejection of any prepositional notion that something or someone can be *alongside* God who then participates in some way from the outside. Staying with the Immanuel theme of "God-with", Tillich analyses the notion of *parousia*⁸⁶ as used by Plato ("as the presence of the essences in temporal existence") and by the early Christian Church (as "the preliminary and final presence of the transcendent Christ in the church and in the world"). So the "with" of "God-with" is in no way to be interpreted spatially or prepositionally. The "with" of Immanuel theology is symbolic and relational, and should be taken as "present to and in relationship with".

The same spatial thinking can easily confuse the human view of God being nearer to an individual than that person is to himself or herself. While every human being is "in" God, in the sense of ontological dependence on the creative ground of the living God, each person is an ontic individual with the finite freedom to "turn away".⁸⁷ This typical passage is loaded with prepositional language, but is redeemed by Tillich's identification of such language as symbolic. In explicating the mystery of God's presence and relationship to creation, Tillich, like other theologians, is repeatedly compelled to use spatial terminology and then qualify its use. Even Tillich's metaphor of "ground", deployed extensively in his doctrine of God, is primarily a spatial symbol. "Abyss" is another instance of the same prepositional categories appearing through Tillich's theology of presence. This is balanced by Tillich's frequent theological "health warnings" about the ambiguity of human language. "Immanence and transcendence are spatial symbols The spatial symbol points to a qualitative relation."⁸⁸

A prime example of how geometrical imagery invades Tillich's theology, particularly when dealing with divine presence and the divine-human relationship, can be seen in his

⁸⁵ Tillich's theory of symbol is linked to the relational idea of participation which in turn connects easily to the question of presence as panentheistically participatory.

⁸⁶ "*Par-ousia* means "being by", "being with" – but on the basis of being absent, of being separated. In the same way God's participation is not a spatial or temporal presence. It is meant not categorically but symbolically. It is the *parousia*, the "being with" of that which is neither here nor there" (*ST 1*, p.245).

⁸⁷ "Man and the rest of reality are not only 'inside' the process of the divine life but also 'outside' it. Man is grounded in it, but he is not kept within the ground. Man has left the ground in order to 'stand upon' himself, to actualise what he essentially is, in order to be *finite freedom*. This is the point at which the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the Fall join. ... This is the difference between being inside and being outside the divine life. 'Inside' and 'outside' are spatial symbols, but what they say is not spatial. They refer to something qualitative rather than quantitative" (*ST 1*, p.255). See also *PI*, p.384; and *ST 2*, p.8.

⁸⁸ *ST 1*, p.263.

article “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking”⁸⁹, where he writes about the future of religion as ultimate concern. He shows that the relation between the eternal and the temporal can take two basic forms, “vertical” and “horizontal”. Both forms are found in every religion. However, undue emphasis placed on one or other of these two elements makes a difference and should be avoided. If religion as ultimate concern is “horizontal” in an earlier period it will inevitably swing back at a later stage to give more expression and recognition to the “vertical element”.⁹⁰ Tillich, in the same article, demonstrates that religion must fully engage with both elements in order to deliver both a world-transforming effect (horizontal – what ought to be) and also affirmation of meaning, depth and the spiritual foundation of reality (vertical – what is). If there is a move too far in either direction, then religion produces the aberrations and extremes of either “verticalisation” (world-defying static mysticism without any ethical dynamic) or “horizontalisation” (world-controlling production of means without ultimate ends). The two elements complement each other in true religion as the expression of ultimate concern.

Tillich uses this geometrical phraseology to convey a range of theological ideas, all of which are linked to the relational context of presence as expressed by the relationship between the eternal and the temporal. In *The Protestant Era*, James Luther Adams, while noting Tillich’s rejection of any “spatialisation of the infinite”⁹¹, confirms Tillich’s use of the Protestant Principle to transcend “the human boundary-situation” by relating “the line upward” (eternal meaning) to “the line forward” (the temporal realisation of eternal meaning).⁹² Again, in his essay “Has Man’s Conquest of Space Increased or Diminished His Stature?”⁹³, Tillich speaks of the triumph of the horizontal which raises spiritual problems and counsels against “the exclusive surrender to the vertical line (in skepticism)”, or “the exclusive surrender to the horizontal line (in what one could call ‘forwardism’)” which “leads to the loss of any meaningful content and to complete emptiness”.⁹⁴ Even

⁸⁹ P. Tillich, “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking”, *The American Scholar*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 1945), pp.102-105; 110-112.

⁹⁰ Tillich writes: “Vertical and horizontal are spatial metaphors for qualities of our religious experience. ‘Vertical’ points to the eternal in its presence as the ground of our being, and the ultimate meaning of our lives. ... ‘Horizontal’, on the other hand, points to the transforming power of the eternal whenever it manifests itself. ‘Horizontal’ is the prophetic fight for social justice and personal righteousness. ... Whenever an ultimate concern expresses itself, both elements – the vertical and the horizontal – do appear” (Tillich, “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking”, p.103).

⁹¹ *PE*, pp.301-302.

⁹² *PE*, p.186 – here Tillich also refers to “the mystical element” (vertical line – the “in spite of” attitude) and “the active element” (horizontal line – the “because of” attitude). See also p.296.

⁹³ See *SSTS*, especially pages 186, 190-191. This essay is also published under the title “The Effects of Space Exploration on Man’s Condition and Stature” in *FR*, pp.39-51.

⁹⁴ *SSTS*, p.191. Indeed, when setting the historical situation for his discussion of the issue, Tillich, in order to comment on the human condition and self-evaluation through the ages, speaks of the transformations from

when writing about the political meaning of Utopia in *Political Expectation*, with specific reference to the idea of the transcendence of Utopia, Tillich draws on geometrical phraseology when arguing, first, for a balance between horizontal transcending and, then, vertical transcending, and against total mystical absorption, that is mystical negation of every utopia.⁹⁵ Indeed, Tillich's uneasiness with pure mysticism has been linked to his concern about overemphasis on the vertical dimension, because, since his early days as a Christian socialist⁹⁶, he championed the need for social justice and world-transforming action on the horizontal level.⁹⁷ With reference to Christ's pre-existence and post-existence, Tillich utilises the same vertical/horizontal thinking.⁹⁸ Of special relevance for his theology of presence, he imports this spatial imagery into his analysis and application of theonomy,⁹⁹ his conception of history¹⁰⁰ and, of particular importance, his eschatology and ecclesiology when he writes of "the consciousness of the presence and the not-yet-presence of the Kingdom of God in history" and the implications of this for the churches.¹⁰¹

Also of special interest, in chapter four, below, will be our twinning of Tillich's three functions of life, namely, *self-transcendence* (under the principle of sublimity), *self-creation* (under the principle of growth) and *self-integration* (under the principle of centredness), with Tillich's three basic polarities of being (freedom/destiny; dynamics/form; individualisation/participation)¹⁰², in order to highlight and connect key elements of Tillich's system with our Immanuel theology of the presence of the living God. For the moment, we note that Tillich conceives these functions of life using the threefold metaphorical geometry of the *vertical* (return to one's self/self-transcendence and sublimity), the *horizontal* (self-alteration/self-creation and growth) and the *circular* (self-identity/self-integration and centredness).¹⁰³

the Greek contemplative mode, to the medieval self-transcendence ideals and on to modernity's world-controlling aspirations using the following spatial images: "One way to express the situation is in three geometrical symbols: the circle for the fulfilment of life within the cosmos and its potentialities – as found in classical Greece; the vertical or the striving for life toward what transcends the cosmos, namely the transcendent One, the ultimate in being and meaning – as found in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages; the horizontal or the trend toward control and transformation of the cosmos in the service of God or man – as found in the period since the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment" (*SSTS*, p.186). Cf. *IR*, pp.24-30.

⁹⁵ *Pol Ex*, pp.173-175.

⁹⁶ See particularly his works in *SD*, especially pp.47-162; *Pol Ex*, especially pp.40-96.

⁹⁷ See J.R. Horne, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism", *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 58 (1978), pp.130-139, p.134. This article offers an important analysis of Tillich's position on mysticism.

⁹⁸ *ST 2*, pp.159-160.

⁹⁹ *ST 3*, pp.258; 260-261.

¹⁰⁰ *ST 3*, p.297.

¹⁰¹ *ST 3*, pp.390-391.

¹⁰² *ST 3*, p.32.

¹⁰³ *ST 3*, pp.30-31 and 86.

We argue that this twinning of the three functions of life with the three polarities of being can be further matched with the three models of presence already identified in our Immanuel theology for detailed study here, and also with Tillich's triple axial concepts of essence-existence-essentialisation. It will be argued that these additional correlations can be made:

- *ontological model* of presence/essence/vertical/self-transcendence and sublimity/freedom and destiny;
- *existential model* of presence/existence/horizontal/self-creation and growth/dynamics and form;
- *phenomenological model* of presence/essentialisation/circular/self-integration and centredness/individualisation and participation.

These configurations, while not specifically grouped in this way by Tillich, can be validated as a legitimate methodological approach which facilitates a detailed analysis of Tillich's theology of presence under our chosen format of Immanuel theology. These groupings around each of the three models of presence will provide a separate, threefold framework for chapter three, below.

Vertical thinking does not appeal to all theologians. Ruth Page, for example, specifically rejects the vertical axis because of its associations with hierarchical and paternalistic images and with the notion of a distant transcendent God. She prefers the horizontal axis because it conveys better the relational aspect of presence with a special emphasis on the preposition "with" to reflect God as Immanuel.¹⁰⁴ However, her view of presence "beside" or "alongside" and her preferred companionship model of divine presence¹⁰⁵ would be unacceptable to Tillich who rejected any theological attempt to condition the unconditional through spatialisation of the divine as one being alongside other beings.

For Tillich, the metaphor of the vertical should be interpreted as "perpendicular presence", visualised as stretching upwards to connote divine transcendence and also plunging downwards below the level of the horizontal line to reflect the human search for the ground of being-itself in the depths. Indeed, the powerful relational metaphor of depth is used frequently by Tillich to express the foundational presence of God in the divine-human

¹⁰⁴ R. Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp.134-140.

¹⁰⁵ Page, *Ambiguity and the Presence of God*, chapter 7, pp.188-216.

relationship. In his sermon “The Depth of Existence”,¹⁰⁶ he takes the spatial experience linked to words like “deep”, “depth” and “profound”, and expands the spiritual quality of the depth metaphor in a vivid and effective way. He contrasts “surface” with its superficial visibility of things, with deeper levels of human experience as explored in “psychology of depth”, and then carries on to reveal God as the deepest ground of our being. The idea of descending below the horizontal line, below the surface, into the deep recesses of human existence, is loaded with both theological and spiritual symbolism for Tillich. It also correlates well with his ontotheology of God as simultaneously the inexhaustible ground of being (*mysterium fascinosum*) and the bottomless abyss (*mysterium tremendum*). Tillich uses the same haunting image of depth when speaking about the quest for revelation and the presence of God to the mind in the “depth of reason”.¹⁰⁷ He speaks of a conflict between structure and depth, between autonomous reason (structure) and heteronomous reason (depth).¹⁰⁸ The phrase “depth of reason”¹⁰⁹ will be explored in section 3.5.1, below, when dealing with the phenomenological model of presence and related issues such as psychological presence and absence. James Luther Adams identifies the dimension of depth as one of Tillich’s basic concepts and confirms that *depth in the present* is particularly meaningful.¹¹⁰ Using the same imagery of depth, John F. Haught links depth and horizon, identifying God as the ultimate horizon of human experience, and shows that the notion of inexhaustible depth is a way of conceiving the apparent absence of God, and declares religion as a “confident *naming* of the dimension of depth”, the experience of which “has made itself transparent to human consciousness”.¹¹¹ Tillich explains the metaphor of depth in a 1954 essay, “Religion as a Dimension in Man’s Spiritual Life”,¹¹² where he reminds us that religion as ultimate concern “is the substance, the ground and the depth of man’s spiritual life”.¹¹³ However, a later essay from 1958, “The Lost Dimension in Religion”,¹¹⁴ bemoans “the predominance of the horizontal dimension over the dimension of depth”.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁶ See *SF*, pp.52-63. This sermon was originally published as “Depth” in *Christendom* Vol. 9 No. 3 (Summer 1944), pp.317-325.

¹⁰⁷ See *ST 1*, pp.79-81.

¹⁰⁸ *ST 1*, pp.83-86.

¹⁰⁹ “Depth refers to the presence of the absolute or God in the essential structures of mind and reality. ... In theological terms, Tillich is affirming the presence of God to the mind” (Newport, *Paul Tillich*, p.94).

¹¹⁰ See J.L. Adams, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture*, pp.28 ff.

¹¹¹ J.F. Haught, *What Is God?: How to Think About the Divine* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p.22.

¹¹² *TC*, pp.3-9.

¹¹³ *TC*, p.8.

¹¹⁴ *SSTS*, pp.41-48.

¹¹⁵ *SSTS*, p.43.

So, in his use of the metaphor of verticality Tillich is able to focus on God both as transcendentally present and on the profundity of divine presence for human experience. It is apparent that in any theology of presence spatial thinking is difficult to avoid and the prevalence of prepositions appears to dominate the conceptual landscape of Immanuel theology. Happily, however, axially plotting the co-ordinates of divine presence in a metaphorical fashion is not the only way of “locating” God and relating to God in the human-divine encounter.

On 5 December 1958 Tillich delivered a lecture at Kenyon, which was first published in the autumn of 1959. According to the editor’s note, “Mr Tillich regards ‘Dimensions, Levels and the Unity of Life’ as one of his most important philosophical essays in many years”.¹¹⁶ The importance derives from the way it brings the metaphor “dimension” into the central structure of his theological thinking. The substance of this article then appears as the first section of volume three of his *Systematic Theology*, where it launches his key notion of the multidimensional unity of life. The original essay starts with his rejection of the metaphor of “level”, because that encourages dualistic and supranaturalistic hierarchical conceptions, and is theologically dangerous and destructive when applied to such issues as the mind-body problem, the relationship between inorganic and organic spheres, the relation of culture and religion, and the alleged dichotomy between supranatural and natural. The metaphor of dimension conquers these dualisms and Tillich initially uses it to bring a special understanding to the unity of life as multidimensional by integrating the presence of dimensions with the classical distinction in philosophy between the potential and the actual.

The importance of these insights becomes obvious only in 1963 with the publication of volume three of the *Systematic Theology*. There, the ambiguity of life is exposed and the multidimensional unity of all life is sourced in the God of life who interacts as Spiritual Presence with every aspect of being and with human history as uniquely interpreted by Tillich, who effectively integrates this with the symbols of the Kingdom of God and Eternal Life¹¹⁷. These issues will in chapter four, below, be seen as integral elements in Tillich’s overall exposition of Immanuel theology with special emphasis on divine presence as divine life, spiritually active in all dimensions of human life and experience

¹¹⁶ P. Tillich, “Dimensions, Levels and the Unity of Life”, *Kenyon Alumni Bulletin* 17 4 (1959), pp.4-8; p.4 (Editor’s Note).

¹¹⁷ Tillich always uses initial upper case letters for the three symbols of Spiritual Presence, Kingdom of God and Eternal Life.

here and now, and throughout human history as oriented eschatologically towards fulfilment in Eternal Life itself. This present study will demonstrate in chapter four, below, at a later stage that the equation between presence and life, the identification of divine presence as divine life, is the key insight in volume three of the *Systematic Theology*. There, the metaphor of dimension is so dominant with its manifold related references such as “dimensions of life”¹¹⁸, “dimension of spirit”¹¹⁹, “historical dimension”¹²⁰ and, of course, “multidimensional unity”.¹²¹

Tillich was conscious of the origin of the metaphorical dimension in geometry and showed how useful it can be when speaking of life processes. But when it comes to the Immanuel issue of the relation between God and the world he knows well that the metaphor of “dimension” can be used only analogously.¹²² The importance of this clarification lies in the distinctions. The “dimension of depth” or the “dimension of the ultimate” are phrases used by Tillich, but he is anxious to ensure that this does not lead anyone to assume that such a dimension is just another one of many dimensions, for the fear is that such a view would lead back to dualism and supernaturalism again.¹²³ While not accepting Kenan Osborne’s criticism that Tillich, when dealing with the presence and activity of the Spirit moved somewhat towards a dualistic and supernaturalistic position, we acknowledge that Osborne underlines a certain ambiguity in Tillich’s use of terms like the “dimension of the ultimate” and the “dimension of depth”, and offers a clear and useful distinction between what Osborne calls “the ground-dimension” and “the dependent dimensions”.¹²⁴

The whole issue of the dimensional provides an important context within which to consider Tillich’s theology of presence because it offers additional perspectives on God Present in the divine-human relationship. Using “dimension” symbolically, Tillich eases and softens the harsher geometrical lines of prepositional theology. Others have also utilised this type

¹¹⁸ *ST 3*, pp.17-21.

¹¹⁹ *ST 3*, p.26.

¹²⁰ *ST 3*, pp.297, 302, 318, 324 and 339.

¹²¹ *ST3*, pp.12, 18, 28, 83, 113, 118, 121, 122, 145, 200, 218, 240, 264, 276, 277, 281, 320, 359, 377 and 418.

¹²² “I say ‘analogous’, for it is not a continuation of the series of dimensions and the preconditions of their actualisation. That of which theology speaks transcends all temporal and causal conditions; it transcends the gap between potentiality and actuality. It is eternally what it is and therefore it is present in every life process as its creative and directing ground. If I apply the multidimensional unity to the relation of God and the world, it is done analogically or symbolically. ... Analogically speaking, God is the dimension of the ultimate in being and meaning, *present in and absent from everything that is*” (Tillich, “Dimensions, Levels and the Unity of Life”, p.8, our italics).

¹²³ Instead, Tillich says of the “dimension of depth” that: “It means the dimension in which all dimensions are rooted and negated and affirmed ... this transforms the metaphor into a symbol ... it is used symbolically, whereas in reference to the different dimensions of life, it is used metaphorically” (*ST 3*, pp.113-114).

¹²⁴ K.B. Osborne, *New Being*, p.191.

of thinking in an effort to expand on the presence of the infinite to the finite and on the overall question of divine presence.¹²⁵ As early as November 1957, Tillich was developing the metaphor of dimension in his Garvin Lecture,¹²⁶ and he also used the phrase “confusion of dimensions” when explaining the perceived conflict between religion and science.¹²⁷ Other aspects of Tillich’s dimensional thinking, such as structure (*Gestalt*), historical space (the relation of physical space and space of the spirit), historical time, different types of “beside-each-other-ness” (space) and “after-each-other-ness” (time), the fact that “creation implies concreteness”,¹²⁸ and the struggle between space and time, between temporality and spatiality,¹²⁹ all need to be analysed with respect to divine presence, and the results channelled towards a clearer and deeper understanding of the comprehensive scope and nature of Tillich’s Immanuel theology.

2.6 Tillich’s Immanuel: A Trinitarian Model

Tillich’s theology of Trinity is characteristically individual. It is developed at certain stages in the *Systematic Theology* in a disparate way, and, on first reading, this belies its importance for the cohesion of his system. It is brought together in summary form at the end of Part Four,¹³⁰ which deals specifically with God as Spirit and Spiritual Presence, which “is the Presence of God under a definite aspect”.¹³¹ The other two aspects of God’s presence are noted as expressed in the symbols of creation and salvation. Spiritual Presence “is the aspect of God ecstatically present in the human spirit”.¹³² For religious experience and for theology, all three aspects of divine presence are real and not simply three different subjective ways of conceiving the idea of God. The trinitarian symbols are a religious way of formulating and presenting this threefold reality of God Present.

Three important factors, says Tillich, have contributed to shaping the historical religious experience of trinitarian thinking. Tillich identifies the first factor as “the tension between

¹²⁵ See K. Heim, *God Transcendent: Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1935), where he examines the question of dimensional boundaries and divine transcendence. See also works such as L.J. van de Brom, *Divine Presence In The World* (Kampen: Pharos, 1993). Special related studies on Tillich: R.A. Evans, *Intelligible and Responsible Talk About God: A Theory of the Dimensional Structure of Language and its Bearing Upon Theological Symbolism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973); P. Annala, *Transparency of Time: The Structure of Time Consciousness in the Theology of Paul Tillich* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1982).

¹²⁶ P. Tillich, “The Idea of God as Affected by Modern Knowledge”, *Crane Review* Vol. 1, Spring 1959 No. 3 pp.83-89.

¹²⁷ Tillich, “The Idea of God as Affected by Modern Knowledge”, p.86. See also *SSTS*, p.175; and *PI*, p.386.

¹²⁸ *ST* 3, p.318.

¹²⁹ See *ST* 3, pp.315 ff; *SD*, pp.17-25; *Pol Ex*, pp.150 ff; *ATR*, p.7.

¹³⁰ *ST* 3, pp.283-294.

¹³¹ *ST* 3, p.283.

¹³² *ST* 3, p.283.

the absolute and the concrete element in our ultimate concern".¹³³ This particular tension between the absolute and concrete features in the idea of God led, throughout the history of religion, to a tendency to establish divine intermediary figures between God and humanity. Reconciling the ultimacy and concreteness found in ultimate concern is a top priority for religion.¹³⁴ Tillich shows how these competitive aspects of religious experience have conditioned the history of human religiosity by giving a detailed typology of religion, which he divides broadly into three varieties of polytheism and four styles of monotheism, matching each one of the seven categories of religion with a specific philosophy and philosophical attitude.¹³⁵ In order to preserve concrete divine presence, and the correct unity and balance between concreteness and ultimacy in religion, Tillich opts for trinitarian monotheism, twinning it with the philosophical attitude of dialectical realism.¹³⁶

The second factor shaping trinitarian thinking is, for Tillich, the idea of the "living" God, and the symbolic application of the notion of life to God.¹³⁷ Life is the operation of potential being becoming actual being. God "is the eternal process in which separation is posited and is overcome by reunion. In this sense God lives".¹³⁸ So, trinitarian symbols, by reflecting the dialectics of life seen in separation and reunion, are themselves dialectical. The view of *God as ground* brings with it the related notions of the power and depth of being resisting nonbeing. *God as form* reflects the *Logos* as the second principle, the principle of God's self-objectification, uniting meaning and structure with creativity. *God as act* is Spirit, the third trinitarian principle, the source of abundance and transformation, actualising and unifying the other two trinitarian principles.

However, identification and consideration of the trinitarian principles do not equate to the Trinity of Christian doctrine, although it amounts to a preparation for it. This points to the third factor in trinitarian thinking.¹³⁹ Additionally, pneumatology, the doctrine of the Spirit, is needed in order to complement christology. Christ is the bearer of New Being

¹³³ *ST 3*, p.283.

¹³⁴ See *ST 1*, pp.211-215.

¹³⁵ *ST 1*, pp.218-235.

¹³⁶ *ST 1*, pp.234-235.

¹³⁷ See *ST 3*, p.284; and also *ST 1*, pp.241 ff., especially pp.249-252.

¹³⁸ *ST 1*, p.242. In God experienced as the ground of life: "... an element of nonbeing must be seen in his being, that is, the establishment of otherness. The Divine Life then would be a reunion of otherness with identity in an eternal 'process'. This consideration brought us to the distinction of God as ground, God as form, and God as act, a pretrinitarian formula which makes Trinitarian thinking meaningful" (*ST 3*, p.284).

¹³⁹ This third factor is "... the manifestation of the divine ground of being in the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. With the statement that the historical Jesus is the Christ, the Trinitarian problem became a part of the Christological problem, the first and basic part, as indicated by the fact that the Trinitarian decision of Nicaea preceded the definitely Christological decision of Chalcedon ... the Christological problem gives rise to the Trinitarian problem" (*ST 3*, p.285). See also *ST 1*, pp.229-230; pp.250-251; *ST 2*, pp.143-145.

which is actualised in history by the action of the Spirit. Tillich links together the themes of trinitarian doctrine, all of which emerge out of revelatory experiences because the ground of revelation is God, the ground of being made manifest in existence. The questions arising from the human condition are grouped under the three concepts of finitude, estrangement and the ambiguities of life, and each of these is respectively answered by Tillich's doctrines of God, the Christ and the Spirit.

Drawing together the three key factors which have, in Tillich's opinion, motivated trinitarian thinking, that is, the preservation of concreteness alongside ultimacy in authentic religion, the insight that symbolically God is life and the Christian affirmation of Jesus as the Christ who is one with the Spirit, it is not difficult to interpret the Trinity's threefold self-manifestation of God's presence as a theological silhouette or reflection of Tillich's philosophical dialectic of essence-existence-essentialisation (alternatively seen as union-separation-reunion). Using the trinitarian elements in the symbol of God as life, the following correlations can be made: God as *ground* is the creative ground and power of all essences: God as *form* is the *Logos* bringing structure and meaning to existence: God as *act* is the Spirit bringing fulfilment of life in the process of essentialisation. A task for our Immanuel theology is to align Tillich's trinitarian theology with our three models of divine presence (see chapter three, below).

The *God Without* model of divine presence has been identified as the "ontological" model, which is a "Being-Itself-based" model intended to highlight Tillich's doctrine of God, with special reference to God as the transcendent creative ground and power of being, on the continuing presence of which we are totally and ontologically dependent. The "stigma" of finitude and the ontological "shock" of the threat of nonbeing (absolute absence) is such that finite being must forever seek the protection of the ever-present ground and power of Being Itself. In this model God is not "another", but "other" than finite. Here, divine presence is transpersonal with the emphasis on divine transcendence, a "theology of the clouds", reflecting Tillich's imagery of vertical thinking. Here, ultimacy and divine hiddenness feature in conjunction with the prophetic element of religion. A consideration of the ontological model of divine presence as *God Without* must include careful examination of a number of Tillich's theological motifs such as finitude and the ontological structure, elements and categories of being, all in the relational context of God's ontologically based presence, Tillich's theology of created space and created time, "polar" presence, creation as the genesis of presence and otherness, nonbeing, the Holy,

the demonic, the Unconditional and the Protestant Principle. Chapter three (section 3.3, below), deals with the *God Without*, the ontological model of divine presence in Tillich's Immanuel theology.

The *God With* model, that is the existential model of divine presence, in contrast to the "Being-Itself-based" model and the "Spirit-based" model, is the "New Being-based" model which accommodates interpersonal presence and encounter theology. It encourages a go-between theology of mediation, stresses divine presence as manifestation (as distinct from divine presence as hiddenness) and generally promotes the notions of divine presence on the basis of communion and two-way participation. The participative shape of this model highlights mutuality, the participation of the finite in the infinite and the corresponding participation of the infinite in the finite. This underlines the central position and presence of the divine *Logos* principle, working to bring meaning and structure to existence, and healing existential separation and estrangement with the arrival of New Being and the affirmation of Jesus as the Christ and bearer of New Being. For Tillich, who as a chaplain experienced at first hand the brutal horrors of the First World War (especially at Verdun), the existential model of divine presence embodies his horizontal thinking evoking a front-line theology, a "theology of the trenches", which responds to the trauma of the human condition with all the promise of his doctrine of Christ as an incarnate, redemptive and salvific divine presence.

This existential model of *God With* gives prominence to a concrete God, a concrete Christ, concrete grace and the sacramental element of religion. An analysis of this model in the context of Tillich's Immanuel theology will include Tillich's related keynote subjects such as the *Logos* as "meaning-full" presence, the *gestalt* of grace ("grace-full" presence), New Being as "New Presence", the "picture-perfect" presence of the Gospel Christ, concrete presence, theonomy, panentheism, estranged presence and human loneliness, "political" presence (Tillich's view of God Present in politics, society and public affairs), "art-full" presence (Tillich on art – the eternal in the temporal), "presence proclaimed" (Tillich's sermons, the biblical God and the relevance of the Christian preaching of Immanuel as God Present), the courage to be and participation (the courage to be as a part), sacramentality and the Catholic Substance. Chapter three (section 3.4, below), explores the *God With*, the existential model of divine presence as identified in Tillich's theological system.

The last model, the phenomenological model, could also be named the pneumatological model, because God as Spirit and Spiritual Presence are the dominant symbols for divinity and are used overtly throughout volume three of the *Systematic Theology* which deals with the work of the Spirit in life (Part IV) and in history and eschatology (Part V of the system). However, the word “phenomenological” in the name of the third model of presence emphasises the theme of *God Within*, the human experience and awareness of the divine, and how that consciousness of divine presence relates to topics prominent in Tillich’s work, such as “the impact” of Spiritual Presence, ultimate concern and awareness of the “Prius”, the depth of reason and its relation to revelation, mysticism, ecstasy, self-transcendence, “symbolic” presence (Tillich’s theory of symbol as participative), psychological presence and psychological absence, radical doubt and absolute faith linked to the courage to be, revelation as received, *Kairos* and breakthrough as experienced personally and in human history, and guilt-consciousness.

The *God Within* model of presence, although designated as “phenomenological” could also be called the epistemological model to reflect the idea of intentional presence as mooted in our introduction, or it could be labelled the Spirit-based model stressing the transformative effect of divine presence, divine immanence as intrapersonal presence and generally reflecting what could be styled as a “theology of the volcano” depicting the mystical divine presence as the immanent power of the human spirit. Chapter three (section 3.5, below), specifically examines *God Within*, the phenomenological model of divine presence in Tillich’s writings.

In his 1946 article, “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion”,¹⁴⁰ Tillich wrote of two distinct ways of approaching God to “symbolise the two possible types of philosophy of religion: the ontological type and the cosmological type”.¹⁴¹ Tillich expresses a stronger preference for the ontological approach as represented by the Platonic-Augustinian-Franciscan school in opposition to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition reflecting the cosmological approach.¹⁴² Tillich considered there was a value in holding together elements of both the ontological and the cosmological types of the philosophy of religion. In his lectures on Protestant theology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he brings forward the key features of the two approaches as expressions of the perennial issue of the

¹⁴⁰ *TC*, chapter 2, pp.10-29.

¹⁴¹ *TC*, p.10.

¹⁴² See J.P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure: An Evaluation of Tillich’s Claim to Stand in the Augustinian-Franciscan Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975). Also *HCT*, pp.103-121.

presence of the infinite in the finite (Nicholas of Cusa – *coincidentia oppositorum*) and shows the influential interplay between *the principle of identity* (principle of immediacy – Spinoza) and *the principle of distance* (also known variously as the principle of contrast, the principle of finitude, the principle of detachment and the principle of contradiction – Kant). He further explores Schleiermacher’s attempt at a classical theological synthesis of both positions, and Hegel’s attempt at a universal synthesis which eventually breaks down.¹⁴³ Tillich’s own doctoral dissertation examined Schelling’s attempt at resolving this tension between the principle of identity (which supports the ideas of mysticism and the participation of the divine in each of us) and the principle of detachment or distance (the Protestant principle of moral obedience, without participation in the divine).¹⁴⁴

This is pertinent to our study of Tillich’s theology of the presence of the infinite to and in the finite, which demonstrates Tillich’s own synthesis of the Protestant principle and the principle of identity. Tillich’s identification of what he calls the ontological and the cosmological types of the philosophy of religion, together with his views of the historical interplay of both, as expressed by the competing principles of immediacy and distance, and his own doctoral work, are all fertile grounds for research into Tillich’s theology of God Present. The ontological and cosmological approaches, together with Tillich’s historical insights and theological findings, must all be brought to bear on our three models of divine presence and, where necessary, must be integrated into the infrastructure of the models themselves.

Commenting on Tillich’s article “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion”, John P. Dourley interprets the two separate approaches as “God *within* man” and “God *beyond* man”, and remarks that this classification exhausts “the theological possibilities of how God’s presence to man may be understood”.¹⁴⁵ This offers a restrictive and simplistic division between “internal/interior presence” and “external/exterior presence”, although we accept that Dourley does not intend to give any impression of spatiality. Rather, he distinguishes between divine presence that registers phenomenologically and psychologically (our God Within model is not unlike Dourley’s God *within* man) and that which is experienced as “otherness”. But we argue that the “otherness” of God can be further classified as either ontologically transcendent (our *God Without* ontological model

¹⁴³ See *P*, especially chapters 3 and 4, pp.71-207.

¹⁴⁴ *P*, pp.74-75; and also Tillich’s dissertation itself, see *MG*, pp.28-33, 114-125.

¹⁴⁵ J.P. Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament: A Comparative Study of C.G. Jung and Paul Tillich* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981), p.15.

of presence), or, alternatively, as that divine “otherness” which can be experienced existentially as Immanuel’s participative divine presence which engages the human condition (our *God With* existential model of presence).

Yielding momentarily to the symbolic use of more spatial phraseology, the three models being advanced here through our Immanuel theology could be seen to represent a further refinement of divine presence as follows:

- Model One as outer presence (transcendence/transpersonal);
- Model Two as intermediate presence (participation/interpersonal);
- Model Three as inner presence (immanence/intrapersonal).

Dourley helpfully observes that Tillich’s two types of philosophy of religion emphasise the contrasting positions of those who believe that there is a profound discontinuity between God and man, and those who support the view that there is a fundamental and abiding continuity in the human-divine relationship. Tillich himself took issue with the dialectical theology of Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten on this important matter of discontinuity or continuity.¹⁴⁶ Tillich’s views on the continuity/discontinuity debate are important for this study because the central question in dispute was the immediacy of God (principle of identity), and our findings on the matter must influence the shaping of, and differentiation between, the three models of divine presence operative within Tillich’s system. Tillich even sees the continuity/discontinuity dichotomy as having an important impact on the relevance of Christian preaching where he acknowledges the need to deploy both a “*theology of offense*” (a Kierkegaardian term reflecting the idea of the “wholly other” and Rudolf Otto’s later reference to “the radical otherness of the holy”, and conveying the discontinuity theme which contradicts and challenges culture and society) and a “*theology of mediation*” (evoking the continuity issue on the conviction that God’s creation is essentially good and the Gospel message must speak to and engage with the cultural situation of the day).¹⁴⁷

Returning once more to Tillich’s trinitarian thinking, we shall develop each of the three models of presence as already specified by aligning them with Tillich’s trinitarian insights, with his three functions of life and with the three matching sets of polarities which emerge from his analysis of the ontological elements. The three sets of axial concepts previously

¹⁴⁶ P. Tillich, “What is wrong with the Dialectic Theology?” *Journal of Religion*, 15 (1935), pp.127-145. Also published in Taylor, *Paul Tillich: Theologian*, pp.104-118.

¹⁴⁷ *IR*, pp.7-9; pp.22-23.

mentioned must also be fully integrated into the relevant models, with special emphasis on essence-existence-essentialisation. These must be further augmented by the application of a fourth set of axial concepts, the prophetic-sacramental-mystical kinds of religion, to the development of the models thus showing the tension between ultimacy and concreteness, and also the interaction between the Protestant principle and Catholic substance.

The classification of Tillich's theology of divine presence as three separate models is not arbitrary. It follows the pronounced trinitarian contour lines of his *Systematic Theology* with its three prominent peaks, Tillich's doctrines of God, Christ and Spirit, forged from the volcanic, dialectical process of essence-existence-essentialisation, a process adopted and developed by Tillich under the influence of his studies of Schelling's three potencies.¹⁴⁸ In the three models proposed, God Present appears respectively as *the ground of presence* (the constitutive principle of presence: ontological model), *grounded presence* (the regulative principle of presence: existential model) and *grounding presence* (the transfigurative principle of presence: phenomenological model). Each of the three models offers a variety of insights and together they project a multidimensional picture textured and coloured by an array of different facets of divine presence. The models mirror three separate portraits or images of Immanuel as *God Without* (ontological model), *God With* (existential model) and *God Within* (phenomenological model).

In the last pages of his *Systematic Theology* Tillich has left trace elements of such a comprehensive macro-model of divine presence. In a brief discussion of Eternal Life and Divine Life, vital clues emerge as Tillich explains the threefold "in-ness" of Eternal Life as life "in" God.¹⁴⁹ Tillich's exposition of the three meanings of "in" in the phrase "in God" is itself a validation of the three models of divine presence as identified in this study. The three meanings of "in" can be interpreted in the triple context of original creation, *creatio continua* and new creation, and they synchronise perfectly with the three models chosen for examination in this thesis.

More importantly, Tillich returns at this final stage to correlate his trinitarian symbolism with divine blessedness and with his conception of life, affirming crucially that "there is no life where there is no 'otherness' ".¹⁵⁰ It is Tillich's view that, although God is eternal,

¹⁴⁸ See Tillich's first dissertation, *CHR*, pp.43-76.

¹⁴⁹ *ST* 3, pp.420-423.

¹⁵⁰ *ST* 3, p.421.

God is also life.¹⁵¹ From the creatures' side, eternal life is not an experience which might commence at death. Rather, for the creature, eternal life is life "in" the presence of God, and that starts at the moment of original creation, carries on through *creatio continua* as God's supporting presence, and into the new creation.¹⁵² Here Tillich affirms the strong connection between Divine Life and creaturely life universal, and identifies this rhythmic relationship with the rhythmic dialectic of his foundational set of axial concepts, essence-existence-essentialisation. He takes one further crucial step by identifying Life Eternal with Divine Life.¹⁵³ So, in the end, it is recognised that the three separate models of divine presence as identified here are three separate perspectives on the Immanuel of Tillich's system, all seen *anthropocentrically* and *cosmocentrically* from the position of humankind and the world in relation to God. Tillich's brief excursion into what he calls "universal theology" offers "a *theocentric vision* of the meaning of existence".¹⁵⁴ Tillich justifies this final twist, that is, his attempt to interpret the meaning and significance of human existence and the human condition for Divine Life, through the legitimate use of eschatological symbols. The real value of Tillich's final theocentric stance is that it offers a glimpse of the shadowy outline of the all-embracing macro-model of divine presence in his *Systematic Theology*.

The message coming through here from Tillich is that our macro-model of Immanuel is relational, trinitarian and life-centred. The symbol of life, as applied by Tillich to God, shapes our most inclusive macro-model of divine presence, within which our three subsidiary models function collectively and coherently. Our "Lifelike" macro-model of presence, inspired by Tillich's theology of life, testifies to the fact that Immanuel is alive and with us.

2.7 Conclusion to Chapter Two

After getting to know Tillich's God better we now conclude our familiarisation trip around the theological topography of the general terrain of Tillich's positions on God's presence. If our main claims about Tillich's theology of presence are to be justified, we must

¹⁵¹ This raises in his mind the fundamental question: "How is the eternal God, who is also the living God, related to Eternal Life, which is the inner aim of all creatures? There cannot be two eternal life processes parallel to each other ..." (ST 3, p.420).

¹⁵² Tillich declares: "This threefold "in-ness" of the temporal in the eternal indicates the rhythm both of the Divine Life and of life universal. One could refer to this rhythm as the way from essence through existential estrangement to essentialisation" (ST 3, p.421).

¹⁵³ Tillich confirms that: "It is appropriate to ask about the relation of the Divine Life to the life of the creature in the state of essentialisation or in Eternal Life" (ST 3, p.421).

¹⁵⁴ ST 3, p.422. "... Our final consideration points in the opposite direction and speaks of God in his relation to man and his world" (p.422).

excavate deeper for more persuasive evidence that the models are substantive, function as structuring principles in our scrutiny of Tillich's work, and contribute to the building up of an Immanuel theology that delivers developed models which are faithful, full-bodied expressions of Tillich's theology of presence. While this chapter has identified the mystery that is God's presence, and noted the delicate balance to be maintained between transcendence and immanence, we must show in the next chapter that we will more closely address the perennial question which haunts Tillich's presence theology: Can the finite be in the infinite and/or can the infinite be in the finite? The resources of panentheism, as utilised by our Immanuel theology, need to be brought to bear on this issue, and relevant applications of our findings identified.

In this chapter we reviewed and reflected upon some of the elements and issues, drawn from Tillich's work, which help us to uncover a theology of presence latent in his writings. In support of our claim that divine presence lies at the heart of Tillich's theological system, we identified and examined a number of components which, if grouped together in three different ways, could be shaped to form the skeletal framework for three separate models of divine presence, models compatible with and characteristic of Tillich's theological enterprise. We have taken into account unique features of Tillich's doctrine of God and his conception of the God above God as a personal presence in spite of his use of abstract philosophical, especially ontological, language. We have recognised the difficulties, when formulating a theology of presence, of trying to avoid the worst excesses of prepositional theology. We have acknowledged that Tillich also struggled with similar problems as he strove to ease the impact of spatial terminology with his use of metaphor and symbolic language. Tillich's search for and identification of God as an ever-present reality, aided by his method of correlation and his theology of mediation, has been highlighted in this chapter as Tillich's quest for Immanuel, that is God Present. From an examination and analysis of the last few pages of his three volume *Systematic Theology*, there were hints or indications that a relational and trinitarian macro-model of divine presence, centred on life in general and Eternal Life in particular, might point towards an effective way of unifying the three subsidiary models to form a cohesive theology of presence. But first the three secondary models of presence must be individually placed under the theological microscope, their Tillichean credentials carefully checked, and their value assessed as contributions to the formulation of a coherent Immanuel theology.

CHAPTER THREE

Building a Tillichean Triad of Immanuel Models

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two introduced a modelling process as a legitimate and useful way of collating and presenting the diverse elements of Tillich's theology of divine presence. Our proposal was that the three models would together serve as a structuring principle for an examination of Tillich's work interpreted as centrally including God's presence in creation. We shall show that Immanuel theology as modelled here is an authentic expression and expansion of Tillich's own presence theology. The three models have already been named as ontological (Model One), existential (Model Two), and phenomenological (Model Three) but, until now, they have only been briefly outlined. Our claim is that these three models, nowhere specifically articulated by Tillich in his work, are nevertheless operative deep within his theological system. The next challenge is to flesh out the skeletal framework of each of the models to give them more substance and to demonstrate their Tillichean character. As promised at the end of the previous chapter, we will also tackle the dominant and recurring double question endemic in Tillich's theological discourse and pertinent to his theology of presence: Can the finite be in the infinite, and/or can the infinite be in the finite?

A panentheistic reading of Tillich's theology will parallel the building of our three models out of Tillichean materials, borrowing and assimilating, correcting and adjusting, elements of Tillich's theology of presence in the light of our Immanuel theology. As we uncover the substance of Tillich's position on God's presence, we will discover some serious problems, and we will need to assess the extent to which Immanuel theology can offer help in any necessary repairs following our retrieval of Tillich's theology of presence. Undoubtedly, this will lead us back to the ontological foundations of his system. In the course of this exercise opportunities will arise to demonstrate the relevance and applicability of our findings to some of the key questions in theology today.

3.2 Tillich and Immanuel's Panentheistic Mantle

However, before undertaking that exercise, we recall that reference was made earlier, (section 2.2), to the models operating as a typology which, unlike a taxonomy, does not of necessity function with either-or alternatives. The models can overlap and interact with each other. But do they share a common complexion, a common context? We will argue

that all three models of divine presence are expressions of panentheism¹ and that Tillich himself was a panentheist.² There are different varieties of panentheism, some sharing common themes and facets such as divine passibility, the cosmos as God's body, the cosmos as "sacrament", God's "dependence on/need for" the cosmos, the language of inextricable intertwining, the intrinsic positive value of the cosmos and, of course, the spatial language of "in and through". The last issue about the use of spatial imagery and metaphor to describe and explain panentheism is one which is central and which many panentheists carefully refine and qualify. Other important matters which are key to a discussion on panentheism are the ontological differentiation between God and world, the panentheists' preference for relational ontology over substance ontology favoured by theists, the conception of "being" in terms of relatedness or relationship, the bilateral interaction between God and world, and the assertion that, although the world is "in" God (the container metaphor) and God penetrates every part of the universe, God is greater than the universe and not exhausted by it.³

Panentheism focuses on the relationship, active and interactive, between God and the world. It has a long pedigree with both philosophical and theological roots going back to Plato and Neoplatonism, especially Plotinus. The transition from classical panentheism (the world is in God, but God is immutable) to modern panentheism (a dynamic God contains the world but develops in and through the world, through nature, history and the human search for the divine as transcendent) came with Schelling and Hegel.⁴ And, as noted in the previous chapter, Tillich was greatly influenced by Schelling. However, Tillich did not explicitly identify himself as a panentheist. Is he perhaps an implicit panentheist? We are convinced that his work is decidedly panentheistic and reflects the

¹ The term was coined in 1829 by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832), a mystic and German idealist philosopher who was a contemporary of Hegel.

² By way of brief definition: "panentheism affirms that although God and the world are ontologically distinct and God transcends the world, the world is 'in' God ontologically", J.W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), p.18. Alternatively, holding the same important ontological position, panentheism has been described as the existence of: "a two-way interaction between God and world, so that (1) the world is somehow 'contained in God' and (2) there will be some 'return' of the world into the life of God. The idea of bilateral relations between God and world may even be said to be distinctive for panentheism", N.H. Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism", in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, (Eds.) P. Clayton and A. Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004), p.20.

³ These ideas and various classifications of panentheism are extensively treated in Clayton and Peacocke, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, especially Parts I, pp.19-91 and IV, pp.249-264.

⁴ "This shift to a dynamic God is the watershed in the history of panentheism, the key change from its classical to its modern form. Schelling and Hegel are the godfathers of modern panentheism because they have influenced all subsequent adaptations of this theological tradition" (Cooper, *Panentheism*, p.91). Cooper, a classical theist, devotes chapter 8 of his book to a treatment of Tillich's panentheism, pp.194-212.

panentheistic turn in modern theology.⁵ Others also affirm that Tillich is a panentheist. In the early 1970s Donald Neil wrote a doctoral dissertation on panentheism,⁶ later published as *God is Everything*.⁷ The work refers to Tillich and claims that, as a panentheist, Tillich's thinking had influenced another panentheist, John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich who sought to replace theism with panentheism defined by him as "the view that God is in everything and everything is in God".⁸ Neil himself, after dealing with Tillich's "third way" (God as Being-Itself, as the unconditional power of being), identified panentheism's two core doctrines as "transcendence-with-immanence and the abandonment of supernaturalism".⁹ In the two recent works already quoted,¹⁰ Tillich is explicitly classified and treated as a leading panentheist. In one instance the case is made that "Tillich's existential panentheism has deeply impressed John Robinson, John Macquarrie, James Cone and Rosemary Ruether".¹¹ Until recently few spoke of Tillich as a panentheist. Early exceptions were Jacob Faubes and James F. Anderson¹² who openly acknowledged Tillich's panentheistic theology.

More famously Charles Hartshorne, the prominent Whiteheadian process philosopher and theologian, supportively drew on Tillich's work to endorse and explain both his own and Tillich's panentheistic style of thinking¹³ and welcomes him wholeheartedly to the panentheist's club when he says "I therefore (joyfully) acclaim him as one of the rapidly growing company of 'dipolar' theists or panentheists to which some of us are proud to belong".¹⁴ Despite their shared membership of the panentheist party, Tillich makes it clear that, notwithstanding creaturely finite freedom, he strongly disagrees with Hartshorne's panentheistic "doctrine that creaturely contingency conditions God in some respect and makes him literally finite in relation to it".¹⁵ In his comparative study of Tillich and

⁵ For example: "God is immanent in the world as its permanent creative ground and is transcendent to the world through freedom. Both infinite divinity and finite human freedom make the world transcendent to God and God transcendent to the world. The infinite is present in everything finite" (*ST I*, p.263).

⁶ D. Neil, *Panentheism: A Gospel for To-day?* (Ph.D diss. University of Exeter, 1973).

⁷ D. Neil, *God in Everything: A Layman's Guide to the New Thinking* (Sussex: The Book Guild, 1984).

⁸ J.A.T. Robinson, *Exploration Into God* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1967), p.87.

⁹ D. Neil, *God in Everything*, p.22.

¹⁰ Clayton and Peacocke, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*; Cooper, *Panentheism*.

¹¹ Gregersen, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, p.24.

¹² J.F. Anderson, *Paul Tillich: Basics in His Thought* (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1972), pp.72-73; J. Faubes, "Review: *Philosophers Speak of God*," *Journal of Religion* 34 (April 1954), pp.120-126; p.125.

¹³ See especially C. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1970), pp.148-51.

¹⁴ C. Hartshorne, "Tillich's Doctrine of God", in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, (Eds.) C.W. Kegley and R.W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1952), pp.164-195; p.166.

¹⁵ P. Tillich, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism", in Kegley and Bretall (Eds.) *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, pp.329-349; p.340.

Hartshorne as two panentheists, David H. Nikkel¹⁶ claims that Tillich emphasises the “active” aspect of God (divine power in all being and every action) at the expense of the “passive” aspect of God (divine knowledge of all being, which, by implication, is deemed passive on Nikkel’s assumption that, by knowing everything which occurs, God is affected or qualified by that knowledge). Conversely, Nikkel argues that Hartshorne’s panentheism stresses the passive aspect of God to the detriment of the active aspect of the divine. Nikkel’s explication of Tillich’s panentheism is informative and persuasive, but, for Niels Henrick Gregersen, “... Nikkel has not shown that a synthesis between the two thinkers is possible”.¹⁷

Tillich himself used the term “panentheism” only twice in his writings, once when he defined it as meaning “that everything is in God”.¹⁸ On the second occasion, noted in chapter two, above, he referred to his own theology in the symbolic expression “eschatological pan-en-theism”.¹⁹ But why is Tillich’s panentheistic stance important? It is significant because it is his chosen “third way”, noted in chapter two, above, the middle road between supranaturalism and naturalism. Supranaturalism, also known as supernaturalism, is Tillich’s term for the position taken by classical theism with its view of God as a supreme perfect being, utterly transcendent, immutable and eternal. Tillich rejected theism, including its extreme form as Deism, because he rejected the notion of God as a being, no matter how supremely perfect. Equally, Tillich rejected the various types of naturalism including its extreme version in the form of pantheism, even though he felt that pantheism was greatly misunderstood. Indeed, he considered that a “pantheistic element”²⁰ was a necessary feature of the classical doctrine of God as being-itself. We will revisit Tillich’s treatment of pantheism when considering the implications of his eschatology (section 5.7, below), but it should be noted at this stage that some accused him of being a pantheist²¹. Tillich vigorously rejected the assertion and defended his idea of using the pantheistic element as a corrective to balance the attribution of freedom to God (divine selfhood and individuality) with the attribution of destiny or necessity to God

¹⁶ D.H. Nikkel, *Panentheism in Hartshorne and Tillich: A Creative Synthesis* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995). See especially the lengthy treatment in two chapters devoted to an exploration of Tillich’s panentheism: chapter II, pp. 29-82; chapter IV, pp. 145-197.

¹⁷ Gregersen, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, p.292, note 36.

¹⁸ *HCT*, p.265.

¹⁹ *ST 3*, p.421.

²⁰ *ST 1*, p.234.

²¹ R.A. Killen, *The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich* (Kampen, Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1956), pp.255-56, 268; K. Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963), pp. 85-87. Cf. G.F. McLean, “Paul Tillich’s Existential Philosophy,” in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*, (Eds.) T.A. O’Meara and C.D. Weisser (Dubuque, IA: Priory Press, 1964), pp.79-80.

(divine universality) “and in both cases we must say: God transcends the polarities, as he transcends essence and existence”.²² In any case, to avoid confusion Tillich says, on another occasion, “that the emphasis on the creative immanence of God in the world does not mean what is called ‘pantheism’ ”²³.

Returning to the significance of Tillich’s panentheism, it is important to make the connection with our Immanuel theology. Panentheism addresses the relationship between God and the world, and that particular issue lies at the heart of any theology of divine presence. In short, panentheism is especially suited to the development of presence theology. It succeeds in achieving and maintaining that delicate balance between divine transcendence and divine immanence while firmly protecting both. Admittedly there is, for some proponents of certain varieties of panentheism, a fine line between panentheism and pantheism. Panentheists must take care not to slide unwittingly into pantheism. Equally, the transcendence of God must be jealously guarded. Despite the risks, authentic panentheism provides a reliable anchor to stop any dangerous drift towards either agnostic transcendentalism or pantheistic immanentism.²⁴

Affirmation and defence of Tillich’s panentheistic credentials help to open up and amplify the various dimensions of his theology of divine presence. In turn, this approach uncovers the links between our Immanuel theology with its three Tillichean style models and Tillich’s panentheistic posture. There is a strong affinity between our Immanuel theology as modelled and Tillich’s theology of presence because both are strongly panentheistic in character. Panentheism is the overarching theological framework that delineates our three models which, in their turn, faithfully reflect multiple aspects of Tillich’s panentheistic approach to God’s presence in the world which is “in” God. In a sense, panentheism itself is the master mould, the matrix, which shapes and forms the three subsidiary models. It puts an identifiable theological stamp on both Tillich’s presence theology and on our Immanuel theology. As we examine each model we should be able to scrutinise the outworking of this as we discern the emerging panentheistic features of both Tillich’s theology and our own Immanuel-shaped theology. The prize here is to arrive at a point

²² P. Tillich, “An Afterword: Appreciation and Reply” in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*, (Eds.) T.A. O’Meara and C.D. Weisser (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965), pp.301-311; p.308.

²³ P. Tillich, “Rejoinder”, *Journal of Religion* 46 (January 1966), pp.184-196; p.186.

²⁴ The struggle to maintain the correct equilibrium between transcendence and immanence is reminiscent of the late 19th and early 20th century Catholic Modernism crisis. For a scholarly historical and theological evaluation of this refer to Gabriel Daly, O.S.A., *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). The challenge was much the same for Tillich who, like the Catholic Modernists in their day, strove to set and keep his feet on a *via media*.

where we are able, after making strong connections with Tillich's work on divine presence, to suggest the relevance of this for current theology. Panentheism provides us with modern tools and Tillich provides us with modern materials to build meaningful links between the composite reality of God and the world. Is panentheism adaptable enough to meet this challenge?

The recent increased recognition and resurgence of panentheism has shown that panentheism offers a most useful theological methodology and referential framework within which a dialogue can more easily be conducted on a range of contemporary issues. For example, on the questions arising from the doctrine of presence which espouses the idea of God as heavily engaged with the world, panentheism has proven to be a productive mode in which to conduct useful discourse between theologians and scientists on such challenging topics as divine-human agency. Ecumenically, a panentheistic theology of divine presence based on varieties of panentheism which promote a non-personal notion of God, such as Tillich's doctrine of God as Being-Itself, has today re-energised discussion in some circles between Christianity and some of the great world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism which similarly hold a view of divine reality as essentially a-personal. Many theologians themselves have discovered that insights arising from the ongoing development of panentheism have brought enlightening new ways of tackling and re-interpreting some of theology's most perennial problems such as evil in the world, God's freedom, and the relationship between eternity and temporality. The Tillichean muscle of our three panentheistic models of divine presence must now be put to the test.

3.3 God Without: Tillich and An Ontological Model of Presence

3.3.1 Ontological Character of Presence

"God Without" is obviously not a phrase intended to suggest that there is any deficiency in God. "Without" indicates that the divine reality, in Tillich's language, is unconditional, without boundaries, without limitations.²⁵ God Without is the deity which, even though it panentheistically includes the finite, is greater than and unrestrained by the finite. While God is the Ground of all being and "in" every being, God is also much more and is "outside" or beyond finite being which God infinitely transcends. The God Without is the transcendent unknowable God, outside or beyond the limits of finite human knowledge

²⁵ "The unconditional is a quality, not a being. It characterises that which is our ultimate and, consequently, unconditional concern, whether we call it "God" or "Being as such" ..., or whether we give it any other name. It would be a complete mistake to understand the unconditional as a being the existence of which can be discussed" (*PE*, p.31, note 1).

and understanding. Faced with this impenetrable reality, theologians often find they have no option but to resort to the terminology of negative or apophatic theology. Tillich himself points to the reality of the divine depth, or the awesome abyss of God. In Tillich's theology of presence the human self faces, not "another" however perfect or supreme, but rather the ground of otherness which is wholly other than finite but which generously encompasses finitude. This is panentheistic theology.

In this particular model, transcendence takes centre-stage. There is emphasis on God, not as distant, but as ontologically distinctive, indeterminate, ultimate, unconditional, infinite and undifferentiated. Tillich champions God's unassailable transcendence. "God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man"²⁶. How then is this apparently inaccessible God Without present to all creation? For Tillich the answer lies in ontology. The bridge between God and world, between the divine and the human, is ontological in character. The ontological bridge is formed when theology necessarily raises the question of being. Theology must ask the question of being, the ontological question: why is there something rather than nothing? From recognition of the self-world structure of being, the ontological elements and categories, and the difference between essential and existential being, Tillich's ontological analysis acknowledges the mystery of nonbeing and formulates his central doctrine of God as Being-Itself and as the power of being which conquers nonbeing. In this way Tillich ontologically builds his foundational model of divine presence. God is shown as the transcendent ground and power of being. The strength of the ontological model is that, while it gives prominence and protection to divine transcendence, it creatively holds together the all-transcendent God and created finite being. This model is panentheistic because, despite the divine abyss, the cosmos as finite being is present in the transcendent God who is both the ground and the power of all being. The conception of God as transcendent ground and power draws everything in a panentheistic way into the presence of God by highlighting, not diminishing, the transcendence of God. Tillich's use of the ontological model of presence allows him to address the important issue of finitude which, in its turn, leads directly to contemplation of the mystery of nonbeing and its dialectical character.

The threat of nonbeing is eternally conquered by the inclusion of finitude in the all-powerful transcendent God. The presence of finite being in God protects created being, despite its finitude, from extinction through nonbeing. Out of the divine depth and abyss

²⁶ *ST I*, p.61.

comes the powerfully protective presence of God ceaselessly at work guarding finitude within the divine reality. As the inexhaustible ground of being, the dynamic God of panentheism is more than just passively or only occasionally powerful. Tillich reminds us approvingly that “the Reformers have interpreted God’s omnipotence as omniactivity”²⁷. For Tillich, God as Being Itself is not a static concept. As we progress we will also see his dynamic God as Life, as related and as Spirit. This bodes well for the presentation of Tillich’s doctrine of God as panentheistic. With reference to a dynamic God, “becoming” does not oppose “being”. It is included in being. Tillich warns that we should be careful to reject, as he does, any nonsymbolic ontological doctrine of God as becoming but, at the same time, we should acknowledge God at rest.²⁸ God as Being Itself is ontologically active throughout the cosmos. Present as the power of Being-Itself and, therefore, as the power in every being, God is panentheistically omniactive and omnipotent across all creation without compromising or restricting divine transcendence.

“To be means to be present”.²⁹ Tillich constructed his own ontology of presence. Divine presence is ontologically at the heart of everything, every being. “Being Present” to the divine and the divine “being present” to every created being are the two dimensions of Tillich’s ontology of presence. The reality of being is impossible without God being present dynamically to and in every being at every moment and in every place. The ontological foundation of every being is the present reality of the divine without whose presence all being would cease to be. So the divine presence is constitutive of every created being because God Present is the very ground of being. Nothing can be, without being present to the divine. God’s presence holds everything in being. It is the basis of all reality. Without God Present nothing can be real or have being. Nothing can be in any way absent to or from an inclusive God as the ever-present source of all reality. The ontology of presence challenges every aspect of deistic thinking, every notion that God is distant or detached from creation. A remote Creator God, an absentee creative God, is ontologically an impossibility, despite the fact that humankind can feel at times abandoned and alone, for example when evil is experienced. “Being present”, being as present, is an inescapable reality. Immanuel is the ineluctable reality of God Present. The truly transcendent is present everywhere, every time, in all reality. Ontologically, the divine presence holds the whole of being together, unifying all of reality. Such an ontology of

²⁷ P. Tillich, “Rejoinder”, p.186. See also *HCT*, p.265: “omnipotence is omniactivity”.

²⁸ “Being comprises becoming and rest. ... God cannot cease to be God. His going-out from himself does not diminish or destroy his divinity. It is united with the eternal ‘resting in himself’ ” (*ST I*, p.247).

²⁹ *ST I*, p.193.

presence fosters the notion of divine universalism, God Present at the centre of everything. This equates to Tillich's idea of theonomy, God Present at work in every situation, in every conceivable relationship.

Tillich's ontological doctrine of God is formulated in a response to the question of finitude and the threat of nonbeing. The infinite-finite relationship is central to Tillich's panentheistic presentation of his ontology of presence. For that reason our ontological model of presence emphasises divine transcendence and the vertical relationship between God the Creator and creation.³⁰ So the finite, finitude itself, is actually within the divine, but God is not subject to it. So the infinite-finite distinction is found in God. This is what Bertocci, in dialogue with Paul Tillich, called Tillich's "finite-infinite" God.³¹ Yet, while the finite is posited in the divine life, Tillich is elsewhere keen to qualify this by explaining that the finite is in the infinite in such a way that it transcends both potentiality and actuality. "Therefore, it is not precise to identify God with the infinite".³²

As the finite is in the infinite, the ontological gap is filled by the presence of God even though finitude is being limited by nonbeing. This puts the dialectical form of nonbeing (*me on*) which is related to being, into the presence of God. Tillich is careful to distinguish dialectical nonbeing, *me on* which is part of finitude, from non-dialectical nonbeing (*ouk on*) which is the *nihil* out of which God creates.³³ Dialectical nonbeing, united with being in finitude, is the "not yet" element of finite being, the as-yet unrealised potential which can unfold through the actualisation of finite essences. Created essence houses the potentiality, the "not yet" character of dialectical nonbeing as *me on*, which can be actualised through the exercise of finite freedom. In a panentheistic way, God is ontologically present in the midst of the finite as both the infinite creative ground and as the power of all being. The dialectical question of nonbeing (*me on*) is played out in the empowering divine presence as created essence is actualised by Immanuel the Creator. This is why, in our ontological model of presence, the Creator as ground and power, finite essence, *me on*, dialectics, finitude and creatureliness, all combine to form the integral process of panentheistically holding the entire cosmos "in" God. Ontologically, the creature always remains fully in the presence of the Creator. Finitude means

³⁰ In panentheistic fashion, Tillich frames the relationship in this way: "... a "finite God" is a contradiction in terms. Certainly, one must say that God has the finite (and its categories) "within" himself, not alongside himself – which would make him finite. But he is not subject to finitude; he is the infinite who comprises his infinity and his finitude" (*PI*, p.376).

³¹ *PI*, p.377.

³² *ST 1*, p.252.

³³ *ST 1*, p.188 and 253; *ST 2*, pp.20-21.

creatureliness.³⁴ Rooted to the Ground of Being and fired by the power of being, the creature, by participation, is ontologically and panentheistically anchored in the presence of God. God as Immanuel is the *Ur*-Presence, Original Presence, which grounds, shakes and turns every other presence. The original ontological foundations of presence have already been laid through creation. This is what Tillich classified as *originating* creation, which he distinguished from present-day *sustaining* creation and future-orientated *directing* creation. In our threefold modular presentation of an Immanuel theology of presence, we make the following cross-connections with Tillich's triadic structuring of creation; originating creativity (Ontological Model in which the Creator is the ontological ground of Original Presence); sustaining creativity (Existential Model in which a dynamic God is constantly present and creatively at work preserving the world, despite existential estrangement); directing creativity (Phenomenological Model in which Immanuel as Spirit is providentially engaged with creation, underwriting the purpose and directedness of all God-world relations, including the divine-human relationship).

In chapter two, above, brief reference was made to Tillich's identification of three different, but complementary, types of religion as prophetic, sacramental and mystical. In Tillich's view, if any one of these is missing from or neglected by a particular religion, then that religion is to some extent inauthentic. Our three models of divine presence each emphasise one of the three elements of religion by aligning them in the following manner; prophetic religion with the ontological model; sacramental religion with the existential model; and mystical religion with the phenomenological model. For the ontological model of presence, presently under consideration, the prophetic element functions under Tillich's Protestant principle. The Protestant principle jealously guards the divine transcendence of the one true and only God. For Tillich, correct use of the Protestant principle properly identifies the true presence of God effective in any given situation, occasion, event or experience and, as the principle of self-criticism, it unmasks and condemns idols which "demonically" masquerade as divine. The Protestant principle warns against the dangers of mistakenly replacing the Creator with the created. This prophetic religious element sits easily within the ontological model of presence which emphasises the transcendence and power of the one and only God who is the ground and power of being. Taking account of the prophetic element in religion, we can say panentheistically that the all-inclusive God

³⁴ When dealing with the *ex nihilo* of the doctrine of creation, Tillich explains: "Creatureliness implies nonbeing, but creatureliness is more than nonbeing. It carries in itself the power of being, and this power of being is its participation in being-itself, in the creative ground of being. Being a creature includes both the heritage of nonbeing (anxiety) and the heritage of being (courage)" (*ST I*, p.253).

must be exclusively worshipped. There is but one Immanuel and, therefore, there is only one unique and all-encompassing divine presence. Our first model could be characterised ontologically, to coin a phrase, as “inclusive transcendence”. “Inclusivity in transcendence” is, we propose, a particularly apt panentheistic way of describing divine presence.

3.3.2 Relevant Applications of Ontological Model

Tillich’s use of philosophy, especially of ontology in such a central way in his theology, was not uncontroversial. He was aware of criticism directed against his doctrine and definition of God which relies heavily on the abstract philosophical concept of being, and he robustly defended his ontotheology, especially his employment of the concept of being.³⁵ Against nominalists who consider that the concept of being is a meaningless abstraction, a universal which does not indicate the particular existence or reality of anything, Tillich contended that the concept of being was a radical but not the highest abstraction and that its importance lay in the fact that “it is the expression of the experience of being over against nonbeing”.³⁶ For Tillich consideration of the idea of being as the power of being could never be excluded from theology. Against those who promote a personalistic theology and consequently resist the use of the concept of being, Tillich points to *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* where he contrasts philosophical ontology and biblical personalism and makes the case that the concepts and symbols of biblical religion have profound ontological implications which help to transcend the personalist symbolism of religious language. To Tillich the term “being” is not impersonal. It is suprapersonal. In the treatment of our ontological model it can be seen that, despite the philosophical abstractions and the non-personal terminology, the ontological character of our model would, we consider, be deemed by Tillich to be absolutely essential and indeed foundational for an adequate theology of divine presence. The fact that the foundations of Immanuel theology are, necessarily ontological does not mean that such a theology of divine presence is less relevant for theology today. To demonstrate the usefulness of a resurgent panentheistic theology of ontological presence and its applicability to certain problems we will briefly touch upon some particular questions of enduring interest.

³⁵ ST 2, pp.10-12.

³⁶ ST 2, p.11.

3.3.2.1 Divine Freedom and Creation

If God is free and self-sufficient, does God “need” the world? Is the world necessary for God and is God “compelled” to create? Does God need the presence of the world in order to be God? Must the divine life include the world and has the presence of the world in God limited divine freedom? More pointedly, and of particular relevance to all who believe in God, does the world, and particularly do we, add anything to God or enhance the divinity in any way, or indeed, could God have opted to create another world or no world? Not unexpectedly there are differences of opinion among panentheists on these linked questions. The freedom of God and the “necessity” of creation are under consideration here. There is a distinction between *voluntary* panentheism (God is totally free in respect of creation) and *natural* panentheism (God’s nature makes creation inevitable and necessary). However, most Christian panentheists accept that, as God is love, creation emerges freely out of divine love rather than from some necessity of divine nature. In this way, God’s freedom is affirmed and the necessity of the world is denied. However, others acknowledge a self-determining God who freely creates because expressing love is an integral part of the divine nature and, as such, these adopt a compatibilist view of divine freedom. “Compatibilism asserts the compatibility of freedom and necessity”.³⁷ We agree with J.W. Cooper’s identification of Tillich as a compatibilist. The polarity of freedom and destiny, which is one of the three ontological elements or polarities identified by Tillich as found in finite being, can be applied only symbolically to God who unites and transcends the polarity of freedom and destiny (necessity). Tillich tells us “that God is his own destiny and that in God freedom and destiny are one”.³⁸ The aseity of God must be protected and divine freedom affirmed. Despite the presence of the finite in the infinite, the freedom of God is not limited in any way. In the panentheistic context of the ontological model of presence, finitude’s polarity of freedom and destiny is transcended by God whose freedom remains unconditioned by the inclusion of the finite.

3.3.2.2 The Presence of Evil

Theodicy is the perennial issue for theology. It is a most challenging problem which persists as relevant and topical in theological discussion today. It is the one question which still understandably comes quickly to the top of the agenda in much current discourse between those who believe in God and those who do not. It is the one matter of great concern which is repeatedly raised for consideration as human beings respond to

³⁷ Cooper, *Panentheism*, p.29.

³⁸ *ST I*, pp. 248-249.

challenges of life with all its pain, suffering, tragedy, human or moral evil and ultimately death. From a panentheistic perspective we can say that God is “in” the world; the world is “in” God; but so too is there evil in the world. It would, therefore, seem that there is evil in God. Is the God of love, as all-powerful creator, in some way ultimately responsible for evil? If evil is real is God its cause? It appears that in our Immanuel theology, God, the creative ground of everything, is active and present in the midst of preventable evil. In any theology of presence, explaining or justifying the presence of evil in the presence of God, that is the presence of God in the face of evil, is a huge challenge.

To touch briefly upon Tillich’s theodicy, his theological explanation of evil, requires further consideration of his treatment of nonbeing, creation, the fall and finite freedom.³⁹ Creation and fall coincide at the point where the free creature actualises its freedom. When human freedom opts for existence through human self-actualisation, the deep inner unity with God is ruptured and this is what Tillich calls the “fall”. We strongly disagree with Tillich’s creation/fall theology in which he visualises pre-existing creatures already with latent freedom which they then freely choose to exercise at a certain point, the stage of aroused freedom, in order to opt out of inner union with God and into existence. Tillich is keen to establish a severe disjunction between creation and existence. This then appears to exonerate God from any responsibility for evil in the created world and in human existence. Any evil in the world comes from the exercise of finite freedom which has brought existence upon itself.

This is a dangerous dichotomy between creation (all divinely created essences) which is good and positive, and existence which is the state of estrangement where finite freedom sometimes generates evil. We will see at section 3.4.3, below, how Tillich’s dark view of existence corrupts areas of his theology of presence. In any case, this does not appear to remove all responsibility for the reality of evil from the God of love who endowed creatures with freedom in the first place. Tillich’s response to this assertion is that God by nature takes risks.⁴⁰ Tillich’s theodicy is similar to that of Schelling who took the view that the ground of the *possibility* of evil lies in God’s freedom, whereas the *actuality* of evil

³⁹ In Tillich’s view of creation, heavily influenced by Bohme and Schelling, “The creative process of the divine life precedes the differentiation between essences and existents. In the creative vision of God the individual is present as a whole. ... The mystery of being beyond essence and existence is hidden in the mystery of the creativity of the divine life” (*ST I*, p.255).

⁴⁰ “Creation is the creation of finite freedom; it is the creation of life with its greatness and its danger. ... If God is creative in himself, he cannot create what is opposite to himself. ... He must create ... life, that which includes freedom and with it the dangers of freedom. The creation of finite freedom is the risk which the divine creativity accepts” (*ST I*, p.269).

is the responsibility of human freedom. For Tillich, God is certainly not the cause of evil but the divine creative nature, the reality of God, opens up the possibility of evil. It is human beings, with their exercise of human freedom, who inevitably actualise evil.

Returning to Tillich's panentheistic position and using the ontology of our first model of divine presence we must again confront the dialectical question of nonbeing. Strongly rejecting any notion of a negative principle which is outside of God and which ferments evil, Tillich acknowledges that, in order to account for sin and evil we cannot "avoid positioning a dialectical negativity in God himself"⁴¹. This resolves another problem by removing any idea of a dualism between God and evil, and it circumvents the risk of appearing theologically or ontologically to have reified evil. The reification of evil in ontological terms would generate a gnostic dualism between God and some external principle of evil outside of God. This would result in the acknowledgement of some kind of unacceptable limiting factor which would appear to restrict the omnipotence of the infinite God of absolute goodness. The logic of Tillich's panentheistic theology is compelling. Nonbeing is in finite being: finite being is in God: therefore nonbeing is in God. This panentheistic telescoping of the presence of finite being into God draws the presence of dialectical nonbeing (*me on*) which is already in finite being, into the presence of the divine. Human freedom is exercised or actualised, sometimes for good and sometimes for ill, within God as the creative ground and power of all being. The Creator who gifted freedom to finite being respects human freedom. Panentheistically, God is greater than creation and is not exhausted by it. Ontologically it seems that God tolerates the possibility of evil out of regard for human freedom and the actualised good that can flow from it. Ultimately the mystery of the presence of evil in the presence of God is only finally resolved at the *eschaton*.

In his ontotheology Tillich reassuringly reminds us that God eternally triumphs over nonbeing.⁴² In the context of faith, grappling with the problem of evil in the presence of the all-powerful God of love is, today as always, significant. For Immanuel theology the reality of evil is a formidable test case for the presence of God in the God-world relationship. Regrettably the limits of this thesis prevent further exploration of the issue

⁴¹ *ST I*, p.189.

⁴² In true panentheistic spirit, and holding together divine transcendence and divine immanence, Tillich declares: "God as being-itself transcends nonbeing absolutely. On the other hand, God as creative life includes the finite and, with it, nonbeing, although nonbeing is eternally conquered and the finite is eternally reunited within the infinity of the divine life. Therefore, it is meaningful to speak of a participation of the divine life in the negativities of creaturely life. *This is the ultimate answer to the question of theodicy*" (*ST I*, p.270, our italics).

here. However, comfort and clarification can be gained from the panentheistic use of ontology which provides a certain foundational solidity on the application of our first model of divine presence to the question of evil.

3.3.2.3 Interreligious Dialogue

When engaging with Buddhism Tillich found his own ontotheology useful, and some of his ontological terms and concepts compatible with Buddhist theologies. Over eight weeks, between May and July 1960, Tillich visited Japan, by invitation, stayed in Tokyo and Kyoto, lectured in ten universities and preached in a number of churches. During that time he was stimulated by discussions with Buddhist and Shinto priests and scholars. This further opened up his own Christian theological perspectives.⁴³ He saw the urgent need to broaden Christian theology to accommodate and interact with the history and the religious experience of non-Christian faiths. He recognised that it was imperative other Christian theologians acknowledge the reality of religious pluralism and ecumenically develop Christian theology in that context. An in-depth study of the history of religions was, Tillich felt, an integral part of that new theological endeavour. His last public lecture, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*,⁴⁴ was his final theological manifesto for doing theology in a new key which would be ecumenical and therefore inclusive, developing a framework within which to reinterpret the common central concepts of all authentic religion, using what Tillich called the method of the history of religions.

During his Japanese visit in 1960, "Tillich was especially attracted to Buddhist mysticism, which he directly experienced as similar to Christian mysticism".⁴⁵ When making comparisons between Christianity and Buddhism, in order to highlight points of similarity and difference, Tillich recognised a measure of affinity between aspects of the theologies of the two religions. Like Buddhism, Tillich uses non-personal and transpersonal categories. Dealing panentheistically with the divine-human relationship and with the

⁴³ However, it would be a mistake to think that Tillich was a late convert to engaging with interreligious dialogue, the study of the history of religions and the global reality of encounter between the world religions. We see these themes, especially the correlation of history and religion, being addressed by Tillich in his earliest work, that is his two doctoral dissertations on Schelling, see (1910) *CHR*, pp.117-158 and (1912) *MG*, pp.114-125. Throughout his life Tillich constantly explored the reality of religious pluralism and frequently engaged in dialogue both through his writing and through personal discussion. "The conventional view is that after a visit to Japan in 1960 he 'discovered' the world of other religions, and specifically the Zen Buddhist religion, and thereafter became concerned about religious encounter and interaction. Such a view ignores his many years of dialogue with Jewish friends and colleagues." (*ERQ*, pp.xi-xxix, p.xi, introduction by editor Terence Thomas).

⁴⁴ *FR*, pp.80-94.

⁴⁵ W and M Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p.260.

world “in” God, Tillich studiously avoids person-to-person or I-Thou language of encounter theology in favour of his non-personal and sometimes ontological terms, such as divine abyss, ground and power, finite in the infinite, the conquest and mystery of nonbeing, ultimacy and concreteness, and the search for ultimate reality. This terminology resonates with Buddhist concepts such as Nirvana. Indeed, using his ontological polarity of individualisation and participation, Tillich develops an interesting comparison between the Christian symbol of the Kingdom of God and the Buddhist idea of Nirvana, and between Christian mysticism and Buddhist mysticism. During these explorations he contrasts the Buddhist notions of identity, compassion, union and unity with, respectively, the Christian concepts of participation, agape, communion and Creator/creature differentiation.⁴⁶

The striking feature of Tillich’s inter-faith dialogue with Buddhism was his implicit use of the ontological model of divine presence which, as an expression of panentheism, deals inclusively with the God-human-world relationship as one composite reality. This is reminiscent of the Buddhist approach to all reality as essentially one and non-dual. We noted Tillich’s earlier firm rejection of classical theism with its stress on God as the highest and most perfect being, on divine individuality and on the idea of God occupying a separate and supernatural (or supranatural, to use Tillich’s word) realm. Tillich moved decisively away from that dualistic position. At the same time he resisted the monism of naturalism in order to protect the transcendence of God. By denying that God is a person and simultaneously confirming God as the creative ground of everything which has being, Tillich moves to his third way, where, through ecstasy and self-transcendence, the finitude of the finite points to the infinite, and where the finite goes beyond itself in order to return to itself in a new way. Ordinary experience is transcended, not removed, through experience of the Holy. The non-duality of this presentation of ecstatic self-transcendence

⁴⁶ For more detail on Tillich’s dialogue with Buddhism see *CE*, chapter 3 entitled “A Christian-Buddhist Conversation”, pp.33-47; P. Tillich, “On the Boundary Line”, in *The Christian Century: An Undenominational Weekly* (December 7, 1960), pp.1435-1437; *ERQ*, Part III: A Dialogue Between Paul Tillich and Hisamatsu Shin’ichi, pp.75-170. For commentary on Tillich’s response to Buddhism see L. Gilkey, “Tillich and the Kyoto School”, in *Negation and Theology*, (Ed.) R.P. Scharlemann (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp.72-85. Also M. Abe, “Negation in Mahayana Buddhism and in Tillich: A Buddhist View of ‘The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian’”, in *Negation and Theology*, (Ed.) R.P. Scharlemann (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp.86-99. Also M. Abe, *Zen and Western Thought* (Ed.) W.R. LaFleur (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), chapter 8 “Tillich from a Buddhist Point of View”, pp.178-185. Also L.D. Alldritt, “Masao Abe and Paul Tillich: A Dialogue of Love”, in *Masao Abe: A Zen Life of Dialogue*, (Ed.) D.W. Mitchell (Boston, Rutland, Vermont, Tokyo: Charles E Tuttle Co., Inc., 1998), pp.232-241. Victor Nuovo considered Tillich’s comparison of Christianity and Buddhism, especially with reference to Tillich’s view of the nature of mysticism as non-historical ontological identity, as in error, see *CHR*, Translator’s Introduction pp.29-32; see also *MG*, p.13.

reflects the Buddhist emphasis on oneness. For Tillich “the one reality which we encounter is experienced in different dimensions which point to one another”.⁴⁷ As Tillich dialectically relates nonbeing to God as Being-Itself and posits in God a dialectical negativity, so too does Langdon Gilkey highlight Tillich’s identification of polarities, in God. Concerning one of Tillich’s divine polarities Gilkey says: “The final and most mysterious and intriguing of all is God as the power of being and as nonbeing”.⁴⁸ Elsewhere Gilkey uses this Tillichean polarity to cross-match some of Tillich’s ontotheology with Buddhism and makes a comparative study between Tillich’s inclusion of nonbeing in God and “those forms of Mahayana Buddhism which posit nothingness (*sunyata*) as the final ground of reality and of authentic selfhood (suchness)”⁴⁹.

In summary, our being-based ontological model of presence, which embodies Tillich’s ontotheology and which offers a panentheistic approach to the presence of God in the world and the world in God, also provides a conceptual framework and language which may facilitate dialogue between Christian theology and Eastern religions, particularly those such as Buddhism that speak of the divine as a-personal ultimate reality. As an early pioneer of inter-faith dialogue, Tillich greatly developed his own theological thinking along these lines, especially in the five years 1960 to 1965. He was responding ecumenically to the world situation of religious pluralism. His work in this respect has been undervalued and underutilised, and his voice should still be heard in the contemporary religious discourse of any multi-faith society.⁵⁰ The foundational ontology of our first panentheistic model of presence does not date or age. It offers a basis on which to develop interreligious dialogue, particularly when combined with Tillich’s broad generic concept and definition of religion centred on ultimate or unconditional concern.⁵¹ His

⁴⁷ *ST 2*, p.8.

⁴⁸ L. Gilkey, *Gilkey on Tillich* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p.100.

⁴⁹ Gilkey, “Tillich and the Kyoto School”, in *Negation and Theology*, (Ed.) R.P. Scharlemann, pp.72-85, p.72.

⁵⁰ Some still draw on Tillich’s theology and work as important and relevant source material for further theological research and reflection into the area of interreligious discourse. For example see: C. Geffré, “Paul Tillich and the Future of Interreligious Ecumenism”, in *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment*, (Eds.) R.F. Bulman and F.J. Parella (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1994), pp.268-288; (Eds.) R.F. Bulman and F.J. Parella, *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001), Part V “Spirituality and Interreligious Dialogue”, pp.165-234; (Eds.) M.A. Stenger and R.H. Stone, *Dialogues of Paul Tillich* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2002), Part I “Interreligious Dialogue”, pp.8-79.

⁵¹ See *ERQ*, pp.3-17. This is the first of the three Matchette lectures which Tillich delivered in April 1958 and which is entitled “The Meaning of Religion and the Protestant Principle”. At one stage he defines religion as “ultimate concern or unconditional concern. It is concern about the ultimate or the unconditional in meaning and being. It is ultimate concern, ultimate seriousness”, p.12. He then expands his idea of religion. He shows in this lecture and in the subsequent two lectures in the series, how he uses this wide concept of religion, which is in no way particularly Christian, in the encounter of world religions. Tillich was developing his own inclusive idea of religion since the 1920s: see his early essay collection which was

inclusive general conception of religion easily embraced all religions. By not defining religion in strictly Christian terms, Tillich avoided having to identify Christianity as the one true religion. All the world religions were valid and, as Tillich considered them to be authentic living religions, they each in their own way manifested revelation. Tillich's view of religion fosters openness towards other religions, and ecumenically offers an approach that stimulates dialogue and encounter between religions. It also provides a way of expanding Tillich's own theological system to embrace the reality of religious pluralism and the study of the history of religions as an integral part of Christian theology today. The presence of the divine as ultimate reality and the human experience of the Holy are elements commonly found in the world religions. On that basis, Immanuel theology of presence, enhanced by Tillich's panentheistic ontotheology, could form part of the expanding horizons of global theology. However, in order to avoid the danger of dealing exclusively with religion and the presence of the divine in a non-historical ontological way, it is imperative that the ontological model is balanced and supplemented by both the existential and the phenomenological models in our Immanuel theology.

3.4 God With: Tillich and An Existential Model of Presence

3.4.1 Existential Character of Presence

For divine presence the ontological model is both foundational and theocentric, whereas the existential model is cosmocentric, and the phenomenological model is anthropocentric. Ontological Model One stresses the anteriority of divine presence, whereas existential Model Two emphasises the exteriority of presence, and phenomenological Model Three focuses on the interiority of Immanuel as God Present in individual human beings. The existential model, like the other two models, is panentheistic, but in this case it is a presentation of God "in" the world. Again, it is worth saying that the "in" is symbolic or metaphorical; it is not spatial in any way. Indeed it is relational because it is intended to express the relationship between God and Cosmos. In the existential model, God is present as fully engaged and involved with all of creation, with the world, with history, with society and human affairs, with the church, with politics and culture, with everything and every event in the cosmos. This is about the divine

later translated into English and published posthumously in 1969 as *What Is Religion?* There, religion is defined as "directedness toward the unconditional" (WR, p.59), and again "Religion is directedness of the spirit toward the unconditional meaning" (WR, p.72). Elsewhere, as in his *Theology of Culture*, Tillich uses similar fundamental definitions of religion which are broad enough to accommodate the world religions, for example, "Religion is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth in all its functions" (TC, pp.5-6); or again "Religion is the aspect of depth in the totality of the human spirit" (TC, p.7); and "the state of being ultimately concerned is itself religion. Religion is the substance, the ground, and the depth of man's spiritual life" (TC, p.8).

impact and influence on all that exists. It concerns a certain divine “externality”, about Immanuel being present in the economic mode of a trinitarian God. In the theology of presence it is about the dynamics of divine outreach directed in countless manifold ways towards the whole created universe. This is where God interacts with finite being, an ambiguous mix of essence and existence. Here Immanuel operates as God Present on the horizontal relational plane, “infiltrating” and influencing the multidimensional levels of existence. It is the existential model where God is considered as the present reality functioning throughout every conceivable set of relationships between all existents everywhere in the cosmos, in all human relationships, in every aspect of the world-human relationship, in the myriad diverse connections and elements within nature, and in the wellbeing of every atom in the universe. The existential model of presence tells us that God is “out and about” in creation.

However, Tillich would no doubt caution that the expression “God With” could be easily misunderstood. For Tillich, God, as the Ground of being, cannot be *a* being and therefore cannot be “with” in the sense of “alongside” individual finite beings like another individual being, no matter how supreme, perfect and powerful.⁵² It has been explained that in this work the term “Immanuel” has been adopted to embrace inclusively the broad generic concept of God as present, that is, divine presence in its various modes and dimensions. In strict personalist biblical language “Immanuel” translates more narrowly as God-With-Us or God-amongst-us, and therefore would more immediately appear to indicate the specific existential manner of divine presence as identified in our second model presently under discussion. However, to keep faith with Tillich’s theology of presence, God’s existential presence should not be conceived as the Divine Being moving like an individualised God who interacts on a one-to-one basis with each creature or, indeed, on a person-to-person basis with human beings. Tillich asserts that God transcends existence because God includes but transcends the essence-existence dichotomy of finitude and the self-world polarity on which the subject-object structure of reason is based.

If God transcends existence, how then can God be existentially present to or in creation? If, panentheistically, God is present in the world, is God’s presence existentially limited by the world? If God is above or beyond existence while including in a panentheistic way all that exists, how is the infinite and wholly absolute God present to or related in any way to

⁵² Tillich called this incorrect notion “spatialization”. See *WR*, p.13: “the spatialization of the divine itself: God is understood to become one being alongside other beings, ‘the Unconditional standing alongside the conditioned’ ”.

concrete finite existing being? The truly absolute as totally absolute seems to be compromised, or indeed contradicted, in the presence of the concrete. To respond to these questions, we refer again to Tillich's conception of God and his conviction that God is not an individual being. In 1919, Tillich published his famous essay *On the Idea of a Theology of Culture*, in which God, the Unconditional absolute divine reality, is referred to in the following terms:

... it is not an existing thing, it is not the substance, the totality of the existing order; it is, if we may use a mystical formula, *the Super-existing* ... it is not a question of *an existent reality*, it is rather *a meaning-reality*, the ultimate, the deepest, all-shattering and ever newly creating meaning-reality.⁵³

This is important for an understanding of Tillich's theology of presence in respect of God's relationship to an existing world and in respect of our existential model of divine presence.

Tillich's explanation and definition of his conception of God, quoted immediately above alarmed some theologians such as Nels F. S. Ferré, a close friend but a stern critic of Tillich. Ferré was concerned that, in Tillich's determination to escape from the supernaturalism of classical theism, from Christianity's idea of God as the Supreme Being, and from the Christian faith's dependence on traditional Western metaphysics which defined all being including God in terms of substance, Tillich had abandoned any idea of a transcendent realm and replaced it with transcendental meaning only. The divine transcendent ontological reality had been replaced by the merely human phenomenological and transcendental meaning-category. The "transcendent" had given way to the "transcendental". Ferré considered Tillich to be seriously in error on this point and, as a consequence, he believed that Tillich's entire theological system collapsed, because it amounted to a rejection of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation since God, defined by Tillich as "Super-existing" unconditional being, could not enter historical existence. On Tillich's reasoning, God does not "exist". God transcends existence and cannot be limited by it in any way. If God were a being, a Supreme Being, existing outside of nature or the world, then God, Tillich argues, would be limited by that relationship. Alternatively, if God existed within creation, then again God would be limited. So God cannot "exist". Instead God is the ground, the power and the meaning-reality which resists nonbeing, and

⁵³ J.L. Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture*, p.77 (our italics). See *WR*, pp.162-163 for a slightly different translation where "the Super-existing" is "that which is above all beings"; where "an existent reality" is "a reality of existence", and where "a meaning-reality" is "a reality of meaning". Alternatively, for yet another important translation by Victor Nuovo see *VS*, p.25 where reference is made to "what is beyond being" (instead of "the Super-existing"), to "some actual being" (instead of "an existent reality"), and to "an actuality of meaning" (instead of "a meaning-reality").

which upholds and harmonises all finite existing being. God is the condition for the very possibility of existence.⁵⁴

At first glance, this does not bode well for our existential model of divine presence, because it appears that God will have nothing to do with existence. However, it is important to remember that for Tillich there is only one integral reality because he rejected the idea of two separate domains or realms, one supernatural and one natural. Consequently he fought all his life against the traditional Christian dichotomy between supranaturalism and naturalism, preferring instead to call his own position self-transcending or ecstatic naturalism.⁵⁵ Avoiding both dualism and monism, Tillich held to the panentheistic view that the one integrated reality was composite. The world is not extrinsic to God because it is created and continually sustained (*creatio continua*) in being by God, and yet the world is ontologically distinct from God. Equally, the world is not intrinsic to God because it is finite while God is absolute, unconditional, unlimited and infinite, and yet the world is ontologically dependent on God. With reference to his doctrine of God, Tillich agreed that God could be described as the “matrix of reality” on the understanding that “matrix means that in which everything that is has its being”.⁵⁶ Tillich’s Ground of Being is synonymous with matrix of reality. For Tillich, God is the all-including reality, but his friend Nel Ferré was still uneasy that this reality was challenged fundamentally by Tillich’s own repeated declaration that God did not exist, because the Unconditional transcended existence and yet, for the unconditional, there was no transcendent realm.⁵⁷

If our second panentheistic model is to be truly existential it must maintain a connection between God and existence. If God is not engaged with existence then, of course, the

⁵⁴ Ferré’s critique of Tillich can be found in the following sources: N.F.S. Ferré, “Tillich and the Nature of Transcendence” in N.F.S. Ferré (*et al*) *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future*, pp.7-18, especially pp.10-12; N.F.S. Ferré, *Searchlights On Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp.113-119 and also all of chapter 11 entitled “Three Critical Issues in Tillich’s Philosophical Theology”, pp.120-132; N.F.S. Ferré, “Tillich’s View of the Church”, in Kegley and Bretall (Eds.) *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, pp.248-265; *PI*, pp.381-382.

⁵⁵ On this vital point he defends himself against Ferré’s sharp criticism by replying: “Mr Ferré is afraid that this attitude makes my idea of God transcendental instead of transcendent, that it prevents a genuine doctrine of Incarnation. ... He is right if “transcendent” means the establishment of a “world” behind the world, if “Incarnation” means the descent of a divine being from a heavenly place and its metamorphosis into a human being. ... All this is a supranaturalism against which my theology stands” (Tillich, “Reply to Interpretation and Criticism”, in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, pp.329-349, p.340).

⁵⁶ Tillich, “An Afterward: Appreciation and Reply” in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*, pp.301-311, p.306.

⁵⁷ Ferré considered that Tillich contradicted himself by holding this view while simultaneously asserting that somewhere beyond experience: “The ground of being, and even the abyss are powers that without existing, work on existence. In some sense they *are* beyond the analysis of experience. These two analyses are contradictory: there is no transcendent realm; there is transcendent power” (*PI*, p.382, Ferré’s italics).

existential model collapses. In defence of existence and God's place in it, we will return shortly to this point when we critique Tillich's negative perception of existence. For the moment we note that, for Tillich, all-inclusive divine reality grounds existence in true panentheistic fashion. With reference to the first model, we spoke of an ontological bridge from the Ground of Being, a bridge creatively formed within God to provide a link between God and world, thus allowing the world to be ontologically present "in" God. Given Tillich's acceptance that God grounds finite existence, it is possible to consider that the same finite-infinite bridge within God could also have an existential function and character. This opens up "two-way relational traffic" on the bridge, with the ontological lane positioning the world "in" God, while the existential lane (still within God) allows the divine to "flow" into and through finite existence without limiting or restricting the Unconditional which upholds and encompasses both the ontological and the existential dimensions of all finite being present in God as inclusive transcendence. On this basis God can be existentially "in" the world which is always simultaneously "in" God.

The existential model presupposes a relationship between Creator and existing creature. Tillich acknowledges that "relation" is a fundamental ontological category which provides the basis on which all finite beings are interrelated and on which the ontological elements are correlated. However, Tillich asks: "Can God be related and, if so, in what sense?"⁵⁸ God is the ground of every relation but, in the divine life, all relations are inner relations because they transcend the split between potentiality and actuality. Tillich asserts that there are no external relations between God and creature because there is no creaturely independence from the Creator.⁵⁹ To say that God is in a relationship, is a symbolic statement which can be both affirmed and denied. From the human side, such a relation is external because it involves an object. From the divine side, the relation can only be within the life of God who can never be an object of human action or knowledge. God always remains the subject, even though the human self as subject can register and relate only to God as divine object.⁶⁰ God is beyond the subject-object and the ego-world correlation which is within the divine life.⁶¹ To relate to God we must transcend the totality of all finite relations. Such a relation is not a relation in the ordinary sense of that

⁵⁸ *ST I*, p.271.

⁵⁹ "But the question is whether there are external relations between God and the creature. The doctrine of creation affirms that God is the creative ground of everything in every moment. In this sense there is no creaturely independence from which an external relation between God and the creature could be derived" (*ST I*, p.271).

⁶⁰ "If we speak, as we must, of the ego-thou relation between God and man, the thou embraces the ego and consequently the entire relation" (*ST I*, p.271).

⁶¹ "He himself is the ground and meaning of this correlation, not an element within it" (*ST I*, p.272).

word. Tillich's view of God as the inclusive ground of all finite relations, is further evidence of the panentheistic character of the existential model of divine presence which surrounds all relations internalised within divine life.

In all existential relationships, Immanuel, as divine sustaining creativity,⁶² is present and at work empowering all creatures to resist nonbeing. Through existence, creatures stand out from the divine creative ground. In that way they resist the ground on which they are dependent and in which they are rooted. Tillich notes that this "double resistance" against nonbeing and the ground of being is an integral part of creaturely existence.⁶³ Yet, it does not undermine the existential God-world relation which is preserved through the everpresence of God's sustaining creativity. Continuing divine creativity guarantees the protective presence of Immanuel at the heart of the multiple dimensions of the existential God-world relationship.⁶⁴ This is a unique inner relationship because it is held, panentheistically, within the divine life of God as ground of being/nonbeing, even though existing creatures seek to stand out from that ground. In effect, the *existence* of creation is "lived" in the presence of Immanuel who overcomes finite estrangement by preserving, in an internalised manner, the existential God-world relationship within the divine life. Different interpretations of "being in God" point to an important distinction between *part-whole* panentheism and *relational or existential* panentheism.⁶⁵ Tillich champions his relational or existential panentheism that accommodates Immanuel's appearance as concrete presence which we examine in detail in the next section.

⁶² See *ST I*, pp.261-263.

⁶³ *ST I*, p.261.

⁶⁴ "Preservation is continuous creativity, in that God out of eternity creates things and time together. ... God is essentially creative, and therefore he is creative in every moment of temporal existence, giving the power of being to everything that has being out of the creative ground of the divine life" (*ST I*, p.262).

⁶⁵ See Cooper, *Panentheism*, p.28 where he writes: "Some panentheists view the world as part of the divine nature. ... Others view 'being in God' more relationally or existentially, so that the mutual interaction between God and creatures in history involves God and the world so totally and intimately that they are one ontologically. ... The history of panentheism displays variations of both positions, but the basic distinction between *part-whole* and *relational panentheism* persists" (Cooper's italics). Cooper, in "Tillich's Existential Panentheism" (pp. 194-212), expands on Tillich's panentheistic position which he briefly summarises as follows: "Tillich's theology, broadly summarised, is an adaptation of Schelling's philosophy of divine-human freedom, amplified by Heidegger's existential ontology and stated in Christian language. It is an existential panentheism, locating the human quest for authentic existence in God" (p.195). He also points to the uniqueness of Tillich's panentheistic contribution in the following terms: "Tillich speaks of *existential* participation in God. This term includes the whole ontology of humanness – the natural and historical dimensions as well as the subjective dynamics of faith, courage, hope and understanding. This existential panentheism is Tillich's unique contribution. Existential panentheism is real when humans live in God authentically. Only on this existential basis can religion symbolise the truth and can theology conceptualise it" (p.210).

3.4.2 Concrete Presence

In the previous section we noted that the existential God-world relationship is not an external relation. It is an inner relation of the divine life. Can this inner Creator-creature relation be concrete? Tillich's answer is simple: "Creation implies concreteness".⁶⁶ The Creator is present as creative ground of concrete creation. Remember that, when considering the trinitarian character of our three models and Tillich's trinitarian thinking (section 2.6, above), it was deemed important to maintain a balance in the tension between the absolute and the concrete elements in the idea of God which emerges in response to our ultimate concern.⁶⁷ Both ultimacy and concreteness were identified as essential factors in authentic religion and in our conception of God. Together they are reconciled in true religious concern. Ultimate concern allows for concreteness.⁶⁸

For Tillich, the key lies in Trinitarian monotheism which espouses "the God in whom the ultimate and the concrete are united".⁶⁹ Within this context, the door is open to explore the various concrete forms in which Immanuel is present to and in the world. Earlier (section 2.5), we considered prepositional thinking and Tillich's presentation of the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of the God-world, including divine-human relationships. The vertical relation emphasises the element of ultimacy, while the horizontal relation stresses the world-transforming power of the eternal presence and God's manifestation in the concreteness of creation. Estrangement, concomitant with Tillich's analysis of existence, is not a barrier to God's concrete presence through and in finite structures of reality because Immanuel is the Creator of all things concrete. Tillich's theology of mediation is a theology of the ultimate in the manifold concrete, where the created is acknowledged as the concrete. Immanuel is constantly and permanently present with concrete creation through God's sustaining creativity. God, as ultimate reality, creates, preserves, supports and breaks through concrete reality. Immanuel is transformatively present in all dimensions of the concrete cosmos.

Our second model of divine presence is centred on existence and on Tillich's presentation of the concrete realities of the human condition in existentialist terms. It allows us to focus on God's ongoing active and proactive involvement with the cosmos, especially our own

⁶⁶ *ST 3*, p.318.

⁶⁷ See *ST 1*, pp.211-215.

⁶⁸ "The concrete element in the idea of God cannot be destroyed" (*ST 1*, p.225).

⁶⁹ *ST 1*, p.228. Tillich writes further: "The Trinitarian problem is the problem of the unity between ultimacy and concreteness in the living God. Trinitarian monotheism is concrete monotheism, the affirmation of the living God" (p.228).

world. It offers us a picture of a dynamically creative God, panentheistically present and engaged with concrete reality. Immanuel of the second model generates mutual perichoretic participation between Creator and concrete creation. Our case is that Immanuel is a dynamic God whose presence comes through the concreteness of creation, and that the ontological polarity of dynamics and form is particularly suited to our study of divine concrete presence because it can be applied symbolically to God's interaction with the concrete existential forms of finitude.⁷⁰

However, when dealing with God's presence as Ultimate Reality encountered through specific areas and activities of concrete existence such as culture, arts and science, Tillich seldom refers to the polarity of dynamics and form. Instead, he tends to use the ideas of form and substance⁷¹ (*Gehalt*), sometimes supplementing these with the concept of *Inhalt* to formulate a triad of linked ideas.⁷² Reflecting a nexus in Tillich's thinking, *Inhalt-Form-Gehalt* is a trinity of axial concepts which appears in Tillich's work, sometimes whole and sometimes in part, as he develops both the correlation between religion and culture, and the wider correlation between the foundational presence of divine Ultimate Reality and finite concrete forms of human, culturally creative, activity. The language changes as Tillich alternates his terminology and refines his triadic ideas of *Inhalt-Form-Gehalt* which were first introduced in *On the Idea of a Theology of Culture*, as guidance for theologians of culture.⁷³ In his theological analysis of the spheres of creative human

⁷⁰ See *ST 1*, pp.245-248. Tillich writes: "The polarity of dynamics and form supplies the material basis for a group of symbols which are central for any present-day doctrine of God. Potentiality, vitality, and self-transcendence are indicated in the term "dynamics," while the term "form" embraces actuality, intentionality, and self-preservation" (pp.245-246). The polar terms "dynamics" (implying becoming) and "form" (implying rest) are held symbolically in tension with the concept of God as a living God. Of dynamics applied to the concept of God, Tillich states: "The divine creativity, God's participation in history, his outgoing character, are based on this dynamic element" (p.246). Of form, Tillich writes: "If the element of form in the dynamics-form polarity is applied symbolically to the divine life, it expresses the actualization of its potentialities. The divine life inescapably unites possibility with fulfilment (p.247). Refer also to L. Halme, *The Polarity of Dynamics and Form: The Basic Tension in Paul Tillich's Thinking* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2003). This is a special study of dynamics and form within the context of Tillich's three functions of life. With reference to dynamics and form as applied to God see pp.49-60. In respect of dynamics and form in existence see pp.60-72.

⁷¹ It will be evident shortly that Tillich's use of the word "substance" in this context should not be understood in any way as substance in an Aristotelian manner.

⁷² See Halme, *The Polarity of Dynamics and Form*, pp.89-93 for detailed definitions and references. Tillich himself refers to the triad in this way: "Another characteristic of culture which is universal and prefigured in language is the triad of elements in cultural activity: subject matter, form and substance" (*ST 3*, p.60). See also *PE*, pp.298-299. Closely connecting religion and culture, Tillich uses the form-substance nexus in the much-quoted statement at *TC*, p.42 where he writes: "religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion"; refer to *ST 3*, p.158 where there is a similar statement but in reverse order, with culture being mentioned before religion.

⁷³ See *VS*, pp.73-74 where Victor Nuovo, in his interpretation of Tillich's essay, summarises the position as follows: "Finally, then, a brief summary of Tillich's categorical scheme. He posits three categories: substance, form and content. These are the categories of the possibility of cultural experience, indeed of all experience Substance stands apart and transcends the other two. This is the 'highest concept' that ... might

activity such as culture, arts⁷⁴, science and politics, Tillich seeks to identify God as dynamically present in the manifold of concrete reality. As he peels back the layers which compose concrete reality, Tillich deploys *Inhalt-Form-Gehalt* and their derivative notions, as explanatory concepts related to the components he uncovers in his quest for Immanuel present foundationally in the created concrete. The relationship between Form and Content (*Inhalt*) helped to shape Tillich's method of correlation.⁷⁵ However, our particular interest here relates to the concrete presence of Immanuel expressed as Tillich's *Gehalt* or import.⁷⁶ Where human beings are most creatively active, there is God in their concrete midst. Tillich distinguishes between "the *form* of meaning" and "the *import* or *substance* of meaning".⁷⁷ He views God as present in every dimension of concrete creation. *Gehalt* or substance, that is, the import of meaning as the ground of reality, shatters and breaks through concrete form to reveal Immanuel as God Present.⁷⁸

We cannot elaborate here at length on all of Tillich's ideas which could be connected legitimately to our treatment of concrete presence as an integral part of our second model. However, we can list and link a number of Tillich's notions, such as Catholic substance, concrete religion, the dangers of demonisation and profanisation, the sacramental, concrete

be characterized as the pure being of meaning. In German his terms are *Gehalt* and *Substanz*; I translate both as substance. We should think of substance here not in an Aristotelian sense, as ... something that exists in its own right in contrast to the properties of a thing. Rather, we should think of it more Spinozistically, as a unique and metaphysically ultimate reality, which is the infinite ground of all existence. But, we must modify it further in a radical way: we must think of it in a Kantian sense as a category, as the fundamental and ultimate category of meaning, the grounding principle of consciousness." Sometimes in his writings, Tillich uses different terms to identify and explain each of the three triadic ideas in the following alternative ways: *Inhalt* – encountered subject matter, an object in its simple being, content; Form – what something is, that which distinguishes and differentiates from something else, that which mediates content; *Gehalt* – meaning-reality, that which gives form meaning, depth-content, import, living import, essential power which breaks through form, substance, *Substanz*, spiritual substantiality.

⁷⁴ For Tillich's theology of art see *OAA (passim)*. For commentaries on aspects of Tillich's thinking on art see M.F. Palmer, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Art* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), *passim*; G.E. Thiessen, *Theology and Modern Irish Art* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1999), pp.15-36; G. Pattison, *Art, Modernity and Faith* (London: SCM, 1998), pp.100-117.

⁷⁵ See J.P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation*, where just such a case is made by the author in chapter 6, "Form, Content and the Concept of Correlation", pp.191-249.

⁷⁶ "Import ... as the presence of the ultimate in each creative act, makes this immanent, dynamic participation of God in culture and history so utterly necessary. ... As Tillich's analysis of culture is impossible without the category of being-itself, so his theology of culture has no content without the dynamic presence of the living God as unconditional import, and as the possibility of reunion", L. Gilkey, *Gilkey On Tillich*, p.107. Tillich writes: "*substance is caught up into content by means of form and brought to expression. Content is accidental, substance is essential, form mediates*" (VS, p.27, Tillich's italics).

⁷⁷ "The import of meaning is the ground of reality presupposed in all forms of meaning, upon whose constant presence the ultimate meaningfulness, the significance, and the essentiality (*Wesenhaftigkeit*) of every act of meaning rest. The unity of forms, like every individual form, is utterly empty without the relation to the import of meaning" (WR, p.43).

⁷⁸ "*The revelation of an overwhelming substance occurs in this way: form becomes more and more inadequate for the reality that is supposed to be contained by it, so that this reality in overwhelming abundance shatters it. And yet this overwhelming and this shattering are themselves still form*" (VS, p.26, Tillich's italics).

grace and the *Gestalt* of grace. This cluster of signature concepts identifies with, and points to, the concrete Tillichean character of our existential model of divine presence. Immanuel theology needs to take account of the concrete dimensions of creation in relation to the presence and involvement of God, without confusing finite concrete forms with the divine reality present in and through them. Tillich warns against the danger of demonisation (i.e., elevating the concrete conditional to the level of the unconditional), and against the risk of profanisation (i.e., reducing the ultimate unconditional infinite to the level of the concrete conditioned finite). Instead, concrete reality should be considered as the medium or channel through which Immanuel, as the everpresent God, engages with creation.

To avoid any misunderstanding and to ensure the authenticity of religion and church, Tillich asserts that the interaction of the Protestant principle and the principle of Catholic substance is vitally important. These two principles are polar but interdependent. They should be embodied jointly and function together within Christianity.⁷⁹ Catholic substance adds the sacramental dimension to concrete religion, while the Protestant principle offers the ethical element of “ought to be” and a prophetic voice to criticise should any perversion of the sacramental deny justice in the name of holiness.⁸⁰ In *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, Tillich goes a step further by proposing his idea of “The Religion of the Concrete Spirit”, incorporating his thinking on the prophetic, the sacramental and the mystical as the three essential characteristics of authentic, concrete, living religion.⁸¹ Tillich acknowledges that the concrete is essential for religion and that, while God is not and does not become the concrete, we find

⁷⁹ “The Protestant principle (which is a manifestation of the prophetic Spirit) ... transcends every particular church, ... but is also effective in every church as the power which prevents profanisation and demonisation from destroying the Christian churches completely. It alone is not enough; it needs the ‘Catholic substance’, the concrete embodiment of the Spiritual Presence; but it is the criterion of the demonisation (and profanisation) of such embodiment. It is the expression of the victory of the Spirit over religion” (*ST 3*, p.245). See also L. Gilkey, *Gilkey On Tillich* for the following helpful summary of Tillich’s position: “The church is ‘a true church’ when it embodies both the Protestant principle (the principle of self-criticism and so of ‘pointing beyond itself’ to the divine source of its grace and power) and the Catholic substance (the principle of the presence through the media of dependent revelation of divine power, divine truth, and divine grace). ... These two principles are polar, mutually dependent: without Catholic substance ... the Protestant principle is empty, unredeemed, and unredeeming, and the church becomes vulnerable to other, alien ‘spirits’. Without the Protestant principle, the Catholic substance can become demonic, a medium that claims ultimacy for itself” (p.142).

⁸⁰ See *FR*, p.87.

⁸¹ “We cannot identify this Religion of the Concrete Spirit with any actual religion, not even Christianity as a religion. But I would dare to say, of course, dare as a Protestant theologian, that I believe that there is no higher expression for what I call the synthesis of these three elements than in Paul’s doctrine of the Spirit” (*FR*, p.88). In the last paragraph of his lecture Tillich declares: “The universality of a religious statement does not lie in an all-embracing abstraction which would destroy religion as such, but it lies in the depths of every concrete religion” (*FR*, p.94). Here we note that Tillich, at the very end of a lifetime of theology, stresses the concrete character of religion.

Immanuel in and through the concrete. Furthermore, holding together Catholic substance and Protestant principle offers ecumenical possibilities for ecclesial convergence.⁸²

Tillich provides three meanings for the term “sacramental”, embracing Spiritual Presence as experienced, religious objects, acts and events, and the “great” sacraments themselves.⁸³ In “Nature and Sacrament”,⁸⁴ Tillich argues for a “new realism” on the basis that a correct understanding of sacrament depends upon a correct interpretation of the power and meaning of nature.⁸⁵ In order to establish a foundation for a new Protestant theory of sacraments and sacramentality, Tillich connects nature to history, especially salvation history centred on Jesus as the Christ.⁸⁶ Indeed, he suggests that the future of Protestantism depends upon resolving the problem of nature and sacrament.⁸⁷ In the sacramental context, Tillich does not consider that word opposes sacrament. Word itself can become sacramental because it is a natural phenomenon.⁸⁸ On this basis, Tillich’s own ministry of the word takes on a special significance for his theology of presence. His words as sermons,⁸⁹ many of which refer directly and indirectly to the presence of God, are sacramental declarations of Immanuel as God Present. History as time, and nature as space, are concrete dimensions of finite reality. Tillich’s theology of concrete presence as sacrament is expansive enough to embrace time and space.⁹⁰

⁸² See, for example, G. Daly, *One Church: Two Indispensable Values: Protestant Principle and Catholic Substance* (Dublin: Irish School of Ecumenics, 1998) “Paul Tillich’s distinction between Catholic substance and Protestant principle can, I submit, help us to recover something at least of what we have lost by our historical divisions. ... All Christian churches need the presence and action of both Protestant principle and Catholic substance – and this for the sake of truth and not merely for the sake of unity. They go together and they ought always to be mutually related, quite irrespectively of the quest for unity. The relationship is dialectical in the sense that each acts as a corrective influence on the other” (p.5).

⁸³ “The largest sense of the term denotes everything in which the Spiritual Presence has been experienced; in a narrower sense, it denotes particular objects and acts in which a Spiritual community experiences the Spiritual Presence; and in the narrowest sense, it merely refers to some ‘great’ sacraments in the performance of which the Spiritual Community actualises itself” (*ST 3*, p.121).

⁸⁴ *PE*, Chapter VII “Nature and Sacrament”, pp.94-112.

⁸⁵ “The power and meaning of nature must be sought within and through its objective physical structures. Power and physical character, meaning and objective structure, are not separated in nature. ... The power of nature must be found in a sphere prior to the cleavage of our world into subjectivity and objectivity” (*PE*, pp.101-2). Elsewhere Tillich writes, “Sacramental thinking is meaningful only if the infinite is present in the finite, if the finite is not only subject to the commands of the infinite but has in itself saving powers of the presence of the divine” (*HCT*, p.443). Such statements emerging from Tillich’s theology of presence, could provide formative principles for a theology of the environment.

⁸⁶ *PE*, pp.102-3.

⁸⁷ *PE*, p.112.

⁸⁸ “The word is, first of all, a natural phenomenon. As such, it can, like other natural elements, become a part of a ritual act in which it functions as the bearer of a transcendent power: it can become sacramental” (*PE*, p.98).

⁸⁹ See *EN*, *NB* and *SF*, published collections of his sermons.

⁹⁰ For example, Tillich states: “presence combines time and space. ... The sacramental presence of God is a consequence of his omnipresence. It is an actual manifestation of his omnipresence, dependent of course on the history of revelation and the concrete symbols which have been created by it” (*ST 1*, p.278).

Tillich explains that the word “grace” refers to a qualification of the divine-human relationship, sourced gratuitously from God.⁹¹ He distinguishes two basic forms of grace, God’s threefold creativity and God’s saving grace, both of which are subsumed under God’s providential grace. Grace is relational; it takes concrete form because it participates in the created world (space) and in salvation history (time). Elsewhere Tillich specifically refers to concrete grace,⁹² “a religion of grace” or “a religion of paradox”⁹³ in which God is sacramentally present and breaks through the concrete on a divine, not on a human, initiative. In addition, Tillich seeks to protect “every concrete presence of the Holy”⁹⁴ from negation by radical mysticism. Embodiment implies concreteness. When writing about the “*Gestalt* of grace” as a sacred structure of reality, Tillich includes the notion of embodiment even though he is aware that this could make Protestants anxious.⁹⁵ However, he balances this with Protestantism’s possession of the formative power of faith which is itself a *Gestalt* or embodiment of grace expressed concretely in a community or a person.⁹⁶ Grace, not the concrete sacramental medium through which it is manifest, is the presence of Immanuel as God-with-us. The reality of grace that precedes the concrete media which bear it, is not an “object” to be known and used by anyone. Treating grace as an “objective” reality is sacramentalism, the reification of grace, and Tillich considers that to be the most profound difference between the Protestant and the Catholic view of grace.⁹⁷

⁹¹ “The term ‘grace’ (*gratia, charis*) qualifies all relations between God and man in such a way that they are freely inaugurated by God and in no way dependent on anything the creature does or desires” (*ST I*, p.285). See also *ST 3*, p.274.

⁹² “Concrete grace ... locates salvation completely in the Unconditional, but in its concrete, historical self-manifestation and not in its abyss, not in its hidden will. Consequently, it issues in a vigorous affirmation of the religious and ecclesiastical media, of the mediator and means of revelation, of prayer and living fellowship with God. But this view almost inevitably goes astray at this point by elevating these media into an absolute status and thus the revelation of grace becomes a religion of the means of grace” (*WR*, p.147).

⁹³ See *WR*, p.93. Tillich explains that “The religion of paradox intuits in a concrete revelational symbol the unity of theocratic exclusiveness and sacramental immediacy”, (*WR*, p.107).

⁹⁴ *WR*, p.93.

⁹⁵ “Grace-embodied, reality of grace, *Gestalt* of grace – all these sound strange and dangerous for Protestants. ‘Grace’ is supposed to be something intangible and unsubstantial, while ‘embodiment’ and ‘*Gestalt*’ seem to point to something that can be grasped and touched. An embodied grace seems to lose its character as grace and to become a ‘law’ in the sense of Catholic sacramentalism” (*PE*, p.209).

⁹⁶ “There is in the centre of Protestant doctrine a point at which it presupposes what we call a ‘divine structure of reality’, namely, faith. ... In so far as faith is in a community or personality, they are embodiments of grace. Faith is created by the hearing of the ‘Word’. The Word is said from *beyond* us, *to* us. But, if it is received, it is no longer *only* transcendent. It is also immanent, creating a divine structure of reality. Thus it creates faith as the formative power of a personal life and of a community” (*PE*, p.210, Tillich’s italics).

⁹⁷ *PE*, pp.211-212. We concur with Tillich’s rejection of any notion that grace can be reified. Grace cannot be ontologised as an object or entity, as if it were a reality separate from God. With Tillich, we agree that both grace and justification are divine because they emerge gratuitously as God’s initiative alone, and cannot be “earned” or merited by human beings. They are relational in character because they qualify and condition the divine human encounter. However, to enter into the nature-grace debate here would lead us too far afield from our present task. For a detailed discussion of the related issues, including a comparison of the Lutheran “simultaneity” model and the Catholic “transformationist” model, refer to our master’s dissertation, *Christ’s Mediation, Invocation and Mary: An Examination of Aspects of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue VIII*

Theonomy, Kingdom of God, theology of history, church and Spiritual Community, and *Kairos*, together form another connected cluster of Tillichean signature concepts which relate to the concrete dimensions of divine presence, and which gravitate like satellites around our existential model. Here, we can deal only briefly with these aspects of Tillich's work, concentrating on their contribution to an Immanuel theology. "Theonomy" is the term Tillich uses to refer to divine governance as Immanuel's influential presence throughout creation. God is present and constantly at work in the world, anchoring and ordering concrete being, especially under the impact of Spiritual Presence on human affairs where culture and morality take on a theonomous character. Spiritual Presence manifests itself in theonomous ways.⁹⁸ Theonomy is "the relatedness of all cultural forms to the ultimate"⁹⁹ but it is not imposed from outside because it is Spirit-directed.¹⁰⁰ It is only fragmentarily successful because of existential estrangement.¹⁰¹ The close association between Spiritual Presence as Immanuel, and theonomy, makes the latter an integral part of our Immanuel theology in its concrete historical expressions.

Tillich's theology of history and the Kingdom of God¹⁰² are closely interwoven with his notions of theonomy¹⁰³ and *Kairos*.¹⁰⁴ History, with its events and personalities, is the concrete setting within which human beings search for the Kingdom of God and where Immanuel is revealed in moments of *Kairos*. This points to the inner-historical side of the Kingdom of God where theonomy is partially successful. Theonomy is fully realised and

(USA), "*The One Mediator, The Saints and Mary*" (University of Dublin, Trinity College: September 1994) pp.22-49; 58-62; 117-122. We take up the subject of grace later in this thesis at section 5.7, below. There we discuss the matter in more detail, pointing out differences and similarities between Tillich's theology of grace and our own Immanuel theology of grace. We make the case that a theology of grace is an integral part of a theology of divine presence. Unlike Tillich, our theology of grace as presence is incorporated into our panentheistic Immanuel eschatology because grace continues to feature in the dynamics of finite life beyond the *eschaton*.

⁹⁸ See *ST 3*, pp.249-268.

⁹⁹ *ST 3*, p.214.

¹⁰⁰ "The idea of a theonomous culture does not imply any imposition from outside. Theonomous culture is Spirit-determined and Spirit-directed culture, and Spirit fulfils spirit instead of breaking it" (*ST 3*, p.250).

¹⁰¹ "Theonomy can never be completely victorious, as it can never be completely defeated. Its victory is always fragmentary because of the existential estrangement underlying human history, and its defeat is always limited by the fact that human nature is essentially theonomous" (*ST 3*, p.250).

¹⁰² *ST 3*, pp.297-423.

¹⁰³ "History comes from and moves toward periods of theonomy, i.e., periods in which the conditioned is open to the unconditional without claiming to be unconditioned itself. Theonomy unites the absolute and the relative element in the interpretation of history, the demand that everything relative become the vehicle of the absolute and the insight that nothing relative can ever become absolute itself" (*PE*, p.47).

¹⁰⁴ "In each *Kairos* the 'Kingdom of God is at hand', for it is a world-historical, unrepeatable, unique decision for and against the unconditional. Every *Kairos* is, therefore, implicitly the universal *Kairos* and an actualisation of the unique *Kairos*, the appearance of the Christ. But no *Kairos* brings the fulfilment in time" (*PE*, p.47). See also *ST 3*, pp.369-372. "We spoke of the moment at which history, in terms of a concrete situation, had matured to the point of being able to receive the breakthrough of the central manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The New Testament has called this moment the 'fulfilment of time', in Greek, *Kairos*" (p.369).

complete on the transcendent side of the Kingdom of God, beyond the temporality of history. The visible church is the concrete church. The spiritual and invisible church is not a different entity from the visible concrete church, but it indicates the spiritual essence of the visible church. Tillich names this Spiritual essence, the Spiritual Community,¹⁰⁵ which should not be understood as a group of people.¹⁰⁶ The church, both concrete and invisible, is an expression of Spiritual Community but is not synonymous with it.

Churches are simultaneously visible and spiritual. They are sociological realities and they share in the essential power of the Spiritual Community. The paradox of the churches is that they participate in the concrete ambiguities of life and, at the same time, they participate in the unambiguous life of the Spiritual Community. Churches are historical and concrete existential embodiments of the Spiritual Community. The unambiguous side of Church life is the Spiritual Community which is actualised in the concrete visible form of church.¹⁰⁷ Tillich's "Spiritual Community" is an ambiguous term because, despite the word "Community", it is not a collection of people. Its significance for Tillich's theology of presence is that it is a creation of God as Spiritual Presence. It empowers and structures churches by being the Spiritual essence of concrete ecclesial communities. We recall that, for Tillich, essence is the ontological principle of unity with God. In our Immanuel theology, "Unity with God" equates with "in the presence of God". Spiritual Community, as Spiritual essence of the churches, is the expression of Immanuel's ecclesial presence, an embodied presence effected through the essential unity of the churches with the divine. Spiritual Community, that is, Spiritual essence and power, results from the impact of the unifying presence of God who is ground of essence and power of essential unity.

In Tillich's theology of concrete presence, there is a correlation between churches, Spiritual Community, Kingdom of God and history. Through their sacramental manifestation of the Holy, the churches in history are ambiguous embodiments of the Spiritual Community, and they are also ambiguous representatives of the Kingdom of God

¹⁰⁵ *ST 3*, pp.149-172. In this context, Tillich writes about Spiritual essence and Spiritual Community using capital letters as shown.

¹⁰⁶ "The Spiritual Community is not a group existing beside other groups but rather a power and a structure inherent and effective in such groups, that is, in religious communities" (*ST 3*, p.162). "The invisible church is the Spiritual essence of the visible church; like everything Spiritual, it is hidden, but it determines the nature of the visible church. In the same way the Spiritual Community does not exist as an entity beside the churches, but it is their Spiritual essence, effective in them through its power, its structure and its fight against their ambiguities" (*ST 3*, p.163). "The Spiritual Community is the inner *telos* of the churches and that as such it is the source of everything which makes them churches" (*ST 3*, p.165).

¹⁰⁷ "The Spiritual Community is an unambiguous, though fragmentary, creation of the divine Spirit. In this context, 'fragmentary' means appearing under the conditions of finitude but conquering both estrangement and ambiguity" (*ST 3*, p.150).

which, with its inner-historical (immanent element) and transhistorical (transcendent element) double-sided character, is itself the answer to the ambiguities of history. In Tillich's theological schema, all these factors are held together by the historical concrete appearance of Jesus as the Christ who takes his place as the centre of history, as the foundation of the church, as the perfect embodiment of New Being of which the Spiritual Community is an expression, as the herald of the Kingdom of God, and as the unique example of the concrete presence of God under the Christian symbol of Incarnation.

In our existential model, the emphasis is on a mode of divine presence which reflects the panentheistic God-world nexus as the infinite in the finite. The infinite-finite relationship is the traditional setting within which the Incarnation is usually considered. Tillich rejects this approach, placing the split between essence and existence at the centre of the christological discussion.¹⁰⁸ In his treatment of the Incarnation, Tillich distinguishes between the dialectical character of the finitude-infinity correlation and the paradoxical nature of his doctrine of the Incarnation.¹⁰⁹ For Tillich, the correlation of the finite and the infinite is dialectical, not paradoxical. Although it is not the paradox of the Incarnation, Tillich includes the idea of divine-human dialectical unity in essential humanity which he refers to variously as essential man, original God-manhood, spiritual God-man, the heavenly man or as "an original 'pre-existent' relation between God and man".¹¹⁰ He even refers to this reality as "a divine being" when he says "the paradox of the Incarnation is not that God becomes man"¹¹¹, but that a divine being who represents God ... manifests himself in the form of existence".¹¹² By using the phrase "a divine being" Tillich does not mean

¹⁰⁸ Cf. P. Tillich, "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation", in *Church Quarterly Review* 147, no. 294 (January – March 1949), pp.133-148 where Tillich writes: "The distance between essence and existence (between what man is in his essential, spiritual and heavenly nature and what he is in his existential, material and earthly nature) was not realised as the main problem of theology in general and of christology in particular. Instead of this, the metaphysical problem of the relation between the finite and the infinite predominated in the doctrine of the Incarnation against the soteriological problem of essential Godmanhood appearing in existence" (p.139). Tillich condemns "the inescapable absurdities of the attempt to explain the Incarnation in terms of a higher chemistry between finiteness and infinity" (p.139). He refuses to apply his pantheism, based on the principle of the infinite-finite relationship, to the christological problem.

¹⁰⁹ Tillich, "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation", p.137; also *ST* 2, p.94.

¹¹⁰ Tillich, "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation", p.137.

¹¹¹ Cf. *ST* 2, p.94: "The assertion that 'God has become man' is not a paradoxical but a nonsensical statement. ... The word 'God' points to ultimate reality and ... that the only thing God cannot do is to cease to be God. But that is just what the assertion that 'God has become man' means. ... He [God] does not become something that is not God. Therefore, it is preferable to speak of *a divine being* which has become man and to refer to the terms 'Son of God' or the 'Spiritual Man' or the 'Man from Above', as they are used in biblical language" (our italics). Here Tillich clearly rules out the possibility of God becoming a human being and rejects the idea that Jesus Christ is or could be God. By implication, he asserts that Jesus as the Christ is exclusively human.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.137. The full quotation reads: "The paradox of the Incarnation is not that God becomes man, but that a divine being who represents God and is able to reveal him in his fullness, manifests himself in a form

that Jesus Christ is divine. The term connotes a pre-creation essence or form, essentially united to God and therefore always in the presence of God, whose essential unity with God is not disrupted even when that finite essence is created and becomes actualised essence in the historical existence of a concrete finite person. This is the paradox of the Incarnation for Tillich. In Jesus Christ, the essential form of man is made manifest in existence yet transcends the disruptive negative gap between essence and existence.

In Tillich's theology of presence the unique christological paradox of presence points to Immanuel as God present within and united to the essential form of humanity made concrete in the personal historical life of the human being, Jesus as the Christ, *without* existential disruption. Despite the negativity of existence, God is existentially and concretely present in Jesus Christ. In the state of New Being,¹¹³ the divine presence in Jesus Christ, although existential and concrete, transcends the ambiguous and fragmentary nature of life as experienced by all other people. The Spiritual Presence is unambiguous in Jesus Christ because it "creates the New Being above the gap between essence and existence and consequently above the ambiguities of life. ... the New Being as the creation

of existence which is in radical contradiction to his divine, spiritual and heavenly form. It is not the unity of the infinite and the finite which constitutes the paradox of the Incarnation, but the manifestation of the original, heavenly man as existential man, or of the universal creative reason as individual created reason, or of the spiritual pre-existent Christ as the empirical and historical Christ." It is important to note that Tillich is referring here, in multiple ways, to a pre-existent creaturely finite form or essence which, when actualised in creation, comes into a finite form of existence where the finite created essence is made manifest. Form as essence is Tillich's ontological principle of unity with God, and on that basis he tends to ascribe words like "God" (original God-manhood; spiritual God-man), "divine" (a divine being), "spiritual", "heavenly", "original" and "pre-existent" (spiritual pre-existent Christ; heavenly man; original God-manhood; original pre-existent relation between God and man) to convey one and the same idea of pre-creation *creaturely finite* essence or form, present from eternity in the inner life of God. In the particular case of Jesus Christ, Tillich is signifying the pre-creation finite form, that is essential humanity, of the finite Christ held eternally, like every other pre-creation finite essence, in a union with the divine in the life and presence of God "prior" to being "later" created and actualised in a concrete form of existence. For Tillich this has everything to do with the eternal dialectical relationship between the finite and the infinite, including the essential union of God with every human being including Jesus Christ. However, for Tillich it has nothing to do with the Incarnation which he designates a paradox. Tillich explains that the paradoxical character of the Incarnation derives from the idea that the original eternal form of creaturely essential man which always appears ontologically in every historical human being under the negative conditions of existence, uniquely appears and is manifest in the personal historical life of Jesus as the Christ *without* being disrupted by the negativity of existence. The paradox is that Jesus Christ is a man but is the only instance where essential humanity is not disrupted by its appearance in concrete existence. Through the essential unity of God and man, and therefore through the correlation of the finite and the infinite, Tillich affirms that God is dialectically present in the life and person of every human being including the man Jesus Christ. In Tillich's view God is also present paradoxically in a unique way in Jesus Christ because the historical Christ event, despite the conditions of existence, did not disrupt the essential humanity of Jesus as the Christ when made historically manifest.

¹¹³ "New Being is essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence. ... The term 'New Being', as used here, points directly to the cleavage between essential and existential being – and *is the restorative principle of the whole of this theological system*. The New Being is new in so far as it is the undistorted manifestation of essential being within and under the conditions of existence. It is new in two respects: It is new in contrast to the mere potential character of essential being; and it is new over against the estranged character of existential being. It is actual, conquering the estrangement of actual existence" (ST 2, pp.118-119, our italics).

of the Spiritual Presence is manifest”.¹¹⁴ Immanuel as God Present in Jesus Christ guarantees the latter’s full and immediate, not fragmentary, participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life. Tillich’s concept of New Being is central in his personal reconsideration of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ is not just the bearer of New Being in his whole being.¹¹⁵ He is also, according to Tillich, the bearer of New Being with an eschatological mission as the harbinger of the new eon.¹¹⁶ There is a number of important eschatological symbols in Tillich’s christology. We refer to these themes specifically as we correlate Tillich’s essentialist christology with his essentialist eschatology in section 5.7, below.

It would be attractive to explore Tillich’s christology¹¹⁷ in greater depth but here we concentrate on the christological aspects of God’s concrete existential presence within the context of the mystery of the Incarnation. We develop our treatment of this in section 3.4.4, below, where we examine the challenging question of the existential presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ who is the paramount example of concrete presence, and we offer our panentheistic christology as a critique and a corrective to problems uncovered in Tillich’s own reinterpretation of the Incarnation. However, before we undertake that task, we need to consider closely Tillich’s view of existence which conditions his ontotheology, which features pivotally in his protology and in his theology of existential concrete presence, and which impacts negatively on his christology and on his understanding of the Incarnation. We will discover that existence which, in the Tillichean system, must be “overcome”, is the underlying problem which “shakes” and conditions many dimensions of Tillich’s theology of presence.

3.4.3 Rescuing Existence – Critiquing Tillich

From the perspective of a theology of presence, Tillich’s treatment of existence presents the greatest difficulties and problems. Our theological quarrels with Tillich seem, directly or indirectly, to return to the theo-philosophical issue of existence. Our Immanuel theology identifies this topic as the most fundamental and troublesome matter which separates our

¹¹⁴ *ST* 3, pp.138-139.

¹¹⁵ “Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being in the totality of his being, not in any special expressions of it. It is his being that makes him the Christ because his being has the quality of the New Being beyond the split of essential and existential being” (*ST* 2, p.121).

¹¹⁶ “His being is the New Being. And the New Being, the conquest of the old eon, is in those who participate in him and in the church in so far as it based on him as its foundation. The symbol of the Second Coming of the Christ corroborates the Resurrection by placing the Christian in a period between the *Kairoi*, the times in which the eternal breaks into the temporal, between an ‘already’ and a ‘not yet’, and subjects him to the infinite tensions of this situation in personal and in historical existence” (*ST* 2, p.164).

¹¹⁷ Tillich’s christology is laid out in detail in *ST* 2, Part III, section II, “The Reality of Christ” pp.97-180.

theology of presence from Tillich's system. Tillich himself focuses his whole systematic theological enterprise on the question of being, the ontological question relating to being and nonbeing. He builds everything on a response to that central subject. However, from the perspective of our Immanuel theology, the question of concrete existence, not just the question of abstract being, must take centre stage in our engagement with Tillich. Existence and essence are necessarily enfolded in being. Being, or to be, is "to exist as". To exist is to exist as something. Existence and essence are mutually dependent. Existence needs essence, and essence needs existence. But, if forced to choose between them or rank them in any way, should one take priority?

Tillich tells us that "the ontological question is: what is being itself?"¹¹⁸ But, given "the shock of possible nonbeing",¹¹⁹ he agrees that an alternative version of the question is "Why is there something; why not nothing?"¹²⁰ From our point of view this clearly moves the emphasis away from being as being to the question of existence, and it could be restated as follows: why is there anything at all? Or, why does anything exist? Here existence, *that* something is, is given priority over *what* something is. What things are is obviously important but, in a way, it is secondary to the fundamental mystery that there is anything at all. This is the primary question of existence. If, as Immanuel theology agrees, it ranks above or conceptually prior to *what* beings are, then existence can be considered in a positive way. The mystery of existence underlies the mystery of being *qua* being. For Tillich all thought is based on being. However, we disagree when he claimed that it was meaningless or pointless to try to get behind the question of being, even though he concedes that nonbeing can be "imagined".¹²¹ Tillich also further contradicts his own view that it is pointless to attempt to go behind the ontological question of being to the question of existence, when he states that humankind "is not bound to 'beingness'; he can envisage nothingness ... he must ask the question about that which creates the mystery of being; he must consider the mystery of nonbeing".¹²²

For Immanuel theology, the mystery of nonbeing is the mystery of existence and, in turn, the mystery of existence is the foundation of the mystery of presence. Presence implies relatedness and otherness. It simultaneously embraces existence and essence as being-in-relation-to-other. Presence declares the manifold character of being because to be present

¹¹⁸ *ST I*, p.163.

¹¹⁹ *ST I*, p.163.

¹²⁰ *ST I*, p.163.

¹²¹ *ST I*, pp.163-164.

¹²² *ST I*, p.186.

is to be present to an other. But why is there any presence at all? Here we seek to prioritise the *fact* of presence, *that* there is presence, over the manifold forms of presence. If nonbeing can be imagined, then surely the mystery of existence can be contemplated. Finite being's power of self-transcendence, so championed by Tillich, can go beyond reflection on finitude, and contemplate the "that" and "why" of existence, without excluding essence as the "what" of being. This is not to privilege existence over essence, because elements or qualifications of being may be separately considered and reflected upon, but being as such cannot be dissected into separate parts. However, conceptually the first challenge is to marvel at the "why" of being which is the mystery and question of existence itself, and then move to explore the "what" of the manifold of being. Existence, as the "why" of being, deserves a more positive consideration than Tillich ever afforded it. He seemed to view existence in a double negative way. For him existence is not nonbeing. "Existence means standing out of nonbeing".¹²³

Double negative statements can usually be interpreted as adding up logically and grammatically to positive statements. But for Tillich the matter is more complex. He compounds the question, or for him the problem, of existence in two ways. Firstly, he says that if existence, as he explains it, means to "stand out", then logically existence must also, in some way, "stand in" what it stands out from, thus maintaining a relationship with it. It follows then, for Tillich, that existence and nonbeing are not really mutually exclusive complete opposites. Instead they are correlates. This is unfortunate because it immediately and significantly downgrades existence. It compromises existence in the face of nothingness, or nonbeing as "not-being". The compound word "not-being" seems stronger than the word "nonbeing", which tends to reify the absence of being, which would be a contradiction. Being nothing cannot be anything. "Not-being" more strongly conveys the verb-like action of "not existing", which itself is the opposite of existing or existence. Tillich's correlation of existence and nonbeing is an unfortunate ontological twist. In Tillich's view it portrays existence negatively as "standing in", as having one foot in, nonbeing. Existence is precariously positioned.

The second complication introduced by Tillich into his treatment of existence relates again to nonbeing. Having correlated existence and nonbeing, he then distinguishes *ouk on* as absolute nonbeing from *me on* as relative nonbeing¹²⁴ (see section 3.3.1, above). For

¹²³ *ST 2*, p.21.

¹²⁴ *ST 1*, p.188 and 253; *ST 2*, pp.20-21.

Tillich, the correlation of existence and nonbeing is effective in both kinds of nonbeing. *Me on*, or relative nonbeing, is potential being, and standing out from it, according to Tillich, is actuality. "Therefore if something exists, we say that it has left the state of mere potentiality and has become actual."¹²⁵ Tillich splits reality into potentiality and actuality. He equates existence, not with all of reality, but only with actuality. Existence equals actuality. Therefore potentiality, finite being's power to be, its potency, does not exist because it has yet to "stand out".

Potential being must exist because it holds the power that fuels the life-process which simultaneously unites potentiality and actuality through the dynamics of actualisation, also called realisation. Existence must be allowed to encompass both potentiality and actuality. It is an ontological fiction to say that potentiality does not yet exist. It exists because it exists as power, even if that power is only made manifest at a later stage in its existence. Existence embraces all of reality both potential and actual. It is not limited narrowly to actuality. In the existence of finite being there is never only either a state of pure unused potentiality or a state of pure actuality. On and from its creation, finite being is "alive"; it exists and it is actualising. The existence of being and the "lifetime" of being are contemporaneous. This is why it is important for Immanuel theology to challenge Tillich's separation of potential being from existence. Fixed completed actuality does not exist for finite being. The actual world is in fact "on the move"; it is always actualising because it is always "alive". For created finite being, potentiality is not an untapped, untouched virgin source of power. Potentiality is the power of being and presence yet to be actually realised. It is potential presence charged with the power of Immanuel the Actualiser.

If something does not exist, it cannot be present. Non-existence means absence, total absence or non-presence. Existence is the condition of all presence and without it presence is an impossibility. God's existence is the pre-condition of all finite presence. This might seem like stating the obvious but it is important for Immanuel theology to start at this level in order to offer both an adequate treatment of existential presence and a critique of Tillich's narrow and negative view of existence which lead him to assert the non-existence of God as a corollary of his negative position on existence. Any feasible theology of presence wishing to retain a Tillichean character must address this central issue honestly and effectively. Tillich's mistaken conviction about the impairment of existence haunts his theology of presence, because his acceptance of existence as negative has serious

¹²⁵ *ST 2*, p.20-21.

ramifications for his doctrines of God, creation, the fall, the Incarnation and also, as we shall see (chapter five, below) for his eschatology. With specific reference to existential presence, Immanuel theology can be used to provide clarification and correction to Tillich's negative concept of existence which needs repair if it is to offer the basis for a sound theology of existential presence. In short, existence needs to be rescued from the pessimism of Tillich's own existential viewpoint in order to preserve Immanuel theology as a positive and inclusive theology of divine presence. In turn, the Immanuel theology offered here can correct Tillich's theology by amending his idea of existence and giving existence a more positive character.

The problem for Tillich is that he narrowly defines and explicates existence with reference only to finite being and creatureliness. Ironically this excludes God and leaves creatures virtually stranded or isolated in existence. Tillich sees existence as detachment from God. This exclusive concept limits existence to a mode of finite being, and inevitably leads to estrangement where the God-world relationship is strained and where divine presence appears to be struggling against the negative tide of existence because Tillich has confined existence to finite existence. Everything wrong with the world is left at the door of existence. True, estrangement happens in existence but it is not caused by existence. Rather, it is caused by finite freedom acting negatively. God is responsible for existence. Finite being is responsible for the impact of finite freedom on existence. By limiting existence to finite existence, Tillich limits his theology of existential presence, and thereby struggles to explain how a non-existent God can be present to or in a finite existing world. It is wrong to equate all existence with finitude. Tillich burdens existence with the baggage of finitude. Existence becomes exclusively conditioned existence populated only by finite existents which are subjected to all the limitations, tensions, restrictions and qualifications of the ontological polar elements and categories within the basic ontological structure of self-world.

Earlier within this section, we regretted the fact that Tillich makes existence a correlate of nonbeing with all the negativity that brings to existence. By asserting that existence means partly "standing-in" nonbeing while partly "standing-out" of nonbeing, Tillich has almost reified or personified nonbeing in a threatening way and, by implication, suggested that existence could in some way be reversible. Our Immanuel theology is clear on the point that existence comes as a gift from God, and in the divine plan for creation existence is irreversible. Existence, once granted, cannot be threatened by non-dialectical nonbeing

(*ouk on*) which is total and absolute nothingness. As the Giver and the Ground of finite existence, God is the Guarantor of finite existence who champions over and ensures the eternal conquest of non-dialectical nonbeing. God cannot be the ground of divine existence which is eternal. However, we can say in our panentheistic Immanuel theology of presence that God includes but transcends all finite existents. Obviously God does not and could not transcend divine existence for that would be to imply divine self-annihilation.

Existence is universal because it is enjoyed by all that is. In God's case it is eternal because God always is in the eternal now. Divine existence reflects the character of God as unconditional, absolute, infinite, unlimited and ultimate. It is also one and unifying because God the Creator panentheistically accommodates all finite existence within divine existence. This is the origin of all presence made possible by God sharing the gift of existence with finite being which exists within God in its own finite way, that is as conditioned, determinate, limited by finitude, manifold, particular and concrete. Presence emerges as sharing and participation in the original eternal existence of the all-inclusive God Who Is. Existence is the divinely-shared universal framework of one reality within which a creative God gives existence to the finite. Presence arises with the appearance of the finite manifold. Such finite differentiation, generated within God's inclusive universal existence, makes presence possible. Finite existence remains within God as ground of finite existence, but the divine ground also eternally exists in a qualitatively different and transcendent way beyond the finite existence it includes. God exists as God. Finite being exists within God but always as finite.

Despite the different divine and finite modes of existence, all existence as such, both divine and finite, is strangely neutral in that it shares a common quality or characteristic, namely reality. In our Immanuel theology, the "real" equation emerges out of the question of reality. All that exists, God and finite being, is real. All that is real exists. Reality means existence. Existence equals reality. This equation stands as correct beyond the divine-finite distinction. When God creatively shares the gift of existence, God is sharing reality, and shared reality is the arrival of presence. After all reflection and analysis which recognises modifications within existence, within reality, Immanuel theology acknowledges that, panentheistically, there is only one comprehensive and all-inclusive divine reality which reveals itself as shared divine existence, the well-spring of all

existential presence. The unifying gift of shared existence is from God and therefore it is good.

By sourcing finite existence in God as its ground, by giving back to God full credit and responsibility for finite existence, Immanuel theology seeks to broaden the basis of Tillichean theology's existential presence, make it more positive and align it more closely with his own strongly-held view that there is only one realm, one reality inclusive of both the transcendent and the transcended within the transcendent. Equating existence universally and inclusively with reality also accords with Tillich's concept of the "really real" and its identification with "the unconditioned ground of everything real, or the unconditioned power in every power of being"¹²⁶. Mirroring our distinction between divine and finite existence within the totality of universal existence, Tillich distinguishes between the "really real" ("truly real") and the seemingly real (which is not unreal) within the totality of reality.¹²⁷

In the best interests of defending a strong theology of existential presence in the face of Tillich's negative perception of existence, we also need to refer to Tillich's declaration of the non-existence of God: "God does not exist. He is being-itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore, to argue that God exists is to deny him".¹²⁸ At first sight this startling statement from a Christian theologian would appear to contradict flatly even the possibility of any theology of divine presence. We should hasten to say that we do not believe that Tillich was denying that there is God. Rather Tillich was anxious to make the point that God does not exist in the way finite being exists and that, once again, we must be clear that God is not a being among or alongside others. Given Tillich's narrow view of existence as meaning the manner in which finite being exists, then it should not be a surprise that Tillich refused to link God and existence in his assertion of the non-existence of God. In effect he was speaking of the non-(finite style) existence of God. Bringing "God's existence down to the level of that of a stone or a star, ... makes atheism not only possible, but almost unavoidable".¹²⁹ Like Aquinas, Tillich agrees with the classical Christian doctrine that in God essence and existence are identical, and on that basis Tillich clearly affirms the existence of God. "If existence in God is thought of as united within his

¹²⁶ *PE*, p.76; see also pp.73 and 299.

¹²⁷ *ST I*, p.101 : "The seemingly real is not unreal, but it is deceptive if it is taken to be really real."

¹²⁸ *ST I*, p.205.

¹²⁹ *TC*, p.18.

essence, I could apply this concept to the divine life.”¹³⁰ Hopefully this clarification confirms that, on this vital question about God’s existence, Tillich’s theology of existential presence is in fact consonant with our Immanuel theology.

Formulating a meaningful theology of existential presence is greatly challenged by Tillich’s multiple use of ontological terms and abstract concepts. His abstractions often dominate large areas of his theology in a way that tends to depersonalise the intimacy and connectedness associated with existential presence.¹³¹ However, Tillich states that his abstract ontological concepts “must be understood symbolically and in terms of the existential correlation of man and God”.¹³² Notwithstanding the mystery of God’s inner life and nature, panentheism presents an inclusive picture of the finite world already and always present relationally within an encompassing God whose creatively divine initiative makes possible and eternally guarantees finite participation in the life of God. Tillich’s insistence that we should not conceive of God in any finite way as a being, no matter how supreme, among other beings imports elements of distance, detachment and divine anonymity into his theology of presence, leaving us with a vague generalised view of a God lacking distinctive features or individuality. God, from the human perspective of a finite world struggling with the negativity of Tillichean existence, seems to recede as a faceless or featureless reality into the background. This is cold comfort for finite being seeking the reassurance of close identifiable divine presence to counterbalance the existential predicament of a finite world.

In Tillich’s abstractions of God as ground, abyss, the depth, the unconditional, ultimate concern, meaning-reality, super-existing and so on, we have evidence of Tillich, striving to “name” the mystery that is God. On the positive side, Immanuel theology recognises that Tillich’s panentheism repeatedly surfaces to express the supportive and empowering inclusivity of God. This contributes to a theology of presence. Naming God theologically

¹³⁰ Tillich, *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p.339. The same point is covered more fully by Tillich when he writes of God: “He is not subjected to a conflict between essence and existing”, and referring to God’s power of self-actualisation he states that “His existence, his standing out of his essence, is an expression of his essence. Essentially, he actualises himself” (*ST 2*, p.23). For a full critical treatment of Tillich’s position on the non-existence of God see R.R.N. Ross, *The Non-Existence of God: Linguistic Paradox in Tillich’s Thought* (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1978).

¹³¹ For example, when speaking of the aseity of God, that is, the theological view that divine being is self-derived, Tillich says: “There is no ground prior to him which would condition his freedom ... there is nothing given in God which is not at the same time affirmed by his freedom ... freedom means that which is man’s ultimate concern is in no way dependent on man or on any finite being. ... A conditioned God is no God. ... God is his own destiny” (*ST 1*, p.248). This image of the self-sufficient distant God, bathed in Tillich’s abstractions, could give the distinct impression that God’s presence to or with the finite world is incidental and peripheral. A panentheistic theology of presence would strongly dispute that notion.

¹³² *ST 1*, p.248.

is a difficult, imprecise and anthropomorphic exercise. Likewise, “numbering” God theologically is not easy. Rejecting polytheism with its multiple Gods, theists assert simply that there is, and can only be, one God. This lends a special or unique character to the idea of one, undivided, undiluted and undiminished divine presence. If there can be only one infinite, there can be only one God. However, even the idea of *one* God would not find favour with Tillich because for him God is not a person, not a supernatural individual. Individuality and identity come with substance. Tillich rejects the application of the Western metaphysics of substance to the notion of God because that would be to individualise and personalise God, ultimately limiting and conditioning the divine. God is not “the essence of all essences, the universal essence, for this would be to deprive him of the power of self-actualisation”.¹³³

Tillich might agree that God is undifferentiated inclusive reality, singular but not single. The consequent exclusion of one-to-one encounter with the divine presence will be touched upon when the third and phenomenological model of presence is considered (3.5 below). Given the immensity, immeasurability and inexhaustibility of God, counting God makes little sense because numbering presupposes limits and dimensions as the measurable character of an entity with which the counter or measurer can have an external relationship. But nothing can be outside God. God has no exterior, no outer limit, and therefore cannot be counted. There is no external perspective from where God is measurable by the finite. The infinite cannot be numbered. God cannot be enumerated, even by the number one which would imply one separate unit or entity. For that reason Tillich correctly insists that, as mentioned earlier in this section, God is not *a* deity, *an* individual, *a* person or *a* being of any kind.

That viewpoint has repercussions for any theology of presence dependent upon a one-to-one form of relational theology where self and other confront one another as separate presences. Presence is not a stand-off. True presence, like authentic relationship, is mutually inclusive and involves sharing, participation and even an element of *perichoresis*. *Perichoresis*, a term usually reserved to describe the inner relations of the Trinity, is used here to suggest the intimacy of the union, the mutual indwelling and interpenetration associated with Tillichean pantheistic presence where God includes the world within divine life as shared with finite being. Despite Tillich’s elimination of God as a divine person, individual or being, this pantheistic presence, with its perichoretic character,

¹³³ *ST* 2, p.23.

does not seem in the least impersonal, detached or distant. On the contrary, it is a personal and intimate surrounding presence, a “wraparound” presence which reassuringly envelopes finite being holistically within the totality of the divine. Avoiding any spatial connotations, this generous and comprehensive presence is qualitatively relational. It is a presence within which God embraces all being, and it is a “place” or relationship where finite being is always an insider, never an outsider.

On this analysis, Tillich’s abstract conceptions of God as unconditional, as ground, abyss, meaning-reality, super-existing and so on, take on a new warmth and inclusivity, making the ideas of divine individuality or personhood much less important, if not almost redundant, in a panentheistic theology of divine presence. By contrast, the personalist view of divine presence, where God is individualised and personified, must rely upon the less appealing and more confrontational notion of presence as head-to-head, person-to-person, face-to-face style of encounter where there is a slightly threatening element of challenge over contested space. One-to-one encounter lacks that aspect of fusion associated with authentic presence. Tillich’s panentheistic terms sound abstract at a certain level but, considered carefully and fully understood in the context of a theology of presence, they convey the more profound totalising impact of whole person inclusivity in communion with the rest of finite being, and all within the divine. Immanuel as God Present enfolds all without exception or exclusion.

This connects well with the inclusive existential model in our Immanuel theology of presence. If God is the ground and power of all being, and if finite being has both essence and existence, then God is the ground of finite existence. As ground and power, God maintains all finite beings in existence. This is the panentheistic interface, within the one composite reality, which both makes possible and guarantees God’s presence with and in the world. God is with the existing world as the ground of existence (the existential model) because the existing world is with and in God who is the ground of its essence and finitude (the ontological model). God as Creator and Sustainer of finitude, of all being, double-grounds being by grounding both essence and existence. The word “double” is not to be understood quantitatively, because essence and existence, as qualifications of being, are not separate entities or “parts” of being. To avoid ambiguity and to maintain the integrity of finite being, it might be better to say that God simultaneously grounds the essential and the existential aspects of finite being.

However, a further factor has a detrimental effect on Tillich's theology of existential presence. By equating existence with finitude, and by linking both closely with nonbeing, Tillich challenges his own claim that there is only one composite reality which, in a combination of transcendence and immanence, simultaneously accommodates the transcendent and the finite. This divinely unified but infinite reality is the only realm, although allowance has to be made for "internal" differentiation or distinction between the infinite and the finite. Tillich's panentheism easily sustains the ontological model of presence, because for him the finite is within the infinite ontologically. God as matrix of reality includes all, and the finite can be considered, not a separate realm, but rather like a "sub-realm" within the one and only eternal and infinite realm. The problem about establishing an acceptable existential model of divine presence consistent with Tillich's theology, is that he seems to have such an aversion to existence that he has effectively locked existence within the restricted sub-realm of the finite. It is almost as if Tillich was "protecting" God from contamination by putting existence into quarantine within finite being. By insulating God from existence, with all its alleged negativity, limitations and its conditioning character according to Tillich, a barrier is being raised in the existential context between the transcendent and the finite. Given these existential obstacles, how can God break into finite existence? How is divine participation in existential presence even a possibility without God ceasing to be God? This presents enormous problems for Tillich when he comes to consider the mystery of the Incarnation which, for him, is the only theological paradox.

From the perspective of Immanuel theology, Tillich's version of the theology of creation and fall raises additional difficulties with particular reference to Tillich's analysis of existence. The consequences of this are important and widespread for a theology of presence.¹³⁴ Our Immanuel theology disagrees with Tillich on his point that conflictive finitude prevents God's appearance in the finite. God conquers conflict and is certainly not blocked or limited by finite conflict. If it were otherwise, divine existential presence would be impossible and the panentheistic view of the God-world relationship would unravel. The incarnational door between God and creature must be kept open. God is not limited or restrained by the fact of finite conflict.

¹³⁴ Tillich writes: "Two central theological doctrines are based on the doctrine of creation, namely, Incarnation and eschatology. God can appear within finitude only if the finite as such is not in conflict with him. ... The formula *creatio ex nihilo* is not the title of a story. It is the classical formula which expresses the relation between God and the world" (*ST I*, p.254).

There is a further underlying assumption in Tillich's statement. He makes a "protective" distinction between creation and conflicted finite existence. He attempts to "protect" God from responsibility for the existence of the finite. To effect this, Tillich equates the distinction between essence and existence with "the distinction between the *created* and the *actual* world ... the *backbone of the whole body of theological thought*".¹³⁵ Profound disagreement between Tillich and our Immanuel theology emerges here. Tillich drives a wedge between creation and finite historical existence around which is formed a climate of alienation from God. We agree that creation and the Transcendent Fall are different events generated by two separate initiatives, one divine and one human, but we disagree with Tillich's grouping and association of certain elements within each of the two events. For Tillich, creation happens through the initiative of God as Creator who brings forth finite essence with its potentiality. With that we would not disagree, although Tillich seems to personify finite freedom in a state of dreaming innocence in his creation scenario from which he excludes existence and actuality. We do not concur with Tillich's exclusion of existence from the divine creative initiative. Existence and actuality belong with and arise from the creative activity of God. In addition, even created potentiality unactualised within essence *already exists* as power not yet activated. From creation onwards essence and existence belong together. Creation, not aroused finite freedom, is the acquisition and sharing of existence.

Tillich presents the Transcendent Fall as self-actualising finite freedom driving beyond dreaming innocence and succumbing to the "temptation" to exist. "The possibility of the transition to existence is experienced as temptation".¹³⁶ Our Immanuel theology rejects the idea that finite historical existence is chosen or generated by self-actualised finite freedom. It also disputes the notion that, without God the Creator, finite freedom can self-actualise. It is God who creatively empowers finite freedom and it is the Creator, not finite freedom, who grants the gift of existence. Divinely gifted finite existence is not negative, although we concede that the later decisions of finite freedom can import negativity and conflict into historical existence. It is wrong to distance God the Creator from existence by claiming that "finite freedom makes possible the transition from essence to existence".¹³⁷ God, not actualised finite freedom, is responsible for generously granting existence to finite being. Finite freedom, not God, is responsible for any negativity or conflict emerging within finite existence.

¹³⁵ *ST 1*, p.204 (our italics).

¹³⁶ *ST 2*, p.24.

¹³⁷ *ST 2*, p.36.

Manifold finite essence brings difference and diversity. Existence suggests affinity. Our Immanuel theology of divine presence, in opposition to Tillich, asserts that essence is created by God, and existence is shared by God. While God exists eternally and infinitely, and finite being exists finitely, the “kinship” of finite being with God is founded on the divine sharing of gifted existence. The existence of the finite emanates from God, not from finite freedom. God is not “tainted” by existence. God is the origin and ground of finite existence and, therefore, God is the ground of existential presence. Panentheistically, Immanuel theology can affirm that creation ushers in the existential presence of God “in” the world as it simultaneously ushers in the ontological presence of finite being “in” God. It is the Creator, not finite freedom, which invites finite being into the divine presence. An eternally existing God extends existence to embrace created being by becoming, through creation, the ground of finite historical existence. As existential ground, God has already opened up the possibility of the divine transcendent entering human history which is itself a form of finite existence. God as divine presence can and does impact everywhere and all the time in creation which is not capable of excluding the Creator. God’s creation brings transcendent existential inclusion in God as ground of finite existence.

We agree with Tillich that finite freedom must take full responsibility for the fall and its consequent estrangement as experienced in finite existence. We do not agree that “actualised creation and estranged existence are identical”.¹³⁸ Because God actualises creation by giving existence to essence, actualised creation precedes estrangement in finite existence and is not identical with it. Tillich correctly claims that “existence cannot be derived from essence”,¹³⁹ but it does not follow that it arises from aroused finite freedom self-actualising itself. Indeed, finite freedom is part of the essence of finite being and, on Tillich’s own account, existence cannot be derived from essence, and therefore cannot be derived from freedom as a part of essence. Furthermore, Immanuel theology also struggles with Tillich’s claim that there is a “point of coincidence between the end of creation and the beginning of the fall”.¹⁴⁰ It appears that, for Tillich, existential presence is instantly fraught with alienation and estrangement from the “end” of creation. But creation continues into finite existence. Perhaps Tillich was restricting his statement about the end of creation to what he refers to elsewhere as “originating creativity”.¹⁴¹ Creation does not “end” with the fall. Finite existence has the constant support of the Creator because it is

¹³⁸ *ST 2*, p.44.

¹³⁹ *ST 2*, p.44.

¹⁴⁰ *ST 1*, p.256; see also p.255 and *ST 2*, p.44.

¹⁴¹ *ST 1*, pp.261-263.

panentheistically held and sustained within eternal divine existence. God's presence is continuously creative because Immanuel never withdraws divine existential presence from the world.

More significantly, and in defence of our existential model of divine presence, we oppose Tillich's view that the doctrine of the fall is the transition from essence to existence, an event leading to what he variously describes as a "break", a "gap", a "split" and even a "leap", between essence and existence.¹⁴² Unfortunately, this language conveys the impression, not just of "separation from the creative ground"¹⁴³, but also radical division within conflicted finite being itself. The word "transition" adds further confusion, because it connotes the passing away from essence altogether, and the passing over exclusively to existence. We cannot have existence without created essence, and we cannot have created essence without existence. This brings us back to creation as the Creator's production of created essence together with the simultaneous sharing of existence with created finite being. Creation involves both the production and the actualising of essence. It is the eternal divine bonding of essence and existence as actualised finite being. The fall is not about splitting essence and existence, and it certainly is not about replacing essence with existence. Perhaps Tillich's clumsy use of the word "transition" was really intended to convey the idea of transformation, where essence is transformed into actualised essence through God's sharing of existence. But that is God's work. It is incorrect to say that "Finite freedom is the turning point from being to existence"¹⁴⁴ because existence is an integral part of being and finite freedom is not self-actualised. Finite freedom is aroused by God, not by itself. God, as source and ground of existence, is the turning point.

Without intending to parody Tillich's ontotheology, based so crucially on the essence-existence dichotomy, it can be stated that, according to Tillich, creation is good; created essence is good; finite existence is bad because that is where it all goes wrong; therefore creation in existence is creation at risk; so creation must be rescued from existence through a process of essentialisation which we will explore later in chapter five, below. Our Immanuel theology differs greatly from Tillich's position. Existence is not the source of distortion. It is where, not why, distortion afflicts the actual. Immanuel's creation is good; creation includes the divine gift of shared existence; so existence is good and is at the

¹⁴² See *ST 1*, p.256 (a "break"); *ST 2*, p.23 (a "split" and a "gap"); p.44 (a "leap"); *ST 3*, p.395 (a "transition").

¹⁴³ *ST 1*, p.256.

¹⁴⁴ *ST 1*, p.165.

centre because Immanuel is at the centre as the ground of finite existence; finite being expressed as finite freedom needs to be rescued by Immanuel, not from existence, but from the negativity of some of its own finite options and decision-making. Finite existence is where Immanuel as the eternal God Present enters in order to rescue or save existing free finite being. Immanuel's dynamic existential presence saves finite freedom *in* existence, not *from* existence.

Tillich's claim that the doctrine of salvation involves the transition from existence to essentialisation¹⁴⁵, suggesting the elimination of existence, is strikingly at variance with our Immanuel theology which protects God's eternal existential presence by protecting existence. The context of Immanuel's presence is the divine holding of creation in the continuing gift of shared existence. Immanuel does not snatch finite being back out of existence. Rather, Immanuel, by being existentially present, consolidates finite being in existence. By creating finite being and sharing existence with it, God has created the existing concrete, and therefore dwells as divine presence in it. Despite Tillich's negative view of finite existence, Immanuel, as Creator of the concrete which panentheistically remains within the divine life, cannot be limited by the concrete nor exiled from it. God is forevermore present to and in the concrete existential character of creation.

With reference to the fall it is equally wrong to suggest "that the very constitution of existence implies the transition from essence to existence"¹⁴⁶. Existence is from God because God is and has eternal existence. If one speaks of existence before creation, this can only mean the divine existence which is not "before" in any sense of temporal existence. When theologians refer to pre-existence they are actually referring to pre-finite existence, pre-creation divine eternal existence which precedes finitude, the fall and estrangement. Pre-existence is the priority and the primacy of divine eternal existence that eternally defeats nonbeing (*ouk on*) which is the total absence of all existence. We can speak of creation *in* existence to mean the transformation of the existence which belongs to the divine life into the existence which belongs to creatureliness. It is more adequate to speak of creation *with* existence, for existence is the form of finite existence in the creative ground of the divine life as well as in creaturely existence. Such is the double character of existence with respect to creation, differentiating between God's pre-creation eternal existence and existence shared, albeit in the mode of finitude, and granted to finite being at

¹⁴⁵ *ST* 3, p.395.

¹⁴⁶ *ST* 2, p.38.

creation.¹⁴⁷ This is an important distinction for our theology of presence, because it allows Immanuel theology to recognise the eternal existential nature of divine presence and, at the same time, to put God at the heart of finite existence by distinguishing between God as eternal ground of finite existence and Immanuel as participant in existential finite being.

Unlike Tillich, who strove to keep God and existence apart at creation, thereby generating difficulties for his doctrines of Incarnation and eschatology, our Immanuel theology acknowledges the necessity of holding God and existence tightly together by proclaiming God as the source and ground of finite existence. In this way, our Immanuel theology seeks to act as a corrective to parts of Tillich's theological system, and to rebalance aspects of his thinking by presenting existence positively as the divine gift of God's presence. Existence is not an escape from God. It comes to creatures with both a divine mandate and an invitation to explore the presence of God for all eternity.

3.4.4 Twinning Christological Panentheism and Panentheistic Christology

Incarnation is sometimes explained as a form of *kenosis*, a process of divine self-emptying, as God enters concrete, historical existence as experienced by human life in its finitude.¹⁴⁸ This can be too easily misunderstood as some mysterious type of divine reduction where God is kenotically present in a diminished way in a concrete situation as if God led two lives, one divine and one human. Incarnational presence should not be misinterpreted as a dilution of divine presence. God's existential presence in any format in the world is never limited or conditioned by concrete finite being. According to the Chalcedonian formulation, Jesus Christ is both truly and wholly God, and also truly and wholly human. God's divinity is not reduced in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. There is no diminution in the infinite power and awesome glory of almighty God incarnately present as Jesus Christ. God is totally present in the concrete which itself is totally and panentheistically present in God as creative Ground of being. God is present *in* (or *to*) the concrete world, but God is present *as* the concrete person of Jesus Christ. Presence *in* (or *to*) indicates that being's manifold elements relationally impact or influence each other and, through this relatedness, share themselves by participation in¹⁴⁹ their presence to each other. Presence *as* signifies that, apart from and prior to its relatedness, each element of manifold being has a real and

¹⁴⁷ At *ST 1*, p.257 Tillich refers to the double character of time with respect to creation, and he talks about "time before creation", "creation *in* time" and "creation *with* time". Here we have paraphrased and adapted his thought by applying it to the double character of existence being articulated in our Immanuel theology.

¹⁴⁸ Tillich states his opposition to the concept of *kenosis* in strong terms when he says: "the necessity of explaining the full humanity of Christ in terms of *kenosis*, as Christ emptying himself of infinite power ... is a Christology of absurdities" (Tillich, "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation", p.138).

¹⁴⁹ *ST 2*, p.119 " 'In' is the preposition of participation".

separate identity in its own right. Presence *in* (or *to*) highlights relatedness. Presence *as*, while not denying relatedness, without which it would not be presence, additionally points to the separateness and identity of the underlying reality *per se* of that which is present. Presence *as* incorporates the shared relatedness of presence *in* (or *to*) but goes beyond that. For Immanuel theology this is reminiscent of one of Tillich's own ontological elements, the polarity of individuality and participation.

On the central question of the Incarnation, the crucial difference between Tillich and our Immanuel theology is the difference between presence *in* (or *to*) and presence *as*. For Tillich the Incarnation is about God's presence *in* (or *to*), about relatedness and participation where God is present *in* and empowers Christ who is finite essential man, to appear by actualising in the personal life of Jesus without being conquered by the conditions of existential estrangement. Tillich denies the divinity of Jesus Christ and limits the Incarnation to relatedness. "It is the eternal relation of God to man which is manifest in the Christ".¹⁵⁰ Christ is essential man, "him who represents God to man"¹⁵¹ and, therefore, Christ is not God. Indicating Christ as essential man Tillich says:

One could also speak of essential God-manhood in order to indicate *the divine presence in* essential manhood; but *this is redundant*, and the clarity of thought is served best in speaking simply of essential manhood.¹⁵²

For our Immanuel theology, the Incarnation is about God's presence *as*, which includes presence *in* (or *to*) with all the implied relatedness and participation, but which goes further by affirming that the full undiminished reality of God is actually present in the world *as* Jesus Christ who is existentially and simultaneously both God and human, the pantheistically finite-infinite God. Our Immanuel theology can hold this position because it acknowledges God as Ground of existence, and that makes possible the eternally existing infinite God entering historical existence without ceasing to be God. In our Immanuel theology, the Incarnation is the point of coincidence in the dialectical relationship between the infinite and the finite, where the finite and the infinite are pantheistically one in God, where the infinite is in an intrinsic relationship with perfect finitude, and where there is also a point of coincidence between transcendence and immanence in the Godhead. Within the divine life Tillich can only conceive of a "pre-existing" eternal unity, not union, between God and finite essential man in a state of pure potentiality later to be actualised in the historical Jesus. In his desire to remove the

¹⁵⁰ ST 2, p.96.

¹⁵¹ ST 2, p.93.

¹⁵² ST 2, p.94 (our italics).

influence of Western substance metaphysics from the doctrine of God, he rejects as inadequate the idea of “divine nature” and, with specific reference to the Incarnation, he opts for “the replacement of the two-nature theory by dynamic-relational concepts”.¹⁵³ That move limits his perception of the Incarnation to relationality or relatedness, narrowing God’s Incarnation down to divine presence *in* (or *to*).

In order to “protect” God as infinite and unconditional, Tillich could not concede that God could enter creation as incarnationally finite and human. If only he had followed the logic of his own implicit or latent panentheism, where he already acknowledges that God is not conditioned or limited by the created finite within the divinity as the creative Ground of Being, nor limited by the potentiality of essential forms of finitude held eternally in the inner vision of God “before” creation and ready for release into actualised existence. Why could not God, from all eternity, have within the inner life of the Trinity a form of human finitude already self-actualised and existing from and for all eternity? Therefore, God’s eternal existence includes both humanity and divinity seamlessly and intrinsically fused in the Godhead. The Incarnation is eternal. It does not involve a “transplant” of the human into the divine and it does not signify any change in the eternal character of God. From the first moment of the historical existence of Jesus Christ, the eternal Incarnation erupts into human history when God elects for human embodied revelation as an integral part of the eternal divine plan for universal salvation. With the historical Jesus comes the full-bodied human-divine presence of God. The narrow literal meaning of the term “Incarnation” as enfleshing or embodiment is applicable only from the first instant in the historical life of Jesus. The broader connotation of the word refers to the eternal character of the Incarnation as an integral part of the Godhead.

Historical finite existence is part of creation. As such, it is from God and so it is good; it is blessed or consecrated by the Creator. God privileges creation with existence, and human finitude is especially anointed in God’s image. Therefore, incarnationally and panentheistically, it should not be difficult to conceive of God present as Christ Jesus whose perfect historical human finitude is in total harmony with the divinity. If God created finite time and space, then God can enter that finite space-time continuum *as* God, and not just relationally through the “external” divine creative power which upholds all of creation. Again, we see emerging here our distinction between presence *in* (or *to*) and presence *as*. God, in Tillich’s own view, is the “power” present *in* all finite being. By

¹⁵³ ST 2, p.148.

contrast, our Immanuel theology considers that, in the mystery of the Incarnation, God is more than divine power manifest *in* Jesus. The all-powerful God is self-present *as* Jesus. The *reality* of God is present *as* Jesus. It is presence *as* which makes Jesus the Christ, not presence *in*. Regrettably, Tillich stops at presence *in*, the power of New (finite) Being in Jesus where divine power is *from* God, but is not God, and where the Christ is essential man, not the *Logos* as principle of divine *self*-manifestation.

All these problems for Tillich stem from his conviction about the negativity of existence. Consequently, he could not allow God to appear, that is, to be, under the conditions of existence lest God's unconditionality be compromised. Yet, panentheistically, he had no problem with confirming the reverse proposition, namely that the finite is in the infinite but does not qualify God. Our Immanuel theology has no difficulty here in consistently applying the full implications of panentheism where the finite is in God and God is in the finite without any compromise to the divinity. In addition, our Immanuel theology's positive view of existence as divine gift, of God as eternal existence and also as the ground of finite existence, means that God as the source of finite existence (which is God's existence shared in the finite mode) is not prevented from entering finite existence without the divinity being conditioned. God cannot be locked out of finite existence and restricted to functioning solely as its underlying ground. Finite existence is rooted in God.

Our Immanuel theology proposes a combination of christological panentheism and panentheistic christology. The phrases "christological panentheism" and "panentheistic christology" are, to some extent, interchangeable and complementary in that both refer to the question of the Incarnation. However, the different terminology reflects two distinctly nuanced, but connected, approaches to an overall understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation. Christological panentheism is weighted theologically towards a consideration of the Incarnation within the wider context of a finite-infinite God. Panentheistic christology, pointing to the mysterious union of the divine and the human as embodied in the concrete historical person of Jesus Christ, will necessitate later in this section of our thesis the introduction of the idea of a doctrine of two finitudes as a legitimate expression and context for panentheistic christology. Taken together, christological panentheism and panentheistic christology merge to offer a picture of the Incarnation as a unique dialectical relation of finite and infinite in Jesus Christ where the finite humanity works in perfect harmony with the divinity which sustains it, but where the divinity upholds and does not overrun the distinctive humanity of Jesus Christ. The finite as Christ's humanity is

panentheistically within the divinity of Jesus Christ, respected and differentiated from the divinity which is not conditioned or limited by Christ's humanity. The historical particularity of Christ's humanness does not diminish the divinity, just as the finite in historical existence and panentheistically in God, does not restrict the infinity of the divine Ground of Being.

Our Immanuel theology offers this twinning of christological panentheism with panentheistic christology as a possible way of addressing the Incarnation, the mystery of a finitely-embodied infinite God. The key to unlocking this paradox is to take the positive view of existence as a shared divine gift, finite existence as participation in a finite way in eternal existence. The Incarnation is where God as the "finite-within-the-infinite" deity chooses to exist simultaneously, not in two separate contrasting natures because the Incarnation is eternal and the one undivided Godhead is eternally divine-human in character, but in two dimensions or modes of existence, where the finite dimension of existence is "lived" panentheistically within the divine eternal existence.

There is a major difference between panentheism as ordinarily understood and our christological panentheism. Ordinary panentheism reflects the extrinsic relationship between Creator and creature. Christological panentheism refers to the intrinsic relationship encompassing the eternally-existing, divine-human character of God, and points to the salvific posture and profile of an infinite God who enters embodied finite historical existence out of love for fallen creatures. Jesus Christ is not a creature of God.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ However, for Tillich, Jesus Christ is exclusively a human being. He says "In as much as Jesus as the Christ is a *creation of the divine Spirit*, according to Synoptic Theology, so is he who participates in the Christ made into a new creature by the Spirit" (*ST 2*, p.119, our italics). In various ways and places, Tillich, both directly and indirectly, implicitly and explicitly, asserts the creaturely status of Jesus Christ as a finite being, albeit the first and therefore unique creature to overcome the "gap" between essence and existence by prevailing over the conditions of existence. Corroboration of Tillich's view that Jesus Christ was finite is threaded through his terminology such as the following: "Jesus, like every man, is finite freedom ... the complete finitude of Christ ... Jesus as the Christ is finite freedom ... the full humanity of Jesus as the Christ, his finite freedom ... his real finitude" (*ST 2*, p.127); "the finitude of Jesus of the Christ ... the seriousness of his finitude" (*ST 2*, p.132); "his permanent unity with God" (*ST 2*, p.134), thus implying he is united with God but is not God because unity is not identity; "the undisrupted unity of the centre of his being with God" (*ST 2*, p.138), again asserting that the being of Jesus Christ is distinct from God; "salvation can be derived only from him who fully participated in man's existential predicament, not from a God walking on earth, 'unequal to us in all respects' " (*ST 2*, pp.146-147); "through creation, he is finite freedom, like every human being" (*ST 2*, p.147). Tillich defines "Eternal God-Manhood" as "the essential unity between God and man" (*ST 2*, p.127) and later he further explains, "we replace the inadequate concept of 'divine nature' by the concepts 'eternal God-man-unity' or 'Eternal God-Manhood'. Such concepts replace a static essence by a dynamic relation" (*ST 2*, p.148). Here, Tillich is confirming that these concepts refer to a relationship or unity between God and mankind, and that they are not statements claiming divinity for Jesus Christ, despite the use and hyphenated juxtaposition of the words "God-man". Tillich is speaking about the eternal presence of God to essential man, that is to the pre-existent eternal form of mankind, now being actualised in existence

Rather, christological pantheism expresses the self-incorporation of the finite into the divine infinity in an act of self-creation consonant with divine aseity, the outworking of which is the self-manifestation of divinity as an incarnate God. Whether we use the word “uncreated” or the term “self-created” interchangeably, christological pantheism is pointing to the reality of a God who is both the self-created (uncreated) finite and the uncreated (self-created) infinite.

There is no “moment” when Jesus was not divine, and there is no “moment” when Christ was not human. The finite-infinite God of pantheistic christology is not half-human, half-divine. Tillich correctly rejected the popular misconception that the Incarnation involved some kind of metamorphosis, where God historically became a human being or, indeed, where God added or implanted humanity into the divinity. Unlike Tillich, who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, the pantheistic christology of our Immanuel theology asserts that Jesus Christ always was and still is fully human as the self-created finite who is also always fully divine. Jesus is the historical appearance of the already eternally-existing, divine-human God. God’s humanity as Christ is eternal. The Incarnation is not some “late” development by a God taken by surprise at the unfaithfulness of created finite freedom. The eternal divine-human God transcends but includes created time by “living” in the Eternal Now.

In our Immanuel theology the self-created finite is eternally within the self-created infinite in a pantheistic way. By rescuing finite existence from the negativity of Tillich’s ontology, with its deep split between essence and existence, and by attributing all existence to God as eternal existence and ground of finite existence, our Immanuel theology opens wide the existential door between God’s infinite existence and finite existence, and offers a basis for our pantheistic christology where the uncreated finite-infinite God can easily enter human history and existence because the existing finite is already pantheistically within that same finite-infinite God who is Ground of existence.

Unfortunately, after ruling out the possibility of God entering human history and finite existence on the basis of his ontological view of existence, Tillich left himself with no option but to deny the divinity of Jesus the Christ, assert the creaturely status of Jesus Christ, reject the traditional understanding of the Incarnation, and restrict severely the

as Jesus Christ. All such language and terminology amount to a denial, not a declaration, of divinity in Jesus Christ.

existential presence of God in creation to divine power being manifest *in* all finite creatures including Jesus Christ. Tillich cannot countenance the full reality of God present under the conditions of finite existence *as* Jesus Christ. However, for our Immanuel theology and its accompanying panentheistic Christology, divine presence can be both *in* creation and can also be the full divine reality *as* Jesus Christ. For Tillich, God can only be the divine power existentially manifest *in* creation and *in* the person of Jesus Christ. For our Immanuel theology, God is both present power of being as manifest *in* all created finite being, and also the complete divine reality manifest *as* the person of Jesus Christ.

God present *in* refers to divine presence as creative ground and power of being dispersed across all creation, whereas God present *as* refers to the full present reality of God. Presence *in* or existing *in* describes relational presence derived from God's relationship with creation, whereas presence *as* or existing *as* connotes "real" presence which signals and confirms the identity of the divine reality itself present *as* Jesus Christ to creation. By ontologically excluding God present *as* but under the conditions of finite existence, Tillich is compelled to "limit" God's existential presence to derived relational presence *in*. Ironically, this appears to undermine, or at least weaken, Tillich's own idea of one inclusive composite reality which panentheistically embraces creation in God because Tillich's ontological separation of God and finite existence brings serious division into that reality by partitioning God off from existing finite being. By this alternative ontological route, Tillich seems to have reintroduced a fundamental cleavage into reality by making an unbridgeable distinction between (the realm of) the eternally existing God and (the realm of) historical finite existence. By contrast, our Immanuel theology with its panentheistic christology holds the infinite and the finite together in one panentheistic reality unified by the eternal existing God who is also the ground of all finite existence from which the transcendent infinite is not excluded.

What God has chosen to limit is the degree and extent of manifestation of divinity in the historical Jesus Christ. The revelation, not the divinity, of God as Jesus Christ is conditioned by concrete historical existence. Although God Incarnate is fully present *as* Jesus Christ, the manifestation of that divinity as concretely present is determined and delimited by the finitude of God's own creation. The recognition of Jesus Christ *as* Immanuel, *as* God present, is stimulated by God's chosen level of manifestation to the manifold finitude of creation. God is never less than fully present in the world *as* Jesus Christ, but divine epiphany is geared by God to the capability of finite creatures.

Therefore, God's existential presence is total but its manifestation is partial in moments of *Kairos* and breakthrough to allow for the finitude of concrete creation. The epiphany of Immanuel as God Present to the finite, not the underlying undiminished reality of divine existential presence, is limited by finitude. The question of manifestation and finite perception of divine presence is dealt with more adequately in our phenomenological model (section 3.5.1, below).

Tillich's christology is closely connected to his pneumatology. Tillich's concept of spirit embraces both the finite as human spirit (spelt with a small "s") and the infinite as divine Spirit (spelt with a capital "S"), which is the unitive principle of the power and meaning of being within the Godhead. It also unites God with human beings and, more universally, it unites divinity and the created cosmos. For Tillich, the presence of the divine Spirit is centrally at work in the saving event which is Jesus as the Christ, even though "Jesus is for Tillich wholly and entirely human – he is simply and solely a human being"¹⁵⁵. God as Spirit is the subject of the Incarnation because it is God who takes the salvific initiative and makes it happen¹⁵⁶ through Jesus who is the bearer of the Spirit because he is also the bearer of New Being, a work of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Divine Spirit is an important dimension of Tillich's theology of presence, not least because it links his christology with his pneumatology by his affirmation of Pauline Spirit-Christology.¹⁵⁷ Tillich is clear that it is the presence of God as Spirit in Jesus as the Christ which is constitutive of the New Being.¹⁵⁸

Spirit is the answer to the question: How can the infinite, without destroying the finite or its own infinity engage the finite? Can this understanding of divine Spirit be utilised in our pantheistic Immanuel christology to help "explain" or illuminate our comprehension of the Incarnation? The divine finite eternally united within the infinite as God, that is, the

¹⁵⁵ L. Gilkey, *Gilkey on Tillich*, p.149.

¹⁵⁶ *ST 2*, p.93, "God is the subject, not the object, of mediation and salvation."

¹⁵⁷ See J.C. Cooper, *The "Spiritual Presence" in the Theology of Paul Tillich*, especially chapters 3 and 4, pp.115-225; also Table 5, pp.240-243. Cooper offers a comprehensive study of Tillich's acceptance and use of Pauline Spirit-Christology which is woven into Tillich's theology of presence.

¹⁵⁸ *ST 3*, p.144, "The divine Spirit was present in Jesus as the Christ without distortion. ... his human spirit was entirely grasped by the Spiritual Presence; his spirit was 'possessed' by the divine Spirit or, to use another figure, 'God was in him'. This makes him the Christ, the decisive embodiment of the New Being for historical mankind." Tillich's preference for Spirit-Christology over *Logos*-Christology (*ST 3*, p.145) is clear, and he makes a strong connection between his christology and Spirit as presence when he says that Spirit-Christology asserts "that it is not the spirit of the man Jesus of Nazareth that makes him the Christ, but it is the Spiritual Presence, God in him, that possesses and drives his individual spirit. This insight stands guard against a Jesus-theology which makes the man Jesus the object of Christian faith" (*ST 3*, p.146). Again Tillich presses his point by saying "Spirit-Christology acknowledges that the divine Spirit which made Jesus into the Christ is creatively present" (*ST 3*, p.147).

eternal pre-existent form of God as Christ, is made flesh by becoming historically concrete as Jesus through the unitive power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings about the perichoretic union of the divine finitude of the eternal Christ with the historical finitude of Jesus to form the God-man from the first moment of Jesus' historical existence. At no moment does Jesus exist separately from divine Christic finitude. The historical Jesus and the eternal Christic finitude are perichoretically one and incarnate.

The infinite does not exclude the finite¹⁵⁹. Infinity is not the opposite to finiteness or finitude. It does not mean non-finite. It means "not only finite" or "more than finite". Infinity would not be infinity if it opposed or resisted the finite. If the finite was "outside" the infinite, that would contradict or undermine the infinite by limiting it to the non-finite. In that event the infinite would no longer be unconditionally infinite. The infinite is inclusive, not exclusive, of the finite. The finite is within the infinite, and the infinite can express or manifest itself in the concrete finite. This understanding of infinity grounds the idea of the finite-infinite God who can be historically and concretely present in an incarnational finite manner without any loss of infinity or diminution of divinity. Inclusive infinity is the basis of our general panentheistic Immanuel theology. It is the basis also of our specific christological panentheism and panentheistic Christology, and our presentation of the Incarnation as incorporating the concrete finite in the twinning of divine Christic finitude and historical human finitude within the infinite.

In our panentheistic Christology, we distinguish between uncreated divine finitude and created or creaturely finitude. We supplement the two natures of the Chalcedonian christological formulation with the idea of two finitudes, one uncreated and one created, as a way of offering some ontological explanation for the very possibility of the person of Jesus Christ being simultaneously human and divine. The Chalcedonian doctrine is a bold assertion or statement that Jesus Christ was wholly human and wholly divine. Our Immanuel christology is proposing a possible ontological basis for the doctrine of the Incarnation in which Jesus Christ is truly human while remaining truly divine. It is panentheistic because it is based on both uncreated Christic finitude eternally within the infinite, and on the created human finitude of the historical Jesus also within the infinite. The mystery of the Incarnation is that the infinite God somehow enters in a concrete way into historical existence as the particular person of Jesus Christ. In our reinterpretation of

¹⁵⁹ "That which is infinite would not be infinite if it were limited by the infinite. God is infinite because he has the finite (and with it that element of nonbeing which belongs to finitude) within himself united with his infinity" (*ST I*, p.252).

the Incarnation, there is the hypostatic union and harmony of uncreated divine finitude and created human finitude. The uncreated Christic finitude provides the element of concreteness and thus facilitates the entry of the divine Christ into concrete existence. The creaturely human finitude provides the element of particularity in the historical person of Jesus.

The absolutely concrete and the absolutely universal constitute the one person of Jesus Christ. They are identical.¹⁶⁰ In our view, the Incarnation can be designated panentheistically as the christological doctrine of the two finitudes, one divine (Christ) and one human (Jesus), intrinsically and perichoretically united as one within the eternal finite-infinite God.¹⁶¹ God is eternally finite without compromising the divinity because God is also the all-encompassing eternal infinity. Panentheistically, Christic finitude is eternally within the infinity of the one God. "Pan-en-theism" literally means "all-in-God". This inclusive idea can easily embrace the eternity of Christ's finiteness within the infinity of God, without any diminution of the divine. The eternal basis of the Incarnation as *uncreated Christic finitude-within-the infinite* is an intrinsic part of, to coin a word, "theo-en-theism" (God in God), an expression for the perichoretic union of the persons of the finite-infinite Godhead. In a theoentheistic manner, God as Spirit unifies divine Christic finitude as the concrete within the divine infinity as absolute.

In our panentheistic Immanuel Christology, what exactly becomes incarnate? If the word "become" means "turn into", or "transform from one state to a different state", or "cease to be one thing and start to be another thing", then God does not "become" incarnate in that sense. If, however, "become" means "come together" or "combine to form something new without loss of status for any of the conjoined elements" then, of course, the Incarnation can mean that divinity and humanness come together to form the incarnate God from the first moment of the historical existence of Jesus Christ. In our christological scheme, the infinite, through the eternal divine finitude of Christ, comes together with the human

¹⁶⁰ "The *Logos* doctrine as the doctrine of the identity of the absolutely concrete with the absolutely universal is not one theological doctrine among others; it is the only possible foundation of a Christian theology which claims to be *the* theology." (ST, p.17, Tillich's italics).

¹⁶¹ Cf. G. Tavad, *Paul Tillich and the Christian Message* (London: Burns and Oates, 1962), pp.169-174. In an effort to correct Tillich's christology, Tavad offers a biblically-based alternative christology of the Celestial Man. He seeks to effect a transition from Tillich's ontological christology to an historical christology by re-interpreting Tillich's central idea of "Eternal Godmanhood" in the light of Christian scripture. Instead of the Chalcedonian christological doctrine involving two natures, divine and human, and instead of our own panentheistic christology of two finitudes, one divine and one human, within the infinite God, Tavad suggests "the two humanities of Jesus: *the divine Humanity*, which is God himself, the eternal Exemplar of all images of God; and *the creaturely humanity*, in whose shape the divine Humanity appeared on earth at a given moment of history (p.171, our italics).

element to form Jesus Christ in Mary's womb. It is the uncreated Christic finitude, eternally concrete in the infinite God, which becomes "enfleshed" by conjoining with embodied created finitude to constitute the person of Jesus Christ. This is not Incarnation by the simple addition or amalgamation of two separate elements. There is panentheistic fusion of the divine and human finitudes in the one conjoint divine-human person as Jesus Christ. This perichoretic fusion which incarnates the divine uncreated Christic finitude, outlasts the historical life of Jesus Christ. It remains eternally an integral part of the divine life.

The Incarnation is less about embodiment or enfleshment, and more about the mysterious union of the divine and the human as one concrete person. Our conception of panentheistic Incarnation does not refer to any kind of extrinsic unity of the divine Immanuel and an existing human being. Rather, it refers to a simultaneous process within the infinite God involving the creation of finite humanness which, at the same time, is intrinsically fused at the ontological level with the divine uncreated Christic finitude which is eternally within the infinite God. The Incarnation is the point of coincidence between the creation of the humanness of Jesus and its intrinsic fusion with the pre-existing divine Christic finitude to generate the divine-human person of Jesus Christ. In our panentheistic christology, there is no pre-existing human element or person later joined to or fused with God. However, there is the pre-existing divine finite element which, through the Incarnation, is merged with created humanness, making Immanuel concretely present *as* a divine-human person. In our panentheistic Incarnation of Immanuel, God is not transformed in some way into a human being. Equally, an already existing embodied human being does not transmogrify into God. The incarnational character of our panentheistic Incarnation emerges through the coalescence, within the infinite-finite God, of concrete divine Christic finitude and historically embodied created finitude to constitute the person of Jesus Christ. To avoid the ambiguity of the word "become", we return to the substance of our original question by framing it in this manner. In the Incarnation, what exactly is incarnated? It is the divine uncreated Christic finitude eternally within the infinite-finite God, which is incarnated or embodied in a concrete divine-human person, through intrinsic ontological fusion with created humanness.

Our panentheistic christology of Immanuel advances the idea of a finite-infinite God incarnately present as the dual divine-human finitude of Jesus Christ. Such an Immanuel christology is a significant modification of Tillich's christology because it involves an

important re-interpretation of Tillich's concept of "essential God-manhood" which, for Tillich, only included the word "God" "in order to indicate the divine presence in essential manhood".¹⁶² For us it means a lot more because it points to the existential concrete presence of God manifested, not just *in*, but also crucially *as* Jesus Christ. Our Immanuel christology of two-dimensional finitude, divine-human finitude panentheistically within the infinity of God, is a declaration of both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus Christ who is God existentially and concretely present in the world. By contrast, Tillich's relational Spirit-Christology is a declaration of the exclusively human character of Jesus Christ *in* whom God as divine Spirit is uniquely and specially present in an unambiguous way through the creation of New (finite) Being. There is a significant divergence, not just between the two christologies, but also between Tillich's theology of incarnational presence *in* and our Immanuel theology of incarnational presence *as*.

In Tillich's christology, the medium of divine presence is created New Being of which Jesus Christ is the original bearer. Tillicean first New Being is uninterrupted divine-human unity expressed as the presence of God *in* essential manhood concretised in the historical Jesus as the Christ. New Being in Christ is like a divinely "customised" historical capsule in which God, as Spiritual Presence, paradoxically accomplishes unambiguous entry into the conditions of existence. In our pantheistic christology, Immanuel is present dialectically as the divine-human finite within the infinite, where Christ is eternal and Jesus Christ *as* God is unequivocally present in history. Jesus Christ is the full, perfect and complete expression of the concrete existential presence of Immanuel as God amongst us.

3.4.5 Relevant Applications of Existential Model

God's pantheistic and immanent presence in the world, has existential and concrete implications for a number of areas where theological discourse is directed towards society, culture and the churches. Here, we can allude only briefly to a few possible applications of Immanuel theology in so far as it deals with divine presence in existentially concrete ways. Firstly, in relation to societal structures, hierarchies and power, we are reminded that Immanuel, as God-Present-to-all, is the great equaliser who is omnipresent. There are degrees of divine manifestation, but there are no degrees of divine presence which is always total and complete everywhere in creation. No one is excluded from the presence of God. God, despite different human perceptions and beliefs, is never actually absent.

¹⁶² ST 2, p.94.

Immanuel, as Creator of the manifold, sanctions diversity and difference. Gender, race and other such distinctions are differentiations of equality and should not become the subject of human power-play in the structures of society. Ultimately, all human power and authority is derived from God, should be used with equality and considered as service. The power of Immanuel's presence is the only real power. Tillich's concept of theonomy is at work here. The human exercise and use of the levers of power should not lead to the inequality of unfair and unjust human leverage. Immanuel, the ground of the parity of presence, is the great leveller whose trans-structural, absolute power governs all relative human relationships, structures and hierarchies. All are created equal, and remain equal in the presence of God.

Tillich's inclusive ontological concept of life and his notion of the multidimensional theonomous unity of life, expresses the same universalist and equalitarian views espoused by our Immanuel theology. Hierarchies are human conceptions and constructions. Human hierarchies are relativised in the absolute presence of Immanuel. The panentheism of our Immanuel theology helps to "flatten down" all finite hierarchies in the equalising presence of God. In this respect, Immanuel theology could be used to inform the equality agenda. It could also be imported into ecumenism to influence interchurch and interfaith thinking, dialogue and activities. It could be mutually affirming to operate under the principle of the parity of divine presence, which asserts that God is equally, fully and "really" present in every church, mosque, synagogue, temple and beyond all places and institutions of worship. Could the issue of "real" presence, in an existential and concrete manner, take on a whole new ecumenical meaning beyond discussion of the eucharist?

The panentheistic outlook of our Immanuel theology can also facilitate applications in the sphere where science, faith and nature interact. A theology of nature¹⁶³ ought to be an integral part of any theology of presence. Tillich includes a theology of the inorganic within the context of his ontological concept of multidimensional life. We will deal explicitly, throughout chapter four, below, with Tillich's theology of life as a contribution to Immanuel theology. We referred earlier (3.4.2, above), to Tillich's sacramental view of nature¹⁶⁴ when we discussed his principle of Catholic substance and concrete presence as sacramental. These aspects of Tillich's Immanuel theology provide principles and elements of a theology of nature within a panentheistic view of divine presence. While

¹⁶³ Cf. M.F. Drummy, *Being and Earth: Paul Tillich's Theology of Nature* (Lanham and Oxford: University Press of America, 2000): see especially chapter 3 "Paul Tillich's Theology of Nature", pp.71-106.

¹⁶⁴ See *PE*, chapter VII "Nature and Sacrament", pp.94-112.

nature and the cosmos are included in Tillich's theology of the fall, he enhances his contribution to the development of an eco-friendly theology of nature by ensuring that the whole universe is included in cosmic redemption, universal salvation, universal participation and universal fulfilment. Furthermore, he puts Christ, as the bearer of New Being, at the centre of cosmic salvation and renewal.¹⁶⁵

Additionally, the panentheistic turn in Immanuel theology has equipped it better to offer new theological insights into divine presence centred on the God-world relationship. This facilitates the science-religion discourse where scientists and theologians seek to explore mutually such issues as the possibility of God's relationship with nature and the universe, the character of divine immanence and presence in the world, divine agency and causality, the impact of creative presence in the natural order, God and the origin of the universe, evolution and emergence, and divine action in a world composed of order, chaos and complexity. Our Immanuel theology can bring an understanding of divine presence as relational, existential and concrete, to bear directly on these and other "hot" topics of science-faith dialogue and debate. The panentheistic framework within which the science-religion discussion takes place, incorporates a consideration of, not only God in the world (*relational panentheism*), but also the world in God (*part-whole panentheism*).¹⁶⁶

3.5 God Within: Tillich and a Phenomenological Model of Presence

3.5.1 Phenomenological Character of Presence

In the third model we will concentrate on divine presence in the context of the divine-human relationship. For that reason, our treatment of this model will draw out and emphasise elements of interiority, immediacy and divine immanence, all closely associated with the presence of the God Within. Like the first two models, this one is also being presented as decidedly panentheistic. Again, without implying anything spatial, the God Within model points to God being panentheistically "in" every human being, "in" the human psyche, "in" the self, engaging human consciousness¹⁶⁷ at a deep inner dimension

¹⁶⁵ Tillich states the issue as "... the problem of how to understand the meaning of the symbol of 'Christ' in the light of the immensity of the universe, ... and the possibility of other 'worlds' in which divine self-manifestations may appear and be received. ... The universe will be reborn into a new eon. The function of the bearer of the New Being is not only to save individuals and to transform man's historical existence but to renew the universe. And the assumption is that mankind and individual men are so dependent on the powers of the universe that the salvation of the one without the other is unthinkable" (*ST 2*, p.95). See also P. Tillich, "Redemption in Cosmic and Social History", in *Journal of Religious Thought* 3, 1 (1946), pp.17-27.

¹⁶⁶ "The history of panentheism displays variations of both positions, but the basic distinction between *part-whole* and *relational panentheism* persists" (Cooper, *Panentheism*, p.28, Cooper's italics).

¹⁶⁷ See J.P. Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament*; also J.P. Dourley, *Jung, Tillich and the Quest for Home and Self* (London: Guild of Pastoral Psychology, 1982). These are comparative studies of Tillich and Jung in the

of human reason and awareness. Tillich is clear that, despite estrangement, there is still continuity between God who is the Ground of Being and human beings striving to re-establish and restore full essential humanity which is eternally rooted in God.

For Tillich, essence is the principle of unity with God as Creator. Existence is the principle of distance and detachment. Existence, according to Tillich, distorts essential unity with God, but it does not sever that union. Divine-human unity maintains that vital continuity which allows human experience to detect and to register the divine presence even though the ambiguity of life¹⁶⁸ makes that experience occasional, intermittent, preliminary and fragmentary. The God Within model affords us the opportunity of examining the significance of periodic, human experience of God as ultimate reality, and human consciousness of what Tillich calls the “really real”. “Knowing the really real of our historical existence presupposes the knowledge of the really real in ourselves.”¹⁶⁹

In our third model, Immanuel as God Present is experienced as intrapersonal presence. In what way do we justify designating this model as phenomenological? The nature of human experience and knowledge of God is at the heart of this question. Tillich reminds us that human experience plays an important role in engaging the sources of systematic theology.¹⁷⁰ “Experience is the medium through which the sources ‘speak’ to us, through which we can receive them”.¹⁷¹ In his discussion of “experiential” theologians and “empirical” theology, he notes the significant contrast between the mystical immediacy of the Augustinian-Franciscan tradition which promoted the principle of the immediate awareness of God, and the tradition represented initially by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus who, following Aristotle, espoused the principle of analytical detachment based on human reason.

The reader will recall that in section 2.6, above, we noted Tillich’s preference for the ontological approach (Platonic-Augustinian-Franciscan school) over the cosmological approach (Aristotelian-Thomistic school). Indeed, Tillich once said “call me an

context of human experience and consciousness of the divine presence of the God Within and how that relates to the transcendent God Beyond as ultimate reality.

¹⁶⁸ The ambiguity of life caused by the tension between essence and existence, and the quest for unambiguous life form important parts of Tillich’s theological system dealt with throughout our next chapter which presents Tillich’s theology of life as an expression of his theology of presence.

¹⁶⁹ *PE*, p.73.

¹⁷⁰ *ST I*, pp.40-46.

¹⁷¹ *ST I*, p.40.

‘Augustinian’ ”.¹⁷² He supports St Augustine’s epistemology.¹⁷³ For Tillich, the choice is between two fundamentally different types of human knowledge about God. The choice is between the principle of identity or immediacy and the principle of distance or detachment. It is about perceiving the divine-human relationship as one of either continuity or discontinuity. The conflicting principles of immediacy and distance are not spatial statements about the proximity or otherwise of God. They are ontological statements about the presence of the divine and they are also epistemological statements about human knowledge and awareness of that divine presence. Knowing follows being, as epistemology follows ontology.

Tillich affirms the principle of immediacy and in his historical work he broadly evaluates theological and philosophical development from the thirteenth century onwards according to the extent to which that principle was accepted or rejected.¹⁷⁴ Like Augustine and the Franciscans, he emphasises the experiential immediacy of God to human consciousness. He is concerned that divine presence was perceived by the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition as distant from human awareness, and he disliked the impact that had on succeeding centuries of theological and philosophical development. For Tillich, the principle of participation is an important aspect of both his ontology and his epistemology. His participative ontology shapes his epistemology. The principle of immediacy is the principle of participation because, “in Tillich’s theology, the principle of participation grounds the possibility of religion and so of theology”.¹⁷⁵ According to the principle of identity or immediacy, God is present within the essential nature and structure of human beings. This is the immanent God Within of our third model of divine presence.

Through the principle of participation, Tillich affirms panentheistically the interpretation of the infinite and the finite within human essence, despite the negative and disruptive influence of existence as the principle of distance and separation. The interplay between essence and existence in Tillich’s theology of presence surfaces this time in our

¹⁷² *HCT*, p.111.

¹⁷³ “In the Augustinian tradition the source of all philosophy of religion is the immediacy of the presence of God in the soul or, as I prefer to say it, the experience of the unconditional, of the ultimate, in terms of an ultimate or unconditional concern. This is the *prius* of everything” (*HCT*, p.112).

¹⁷⁴ “I would say, almost unambiguously, that I myself and my whole theology, stand much more in the line of the Augustinian than in the Thomistic tradition. We can trace a line of thought from Augustine to the Franciscans in the Middle Ages, to the Reformers, to the philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the German classical philosophers, including Hegel, to the present-day philosophy of religion, to the extent it is not empirical philosophy of religion, which I think is a contradiction in terms, but a philosophy of religion which is based on the immediacy of the truth in every human being” (*HCT*, p.104).

¹⁷⁵ J.P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure*, p.10.

phenomenological model. Tillich opposes the principle of duality which asserts that God comes from “outside”. For him, God as the creative ground of everything expresses the principle of identity or immediacy because “it means that the power of the divine is present in everything, that he is the ground and unity of everything.”¹⁷⁶ In opposition to deism and Enlightenment theology Tillich offers the principle of identity which is equivalent to “the principle of the infinite in the finite, the principle of mutual within-each-otherness”.¹⁷⁷ This is a perichoretic and panentheistic way of expressing the interpenetration of the finite and the infinite in the context of a theology of divine presence. For Tillich, “religion itself is immediacy, an immediate relation to the divine”¹⁷⁸.

Tillich’s support for the principle of immediacy drew sharp criticism from both Protestant and Catholic theologians, not least from followers of Karl Barth about whom Tillich said “If you take a seminar on Karl Barth, you will see the protest against mysticism, against any form of the principle of identity”¹⁷⁹. Barthians considered Tillich’s theological starting-point anthropocentric. Alexander McKelway echoes the same point when he states, with reference to Schlieremacher’s notion of “feeling” and Tillich’s idea of “ultimate concern”, that “for both men anthropology is the starting place for theology”¹⁸⁰. Ultimately, McKelway is objecting to Tillich’s use of the principle of immediacy to correlate religion and life. Similarly, R.A. Killen concluded that Tillich was being pantheistic by linking the inner life of the Trinity to the dynamics of creation through his application of the principle of participation as a way of explaining the immediateness and intensity of perceptible divine presence to human consciousness.¹⁸¹

Divine immanence and the reality of God Within is understood by Tillich as founded on the principle of ontological participation which gives divine reality its immediacy to all creation. Human experience and awareness of that reality has brought us into the sphere of human knowledge and, therefore, epistemology. Tillich’s preferred epistemological approach to explaining the immanence of God in the human mind is through the

¹⁷⁶ P, p.95.

¹⁷⁷ P, p.94.

¹⁷⁸ P, p.99.

¹⁷⁹ P, p.75.

¹⁸⁰ A.J. Alexander, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1964), p.20.

¹⁸¹ R.A. Killen, *The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1956), p.242. Killen was also concerned that Tillich’s idea of the Creator was deterministic and, therefore, pointed to a Creator-creation relationship which was ultimately pantheistic. He considered that Tillich derived the notion of God as ground of being from Schelling’s pantheism, see p.13. For further examples of the criticism which was directed at Tillich during his lifetime from both Protestant and Catholic quarters see Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure*, pp.12-19.

application of phenomenology. Our designation of the third model as phenomenological conveys the form in which human beings experience the immediate presence of the divine. The phenomenological method which engages in describing meanings should, according to Tillich, be applied by theologians when they are dealing with theology's basic concepts.¹⁸² Phenomenology relies upon the intuition of essences irrespective of their existence because it "is a way of pointing to phenomena as they 'give themselves', without the interference of negative or positive prejudices and explanations"¹⁸³.

Our phenomenological model of divine presence highlights Tillich's explication of the human subjective process involving knowledge, experience, consciousness and self-awareness when human beings conceptually engage with the reality of God's presence. The character of this subjective process is under consideration and Tillich urges us to adopt an attitude of openness to the unconditional.¹⁸⁴ In our third model, two more features of the divine presence emerge from the foregoing quotation where reference is made to the divine as a presupposition and to its "givenness". The presupposition points to the priority of God's presence which ontologically precedes any human phenomenological perception of it. Just as being is "older" than thought, so too is presence "older" than consciousness.

Though aware of the need to maintain an equilibrium, Tillich saw that the struggle to accommodate both divine transcendence and divine immanence within his system was preceded by and predicated upon the "mystical *a priori*".¹⁸⁵ Based on the searching theologian's faith in the reality of God as a present dynamic, Tillich recognises that the point of departure for the theological quest is identical with the point of arrival. This closed loop which is formed by acceptance of God as a given real presence, that is as Immanuel, is founded on faith experienced as ultimate concern. If we are to reach God we

¹⁸² Referring to his own systematic theology he says: "The present system, therefore, begins each of its five parts with a description of the meaning of the determining ideas, before asserting and discussing their truth and actuality" (*ST I*, p.106). Here, in his use of phenomenology, we have further evidence of Tillich asserting the primacy of essence over existence.

¹⁸³ *ST I*, p.106. At *RS*, p.45 Tillich writes about the intellectual point of view being changed by phenomenology: "Instead of dissolving objects by means of critical analysis and of raising the question whether and how such objects exist, the essence of the things themselves is regarded quite apart from the question of their existence." However, Tillich does not use "pure" phenomenology when applying it to religion and spiritual realities. Instead he uses a modified method. "This is 'critical phenomenology', uniting an intuitive-descriptive element with an existential-critical element. The existential-critical element is the criterion according to which the example is selected; the intuitive-descriptive element is the technique by means of which the meaning which is manifest in the example is portrayed." (*ST I*, p.107).

¹⁸⁴ "Openness to the unconditional, turning toward it, receiving and bearing it ... the consciousness of the presence of the unconditional permeates and guides all cultural functions and forms. The divine, for such a state of mind, is not a problem but a presupposition. Its 'givenness' is more certain than that of anything else" (*PE*, p.43).

¹⁸⁵ *ST I*, p.9.

must start with God. Tillich called this loop “the theological circle”.¹⁸⁶ Theology does not invent the mystical *a priori*. It discovers it, or more precisely, it helps to uncover it in the course of theological enquiry. For our Immanuel theology this discovery and awareness of something already present from the start highlights the divine present reality, that is God as Immanuel, as *the a priori*, The First before all else, Prior Presence revealing itself. This perpetual presence is the primary power of the engine room of systematic theology, driving theologians into action in their quest to formulate the most apt, but all too human, conceptions of Prior Presence at the hub of all theological endeavour.

It is a short step for theologians to move from an acknowledgement of God as Immanuel, the Prior Presence with us, to pose basic but important questions about the manner, intensity and proximity of this divine prior or primary presence. If God as Immanuel is related to the world, then how close or how distant is God in the divine relationship to the cosmos? Crucially, how near or how far is God as Presence to people? Is the ever-present God transcendently present or immanently present? For Tillich, of course, God is simultaneously transcendent and immanent.

In striving to deal with “these two classic spatial metaphors”,¹⁸⁷ there is an acknowledged tension between the immanence and the transcendence of God as reflected in Tillich’s writings. Tillich develops “radically immanent themes”¹⁸⁸ by stressing that every created finite being participates in God as Being-Itself. At first glance this immanent view would seem to reduce significantly the transcendent otherness of God. But this is certainly not the case for Tillich who vigorously defends the God of transcendence while simultaneously attacking the idea of a distant God as portrayed by some forms of theism. Here we glimpse the strength of Tillich’s inclusive pantheism.

The “givenness” of God’s presence, discerned by Tillich through his phenomenological approach, points to the idea of manifestation in Tillich’s Immanuel theology. Divine “givenness” is God’s self-manifestation to us and involves human reception as its correlate. If God is the *mysterium tremendum* how is Immanuel close as God-present-within-us in the divine-human encounter? When dealing with the three meanings of the term “correlation”¹⁸⁹, Tillich identifies the third theological usage of the word as operative

¹⁸⁶ *ST I*, pp.8-11.

¹⁸⁷ M.K. Taylor (Ed.), *Paul Tillich: Theologian*, pp.22-23.

¹⁸⁸ Taylor (Ed.), *Paul Tillich: Theologian*, 23.

¹⁸⁹ *ST I*, pp.60-61.

within the sphere of religious experience because it refers to a factual or real interdependence between human ultimate concern and the foundation, source and content of that ultimate concern. The term “correlation” in this third sense has a qualifying effect on the divine-human relationship because it involves divine-human interaction.¹⁹⁰ The importance of this lies in Tillich’s recognition of our Immanuel concept as not just “within us” and “we within” God, but that God-Present is immanently “God for us” and that makes us “we for God”. For Tillich, then, divine presence is correlative and relational.

It is also important to note Tillich’s implicit distinction between the reality of God’s presence and the divine self-manifestation of that presence. God is present for us in his abysmal nature but that may not be manifest to us. Presence and manifestation are different although they can be connected. Presence does not automatically manifest itself, but manifestation implies prior presence, the revealing of what is already present. John Macquarrie uses this same distinction between presence and manifestation with telling effect in the explication of his theology, with particular reference to being and God, revelation, creation and religious symbolism.¹⁹¹ However, apart from presence and manifestation, Tillich introduces a third element, that of human reception. The human reception of, and reaction to, presence made manifest, relating to and appropriating the Immanuel experience is an integral part of our phenomenological model of divine presence. Apart from divine presence expressed as *manifestation to us* (reception) there is also the important issue of *manifestation in* the actualisation of New Being in Jesus. This has already surfaced in our analysis of Tillich’s existential model of divine presence (section 3.4, above), where our Immanuel concept was viewed under the conditions of existence. Part of Tillich’s achievement here is that, for him, correlative presence implied in the last quotation is one way of amplifying his thinking of God-within-us in the divine-human encounter, without reference to spatial thinking and terminology so endemic in the theology of presence. God *within* has become God *for*. “Within” and “for” are both prepositions, but “for” softens the envisaged positional and spatial character of Immanuel’s presence in the divine-human relation. Tillich himself states “I try, not always successfully, to avoid statements about the divine nature which transcend the merely relational, the ‘for us’.”¹⁹² God “for us” does not mean that God is simply good or right or

¹⁹⁰ “Although God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man, God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation. ... There is a mutual interdependence between ‘God for us’ and ‘we for God’. ... The divine-human relation is a correlation” (*ST I*, p.61).

¹⁹¹ J. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London, 2nd Edition: SCM Press, 1977), especially p.87 ff; 114-115; 142-143; 218-219.

¹⁹² *PI*, p.378.

appropriate for us. It means that God's presence does not overpower us. Immanuel "empowers" us as a positive presence, safeguarding our freedom, our ontological distinctiveness, while being on our side, for us, in the battle against nonbeing.

Human reception of, and reaction to, manifestation involves more than simply coming to know something. "Manifestations are effective expressions, not only communications. Something happens through a manifestation which has effects and consequences".¹⁹³ Manifestation is an important element in Tillich's use of phenomenology and it leads directly to his theology of revelation which will now be considered within the context of a phenomenological model of divine presence. Tillich identifies the three marks of revelation¹⁹⁴ as mystery, miracle and ecstasy. Even though revelation brings the mystery within ordinary experience, the mystery itself is not revealed. It remains a mystery. However, the reality of what is revealed and our relation to it is a matter of experience. Both the negative side of mystery (the abysmal element and the threat of nonbeing) and the positive side of mystery (the ground and power of being) in actual revelation become manifest in all aspects of reason as ultimate concern.¹⁹⁵ Deriving from that which is holy, revelatory events are usually "described as shaking, transforming, demanding, significant in an ultimate way".¹⁹⁶ Revelation is always specific in that it registers with one or more people in a specific concrete situation where ultimate concern is experienced.

Every revelation involves an objective event or occurrence (miracle or sign-event) which grasps someone and a subjective experience (ecstasy) wherein someone is grasped. Of particular interest in our consideration of the phenomenological model of presence is ecstasy as the subjective reception of revelation. Ecstasy always features as an integral part of revelation because the mind is grasped or engaged in some way by Immanuel, God Present, as the ground of being and meaning.¹⁹⁷ In its original meaning the word "enthusiasm" (God-is-in) is another term for ecstasy and it is defined by Tillich as "the state of having the god within one's self or of being within the god".¹⁹⁸ All revelatory

¹⁹³ *ST I*, p.175.

¹⁹⁴ Tillich defines revelation itself as "the manifestation of something hidden which cannot be approached through ordinary ways of gaining knowledge. ... A revelation is a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way" (*ST I*, p.108).

¹⁹⁵ "Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately", (*ST I*, p.110).

¹⁹⁶ *ST I*, p.110.

¹⁹⁷ Tillich explains that: "Ecstasy" ("standing outside one's self") points to a state of mind which is extraordinary in the sense that the mind transcends its ordinary situation. Ecstasy is not a negation of reason. ... In being beyond itself reason does not deny itself. "Ecstatic reason" remains reason ... but it transcends the basic condition of finite rationality, the subject-object structure" (*ST I*, pp.111-112).

¹⁹⁸ *ST I*, p.112.

presence is ecstatic. There are ecstatic qualities in the enthusiastic state of mind. Our third model could be called the enthusiastic model to reflect both the immanence of God Within and the panentheistic aspect of that presence.

In the phenomenological model of our Immanuel theology, revelation is both the manifestation of God's presence and also the conscious human reception and experience of that reality. This encounter structure of both divine invitation and human response brings the theology of revelation into close alignment with our theology of divine presence. Tillich explains that revelation is experienced as breakthrough, or *Durchbruch*,¹⁹⁹ of the unconditioned which concerns us ultimately and about which we may speak symbolically. Ultimate concern²⁰⁰ is an important feature of Tillich's phenomenology of divine presence because it correlates the human experience and consciousness of Immanuel revealed as God Present with God as ultimate and unconditioned reality. That correlation is experienced as personal.²⁰¹ As a further expansion of the Tillichean character of our third model of divine presence we note that Tillich forges a close connection between ultimate concern, faith, radical doubt and the courage to be.²⁰² Indeed, Tillich's books, *Dynamics of Faith* and *The Courage to Be*, taken *in toto*, are a substantive contribution to his theology of presence in general, and to the composition of the phenomenological model in particular. In phenomenological terms, human encounter with divine presence registers as "being grasped".²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ See U.C. Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation*, especially chapter v, "The Concept of the Breakthrough of Revelation in Tillich's *Dogmatik* of 1925", pp.117-142, for a comprehensive treatment of Tillich's concept of *Durchbruch*. "There is a clear distinction between *Durchbruch*, which means breakthrough, and *Zerbruch*, which means breaking-apart, or shattering. ... *Durchbruch*, while it ruptures, it allows something new to emerge out of the old without discarding the old" (p.120). Tillich himself says: "Revelation is the breakthrough of the Unconditioned into the world of the conditioned" (*WR*, p.29).

²⁰⁰ See *ST I*, pp.11-15. "The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately" (p.12). "Our ultimate concern is that which determines our being and nonbeing. ... Man is ultimately concerned about that which determines his ultimate destiny" (p.14).

²⁰¹ "The relation of the ground of revelation to those who receive revelation can be conceived only in personal categories; for that which is the ultimate concern of a person cannot be less than a person, although it can be and must be more than personality" (*ST I*, p.156).

²⁰² "Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned" (*DF*, p.1). "Faith as ultimate concern is an act of the total personality" (*DF*, p.4). "The term 'ultimate concern' unites the subjective and the objective side of the act of faith" (*DF*, p.10). "God never can be the object without being at the same time subject. ... In the act of faith that which is the source of this act is *present* beyond the cleavage of subject and object. It is *present* as both and beyond both" (*DF*, p.11, our italics). See *DF*, pp.16-22, 99-105 and *CP*, pp.25-26 where Tillich makes the connection between faith, doubt and the courage to be. Referring to the experience of a person in the state of radical doubt, Tillich relates presence and doubt by commenting "that in the unconditional seriousness of his doubt the divine Presence is effective – though in terms of the divine 'absence' " (*PI*, p.379).

²⁰³ "We have used the metaphor 'being grasped' for describing the state of ultimate concern. And being grasped implies that he who is grasped and that by which he is grasped are, so to speak, at the same place" (*DF*, p.99). "Without the manifestation of God in man the question of God and faith in God are not possible. There is no faith without participation! But faith would cease to be faith without separation – the opposite element" (*DF*, p.100). For Tillich, God's presence through faith involves a mix of participation (out of which

This encounter experience links directly to the importance Tillich gives to a phenomenology of the holy in his theology of divine presence. In turn, this forms an integral part of our phenomenological model. Earlier (section 2.2, above), we considered Tillich's reaction to Rudolf Otto's *Idea of the Holy* which dealt with the experience of the numinous presence of the Holy. The experience of the Holy²⁰⁴ became a constitutive element of the methodology adopted by Tillich in his philosophy of religion. The numinous character of the Holy is encountered as human experience which is both shaking (the divine abyss-*mysterium tremendum*) and fascinating or elevating (the ground of being – *mysterium fascinans*). Tillich explains the dynamics of encounter with the Holy in conjunction with the experience of faith and ultimate concern,²⁰⁵ but he distinguishes between the Holy and the divine even though the meaning of the Holy and the meaning of the divine are interdependent.²⁰⁶ Where the divine is manifest the Holy is experienced. In Tillich's phenomenology of the Holy, human experience of God's presence is central because the experience of the Holy is the experience of divine presence.²⁰⁷ For that reason it finds its rightful place in our phenomenological model where Immanuel is experienced as Holy because Immanuel is experienced as present.

The phenomenological model accentuates the element of human reception and the experiential dimension of our Immanuel theology. However, human subjective activity is only part of the dynamics of the third model of divine presence. The profile and explication of this model would be incomplete without reference to the crucial role played by the Holy Spirit as Immanuel, the divine catalyst in our phenomenology of divine presence. Tillich deals with the action and interaction of the divine Spirit under the symbol of Spiritual Presence.²⁰⁸ For the purposes of the third model of our Immanuel theology we

there emerges the certainty of faith) and separation (out of which there emerges the doubt in faith). The two elements are always found together in any authentic act of faith.

²⁰⁴ One of Tillich's sermons carries the title "The Experience of the Holy", see *SF*, pp.87-92; "The Escape from God", another sermon (*SF*, pp.38-51), also treats of the actual holiness and omnipresence of God.

²⁰⁵ "Where there is faith there is an awareness of holiness. ... What concerns us ultimately becomes holy. The awareness of the holy is awareness of the presence of the divine, namely of the content of our ultimate concern" (*DF*, pp.12-13).

²⁰⁶ "Holiness is an experienced phenomenon; it is open to phenomenological description. ... The holy and the divine must be interpreted correlatively. ... The holy is the *quality* of that which concerns man ultimately. Only that which is holy can give man ultimate concern, and only that which gives man ultimate concern has the quality of holiness" (*ST I*, p.215).

²⁰⁷ Elements of Tillich's phenomenology of the holy can be found in the following sources: *ST I*, pp.215-218 (where Tillich also contrasts the idea of the holy with two other concepts, the unclean and the secular); *ST I*, pp.271-272; *MSA*, chapter IV, "The Holy – the Absolute and the Relative in Religion", pp.124-143 (where Tillich treats human encounter of the holy within the context of religion); *DF*, pp.12-16; *PE*, pp.108-112; *ST 3*, pp.98-102. A helpful summary treatment can also be found in C.J. Armbruster, *The Vision of Paul Tillich*, pp.60-66.

²⁰⁸ "The Spirit of God is the presence of the Divine Life within creaturely life. The Divine Spirit is 'God Present'. The Spirit of God is not a separated being. Therefore, one can speak of 'Spiritual Presence' in

have a particular interest in the character and manner of Spiritual Presence as manifest phenomenologically in the human spirit.²⁰⁹ When dealing with the christological aspects of our existential model (section 3.4.4, above), mention was made of Tillich's Spirit-christology and also New Being as the work of the divine Spirit. God as Spiritual Presence entirely grasped the human spirit of Jesus Christ and became creatively present in him. In our phenomenological model, it is Immanuel, God Present as divine Spirit, who seeks to dwell and work as Spiritual Presence in every other human spirit to create unambiguous life. In these circumstances the relationship between divine Spirit and human spirit is panentheistic,²¹⁰ and the human experience of the Spiritual Presence is ecstatic.²¹¹ In his phenomenology of Spiritual Presence, Tillich describes human reception and experience of the divine Spirit as revelatory, but its ecstatic character does not destroy or adversely affect the essential rational structure of the human spirit in any way.²¹² Even though divine Spirit creates unambiguous life for which human beings yearn, the human spirit cannot force the divine Spirit into a relationship. Tillich makes a distinction between grasping and being grasped. The formation of a relationship with Spiritual Presence happens as the result of a divine initiative.²¹³

order to give the symbol its full meaning. ... 'Spiritual Presence', then, is the first symbol expressing unambiguous life" (*ST 3*, p.107). In his sermon "Spiritual Presence" (see *EN*, pp.81-91) Tillich speaks of Spiritual Presence as follows: "For this is what Divine Spirit means: God present to our spirit. Spirit is not a mysterious substance; it is not a part of God. It is God Himself; but not God as the creative Ground of all things and not God directing history and manifesting Himself in its central event, but God as present in communities and personalities, grasping them, inspiring them, and transforming them" (*EN*, p.84).

²⁰⁹ Tillich's full treatment of the manifestation of the Spiritual Presence in the human spirit can be found at *ST 3*, pp.111-138 and 275-282.

²¹⁰ Using panentheistic phraseology to explain that the divine Spirit is "in" the human spirit, and conversely, that the human spirit transcends itself in response to being grasped by the creative ground "in" which it has its being, Tillich says: "In this context, the word 'in' implies all the problems of the relation of the divine to the human, of the unconditional to the conditional, and of the creative ground to creaturely existence. If the divine Spirit breaks into the human spirit, this does not mean that it rests there, but that it drives the human spirit out of itself. The 'in' of the divine Spirit is an 'out' for the human spirit. The spirit, a dimension of finite life, is driven into a successful self-transcendence; it is grasped by something ultimate and unconditional" (*ST 3*, pp.111-112). Tillich uses further panentheistic description when he says: "In the human spirit's essential relation to the divine Spirit, there is no correlation, but rather *mutual immanence* (*ST 3*, p.114, our italics).

²¹¹ "Ecstasy" is the classical term for this state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence. It describes the human situation under the Spiritual Presence exactly" (*ST 3*, p.112).

²¹² "Ecstasy does not destroy the centredness of the integrated self. Should it do so, demonic possession would replace the creative presence of the Spirit" (*ST 3*, p.112); and again, "The Spiritual Presence does not destroy the structure of the centred self which bears the dimension of spirit. Ecstasy does not negate structure. ... God does not need to destroy his created world, which is good in its essential nature, in order to manifest himself in it" (*ST 3*, p.114). Tillich affirms that, despite the ecstatic influence of Spiritual Presence, the life function of self-integration together with its drive towards centredness, is left intact. In the presence of God, the integrity of the human self is respected.

²¹³ "Man in his self-transcendence can reach for it, but man cannot grasp it, unless he is first grasped by it. ... the human spirit is unable to compel the divine Spirit to enter the human spirit. ... The finite cannot force the infinite; man cannot compel God" (*ST 3*, pp.112-113).

Our Immanuel theology identifies the divine Spirit as central in any Christian theology of divine presence. The Spirit, in trinitarian life, is the principle of unity and integration, uniting the power (abyss) and form (meaning) of the Godhead. So too, the Spirit, as Spiritual Presence, is the principle of unity and integration in all human life, bringing the power and self-manifestation of God, united by the Spirit, into the lives of every human being. As the principle of integration, divine Spirit underwrites and unifies the totality of life which Tillich refers to as his doctrine of the multidimensional unity of life to which we refer (section 4.3, below). The Spirit effects and protects the self-integration and centredness of every person and, at the same time, enters into human awareness at the most profound level by bringing the ultimacy and depth of Immanuel as God Present and manifest, to human consciousness. Divine Spirit participates in human experience as divine presence. By engaging the human spirit, Spiritual Presence works towards the creation of unambiguous life and participation in the transcendent union, and makes itself manifest as faith and love experienced in human life.²¹⁴

In writing about the manner in which human spirit receives Spiritual Presence, Tillich explores the meaning of two spatial metaphors under the terms “inspiration” (breathing into human spirit) and “infusion” (pouring into human spirit). However, he warns against misunderstanding each of these concepts.²¹⁵ Tillich considers that the Spiritual Presence relates to the multidimensional unity of life in general only in an indirect and limited way. When the divine Spirit impacts directly on human spirit, Spiritual Presence should not be conceptualised as some kind of substance or physical cause.²¹⁶ Frequently, he uses the word “impact” to describe the direct influence of Spiritual Presence on human spirit but, again, he is concerned that the term should not be misunderstood as conveying any

²¹⁴ Tillich makes it clear that unambiguous life and the transcendent union beyond the split between essential being and existential being, can be experienced only in a fragmentary and anticipatory way in temporal existential life. “The ‘transcendent union’ answers the general question implied in all ambiguities of life. It appears within the human spirit as the ecstatic movement which from one point of view is called ‘faith’ and, from another, ‘love’. These two states manifest the transcendent union which is created by the Spiritual Presence in the human spirit. The transcendent union is a quality of all ambiguous life ... faith is the state of being *grasped* by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life – it embodies love as the state of being *taken into* that transcendent unity” (*ST 3*, p.129); see pp.129-138 for Tillich’s fuller exposition, especially in relation to faith and love as manifestations of Spiritual Presence in the human spirit.

²¹⁵ For Tillich, inspiration “is not an informative lesson about God and divine matters. The Spiritual Presence is not that of a teacher but of a meaning-bearing power which grasps the human spirit in an ecstatic experience” (*ST 3*, p.115). He also comments on Protestant preference for the term “inspiration” and suspicion of “infusion” terminology which has led, in some quarters, to misleading magic-materialistic notions of the Spirit as some kind of substance or “matter” (see pp.115-116).

²¹⁶ “There is no direct impact of the Spiritual Presence on life in the dimensions of the inorganic, of the organic, and of self-awareness. Divine Spirit appears in the ecstasy of the human spirit but not in anything which conditions the appearance of spirit. The Spiritual Presence is not an intoxicating substance, or a stimulus for psychological excitement, or a miraculous physical cause” (*ST 3*, p.275).

connotation of causality. Divine Spirit is a *presence* which participates in the human spirit on which it impacts.²¹⁷ Despite any limitations fragmenting its impact on people in temporal existence, the activities of Spiritual Presence include the important function of healing²¹⁸ as the Spirit seeks to integrate and elevate the human spirit.

On the principle of transcendence, God is above and beyond everything, but through the principle of immanence, God the creative ground is also present in everything, in every created structure of being²¹⁹ including human spirit. Immanence is given particular prominence in the third pantheistic presence model of our Immanuel theology. Tillich's reference to the "mutual immanence"²²⁰ of divine and human spirit reinforces the pantheistic character of our phenomenological model. Although never constrained or contained by any finite reality, God is present in the *logos* structure of creation. As Spiritual Presence, God is specially and directly proactively present in the dimension of human spirit. Tillich's polarity of participation and individualisation is particularly significant in our perception of the third Tillichean model. There is a two-way pantheistic participation of Spiritual Presence in human life and *vice versa*. However, the work of divine Spirit protects and respects the self-identity and self-integration of each individual personal centre. Spiritual Presence never overruns or "swamps" a human being. It empowers. It never overpowers,²²¹ despite everything that has already been said about divine initiatives and activity in the form of revelation and ecstasy, immediacy, ultimate concern, "being grasped", "impact", breakthrough, the shaking, fascinating and elevating effect of the Holy, inspiration and infusion. Human reception and appropriation of

²¹⁷ "The multidimensional unity of life means that the impact of the Spiritual Presence on the human spirit is *at the same time*, the impact on the *psyche*, the cells, and the physical elements which constitute man. And although the term 'impact' unavoidably uses causal imagery, it is not a cause in the categorical sense but a presence which participates in the object of its impact. ... As the 'impact' of the Spiritual Presence is not a cause in the categorical sense, so it does not start a chain of causes into all dimensions of life but is 'present' to all of them in one and the same Presence. However, this presence is restricted to those beings in whom the dimension of the spirit has appeared. Although qualitatively it refers to all realms, quantitatively it is limited to man as the being in whom spirit is actualised" (ST 3, p.276).

²¹⁸ "[healing] is an effect of the Spiritual Presence and an anticipation of eternal fulfilment. ... Salvation means healing, and healing is an element in the work of salvation" (ST 3, p.277). In an inclusive treatment of healing, salvation and the Spiritual Presence (see pp.277-282), Tillich summarises his position by saying "the integration of the personal centre is possible only by its elevation to what can be called symbolically the divine centre ... this is possible only through the impact of the divine power, the Spiritual Presence. ... Health in the ultimate sense of the word, health as identical with salvation, is life in faith and love. ... it is created by the Spiritual Presence" (ST 3, p.280).

²¹⁹ See ST 1, pp.238-239.

²²⁰ ST 3, p.114.

²²¹ "The Spiritual Presence maintains the identity of the self without impoverishing the self, and it drives towards the alteration of the self without disrupting it. ... Where there is Spirit, the actual manifests the potential and the potential determines the actual. In the Spiritual Presence, man's essential being appears under the conditions of existence, conquering the distortions of existence in the reality of the New Being" (ST 3, p.269).

Immanuel form together a crucial part of the dynamics and significance of divine-human engagement in our phenomenological theology of divine presence.

To what extent is a person conscious of the immanent presence of the God Within? We have already incorporated experiential elements such as awareness, manifestation and consciousness into our explication of the phenomenological model. Although God is immanently present to and in the mind which, like all structures of reality, has a *logos* character, it does not follow that the person concerned is automatically conscious of the presence of God. Often the individual is unaware of Immanuel as a “mind-full” presence, despite the co-inherence of mutual immanence. Obviously, being unaware of something or some presence does not mean that there is nothing present. God is never absent but, nevertheless, people can feel that God is absent. Immanuel can be the hidden God, but never the absent God.²²² Human spirit can be aware or unaware of the divine presence, but the unchanging reality is that Spiritual Presence is Immanuel, and Immanuel is God-always-with-us, “for everything Spiritual is manifest in hiddenness. ... Only Spirit discerns Spirit.”²²³ Even human discernment of God’s presence is made possible only through the work of the divine Spirit.

If the prompting of divine Spirit “inspires” human discernment which, in turn, involves conscious perception and insight, then divine Spirit is at the heart of Tillich’s Immanuel phenomenology of divine presence. Following Augustine, Tillich holds that God is really and immediately present in the structures of the mind because the mind participates in God. Awareness of this reality is the human response to the presence of the Unconditional in human self-consciousness. “But awareness of the Unconditional is itself unconditional, and therefore beyond the division of the psychological functions”.²²⁴ The immediate presence of God in the finite mind and its correlate, the human ontological awareness of

²²² “The Spiritual Presence can never end. But the Spirit of God hides God from our sight. ... the Spirit that always remains present to us can hide itself, and this means that it can hide God. ... And then the absent one may return and take the space that belongs to Him, and the Spiritual Presence may break again into our consciousness, awakening us to recognise what we are, shaking and transforming us. ... Life in the Spirit is ebb and flow – and this means – whether we experience the present or the absent God, it is the work of the Spirit” (*EN*, pp.88-89).

²²³ *ST* 3, p.161.

²²⁴ *TC*, p.23. Given God’s presence in the structure of the mind and using his ontological principle, Tillich explains his view that there is human ontological awareness of the Unconditional which is immediate, unmediated and prior to any intuition, experience or knowledge. He says: “The ontological principle in the philosophy of religion may be stated in the following way: *Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically.* ... Awareness, in this proposition, is used as the most neutral term, avoiding the connotations of the terms intuition, experience and knowledge. ... ontological awareness is immediate, and not mediated by inferential processes. It is present, wherever conscious attention is focused on it, in terms of an unconditional certainty” (*TC*, pp.22-23, Tillich’s italics).

the unconditional, are together prior to and the basis of a phenomenology of divine presence involving human perception, experience, intuition and knowledge.

For Tillich, God is present in every act of knowledge because the mind participates in God.²²⁵ However, the human mind may not be aware of God's presence. In the process of knowing there is the mutual and cognitive participation of the knowing subject and the known object. Knowing involves the polarity of participation and individualisation because there is union (participation) as well as separation and detachment (individualisation).²²⁶ Every cognitive encounter and ontological reason are predicated on God's presence as the matching *logos* structure of both the knowing self and the known objective reality.²²⁷ In his phenomenology of cognition and subjective reason, Tillich uses his now familiar phraseology of "grasping", "shaping" and "transforming"²²⁸ as a prelude to his consideration of the cognitive character of revelation and revelatory events, which were considered earlier in this section. Cognitive relations²²⁹ embrace both the subjective element of union ("receiving knowledge") and the objective element of detachment ("controlling knowledge"). Both of these elements of cognitive encounter are found in the cognitive character of revelation.²³⁰ Underpinning these is Immanuel as the depth of reason,²³¹ Tillich's metaphor for divine presence profiled epistemologically in our

²²⁵ "There is no such thing as secular knowledge. All knowledge is in some way rooted in the knowledge of the divine within us. There is a point of identity within our soul, and this point precedes every special act of knowledge" (*HCT*, p.185).

²²⁶ See *SSTS*, chapter 5, "Participation and Knowledge: Problems of an Ontology of Cognition", pp.65-74. On the phenomenology of cognitive encounter Tillich says "there is an irreducible though indefinite minimum of structural presuppositions of every cognitive encounter that is a genuine subject matter of phenomenological research", p.68. Tillich also writes: "Knowing is a form of union. In every act of knowledge the knower and that which is known are united; the gap between subject and object is overcome. The subject 'grasps' the object, adapts it to itself, and at the same time, adapts itself to the object. But the union of knowledge is a peculiar one; it is a union through separation. Detachment is the condition of cognitive union" (*ST I*, p.94).

²²⁷ "Ontological reason can be defined as the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and to shape reality. ... the *logos*, the word which grasps and shapes reality, can do so only because reality itself has a *logos* character. ... [this is] the relation between the *logos* structure of the grasping-and-shaping-self and the *logos* structure of the grasped-and-shaped-world" (*ST I*, p.75).

²²⁸ "Subjective reason is the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and shape reality on the basis of a corresponding structure of reality. ... The mind receives and reacts. In receiving reasonably, the mind grasps its world; in reacting reasonably, the mind shapes its world. 'Grasping', in this context, has the connotation of penetrating into the depth, into the essential nature of a thing or an event, of understanding and expressing it. 'Shaping', in this context, has the connotation of transforming the given material into a *Gestalt*, a living structure which has the power of being" (*ST I*, p.76).

²²⁹ See *ST I*, pp.97-100.

²³⁰ "Revelation claims to create complete union with that which appears in revelation. It is receiving knowledge in its fulfilment. But, at the same time, it claims to satisfy the demands of controlling knowledge, of detachment and analysis" (*ST I*, p.100).

²³¹ "The depth of reason is the expression of something that is not reason but which precedes reason and is manifest through it. Reason in both its objective and subjective structures points to something which appears in these structures but which transcends them in power and meaning. ... In the cognitive realm the depth of

phenomenological model.²³² God, as the depth of reason, can be hidden in existential conditions,²³³ but Immanuel emerges when reason quests for revelation.²³⁴

Our phenomenological model concentrates largely on “experienced” divine-human encounter where God’s presence registers in some discernable way with the person engaged by Immanuel. The manifestation of divine presence is manifestation to someone. To be a manifestation, the reality and content of what is revealed must be received and experienced by a person. Perception and reception form the human response to divine manifestation. Tillich’s concept of *Kairos* as the fullness of time relates to his christology and his theology of history and, accordingly, belongs within a consideration of our existential model of divine presence. However, like revelation and breakthrough considered earlier in this section, *Kairos* is also experienced,²³⁵ and therefore it deserves a brief mention at the phenomenological level of our third model. Similarly, Tillich’s “*Gestalt* of grace”²³⁶ also straddles models two and three. While it finds its place in the existential model as a sacred structure of reality and as an expression of concrete presence, it is also experienced as a transparent *Gestalt*²³⁷ and, therefore, ranks as divine

reason is its quality of pointing to truth-itself, namely, to the infinite power of being and the ultimately real, through the relative truths in every field of knowledge” (*ST I*, p.79).

²³² Tillich makes an important distinction between God as the preceding ontological foundation of the human mind, as the depth of reason which has the *Logos* structure, and projection theories which consider that God is a mental construct, solely the invention and projection of the human mind. Immanuel is not the product of the finite mind but there is “mind-full” divine presence because God, although transcendent to and independent of the human mind, is still ontologically present in and to the mind of every human being. Anthropomorphic images of God are necessarily framed in a concrete way but Tillich rebuts “all theories of ‘projection’ which say that the gods are simply imaginary projections of elements of finitude, natural and human elements. What these theories disregard is that projection always is projection *on* something – a wall, a screen, another being, another realm. Obviously, it is absurd to class that on which the projection is realised with the projection itself. A screen is not projected; it receives the projection. The realm against which the divine images are projected is not itself a projection. It is the experienced ultimacy of being and meaning. It is the realm of ultimate concern” (*ST I*, p.212). See also R.B. Bush, *Recent Ideas of Divine Conflict: The Influences of Psychological and Sociological Theories of Conflict upon the Trinitarian Theology of Paul Tillich and Jurgen Moltmann* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991) pp.84-86. *MH* also contains a series of related essays, written at various times by Tillich, dealing with the area of religious consciousness, and awareness of God and divine presence.

²³³ “The depth of reason is essentially manifest in reason. But it is hidden in reason under the conditions of existence” (*ST I*, p.80).

²³⁴ “Revelation does not destroy reason, but reason raises the question of revelation” (*ST I*, p.81). “Revelation is the manifestation of the depth of reason and the ground of being. ... reason is not destroyed by revelation, just as revelation is not emptied by reason” (*ST I*, pp.117-118).

²³⁵ “The consciousness of the *kairos* is dependent on one’s being inwardly grasped by the fate and destiny of the time” (*PE*, p.48). “Where the *kairos* is proclaimed as a prophetic message, it is already present; it is impossible for it to be proclaimed in power without its having grasped those who proclaim it” (*PE*, p.51). “The *kairos* serves to reveal rather than conceal the *Logos*” (*IH*, p.175).

²³⁶ “But the *Gestalt* of grace is not a *Gestalt* beside others. It is the manifestation of what is beyond every *Gestalt* through a *Gestalt*” (*PE*, p.211).

²³⁷ “The *Gestalt* of grace is not something tangible. ... Grace, of course, is not perceptible, but the manifestation of grace through a finite medium can be perceived. A *Gestalt* of grace is a ‘transparent’ *Gestalt*. Something shines through it which is more than it is” (*PE*, p.212).

manifestation and revelation to someone. From a phenomenological point of view, human reception of divine manifestation is an integral part of our third model.

Within religious experience, there is a correlation of mutual interdependence between divine manifestation and human reception.²³⁸ The consequences of this correlation with its phenomenological dimension of experience as reception and response, have surfaced already in our treatment of such issues as revelation, ecstasy and ultimate concern in Tillich's theology of presence as divine-human encounter. In divine-human presence, the human side is experientially reactionary in that it is a reaction or response to a divine reality already there in the relationship. God, as the *Logos* principle, brings power and meaning to persons and to the world. According to Tillich, divine presence comes to us as "meaning-reality" which breaks through finite forms such as those found in art, culture and science. Immanuel is the eternal ground of meaning and meaning-fulfilment. The concept of meaning functions as an important part of both Tillich's philosophy of religion and his theology. Phenomenologically, the person experiences and discerns God's theonomous presence as the meaning-reality through revelatory breakthrough, *Kairos* moments and ecstasy.²³⁹ Immanuel delivers meaning to the human mind by making finite forms transparent to the meaning-reality and the ground of ultimate meaning as the "really real". In our treatment of concrete presence (section 3.4.2, above), we referred to Tillich's triad of axial concepts, *Inhalt-Form-Gehalt*, that identify the elements which emerge at different levels in his hermeneutics of meaning, the foundation of which is Immanuel, God Present as ultimate meaning and reality. In our phenomenology of divine presence, we identify *Gehalt* with Immanuel experienced as the most profound meaning and significance of ultimate reality, present and manifest in the manifold of finite forms. Meaning and manifestation are declarations of presence. Meaning-for, like manifestation-to, implies phenomenological response and human reception.

At times, Tillich used the metaphor "transparence" to describe the revelatory character of finite media through which the presence of divine reality could be glimpsed. Shortly

²³⁸ "Although God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man, God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation. ... The divine-human relation is a correlation" (*ST I*, p.61).

²³⁹ "Ecstasy operates in such a way as to break through a given form of individual existence, bringing it into union with the ultimate ground of meaning. It is the experience of being grasped by the essential power and meaning of reality, 'the really real', the unconditional – that which is man's ultimate concern so long as he remains within the realm of being and meaning. ... But more than a totality of meaning is involved, for a mere totality of meaning could sink into a void of meaninglessness. In the totality of meaning there lives an unconditional meaning which is itself not a meaning but rather the basis of meaning. This is the unconditional element in all being and meaning" (*PE*, p.299).

before he died, Tillich agreed that transparency was not the best metaphor because it could convey the wrong idea of something being seen clearly as if through window glass. On reconsideration, he thought that the metaphor “translucency” depicted better his idea because it gave more prominence to the contribution of the medium through which divine presence was discerned.²⁴⁰ Both transparency and translucency contribute to the Tillichean character of our phenomenological model because these metaphors express experiential manifestation. They imply the involvement of a person as viewing subject who seeks to engage with and participate in the presence of Immanuel through and beyond the finite concrete medium.

Our third model is epistemological and personal because knowledge, awareness and encounter are involved. In this context, religious symbols are important. Tillich’s theology of symbol²⁴¹ is significant, especially in his treatment of the problem of religious knowledge and language.²⁴² For now, we must concentrate on the points of contact between Tillich’s religious symbol and divine presence as expressed in our phenomenological model. Religious symbols are epistemological bearers of meaning and interpretation which must correspond in some way with that which they symbolise. There is a correlation between the religious symbol and ultimate divine reality which is represented in the symbol. Concrete statements and assertions about God are symbolic.²⁴³ Religious symbols are special indicators because they indicate the presence of God as the

²⁴⁰ See P. Tillich, “Rejoinder”, *Journal of Religion* 46 (January 1966), pp.184-196. “If the metaphor ‘translucency’ is used (as I should have done), ... [it] makes a sharper description of the function of the ‘sacramental’ symbol possible. I would say: The light that shines through the stained window is, taken as a metaphor, the unapproachable divine mystery. The colours and forms are the contributions of the medium which make a seeing of the invisible possible. This makes the sacramental symbol irreplaceable, because the medium reveals something of the ‘Invisible’ which no other medium would reveal. (‘Medium’ ... is ... the whole mediating situation, above all the historical context, in which a sacramental symbol is alive)” (p.187).

²⁴¹ See *ST 1*, pp.238-247; *ST 2*, p.9; *DF*, chapter 3, “Symbols of Faith”, pp.41-54; P. Tillich, “Symbol and Knowledge: A Response”, *Journal of Liberal Religion* 2 (Spring 1941) pp.202-206; P. Tillich, “Existential Analysis and Religious Symbols”, *Contemporary Problems in Religion*, Edited by H.A. Basilius (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1956) pp.35-55; P. Tillich, “The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols”, *Religious Experience and Truth*, Edited by S. Hook, pp.3-11; P. Tillich, “The Religious Symbol”, *Religious Experience and Truth*, Edited by S. Hook, pp.301-321; P. Tillich, “Theology and Symbolism”, *Religious Symbolism*, Edited by F.E. Johnson (New York: Harper, 1953) pp.107-116. See also L.S. Ford, “Three Strands of Tillich’s Theology of Religious Symbols”, *Journal of Religion* 46 (January 1966), pp.104-130.

²⁴² “This is the problem of the symbolic knowledge of God. If God as the ground of being infinitely transcends everything that is, two consequences follow: first, what everyone knows about a finite thing one knows about God, because it is rooted in him as its ground; second, anything one knows about a finite thing cannot be applied to God, because he is, as has been said, ‘quite other’ or, as could be said, ‘ecstatically transcendent’ ” (*ST 2*, p.9). See also *TC*, chapter v, “The Nature of Religious Language” pp.53-67.

²⁴³ “Any concrete assertion about God must be symbolic, for a concrete assertion is one which uses a segment of finite experience in order to say something about him. It transcends the content of this segment, although it also includes it. The segment of finite reality which becomes the vehicle of a concrete assertion about God is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol, for a symbolic expression is one whose proper meaning is negated by that to which it points. And yet it also is affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself” (*ST 1*, p.239).

Ultimate, Being-Itself. Signs and symbols both point beyond themselves but a symbol is much more than a sign. A sign simply points in a certain direction beyond itself and has no necessary relation to the reality to which it points, whereas a religious symbol additionally participates in the presence and power of the divine reality to which it points symbolically.²⁴⁴ This element of participation by the religious symbol guarantees its position within our consideration of the third model. Religious symbols, to be effective, require also human reception without which the symbols lose meaning and die.²⁴⁵

Meaning, knowledge, participation and human reception are all important aspects of religious symbols and they are also characteristics which we associate with our third model. Religious symbols have a personal impact and are true as they reflect the revelatory correlation.²⁴⁶ Interpreting religious symbols is the work of theology. Significantly, in our Tillichean theology of presence, religious symbols span the infinite-finite gap and draw closer together the divine presence and the finite human in a mutually participatory way.²⁴⁷ Such symbols are much more than signifiers of presence. They foster and enrich divine-human encounter. They cultivate human awareness of divine presence because they are dynamic and, through participation, they become additional entry points into the presence of the divine. Religious symbols are also transparent, or rather, translucent to the presence of the divine as the ultimate reality and power of being in that segment of finite reality which contributes the concrete material of the symbol.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ "While the sign bears no necessary relation to that to which it points, the symbol participates in the reality of that for which it stands. ... Therefore, the religious symbol, the symbol which points to the divine, can be a true symbol only if it participates in the power of the divine to which it points" (*ST 1*, p.239).

²⁴⁵ "The symbol grows and dies according to the correlation between that which is symbolised and the persons who receive it as a symbol" (*ST 1*, p.239). "Symbols cannot be produced intentionally. ... They grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being. Symbols ... are created or at least accepted by the collective unconscious of the group in which they appear" (*DF*, p.43).

²⁴⁶ "A religious symbol possesses some truth if it adequately expresses the correlation of revelation in which some person stands. A religious symbol *is* true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation. A religious symbol can die only if the correlation of which it is an adequate expression dies" (*ST 1*, p.240).

²⁴⁷ "Religious symbols are double-edged. They are directed toward the infinite which they symbolise *and* toward the finite through which they symbolise it. They force the infinite down to finitude and the finite up to infinity. They open the divine for the human and the human for the divine" (*ST 1*, p.240).

²⁴⁸ "A religious symbol uses the material of ordinary experience in speaking of God, but in such a way that the ordinary meaning of the material used is both affirmed and denied. Every religious symbol negates itself in its literal meaning, but it affirms itself in its self-transcending meaning. ... The meaning of 'God' is completely missed if one takes the symbolic language literally" (*ST 2*, p.9).

When sign and symbol are confused, Tillich notes that some consider that the “term ‘symbolic’ carries the connotation of nonreal”.²⁴⁹ Equally, he cautions against using the phrase “only a symbol”.²⁵⁰ For Tillich, religious symbols are theologically weighty. They mediate an awareness of God as divine presence. Unlike signs, symbols “have an original affinity to the symbolic content they represent”.²⁵¹ They have a representative character.²⁵² In some manner, religious symbols stand in for and represent that which they symbolise. They make present that which they represent. They point to and reflect the presence of what is symbolised. Tillich’s theology of symbol includes the important element of participation which is really a form of shared presence. For Tillich, symbols participate in the power of the symbolised referent. Tillich makes it clear that such power is the “power of being” in which the symbol participates, and that such participation implies an element of identity.²⁵³ The power and presence of Immanuel are represented, through participation, in the functioning of the living religious symbol. Our interpretation of Tillich’s treatment of religious symbol as Immanuel’s symbolic presence, qualifies for inclusion in our third model of divine presence.

For Tillich, authentic religion had to have the three characteristics of being prophetic (dealt with as the Protestant Principle in our first model, (section 3.3.1, above), sacramental (dealt with as Catholic substance in our second model, see section 3.4.2, above), and mystical. Mysticism²⁵⁴ has a place in our phenomenological model because it is about a form of

²⁴⁹ *ST 1*, p.241. P. Ricoeur, famed defender of symbol and metaphor, referred to Tillich as “my theologian”. See R. May, *Paulus: Reminiscences of a Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p.102 where it reads “Paul Ricoeur rose to speak (he had always said of Paulus, ‘He is my theologian’ – exceptional praise from one so eminent as Ricoeur”.

²⁵⁰ Speaking about understanding correctly the nature of religious symbol and avoiding confusion of sign with symbol, Tillich says that the religious symbol “is not a sign pointing to something with which it has no inner relationship. It represents the power and meaning of what is symbolised through participation. The symbol participates in the reality which is symbolised. Therefore, one should never say ‘only a symbol’. This is to confuse symbol with sign” (*ST 2*, p.9). See also *TC*, pp.64-65 where Tillich again warns against using the word “only” in conjunction with “symbol”.

²⁵¹ P. Tillich, “Symbol and Knowledge: A Response”, *Journal of Liberal Religion 2* (Spring 1941) pp.202-206. “Symbols are nearer to the reality expressed in them. Their direct, immediate, non-symbolic nature must have an original affinity to the symbolic content they represent” (p.204).

²⁵² “The symbol represents something which is not itself, for which it stands and in the power and meaning of which it participates. This is a basic function of every symbol. ... And now we come to something which is perhaps the main function of the symbol – namely, the opening up of levels of reality which otherwise are hidden and cannot be grasped in any other way. Every symbol opens up a reality for which non-symbolic speaking is inadequate” (*TC*, p.56).

²⁵³ “[Power] is meant only in *one* sense, namely, the ‘power of being’ which is a character of everything that has being. It means the degree to which a reality is able to conquer non-being, to radiate being and meaning, to unite manifoldness in a dynamic centre. ... There is an element of identity. The reason for my use of the term ‘participation’ is the desire to make the difference of symbol from sign as sharp as possible and, at the same time, to express what was rightly intended in the medieval doctrine of *analogia entis*, namely, to show a positive point of identity” (Tillich, “Rejoinder”, p.188).

²⁵⁴ “Mysticism – the Protestant Orthodox theologians called it *unio mystica* – is the immediate union with God in his presence” (*HCT*, p.136). “ ‘Mysticism’ means union with the unconditioned import of meaning as

personal encounter with the divine, and it involves the principle of immediacy or identity referred to earlier in this section. It is a phenomenological experience²⁵⁵ of divine reality as immediate presence.²⁵⁶ Tillich explains that reason and rationalism are not opposed to or contradict mysticism, rather, reason emerges in response to divine presence experienced mystically within us.²⁵⁷ In the context of mysticism, Tillich says that, like St. Paul, he puts a high premium on human experience and interaction with the Spirit.²⁵⁸ For Tillich, mysticism is the theology of inner experience and its opposite is the theology of the Word.²⁵⁹ Both are reconciled through the mediating power of the Spirit. Tillich warns that Protestantism should not neglect mysticism because to do so is to neglect the experience of God's presence as Spirit.²⁶⁰ However, mysticism must remain connected to the sacramental attitude even though it seeks to move beyond all concrete forms and towards Immanuel as God Present.²⁶¹ While true Christian mysticism means immediate and experienced union with God, Tillich urges his students not to mistake this genuine type of mysticism with abstract or absolute mysticism in which the individual is swallowed up in

the ground and abyss of everything conditioned. In this sense mysticism is essential to all religion" (*WR*, p.90).

²⁵⁵ "With the rise of phenomenology a mystical element has entered into modern philosophy. Its entrance is not fortuitous for a clear line of relationship leads back from Husserl through Brentano and Bolzano to medieval philosophy" (*RS*, p.46).

²⁵⁶ "Mysticism means inwardness, participation in the Ultimate Reality through inner experience. ... There is a mystical element in every religion and in every prayer. This mystical element is the inward participation in and experience of the presence of the divine" (*HCT*, p.318).

²⁵⁷ "The common denominator in Pietism, or revivalism as it is often called, and in Rationalism is the mystical element. ... Rationalism and mysticism do not stand in contradiction to each other, as is so often thought. Both in Greek and modern culture rationalism is the daughter of mysticism. Rationalism developed out of the mystical experience of the 'inner light' or the 'inner truth' in every human being. Reason emerged within us out of mystical experience, namely, the experience of the divine presence within us" (*HCT*, p.315).

²⁵⁸ "As important as the doctrine of justification was for Paul, it was not the centre of his theology. At the centre was his experience and doctrine of the Spirit. Thus he is on the side of those in Protestant theology who stress inwardness. ... Paul is indeed the theologian of the Spirit. Although I am not a mystical theologian, I would say that I am more on the side of the theology of experience and inwardness, for I believe that the Spirit is in us" (*HCT*, p.317). Tillich himself has been identified as "a theologian of the Spirit" – see R. Modras, *Paul Tillich's Theology of the Church: A Catholic Appraisal* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976) p.61 and W. Leibrecht (Ed.), *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich* (London: SCM Press, 1959) p.19.

²⁵⁹ "The problem is the difference between the theology of the Word from the outside and the theology of inner experience, which is frequently and wrongly called 'the inner Word'. That is not a good term. 'Inner light' is better. In modern terminology we speak of 'existential experience'. ... The concept of the Spirit is the mediating power which overcomes the conflict between outside and inside. ... The opposite of mysticism is the theology of the Word in terms of an authority coming from outside, to which we subject ourselves either by accepting doctrines or by fulfilling moral commands" (*HCT*, p.317).

²⁶⁰ "In Protestantism ... we see what happens when the mystical element is neglected and forgotten. ... Thus Protestantism becomes an unmystical system of moral commandments, and its specifically religious basis, the presence of the Spirit of God in our spirit, is disregarded. The history of Protestant theology refutes such an attitude and shows that it is a complete deviation from the genuine experience of the divine presence" (*HCT*, p.318).

²⁶¹ "Mysticism is the radical ecstasy that seeks to grasp the import itself beyond all forms. ... Mysticism deliberately remains attached to the sacramental attitude" (*WR*, pp.90-91).

the immensity of the divine.²⁶² The corrective is to maintain a concrete dimension. In Tillich's view, mysticism can be baptised. It can be Christian by becoming "a concrete Christ-mysticism".²⁶³ Tillich qualifies his acceptance of mysticism by insisting on the retention of the concrete element and by rejecting absolute mysticism²⁶⁴ where the self is annihilated and individuality is lost. He expresses his preference for "concrete mysticism" or "Christ mysticism" as opposed to "abstract mysticism" or "transcending mysticism".²⁶⁵ To maintain the polar balance between participation and individualisation with regard to mysticism, it is better to speak of communion rather than union, thus preserving the concrete self as it participates experientially in that mystical relationship with Immanuel as God Present.

Personal and nonpersonal elements co-exist in a complementary way under the umbrella of our phenomenological model of divine presence. This reflects the constant interplay between Tillich's polar elements of individualisation and participation which function as the personal-nonpersonal polarity at the heart of the third model of our Immanuel theology. At section 2.4, above, we considered and analysed Tillich's theological view of personal presence against the background of his conviction that God is not a person. Despite his abstract ontotheology, Tillich regarded the divine-human encounter as both personal and nonpersonal.²⁶⁶ The phenomenological model includes personal and nonpersonal components. On the personal receiving side, there is the subjective individuality and separateness of the knowing subject, subjective reason, human perception and reception, consciousness, ultimate concern, self-integration and centredness, awareness, intuition and experience. On the nonpersonal giving side, there is the apparent objectivity of ultimate

²⁶² "Do not make the mistake of identifying this type of mysticism with the absolute or abstract mysticism in which the individual disappears in the abyss of the divine" (*HCT*, p.136).

²⁶³ "Can mysticism be baptised? Can it be Christian? Mysticism is much older than Christianity, and much more universal. What about the relation of Christianity to mysticism? In our seminar we have come to the conclusion that mysticism *can* be baptised if it becomes a concrete Christ-mysticism, very similar to the way it is in Paul – a participation in Christ as Spirit" (*HCT*, p.173).

²⁶⁴ See J.R. Horne, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism", *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 58 (1978), pp.130-139.

²⁶⁵ *HCT*, pp.174-175; see also *MG*, where Tillich writes: "the principle of mysticism triumphs, but not in the form of mysticism, not as immediate identity, but rather as personal communion that overcomes contradiction: it is 'the religion of the Spirit and of freedom' ", p.125.

²⁶⁶ "This means that *being* and *person* are not contradictory concepts. Being includes personal being; it does not deny it. The ground of being is the ground of personal being, not its negation. ... Religiously speaking, this means that our encounter with the God who is a person includes the encounter with the God who is the ground of everything personal and as such not a person. Religious experience ... exhibits a deep feeling for the tension between the personal and the nonpersonal element in the encounter between God and man. The Old as well as the New Testament has the astonishing power to speak of the presence of the divine in such a way that the I-thou character of the relation never darkens the transpersonal power and mystery of the divine, and vice versa" (*BR*, pp.83-84). Tillich uses the terms "nonpersonal" and "transpersonal" instead of the more confrontational and oppositional word "impersonal".

reality, the Unconditional, the *logos* structure of reality as objective reason, the Holy, the depth of reason, Spiritual Presence; all grasping, shaping, transforming and elevating the human being, driving it towards union by way of revelatory breakthrough, provoking human response, and drawing the person into the divine presence through self-transcendence and ecstasy. This mix of the personal and the nonpersonal, involving mutual immanence and the perichoretic interpenetration of the divine and the human, exhibits the panentheistic profile of our third model.

Underlying the phenomenological context of “experienced” divine presence, and irrespective of whether or not that ever-present reality is discerned or perceived in any way, Immanuel is already there as the mystical *a priori*, Prior Presence, on which the divine-human relationship is founded. That relationship only graduates to the level of encounter or meeting through divine self-manifestation, revelation and disclosure. Union and immediacy are achieved through participation. Separation and detachment are achieved through individualisation. They are held together in interdependent polar tension within the divine-human matrix of panentheistic presence. The mutuality of divine-human presence requires that delicate balance between individualisation and participation. Participation, without individualisation, would lead to loss of personhood, selfhood, self-identity, self-relatedness and freedom, and to the elimination of otherness.²⁶⁷ Individualisation, without participation, would lead to total separation, isolation and loneliness, rigid domination by the subject-object dichotomy, and to the loss of all communion. Both polar elements are essential for authentic relationship on which presence flourishes.²⁶⁸ In the pantheism of divine-human encounter, at the point of coincidence where opposites meet, there divine immanence facilitates finite participation, and divine transcendence facilitates finite individualisation.

In any theology of presence, it is not enough to limit explication to the fact that God is the infinite God and, therefore, God is unavoidably and inescapably present everywhere and at all times, in a manner conceived variously as transcendent, immanent, pantheistic or panentheistic. The divine-human relationship, at the heart of which is Immanuel, is dynamic and interactive, not static. There is divine directedness and purpose to God’s

²⁶⁷ Referring to the correlation of divine transcendence, finite human freedom and otherness within religious experience Tillich says: “Transcendence demanded by religious experience is the freedom-to-freedom relationship which is actual in every personal encounter. Certainly, the holy is the ‘quite other’ ” (*ST I*, p.263).

²⁶⁸ “In polarity with individualisation, participation underlies the category of relation as a basic ontological element. Without individualisation nothing would exist to be related. Without participation the category of relation would have no basis in reality” (*ST I*, p.177).

presence. Tillich calls this God's directing creativity.²⁶⁹ By nature God is Creator, and divine life is essentially creative. The exercise of divine creativity is the purpose of creation. On offer is universal fulfilment for creation and individual fulfilment for human beings, both leading to a sharing of and participation in divine life itself. God is providentially present throughout creation because "providence is a permanent activity of God".²⁷⁰ In the divine-human presence matrix, the human condition is underwritten by "the divine condition"²⁷¹ and the human factor is supported by "the divine factor".²⁷² God's presence is full of divine purpose. To each person Immanuel holds out the prospect of securing the ultimate prize which is ultimate fulfilment. This points towards the future and unambiguous life in the transcendent union but, simultaneously, focuses on the present human predicament of estrangement where God as divine Spirit is present with purpose.

Under Tillich's symbol, "Spiritual Presence" correlated to human spirit, Immanuel as Spirit is proactively engaged in unification in a threefold way in the divine-human relationship, uniting power and meaning in all human life. Firstly, as the principle of integration and unity, divine Spirit unifies the individual person through self-relatedness, self-integration and centredness in the pursuit of individual fulfilment. Secondly, in the personal-communal dimension of life, it unites persons with each other through participation in pursuit of universal fulfilment. Thirdly, and essentially, divine Spirit or Spiritual Presence as the principle of reunification, reunites all human beings individually and collectively with God. Given his theology of creation, Tillich understands this process, not as unification with the divine, but rather as reconciliation and reunification of the person's human essence with God. "Essentialisation" was the term Tillich gave to this Spirit-driven process of essential reunification with God, directed towards the transcendent union of unambiguous life. Spiritual Presence, through essentialisation and the creation of

²⁶⁹ See *ST I*, pp.263-270. "The concept 'the purpose of creation' should be replaced by 'the *telos* of creativity' – the inner aim of fulfilling in actuality what it is beyond potentiality and actuality in the divine life. One function of the divine creativity is to drive every creature toward such a fulfilment. Thus directing creativity must be added to originating and sustaining creation. It is the side of the divine creativity which is related to the future. The traditional term for directing creativity is 'providence' " (*ST I*, p.264).

²⁷⁰ *ST I*, p.266. Tillich explains: "Providence is not interference; it is creation. It uses all factors, both those given by freedom and those given by destiny, in creatively directing everything toward its fulfilment. Providence is a *quality* of every constellation of conditions, a quality which 'drives' or 'lures' toward fulfilment" (*ST I*, p.267).

²⁷¹ "Providence is 'the divine condition' which is present in every group of finite conditions and in the totality of finite conditions. ... It is the quality of inner directedness present in every situation" (*ST I*, p.267).

²⁷² "Special providence (*providentia specialis*) gives the individual the certainty that under any circumstances, under any set of conditions, the divine 'factor' is active and that therefore the road to his ultimate fulfilment is open. ... In Christianity providence is an element in the person-to-person relationship between God and man. ... It is confidence in 'the divine condition' within every set of finite conditions. ... But it is the paradox of the belief in providence that, just when the conditions of a situation are destroying the believer, the divine condition gives him a certainty that transcends the destruction" (*ST I*, pp.267-268).

New Being, draws humanity and the rest of creation towards complete reunification with Immanuel. The restoration of human essence by re-establishing its unity with God, is the mission of Immanuel as Presence. For that reason, divine Spirit centres and shapes panentheistically our “enthusiastic” third model where human spirit responds phenomenologically to the “pneumatic” presence of Immanuel as the God Within.

3.5.2 Relevant Applications of Phenomenological Model

Our consideration of the phenomenological model of divine presence has allowed us to focus closely on the dynamics of the divine-human relationship under the impact of the Spiritual Presence. Revelation and reason, and human perception, awareness and consciousness, have all played their part in accentuating the personal dimensions of Immanuel’s presence as the God Within. Phenomenological presence has a number of relevant applications, particularly as it brings us to the interface between psychology and religion. Unfortunately, here we can refer only briefly in this section to one set of connected theological issues which appears to threaten and destabilise the divine-human encounter, and turn it into a divine-human confrontation. The issues are divine impassibility, creaturely freedom and suffering.²⁷³ Can God who is present in the world suffer, or does Immanuel participate in creaturely suffering? Tillich gives a carefully qualified affirmation to these questions.²⁷⁴

Freedom adds a further complication to the functioning and development of the divine-human relationship in the presence of Immanuel. Is God affected, and is divine freedom limited, by the exercise of creaturely freedom, particularly human freedom?²⁷⁵ This issue divides *classical* (divine determinist) panentheism from *modern* (co-operative) panentheism.²⁷⁶ If it is considered within the context of our panentheistic theology of

²⁷³ Cf. D.H. Nikkel, *Panentheism in Hartshorne and Tillich: A Creative Synthesis* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), pp.168-197. This is a well referenced section which examines Tillich’s treatment of these correlated issues.

²⁷⁴ “The principle of participation drives us one step further. God himself is said to participate in the negativities of creaturely existence. ... it is meaningful to speak of a participation of the divine life in the negativities of creaturely life” (*ST 1*, p.270). When clarifying his doctrine of atonement, Tillich explains that God’s suffering is not based on substitution. It is based on free participation: “God participates in the suffering of existential estrangement, but his suffering is not a substitute for the suffering of the creature. ... the suffering of God, universally and in Christ, is the power which overcomes creaturely self-destruction by participation and transformation. Not substitution, but free participation, is the character of the divine suffering” (*ST 2*, p.176). For further references on divine suffering and God’s participation in creaturely suffering, see *ST 1*, p.284; *ST 2*, p.175; *ST 3*, p.405; *LPJ*, p.113; *PI*, p.379.

²⁷⁵ Cf. D.H. Nikkel, *Panentheism in Hartshorne and Tillich*, “Genuine creaturely freedom is one of the things that distinguishes panentheism from pantheism. Mutual creaturely and divine freedom is one of the ways that God transcends the creation that God includes with total intimacy” (p.168).

²⁷⁶ Cf. J.W. Cooper, *Panentheism*, “... the freedom of creatures to affect God, mainly divides *classical* from *modern panentheism*. ... [classical panentheism] affirms divine omnipotence and does not allow that creatures

presence, it can provide further insights into the dynamics of the divine-human encounter where there is a delicate theological balance to be maintained between divine freedom and human freedom. In contrast to the Reformed perspective of *classical* panentheism, *modern* panentheism emphasises that, from the human side of phenomenological presence, a person's perception of the divine-human relationship needs to include the conviction that human beings are free to respond in love to God, that the joys and sorrows of their lives have real meaning and value for God, and that the concerns of their human predicament register with and really influence Immanuel.

3.6 Conclusion to Chapter Three

Our three models of divine presence accentuate selfhood (Model Three), relationality (Model Two) and otherness (Model One). Each model has been used here to highlight special modes of divine presence as appropriate theological responses to the three problems of the human condition as identified by Tillich, namely *finitude* (Model One), *estrangement* (Model Two) and *ambiguity* (Model Three). The ever-present reality of the living God as Immanuel is offered, in three different ways, as the answer to each of the above three issues arising from the human situation which is conditioned by the struggle between essential being and existential being, the two main qualifications of being.

The *ontological* model presents Immanuel as the radical Other, the Ground of Being, Being Itself, the source of all essences, bringing meaning to and support for human *finitude*. The *existential* model offers Immanuel as New Being, manifest in the reconciling work of Jesus as the Christ, in response to human *estrangement* experienced existentially as the ruptured relationship between the human and the divine. The *phenomenological* model shows Immanuel as Spirit, impacting on human life at the individual personal level, and, in a process of essentialisation, assisting all human life to actualise itself more fully in the quest for unambiguous life, thereby conquering the *ambiguities* of life. The models represent a variety of approaches to Immanuel as the presence of the Other (Model One – transcendent presence), as the presence of the divine manifest through existential relationships (Model Two – relational presence), and as the presence of God as Spirit acting intimately within each human being (Model Three – immanent presence). While the separate models open different vistas on the presence of God to all creatures, it would be a mistake to think that there is anything other than one unified and unifying divine presence,

affect God even though they exist in him. ... Almost all modern pantheists affirm divine-human cooperation. ... The libertarian freedom of creatures to act, shape history, and affect God is a basic principle of modern panentheism" (p.29).

one Immanuel, who can be glimpsed only in a limited and finite way from different but human perspectives.

We have introduced the panentheistic approach into our study, identified Tillich as an implicit panentheist, declared Immanuel theology an expression of panentheism and then used it to light-up different perspectives of Tillich's theology of presence. We have discovered that this strategy facilitates closer engagement with Tillich's thinking, particularly on relational divine presence, as both the finite "in" the infinite and God "in" the world. We found that the panentheistic framework fits well around Tillich's presence theology and our own Immanuel theology, draws both of them closer together for ease of comparison and contrast, and better aligns their content and functionality. This has helped to progress the development of the three models, all of which have gained theological "weight" in the process. The application of panentheism to the models has made them more adaptable and relevant for use in some areas of contemporary theology.

But not all was found to be positive. We have learned that Tillich is keen to separate God clearly from existence and to exonerate the Creator from having any responsibility for it. Here we see that a theological *desiderium* leads to a serious philosophical weakness in Tillich's system. For Tillich, the theological distance between the transcendent God and concrete existence is infinite. This generates the only theological paradox recognised by Tillich, the paradox of the Incarnation, which we considered in section 3.4.2, above, in relation to the existential model of presence. The Christ came into existence to redeem and rescue people from existence and from the ambiguities of life caused by existence. Tillich refers to the doctrine of salvation as the transition backwards from existence to essence. According to Tillich, the mission of Christ was to reverse the negative effect of existence as the reputed source and cause of that which is not good in creation. "In terms of the eschatological symbolism it can also be said that Christ is the end of existence".²⁷⁷ In his anxiety to distinguish clearly between God and distorting existence, and as part of Tillich's response to the problem of being, we saw that he chose to align the created world, and therefore what is essentially good, with essence, and he aligned existence with negativity, estrangement and the actual world.

We have earlier registered our dissatisfaction and unease at this alignment because it separates creation from actuality and existence, as if creation was not actual reality and

²⁷⁷ ST 2, p.119.

was not a characteristic of the real existing world. It denies that existence, an integral part of being, is part of creation and is good, and therefore it appears to Tillich that existence should not be accepted as an integral part of the gift of creation. Tillich is clear about his stance on this, and he has told us that the distinction he makes “is identical with the entire theological system...is the backbone of the whole body of theological thought. It must be elaborated in every part of the theological system”.²⁷⁸ Tillich has left no doubt about where he stands on this central issue. Creation is good. Existence distorts. By contrast we have clearly made the point that distortion and ambiguity come, not from existence, but from finitude and from other related factors such as the polar tension of the three ontological elements, particularly finite freedom in its struggle with finite destiny. Existence is the quality that makes being “stand out” from nonbeing, but that does not make it negative.

As a consequence of our critique of Tillich’s treatment of existence we have unearthed real and deep problems in important areas of his theological system, including his doctrines of creation, Incarnation and salvation. These problems have ontological roots and have serious implications for Tillich’s theology of presence, especially the existential mode of divine presence. We did not stop at the end of the retrieval process which uncovered the difficulties. Our Immanuel theology has pointed to ways of repairing and renewing Tillich’s work on presence, especially its ontological foundations, by presenting the positive advantages of considering God as Ground of existence, shared existence as divine gift, and by proffering a panentheistic christology designed to deal with the problems arising from Tillich’s view of Incarnation and to show how it is panentheistically feasible for God to enter historical existence.

Given his doctrine of God, Tillich had to offer a radical reinterpretation of the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation. For Tillich, Jesus Christ could not be divine because God could not be a person. Equally, Jesus Christ could not be human because God could not “become” human without ceasing to be God. “The only thing God cannot do is to cease to be God.”²⁷⁹ In any case, God could not be present in creation as a historical and existential reality because God transcends the split between essence and existence. Accordingly, the Tillichean reinterpretation of Incarnation is explained as the start of a reunification process where, for the first time, essential humanity is fully reunited with God in an unambiguous and uninterrupted way in the historical person of Jesus Christ despite the distorting

²⁷⁸ *ST 1*, p.204.

²⁷⁹ *ST 2*, p.94.

character of existence. "New Being" is Tillich's term for that new and unique relationship between the divine and the human. Our panentheistic Immanuel christology highlighted the important difference between God's *presence as* and God's *presence in*. Tillich's christology would not countenance any form of divine *presence as*.

Noting the strictures of Tillich's doctrine of God, it is not unreasonable to raise the basic question: does Tillich accept fully the concept of God's *presence in* within the context of existence? Panentheistically, Tillich asserts repeatedly that the finite is in the infinite, and that the created is wholly dependent on the Creator as Ground of all being. But can he really affirm any form of divine *presence in* existential creation if God entirely transcends existence and seeks to rescue finite essence from existence? Tillich's theology of fallen creation dictates a reversal of existence, and both his christology and his eschatology envisage a reunification process where created essence is restored beyond existence to full unity with God. Tillich's theology of presence leaves little room for the presence of the infinite in the finite, that is, for God's *presence in* actual creation which needs to be redeemed out of existence.

This puts a question mark over both Tillich's acceptance of divine concrete presence and the consistency of his espousal of divine immanence. As Creator and Ground of all created being, God stands *under* existing creation but, on Tillich's own theological terms, can God really stand *in* historical existence? Does Tillich's important theological principle of participation really function in both directions? Admittedly, we and all of creation participate panentheistically in God and in the divine life, but does Tillich accept that God, in a reverse panentheistic mode, really participates *in* creaturely life? As Creator and Sustainer, the infinite God engages the created finite by panentheistically enveloping it, but would Tillich agree that the infinite actually enters the finite in historical existence? His christology seems to resist any such notion. In Tillich's panentheism, the creature is certainly always present *in*, and internal to, God. But is the infinite God present in the finite world and immanent in all creation?

With reference to various existential and phenomenological forms of God's presence respectively as divine presence *in* and *within*, Tillich frequently explains these elements of his theology of presence in terms of manifestation. Divine manifestation is evidence of divine presence, but such manifestation *in* does not necessarily mean presence *in*. Manifestation *in* can be understood merely as manifestation *to* or *through*, just as presence

in can be understood sometimes as conveying the more distant notion of presence *to* or presence *through*, much in the same way as Tillich writes about the transparency or translucency of created finite forms. A foundation gives vital support and upholds the structure dependent upon it, but a foundation is under, not in, the structure. For Tillich, God is the ontological foundation of all creation. God is present to creation as its ground but is God present *in* creation? We are left with a lingering suspicion that Tillich's view of God's presence *in* or *within* creation is revealed, in the final analysis, as the more detached mode of divine presence *to*. In turn, this appears to weaken and dilute Tillich's understanding of divine immanence.

When considering the phenomenological character of divine presence (section 3.5.1, above), we examined a variety of Tillich's immanent modes of "experienced" divine presence as expressions of manifest presence *in* and *within*. We noticed, on closer scrutiny, that there is a range of Tillich's concepts, linked to presence *in* and *within*, such as revelation, ecstasy, self-transcendence and mysticism. Tillich seems to consider such interior experiences of immanent divine presence as only starting-points from which we journey *outwards* in a self-transcendent manner towards transcendent union with ultimate divine reality beyond the existential state of our finitude. Tillich's theological language speaks of these existential experiences as leading to transitory elevation above the essence-existence split and to escape out of our existence, at least in fragmentary ways. The human experience of being "grasped" by the Spiritual Presence is not the realisation that divine presence is penetrative in some invasive way. It is, for Tillich, the awakening of human spirit to the fact, not that God is present *in* it, but that human spirit is enveloped and supported by the divine presence which encompasses it. On careful reconsideration, there is perhaps a case for saying that Tillich's concept of *Durchbruch* or breakthrough is less about God's presence breaking into the finite and more about God opening up human spirit which seeks to break out of finitude's existential state and to break self-transcendently into the infinite presence that surrounds it. On balance, Tillich's Immanuel theology, as it relates to immanent presence, actually orientates our thinking outwards towards the transcendent God beyond the finite, rather than convinces us conclusively that the infinite is present within the finite. In this instance, divine immanence is protected by being regarded as immanence-in-transcendence.

Tillich is persuasive in his panentheistic view that the finite is present in the infinite. However, does he, with the same conviction, hold that the infinite is actually present in the

finite? Does he hold that such an idea is even ontologically possible? The ambiguity and equivocality of his panentheism on this point, and the narrowness of his christology which excludes the co-existence of the divine and the human as one historical person, together seriously limit and qualify his theology of presence, especially in respect of existential and phenomenological modes of divine presence. For Tillich, God is present as the Ground of being and as the power of being. Our Immanuel theology endorses that position, but we go unequivocally much further. For us, God is not just present through the power of being, present through the supportive divine power behind, under or panentheistically around being. The infinite-finite God, as Immanuel, is also panentheistically, christologically and “enthusiastically” present *in* and *within* finite creation. We subscribe, without reservation, to two-way panentheism and reverse participation where the finite is perichoretically present in the infinite, and where the infinite is also truly and perichoretically present *in* and *within* the finite. Our residual doubt about Tillich’s complete position on this matter is born of our understanding of both his christology, particularly his reinterpretation of the Incarnation, and of the limitations of his ontotheology, especially his adverse treatment of existence. Our critique of Tillich’s contribution to our three panentheistic models of divine presence has shown the Tillichean components of our ontological model to be reliable despite the difficulties of his theology of fallen creation. It has also shown that there is a shadow over some of the Tillichean constituents of our existential and phenomenological models, especially with reference to existential presence *in* and phenomenological presence *within*. The Tillichean elements of these two models need to be balanced and strengthened by the added value of our panentheistic christology, by our ontological repair kit in relation to Tillich’s stance on existence, and by the further corrective elements of our overall Immanuel theology which round out and improve the Tillichean character of our three models as we seek to benefit from, but move beyond, the confines of Tillich’s own theology of presence.

Operating in this way the three models of Immanuel theology have now clearly emerged and are functioning as (re)structuring principles which confirm and correct, co-ordinate and collate Tillich’s ideas, and which shape his presence theology by giving due prominence to its panentheistic character. In search of the macro-model most capable of panentheistically unifying and universalising Tillich’s ideas on divine presence into one grand inclusive design, we need to rise above the three individual models in our quest for the one undivided Immanuel. In the next chapter we will see that Tillich already has, as an integral part of his theological system, a most interesting theology of life. What is more

inclusive than life? Can we usefully synthesise Tillich's theologies of life and of presence in order to consolidate Immanuel theology's retrieval and rejuvenation of Tillich's work on God's presence? Is life the key? Perhaps checking for life, "taking Immanuel's pulse", will lead us into the presence of the living God.

CHAPTER FOUR

Immanuel's Threefold Presence as Tillich's Theology of Life

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter the three individual models of divine presence were framed and separately considered, and their respective structures and component parts were examined. It has been noted that these models are not Tillich's models of divine presence. They have emerged from an analysis of and reflection upon Tillich's theology which is centred on the pivotal relationship between God and creation, between the infinite and the finite. The models are offered here to assist the reader in viewing Tillich's theology of presence from various perspectives using the separate lenses provided by ontology (Model One), existentialism (Model Two) and phenomenology (Model Three). It is not being claimed that Tillich would have identified these three models of divine presence as being readily and separately recognisable in his own systematic theology. Yet these models have been constructed using many of Tillich's concepts and important strands in his thinking. In that sense the three models are Tillichean in character.

However, it would be artificial and simplistic to argue that the three models should stand in splendid isolation from one another. There is limited merit in considering each model separately, but that allows us to emphasise distinctive aspects of Immanuel theology and facilitates the consideration of the different dimensions of divine presence to all of creation. The problem is that the individual models of God's presence highlight only specific characteristics of God as Immanuel. Multiple models offer disparate insights into what is in fact one integral reality. By considering each of the three models, we intend to advance an understanding of the various separate elements which together constitute the bigger integrated picture of the divine trinitarian presence as multidimensional and as total, immediate and universal. The models are obviously linked in that they deal with the theme of divine presence. Yet further benefits can be gained by viewing the models holistically, as together forming one universal inclusive model or conception of God as ever-present, God as Immanuel. Is there a common thread, a common underlying concept or theme which runs through all three models of divine presence considered to date? If so, is it strong and significant enough, not just to lock these three models together cohesively, but also to merge and subsume them into one significant conception of the meaning of divine presence for all creation? Indeed, if such a conception could be found, would it register as having sufficient contemporary meaning and relevance for people who believe in the

reality of God for today? The idea of God's presence can impact on lives as personal, dynamic and immediate. Theologically it would also have to address adequately, while sufficiently preserving and respecting, the mystery of God's presence to all.

4.2 Immanuel as Life

It is appropriate at this stage to step back from the individual models, take a wider view, and reflect upon how and why these three models taken together really form the one integrated macro-model briefly mentioned at sections 1.7, 2.6 and 2.7, above. This composite inclusive macro-model of divine presence, that is God as Immanuel, has been characterised as "lifelike" or "life-sized" because the dominant feature of this proposed inclusive super-model is that it is life-centred. All life is sourced from and centred on the divine presence of God as Immanuel. The primacy of life reflects the primacy of divine presence. To celebrate life is to celebrate Immanuel, the presence of God in our midst.

Tillich closely connects his concept of God with his concept of life. For him the relationship between God, as ever-present reality, and creation is manifest in the life process. At section 2.6, above, we noted Tillich's conviction that there is a strong rhythm, a direct and dynamic association, between Divine Life, and creaturely life universal¹. Identifying Life Eternal with Divine Life, Tillich encompasses all creaturely life from the first moment of its existence as participating in eternal life because all life is "in", and remains at all times "in", the presence of God. All creaturely life emerges from divine creation (emergence of *essence*), continues through God's providential presence as *creatio continua* (through *existence*) and eventually finds fulfilment in the new creation (the process of *essentialisation* as the fulfilled life of the creature in Eternal Life). The movement of all created life is reflected by Tillich in his exposition of the passage from essence (Model One: God as the Ground of all being), through existence with its consequent estrangement (Model Two: Jesus Christ as New Being), to essentialisation (with the help of God as Spirit; Spiritual Presence – Model Three).² Here, Tillich clearly links self-realisation with essence, estrangement with existence, and reconciliation with the process of essentialisation.

¹ *ST 3*, p.421.

² At the end of his *Systematic Theology* Tillich puts it this way: "Creation into time produces the possibility of self-realisation, estrangement, and reconciliation of the creature, which, in eschatological terminology, is the way from essence through existence to essentialisation" (*ST 3*, p.422).

But Tillich also has a developed theology of life which forms an integral part of his *Systematic Theology*³. His extensive philosophical and theological treatment of life and its processes provides an opportunity to consider this in conjunction with the three analytical models of divine presence considered in the previous chapter. Tillich connects his system together by writing about the *eschaton* at the end of volume three of his *Systematic Theology* in such a way that he envisages it as ultimately bringing him back to the beginning of the system, thus seeing it all together as one integrated project. He neatly summarises his thinking on this by quoting Romans 11:36 “For *of* him, and *through* him, and *to* him, are all things”⁴. There Tillich acknowledges the triadic structure of divine reality as presence by focusing on the threefold dimension of the creator-creature relationship. The italics used in that scriptural quotation are provided by Tillich himself, and in that way the three models of divine presence developed and used in this thesis can be identified as “*of* him” (Model One – the Ground of Being, Being-Itself, source of creation), “*through* him” (Model Two – the New Being redeeming creation estranged through existence), and “*to* him” (Model Three – the return of fulfilled essentialised human beings and indeed all creation, the New Creation, through the action of God as Spirit, as Spiritual Presence).

While Tillich did not identify and write about three specific models of divine presence, he did conceive of three modes of God as present to creation by writing of God, firstly as Being Itself, the source of essences, of all creation; secondly as New Being, victorious over estranged existence; thirdly as Spirit revitalising and ultimately fulfilling and restoring all creation anew, especially humankind, through a process of sanctification and essentialisation. If this cycle is viewed as continuous participation in Eternal Life, that is, Divine Life, from start to finish, then can this be interpreted as expressing the triadic structure of divine presence, God as Immanuel in threefold relationship with creation incorporating the cycle of life, the grand loop of life?

To respond to this question we shall examine Tillich’s inclusive theology of life in more detail, ultimately with reference to Divine Life and God as source of, and continuous support for, all life. A key proposition of this thesis is that Tillich’s theology is “full of life” because it is full of presence, particularly the presence of God as Immanuel, the God

³ *ST* 3, Part IV (pp.11-294). In addition, Part V (pp.297-423) of his system also deals extensively with the historical dimension of life, life processes and the ontological categories (time, space, causality and substance), and also eternal life and Divine Life involving the final conquest of the ambiguities of life.

⁴ *ST* 3, p.6.

who stays with created life throughout and beyond time. We contend that Tillich, wittingly or otherwise, chose life as the concept and theme that harmonises and draws together the various elements of an Immanuel Theology scattered throughout his writings. Tillich's theology of life is a development from, and can be telescoped back into, his theology of divine presence. For Tillich, life expresses the presence of the divine. It signals the reality of Immanuel at the heart of everything there is. Life, conceived by Tillich in the most comprehensive way, can be interpreted as evidence of the immediate enduring reality of God's presence to all creation. There can be no theology of life without an underlying theology of divine presence which provides the basis and explanation for it. All life is participation in the life of God, in Eternal Life, and that presupposes God as an ever-present reality.

4.3 Tillich's Theology of Life

While noting that the word "life" can be limited to an organic connotation which refers exclusively to the realm of "living beings", and that it can also be used as a polar concept to embrace the notions of life and death, dying and rebirth, Tillich opts for an all-inclusive "ontological concept of life – life as 'the actuality of being' "⁵. This recognises life as the potentiality of beings which actualise themselves in time and space.

This ontological concept of life "unites the two main qualifications of being *which underlie this whole system ... the essential and the existential*"⁶. Here Tillich affirms that life holds together all finite being as conditioned by the tension between the essential and the existential dimensions of every individual finite being, and that the interplay between the essential and the existential as modifications of being underpins his entire theological system. A potentiality is a type of being, an essence with the capability of becoming actual under the conditions of existence. In turn, existence exposes actualising essences to growth, distortion and death. The "bare necessities of life" are formed out of a "mix" of essential and existential elements. Tillich's ontological concept of life is a universal concept which defines "life" as the actualisation of the potential in the structure of beings conditioned by existence.⁷

⁵ *ST 3*, p.11.

⁶ *ST 3*, pp.11-12 (our italics).

⁷ According to Tillich: "The ontological concept of life liberates the word 'life' from its bondage to the organic realm and elevates it to the level of a basic term that can be used within the theological system only if interpreted in existential terms" (*ST 3*, p.12).

This ontological concept of life prompts two types of consideration. The first is identified by Tillich as “essentialist” and refers to life’s essential nature which gives it both unity and diversity. This is what Tillich terms “*the multidimensional unity of life*”⁸, highlighting the role of essence and concentrating on the unifying effect of the essence of life. It also shows Tillich’s preference, as noted in section 2.5, above⁹, for the notion of “dimension” instead of “level” or “stratum” or “layer”, when classifying different types of life. The second type of consideration is the “existential”. Despite the unifying and diversifying effects of essence on all life’s dimensions, the impact of finite freedom on existence, with its ability to disrupt and distort life, brings the quality of ambiguity to life itself. The existential ambiguities of life prompt the quest for unambiguous life which is eventually reached only through the process of essentialisation. Unambiguous life is the fullest participation in eternal life, in the eternal presence of the Divine Life itself. Therefore, all life, conceived ontologically by Tillich, is lived out temporally here in the presence of God in a fragmentary way, and under the impact of Spiritual Presence, until finite life reaches full transcendent union in eternal life with Immanuel. Multidimensional life is rooted in the life of God made present to creation as Immanuel. The *life as presence* connection that we make is profoundly important for the central thrust of this thesis. All life is sourced from the living God; it is maintained by the God of life; it is ultimately directed towards fulfilment in the life of God. For all this to happen God, the Ground of all life, must be Immanuel, that is, God Present to all at all stages. Life is not a process which is started by God who then steps back and lets life develop on its own. Life anywhere and at anytime needs the enduring presence of the creative God Immanuel who maintains and underwrites all life.

Tillich agrees that there is no specified number of dimensions or realms of life, but for his purposes he identifies five dimensions: the *inorganic*; the *organic*; the *psychological* (inner awareness: the self-awareness of life); the *personal-communal or the “spirit”* (“the unity of life-power and life in meanings, or in condensed form, the ‘unity of power and meaning’ ”¹⁰); the *historical* (the all-embracing dimension of life only fully actualised in mankind as the bearer of the spirit)¹¹.

⁸ ST 3, p.12.

⁹ See again, P. Tillich, “Dimensions, Levels and the Unity of Life”, pp.4-8.

¹⁰ ST 3, p.22.

¹¹ In Volume Three: Part V, “History and The Kingdom of God” (pp.297-423) the final part of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich explores at length the historical dimension.

Tillich's theology of life can helpfully be interpreted as an entry point into our Immanuel theology. Firstly, given Tillich's view of God as the ever-present Ground of Being, or Being-Itself, his theology of life, which is really an *ontotheology of life*, accommodates every created being with the potential to be actualised within Tillich's all-embracing ontological conception of life under the providence of the living God. Without the continuing presence of God as Immanuel at every stage, all ontological life would simply cease to be. "Ontological Life" is our descriptive phrase for the dynamic life process considered at the all-inclusive level of being where God is the ground and power of being. It is the potentiality-to-actuality shift manifest in all finite being as the ongoing process of actualisation in which Immanuel as Life-Giver continually empowers and activates the potency of all created being into dynamic life. God is the Actualiser and ontological life can be defined as the enduring divine actualisation of every finite being. Ontological life understood as actualisation is an expression of Immanuel's sustaining creativity. Secondly, Tillich rightly considers that the dimension of the inorganic has religious significance, although he says that is rarely acknowledged in theology which too readily equates the inorganic with terms like "nature", or the "natural", or "matter", with all their accompanying traditional antireligious connotations. Tillich pleads for a "theology of the inorganic"¹². Indeed, such a thought with its broad and inclusive ontological idea of life on our planet would be a good basis on which to develop a persuasive and attractive ecotheology, a pressing requirement for today's world.¹³ Given Tillich's ontological concept of life, nothing, not even the realm of the inorganic, is "outside" the life of God present to and in all creation.

However, Tillich acknowledges that most people, including the philosophers of life, normally use the word "life" to refer to organic life. Yet he balances this with a reminder that, underlying all ontological life, there is the important distinction between the potential and the actual. Essence and the degree of actualisation determine each dimension of life. The more complex forms of ontological life are essentially present in the less complex forms. In the inorganic, the organic is essentially present but it makes its actual appearance only under certain conditions. All dimensions of life are present, whether as partly potential or as partly or fully actual, in every realm of life. One actual dimension

¹² *ST 3*, p.18.

¹³ Tillich comments that "... the inorganic has a preferred position among the dimensions in so far as it is the first condition for the actualisation of every dimension ..." (*ST 3*, p.19), but he would be rightly concerned if all reality were to be reduced to inorganic processes because that would simply be "reductionist naturalism", or materialism, which identifies matter with inorganic matter. *Materialism*, in this definition, is an *ontology of death*" (*ST 3*, p.19).

will characterise a particular realm, but that will happen only because other dimensions have already been actualised, thus forming the conditions for the determining dimension's own actualisation. Given that different dimensions of life have different degrees of power of being, a graded system of life values emerges on the principle: "That which presupposes something else and adds to it is by so much the richer"¹⁴. So to all the other dimensions of life presupposed and contained in a human being, historical man adds the historical dimension. In our human experience this makes the historical human being the highest being or life form incorporating the greatest number of potentialities in a single living actuality.

From our perspective, the importance of Tillich's thoughts on ontological life is that they present us with a comprehensive picture of all life as a unity rich in dimensions, all of which are present to each other, are fully integrated and held together through the mutually shared power of being sourced in the living God. Multidimensional life is fuelled by the power of being. This creates the multidimensional presence of all ontologically alive beings to each other. Multidimensionality preserves and expresses the diversity of life, itself unified through the power of being flowing from Immanuel as the Ground of Being. Life manifests the multidimensional character of the divine presence throughout all created reality which throbs with the power of being, the power of life itself. Immanuel is life itself made present and manifest in the rich diversity of all ontological life forms.

Having differentiated the organic realm from the psychological dimension of life which expresses the self-awareness of life, Tillich concentrates on the dimension of the "*spirit*" or the *personal-communal*, where human beings are actualised. When dealing with the phenomenological model of divine presence as immanence in the human consciousness, the special role of Spiritual Presence was emphasised. There it was noted that Tillich specifically used a capital "S" when writing the words "Spirit" and "Spiritual" in order to refer to the Divine Spirit or Spiritual Presence in order to emphasise the impact of the divine on the human. In his ontological view of life, Tillich wishes to redeem the word "spirit", spelt with a small "s", from its manifold confusing uses, and he goes on to compare how it relates to, but is distinguishable from, other words such as "mind", "soul" and "reason". The dimension of human spirit emerges in conjunction with a totally centred self, that is a self that is free. It dominates the human life process. It actualises all particularly human potentialities and in that way the human being, as a free personal

¹⁴ ST 3, p.17.

centre, can transcend itself. Human spirit, as the power of life and as the unity of power and meaning, integrates and unifies all dimensions of life in the human being. The dimension of spirit transforms the psychological centre, the self-awareness of life, as the free personal centre actualises its potentialities and transcends itself.

While life is a multidimensional unity, and while it is also ambiguous because of the tension between the essential and existential elements of being, human life is the bearer of spirit. Spirit manifests itself creatively in the personal centre of every human individual, and is active in the self-world-God relationship which provides the encountering context for divine presence in creation. Given Tillich's broad and inclusive ontological concept of life, it is not difficult to conclude that his theology of life is the natural outgrowth of his theology of presence. Immanuel, as God Present with us, comes to us and dwells with us as *the* "life-line" to all that has been given being. Through the divine gift of life, Immanuel appears *ontologically* (Model One) because all being has life, and also appears *existentially* (Model Two) because in the life process essential being is actualised in existence. In addition, Immanuel also makes the divine reality manifest *phenomenologically* (Model Three) in a special way in the depth of reason and in human consciousness through revelation and through the creative impact of Spiritual Presence on every human being as a bearer of spirit.

4.4 The Dialectics of Life As Presence

"Life was defined as the actualisation of potential being".¹⁵ This statement reflects Tillich's view that life involves the continuous transition from potential being to actual being, from potentiality to actuality. This process, involving the gradual realisation of the power of essential being, is the process of life. However, the action of living, the act of life, should not be envisaged as a simple direct forward movement. Every "living" being, remembering Tillich's ontological concept of multidimensional life, has its own identity, its own unique centre, and living its life involves the outward movement from its centre of action. This process of self-alteration occurs with reference to the other, but it does not threaten the self-identity of the being because it returns again to its centre. In this way Tillich identifies the three elements of the life process as *self-identity*, *self-alteration* and *return to one's self*. Life as the movement from potentiality to actuality involves these three elements. The rhythm of life, then, displays this oscillation from the centre (self-identity) out to the other in a self-changing process (self-alteration), and then back again to

¹⁵ *ST* 3, p.30.

the centre having been enriched or actualised by contact with the other (return to one's self). Tillich calls this rhythm "the dialectics of life".¹⁶ Such is the triadic character of life but how, if at all, does this connect with a theology of presence?

The three constitutive elements of presence were identified as self, relation and other. With specific reference to our three models of divine presence, it was noted that the *self* was given special attention in the *phenomenological* model during our discussion of the divine presence within human consciousness and experience; the *existential* model emphasised the divine presence manifested in existential and historical human *relationships*; the *ontological* model stressed the divine presence in the context of God as the profoundly *Other*, ever-present ultimate but infinite reality. This threefold structure of presence reflects the triadic nature of the life process which matches *self* with self-identity, *relationship* with self-alteration (the power of life to form relationships by going beyond itself), and the *other* with return to one's self (which implies the discovery of the other from which the self is returning). Linking and twinning these three pairs of concepts in this manner cannot be found in Tillich's work. We propose it here as a novel and legitimate way of fusing Tillich's theology of presence with his theology of life. The insight that life in all its processes is the underlying expression or manifestation of divine presence blends the three models into one.

4.5 The Functions of Life As Presence

Integrating Tillich's theology of presence with his theology of life can be extended beyond his threefold dialectics of life elaborated as self-identity (selfhood), self-alteration (relationality) and return to one's self (otherness). In addition to this triadic structure of life, in which potentiality becomes actuality, Tillich also identifies the three functions of life as *self-integration*, *self-creation* and *self-transcendence*. All three dialectical elements of the structure of life are present and operative in each of life's three functions, although one particular dialectical element tends to be dominant in one particular function of life. Self-identity is prominent in the life function of self-integration. Self-alteration is more apparent in self-creation, and return to one's self is the most obvious feature of self-transcendence as the third function of life.

Each function of life tends to indicate a specific direction in the unfolding of life through the actualisation of the potential. The life function of *self-integration* indicates a *circular*

¹⁶ ST 3, p.284.

movement, where the centre of self-identity is affirmed, then prompted into self-alteration and finally re-affirmed in the return to one's self, more enriched by that which has altered it. According to Tillich, this happens and is determined under the *principle of centredness* which dictates the circular manner in which life is actualised through the function of self-integration.

The second direction in which life actualises itself is described by Tillich as *horizontal* in that "Life drives toward the new".¹⁷ This occurs through life's second function of *self-creation* under the *principle of growth* which entails both growth within the self-centred being as well as external growth involving the creation of new centres beyond the centred self.

The third directional movement of life is characterised by Tillich as *vertical*, depicting life as self-realisation through life's third function of *self-transcendence*. Just as the life process element of self-alteration is effective to some degree in the life function of self-integration, and the element of self-identity is to some extent effective in the life function of self-creation, so too the third element of the life process, return to one's self, which is dominant in the life function of self-transcendence, is operative, but in a limited way only, in the other two life functions of self-integration and self-creation, where self-transcendence is contained within the confines of finite life which itself is not transcended. However, Tillich correctly wishes to reserve the word "self-transcendence" to refer exclusively to that situation where life transcends itself as finite life. The third life function of self-transcendence operates in the life process under *the principle of sublimity*. "Life, by its very nature as life, is both *in* itself and *above* itself."¹⁸ Just as life drives towards centredness (function of self-integration), and life drives towards growth (function of self-creation), so also does life drive towards the sublime (function of self-transcendence).

Before attempting to situate the triadic character of life's functions within an Immanuel theology, a cautionary word should be said about Tillich's prolific use of the prefix "self" in his exposition of a theology of life. When speaking of the three elements of the dialectics of life (*self-identity*; *self-alteration*; return to one's *self*) and the three functions of life (*self-integration*; *self-creation*; *self-transcendence*), he obviously must make frequent

¹⁷ ST 3, p.31.

¹⁸ ST 3, p.31.

reference to “self”. Given Tillich’s ontological view of life, this “self” should not be construed as referring specifically to the “psychological self” of the third dimension of life, discussed previously as the dimension of life where self-awareness, centred awareness, appears. Tillich does not envisage this “self” as necessarily a conscious being, nor indeed even an organic being. He is not intending to posit a separate “self” in the ordinary accepted sense of that word.

When he mentions the functions of life as *self*-integration, *self*-creation and *self*-transcendence, he is not implying that there is a separate individual or entity, consciously or unconsciously, standing outside the life process integrating, or creating or transcending itself. For example, self-creation is not the creation of a self; nor is self-transcendence the transcendence of a separate self by itself. Life does not stand outside itself. The prefix “self” used here by Tillich in the context of his theology of life refers to life itself.¹⁹ With reference to the self-creative function of life he is careful to point out that “life is not self-creative in an absolute sense. It presupposes the creative ground out of which it comes”.²⁰ Furthermore, when considering self-transcendence as the third function of life he is careful to say, in respect of life’s push to go beyond itself as finite life; “It is *self*-transcendence because life is not transcended by something that is not life”.²¹

To conclude this section, and as a further development of our Immanuel theology, we can make important links, as was done earlier in respect of Tillich’s threefold dialectics of life, between our three models of divine presence and Tillich’s three functions of life. The ontological model of presence, which accentuates Immanuel’s transcendence and the “vertical” relationship with God, accommodates the life function of self-transcendence and its principle of sublimity. The self-creation life function, under its principle of growth accords with the existential model, which is expressive of the expansion of divine presence along horizontal relationships centred on Jesus the Christ as New Being. New life is the growing manifestation of Immanuel in a world held in being through God’s sustaining creativity. The phenomenological model of divine presence, representing the close personal inclusive form of divine-human presence, experienced in the manner of Immanuel as Spirit and as divine immanence, accords with the circularity of individual conscious

¹⁹ With reference to the self-integration of life he warns: “The syllable ‘self’ indicates that it is life itself which drives toward centredness in every process of self-integration. There is nothing outside life which could cause its movement from centredness through alteration back to centredness” (*ST 3*, p.30).

²⁰ *ST 3*, p.31.

²¹ *ST 3*, p.31 (Tillich’s italics).

finite life dictated by the principle of centredness operating in conjunction with the life function of self-integration.

4.6 Immanuel's Creative Formula: Being = Presence = Life

This is important as we seek to integrate further Tillich's theology of life with our Immanuel theology. Remembering Tillich's ontotheology, his ontological understanding of God with references to God as Being-Itself, the Ground of Being, and also recalling his emphasis on the ontological character of life and all its processes, dialectical elements and functions, it is justifiable for us here to equate being with life, and consequently, to make direct reference to God as Life-Itself, or as the very Ground of Life. Immanuel is the ever-present power of all life. From this statement it follows that God's presence registers throughout all created reality, throughout all created space and time, as Life-Itself made manifest in all finite life and in all life's processes, dynamics and functions.

All finite being is alive because being is life. This is proof positive of the creative God Immanuel as presence. Without divine presence there would be no being, no life at all. For anything to have being it must be present and have presence. To have being is to have life. Therefore our equation is simple. Being equals presence equals life. In this thesis, both ontologically and theologically, being, presence and life form an indispensable and indivisible unity. Given Tillich's ontological definition of life it is perhaps not too fanciful to interpret the divine agenda, at the beginning of creation, as reflecting the Creator's intention to correlate being, presence and life in an outpouring of infinite love for the created other. Let there be being: let there be presence: let there be life – all one and the same creative act. Though this correlation is not explicit in Tillich's writings, it is a formulation and development of this thesis, offered as a framework for the construction of Immanuel theology, a theology of presence.

Yet linking God as the source of all life to Tillich's ontological idea of life as essentially a process of actualisation, a fulfilling movement from potency to actuality, appears to expose a contradiction in Tillich's ontotheology of God and life. If God is in fact the source or fount of all life in every created being, does this not mean that God as Life-Itself is in a state of eternal change and is engaged in a continuous eternal process of actualisation within the Godhead? If God is defined by ontotheologians like Tillich as pure actuality, beyond the passage from potentiality to actuality, prior to the continuous realisation of potency into actuality, an ontological process which, according to Tillich, is life, then does

it not follow that God as pure actuality and without unrealised potentiality is ontologically dead? Is God really alive?

The answer is that when we say that God is “alive” we are using a human metaphor with anthropomorphic limitations. It is perhaps better to say that God is the ground of all life. The “living” God of Christian Scripture is the God who creates and sustains all finite life. The “life” of the Godhead is in reality the life-giving love which constantly pours out into the divine dynamics of creation. It is creation, all created reality, which is alive with God. As the fundamental condition of all life, God is the Life-Giver. Creation can be alive only with God because God is Immanuel, at all times present to all finite beings who are given life through the divine presence.

Yet again, Immanuel theology is revealed as the convergence of the theology of life and the theology of divine presence, because life is not possible without God Present. All finite reality is alive with God because God is Immanuel the Life-Giver. “Alive with God” or “alive in God” are phrases which describe the procreative relationship of Immanuel to every finite being. By definition, the divine presence brings life, which, out of divine love, it fosters and preserves for all eternity. The “living” God is Immanuel as the power of all finite life. In that sense Immanuel is the Life-Giver, the source of the power of life. Divine presence and life are always found together because the divine presence always bears life. Where there is life, there is Immanuel. “Being alive” means God Present.

All finite life is divine in that it is divinely inspired. Finite life has a divine character or quality because finite life means that God is present. If all life, as defined ontologically by Tillich, is a process which happens only to finite beings, then expressions such as “the divine life” or “the inner life of the Godhead” must be carefully recognised as human metaphors. God is “beyond” life, before life, prior to the manifold diversity of life, and is the absolute essential condition for all life which, as created, can be finite only. As the *sine qua non* of all life, God is Immanuel whose creative power as presence sparks and protects the life of every finite being. “The divine life” is not a reference to the inner nature of God which humans could never hope to comprehend. Rather it is a theological description of the impact of the divine presence on the relationship between created reality and Immanuel as divine reality. It is descriptive of what God gifts creation through the life-giving divine presence. We do not share or participate in “the divine life”, rather, finite beings “come alive” and “stay alive” within the creative presence of Immanuel. We do not “share” life

with God. It is God who brings us to life through the creative presence of divine love. God is the unity and the power behind the multidimensional nature of all finite life. Indeed all finite life is lovingly gifted by God as Creator of all finite being. Immanuel, the God who has chosen out of love to form a close relationship with every created being, is the ground, the power, and the meaning of all life, every single life. Immanuel is the necessary condition for the possibility of any life at all.

In our Immanuel theology of presence, finite life and divine love are one. In it, God invites us into a life of love and a love of life, both made possible only through divine presence. God is the principle of life. Creation is the divine act of being brought alive in the divine presence. *Creatio continua* is the divine process whereby all finite life is kept alive and nurtured in the divine presence. “Alive with God” means exactly the same as being “alive and with God” because Immanuel’s presence is the absolutely necessary condition for the creation and maintenance of all finite life.

The integration of our Immanuel theology with a theology of life, achieved by using the conceptual tools of Tillich’s ontologies of God and of life, strengthens our claim here that created life, finite life, is concrete evidence of God’s presence in all created being. By sharing the gift of life with every created entity, God’s dynamic presence as Immanuel is proactive at the heart of life’s process where the potentiality of essences is being actualised in existence. Life as self-realisation is really the Ground of Life made manifest in every aspect of created life’s multidimensional unity. Here again, one can see how the presence of God as Life-Itself unifies our three subsidiary models of divine presence into one life-centred metamodel.

4.7 Life, Immanuel and Human Presence

We have seen how Tillich’s understanding of the process of life and the elements which compose the dynamics of life all dovetail into an Immanuel theology which incorporates our three models of divine presence, presented and discussed in previous chapters. Now we turn to an examination of life’s three functions of self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence, in order to reflect on how and where these functions of life connect with aspects of our Immanuel theology. Can these functions of life enhance an understanding of our three chosen subsidiary models of divine presence which make up the one all-inclusive overarching model of Immanuel, the enduring source of all life in

creation? Indeed, can Tillich's three functions of life give us fresh insights into how divine presence functions as Life-Itself, the Ground of Life, in the life of finite being?

In section 4.5, above, we noted that self-identity, self-alteration and return to one's self, elements of Tillich's threefold dialectics of life, are united to some extent by each of the three functions of life, despite the fact that existential estrangement threatens that unity as life drives simultaneously in each of the directions dictated by each of its functions. The experience of existential estrangement in life brings real disruption. Self-integration is opposed by *disintegration*, self-creation is confronted by *destruction*, and self-transcendence is challenged by *profanisation*. This mix of positive and negative elements introduces unavoidable ambiguity into every life process. "Life at every moment is ambiguous ... life is neither essential nor existential but ambiguous".²² This has a significant impact on our Immanuel theology because, as created life is constantly distorted by ambiguity, divine presence in created time and space manifests Immanuel in a fragmentary way only, pending finite life's final and full "participation in the transcendent union of unambiguous life".²³

Lest we dilute the central importance of divine presence in any systematic theology, and thereby dilute the significance of Immanuel theology, by concentrating too much on the universalising effect of Tillich's all-encompassing ontological concept of life as it embraces all finite being, it is time to concentrate our consideration of life and divine presence specifically on the divine-human relationship. By focusing our attention, not simply on "living" beings nor even more narrowly on organic life, but especially on life under the dimension of spirit, the personal-communal dimension experienced only in the human domain of life, we can consider closely human presence in relation to God. It will be recalled that, in our examination of the significance and content of the three individual models of divine presence in chapter three, (sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, above), we particularly devoted our attention to the manner and mode of God's presence and how it impacts upon *human* nature and its essentiality (Model One), on the *human* existential condition (Model Two), and on the *human* consciousness of the personal self as it is gradually elevated and "essentialised" under the influence of Spiritual Presence (Model Three).

²² *ST* 3, p.32.

²³ *ST* 3, p.140. Here Tillich distinguishes carefully between ambiguity and fragment, pointing out that "Spiritual Presence" is itself unambiguous even though "It may be drawn into the ambiguous actualisations of life, especially life under the dimension of the spirit. But in itself it is unambiguous. However, it is fragmentary in its manifestation in time and space".

Pondering Tillich's three functions of life, and considering them specifically in the context of the life dimension of "spirit" actualised in human beings, we note that each function of life

... is dependent on the basic polarities of being: self-integration on the polarity of individualisation and participation, self-creation on the polarity of dynamics and form, self-transcendence on the polarity of freedom and destiny. And the structure of self-identity and self-alteration is rooted in the basic ontological self-world correlation.²⁴

The importance of this statement lies in the key connections which are relevant to this thesis. We have already seen that each one of the three polarities of being has its own special significance for a particular one of our three chosen models of divine presence: individualisation and participation for Model Three, dynamics and form for Model Two, freedom and destiny for Model One. By identifying, in the foregoing quotation, a dependent association between specific functions of life and specific polarities of being, Tillich has provided us with the basis for directly connecting the life function of self-integration with Model Three, the life function of self-creation with Model Two, and the life function of self-transcendence with Model One. Once more we are justified in claiming that our Immanuel theology of divine presence and Tillich's important theology of life synchronise with each other, thus affirming again that Immanuel, God Present, is also the Ground of Life.

The last sentence of the previous quotation from Tillich also signals another important message. It traces the source of the dialectics of life, with its structural elements of self-identity and self-alteration, to the basic ontological structure of self and world.²⁵ Out of this structure, human awareness raises and answers the ontological question about being, thereby acknowledging presence, because there is something rather than nothing, and also confirming that humans participate in being which is present to them. The dialectics of ontological life and the ontological foundations of presence interlock. Thus the correlation of both life and being as presence is evident.

But how does each of the functions of life facilitate the development of life as the actualisation of presence? Furthermore, how does Immanuel, the immediate presence of divine reality, operate through life's processes, especially its functions, to promote and safeguard all finite life? In short, how does Immanuel function in life? The three

²⁴ *ST 3*, p.32.

²⁵ *ST 1*, pp.168-174. Here, the basic ontological structure of self and world is elaborated by Tillich within the context of the question of being, all as a prelude to and preparation for his exploration of being and the question of God.

functions of life are not three separate stages in the forward development of life. Life, the actualisation of essential being, is the potency of essence flowering into existence in a process of self-realisation. The “self” of self-realisation refers to life itself. Life, then, emerges out of the potency of being as it is actualised. The triadic functioning of life happens simultaneously through self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence and will now be considered under the life dimension of human spirit, the life dimension with the personal-communal characteristics.

Ontologically speaking, being brings presence. So too, as personal life develops through its triadic functioning, personal presence emerges. As God is the Ground of being, the source of all finite life, Immanuel appears as the source of personal presence, the Ground and Condition of human presence. As Immanuel promotes the functioning of human life through self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence, so also does Immanuel promote the development of personal presence through human life. God, by virtue of being Life-Giver, is also Immanuel as divine presence fully actualised at all times in all creation, and in a special way in human life. There is an important distinction between Immanuel as divine presence always fully actualised in human life, and human life itself always present to God, but only as partially actualised. Human life in its existential condition is always struggling to make its presence “felt”, striving to actualise itself more and more. While Immanuel is only ever *fully* present to human life, human life is constantly endeavouring more and more to actualise, to make present, its essential being through existence. In the process of human life, human presence grows. Immanuel gifts being in order to be present in finite life. Human life can only battle forward to be itself in existence with the never failing support of Immanuel, the source of life. By sharing and supporting life, Immanuel is fully involved in the growth of human presence. Human beings “come to life” because Immanuel is dynamically engaged in the three life functions of self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence.

4.8 Immanuel and the Three Functions of Human Spirit

4.8.1 The Life Function of Self-Integration

The life function of self-integration expresses individualisation and participation, the polarity of being which is associated particularly with our third model of divine presence. This model concentrates particularly on God as immanent in and present to the conscious human self. *Centredness* is the principle under which the life function of self-integration

operates. An individualised human being is a centred being. The word “centredness”, evoking the idea of an outwards and inwards movement between a centre and a periphery, “unites a manifoldness of elements. This corresponds to participation, with which individualisation forms a polarity”.²⁶ On its own, individualisation isolates the centred being, while participation on its own undermines the integrity of the self. Self-integration is the life function which oscillates between the centre and the plurality or manifoldness which is drawn into the centre. If self-integration fails, and the delicate balance is lost, the life process is threatened by *disintegration* when the centre is isolated and “approaches the death of mere self-identity. Or ... it faces the danger of losing its centre altogether – the death of mere self-alteration”.²⁷

So, personal life, with its centred awareness, is constantly faced with an ambiguous mix of self-integration and disintegration as it actualises itself under the dimension of the human spirit. Linking Tillich’s understanding of self-integration with our Immanuel theology we can say God’s presence, giving and sustaining life, is at the centre of the centred being, the ground of its centre. It guards the integrity of the individual while simultaneously empowering it to open up and relate to the other, inviting it into the individualised centre. This enhances presence, without allowing the centred being to be overpowered or to disintegrate. In human life, indeed in all life, Immanuel the life-force underwrites centredness and offers cohesion with openness, as life is balanced at the centre of its being through self-integration.

Our three models of divine presence each concentrated in turn, although not exclusively, on one of three elements of presence as the self (Model Three), relation (Model Two) and the other (Model One). This consideration took place particularly within the context of the divine-human relationship. Human selfhood (Model Three) is anchored within the personal centredness of the human being present to others. Human essential centredness is actualised through the moral act. In the dimension of human spirit the self-integration function of life is manifest as morality which constitutes the personal self.²⁸ Linking this to Immanuel Theology, and especially to our third model of divine presence, it can be seen that the integrity of the self is given to each individual as personal centredness which is part of the essential nature of human beings. Through the divine gift of essential

²⁶ ST 3, p.33.

²⁷ ST 3, p.33.

²⁸ “Morality is the constitutive function of spirit. A moral act ... is ... an act in which life integrates itself in the dimension of spirit, and this means as personality within a community. Morality is the function of life in which the centred self constitutes itself as a person” (ST 3, p.38).

humanness with its personal centredness, the human being receives the power to actualise itself, to constitute itself as a personality which can then properly relate to others. Among life's functions there is morality which constitutes the individual self. With the gift of human life, which includes the function of self-integration, Immanuel invites and assists human beings to become fully human by living morally through the actualisation of their personal centredness.²⁹ The quality of the personal presence of one human being to another, and to God, is thus enhanced through Immanuel's participation in human life's function of self-integration.

4.8.2 The Life Function of Self-Creation

The life function of self-creation expresses dynamics and form, the second polarity in the structure of being. Dynamics and form were especially examined in the consideration of our second model of divine presence, (section 3.4.2, above), where Immanuel was identified as present and active in human existential relationships qualified by the human condition. That particular model was dominated by relationality, the second constitutive element in our analysis of presence. It is in existence that actual human relationships are formed and conditioned, as personal life *grows* in presence among human beings and with God as Immanuel who entered into concrete historical existence as Jesus the Christ. The word "grows", used in the last sentence, allows us to introduce the idea of *growth*, Tillich's principle under which the life function of self-creation operates.³⁰ There can be no dynamic growth without form because all being has form. Form shapes life. Form dictates the character of life, while dynamics empowers it to break through the limits of the old life. This introduces the threat of chaos into the life process as the old form gives way to the new. The self-creative function of life is endangered in this "life crisis", as creation and chaos are managed simultaneously while life grows, develops and changes creatively. In the self-creative dynamics of life the spectre of *destruction* looms over the life form.

²⁹ Through divine presence, Immanuel facilitates personal life which "emerges in the encounter of person with person and in no other way ... self-integration of the person as a person occurs in community, within which the continuous mutual encounter of centred self with centred self is possible and actual" (ST 3, pp.40-41).

³⁰ Growth is a quality of, and is dependent upon, the polar element of dynamics. It "... is a process by which a formed reality goes beyond itself to another form which both preserves and transforms the original reality. This process is the way in which life creates itself. It does not create itself in terms of original creation. It is given to itself by the divine creativity which transcends and underlies all processes of life." (ST 3, p.50). Here we see that Tillich is quick to point out the ambiguity of his own term "self-creation". Life does not literally create it. "Creation" in self-creation as a function of life, refers to life's ability to sustain and absorb change creatively while it simultaneously preserves its own continuity. Self-creation relates to personal life's forward drive in the horizontal direction in search of the new.

Taking this to the level of personal life under the dimension of human spirit, and considering its relevance for Immanuel theology, certain connections can be made between the self-creative function of life through growth and divine presence. Ontologically speaking, growth is *becoming*. If shared being is presence, and if becoming is making being more present through actualisation, then life as the actualisation of being is the emergence of presence as shared life. Immanuel, as the Ground of personal being, is also the Ground of personal presence and the Ground of creative personal life. In the creation of personal life, Immanuel is present, not just as ground, but also as the continuing source and sustainer of personal life's self-creativity. As such, Immanuel underwrites the self-creativity of human life and, as the creative Ground of life, God is always present to offer personal life, in its self-creative function, protection against chaos and destruction. The quest for unambiguous life is a struggle, in the presence of God, between the structures of creation and the powers of destruction.

In personal life under the dimension of human spirit there is, due to the function of self-creativity, much more to life than simply "staying alive". With human life, and therefore with personal presence, there is a growth and development, both within the self and also in relationship to others. Life, and with it presence, grow as the self-creativity of life expands and expresses itself in new ways.³¹ As life expands, presence deepens. Culture celebrates the self-creative growth of life. For each person, such activity is not contained and isolated solely within each separate individual life. As each human life grows and develops it reaches out toward the new, the "other-than-itself". As life creatively develops it opens up to the other, and by so doing it enhances presence, because it enhances relationships. As life cultivates itself, it cultivates presence through the constant renewal of relationality, one of the three elements in our analysis of presence especially considered at section 3.4, above, in conjunction with our second model of divine presence. There, human existential relationships and the involvement of Immanuel in human existence were examined in the context of the human search for meaning and in the context of the divine *Logos* as the source of all meaning and structure in reality. Culture, the self-creative function of life under the dimension of spirit, reflects the growth of human life, in its self-creative search for meaning and significance in encountered reality. As such, it fits well with our existential model of divine presence where Immanuel is fostering presence through the

³¹ In an effort to take care of itself life produces culture. "Culture, *cultura*, is that which takes care of something, keeps it alive, and makes it grow. In this way man can cultivate everything he encounters, but in doing so, he does not leave the cultivated object unchanged; he creates something new from it ..." (*ST* 3, p.57).

constant renewal of the network of relationships between God, self and world, and where God's manifestation in existence as Jesus the Christ opened up the offer of New Being to humanity constantly struggling to renew itself through self-creative growth as human culture. In the way that human culture and divine presence are related, we here detect another important contact point between Tillich's theology of life and our presentation of Immanuel theology.

4.8.3 The Life Function of Self-Transcendence

The life function of self-transcendence depends on the basic polarity of freedom and destiny, one of the three polarities of being as expounded by Tillich in his treatment of the ontological elements.³² Freedom and destiny as a polarity formed an important part of our deliberations on and elaboration of our first model of divine presence, where Immanuel is portrayed as the Creator, the wholly transcendent Other, the sublime Other who shaped creation by determining the destiny of every finite being through its particular essence but who simultaneously blessed every finite creature with freedom. So all life in the presence of Immanuel is both free and determined. Human life is free to transcend itself and yet no human being can elect to be anything other than human. Free human beings, always in the divine presence, cannot choose to be non-human, cannot escape their humanness. Our essence dictates that once we are made human, no matter how free, we are forever human even though we have the gift of transcending our lives. Equally, even though we are free, we are forever destined to live in the presence of God without whom we would simply not have life. Despite our cherished freedom, we are unable to opt out of the presence of Immanuel, and we cannot elect to change or transform our essence, our nature, into a non-human being. The "other" is one of the three constitutive elements of presence, and it is placed centrally in our first model of divine presence (section 3.3, above), where Immanuel was pictured as the creative source of presence as being.

From Tillich's axial concepts of essence-existence-essentialisation, essence was singled out for special treatment in the ontological model of divine presence (section 3.3.1, above). Immanuel, as Creator, is the ground and origin of all finite essences which are governed by the polarity of freedom and destiny. This polarity of finite being contributes to the ambiguity of all life. Life itself is free to transcend itself without ever ceasing to be the life it is destined to be. So, with particular reference to human beings, we can say that all human life, albeit ambiguously, functions under the polar tension between freedom and

³² *ST I*, pp.174-182.

destiny without ever leaving the presence of Immanuel as the Ultimate Other on whom all finite life depends. Immanuel is not ambiguously present to human life, but human life is certainly lived ambiguously in the presence of Immanuel. Ironically, in the first presence model Immanuel was depicted as “God Without”, not as “God With” as expressed in the second model, in order to emphasise the otherness of the infinite God who, although always present to human life, is “without”, different from and infinitely beyond finite beings. The God who is present to us in the first model is, nevertheless, ontologically distinct, both infinitely distant and different from all finitude, even though every finite being depends totally on the creative presence of the God Without. Slipping back into the spatial metaphors of prepositional theology outlined earlier (section 2.5, above), we can say that the God of Model One is ontologically and necessarily present to creation, and yet is the God “above” or “over” all creation. Immanuel, paradoxically as the God Without, is greater than the whole of creation sustained by divine presence. For human life God is truly other, but still present. Such is the transcendence of Immanuel who remains present to all finite life.

Divine transcendence gives us a reference point for the consideration of self-transcendence as a function of human life. Within the polar context of freedom and destiny, Tillich is clear that life seeks to function in a self-transcendent manner. The geometric imagery of verticality, associated to some extent with our first model of transcendent Immanuel, can be deployed here.³³ Human life freely transcends itself, while remaining true to its destiny, its human nature. However, there is ambiguity in every act of the self-transcendence of life, especially pronounced in the religious realm, because that life function of self-transcendence is always challenged by what Tillich calls profanisation.³⁴

In our theology of presence, self-transcendence concerns those elements of the dialectics of life which refer to going out to the other, especially the Divine Other, Immanuel, who is in an eternal relationship with all of creation. The door to the temple of God is the image

³³ Tillich puts it like this: “Life, in degrees, is free from itself, from a total bondage to its own finitude. It is striving in the vertical direction toward ultimate and infinite being. The vertical transcends both the circular line of centredness and the horizontal line of growth” (*ST 3*, p.86).

³⁴ “The self-transcendence of life is contradicted by the profanisation of life. ... The term “profane” in its genuine meaning expresses exactly what we call “resisting self-transcendence”, that is, remaining before the door of the temple, standing outside the holy ...” (*ST 3*, p.87). This volume of the *Systematic Theology* was published in 1963. It is interesting to note that earlier, in 1959, Tillich uses the term “self-manifestation” (instead of self-transcendence) and “concealment” (instead of profanisation). Self-manifestation conveys the image of opening up to the other, showing oneself to the other, moving out of self and towards the other. Concealment, by contrast, carries the notion of hiding from the other, remaining strictly within the confines of the self, resisting and staying away from the company of the other; in short, rejecting presence. See P. Tillich, “Dimensions, Levels and the Unity of Life”, p.8.

conjured up by Tillich when he defines profanisation as the human tendency or temptation to stand outside the temple, to resist the presence of the Divine Other. Human destiny is to be human but this must be balanced by the human freedom to go beyond, to transcend human life, by reaching out to Immanuel and by seeking to enter the presence of God. The polar tension between freedom and destiny is tightly drawn. The tendency towards profanisation, locking the human self away from the presence of the Divine Other, must be resisted. Our first model of divine presence, the ontological model, acknowledges the inescapable reality of human finitude as human destiny. At the same time, it strives to accommodate the reality of human freedom in the presence of Immanuel as Creator. It also seeks to reconcile, within the context of our theology of presence, the utter transcendence of the Divine Other with the desire and capacity of human life to transcend itself and open up to the ever-present reality of God as the Ground of all finite being.

The relevance of this for Immanuel theology becomes clearer when considered at the level of personal life under the dimension of spirit. The polar elements of freedom and destiny are interdependent, constantly converging and diverging in the life-process, as human life, "driving towards the sublime".³⁵ Through self-transcendence, human life, personal life under the dimension of spirit, is transcended only by something which is life. This life function of self-transcendence operates under the principle of sublimity by going outside and beyond its own limits towards the other which, in our Immanuel Theology, is the transcendent Divine Other. Self-transcendence is evidence that human life acknowledges and seeks the Sublime, the presence and company of something greater than human life itself, something larger than life, the Source or Ground of life, that is Immanuel. Beyond or above the life process there is Immanuel, and the function of self-transcendence in personal life under the dimension of spirit provides the capacity for human beings to open up and enter into the presence of the sublime infinite Divine Other who is Immanuel, the transcendent God who is already present to all human life as its source.

By resisting profanisation, human life has the amazing capacity to go beyond itself by self-transcendence, enter through the door of the temple into the presence of the Holy, the Sublime Immanuel. The holiness of human or personal life, indeed all life, derives from its source in the Ground of Life and from the presence of the Holy engaged through life's function of self-transcendence. Personal life, questing for presence, expands beyond itself in its pursuit of the Sublime. The self-transcendence of life under the dimension of human

³⁵ *ST* 3, p.31.

spirit is the key which unlocks the temple door and facilitates entrance into the divine presence. This key can function as religion. The three essentially related functions of the human spirit are *morality* (an expression of the life function of self-integration and its principle, centredness, in relation to presence as encountered under the polar influence of individualisation and participation), *culture* (an expression of the life function of self-creation and growth, its principle, in relation to the generation of new aspects and forms of presence under the polar influence of dynamics and form), and *religion* (an expression of the life function of self-transcendence and its principle, sublimity, in relation to engaging the presence of the Ultimate Other under the polar influence of freedom and destiny).

As a function of the human spirit, religion acknowledges ultimacy and transcendence in the presence of Immanuel as the Divine Other. In the search for unambiguous life, where human life would experience and enjoy the divine presence of Immanuel unambiguously, religion as the self-transcendent function of the human spirit, struggles with profanisation as a retreat from the presence of the Holy. Under the dimension of human spirit, religion as the self-transcendence of life liberates life by allowing it, albeit ambiguously, to “live life beyond its own means” in the transcendent presence of God. Religion, as it struggles to reject profanisation, and as it battles with the ambiguity of life, carries us through the door of the temple and into the ultimate, transcendent presence of Immanuel, the Holy One. Yet the ambiguity remains. While religion is the function whereby life transcends itself, life itself is not negated through self-transcendence. Despite religion, human life remains in existence, otherwise there would be nothing to be transcended. So, ironically, life is simultaneously both transcended and not transcended through religion.³⁶ Religion does not remove the ambiguity of life; nor does it surpass life. As self-transcendence, it helps to forge, from the human side, a relationship with the Infinite Other. Religion is the God-given human capacity to elevate human life beyond itself and into the already available presence of Immanuel as the Holy transcendent God. It is hoped that this particular treatment and interpretation of Tillich’s idea of religion as the self-transcendent function of the human spirit, highlights new and important points of contact between our Immanuel theology and Tillich’s theology of life.

4.9 **The Vitality of Presence**

By our selection of key elements of Tillich’s theology of life and the integration of them into the Immanuel theology of divine presence being proposed here, we have made a

³⁶ ST 3, p.98 where Tillich speaks of the “double ambiguity” of religion.

reasonable case for that Immanuel theology. The interchangeable use of the terms “being”, “presence” and “life” is justified. The presence of life is simply another way of saying the life of presence. Tillich’s multidimensional unity of life points to the multidimensional presence of every form of finite life to every other form of finite life, and beyond that to the unifying Ground of Life Itself. Presence is as pervasive as life, because presence is life lived out in the presence of Immanuel. Life is God’s creative enlargement project. It is the Creator’s work-in-progress, conducted exclusively and necessarily in the divine presence, as finite life reflects the passage of finite being from potentiality to actuality. Divine “presence” is not just another noun indicating the “proximity” of the divine reality to all creation. It is also more than divine immanence. From the perspective of finite life it is a dynamic process. It registers as a mode of living enjoyed by every creature. It is recognised as the central feature of a state of being, an eternal process which forever fosters the divine-human relationship.

Tillich’s theology is full of “vital” statistics, life references, which constantly point back to Immanuel as the God fully engaged with creation. These are literally “vital signs”, signs of life, constantly directing us back to God as the ever-present source of all life. While Tillich often refers to the “living” God³⁷ he does so with reservations, mindful of the symbolism and anthropomorphism which suffuses theological and religious language.³⁸ Tillich makes clear that his ontological definition of life cannot embrace God to whom we can only refer symbolically as “living”.

Equally, Tillich uses the phrase “the divine life” with the same qualifications. However, with careful refinement, he is happy to apply the elements of being, that is the three polarities of being, symbolically to divine life but with many theological caveats. For Tillich, divine life clearly transcends the basic ontological structure of self and world, while at the same time it underwrites the very being of that structure. God is the life-force of presence, the power behind life, which brings all finite being to life. Immanuel is larger than life. Within a consideration of trinitarian principles, Tillich is clear that “The statement that God is Spirit means that life as spirit is the inclusive symbol for divine life.

³⁷ See especially *ST 3*, pp.241-252. This section is entitled “God as Living”.

³⁸ “Life is the actuality of being, or more exactly, it is the process in which potential being becomes actual being. But in God as God there is no distinction between potentiality and actuality. Therefore, we cannot speak of God as living in the proper or non-symbolic sense of the word ‘life’. We must speak of God as living in symbolic terms. Yet every true symbol participates in the reality which it symbolises. God lives in so far as he is the ground of life” (*ST 1*, p.242).

...God's life is life as spirit."³⁹ Spirit is the actualising principle of God, and actualisation is the very nature of the life process. So Immanuel, as Spirit, is the actualiser, the life-giver. On the basis of the special focus of this thesis it can be said that the divine actualiser generates presence as it generates life. It is one and the same act. Divine life as creative actualises, without distinction, being, presence and finite life as a single composite process.

Immanuel brings finite being to life in presence. Nothing in creation is lifeless. God is true to life. Our three models of divine presence are designed to reflect the following three different aspects of Immanuel's gift of animation: life-giving (Model One), life-sustaining (Model Two) and life-transforming (Model Three). Creaturely finite life is the life of presence. Life's journey out of potentiality and towards increasing actuality is mirrored in a form of ontological "life-cycle", which Tillich characterises as finite being's transition or passage from essence to existence and on to essentialisation. Our overarching "lifelike" or "life-sized" model of divine presence is large enough to encompass in creation all that is, was or ever will be, because it highlights Immanuel as the actualiser of finite being's life of presence. Divine presence is life-affirming. The mystery of Immanuel is the mystery of presence, the mystery of presence is the mystery of life, and the mystery of life is the mystery of being.

The "vital" statistics of Tillich's ontotheology show that he makes an important correlation between trinitarian concrete monotheism, the threefold dialectic of the life-process, and the affirmation of the living God. For Tillich it is theological nonsense to associate the Trinity with the mathematical challenge of one in three, or three in one. It is about human beings needing to relate to a concrete God without undermining or devaluing divine ultimacy.⁴⁰ These are important associations for a theology of presence, especially where life and presence are identified as one.⁴¹ Tillich confirms the dialectics of the presence of the infinite to the finite. He indicates the dialectical "character of all life" found in the trinitarian God whom we identify as Immanuel, God-Related. Crucially, Tillich is pointing to an infinite-finite relationship that is the basis for the presence of the infinite to the finite, as implied in the dialectical character of life. Philosophically, Tillich is also keen to

³⁹ *ST 1*, p.250.

⁴⁰ "The Trinitarian problem is the problem of the unity between ultimacy and concreteness of the living God. Trinitarian monotheism is concrete monotheism, the affirmation of the living God" (*ST 1*, p.228).

⁴¹ Given the dialectical nature of life, Tillich can say that when this is applied to the divine life symbolically then "God as a living God must be described in dialectical statements. He has the character of all life, namely, to go beyond himself and to return to himself. This is expressed in the Trinitarian symbols. ... Trinitarian thinking is dialectical. ... This implies a relation in God between the infinite and the finite. ... The finite does not limit him but belongs to the eternal process of his life" (*ST 2*, pp.90-91).

demonstrate⁴² that dialectical realism, a philosophy of life, is the theoretical companion to be twinned with trinitarian monotheism, a theology of life, because they both reflect the dialectical character of life which, in our Immanuel theology, is an expression of divine presence rooted in that infinite-finite dialectical relationship referred to above. Once again we can conclude that God's presence as trinitarian, dialectical and life-orientated, must form an integral part of our Immanuel theology of presence.

4.10 Immanuel and the Frailty of Ambiguous Life

However, not all is well with Tillich's theology of life. We agree that the dialectic of life with its three elements of self-identity, self-alteration and return to self, is united by life's three functions of self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence. Also, we agree that, as Tillich claims, life is ambiguous. What we do not agree is the cause of the ambiguity of all finite life. Tillich asserts that it is existential estrangement which disrupts the unity of life formed through the interaction of life's threefold dialectic and life's three functions. Tillich's view is based on his conviction that existence, the actualised stage of life (as distinct from the potential undeveloped stage of life sourced in essence), is negative. Tillich clearly asserts that it is existence which distorts life, making it ambiguous at every moment. In our opinion this is a central weakness which seriously discolours Tillich's theology of life. The reader will recall that an extensive critique of Tillich's perception of existence has been included with our treatment of the existential model of presence (section 3.4.3, above). Certainly life is ambiguous because it is obviously a mix of positive and negative. Yet this is arguably generated by the impact of finite freedom and other ontological factors operative in ways both positive and negative during the course of the life of every finite being. The ambiguous character of life is not, as Tillich believes, in the tension and contrast between essence and existence. This goes to the heart of much of Tillich's theology, and we are obliged to take issue with him on that account.

Ontologically, existence, *per se*, is not negative. Theologically, existence, like essence, is an integral part of the gift of created being. Admittedly, finitude, which is being as limited by nonbeing⁴³, is threatening and makes finite life ontologically vulnerable. Life, as the becoming of being, is fraught with danger. Existence is the challenge and pressure of living life as it actualises. The four ontological categories (space, time, causality and substance), present and operative in every form of finite life, each expresses a dual relation

⁴² *ST I*, pp.234-235.

⁴³ *ST I*, p.189.

to being (positive element) and to nonbeing (negative element).⁴⁴ So the categories carry the threat of nonbeing deep within the ontological character of all finite life. For all life this is the price of finitude. It is finitude with its creaturely freedom, not existence, which is the real threat to life, and the source of its ambiguity.

In addition, we referred to (sections 4.8.1, 4.8.2 and 4.8.3, above) the dependence of each of life's three functions on one of the three ontological elements or polarities of being. Self-integration is dependent on the polarity of individualisation and participation. Self-creation is dependent on the polarity of dynamics and form. Self-transcendence is dependent on the polarity of freedom and destiny. In turn, the poles of each polarity operate in tension and interdependence with one another. When polar tension is not perfectly balanced, and indeed this imbalance is part of the character of finitude, then life is made ambiguous because it is constantly being disrupted and destabilised. So again it can be seen that, just like the threat of nonbeing to which the ontological categories are exposed, the polar ontological elements also contribute to the disruption of finite life and give it an ambiguous aspect. Life, and therefore by implication presence, is not distorted by existence as Tillich claims in his ontology. All finite life is threatened by the legacy of its finitude, haunted by nonbeing, and also by the instability of the ontological categories and the polar elements which of necessity contribute, albeit ambiguously, to the character and functioning of the life process. Existence as such is not the culprit. Existence is a fact and privilege of creation. Existence, the reality that something simply is, is not the agent of life's distortion. It is the "victim" of distortion coming from the dark side of finitude's freedom. Life experiences the imperfections of finitude as they are played out in the context of existence. Finitude, not existence, is the origin of life's ambiguities.

Immanuel as Spirit, in the face of life's ambiguities, sponsors life, shields it from nonbeing and shepherds it away from distortion and towards fulfilment. Despite its ambiguity, life is never God-forsaken. Immanuel is the guarantor, through divine presence, of all finite life. Our three models of presence, as integrated into the macro-model of divine presence as source and sustenance of life itself, show Immanuel's multidimensional (through ontology, existentialism and phenomenology) support for and protection of the multidimensional unity of finite life. Immanuel, who is "God-related-to-creation-as-life", reigns over all life through presence. This is echoed in Tillich's idea of theonomy which, by extension, gives rise to his notion of the theonomous unity of life. Immanuel is "God-with-life" and "life-

⁴⁴ *ST I*, p.192.

with-God". Despite the fragility of life, God, as the transcendent ground of life and its depth-dimension, brings finite being to life and provides creation with its lifeline. Immanuel unifies life through the divine presence and continually bolsters the fabric of life against the threat of nonbeing. Nonbeing, as *ouk on*⁴⁵, is the complete lack of any being at all. As such it is also the lack of life and presence of any kind. It is ontological death and total absence. Immanuel as God-Present stands between ontological life and ontological death, between being and nonbeing, and between manifold presence and the abyss of utter absence. God gives life to being through presence. Such is Immanuel theology where God, the creative ground of presence, is offered as the answer, the antidote, to the fragility and vulnerability of being as life.

4.11 Conclusion to Chapter Four

This chapter has demonstrated, not just the equation between being, presence and life, but also the importance of ultimately considering our three models of presence as one unified overarching model centred on life. Certainly it was useful in chapter three, above, to view each of the three models separately in order to appreciate the richness and diversity of Tillich's theology of presence, and to show how our Immanuel theology both corrects and enhances Tillich's perception of God's presence. However, there is significant added value gained by examining Tillich's theology of presence as one comprehensive macro-model. Through both integration of the models and introduction of the dynamic of life we have been able to unify and enliven Tillich's theology of presence. This helps to emphasise the inclusive panentheistic nature of Tillich's view of divine presence. We have highlighted the fact that Tillich's unique ontological theology of life, often neglected by his commentators, fits well and consistently with both his theology of presence and our Immanuel theology. The immanence of life and the transcendence of the Ground of Life are reconciled.

Through the process of retrieving a theology of presence from Tillich's writings, our Immanuel theology has sought to repair, modify where necessary, and amplify aspects of Tillich's work on God's multi-dimensional presence in creation. On this occasion and in this chapter Immanuel theology has also shown that Tillich himself has brought life to presence through the interactive combination of his panentheistic theologies of both life

⁴⁵ When dealing with "nothing" or "nonbeing" Tillich is always careful to make the distinction between *ouk on* which is the absolute negation of nonbeing, the *nihil* out of which God creates, and *me on* which is relative nonbeing and which has a dialectical relation to being as potentiality. See *ST 1*, pp.188 and 253; *ST 2*, pp.20-21.

and presence. By linking presence and life, Tillich's dry ontological abstractions soften and recede into the background as presence, like life, is considered vibrant and dynamically relational. "Living in the presence" takes on a new and more profound inclusive meaning as Tillich's theologies of life and presence, and our Immanuel theology, all emerge as truly panentheistic. These theologies underline the fact that divine presence is the basic impulse of life, that Immanuel is the constant of all life, the constant in all our lives, and that the inclusive abundance of life is panentheistically sourced in the divine presence as divine life.⁴⁶

This chapter has also accentuated the triadic structure of presence as life and pointed to the way this threefold presence of life mirrors Tillich's dialectics of life which, in turn, reflects the dialectical character of all trinitarian symbols of divine life as a process of "identity-separation-unity".⁴⁷ By making these important connections between divine life, presence and the dialectical nature of all life, we have carefully drawn out the underlying trinitarian aspect of Tillich's theology of divine presence, and incorporated that into our Immanuel theology with all its panentheistic, trinitarian, relational and life-centred dimensions.

Death is the ultimate test case for any theology of presence as life. Does divine presence as life survive death? If divine presence explains life and, correspondingly, if life is evidence of divine presence, then that dual proposition must be tested against the unavoidable reality of death. The results of such an exercise will be scrutinised carefully in the next chapter, and the implications for both Tillich's implicit theology of presence as life and for our Immanuel theology will also be considered. To achieve this we will embark first on a preparatory exploration of Tillich's eschatology.

⁴⁶ "The finite is posited as finite within the process of the divine life, but it is reunited with the infinite within the same process. It is distinguished from the infinite, but it is not separated from it. The divine life is infinite mystery, but it is not infinite emptiness. It is the ground of all abundance, and it is abundant itself" (*ST 1*, p.251).

⁴⁷ *ST 3*, pp.284-5.

CHAPTER FIVE

Immanuel Eschatology for Tillich: The Permanent Presence of the “End”

5.1 Introduction

Our three models of divine presence show different but complementary presentations of the immediacy of divine reality to all temporal finite being, and in particular to human beings engaged by Immanuel in the divine-human encounter. Our macro-model, giving an integrated profile of Immanuel, incorporates the three subsidiary models of divine presence into one inclusive model centred on the concept of life, and particularly Immanuel as the Life-Giver. Here God is offered as the source and ground of ontological life (Model One), existential life (Model Two), and human self-conscious life under the dimension of human spirit (Model Three). If the central proposition is that Immanuel is God present to us through life, and therefore remains present to us by keeping us alive, then we are bound to consider the impact and significance of death in relation to Tillich’s theology of divine presence as life and to our Immanuel theology. This brings us to eschatology in general, and to Tillich’s eschatology in particular.

The meaning of life is radically challenged by the inescapable reality of death. Perhaps the loss of life is the loss of divine presence in some way. It may be that death brings a qualitative change to life as divine presence. The anxiety is that the loss of life, perhaps even the loss of self, is the loss of meaningful presence. Death certainly ruptures personal relationships. It is understandable that we should consider the reality of death in conjunction with the three components of divine-human presence, that is the human self, the divine Other, and the relationship between them. It behoves us to ponder deeply the implications of death for a theology of presence based on life. Indeed, it appears to be the ultimate test of Tillich’s panentheistic theologies of life and presence as modified by our Immanuel theology. Will death threaten and frustrate our retrieval of Tillich’s theology of presence enhanced as life?

5.2 Immanuel and the *Eschaton*

There is more to eschatology than death. Tillich makes such a point when he expresses his preference for the use of the Greek word in the singular form, *eschaton*, instead of using the plural, *eschata* (referring to “the last things” – *ta eschata*). The Greek term *eschatos*, like the English word “end”, has a dual connotation. It can refer to the last in a temporal

sequence, the end of time, the cessation of existence in space and time, the finish. It can also mean “end” as in purpose, goal, inner aim to which the Greek word *telos* also refers. While the first usage relates to the spatio-temporal mode, the second is used in a qualitative-valuating way. When dealing with the historical dimension of all life, especially human life, as part of his wider ontological concept of life, Tillich engages with the symbol “Kingdom of God” which has both a transcendent or transhistorical side and an inner-historical side. It transcends history in that it transcends every moment of time and the end of time itself because it is eternal. While the inner-historical side refers back to the symbol “Spiritual Presence”, the transhistorical side relates to the “end” of history, meaning the aim, the purpose, the goal, the *telos*, of history which is “Eternal Life”, another symbol used extensively by Tillich with particular reference to his eschatology. The interplay between the three key symbols “Kingdom of God”, “Spiritual Presence” and “Eternal Life” forms a prominent part in the quest for unambiguous life, the quest which dominates the whole of the third volume of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*.¹ Unambiguous life can be described as life under the Spiritual Presence, or as life in the Kingdom of God, or as Eternal Life.

We have seen previously (section 4.10, above), that for Tillich, the source of life’s ambiguities is the clash between the essential and the existential elements involved in all life processes. Tillich associates the essential with created goodness and the existential with estrangement. Tillich’s perceived tension between these two aspects of life is a matter to which we will return shortly (section 5.5, below), because it forms a vital part of his approach to the central questions of eschatology. For the moment, we note the connection between the quest for and nature of unambiguous life, with particular reference to the Kingdom of God and Eternal Life symbols, and our Immanuel theology of presence also based on the theme of life. This connection is made at the points where presence theology and eschatology interact, and not simply at the point of death where matters relating to the “last things” arise.

The aim, the end, of all finite life is to enter into and enjoy unambiguous life as the ultimate and desired final fulfilment of life. This quest for unambiguous life is particularly facilitated by life’s self-transcendence function. The search is ongoing from the moment life starts, and the goal is Eternal Life in the Kingdom of God. This gives all life at all stages, and indeed all history, a distinctive eschatological character, symbolised variously

¹ *ST 3*, p.108.

as Spiritual Presence, Kingdom of God and Eternal Life, all of which are expressions of Immanuel at work throughout life and throughout history. For Tillich the three major symbols, all of which are eschatological, are effectively interchangeable. However, each is distinctive, because each one draws on different symbolic material. This provides a basis for associating a particular symbol with a specific one of our three chosen subsidiary models of divine-human presence.

The symbolic material used by Tillich in his symbol Eternal Life is drawn from the spatio-temporal finitude of all life. This allows Eternal Life, as a symbol, to sit well within our first model, the ontological model, which gives specific prominence to religion as human life's function of self-transcendence, a function particularly dependent on the ontological polarity of freedom and destiny, one of three basic polarities of being. The symbol Eternal Life accentuates the vertical eschatological mode in the presence of the human to the divine Other (the "other" being the first constitutive element of presence). Eternal Life, as unambiguous life, seeks to conquer the categorical limits of human existence, to counteract the threat of profanisation, to facilitate finite life as it drives towards the sublime and to elevate essential human life into the *transpersonal* presence of Immanuel. Divine transcendence is the keynote of this eschatological symbol and of Model One.

The Kingdom of God symbol is dependent upon the symbolic material associated with the historical dimension of life. This permits the Kingdom of God to register with our second model, the existential model, which emphasises culture as the expression of human life's function of self-creation, a function especially dependent on the ontological polarity of dynamic and form. The symbol Kingdom of God is a social symbol which stresses the horizontal historical eschatological mode in the presence of the human to the divine. Because it is a social symbol of unambiguous life, it is necessarily a relational symbol which highlights the creation of relationships (the second constitutive element of presence). The Kingdom of God seeks to conquer the ambiguities of existential historical human life, as human life itself strives towards the new; new life, New Being, under the life principle of growth. As unambiguous life, the Kingdom of God is working in human life and history as an eschatological reality, enabling life to resist the threat of destruction, promoting the eternal fulfilment of life itself, and fostering the growth and development of human-divine relations in the *interpersonal* presence of Immanuel. Divine relationality is the keynote of this particular symbol and of Model Two.

The Spiritual Presence symbol is a particularly personal symbol indicating that the Spirit of God is active in individual lives, expressing the presence of Immanuel in creaturely life and offering eternal fulfilment of each individual personal life. For that reason, Spiritual Presence finds its natural place within our third subsidiary model of divine presence, the phenomenological model, which emphasises the human self (the third essential element in our analysis of presence), and the immediacy of God's presence in human experience and human self-consciousness. This particular model accommodates the morality of each human individual, and morality is the decisive expression of human life's function of self-integration, a function especially dependent upon the ontological polarity of individualisation and participation. Spiritual Presence, as a symbol, is the eschatological reality of unambiguous life which seeks to conquer the ambiguities of life under the dimension of human spirit, as human life strives towards eternal fulfilment under the life principle of centredness. This principle gives that very personal circular orientation to finite life as it functions within the divine-human encounter and in the *intrapersonal* presence of Immanuel. In our third model, the individual self, resisting the threat of disintegration with the help of Spiritual Presence, reaches out for unambiguous life delivered to the self through a process identified by Tillich as essentialisation. Divine immanence is the keynote of Model Three and the symbol Spiritual Presence.

All three powerful symbols are synonymous with each other and with unambiguous life. By inference, all three of our models of divine presence are presentations of the divine-human encounter geared towards the quest for unambiguous life. All three symbols are eschatological in character. By inference, our three models are eschatological structures representing Immanuel as divine presence in human life. Each symbol, and therefore each model, is orientated towards the eternal fulfilment of human life. This further justifies interpreting our three subsidiary models as really forming one overall macro-model of Immanuel's presence with us. All three secondary models, taken together, feature the three polarities of being with their three dependent functions of life, and they incorporate the three eschatological symbols, in three separate representations of the quest by finite life for unambiguous life. The overarching macro-model is definitively life-centred and eschatological in character. In every way, Immanuel is our eschatological "Life-Partner" who, at each stage, jealously guards and fosters the multidimensional theonomous unity of all life. God is not just present at the end of our mortal lives. The divine presence is with us in life every breath of the way.

A theology of presence and eschatology should be intermingled throughout the presentation of systematic theology. We have noted earlier how Tillich refused to limit the confines of his eschatology to the “last things”, even though he did locate his eschatology in the fifth and final part of his *Systematic Theology*. He put it in the traditional final section because he acknowledged that the theology of creation is usually placed at the front of the system and referred to in the past tense, whereas eschatology normally deploys the future tense.² So, following Tillich, it can be argued that creation is not confined to the past, to the start of all things. Immanuel is creatively active throughout finite existence. Equally it can be claimed that, given the inner purpose of all things from creation onwards, eschatology reveals Immanuel as present and active in all finite life from creation onwards.

For the purposes of our theology of presence as life, Tillich puts it neatly when, with reference to history and Eternal Life, he includes the phrase “The Permanent Presence of the End” in the heading of a chapter sub-section.³ This brings the *telos*, the aim, of all life processes in life’s historical dimension into the present. The inner aim of all life is its fulfilment in Eternal Life as the achievement of unambiguous life. Striving to reach this goal brings eschatology into the “present” mode alongside any theology of presence. Eternal Life is, for all finite life, a present, although fragmentary, reality here in space and time. The permanent presence of this goal in human life here and now, with its teleological orientation, makes the *eschaton* itself a present reality, and not simply something which will happen in a future end of time. For human life and its presence to the divine, the eschatological problem has immediate existential significance. The *eschaton*, despite its futuristic orientation, is experienced now in the present. The theological problem of eschatology for Tillich does not relate to many events. Rather it relates to one single theological process which expresses symbolically a certain “transition”.⁴

Immanuel, the bearer of eternal life, is with us throughout the *eschaton*, during the entire transition from the temporal to the eternal. In that way the *eschaton* is an integral part of

² Tillich writes: “Between the questions “where from” and “where to” lies the whole system of theological questions and answers. But it is not a straight line from the one to the other. The relation is more intrinsic: “where to” is inseparably implied in “where from”; the meaning of creation is revealed in its end. And conversely, the nature of the “where to” is determined by the nature of the ‘where from’; that is, only the valuation of the creation as good makes an eschatology of fulfilment possible; and only the idea of fulfilment makes the creation meaningful. The end of the system leads back to its beginning” (*ST 3*, p.299).

³ *ST 3*, p.394. The full title of the section reads “The Double Meaning of ‘End of History’ and The Permanent Presence of the End”.

⁴ “The ‘transition’ from the temporal to the eternal, and this is a metaphor similar to that of the transition from the eternal to the temporal in the doctrine of creation, from essence to existence in the doctrine of the Fall, and from existence to essence in the doctrine of salvation” (*ST 3*, p.394).

our Immanuel theology of divine presence, because it signals the enduring reality of divine presence as eternal life throughout human life right up to and including the human experience of death. At this stage we will move our discussion to a consideration of “the last things”, the final elements which normally dominate much of traditional eschatology, and especially the impact of death on life, because life is the central theme in our macro-model of an Immanuel theology of divine presence. Death confronts life, and therefore it offers a strong challenge to our view of Immanuel, God Present as the Ground of Life.

5.3 Tillich’s “Last Things”

The permanent presence of the end (Eternal Life), as visualised by Tillich in his eschatological view of life and history, appears reassuring for any proponent of Immanuel theology. According to Tillich, we have come from the eternal. Creation is a transition from the eternal to the temporal. The eternal, as our true destination from the first moment of our existence, forms an integral part of our everyday existence. As we “live through” the transition from the temporal to the eternal, that is the *eschaton*, we are in the permanent presence of the eternal, Immanuel, as Eternal Life. The unfolding *eschaton*, there from creation, underwrites Tillich’s theology of divine presence. In this way Tillich’s eschatology is interspersed throughout his *Systematic Theology*. There is little doubt about the universal character of Tillich’s eschatology and its prominence in his writings.⁵

For Tillich, the symbol of the *eschaton* is “an expression of our standing in every moment in face of the eternal”.⁶ “The mystery of the future and the mystery of the past are united in the mystery of the present. Our time, the time we have, is the time in which we have ‘presence’.”⁷ In this way the *eschaton* is the framework and the context in which Immanuel is immediately present to us. The *eschaton*, like divine presence, has immediacy. It is relevant to us all because it is immediately and existentially significant and because it “becomes a matter of present experience”.⁸ Tillich, writing about various historical approaches to the doctrine of immortality, recognises that, for some, the idea of an eternal destiny of human beings might be questionable but nevertheless “it is implied in immediate existential experiences and cannot be undermined by theoretical criticisms”.⁹ Raymond F. Bulman is right to draw our attention to the fact that Tillich, when addressing

⁵ This is confirmed by the contributions made to the III International Paul Tillich Symposium held in Frankfurt/Main 1990 and published as *New Creation or Eternal Now: Is there an Eschatology in Paul Tillich’s Work?* (Ed.) G. Hummel (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991).

⁶ *ST 3*, p.395.

⁷ *EN*, p.130.

⁸ *ST 3*, p.396.

⁹ P. Tillich, “Symbols of Eternal Life”, in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin 26* (April 1962), pp.1-10; p.3.

issues in eschatology, constantly reminds us that “all eschatological language is symbolic”¹⁰ and that eschatological images must be experientially based.

From the point of view of presence, there are two interesting temporal features in eschatology. Eternal Life is simultaneously available both now in the present and also in the future, and this is “merely a consequence of the paradox of all Christian eschatology, the unity of the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’.”¹¹ The “already” element is directly connected to the presence of the divine in the here and now. The “not yet” element is futuristic in that it directs our attention to divine presence as it is related to the final phase of the *eschaton*, the “end time”, where the “last things” are experienced, both at the level of the individual human being through death and beyond, and also at the social and collective level at the “end of time”, the “end of the world”.

This brings us to Tillich’s treatment of the “last things”, the final events that affect us both individually as human beings who die, and also communally as historical human beings at the end of time, the end of history. From the point of view of Immanuel theology, we need to examine Tillich’s eschatology of the “last things” within the context of death as the final eschatological test of divine-human presence. This should encompass such matters as the unavoidable existential reality of death, the meaning of death in relation to eternity, the post-death state of human beings both as individuals and as community, the meaning and significance of the “end of the world”, immortality, resurrection, final judgement, heaven, hell and the final restoration of all things in the new creation, the new heaven and the new earth. This tests divine-human presence to the final limits. It is particularly pertinent for our Immanuel theology which is so centred on the motif of life as its unifying concept. It is “a matter of life and death” when a presence theology, based on life, must deal with life-

¹⁰ R.F. Bulman, “Tillich’s Eschatology of the Late American Period”, in *New Creation or Eternal Now: Is there an Eschatology in Paul Tillich’s Work?* Contributions made to the III International Paul Tillich Symposium held in Frankfurt/Main 1990. (Ed.) G. Hummel (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991) pp.137-152; p.140.

¹¹ P. Tillich, “Redemption in Cosmic and Social History”, pp.17-27; p.24. Tillich’s use of the word “paradox” in this quotation about Christian eschatology might appear, at first glance, to contradict his repeated assertion that there is only one theological paradox, namely the Incarnation. However, the reader will recall that, at section 3.4.3., above, reference was made to Tillich’s emphasis on the eschatological character of the Incarnation (see also *ST 2*, p.164 which confirms the point). For Tillich, the paradox of all Christian eschatology is, in effect, a derivative paradox which emerges as a direct implication of the primary paradox of the Incarnation. Tillich makes the general point in this way: “There is, in the last analysis, only one genuine paradox in the Christian message – the appearance of that which conquers existence under the conditions of existence. Incarnation, redemption, justification, etc., are implied in this paradoxical event (*ST 1*, p.57). For Tillich, “the appearance of the New Being under the conditions of existence, yet judging and conquering them, is the paradox of the Christian message. This is the only paradox and the source of all paradoxical statements in Christianity. ... Historically and systematically, everything else in Christianity is a corroboration of the simple assertion that Jesus is the Christ” (*ST 2*, p.92).

related terms and ideas such as eternal life, the “afterlife” or life after death, everlasting life, participation in divine life, eternal life in Christ and the contrary notion of eternal death. The full impact of this on our analysis of presence, which comprises a constellation of the self, relationship and the other, must also be carefully evaluated with particular reference to Tillich’s theological understanding of the “last things” in his eschatology.

We have already seen (section 5.2, above), how Tillich visualises the *eschaton* as an integral part of his theology of history and, how within that, his emphasis on the symbol Kingdom of God has both a transcendent side and an inner-historical side. The permanent presence of the end, or *telos*, of history is Eternal Life. History embodies the transition from the temporal to the eternal. Eternal life reflects the transcendent side of the Kingdom of God. Given the fulfilment of history in due course, Tillich ponders the question of the nature or content of Eternal Life as life in the Kingdom of God under the transcendent rule of God. While this is recognised by Tillich as a mystery, he thinks that theology should probe this question because “life” and “kingdom” are concrete symbols, and they should carry meaning and significance for all of us. At the same time, he urges that we resist facile popular imaginings about life hereafter as “an idealised reduplication of life experienced within history”¹² but without the negativities of finite existence as experienced here and now. Tillich rejects these naïve projections of historical life out of the earthly realm and into a supernatural heavenly realm, thus disconnecting history from the Kingdom of God and depriving history of its true ultimate meaning. Tillich much prefers that we interpret the symbol “Kingdom of God” in a dynamic-creative way in order to acknowledge the true relationship between history and Eternal Life. Eternal Life, the permanently present “end” of history, elevates human history’s positive content into eternity while it also rejects its negative content which arises in existence. Indeed, all life and history, human and otherwise, makes a positive contribution to Eternal Life and the Kingdom of God in every moment of existence even before the “end time”. While creation is orientated towards Eternal Life as its ever-present goal, and while the polarity of freedom and destiny actualises “the new” drawn from the essential nature of creation grounded in God, every finite event is significant for God because participation in divine life is the reality of Eternal Life and the aim of all creation.

Despite the ambiguous mix of positive and negative elements in all life as lived under the conditions of existence, Eternal Life, as the divine purpose working within history,

¹² *ST 3*, p.397.

involves the exposure and ultimate judgement of the negative as negative, as well as the elevation of the positive into divine life. In the presence of the eternal, evil, even when it presents itself under the appearance of the positive, is unmasked. For Tillich the symbol of ultimate judgement means "here and now, in the permanent transition of the temporal to the eternal, the negative is defeated in its claim to be positive".¹³ This transition, which is towards the eternal, is not an event which registers in time because temporality is itself a created reality. The inner aim of all created finite being is eternity which is constantly and permanently elevating the finite into the eternal.¹⁴ Already, what has been said by Tillich has a direct bearing on our theology of presence. We are told by Tillich that nothing, in so far as it has being, will be denied by God. This includes, not just the positive, but also the negative, because the negative is never purely negative. It is always mixed in with the positive which it distorts. The consequence of this is interesting from the point of view of the presence of the finite to the divine. In the end, according to Tillich, nothing is annihilated. Nothing that has being is ultimately debarred from eternity. In the final divine judgement the negative will be affirmed and judged as negative, and in so far as it is mixed with the positive, all such mixed finite being remains rooted in the ground of being, and will participate in the divine life by being ultimately retained as remembered life (living retention) in the "eternal memory" of God.

Tillich accepts here that he cannot answer or even address questions relating to the manner in which the negative is negated if it is always associated with the positive which itself is not negated. The nature of such negation is, he admits, beyond him. But, from the perspective of presence theology, what he has said so far appears ontologically and theologically generous and all inclusive. All finite being survives death and the final judgement. It is in some way positive. It is present in the creative ground of life here in existence. All such finite being, all created life, in the end is retained in the divine memory, and the negative will be excluded only to the extent that it is mixed with nonbeing. Therefore everything that has being remains, in some way, in the presence of the divine both now and beyond the end-time because, as being, it is rooted in the creative ground of being itself.

¹³ *ST 3*, p.399.

¹⁴ For Tillich "... the temporal, in a continuous process, becomes 'eternal memory'. But *eternal* memory is a living retention of the remembered thing. It is together past, present and future in a transcendent unity of the three modes of time" (*ST 3*, p.399).

Ontological dependence of everything finite on God as Being-Itself appears to be the key used by Tillich to maintain the presence of all things in existence now with God, and beyond time, in Eternal Life where all finite being participates in the divine life. The life of all things finite survives death and the final judgement when all things are restored to God. Immanuel remains present to all created being both in time and in eternity. Creation continues to live with God in whose divine life it continues to participate. The news from Tillich is that, at no stage, does God withdraw from creation which remains eternally present to the divine. This is a necessary consequence of Tillich's ontological concept of life which was examined in section 4.3, above. The ontological view of life is universalist and comprehensive. That which has been given being has been given life, and that being, that life, endures in the eternal presence of God from the moment of creation onwards. Eternal Life, present from the start in created being as its inner aim, embraces all finite life eternally. The eschatological presence of Immanuel is a prelude to Immanuel's presence to all created life in eternity.

The breadth of Tillich's ontological view of life has other important eschatological implications. It is consistent with his soteriology. Tillich considers salvation within the context of healing. For him, salvation has both cosmic significance as well as eschatological meaning. "Salvation, redemption, and regeneration are eschatological concepts ... Cosmical eschatology creates most of the symbols through which those concepts are interpreted"¹⁵. Salvation is bound up with the eschatological character of history, and its healing saving power is directed towards the whole cosmos. For Tillich the notion of salvation has both social and cosmic implications. It is not confined to individuals. Salvation, supported by the symbols of redemption and regeneration, is for the whole universe in which God, as ground of all being, is both active and manifest as life. Salvation, with its eschatological character, is about maintaining and, with its healing power, making whole the relationship of all creation with God who is the proactive divine presence ushering forward the entire cosmos into eternity where creation's presence to the divine is perpetuated beyond time.

Tillich asserts that both redemption and regeneration have cosmic as well as eschatological significance. What combines both redemption and regeneration in presence theology is Tillich's underlying notion of participation, that is participation in the death and resurrection of Christ as Redeemer who underwrites the status of "the New Creature"

¹⁵ P. Tillich, "Redemption in Cosmic and Social History", p.19.

(New Being), and ultimately the new creation which follows the universal judgement. With reference to the cosmic and eschatological nature of salvation, redemption and regeneration Tillich says, “Here we find – as in all the other concepts – the preceding of the objective and universal event followed by personal participation. Perhaps we should call it ‘the pattern of participation’ ”.¹⁶ Participation starts to emerge as a key concept in Tillich’s explicit eschatology which has its own implicit theology of presence. Participation is used extensively by Tillich as an important way of explaining and describing the mode of finite-infinite presence in general, and the manner of the human-divine presence encounter in particular. It is interesting to note that, in his “pattern of participation”, Tillich gives priority to the objective universal cosmic side of salvation before seeking to develop the subjective personal side relating to individual human beings. It becomes noticeable that Tillich, in the development of his eschatology, puts more emphasis on the *totality* of finite being, on the *whole* of creation, on the *entire* cosmos and on the *full scope* of history than on the position of the *individual* human being. The apparent subjection of the individual to the wider process is a worrying feature of Tillich’s eschatology, and it has wider implications for our Immanuel theology which seeks to give a prominent place to the human self in any theology of presence. We will return to this at sections 5.5 and 5.6, below, mindful of some of Tillich’s unsettling comments such as: “Outside of genuine eschatology stands the question of the individual after death”¹⁷.

Returning to participation, cosmic eschatological redemption and the delicate issue of the presence of the negative to the divine, Tillich comments that, in human religious consciousness, there is a widely recognised principle.¹⁸ Tillich poses the question: How is the negative negated in the transition from the temporal to the eternal? Using his daring metaphor of “eternal memory”, Tillich explains that the living retention of the negative does not refer to an object. “The negative is not remembered at all. It is acknowledged for

¹⁶ P. Tillich, “Redemption in Cosmic and Social History”, p.26.

¹⁷ “Eschatology and history” in *IH*, pp.266-284, p.281. This article was first published in German as “Eschatologie und Geschichte”, aus: *Religiöse Verwirklichung*, Berlin 1929, Furche-Verlag.

¹⁸ In “Redemption in Cosmic and Social History”, pp.25-26, Tillich identifies this as the principle “... which says that the redeemer-God must participate in the evils from which he liberates so that the redeemed can participate in him. This transfers the process of redemption into the depth of the divine itself. It carries the infinite tension between the finite and the infinite into the ‘Ground of Being’, thus making it universal and valid for the status of Being as such. The end of redemption is the ‘New Being’, cosmically, in nature, man and history. This is the meaning of regeneration.” In this same article, Tillich makes a good case for environmental ethics and an ecologically sensitive theology of nature. His redemptive cosmic eschatology points to the salvific divine presence at work in the heart of the cosmos and in the inclusive history of the universe. “The salvation of man and the salvation of nature are interdependent”, p.22. “Christian theology should interpret the meaning of salvation in nature”, p.23. No theology of presence is complete if it fails to encompass Immanuel, not just as a redemptive presence with human beings, but also as the creative salvific presence active throughout the cosmos which is divinely preserved and ultimately carried out of history and into eternity.

what it is, nonbeing ... It is present in the eternal memory as that which is conquered and thrown out into its naked nothingness”¹⁹. This is contradictory on such an important issue as the presence of evil to the divine. The negative is apparently retained; it is present, and it is thrown out. Here Tillich struggles to explain the question of evil in the presence of God in terms of his ontology, especially in terms of nonbeing. From the point of view of his eschatology he is pointing to the symbol of ultimate judgement as condemnation, and he admits that in this respect he is forced to resort mostly to negative statements.

With reference to ultimate judgement in its salvific aspect, that is the retention of the “positive” in the eternal memory, Tillich explains that the true reality of the “positive” is, in fact a thing’s created essence. With regard to the elevation of the positive into eternity, seen as a return to essence in some manner, Tillich introduces for the first time his concept of “essentialisation” (a term which he acknowledges he has borrowed from Schelling) into the final pages of his *Systematic Theology*. Tillich urges us not to consider essentialisation as a simple return to potentiality, to essential being, thus excluding what has been generated as new by existential being in the historical process.²⁰ The foregoing passage is most important for our understanding of Tillich’s view of the *eschaton*. It describes the “inner mechanics” of the transition from the temporal to the eternal. From the perspective of a theology of presence it is vitally important. It gives a number of crucial insights into what exactly in finite being is retained and protected as present to the divine both in time and in eternity. Essentialisation reveals Tillich’s view of how the continuity of the presence of the finite to the divine is maintained in history and how it is carried through into eternity.

Apart from the process of preserving the continuity of the reality of the finite as present to the infinite through time, in the interim transfer period between time and eternity, and in eternity itself, essentialisation also explains the actual content of the finite as a presence to and in the divine. This content of the finite, present to God now and in eternity, is the sum total of each finite being’s essential nature plus the new which it has added as positively actualised during its temporal existence. It is this sum total, “a creative synthesis”, which is allowed to be present to the divine by way of participation in eternal life. Again Tillich

¹⁹ *ST 3*, p.400.

²⁰ “But the term ‘essentialisation’ can also mean that the new which has been actualised in time and space adds something to essential being, uniting it with the positive which is created within existence, thus producing the ultimately new, the ‘New Being’, not fragmentarily as in temporal life, but wholly as a contribution to the Kingdom of God in its fulfilment. ... Participation in eternal life depends on a creative synthesis of a being’s essential nature with what it has made of it in its temporal existence” (*ST 3*, p.400-401).

chooses the term “participation” to describe the manner in which finite life engages with the divine and is eternally present to Immanuel. Furthermore, it now transpires that it is through the process of essentialisation, which has been working from the “moment” of creation, that the reality of finite-infinite presence has been gradually fostered and developed. The process itself is designed to enhance essential being as it is prepared for its transformation, through the production of the ultimately new, into the “New Being”, thus fulfilling its positive contribution to the Kingdom of God. At the end of the process, enhanced essential being, that is New Being, secures its place in the presence of God through full and complete membership of the Kingdom of God. Essentialisation is the “mechanism” by which finite life is delivered conclusively into the divine presence in which it permanently enjoys eternal life through participation. When essentialisation is completed, divine presence is experienced, not fragmentarily, but permanently. The permanently present end of history, eternal life, is irreversibly available to all finite life in its mode as enhanced essential being, through the process of essentialisation.

Again, Tillich’s exposition of the final stages of the *eschaton* leaves little room for the individual. What we have heard to date is couched in all-inclusive ontologically based terminology. Even the crowning glory of essentialisation, that is the production of the “New Being”, registers generically as the undifferentiated state of all created being at the end of the *eschaton*. Tillich acknowledges the individual contribution of each being by way of its enhanced essential being, but this tends to be presented as being absorbed collectively with other similar contributions into the eternal memory of the divine, thus suppressing any notion of the post-death survival of the individual self. This does not bode well for a meaningful theology of divine presence.

Returning to our central theme of life as the co-ordinating motif of our Immanuel theology, we note that, for Tillich’s eschatology, the completion of the transition from the temporal to the eternal brings unambiguous life, the final conquest of the ambiguities of life. Unambiguous life, devoid of conflict between essential and existential being, is the state of final perfection for all dimensions of life, that is for all “degrees of being”²¹. It is the state of life where Eternal Life is synonymous with the Kingdom of God in its fulfilment. In unambiguous life the three polarities of being, each with its own corresponding function of life, are perfected in Eternal Life.

²¹ *ST* 3, p.401.

We have previously examined (section 4.8.1, above), the alignment of individualisation and participation as one polarity of being, with self-integration as its dependent function of life which operates under the principle of centredness. In Eternal Life, unambiguous self-integration reflects the fact that its corresponding polarity of individualisation and participation, now in perfect polar balance, is transcended by the divine centredness. From the perspective of our Immanuel theology, Tillich now seems to give us some distinctly good news: "Eternal Life is still life, and the universal centredness does not dissolve the individual centres"²². For Tillich this is the basis for characterising eternal life, unambiguous life, as a life of love. However, this is hard to reconcile with his view that, at the end of essentialisation, finite beings end up in the "eternal memory".

In the previous chapter (section 4.8.2, above), we noted the alignment of dynamics and form as one polarity of being with self-creation as its dependent function of life which operates under the principle of growth. Here again, in Eternal Life unambiguous self-creativity finds its corresponding polarity of dynamics and form, now in perfect balance, and transcended by the divine creativity. Apparent additional good news is Tillich's view that "The self in self-creativity is preserved in the fulfilled Kingdom of God"²³. Again this is difficult to square with the self's final eternal resting place as the "eternal memory".

Earlier, (section 4.8.3, above), we saw that freedom-destiny is a polarity of being with self-transcendence as its dependent function of life which operates under the principle of sublimity. In Eternal Life, unambiguous self-transcendence arises from freedom and destiny, two poles now in perfect balance, united and transcended by divine freedom with which divine destiny is identical.

When considering presence as life we saw, with specific reference to human life under the dimension of human spirit, (section 4.8, above), the special human life functions of morality as an expression of human self-integration, culture as an expression of human self-creativity, and religion as an expression of human self-transcendence. Tillich now concludes that at the end of history and at the entrance to unambiguous life as Eternal Life, these special functions come to an end. Eternal Life is the end of morality, the end of culture and the end of religion.

²² *ST 3*, p.401.

²³ *ST 3*, p.402.

This prompts Tillich to raise the issue of the content and quality of Eternal Life, and to face the challenge of factoring into eternal fulfilment

... the element of negation without which no life is thinkable? ... a concept which ... contains the problem of Eternal Life in its relation to being and nonbeing – the concept of blessedness as applied to the Divine Life.²⁴

Negativity is part of life, and it is part of eternal blessedness as it applies to Divine Life and to finite life that participates in it. The blessedness of Divine Life is its eternal conquest of the negative. In the dialectics of divine life, God goes out into the ambiguities of life and the negativities of existence without losing divine eternal identity. Eternal blessedness is a dynamic idea, not “a state of immovable perfection”²⁵. From the point of view of an inclusive Immanuel theology, Tillich again strikes a reassuring note by declaring that all finite being, not just humanity, will experience eternal blessedness by participation in divine life through essentialisation, because of the created goodness of the essence of all things. The blessedness of the fulfilled Kingdom of God has a universality which coincides with Tillich’s view that both salvation and fulfilment are universal.

Tillich further expands and confirms his stance on theological universalism with particular reference to the individual person, and to both universal and individual fulfilment. The difference between human beings and the rest of finite being is that, unlike the rest of creation, the individual person has an awareness of hope, despair, guilt and responsibility. A person is in some way aware of the eternal and a certain “teleological” orientation in life. But people are also aware of their freedom, and of their ability to turn towards or away from their “*telos*” which is Eternal Life. This introduces the tragic element into the universal estrangement of the human condition, as people sense their ability both to move away from and aspire to their *telos*. This, in turn, gives a profoundly dialectical character to Tillich’s concept of essentialisation, which is centred on the actualisation of human potentialities through freedom which has the power to choose both the positive and the negative. In essentialisation, the negative in the person is affirmed as negative, thus diminishing the person who will also have realised something positive in historical existence. In this way degrees of essentialisation are introduced into Tillich’s eschatology which categorically excludes the idea of absolute judgements reflected in traditional terminology such as “heaven and hell”, “eternal life and eternal death” and “being saved or being lost”.

²⁴ *ST* 3, p.403.

²⁵ *ST* 3, p.405.

For Tillich, anything which has being is grounded in God. Therefore absolute judgement over finite being is an ontological impossibility, because that would be to confer infinite status on the finite. Being as being is good. Nothing is completely evil, and therefore the doctrine of twofold eternal destiny, an attempt to introduce duality into God, is rejected in favour of the divine self-manifestation expressed in God's permanent creation as good. Tillich favours Origen's doctrine of the *apokatastasis panton* (the restitution of everything) with the qualification that it should not be used to minimise or remove the seriousness of the absolute threat implied in "losing one's life". His idea of essentialisation refines this position for him.²⁶ Clearly Tillich, in his eschatology, promotes theological universalism, a doctrine of universal essentialisation which "elevates" all finite being into universal participation in the fulfilled Kingdom of God.

For him there is a social dimension to this. Everyone is conditioned during existence by others with whom they share life. Human beings grow and live only in interdependence, and are shaped by social events and situations involving other beings whose conditioning presence leads Tillich to conclude that the destiny of every individual person is bound up with the destiny of the whole human race, and indeed with all finite being. This interdependent presence of all finite beings, one to another, is the basis on which Tillich explains and accommodates the meaning of the lives of those less advantaged people, such as those who die in infancy, who have little or no chance of developing their essential *telos*. No-one has a completely isolated separate destiny.²⁷ Such views would seem to enhance greatly any theology of presence, giving it a social and collective character. Accordingly, we have no problem in seeing this as an integral part of our Immanuel theology of divine presence. However, there is, for us, a certain sense of unease at the compression of all individuals into an amorphous mass through a process of universal participation.

As the ground of being, Immanuel, is present to each and every one of us, both individually and collectively. We each participate in being and so we are ontologically dependent on God, and ontologically present to both God and each other simultaneously. This is another way of expressing Tillich's idea of the multi-dimensional unity of all life,

²⁶ "The conceptual symbol of 'essentialisation' is capable of fulfilling this postulate, for it emphasises the despair of having wasted one's potentialities yet also assures the elevation of the positive within existence (even in the most unfulfilled life) into eternity" (ST 3, p.407).

²⁷ Tillich "... understands essentialisation or elevation of the positive into Eternal Life as a matter of universal participation: in the essence of the least actualised individual, the essences of other individuals and, indirectly, of all beings are present. ... This idea of the essentialisation of the individual in unity with all beings makes the concept of vicarious fulfilment understandable" (ST 3, p.409).

which is the ontological conception we considered (section 4.3, above). All finite beings are present to each other and to Immanuel who is the ground of life-itself. Here, in his eschatology, Tillich takes the same basic idea and extrapolates it into his understanding of who shares Eternal Life with God. His clear answer is that all created finite beings, having shared being together in existence, share Eternal Life together with God. This universalises the whole framework of Immanuel theology. Immanuel is present to all, both here in existence and eternally beyond the end of the *eschaton*. No-one is ever excluded from the presence and company of Immanuel, nor indeed from the interdependent presence of every other fellow human being, neither now nor in eternity. In Immanuel theology no-one is ever lost: no-one is ever absent. All this is consistent with Tillich's view, predicated on the principle of ontological participation, of ultimate salvation. No-one is saved alone. There is, for Tillich, no such thing as individual fulfilment apart from universal fulfilment. "Fulfilment is universal"²⁸. However, again we are left with the uncomfortable impression that Tillich is depersonalising fulfilment and phasing the individual into the background.

Tillich is aware that, within the concept of the universality of salvation (*apokatastasis panton*), people struggle with the idea of particular individual salvation and the related issues of individual eternal life and individual eternal death. For Tillich, eternal death, death "away" from eternity, is a contradiction. People do not fail to reach eternity, but that does not remove uncertainty about their ultimate destiny. This whole matter "... is of great theological and perhaps even greater psychological significance. Despite its speculative dress, it is one of the most existential problems of Christian thought"²⁹. Related to this, Tillich briefly discusses, and ultimately dismisses, the three ideas of "reincarnation", "an intermediate state" and "purgatory". All three notions imply that the ultimate destiny of a human being is not decided at the moment of death, but rather that it is determined after "a period" during which the individual "develops" in some way beyond death. For Tillich, this is a theologically inadequate attempt to deal with the problem relating to those disadvantaged people, such as infants, children and undeveloped adults, who had little or no chance of positively actualising their essentially good potentiality during their lifetime. Representative fulfilment, "vicarious fulfilment"³⁰, based on the ontological principle of participation, was Tillich's proposed solution to that problem.

²⁸ *ST 3*, p.147. Tillich also uses the principle of participation and the idea of universal fulfilment in the same way when dealing with aspects of theodicy, and with the doctrine of predestination which, for Tillich, is a theological impossibility, see *ST 1*, p.270.

²⁹ *ST 3*, p.416.

³⁰ *ST 3*, p.409.

In sharp contrast to the significance of the moment of death as perceived by others, Tillich says that “The whole life process, rather than a particular moment, is decisive for the degree of essentialisation”³¹. The “degree” of essentialisation is also a thought used by Tillich to deal with the ideas of “heaven” and “hell” which are symbols, not of places, but of states of happiness and despair, that reflect “the amount of fulfilment or non-fulfilment which goes into the individual’s essentialisation”³².

In these matters we see Tillich grappling with the particularly difficult issue for any eschatology of the “last things”, that is “the great question of the development of an individual in Eternal Life”³³. This question, for us, presupposes the more fundamental question of the *actual eternal survival* of the human individual who dies. For the purposes of our Immanuel theology, and given our analysis of the divine-human encounter where the three key constituent elements of divine Other, relationship and the human self, have been identified and modelled (sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, above), the survival of the self beyond death is of central importance. If the divine-human relationship, that is, the presence of God in human lives, is to have eternal meaning, then the reality of the human self, remaining alive in the divine presence beyond death, must be affirmed. It is not enough to be told that human beings “live through” the death experience, and that they survive death in some way. To have real existential significance here and now, people who believe in the “after-life” normally assume that life after death will be fuller and personally more satisfying, that it will involve enlightenment and illumination of their understanding of the mystery of the divine, and that they will “experience” the immediacy of God’s presence. In short, they believe that they will “come alive” in the presence of God in a more personal, intimate and immediate way, in contrast to what they normally experience here in their historical existence.

Tillich himself seldom seems to express theologically his view of the survival of the self in particularly personalist or individualistic terms. His belief in the human self’s survival beyond death is not at all obvious. He has a decided tendency to use the impersonal universal language of ontology. This usually excludes any explication of what his symbols of Eternal Life and the fulfilled Kingdom of God actually mean for the individual person who “lives” beyond death. His ontological terminology tends to submerge the human self, almost to “bury” the person in the grand all-inclusive but amorphous category of finite

³¹ *ST 3*, pp.416-417.

³² *ST 3*, p.418.

³³ *ST 3*, p.418.

being. There is some acknowledgement that the individual survives or “lives on”, but this is usually set deep within the blanket contexts of *universal* essentialisation, *universal* fulfilment, *universal* participation and *universal* salvation of all finite being. The quality or nature of that post-death individual life is not something on which he speculates theologically, other than understandably to reject outright any naïve impression that Eternal Life is a simple continuation of historical human life after death in some form or other. Despite his acute sensitivity to the human existential condition, Tillich never seems to dwell theologically on the profundity of the actual moment of death and its relevance for each separate individual. Admittedly, Tillich writes most effectively when considering the existential impact of the threat and prospect of death on an individual’s life and anxiety level as life is lived out on this side of the grave.³⁴

When writing eschatologically, Tillich recognises the importance given in traditional Christian preaching and theology to the end of the individual, but he is anxious that much more prominence be accorded to the overall *eschaton*, which should be a significant experience for us all as we live now, albeit temporally, in the eternal, and as we contemplate the end of history.³⁵ While not disagreeing with the seriousness and relevance to be awarded to the full reality of the universal *eschaton* both now and into the future, our worry is that, for Tillich’s eschatology, this leads to the radical diminution of the individual beyond death, and the erosion of that individual’s existence on the other side of the grave. Our Immanuel theology must incorporate Tillich’s doctrine of the *eschaton*, but not at the expense of depersonalising each precious life to be lived eternally in the presence of God.

Despite Tillich’s reputation for sourcing his theology from the human existential condition, his acute awareness of human estrangement and anxiety, and his conceptions of ultimate concern, the threat of nonbeing, and ecstasy, it is his ontology which dominates his theology of life, his eschatology, and ultimately his theology of presence. The theological significance of death for each unique person is, surprisingly, not really addressed in Tillich’s theology. Personal transformation on death does not feature. The personal “life-changing” moment of death, perhaps the most acute existential moment in any individual’s life, is not specifically treated theologically by Tillich. Instead, the death of the self is

³⁴ For example see *ST 2*, pp.66 ff and *CP*, pp.25-27.

³⁵ Tillich writes: “... the preaching of the *memento mori* was always important in the church, and the transcendent destiny of the individual was always a matter of high theological concern. But the question of the end of history and of the universe in the eternal was rarely asked, and if asked, not seriously answered. ... And it must be said here that without the consideration of the end of history and of the universe, even the problem of the eternal destiny of the individual cannot be answered” (*ST 3*, p.396).

submerged in Tillich's explication of the impersonal ontological process of essentialisation, with its return of partially enhanced or actualised essential being to God. There is no separate "personal space" which appears to distinguish the human self from the amalgam of partly actualised essences returned out of existence to God. Instead, Tillich speaks impersonally of the elevation of the positive into eternity. "No individual destiny is separated from the destiny of the universe".³⁶ The universalising effect of his ontology on his eschatology is rampant, and it tends to depersonalise his implicit theology of presence, particularly eschatologically in respect of the post-death divine-human relationship.

However, it should be emphasised here that Tillich does not ignore the question of the self in his eschatology. We have already referred to his exploration of the issue of the post-death development of the individual in Eternal Life. Tillich also deals with two other important eschatological terms, "immortality" and "resurrection", both of which involve the individual. He concentrates more on identifying and rejecting incorrect theological interpretations of both topics. He expresses a strong preference for dealing with them as eschatological symbols, rather than cognitive concepts.

In respect of immortality, Tillich considers that, if it is treated as a concept rather than a symbol, theological problems arise because concentration then focuses on the erroneous idea of the human soul as an object, the nature of which is thought to be an immortal substance. Even though Tillich acknowledges that Christian theology normally emphasises the individual person's eternal destiny, he agrees with Locke, Hume and Kant who all attacked the idea of a separate immortal soul, an idea which leads to a dualism between body and soul. Tillich wants Christianity to jettison any superstitious notion that immortality refers to a bodiless continuation of an individual's temporal life into eternity. For that reason he dislikes the phrase "life hereafter". Immortality, he says, "... expresses negatively what the term eternity expresses positively: it does not mean a continuation of temporal life after death, but it means a quality which transcends temporality"³⁷. Here again we see in Tillich's eschatology the immortal self receding into the background in favour of a "quality" signalling the elevation of finitude into the eternal. Death and immortality are considered by Tillich but, in that particular discussion, there is no mention of any personal transformation of the individual self.

³⁶ *ST 3*, p.418.

³⁷ *ST 3*, p.410.

We are not suggesting that Tillich is deliberately minimising the place of the person in his eschatology. This may simply be the logical outworking of his dominant ontology. Yet the result is the same. Perhaps subconsciously, Tillich, in his eschatological scheme of the “last things”, awards the individual self a reduced or minor background position and status. This is in striking contrast to the rest of his systematic theology, the whole framework of which is a masterly response to the fundamental questions raised by the anxious existential self, conscious of its finitude and embedded in the human condition. In any case, it would be wrong to give the impression that the individual is entirely ignored in Tillich’s ontological presentation of eschatology, particularly at the end of the *eschaton*. For example, when dealing with participation in eternal life in relation to the symbolic Christian expression “resurrection of the body”, Tillich introduces references to transformation, to whole personality, to the individuality of the person, and to individual essentialisation. He interprets and uses the Pauline symbol “Spiritual Body” to assert a double negation about resurrection – it does not involve any “materialistic” notion of a resurrected body, and it does not refer exclusively to a purely spiritual existence; it involves the spiritual transformation of the whole person. Yet, when we read what Tillich says about resurrection, we receive the strong impression that Tillich is reporting on the mainstream traditional views of Christian theology, and not necessarily reporting or conveying his own theological perspective on resurrection.

Tillich offers his view that “Resurrection says mainly that the Kingdom of God includes all dimensions of being. The whole personality participates in Eternal Life”³⁸. But he immediately follows this by alluding to his much less personal ideas of “essentialisation” and unity with the essences of all finite beings. However, for Tillich, the certainty of Eternal Life is reflected in the idea of resurrection as the universal symbol of eschatological hope.³⁹ However, even here Tillich does not seem to be referring to individual personal transformation. Rather he is speaking ontologically, using broad universal terms like “old being” and “New Being”, to convey the significance of his ontological process of essentialisation which elaborates the transition of partially enhanced and actualised essential being out of historical existence and into eternity.

³⁸ *ST 3*, pp.412-413.

³⁹ Overtly introducing the theme of transformation Tillich confirms that resurrection “is a symbolic way of expressing the central theological concept of New Being. As the New Being is not another being, but the transformation of the old being, so resurrection is not the creation of another reality over against the old reality, but is the transformation of the old reality, arising out of its death” (*ST 3*, p.414).

5.4 “Staying Alive” with Immanuel

The foregoing review of the final stage of the *eschaton*, as visualised and explained by Tillich with his use of symbols and metaphorical language, offered an opportunity to identify his key concepts and to acquire an all-round and better understanding of his approach to eschatology, a particularly difficult and speculative area of theology. Our special interest in this relates to its impact on our Immanuel theology of presence. Here, life is being presented as the unifying manifestation of divine presence in all created reality. Our proposition is that God is Immanuel, chosen and modelled here as a trinitarian representation of God-with-creation, God-with-us, expressing the immediacy and intimacy of enduring divine presence as life shared panentheistically with all finite being.

To prevail as legitimate and adequate, our central proposition must encompass the assertion that life, meaningful life, is not extinguished by death, nor is it defeated or diminished at the *eschaton*. Our assertion is that life prevails and finds its fulfilment in Eternal Life, where God continues as Immanuel to live with us throughout eternity. We contend that, in our theology of presence, life with God continues in some form beyond the *eschaton*. To hold otherwise would be to collapse our central thesis, or at least to limit it radically to an assertion that divine presence is a meaningful reality only for the duration of finite temporal existence lived out in history. This would be tantamount to asserting that creation is not forever, and that creation is in fact reversible, thus implying that God ceases to be Immanuel by withdrawing the creative and sustaining divine presence, and that God emerges as the only surviving reality at the end of the *eschaton*. Here we seek to amplify and refine our position further by interacting with, and reacting to, various aspects of Tillich's eschatology, elements of which cause us some concern and not a little confusion.

If the human-divine encounter continues beyond the *eschaton*, then Immanuel must “keep us alive” beyond our temporal existence and on into eternity. “Staying alive” with Immanuel beyond the *eschaton*, compels us to consider further the content and quality of Eternal Life as elaborated by Tillich in his eschatology. As a prelude, we should recall his theology of life, and in particular his ontological concept of life (section 4.3, above). Everything which has being has life. The essential and the existential qualify being. Life is the actualisation of being. Potentiality is rooted in essential being. Life is the actualisation of the potential of essential being under the ambiguous conditions of historical existence. According to Tillich, ambiguous life is finally transformed through his process of essentialisation when the end of the *eschaton* ushers in unambiguous life,

otherwise known as Eternal Life. From this, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what happens to finite life, particularly human life, at death and beyond death. We have already seen that Tillich's theology of life is finely interwoven with his ontology of life, and together their delicate intricacies clothe Tillich's eschatology. The common thread is life and its future prospects.

The centre-piece of our Immanuel theology is also life. Divine presence, envisaged by us as life-itself, surges along our mainstream macro-model with its three tributary models, flooding all of creation with the transcendent immanence of Immanuel, the spring and head-water of all life. Life is not just saturated with divine presence. The river of life, like every river, depends on the riverbed as its ground. All finite life is forever present to God because it is eternally grounded in the creative ground of Life-Itself. If life is the key to our understanding of divine presence, and if we have drawn support from Tillich's theology of life, then we should look again at his ontology of life at the point where it connects with his eschatology of the "last things". From the vantage point of Tillich's ontological concept of life, and assuming the arrival of death and the end of the *eschaton*, does life change? Is it taken away? Is it replaced by a totally new form of life? Or indeed, is it totally absorbed, without trace, back into divine life from where it came?

None of the answers to these questions is at all clear from Tillich's exposition of eschatology. Tillich tells us that "Life is the actuality of being, or, more exactly, it is the process in which potential being becomes actual being"⁴⁰, and again he says "Life includes the separation of potentiality and actuality. The nature of life is actualisation, not actuality"⁴¹. The problem here is that, from Tillich's exploration of the process of essentialisation which brings the *eschaton* to a conclusion, it appears that the end of essentialisation is the end of actualisation. If actualisation has ceased it would seem that finite life, as defined by Tillich, has ceased. So it also seems from this that the end of history, the completion of the *eschaton*, heralds the end of life for finite being which is reduced to the lifeless sum total of essential being plus the "new" (that which is already actualised as positive within historical existence by finite freedom) produced and deposited "as a contribution to the Kingdom of God in its fulfilment"⁴².

⁴⁰ *ST 1*, p.242.

⁴¹ *ST 1*, p.246.

⁴² *ST 3*, p.401.

For Tillich, the *eschaton* leads to an ontological cul-de-sac where all finite life, all actualising of potential being, stops “dead” and is buried in the “eternal memory” as a contribution to the fulfilled Kingdom of God. At the end of our allotted days in historical time, the as yet unrealised potential of our essential being freezes, actualises no more and, with the addition of the already actualised “new” which can no longer be augmented, drops back into the creative ground of Being-Itself. At the end of its time essential being is not fully actualised. It retains more potential. It has been actualised only to the extent that finite freedom has chosen to make it so in space and time. At the end of historical life, essential being is still pregnant with the unrealised potentiality first given to it at creation. Surely then, at the end of its days, partially actualised finite life is not pure actuality because “Pure actuality, that is, actuality free from any element of potentiality, is a fixed result; it is not alive”⁴³.

More positively, we can say that finite life enters eternal life full of further, as yet untapped, potential which could possibly be actualised beyond the *eschaton* to produce more of the “new” for the greater glory of God. Beyond death, life is changed, recharged, not taken away. On Tillich’s own ontological terms, life depends on potentiality yet to be actualised. The idea that, at the end of time, life’s potential as unactualised essential being is choked off or frustrated, is unacceptable in our Immanuel theology of presence. Creation heaves with life, and the divine presence is not limited by and to the duration of the *eschaton*. Creation is the work of God. God saw that it was good and it is not conceivable that Immanuel, who formed and maintained creation, would drain it of life and collapse it into the “eternal memory”. Such an eschatological scenario would represent Eternal Life as the frustration of life, rather than its fulfilment. For finite being, to be without life is to be without divine presence. Staying alive with Immanuel beyond the *eschaton* means more than entering eternal life and, through participation, “enjoying” the presence of God as a finite form of (to borrow a term from the world of art) “still-life”.

Certainly Tillich reminds us, when writing about such matters, that he can only point to “the state of final perfection ... in the negative metaphorical language which must be used in all attempts to conceptualise eschatological symbols”⁴⁴. That problem of language is readily acknowledged here. However, it is important to respond, where possible, to the questions and apparent inconsistencies which arise from his application of both his

⁴³ *ST 1*, p.246.

⁴⁴ *ST 3*, p.401.

theology of life and his ontology of life to his understanding of the completion of the *eschaton*. The three polarities of being, with their three corresponding functions of life, are affected at the end of history by the final conquest of the ambiguities of life. With the arrival of unambiguous life, which Tillich equates with Eternal Life, we are told that the two poles of each polarity, that is individualisation with participation, dynamics with form, and freedom with destiny, are brought into perfect balance. The poles of each polarity are united and perfected by being subsumed into that which transcends each polarity: the divine centredness in the case of individualisation and participation: the divine creativity in the case of dynamics and form: divine freedom (identical with divine destiny) in the case of freedom and destiny. However, he does assure us that individual centres are “not dissolved” in the universal divine centredness, and that the self in self-creativity is “preserved” despite the transcendence of divine creativity.

The distinct impression given by Tillich is that the three polarities of finite being are perfected by being preserved in a static fossilised way, and are effectively transcended or overpowered by the infinite all-encompassing life of the divine. It is almost as if finite life is awarded museum status and relegated, as Tillich has already said, to retention in the eternal memory. On this basis the only life actually being lived is the life of God, divine life, not finite life, which seems to have been drained of all its vitality and extinguished as a separate life-form in eternity. At the end of time it seems only God lives. Finite life’s participation in eternal life is reduced to a type of eternal divine surrogacy by which God lives life for us, and we “live”, no longer as distinctive finite life, but through God on the basis of our “memorialised contribution” to the Kingdom of God. Absorption into divine life in this way amounts to an acknowledgement that separate distinguishable finite life ceases to be. This, in turn, dissolves any continuing meaningful relationship which affirms finite being as present to, but differentiated from, the divine Other. The negative ramifications of this for our Immanuel theology of divine presence as life are obvious.

Tillich confirms our suspicions when, in dealing with the three polarities of finite being in the state of final perfection, he discusses the three corresponding functions of life which become unambiguous at the end of the *eschaton*. The functions of finite life, now in their unambiguous mode, are associated in the following way with the three polarities on which they depend: under the principle of centredness, unambiguous self-integration relates to the polarity of individualisation and participation; under the principle of growth, unambiguous self-creation relates to the polarity of dynamics and form; under the principle

of sublimity, unambiguous self-transcendence relates to the polarity of freedom and destiny. Now, in unambiguous life, we ascertain from Tillich's explanation that the three principles under which the three functions of finite life normally operate, are actually rendered inoperative, and are effectively superseded and transcended by divine centredness, divine creativity and divine freedom.

For Tillich, finite life, and particularly what makes human life human, ceases to function because, in his opinion, the special functions of human life become redundant. From the point of view of a theology of presence based on life, it would have been preferable if Tillich had said that, instead of ceasing, the special functions of human life were transformed and perfected in Eternal Life through the unequivocal and decisive removal of all ambiguities and negativities from continuing human morality, culture and religion, all now unified and directed in an exclusively positive way to give glory to God throughout all eternity. Our Immanuel theology insists that, beyond death, human beings still remain human beings.

As we contemplate the problems emerging from Tillich's eschatology in relation to our Immanuel theology of life, it is apparent that one important underlying ontological issue seems to dominate and condition Tillich's theological approach to all post-*eschaton* matters and "events": that is the ontological problem of "becoming". The category of becoming is important to Tillich. It is the basis of actualisation, and therefore the basis of his ontological concept of life. Becoming lies between essence and existence, between essential being and existential being, between potentiality and actuality, and between relative nonbeing (*me on*) and being. Tillich equates the dynamics of life with the historical dimension, "this last and all-embracing dimension of life"⁴⁵, and he considers "that 'becoming' and 'process' are universal qualities of life"⁴⁶. However, instead of using the word "becoming" to characterise life, he prefers to use the expression "... the creation of the new. ... for history is the dimension under which the new is being created"⁴⁷.

In *The Interpretation of History*, Tillich, writing about theological eschatology, makes an interesting distinction between the natural motion of things and historical motion. The *natural motion* of things is what, many years later, he calls self-creativity, one of the three functions of all finite life. It happens strictly within each finite being as it drives towards

⁴⁵ ST 3, p.25.

⁴⁶ ST 3, p.26.

⁴⁷ ST 3, p.26.

the “new”, but the “new” in this case is really only the actualisation of its own potential being. Tillich contrasts this with the *historical motion* of human history.⁴⁸ For Tillich, “the meaning of life” refers to “the production of the new in history as the production of new and unique embodiments of meaning”⁴⁹.

The significance of this for the purposes of our evaluation of Tillich’s eschatology is that “becoming”, the production of the “really new” happens in human history through the action of finite human freedom. The direct implication of this is that, at the end of history, all becoming, all actualisation, all development, all growth, all production of meaning, stops dead. If the end of the *eschaton* means the end of all such human life-based activity, it seems that human life itself has ceased. Again, such a negative understanding of Tillich’s position shows major differences between Tillich’s theology of the “last things”, and our Immanuel theology of divine presence which conceives of God as staying with the divine creation project of finite life, fostering and perfecting each precious human life beyond the grave in a new and meaningful way. Hopefully life after death is more than simply a divine acknowledgement of each remembered, but past historical, human life now ended. Immanuel is the guarantor of life, not its undertaker.

In the case of Tillich’s eschatology, the interaction between his ontology and his theology is profound. Unfortunately, Tillich limits the ontological category of “becoming” to historical existence. For him becoming is the very basis of life. It is actualisation. It is the key to the dynamics of historical life and to the whole concept of growth and development in life. Becoming is the historically based generation of the “really new”. This does not just leave Tillich with an impoverished view of life after death. This, regrettably, actually leaves him with no meaningful finite life after death. Tillich cannot conceive of any finite “living” activity beyond the end of the *eschaton*, because that would involve “becoming” in the form of growth, change, development of some sort. That would be impossible because “becoming” involves time, but history has ended. This in turn seems to rule out the idea of any exchange or dynamic normally implied in the idea of sharing life, of living together. If the notion of participation in eternal life does not include any of that dynamic then, from the point of view of the creature, it looks like a form of lifeless non-existence.

⁴⁸ “Historical motion differs from this [natural] type of motion. It breaks through the closed circle of pure being; it produces the new, the unexpected which cannot be derived from natural motion. Therefore, history also is more than the development of something enveloped. Every living being develops what is enveloped in its very nature ... but it does not break through the circle of actuality and potentiality as history does. ... The new, which occurs whenever history occurs, is meaning. In creating meaning, being rises above itself. ... The new which is produced in history is really new because it is produced by freedom” (*IH*, p.272-273).

⁴⁹ *ST 3*, p.304.

Tillich's termination of all ontological becoming at the end of history is effectively the termination, not just of meaningful personal finite life, but of all finite life as such. That, of course, would be the end of all divine presence, because the promised new creation would simply be the return of the original creation, swallowed up by God through the extinction of all finite life. The idea that Immanuel would abandon or reverse creation is unthinkable. Yet this seems to be the ontological outcome of Tillich's idea of essentialisation, where existence appears in the end to be abandoned, while essence is privileged. Essentialisation, as described by Tillich, is an ontological process. In fact, it is simply "becoming" by another name. It reflects Tillich's "value-added" approach to existence. For him historical existence is a state in which finite freedom actualises something positive in essential being or essence. The end result is "enhanced being". Enhanced being is enhanced essence, that is the sum total of the original potential being together with the value-added element actualised during historical existence by finite freedom. At the end of time, for Tillich the end of existence, enhanced essence (enhanced being as partially actualised finite being) is returned from existence back to God.

For Tillich, Christian theology cannot avoid the problem of being, and particularly the distinction between essential and existential being. The difference and the relationship between essence and existence go to the heart of Tillich's theology, and it is the interplay between the two which characterises his distinctive approach to a theology of creation, the fall, Incarnation, redemption, salvation, life, history and, as we now see, eschatology.⁵⁰ Ontologically, the essence-existence distinction is even more fundamental than the category of becoming. When dealing with the existential model of presence (section 3.4, above), we saw that Tillich's belief in "the ambiguous character of existence which expresses being and at the same time contradicts it"⁵¹, casts a long shadow over his theology. But being is more than essential being. Surely then existence, as an integral part of created being, is not itself a challenge to being?

If life is actualisation, and according to Tillich this happens only in historical existence which is ambiguous, then graduating to unambiguous life seems to mean reaching a state devoid of both life and meaningful existence. If existence means *being actual*, then the

⁵⁰ The following keynote statement shows just how important this is for Tillich's theological system. "A complete discussion of the relation of essence to existence is *identical with the entire theological system*. The distinction between essence and existence, which religiously speaking is the distinction between the *created* and the *actual* world, is the *backbone of the whole body of theological thought*. It must be elaborated in every part of the theological system" (*ST I*, p.204, our italics).

⁵¹ *ST I*, p.203.

positively actualised part of a finite being, achieved during historical existence, would survive death and the end of the *eschaton*. It would continue to exist, but as a dead entity, because its actualising would have ceased, and therefore it would have ceased to live. This raises the issue of the “existence” or state of the remaining potential unactualised part of the finite being at the end of its history. The logic of this seems to point to an unusual position whereby finite being might “survive” the end of the *eschaton*, but it would be “lifeless” and only “partially existent”. Has the marriage of Tillich’s ontology of life to his ontotheological eschatology led us to a strange place where the presence of finite life to the divine, despite the promised fullness of life eternal, is at best a twilight, passive half-existence?

If God is with us all the way, then our Immanuel theology of divine presence ought to include the idea of a divine invitation to live eternally with God. Such an invitation to life with God implies an ongoing and positive “lively” human response beyond the completion of the *eschaton*, an eternal openness in finite life to the mystery and beauty of God, an eternal “experience” or consciousness of eternal life as vibrant and vital, where there is growth in love and understanding, and where finite human beings react to, and interact in some way with, the presence of God. Life after death ought to include some creaturely appreciation and acknowledgement of Immanuel’s presence. Eternal Life should offer some element of creaturely exploration and discovery by human beings in the immediate and eternal presence of God. At the instant of death, finite human beings could not immediately, or ever, hope to embrace and comprehend the entire infinite mystery of life with God. The fulfilment and perfection of human life must be open-ended in some way, allowing for an eternal post-death actualisation of the created goodness of potential being in all humans, potential being not brought to its full actuality at the end of a person’s historical existence.

It seems presumptuous to try to push into the mystery of God in this manner. Here, at the furthest limits of eschatology, we are grappling to comprehend, or at least glimpse, not the mystery itself, but rather where the mystery lies, seeking to grasp that which makes it a mystery for human understanding. Tillich, when dealing with creation which is at the other end of the theological spectrum to eschatology, issues a timely reminder which

applies equally well to the final stages and elements, the “last things”, of the *eschaton*.⁵² We are conscious that, in our desire to extrapolate our Immanuel theology of divine presence beyond the end of the *eschaton*, we have used language and terminology which imply the passage of time, using such words as “experience”, “consciousness”, “growth”, “interact”, “exploration”, “post-death actualisation”, and so on. But time is not eternity. Eternity includes created time but it is also “above”, or beyond time. It transcends time, but it does not necessarily imply the abolition or destruction of time. For Tillich, the correlation of time and eternity is important.⁵³

5.5 Contra Tillich: Elements of an Immanuel Eschatology

From Tillich we learned that unambiguous life, that is life without the negative distractions that come with existence as it conflicts with essence, is reflected in the three symbols of Kingdom of God, Spiritual Presence and Eternal Life. Here we are interested that, for Tillich, unambiguous life can be described as Eternal Life. The successful quest for Eternal Life is achieved through the conquest of life’s ambiguities, but this can happen only beyond death, and indeed beyond historical finite existence. According to Tillich, existence is the source of life’s ambiguities. If that is the case then, for Tillich, unambiguous life is life without existence. But if existence is taken away, there can be no meaningful life of any kind. Shedding existence is the end of individuality, dynamics and freedom. It is the end of life. The reality of Tillich’s unambiguous life is that it is no more than the return of essence, positively enhanced and purged of its existential distortions, to the creative ground of God. It is radical, ontological deconstruction to remove existence in an effort to convert ambiguous life to unambiguous life. An inevitable question arises here. Is Tillich’s concept of unambiguous life really life, even according to Tillich’s own ontological definition of life as a process of actualisation? Without the dynamic of existence, unambiguous life is reduced to an impoverished and devalued form of life, where the individual is no longer separately identifiable.

This does not augur well for a meaningful understanding of Eternal Life which, for Tillich, is a synonym for unambiguous life. It is Tillich’s own eschatology which emerges as ambiguous when we try, in our Immanuel theology, to keep sight of the post-death individual and the quality of that person’s life as eternal. We know that our Immanuel

⁵² “Of course, this is said symbolically, since we are unable to have a perception or even an imagination of that which belongs to the divine life. The mystery of being beyond essence and existence is hidden in the mystery of the creativity of the divine life” (*ST 1*, p.255).

⁵³ *ST 3*, pp.419-420.

eschatology, indeed any eschatology, brings us into the realm of speculative theology. There we are without any experiential guide. However, it is legitimate to adopt, as Tillich does, the language of religious symbolism and metaphor. This can be supplemented by the apophatic approach of negative eschatology which assists with ruling out inappropriate statements and ideas relating to the “last things”. Frequently, when dealing with eschatological matters, it is easier to say what is not the situation. Tillich often uses this technique when formulating his eschatological symbols and thoughts on such difficult matters as self-consciousness after death, *apokatastasis* and the relation of time to eternity, where he is forced to make double negative statements on two opposing polar assertions about the one topic.⁵⁴

On a more positive note, further assistance in understanding eschatological issues can be drawn from biblical revelation, especially Christian scripture. In addition, for our Immanuel eschatology, we rely on the philosophical resources of ontology. The principles and concepts of ontology can be applied to eschatological questions with consistency and rigour. Religiously speaking, then, the mystery of being is the mystery of God, though ontology also considers the idea of nonbeing.⁵⁵ Nonbeing is particularly relevant when considered eschatologically in the context of the mystery of being beyond death. In our Immanuel eschatology, God eternally champions the cause of being against nonbeing, maintaining finite life and elevating it into the divine presence throughout eternity. There is no ambiguity in what Immanuel does for finite being, for life. Immanuel, as the ever-present God, triumphs over death as part of the eternal conquest of nonbeing.

Returning now to Tillich’s identification of unambiguous life with Eternal Life, it is clear that he considers death as the point at which there is a transition from ambiguous life to unambiguous life. What is not so clear is the actual character and quality of this unambiguous life. Indeed, is eternal life even life as ontologically defined by Tillich himself? In universal terms, he refers to eternal life as the transcendent side of the Kingdom, that is, the permanently present end of history⁵⁶. He states that “Eternal Life is identical with the Kingdom of God in its fulfilment”⁵⁷, and that “the end of history in the sense of the inner aim or the *telos* of history is ‘eternal life’.”⁵⁸ The actual meaning and

⁵⁴ For examples see *ST 3*, pp.412, 414, 416 and 418.

⁵⁵ “The ontological question, the question of being itself, arises in something like a “metaphysical shock” – the shock of possible nonbeing” (*ST 1*, p.163).

⁵⁶ *ST 3*, p.396.

⁵⁷ *ST 3*, p.401.

⁵⁸ *ST 3*, p.394.

significance of Eternal Life for the individual is not conveyed in these statements. Tillich affirms that Eternal Life is “the non-fragmentary, total and complete conquest of the ambiguities of life... Eternal Life is still life.”⁵⁹ Helpfully, from the point of view of Immanuel theology, he asserts that:

The eternal is not a future state of things. It is always present, not only in man (who is aware of it), but also in everything that has being within the whole of being.⁶⁰

At least Tillich confirms that the presence of the eternal is constantly there for every person, and indeed, for every finite being. But again, where and what is the profile of the individual in Eternal Life as unambiguous life?

Individuals, through their finite freedom, at times struggle against Eternal Life and, as Tillich says, “...every human being turns against his *telos*, against Eternal Life, at the same time that he aspires to it”⁶¹. More significantly, it tells us that a person’s *telos*, or inner aim, just like the “end” of history, is Eternal Life. That is why, when Tillich speaks of the *eschaton*, he uses the metaphor of that which “symbolises the ‘transition’ from the temporal to the eternal.”⁶² The “transition” is the movement towards the inner realisation of the person’s *telos* or goal. Ultimately the person’s *telos*, Eternal Life, can be identified as unambiguous life with God. For our Immanuel theology, the importance of the person’s *telos*, the individual’s life objective and inwardly desired destination, is now revealed as God present with that person all the time from the first moment of existence. Life with the divine, Eternal Life, is not just the final external destination or terminus, it is also with and within each person throughout life as a journey from the temporal to the eternal. In our theology of presence, Immanuel is truly God-with-us as the *telos* of our lives. For every person Eternal Life starts, and God is fully present, from the commencement of life. Here again we can claim that our Immanuel theology of presence and Tillich’s theology of life converge in the divine reality who is Immanuel, God-with-us. Everyone’s inner aim is an integral part of the ontological structure of each person’s finite being. Human finitude comes from the Creator already “pre-packed” or encoded with Eternal Life as its “*telos*”, that is, with Immanuel as the presence of God offering unambiguous life.

Finite being cannot be brought abruptly to its full actualisation on death or immediately after death. Otherwise, it would mean that finite being as fully actualised would have no

⁵⁹ ST 3, p.401.

⁶⁰ ST 3, p.400.

⁶¹ ST 3, p.406.

⁶² ST 3, p.395.

more potential. It would in effect be pure actuality which, of course, for some is an ontological description of God as *actus purus*. Death does not convert finite being into God. Equally, if the potentiality of finite being is not deemed to be fully exhausted at or after death, then does finite being, as partially actualised at the moment of death, remain fixed for all eternity, with no prospect of further development or actualisation in the post-death state? This does not match the Christian community's expectations, the Gospel promises, of eternal life as something personal, dynamic and vibrant. The vision of a fixed, passive human being frozen from death, in a part-developed unfinished state, is most unappealing, and is definitely not life as we hope or expect it to be after death. Those who die are hopefully at peace with God, with themselves and their fellow creatures, but they are not "at rest". They are more alive, living with much more intensity, than they could ever have been before death.

The grim picture of the part-actualised, post-death person facing the prospect of eternity without any change, as disappointingly envisaged by Tillich, raises a further ontological issue in respect of that person's as yet unrealised potential. In such an eschatological scenario, it would appear that the post-death person's unrealised potency, their potentiality which is an integral ontological part of that person's essence, would be negated, made eternally redundant. This would appear to frustrate or contradict the Creator's original plan for that person. The unrealised part of that person's essence, their remaining potentiality which was created as good and which is a part of who that person was, is and will be, is effectively annulled or annihilated at death. This would seem to reverse or extinguish part of creation, part of that person's identity. It would be the ultimate in disempowerment. It would be the removal of that person's ability to develop and grow after death. In effect it would, according to Tillich's own original ontological definition of life, make that person totally incapable of any further life beyond death. Arguably, it would ontologically destroy that person's identity and integrity. Literally, that individual would not be ontologically the same person who was once alive before death. Any such suggested ontological "surgery" at the point of death mocks the Creator.

Ontological dismemberment, the ontological deconstruction of a human being at death, is philosophically implausible. It would violate the ontological structure of finite being of which human life is an expression. Christians, believing in an all-loving Creator who does not have a change of heart or mind about the original creation at the moment of someone's death, could not contemplate such a life-defying eschatology. The idea of ontological

death and the disintegration of the created individual experiencing death, would flatly contradict the work of the Creator. Equally, such a notion would radically challenge our view of Immanuel as the God related eternally to creation and as present eternally in the life of creation, even beyond death. Death is not the end of Immanuel's presence project.

In sharp contrast to his view that, after death, there is no further change or development, Tillich also affirmed "that becoming and process are universal qualities of life"⁶³. It now appears that he intended to limit that statement to life in historical time and space. In our view, life, full-blown life and not a passive changeless imitation of real life, goes on after death. Post-death life is life lived to the full, where it is experienced at a more profound level and in a less inhibited way. It is the continuation, not the commencement, of eternal life initiated at a person's creation. It is life in every ontological sense of the word. Post-death life is an eternal journey into the mystery of God. It is a journey travelled by a person in the presence of Immanuel perceived clearly and fully, not fragmentarily, as the divine reality wholly manifest. It is an eternal exploration of God where the post-death person is eternally responding in nothing but a positive way as the divine-human relationship is being constantly enriched.

The finite will never exhaust the exploration of the infinite. Even the post-death finite human beings, from whose eyes the scales have fallen, will never fully and completely know all that could be known about Immanuel as the infinite God. Even in the post-death state of life, it is ontologically impossible for mere finite human beings to encompass the infinite, to embrace and understand totally the infinite mystery and inner life of the Godhead. For finite creatures, eternity is not "long enough" to know Immanuel. But the joy of heaven, the meaning of paradise, for those who have died, is in the eternal process of discovery, where they grow in knowledge and consciousness as the divine-human relationship develops and they move deeper into the heart of the mystery of God.

This eternal voyage of divinely-guided discovery of the infinite God, will facilitate forever the opening up of the living post-death finite individual whose potentiality, unrealised at death, will be gradually and further actualised in the eternal process of life everlasting. This eschatological view is ontologically consistent. It respects the goodness of God's created people, and it accommodates the notion of vibrant eternal life which lasts forever. It ensures that post-death people remain eternally as identifiable, separate individuals in the

⁶³ *ST 3*, p.26.

presence of God. It allows real life to flourish and function eternally under the Tillichean life principles of centredness, growth and sublimity, where the ontological elements, that is Tillich's three polarities (freedom and destiny: dynamics and form: individualisation and participation), are balanced, harmonised, and no longer in tension. Tillich has previously tried to assure us that eternal life is the final conquest of the ambiguities of life, and that "Eternal Life is still life"⁶⁴. Maybe the keyword is "still"; life stilled, lacking any real dynamics and individuality.

Importantly, life never fully expends its potentiality. Life, once started, enters into an eternal process. It is always moving potency toward actuality, but not all potency is fully actualised. Tillich would agree with this general ontological principle relating to the inexhaustibility of finite being's potential, even though he himself fails to apply this, eschatologically, to unambiguous life after death. When dealing with existence and being becoming actual, he equates the existence of something with the fact that it has become actual and has moved out of the state of mere potency.⁶⁵ By contrast, Tillichean eschatology refuses to entertain any notion of change beyond death. Tillich denies that any form of life after death, any understanding of eternal life, could include a continuing process of actualisation which, by his own ontological definition, is life. On death, unused human potentiality becomes derelict, apparently abandoned by Immanuel. This leaves life after death an impossibility because, for Tillich, there is nothing left to actualise, nothing left to live.

Although Tillich's ontology of God, his analysis of being and finitude, and his theology of life have been liberally used here, the Immanuel eschatology now being advanced goes well beyond the limits which Tillich set for his own "eschatological pan-en-theism."⁶⁶ Indeed, elements of our eschatology flatly challenge some of Tillich's own eschatological perceptions. By openly adopting Tillich's ontological definition of life, but then extrapolating it logically and, hopefully, consistently beyond death, we have constructed an ontology different to that of Tillich.

After death, life still goes on. In principle, Tillich would not take issue with that statement. However, he would probably not agree with the assertion advanced here that there is

⁶⁴ *ST 3*, p.401.

⁶⁵ Tillich writes: "An actual thing stands out of mere potentiality; but it remains in it. It never pours its power of being completely into its state of existence. It never fully exhausts its potentialities" (*ST 2*, p.21).

⁶⁶ *ST 3*, p.421.

development, change after death. Yet his own ontological definition of life demands constant change and, if genuine life is to continue after death, then change and development must go on thereafter. All such post-death development can only be positive because those who have experienced death have opened up to the full reality of God's presence. Life after death continues to be a process of eternal enlargement, as potentiality is steadily converted into actuality. Finite life, as conceived and created by God, is in reality an "enlargement" project which endures for eternity. The character of life is that it grows eternally. It is never fully grown nor is its growth stunted by death. Despite his denial of post-death change and post-death expansion of life, Tillich has given us valuable ontological and theological tools to accommodate post-death change, even though he himself largely restricted the application of his ontology and his theology of life to life before death.

Life after death does not come to a standstill. The image of passive, gridlocked life after death is unattractive. It is as if the unactualised potential of the post-death individual, could never be activated throughout all eternity, even though the power, the person's potency, remained. How then could post-death people react or respond to their increased, and ever increasing knowledge of God? If these glorified people, these after-death people who live in a new way in the presence and glory of Immanuel, were reduced to some sort of freeze-frame, fixed state of being and were incapable of reacting and responding to the "unveiled" mystery of God, that would be a parody of paradise. The idea that the blessed, those who have experienced death, would be condemned for eternity to subsist in a totally passive, sterile relationship with Immanuel, would be a travesty of eternal life. At death, God-given, unrealised potential is still there to be utilised positively beyond death. Without the possibility of actualising that, as yet, dormant human potentiality capable of making the post-death person even more fully human, eternal life would simply not be life.

More specifically, the notion that the Creator would frustrate and extinguish at death the unrealised created potential goodness of a person, contradicts the concept of divine love functioning through a dynamic relationship in the eternal presence of Immanuel. There is more to life after death than eternal human passivity. Dynamic life involves growth and development generated by divine, not human, initiative. In the post-death state, life can be visualised as an expansive life process, a continuing enlargement of the living individual who survives death, and who "lives" in Immanuel's eternal presence.

Tillich denies the possibility of change or development, even exclusively positive change, within the essence of the post-death person. This ontological paralysis of existence in the post-death presence of Immanuel contradicts Tillich's own important ontological definition of life as dynamic, and leaves real vibrant life stranded at death's door. Tillich's understanding of dynamic life is qualified by being limited to temporal life before death. His conviction that there can be no post-death essential growth or development, rings the death knell on dynamic eternal life at the moment of death. Regrettably, this reduces eternal life to theological fiction and declares human life to be the temporal short-term project of a Creator whose love for humankind only extends as far as death. This devalues the Gospel promises of eternal life. If Tillich's view of life after death as passive proves correct then, those who have already experienced death could not glorify, honour, praise and worship Immanuel because such activities are dynamic. All prayer is a form of communication, and such post-death prayer would require people acting simultaneously both as individuals and in communion with others who have died. Tillich is implicitly denying the communion of saints, one of the credal beliefs of Christianity.

It is said that Eternal Life is lived out in "heaven". Heaven, however, is not a fixed state, nor is it a place. Rather it is a communion of beatified enlightened people who are part of one and the same reality. They have not been transported to some twilight existence suspended beyond reality. They remain an integral part of God's creation. They do not inhabit 'another world'. They are with us but they are transfigured and enlightened. Eternal fulfilment is not a completed fixed state. For the blessed, it is an eternal, dynamic process of 'filling up', of becoming more and more human, of 'opening out' in an exclusively positive way to the unveiled presence of Immanuel. Perfection, the perfect life beyond death, is not completion; it is not a finished, rounded-off product. It is not a concluded, closed off process. It is life freed totally of all negativity. In terms of eternal life, there can be no such thing as a 'completed' life. A recurring theme of our alternative eschatology is that life beyond death involves eternal growth and enlargement of the individual who has survived death. All this happens in, and is stimulated by, the unveiled presence of Immanuel. Those who have become enlightened through death are literally 'enlivened', more alive than those who have not yet died.

On death, the diluted, mediated character of all human experience falls away. The distractions, the distortions and the barriers are dissipated. In the eschatology of presence, pure immediacy rules. We cannot imagine how human awareness of the presence of God

intensifies as the post-death individual is set free to live in a radically new, uninhabited way. Never again would that person have to suffer the human experience of the “absence” of God. That apparent absence of God would be finally revealed as no more than an illusion, a passing understandable weakness of human faith. Believing or feeling that God is absent could never change the reality of God’s ever-presence. Beyond death, there is no hiding place, no obstacles shutting off the fullness of Immanuel’s presence, and no perceived absence of God. All will be revealed. The presence of God will be enjoyed eternally. The beatific vision is Immanuel’s final gift to those who die. The dead are enlightened. All the earthly, bodily restrictions are lifted. Human knowledge is no longer gained through mediation. It is direct and immediate.

Tillich, of course, would vehemently disagree. For him, knowledge and awareness imply continuing change and development, all of which he firmly rules out once death has impacted on a human being. He is ambivalent about any idea that a person beyond death could be conscious, that is aware of oneself, or others, or indeed the presence of divine reality. He holds to the idea that the dead are, not unconscious, but not truly self-conscious. Is this further evidence that Tillich does not really conceive of the individual as surviving death in any meaningful way? Sadly, as we shall see at section 5.6, below, Tillich’s view seems to strip away vital elements of meaningful life at the point of death.

We have not elaborated all that Tillich has to say on this subject. He contradicts his own view that post-death change and, therefore, also post-death knowledge and awareness, are simply not ontologically possible by asserting that, nevertheless,

... the centred, self-conscious self cannot be excluded from Eternal Life. The dimension of the spirit which in all its functions presupposes self-consciousness cannot be denied eternal fulfilment.⁶⁷

Using his technique of double negation, he immediately moves towards the diametrically opposite standpoint by heavily qualifying the first statement, almost to the point of denial, when he says

... the participation of the centred self is not the endless continuation of a particular stream of consciousness in memory and anticipation. ... But eternity transcends temporality and with it the experienced character of self-consciousness. ... the self-conscious self in Eternal Life is not what it is in temporal life.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *ST 3*, p.414.

⁶⁸ *ST 3*, p.414.

Tillich appears to be saying that there is self-consciousness after death, but it is not really self-consciousness as we know it because that would be to admit that change is part of life beyond death.

Without denying that death will bring a transformation to human consciousness, which should amount to a perfecting of self-consciousness if the self is to remain human, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Tillich has unnecessarily worked himself into a dilemma here. His difficulty is that he has directly connected self-consciousness to change, and change to time. He has compounded his problem further by excluding time and change from eternity. The removal of time and change from the post-death state makes it impossible for Tillich's eschatology to accommodate, logically, any meaningful notion of the self-conscious self in Eternal Life beyond death. This greatly impoverishes Tillich's eschatology, and it contradicts his ontological concept of life as becoming, as actualisation, where there is an attempt to apply this to life beyond death.

Given its defence of the continuation of existence, and therefore also change and time after death, our Immanuel eschatology can better promote and justify the quality of life for the self-conscious self in Eternal Life beyond the grave. A theology of presence cannot accept the idea that the individual consciousness of those who have died has been eradicated or neutralised, or even numbed or dulled, in some way. Death does not deliver any kind of anaesthetic to life as eternal. On the contrary, given the removal of the distortions and ambiguities of historical life, those who die should experience heightened and enlightened consciousness. Their eternally exalting consciousness will enable them to engage and explore the mystery of God present to them. Glorified people do not "sleepwalk" through Eternal Life in a trancelike state. It is not that they are unaware or are unconscious people, hooked-up to some eternal life-support machine where only the mere semblance of life is maintained. They are either fully conscious and fully alive, or not at all. The real concern about Tillich's eschatology is that Tillich seems unable to protect the eternal survival of the self-conscious self. Fundamentally, this threatens the individual person who then disappears without trace into the anonymity of eternal, universal participation.

Returning to the question of eternity and time, we agree with Tillich that eternity transcends temporality. However, that does not mean that eternity, especially when considered beyond death, excludes time which itself is a product of God's creation. All of creation, including time, is contained within eternity. In his concept of eternity Tillich

refuses to include any element of change, and therefore he does not and cannot allot time for change, thereby condemning post-death life to passivity. However, this does not deter Tillich from giving assurance, in respect of the relation of time and eternity, that “if transtemporal fulfilment has the quality of life, temporality is included in it.”⁶⁹ The critical word here is the conditional “if”. From this we are not able to draw any comfort in respect of the quality of life beyond death. Again, Tillich’s terminology of “transtemporal fulfilment” and “temporality”, is non-specific, abstract and universalist. Furthermore, Tillich states that “time and change are present in the depth of Eternal Life, but they are contained within the eternal unity of the Divine Life”⁷⁰ This is a restatement that God is the creative ground and author of time and change. It is more of Tillich’s abstract language, and it does not concede any time, change or development to the post-death individual in Eternal Life.

Tillich must revert, when considering eternity, to another one of his double negations because he is unable to affirm positively anything about the relation of eternity to time. He must content himself with two polar assertions “...eternity is neither timeless identity nor permanent change, as the latter occurs in the temporal process.”⁷¹ Alternatively, he puts it this way: “We have rejected the understanding of eternity as timelessness and as endless time.”⁷² Again, these are references to God as the eternal ground and source of temporality, but there is no mention or inclusion of the self-conscious self experiencing time and, therefore, change in any form in Eternal Life.

Tillich briefly considers the movement of time in relation to eternity, but only prior to the end of the *eschaton*. Using spatial, indeed geometrical, imagery he refers to “the diagram of temporality”⁷³ which he visualises as a curve depicting the movement of time emerging out of and down from eternity, connecting at the bottom of the curve with the present moment, “the *nunc existientiale*, the ‘existential now’ ”⁷⁴, and returning upwards toward eternity where it finishes at the end of time. This closes the door on any notion of the self-conscious self in Eternal Life, experiencing time and change in any form. However, for an Immanuel theology, it is encouraging to note Tillich’s endorsement of the present moment, the existential now, as the meeting-point between eternity and time and, by implication, the

⁶⁹ ST 3, p.418.

⁷⁰ ST 3, p.418.

⁷¹ ST 3, p.418.

⁷² ST 3, p.419.

⁷³ ST 3, p.420.

⁷⁴ ST 3, p.420.

point of encounter between God and finite being as mutually co-present permanently in the here and now. Immanuel is existentially present everywhere and always to all human life in the immediacy of the present, the interface between eternity and time. While Tillich has unfortunately limited this theological treatment of existence to the period before the end of the *eschaton*, he acknowledges critical and positive interaction between eternity and time when he writes: "Time not only mirrors eternity; it contributes to Eternal Life in each of its moments".⁷⁵

In the case of eternity and Eternal Life versus post-*eschaton* development and change, we put Tillich again in the witness box for further cross-questioning. As eternity and its counterpart Eternal Life have, by definition, always been a reality and still remain a reality here and now, then it is obvious that they have always accommodated within them the reality of existence, time, change and indeed life itself as a process of actualising. It is reasonable to ask, therefore, why eternity and Eternal Life after the completion of the *eschaton* are, according to Tillich, incapable of tolerating these elements of God's creation? What is different in eternity and Eternal Life after the *eschaton*? Could it possibly be that, for Tillich, the difference is that the existence of all finite being, and particularly all human life, will effectively cease, and that only enhanced positivised essence will be finally returned and submerged, without distinction or differentiation, into the creative ground of being or into the "eternal memory"⁷⁶? Is there any other possible explanation? If Tillich's eschatological scenario is correct, should we not be grateful that at least positive essence is to be returned into the Godhead, rather than contemplate the ontological nightmare of a complete victory for nonbeing over finite being? These questions raise serious charges against Tillich's eschatology, and in particular his use of ontology, especially when applied to the end of the *eschaton*. For our Immanuel theology, the post-death survival of the human being is at stake here.

We revert to the central question which we have just put to Tillich. Why is eternity during the *eschaton* hospitable towards finite life, with all its concomitant change and development through the process of actualisation, and then hostile to it when the *eschaton* is complete? Why, in the post-*eschaton* state, is eternity a cold house for created vibrant life? Why does eternity beyond the *eschaton* resist the idea of flourishing life, life through growth, change and development? The answer, of course, is time. The difference for

⁷⁵ *ST* 3, p.420

⁷⁶ *ST* 3, p.399.

Tillich is time. He allows time, and therefore change and growth, during the *eschaton* but not after it. We recall that Tillich framed the theological problem of eschatology as an effort to understand the “thing”, the reality, behind any “symbolic expression of the relation of the temporal to the eternal ... the ‘transition’ from the temporal to the eternal.”⁷⁷ For Tillich, the *eschaton* involves the movement out of time and into eternity. Time is to be left behind. The reality underlying the *eschaton* is the eternal which is the Eternal One, God. God is the destination towards which the *eschaton* is carrying all life. Tillich correctly points out that the *eschaton* is not just futuristic in its orientation. It, like its underlying reality, is also a present reality. This is important for our Immanuel theology of presence because it directs our attention towards the divine presence of the Eternal One to each one existentially here and now in every moment.⁷⁸

Tillich is clear. The *eschaton* eventually brings the curtain down on time for all finite being. The *eschaton*, the power behind which is the Eternal God, inclusively embraces all of creation. It will ultimately signal the end of history, time, the world, and all life. Nothing will escape the final impact of the *eschaton*. But do we all have to wait collectively to the end of time to experience the conclusion of the *eschaton*? The logic of Tillich’s eschatology would deem that to be unnecessary and irrelevant. After all, when someone dies Tillich would say that individual has stepped out of time and exclusively into eternity. For that person history, the world, time, and temporal life have ended. At death, the end of the *eschaton* is experienced by that individual. Time has disappeared. So waiting for the universal *eschaton* to end and impact on all creation, is meaningless for that person. At the moment of death, Tillich’s eschatology dictates that the end of the *eschaton* has already arrived for the person who has died.

But do we really run out of time? This is where our Immanuel eschatology again conflicts with Tillich’s theology. Our claim is that death is actually not the end of time, or the end of life through growth. A theology of presence ought to be fully compatible with a theology of life which endures eternally. In this context, the *eschaton* is not viewed as a movement out of time and into eternity. Rather, and this is the central point of divergence from Tillich’s eschatological thinking, the *eschaton* is perceived as open-ended. It is wholly governed by the Eternal One. It is an eternal process, and it involves the eternal integration

⁷⁷ *ST 3*, p.395.

⁷⁸ “In this way the *eschaton* becomes a matter of present experience without losing its futuristic dimension: we stand *now* in face of the eternal, but we do so looking ahead toward the end of history and the end of all which is temporal in the eternal” (*ST 3*, p.396).

of temporality into eternity. Time continues to be accommodated within eternity, just as it manages to do before the end of the *eschaton*. The *eschaton* has no end because finite being as life, before and after death, eternally drives towards its *telos*. The finitude of life, life's basic ontological structure, does not change or deconstruct at death. Finite being as life is, before and after death, still finite being complete with essence, existence, the three ontological polar elements and the four ontological categories. Anything less and it would not be finite being.

If finite being is life, as Tillich tells us, then the three functions of life, self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence, should all be operative beyond death. We saw (section 5.4, above), that Tillich attempts to address eschatologically the role of the three life functions and their matching three ontological polarities in the context of the *eschaton* as the end of history and as the final conquest of the ambiguities of life.⁷⁹ He includes essence and existence in his eschatological discussion, although his alignment of essence with eternity, and existence with time, is wholly unacceptable in our Immanuel theology. However, it is important to observe that Tillich does not include a consideration of the four ontological categories of being within his eschatology. This appears to be a strange omission until it is recalled that one of the four categories of being is time.

In Immanuel theology, created time does not end. It is not reversed out of creation at the conclusion of the *eschaton*. Ironically, this stance offers a solution to a problematic issue which Tillich identifies in his own eschatology. He was compelled to say, mysteriously, that the end of *telos*, that is the end of time itself, is eternity. It is not a temporal event and it does not happen in any moment of time.⁸⁰ Tillich has the same problem in reverse in respect of creation which could not happen in a moment of time, because creation involves the creation of time itself.⁸¹ Our Immanuel eschatology has no such problem because time does not have an end and therefore a final moment is simply not an issue. If, for our Immanuel theology, time continues eternally, the word "*eschaton*", with its connotation of "last things" ("*eschata*") or "the last event", no longer seems appropriate. Perhaps the

⁷⁹ *ST 3*, pp.401-403.

⁸⁰ *ST 3*, pp.394 and 399.

⁸¹ On the *eschaton* Tillich writes: "But the end of time is not conceived in terms of a definite moment either in the past or in the future. Beginning from and ending in the eternal are not matters of a determinable moment in physical time but rather a process going on in every moment as does the divine creation" (*ST 3*, p.420).

word “*metapanton*”, our coinage meaning the next stage for all things, would better reflect the idea of the succeeding state of things and events beyond death.⁸²

Time is not terminal. This is strikingly different from Tillich’s position. But can an Immanuel theology, supported by a theology of presence as life lasting eternally, justify its claim that time, once created, has a permanent place within the reality of eternity as life in the presence of the Eternal One? Such a case cannot be made for time in isolation from the other three ontological categories of space, causality and substance. All four categories must be taken together because they all facilitate and govern change in being. They condition the “becoming” or actualisation of being. As such they are the conditions under which life flourishes and grows on both sides of the *metapanton*. Without the categories, human life after death would be destitute of self-consciousness, knowledge, awareness, participation, relationships, communion, union, and other vital faculties of real life. Tillich considers the categories in relation to the life process and history⁸³, but he did not bring the categories of being into his eschatological reflections other than to rule time out of eternity at the end of the *eschaton*. Our Immanuel eschatology seeks to protect dynamic life as eternal and at the same time defend its finitude, its unchangeable ontological character, if life is to continue as identifiable finite life beyond death. It is a contention of our theology of presence that through death, as the transitional stage of the *metapanton*, Immanuel effects a “categorical” transfiguration of life as presence, “liberating” the four categories of being from the limitations of the physical universe. The word “transfiguration” is carefully chosen as a metaphor to convey the idea that the categories, as ontological in character, must remain the same. However, they are perceived differently as reshaped or reformed, and recognised after death as transparently operative at a transcendent level, unfettered by the restrictions of the empirical world. In other words, the categories do not change, but they are seen to function differently and effectively for life beyond death. The ideas of shape and figure are contained in the word “transfiguration”. This resonates with the four categories which are categorical forms that shape finite reality. “They are ontological, and therefore they are present in everything”.⁸⁴

⁸² The Greek prefix “*meta-*” implies the notion of next, after, later, beyond, all combined with an element of change without undermining continuity. There are other possible alternatives: “*metabolon*” with its Greek root of *metabole*, carrying the idea of change in living entities as signified in the English word “metabolism”; “*metabasis*” carries the meaning of a transition, going to the next stage; “*meta bainota*” rendering the concept of things that have passed over from one condition to another.

⁸³ See *ST 3*, pp.313-326.

⁸⁴ *ST 1*, p.192.

The four categories of being, as identified by Tillich, are locked into our finitude. They are an integral part of the inner, ontological structure of finite life. We are no less finite in the post-death state of being. So time, space, causality and substance all endure ontologically beyond death. Through death, the categories as experienced by finite life, evolve and adapt as life is elevated into the eternal. They are transfigured. This transfiguration of the categories requires new eschatological thinking and language to accommodate and express the theological and the philosophical implications for the individual finite human being who is transformed by death. Such a challenge is beyond the scope of this present work, but some preliminary remarks might provide a few helpful indicators.

Creation is essentially good. As a divine project it is not reversible. It is, by divine design, meant to last through all eternity. Creation is a divine work-in-progress which preserves for ever that which is good. God will not cast aside anything that is good. Time and space, causality and substance, are created realities which are good. As categories of created finite being they will, like all manifestations of finitude, persist in finite being as life beyond death. If life is genuinely eternal, then it follows that death is not the opposite to life. Death transforms temporal life. Equally, for every finite human being death is not the end of finitude, and it is certainly not the end of the individual. Death has no power to extinguish the finitude of God's good creation. It does not, and cannot, contradict creation. It has no power of annihilation. It is incapable of frustrating God's creative work which endures forever.

If, after death, finitude and finite existence remain, the categories of finite being also remain. In the conscious experience of the finite human being who has died, the categories still form part of what it is to be human and finite in the post-death stage of one's eternal life. It is ontologically impossible for human beings as finite creatures ever to be outside, beyond, or without the categories of being which make them finite. Equally it is not ontologically possible for human beings to run out of time or, indeed, space. It is not ontologically possible for them to escape causality or lose their substance. However, death transforms the character of the categories which continue to impact on the post-death human being. This is different from the manner in which the inescapable categories of finitude register with the pre-death finite human being. After death, the categories do not disappear. They are experienced in a new way. They are not changed into something completely different by Immanuel's transfiguration of them in response to the loss of embodiment through death. Yet the categories function differently in relation to human life

as spirit which is no longer corporeally conditioned. They are still the ineluctable limitations of finite being, though they do not operate in relation to the physicality of the finite world. They are not confined to the physical characteristics usually associated with the space-time continuum. Ontologically, they remain fundamentally unchanged but, with reference to the human being who has died, the transfigured categories operate in a new way. They are not impenetrable barriers to human life relating to the divine reality, and detecting and responding fully to the divine presence. God is reality. Tillich would quickly remind us that God is not *a* reality, no more than God is *a* being among other beings. For Tillich, God is the ground and condition of all reality including the ontological categories. The Creator is greater than and beyond the categories which, as created entities, are sourced in God. The categories are within the creative ground of God, and they are used by Immanuel to shape the structure of finite being as life destined to endure into eternity.

Contrary to Tillich's views, our Immanuel theology claims that the ontological categories are not optional for finite life, even after death. Death does not purge created being of its finitude. Tillich has taught us that human life is life under the dimension of spirit. Human spirit is the power of life, sourced from God as the power of being. Tillich himself talks about "the modification of time, space, causality and substance"⁸⁵ as the categories are expressed and adapted to the different dimensions of life, giving each its own special character. "For the categories change their character under the predominance of each dimension."⁸⁶ However, in principle it is not unlike the claim in our Immanuel theology that, on and after death, human life experiences a modification, a transfiguration, of the ontological categories. Through death, the existence of human life under the dimension of human spirit, is "spiritualised" as the categories are transformed and as the finite spirit of human life is released from the corporeal dimension. After death, the human spirit, as non-corporeal finite life, still needs the categories if it is to function as life and as finite.

Tillich would disagree with our central proposition here that, driven by the logic of our Immanuel theology of presence as eternally flourishing life, there is post-death change and development all conditioned by the modifying transfigured categories of finite being as life. Despite that, we can, somewhat ironically, point to some of his own work on the categories and, by extrapolation, refer to it in support of our own position on change in post-death life. Tillich describes the character of space as "beside-each-other-ness", and

⁸⁵ *ST 3*, p.18.

⁸⁶ *ST 3*, p.18.

the character of time as “after-each-other-ness.”⁸⁷ At first these terms seem clumsy and physical in a measurable, geometrical way. However, he expands his view that there are different types of time and space. We are particularly interested in how that impacts on the dimension of human spirit which is the focus of human life. Tillich explains:

With the emergence of the dimension of the spirit as dominant, another form of beside-each-other-ness and after-each-other-ness appears; the time and space of the spirit.⁸⁸

Tillich then introduces his additional idea that time and space each have elements of both abstract unlimitedness and concrete limitedness. It is not difficult to translate these notions, and his thoughts on the space of the spirit and the time of the spirit in such a way that, for our Immanuel theology, they are applicable to eschatology, and particularly to the concept of the *metapanton* where life continues after death into the next stage to grow eternally in a transfigured way. Tillich can distinguish qualitatively different forms of time and space of the spirit which go well beyond the normal concepts of physical time and space. Under the dimension of human spirit, Tillich makes similar points in relation to causality and substance which can be incorporated into our case for “categorical” life, life conditioned and directed by the ontological categories after death.

Tillich has no problem in retaining the three ontological polarities of being in the post-death life of finite being. But there is no ontological reason which should or could exclude the retention of the four categories. The ontological composition of finite being is irreversible, even after death. Tillich recognises “the categorical unity of the universe”⁸⁹, reflecting his belief that all things are together “contemporal, conspatial, causally conditioned by each other, and substantially distinct from each other.”⁹⁰ All forms of temporality, spatiality, causality and substantiality are united respectively into the composite categories of time, space, causality and substance. Each of these four generic categories relate to all dimensions of life, and in that way each general category transcends all individual dimensions of life. These inclusive categories have a transcendent character because they belong to the mystery of being-itself. This is a reminder that the four broad categories, encompassing all individual forms of each category, govern all forms of life. From that point it takes only a step to apply the four inclusive categories to life beyond death, because the absence of the individual physical forms of the four overall categories

⁸⁷ *ST 3*, pp.315-317.

⁸⁸ *ST 3*, p.317.

⁸⁹ *ST 3*, p.314.

⁹⁰ *ST 3*, p.314.

removes only some specific instances from each of the four transcendent group categories which, as transfigured, continue to function ontologically intact.

All of this is possible in our Immanuel eschatology, because the mystery of being itself is rooted in God as the creative ground of the four categories of being. In some way, which we cannot hope to understand on this side of the grave, Immanuel the Life-Giver underwrites the continuing operation of the categories which impact on finite life as it flourishes eternally. Anything less would not be Eternal Life. Tillich is careful to protect the link between Creator and categories, just as our Immanuel theology is keen to endorse that, and also promote the link between the categories and Eternal Life. This unites creation and the *metapanton* (or *eschaton*) into the one overall divine plan for presence as real life which thrives fully and eternally from creation and on into eternity.⁹¹

Our Immanuel theology accepts all that Tillich has just said in the previous footnote, but then seeks to take the logic of it further, beyond death, and into the *metapanton* centred on Immanuel as the Eternal One. The created categories are programmed for eternal maintenance and continuous development of all finite life. They form part of the creative power of God and their functionality is modified by death. They are ontologically designed by the Creator who has endowed them with the capacity to be transfigured through death, thus guaranteeing that all finite life, especially human life, can really live eternally in a meaningful way. Our Immanuel theology is pledged to defend the post-death retention of the categories, because they ensure that the quality and character of life beyond the grave will include dynamic vibrant elements such as participation, growth in knowledge, communion and self-consciousness. With the continuing efficacy of the categories after death, human life will flourish through growth, change and development. The *metapanton*, the next stage beyond death for all finite life, ushers in transfigured life which enlarges finite being through the ontological action and conditioning of the categories.

For our Immanuel eschatology, there is no “end-time”, in the sense that created time, and indeed created space, substance and causality, do not come to an end. They do not finish. Tillich’s repeated use of the symbolic phrase “the transition from the temporal to the

⁹¹ Describing the connection between the Creator and the origin of the categories Tillich writes: “Temporality, not related to any identifiable temporal process, is an element in the transtemporal, time-creating ground of time. Spatiality, not related to any identifiable space, is an element in the trans-spatial, space-creating ground of space. Causality, not related to any identifiable causal nexus, is an element in the transcausal, cause-creating ground of causality. Substantiality, not related to any identifiable substantial form, is an element in the transsubstantial, substance-creating ground of substantiality” (*ST* 3, pp.314-315).

eternal”⁹² is unfortunate because it conveys the impression that, for Tillich who believed that “time is the central category of finitude”,⁹³ the temporal is left behind in the journey of finite being from temporal life through death to eternal life. More helpful is his use of the word “elevation” in such expressions as “The End of History as the Elevation of the Temporal into Eternity”.⁹⁴ “Elevation” hints at the themes of preservation and retention of the temporal. However, Tillich seems to employ the word only in the context of being taken into or absorbed back into the eternal itself, leaving no trace of time or indeed the other categories as transmogrified to accommodate real developing and changing human life beyond death. In our Immanuel theology, it is crucially important to uphold the eternal ongoing character of the relation between the temporal and the eternal. That relation is simply another way of expressing the foundational relationship between the finite and the infinite as the basis of all presence. It is imperative that this particular relationship is defended theologically at all its stages from creation through transfiguring death and on eternally into the *metapanton* where human life blossoms in the presence of the Eternal One. Like a lightning conductor, the presence of Immanuel towers over finite being and draws eternally all forms of life, without loss of distinction or differentiation, deeper into the mystery of God as eternal.

Death brings true enlightenment. What was once misunderstood, or only partially understood, becomes crystal clear. The image of the city of glass in the Book of Revelation comes to mind. Nothing is hidden. Everything is in the light, a metaphor for the post-death clarity of human consciousness and understanding. All is transparent. There is no darkness beyond the grave. Faith becomes redundant as the reality of God’s presence is plainly seen and recognised. Immanuel is no longer hidden. All doubt is removed forever. Death brings irreversible ‘illumination’, the full and undeniable manifestation of Jesus Christ as the final revelation, the ultimate epiphany of the presence of God. This revelation, in all its intensity and clarity, can be received only by post-death people who are fully conscious and utterly alive.

Death is not the end of time for people. It is merely the last temporally measurable day of their lives. On this their ‘last day’ they will, in a new non-fragmentary and full way, encounter Immanuel as the divine presence coming in glory to resurrect them, that is to elevate them into the heart of the mystery of God-Present. This is resurrection, being lifted

⁹² See *ST 3*, pp.395, 399 *et alia*.

⁹³ *ST 1*, p.193.

⁹⁴ See section heading at *ST 3*, p.396 and subsequent pages.

up, to a new level of being alive. It is still the same living person who experienced death, but that person's life is now transformed and transfigured through death which brings to that person a renewal or resurgence of life, boosted now in intensity to an unimaginable degree of liveliness, vitality and awareness. Yet that resurrected living person is one and the same person who lived before death. The continuity, the integrity and the identity of that person is preserved after death. Without that, the Gospel promise of eternal life would be totally empty. It would be meaningless if the original self was lost at death. The life-process of every single finite being, that is its actualisation as the 'becoming' of its being, goes on eternally in the presence of Immanuel.

Nothing positive in creation is ever lost. The five realms or dimensions of finite life as identified in Tillich's theology of life are all encompassed in the universal dimension of eternal life in the presence of Immanuel. Here Tillich would agree. He referred to this as the *apokatastasis panton*, sometimes called the doctrine of theological universalism. The importance of this for our Immanuel theology of presence centred on life is that Tillich, when writing on the theme of universal restitution or restoration in eternity in the context of ultimate judgment and eternal fulfilment, refers to the conflict between this notion that all are finally saved and:

... the seriousness implied in such threats and hopes as "being lost" or "being saved". A solution of this conflict must combine the absolute seriousness of the threat to "lose one's life" with the relativity of finite existence.⁹⁵

Loss of life is downgraded because, in Tillich's tell-tale phrase, of the "relativity of finite existence". This seems to be code for the relative unimportance of individual life. His solution to the problem is his conceptual symbol of "essentialisation" where the good, positive "bits" of the actualised essences of individual lives are swept up, and elevated out of existence and into eternity. We are concerned about the negative implications of this for our holistic Immanuel theology which seeks to emphasise the *eternal* value of each individual life to be lived out eternally in the presence of God.

To conclude this section, we return to Tillich's conception of the purpose, the *telos* or end of created being. Eschatological faith can be too easily threatened by a narrow view of life as exclusively associated with the organic and the bodily. Then, at the dissolution or destruction of the body, it seems to many that life has really ended. This challenge to eschatological faith arises from the close identification of life with embodiment. This, in turn, leads to theological agonising about bodily resurrection to make life whole and

⁹⁵ ST 3, p.407.

complete again through bodily reattachment. To foster and protect a robust faith in the full reality of eternal life, it is necessary to deploy Tillich's all-inclusive ontological definition of finite life. However, unlike Tillich, it is also essential to take that definition beyond death and apply its logic rigorously to a rounded view of everlasting life in defence of a sound eschatological faith which espouses life as eternal in the presence of Immanuel.

5.6 Immanuel and the Tillichean "Black Hole"

To formulate a plausible Immanuel theology based on presence as life, we have kept company with Tillich as our theological conversation partner. We have travelled a long way with him, covering the road from creation through to the *eschaton*. Along the way we have borrowed heavily and gratefully from Tillich's work in order to build up our Immanuel theology of presence. We have shared common ground. However, on the journey together we have also had disputes and sometimes serious disagreement, but we were able, with reservations, to continue the dialogue. Sadly, we can follow Tillich, in our own theology of presence as life, only to death's door. There, we are forced theologically to part company with him. We have taken the strain of Tillich's trilogy of axial concepts, the essence-existence-essentialisation configuration which underlies his entire ontotheological system, to its breaking-point, the point of death. From the moment of death onwards, we have a different conception of divine presence, and of Immanuel's role and involvement in personal finite life. There, Immanuel is at last manifest without ambiguity, and no longer in a fragmentary or anticipatory way. The divine reality is present unambiguously. In these circumstances all life continues and is enriched with a fresh and deeper understanding of the immediacy of God.

On and from its creation, the potentiality of essential being is being released and actualised. It exists and it is "alive" as an elemental part of finite being. Creation is the start of life. From creation onwards, the "stuff" of finite being as both essence and existence, as essential being and existential being, is "alive" and "bonded" through the process of actualisation. Life is coterminous with existence. It exists as it simultaneously unites potentiality and actuality. What exists lives. What lives exists. Being, complete with its essence, existence, polar elements, categories, ontological structure and life, comes as one simultaneous composite through creation. Conceptually, distinctions can be made, but the "parts" of being are inseparable. Being is "alive" from creation and its "components" cannot be separated from time or by time. There can be no essential being without

existential being, and *vice versa*. Being “lives” both because it exists, and because it has essentiality. Life exists, but always as something.

Tillich disposes of existence at death by allowing it to topple ontologically into the oblivion of nonbeing. By contrast, he rescues positive essentialised being at the end of the *eschaton*. If our Immanuel theology failed to resist such a selective move that would be the end of all meaningful presence of existing human life with Immanuel in eternity. The cleavage between essence as potential and existence as the actual must be challenged by our Immanuel theology because it strikes at the heart of the ontological character of life as defined by Tillich himself, and it limits his theology of presence.

To protect being, presence and life, Immanuel theology must insist that all three exist and express the same reality. To be, to be present and to be alive are three statements about the same fact. They all imply existence. Tillich tries, by excluding potentiality from existence, to limit existence to the actual. However, he contradicts his own view that existence relates to the actual not the potential when he holds that life is not pure actuality. “It is the process in which potential being becomes actual being.”⁹⁶ “The nature of life is actualisation, not actuality.”⁹⁷ For Tillich life is not actuality and yet it exists. Yet life is not a “half-way house” between potentiality and actuality. Life does not “half” exist. It just exists. Life is the one integrated existing process which simultaneously draws on potentiality as it adds to actuality. Being is never at rest because potential being and actual being are never at rest. All being exists and is “alive”. Philosophers from Heraclitus to Whitehead and beyond, call this process “becoming”. Being “becomes” life.

From Tillich’s philosophical and theological assessment of existence, comes a grim theology. For us, it does not just shake the tree of life to its roots, it fells life. That is the unavoidable conclusion which our Immanuel theology is compelled to acknowledge as flowing logically from Tillich’s position on existence. Having evaluated the evidence, we have no option but to accept that Tillich’s idea of existence is negative. The end of existence is the “black hole” in Tillich’s overall philosophical and theological system. Conceptually, existence exerts a threatening, almost “magnetic”, influence on the other key concepts in Tillich’s theological firmament. For Tillich, existence has a pervasive influence over his other central ideas such as being, essence, creation, life, estrangement,

⁹⁶ *ST 1*, p.242.

⁹⁷ *ST 1*, p.246.

sin, salvation, Incarnation, essentialisation, his eschatology and, of course, his perception of God who is the Ground of Being but who does not exist. Astronomers speak fearfully of the awful power of the black hole which can irresistibly swallow up anything which comes into association with it. To enter a black hole is to enter oblivion and be subjected to utter annihilation and disintegration. In Tillich's system, the gravitational pull of the negativity of existence is immense. In our Immanuel eschatology we seek to harmonise and perfect existence and essence in finite beings, whereas Tillich eliminates existence and perfects essence because he equates existence with estrangement.

To insulate God further from the negativity of existence, Tillich conceives of the Transcendent Fall as the transition from essence to existence, thus identifying existence automatically with estrangement and distortion. The benighted status of existence is a central theme in Tillich's theology. Tillich symbolises creation as the transition from the eternal to the temporal, and the *eschaton* as the transition from the temporal to the eternal. Our critique of Tillich concludes that the temporal means temporary existence. The temporary character of Tillichean existence means that the black hole at the end of existence swallows up time and history, including historical life which is Tillich's fifth dimension of life. It now transpires that Tillich's "diagram for temporality"⁹⁸ turns out not to be a curve after all. It is a straight line which comes to an abrupt halt at the *eschaton*. The end of time is the eradication of change and development. It marks the end of any meaningful life in Tillich's system.

Our quarrel with Tillich over the question of existence is not just about the negative quality he attributes to it. It is also about the length or duration of existence. By truncating existence, he robs finite life of its longevity, its passage on into eternity. With the disappearance of time and change into the depths of the black hole at the end of existence, we concluded that the other three ontological categories of space, causality and substance all suffer the same fate. Finitude evaporates into absolute nonbeing as the categories are "shed" on death, and existence is withdrawn from being. Even the three polarities of being disintegrate at the projected re-entry point into Eternal Life beyond the *eschaton* at the end of temporal existence. Without existence, human life, due to the loss of the subjective poles (individuality, dynamics and freedom), does not survive the impact. What remains is solely the Godhead, the divine matrix or uniting transcendent ground of the original

⁹⁸ *ST* 3, p.420.

polarities once manifest in created finite being as life but now, at the *eschaton*, extinct. The polarities of finite being have collapsed back into the ground of being.

With death and the *eschaton*, the dissolution of existence will mean that the dialectics of life will finally malfunction; instead of self-identity there will be no self to be identified; instead of self-alteration there will be no self to be altered; instead of return to self there will be no self to return. The finite life process goes out beyond itself never to return. Originally, our Immanuel theology took comfort from Tillich's idea that all finite being, every individual being as well as history itself, was endowed with a *telos*, an inner aim driving all being towards its final objective, its ultimate goal. The permanent presence of this *telos*, this end or purpose of life is Eternal Life. For our Immanuel theology of presence, this was a reassuring message until closer examination showed that the drive towards Eternal Life took finite being, including human life, only to the end of temporal existence where all is lost in the black hole of non-existence. Tillich's promise of New Being turns out to be, not a new eternal lease of life for old being, but rather the emptiness of *ouk on*, absolute nonbeing.

Equally, Tillich's pledge of unambiguous life is, for finite being, an illusion. We learn that Unambiguous Life is synonymous with his three eschatological symbols of Spiritual Presence, Kingdom of God and Eternal Life, all three of which in Tillich's system, anticipate and promise Unambiguous Life. At first this appeared to be good news for Immanuel theology. However, closer scrutiny showed that Tillich crucially moves on to examine, in the last few pages of his *Systematic Theology*, the following question and answer:

How is the eternal God, who is also the living God, related to Eternal Life, which is the inner aim of all creatures? There cannot be two eternal life processes. ... The only possible answer is that Eternal Life is life in the eternal, life in God.⁹⁹

We have already summarised Tillich's subsequent treatment of this issue (section 2.6, above). This included an explication of the meaning of Tillich's threefold "in-ness" with reference to the phrase "life *in* God", and it was noted that the rhythm of life universal and the Divine Life was reflected in "the way from essence through existential estrangement to essentialisation"¹⁰⁰ This pushed Tillich to "the identification of Life Eternal with the Divine Life."¹⁰¹ From this and from our critical examination of Tillich's eschatology, we

⁹⁹ *ST* 3, p.420.

¹⁰⁰ *ST* 3, p.421.

¹⁰¹ *ST* 3, p.421.

have no option but to conclude that this identification of Divine Life with Eternal Life effectively telescopes the latter into the former. They are one and the same life. This squeezes out creaturely life because Eternal Life is now shown to be, not life in or with God, but rather God's life, Divine Life. This leaves no room for individual human life bereft of existence. Once again, our Immanuel theology's interpretation of Tillich's message leads us to the spectacle of finite life dropping into the void, the black hole, of his theology. Tillich's theology of life, though it amplifies our theology of presence, is forced in the end to give way to a theology of ontological death. Ultimately, Tillich's apparently attractive vision of the final conquest of the ambiguities of life amounts to a conquest of life itself, a total defeat for life.

When exploring Tillich's eschatology we examined the nature of his process of essentialisation and cited our considerable reservations about it. We discovered that the elevation of the positive into Eternal Life, that is essentialisation, is the final ingathering of the enhanced essence of finite beings during their temporal but since terminated existence. For Tillich, this leads to the *apokatastasis panton*, the restitution of everything good in eternity. The "positive", the created essence, together with the new, achieved during temporal existence and added to essential being, becomes "New Being" which is then, by way of fulfilment, added to the Kingdom of God. We already know that Tillich considers the Kingdom of God to be another symbolic title for Divine Life. So essentialisation leads to the return of positive essence, duly enriched by the new, back into the Godhead's inner life and creative ground from which it originally emerged. For our Immanuel theology this is tantamount to the reversal of creation. Theologically, it amounts to "asset-stripping" creation as something generated by, but separate from God who then, because existence has expired, winds up creation through a process of divine liquidation which Tillich calls essentialisation. In his analysis of the power of God, Tillich uses the metaphor of ground to indicate the immanence of the *mysterium fascinosum*, and the metaphor of abyss to reflect the transcendence of the *mysterium tremendum*. Given our understanding of Tillich's eschatology, it is difficult not to conclude that, through essentialisation, Tillich has swept away the ground from underneath the individual self who is left to topple into the abyss as another casualty at the end of the *eschaton*, another victim of Tillich's black hole at the end of temporary existence.

Our complaint here is that human life as the individual self, is totally and eternally lost in this universalising and depersonalising process. At the end there is nothing left of the

human individual whose “ontological DNA” in the form of enhanced essential (but not existential) being is returned for total reintegration back into the creative ground of God. The self is lost without trace. The process cannot lead to any meaningful “participation” of the self in Eternal Life because existence has been removed, and therefore all individuality has been eliminated. The person cannot survive such a process which strips away all personal identity, substance and continuity. In the end the temporary status of human existence, that all-important “standing out” from nonbeing, proves to be nothing more substantive than an ontological hologram. Holograms need light if their projections are to be seen. If death switches out the light of human life as existence, the self disappears.

Essentialisation fails to protect the person. Human life is lost. To some extent Tillich must have been aware of the difficulty of his “final” process, because he attempts to introduce a few corrective measures in an effort to redress the imbalance in essentialisation. He acknowledges individual contributions to the Kingdom of God, that is to Divine Life, as each person’s essentialised being, but not their existential being, is assessed for positivity and returned accordingly into the Godhead. In other words, Tillich introduces the idea of grades into the “amount” of a person’s essentialised being. Individual lifetime performance during temporal existence is measured or graded, as the positive and negative are revealed during essentialisation. The negative is rejected. For Tillich, a Lutheran, there is a strange echo or suggestion of a purgatorial process here. The amount of the positive is gauged as a measure of the extent that essential being has triumphed over existential distortion.¹⁰² From this Tillich has made a number of points clear. Despite his belated recognition of individual performance, it is obvious that he refers to this as *past* performance. The individual is no more because, through essentialisation, the whole person is dismantled. Existence, which the essential has “conquered”, is discarded as negativity. Only essential being, like some sort of “semi-being”, emerges from the process. But this semi-being has no individual status because it does not exist, it has no existential being. In that case it cannot even be a half-being. Being, drained of existence, is no being at all. It is nonbeing. But Tillich struggles on. In essentialisation, “surviving” essential being is tucked away in eternal divine memory, another attempt by Tillich to give posthumous, post-existence credit to former individuals who no longer exist.

¹⁰² The following telling quotation makes the point: “Participation in the eternal life depends on a creative synthesis of a being’s essential nature with what it has made of it in its temporal existence. In so far as the negative has maintained possession of it, it is exposed in its negativity and excluded from eternal memory. Whereas, in so far as the essential has conquered existential distortion its standing is higher in eternal life” (ST 3, p.401).

Then, in a further attempt to signal the varying past performances of individuals now long gone into the black hole at the end of existence, Tillich assures us in our previous footnote that the reward for better performing essential being is that “its standing is higher in eternal life”. It is almost impossible to conceive what Tillich means by this phrase, given his apparent view that even the best performing past individuals no longer exist. Perhaps his idea is that the better records of past achievers will stand out more in the eternal memory. In any case the underlying message received by our Immanuel theology is clear. Existence, through essentialisation, is treated as negativity and written off, even out of the eternal memory. The individual simply does not survive essentialisation, and that is fundamentally at odds with our theology of presence.

Tillich turns to acknowledge the worth or performance of those former individuals who, through no fault of their own, were not able to develop their potentiality well before their deaths. The death of infants is an instance of a group of such individuals. At first sight, these people appear to be seriously disadvantaged by Tillich’s selective process of essentialisation. However, he seeks to have such people dealt with fairly through his doctrine of *universal* essentialisation.¹⁰³ “Vicarious fulfilment” is elsewhere referred to as “representative fulfilment”.¹⁰⁴ It is an attractive idea which involves the destiny and fulfilment of individuals in universal fulfilment. However, in the context of essentialisation at the end of the *eschaton*, it is cold comfort for those less actualised individuals who find that it is still only their essence and not their existential being, joined to other more developed essences, which are dealt with positively by inclusion in the eternal memory. Vicarious fulfilment under the process of essentialisation is not fulfilment at all because the individuals concerned are not spared extinction through the termination of existence, even though the good positive aspect of their underdeveloped essence is amalgamated with the aggregated good essence of others in the eternal memory. Even here, despite Tillich’s good intentions towards those disadvantaged in temporal existence, individuals are left no space for continuing their personal lives into eternity.

Through individual and universal essentialisation, Tillich finally shows that he privileges essence over existence with observations such as: “all things – since they are good by

¹⁰³ “... if one understands essentialisation or elevation of the positive into Eternal Life as a matter of universal participation in the essence of the least actualised individual, the essence of other individuals and, indirectly, of all beings are present. ... This idea of essentialisation of the individual in unity with all beings makes the concept of vicarious fulfilment understandable” (*ST 3*, p.409).

¹⁰⁴ *ST 1*, p.270.

creation – participate in the Divine Life *according to their essence*".¹⁰⁵ For Tillich, existence is only a temporary battleground where essence endures conflicts which "serve the enrichment of essential being after the negation of the negative in everything that has being".¹⁰⁶ The recurring theme is the return of essence. From creation, essence moves out (or falls) into existence. It travels through ambiguous existence where, despite the hostile environment of distortion and negativity, it manages to actualise and accumulate some positivity which it then, *via* essentialisation and elevation, delivers back into the creative ground of God from which it originally emerged. It is cyclical. By leaving existence behind it exclusively favours essence all the way.

None of this prevented Tillich from occasionally declaring that in some way, although he could never explain or justify the aspiration, the self-conscious self survives death. He struggled with this but firmly rejected common misunderstandings about immortality. In one lecture, given a few months before his death, he turned to consider the idea that each person might have an individual essence.¹⁰⁷ Ontologically this is a radical step where Tillich contemplates the possibility that a person's essence might be individual and unique to that self, rather than the traditional position which holds essence as universal in which individuals participate. Tillich briefly explores the point, but he does not really develop or justify it to any convincing degree. The issue is floated by Tillich in a manner which suggests that he is speculatively thinking or wondering out loud, but he is not fully persuaded of the matter himself. He ponders the issue as a possible way of rescuing individuality at the end of a person's temporal life, but he still affirms that time, existence and change cease for each separate self at death.

Tillich has created many difficulties for both his philosophy and his theology, especially his eschatology, by turning the abstract distinction between essence and existence into such an irretrievable and unbridgeable split. He has opened up an enormous gap by including essence in the act of creation, while excluding existence and denying that it could be the work of the Creator. With this starting-point, Tillich made it impossible, theologically or philosophically, to heal the infinite chasm he was convinced lay between essence and

¹⁰⁵ *ST 3*, p.405 (our italics).

¹⁰⁶ *ST 3*, pp.405-406.

¹⁰⁷ P. Tillich, "The Problem of Immortality", in *East-West Studies on The Problem of The Self*, (Eds.) P.T. Raju and Alburey Castell (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp.34-43. See also *ST 1*, pp.174-175; pp.254-255 and *MSA*, pp.74-75 for further brief hints from Tillich about the possibility of individual essences.

existence.¹⁰⁸ For the purpose of our Immanuel theology of presence as life it would have been much better if Tillich had, alongside his process of essentialisation, allowed a parallel process of “existentialisation” whereby existence, like essence, was positivised or purged of all imperfection through transfiguration and transformation as the individual is elevated into eternity. This would achieve a happier ontological marriage of essential being and existential being in one existent, thus guaranteeing the survival of finite life, including the human self, into eternity. Such a scenario would ensure that eternal life would be lived to the fullest extent. It would preserve the personal, and be more inclusive than Tillich’s conception of the exclusive retrieval of non-existent enhanced essence, harvested at the end of the *eschaton* like a strange anonymous form of quasi-being which is then deposited in the eternal memory. Tillich’s vision of New Being emerges finally as only “re-newed” essence, as being devoid of existence. Even that quasi-being has no individual status as it drops back into the ground of Being-Itself, losing for eternity all distinctiveness and differentiation.

5.7 The “Return” of the Essential or an Eschatological Self?

To counter-balance our critique of Tillich’s eschatology, there is a more positive interpretation of his view of the “return” of the essential to God. In the previous section, we considered how Tillich struggled to give eschatological recognition to the individual’s performance in temporal existence. We learned that the degree or amount of positive actualisation of essence registers, in some special way, on its return to the Creator through the essentialisation process. In addition, Tillich had comforting words for disadvantaged individuals whose opportunities to develop their essence positively was frustrated in ways beyond their control. By vicarious or representative fulfilment, these individuals with underdeveloped or under-actualised essence, are elevated through universal essentialisation to universal participation in Eternal Life. However, in both the above cases, individuality is lost because the “return” of essential being is devoid of existence. Even the inclusivity of Tillich’s view of *apokatastasis panton*, where all finite essence and not just human essence is “returned” or restored in the final consummation, does not provide for the preservation of individuals or individuality at the *eschaton*. The record shows just how uneasy Tillich was about the loss of individuality and the extinction of the self on death. His brief flirtation with a doctrine of individual essences is further evidence of his misgivings about the fate of the individual in his own eschatology. Why then is the

¹⁰⁸ Even Tillich’s concept of New Being, so central to his eschatology, does not close or heal the essence-existence gap. It transcends the split and so escapes the disruptive impact of existence.

“return” of the essential, even though devoid of existence, of individuality and of the capacity to “live on” ontologically through eternal actualisation, so important to Tillich? What is Tillich seeking to safeguard or restore? Why, ultimately, is he prepared to limit his idea of Eternal Life to the exclusive life of God alone, and thereby preclude any notion of the survival of the finite individual beyond death?

The answers to these important questions lie in Tillich’s ontology as applied to his protology, his theology of “first things”, especially creation and the fall. The idea of individual essences would have been a good solution for Tillich, except for one problem. In his ontology, he attributes individuality to existence but, at the same time, he uncouples existence from essence in the process of divine creation. Tillich credits God with the creation of essence but attributes existence to an initiative taken by aroused finite freedom as it succumbs to the temptation to actualise created essence into existence. The result is actualised essence, essence-in-existence. For Tillich, existence is associated with actuality and actualisation. It equates to estrangement and distance, but not total separation from the Creator. Existence weakens and disrupts, but it does not break, the unity of created essence with God. Ontologically, Tillich compounds his problem relating to the survival of an eschatological self or individual, by associating finitude and its potentiality (the unactualised state of the potency of created essence) with nonbeing. By limiting existence to the actual, he rejects the *existence* of “mere potentiality”. The irony, under Tillich’s own ontological rules, is that the more created essence is actualised, the more it draws away from the threat of nonbeing, but the more it actualises into existence to avoid that threat, the more it draws away from its unity with the Creator.

Tillich’s option for essence and against existence, as cited above, gives us significant insights into his motivation for prioritising the “return” of the essential to Immanuel. Given the impact of Tillich’s split between essence and existence, he could not retain eschatologically both essence and existence. He has to choose between them. His negative view of existence as the product of aroused finite freedom and not of God, decides the issue. He privileges essence over existence and, on his terms, that means that he forfeits existence and individuality at the *eschaton*. For Tillich, created essence is the principle of unity with God, but essence actualised in existence is essence under threat. In order to safeguard created essence and restore full, uninterrupted unity with God, Tillich deploys the process of essentialisation which prepares essence for safe passage through death and *the eschaton*, and for complete reinstatement and consummation with the divine.

Loss of individuality is Tillich's price for the safe return of essence, and for secure eternal reunification with God. Tillich's eschatology "rescues" essence out of existence and shepherds it carefully back home to God whence it first came.

For Tillich, God is the eternal cradle, not the grave, of returned essence now totally reunited with the divine and wholly freed from the distortion, disruption, estrangement and ambiguity of existence. The Tillichean return of the essential is the entry point into the Eternal Now where finite essence is integrated fully and unequivocally back into Eternal Life which is, for Tillich, the divine life of the one God. Returned essence becomes truly one with Immanuel as unity gives way to union. Separated finite life yields to final, ultimate fulfilment as total immersion in infinite divine love, where there is no longer separation, no longer distance from Love Itself. Tillich's principle of identity is brought to perfection as essence returns to the creative ground where it finds absolute identity with Immanuel, and where shared life is elevated into the one eternal life of God. In Tillich's eschatological scheme, individuality which inhibits total union, dissolves before the oneness of Absolute Identity as essence is retrieved out of existence, and "survives" in God who preserves by remembering eternally the unique identity of every returned created essence.

There is another important consideration in Tillich's ontology which explains why Tillich views the "shedding" of existence on essence's return to God as a positive eschatological development. Existence is not just the principle of detachment and distance in contrast to essence as the principle of essential unity with God. Essence is the point of coincidence, the place of encounter, between the infinite and the finite. In a strange way, existence is the principle of resistance which confronts essence by seeking to actualise it "away" from God. Through actualising, existence is more than the "mere potentiality" of essence but less than it could be, because it always fails to exhaust the power of essence. The "goodness" of created essence is inexhaustible because it is from God, but it is compromised in so far as it is actualised in existence where it is always less than it could be. For Tillich, existence is the principle of escape from God. It strains to take created essence away from God. The marriage of existence to essential form tempts actualising essence to "compete", in a demonic way, with God in a futile bid to become infinite.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ "Form of being and inexhaustibility of being belong together. Their unity in the depth of essential nature is the divine, their separation in existence, the relatively independent eruption of the 'abyss' in things, is the demonic. ... the demonic can come to existence only in the tension of both elements. ... To come into being means to come to form. To lose form means to lose existence. At the same time, however, there dwells in

Existence is a defiant “standing out” from the creative ground of being, challenging the unicity of God by actualising the manifold and distancing its diversity and differentiation from God. Tillich considers existence as an oppositional force, a threat to created essence and to God as the creative source of all essences. The goodness of creation is tested in existence where the unambiguous appearance of essential being before God is frustrated. In Tillich’s theology of presence, existence fragments the unity between created essence and the Creator, and it disrupts Immanuel’s presence to and in essential being. Given all the risks and threats emerging from the association of existence with essence, it is not difficult to understand and appreciate that, for Tillich, many advantages arise from jettisoning existence at the *eschaton* and chaperoning essence back to ultimate fulfilment and final consummation with God. The “return” of the essential becomes a reversal and restoration process through which the negative consequences of existence are neutralised.

Why, then, should we champion the continuation of existence beyond death and the *eschaton*? Why is our Immanuel theology so concerned to “defend” the individual as an eschatological self? The short answer lies in our positive perception of existence as a divine gift from Immanuel who is the ground of existence. For our Immanuel theology, existence is a blessing and an integral part of God’s creation, not something added on to created essence through the initiative of aroused finite freedom. Tillich appears to give a surprising amount of power to finite freedom at the critical “moment” of God’s creation of essence. Without rehearsing our argument in detail again, our position is that God, not finite freedom, is the power of being *and* the Actualiser of potentiality. It is finite freedom which makes choices about how the actualised power of finite essence is used. In our ontotheology, God as the ground of existence, is credited with transforming created essence into actualised essence. Actuality, like potentiality, is from God. Both *exist*. Existence, embraces both potentiality and actuality. God is not just the power of being. God also empowers being. The state of actuality is potentiality activated by God. Immanuel is the Activator, the Empowerer, the Giver of existence. Finite freedom selects the aspects of potentiality to be activated. For us, existence is a decidedly God-given state. God is not in conflict with existence *per se*, even though some of finite freedom’s choices run counter to the divine plan for creation. Yet, Immanuel is present to everything that

everything the inner inexhaustibility of being, the will to realise in itself as an individual the active infinity of being, the impulse towards breaking through its own limited form, the longing to realise the abyss in itself” (*IH*, pp.84-85). If being was exhaustible and all potentiality was actualised into existence as pure form, the result would be *actus purus*, pure actuality where “the dynamic side in the dynamics-form polarity is swallowed by the form side” (*ST I*, p.246). If we integrated Tillich’s thought on this matter into our own eschatology where the eschatological self is eternally actualised, then eternity and eternal life would not be “long enough” to exhaust finite life.

exists because Immanuel holds everything in existence. Potentiality is real; it is real unactivated power; it exists as essential being, just like actuality which is actualised being. Existence embraces the states of both potentiality and actuality of essential being.

In what way does our ontotheological dispute with Tillich on the question of existence bear upon our defence of the individual as an eschatological self? It makes a profound difference to the way in which life itself, including eternal life, is considered. Tillich is wrong to equate actuality with existence, and existence with estrangement, because that equates actuality with estrangement. The process of actualisation is Tillich's perception of the life process. We subscribe to Tillich's ontological theory of life but we disagree with linking actualisation *per se* to estrangement, because that makes the process of finite life automatically a movement away from the presence of Immanuel and into a state of increasing estrangement. In our Immanuel theology, finite freedom, not God-given existence and God-empowered actualisation, is responsible for estrangement. The impairment of life is not due to existence or the actualisation of potentiality. On account of his negative perception of the impact of existence on essence, Tillich distrusts the potentiality-to-actuality shift, even though that very process characterises and defines Tillich's own ontological theory of finite life. Finite life itself comes under suspicion in Tillich's ontotheology of existence, actualisation and estrangement. Actualisation, finite life, existence and estrangement are, for Tillich, inextricably linked together. In his eschatology, Tillich seeks to eliminate existence together with actualisation and estrangement. The eschatological continuation of finite life, together with individuality which is ontologically bound to existence, become collateral damage, casualties of the outworking of Tillich's own ontotheology where life is perceived to collide with existence in the actualisation of essence. At the heart of life as actualisation, Tillich has sown "terminator" seeds in his ontotheology of existence as estrangement. If returning essence is to reach the safety and security of the inner life of the Godhead, all existing finite life would have to cease at the *eschaton*.

The contrast between Tillich's eschatology and our own eschatology could not be more pronounced. In our disagreement with Tillich, the nature, the quality and the function of life, and the purpose of divine creation, are all at issue. Here again we raise the question: what is so important about the eschatological survival of the individual? Individuality and existence are ontologically locked together. The termination of the finite individual is the end of all finite existence and life. If finite life stops, all presence ends and creation is

rendered pointless. In Tillich's eschatological scheme, the return of enhanced and positivised essence in lifeless form adds nothing to an already perfect God. Gone for all eternity are finite individuality, freedom and dynamics. In short, there is no surviving life to give glory to God and to respond to divine love. Admittedly, Immanuel does not need us but we are the created product of divine love. God creates graciously and gives life generously, not out of need, but out of infinite love which generates the other-than-divine to share life and respond to love in the panentheistic divine presence. The finite individuals which make up finite life are all precious to Immanuel who preserves them in shared life and love for eternity. To think otherwise is to support an eschatology which collapses and reverses creation. Creation is for life, for life eternal. At death and at the *eschaton*, God does not have "a change of heart or mind" about creation. There is no termination of finite life which is created out of infinite love. There is no cessation of the divine-human, God-world set of relationships "conceived" out of Absolute Love to endure for all eternity as finite life expressed in countless individuals all beloved in the sight and presence of Immanuel. It is the nature, not the necessity, of Infinite Love to create life. Infinite love never stops loving manifold finite life. Finite individuals endure beyond death and the *eschaton*, because creation endures for eternity in the presence of the living God.

In our panentheistic eschatology, we envisage death, not as the abolition of existence and life, but as the abolition of estrangement and the perfecting of the individual's life as presence with Immanuel. Even though we have dwelt, in a theologically speculative manner, on the concept of finite life continuing beyond death and on the eschatological survival of the self, it is not our intention to devalue or diminish in any way the full reality and significance of death itself. We are anxious not to leave any impression that death gently fades from life as some sort of "background" experience which offers only a mild interruption, a momentary transition, or "hiccup" in the stream of finite life which continues on eternally. Our Immanuel eschatology does not sponsor or champion any form of death-denial. Human beings are not immortal. We all face death. The prospect of experiencing dying naturally holds fears and anxieties for us all, but death *per se* should be considered differently. We positively affirm death which is the decisive and conclusive end to temporal historical life. Ironically, life takes its meaning from the significance of death because death is not the end of life as such. Death is a certainty which terminates temporal life, but it opens up new possibilities in our relationship with Immanuel. Death is

radical in that it ends our temporal life, but it brings with it eternal benefits. It is radically transformative because it transfigures life totally.

The self survives death, but individual finite life is utterly changed. While the full nature of eternal life after death is beyond any human speculation, our panentheistic eschatology extends Tillich's ontological concept of life by holding to the continuation of finite life as actualisation with the retention of finite existence, freedom and dynamics. Importantly, this means that the quality of finite life after death is dynamic. It involves change, growth and development as the individual's relationship with Immanuel deepens. While this involves interaction between God and the individual, there should be no suspicion that this happens as works or human effort on the part of the finite individual. The relationship is maintained and developed solely by the grace of God whose invitation to eternal life is left open to human response. All life, both before and after death, is carried forward on the gratuitous initiative of divine grace, where God is proactive and the finite free individual is always reactive. Life, like being and presence, is a gift from God. Our theology of grace is not too dissimilar to Tillich's own position, except that we extend it beyond death to apply to the continuing relationship between Immanuel and the eschatological self. Our Immanuel theology of grace forms part of our theology of divine presence. Like Tillich, we uphold the entirely gratuitous character of divine grace which can never be earned or merited through human effort. Grace is an integral part of our Immanuel theology because we interpret Uncreated Grace as God Present to the finite. Uncreated Grace is divine presence. Created grace is not a reification of grace. It is a relational quality because it is the impact of divine presence as Uncreated Grace on the divine-human relationship. In that way, we dissolve the distinction between Uncreated Grace and created grace because they both refer to the one divine reality, the relational presence of Immanuel. Tillich agrees that grace is relational in that it qualifies the divine-human relationship.¹¹⁰ He confirms also that God as Spirit, as Spiritual Presence, together with love and grace, are the one reality in which the impact of Spiritual Presence is grace.¹¹¹

However, in Tillich's essentialist eschatology, grace as divine impact becomes redundant because, without life as presence beyond death, there is no longer a divine-human

¹¹⁰ *ST 1*, p.285.

¹¹¹ "Spirit, love, and grace are one and the same reality in different aspects. Spirit is the creative power; love is its creation; grace is the effective presence of love in man. The very term 'grace' indicates that it is not a product of any act of goodwill on the part of him who receives it but that it is given gratuitously, without merit on his side. The great 'in spite of' is inseparable from the concept of grace. Grace is the impact of the spiritual presence. ... Where there is New Being, there is grace, and vice versa" (*ST 3*, p.274)

relationship beyond the *eschaton*. In his pre-death theology of grace, we find a measure of agreement with Tillich, centred on the idea of grace as relational. It fits well within the context of our Immanuel theology of presence. Grace does not build on or perfect nature in any substantialist sense. Therefore, we do not agree with a Catholic “transformationist” model of grace. Yet, we affirm that grace brings *real* change in that it truly transforms and perfects the divine-human relationship, and makes it “righteous” in the presence of God. We subscribe to a model of grace which allows for real change brought about by the relational impact of Uncreated Grace, that is, by the presence of Immanuel on the divine-human encounter. However, we reject any latent notion that divine grace is met with human passivity. Divine grace, as God’s relational presence, stimulates the dynamics of finite life. The divine-human encounter is a living, dynamic relationship. God’s grace evokes and enables a response to the divine invitation. In our Immanuel eschatology, this is true of the interaction of grace and finite life, both before and after death.

Our comments on the theology of grace point to similarities and differences between Tillich’s theological anthropology and our Immanuel anthropology. Here we can touch on only a few points bearing upon the area of anthropology. For Tillich, human beings are in conflict with their own existence and struggle against it as something to be overcome, whereas our anthropological view is that the person struggles in existence and is conflicted often by the impact of finite freedom upon existence. Tillich’s ontology, together with his theology of creation and fall, paint a picture of existence as a “mistake” which needs to be rectified. Person-in-existence is an estranged individual who represents the post-creation, fallen human condition. Under Tillich’s scheme, humankind needs to be rescued out of existence, and human essence preserved by transcending and eliminating existence. Tillich locks human goodness away in created essence and presents the existential state of a person as negative. In the context of the divine-human relationship, this gives rise to human passivity as the person waits to be “grasped” by God as Spirit. Tillich’s anthropology is heavily conditioned by his ontotheology, particularly his negative perception of existence. For Tillich, human engagement with life is threatening, because life involves actualisation through existence, a process which brings estrangement and distancing from God. Our Immanuel anthropology views matters differently. Human life, existence and the divine-human encounter are all God-given and viewed more positively as dynamic and interactive.

Theological anthropology and eschatology are closely correlated. Anthropologically, striking dissimilarities have already emerged in the comparison of Tillich's essentialist eschatology with our own panentheistic Immanuel eschatology. The meaning of temporal and eternal life, the significance of death, the purpose and goal of history, the character of the kingdom of God, the nature of the *apokatastasis panton*, ultimate fulfilment and human *telos* all have significant anthropological ramifications and are all matters of contention between Tillich and ourselves. Tillich's essentialist anthropology is centred on the split between essence and existence. It privileges human essence, the essential human being, individual and universal essentialisation, and New Being. This is consonant with Tillich's Christology and eschatology. Ontotheology, that is ontology as applied to theology, provides the foundation for Tillich's theological enterprise. It conditions his protology and his eschatology which, in turn, bracket the entire Tillichean theological system. Tillichean anthropology and christology are integrated, and function as "connective tissue" holding together the body of Tillich's work.

Tillich links his essentialist christology to his essentialist eschatology through his reinterpretation of "distorted" eschatological symbols such as the resurrection of the Christ, the ascension of the Christ, Christ "sitting at the right hand of God", Christ as Lord of history, the *parousia* or "second coming", and the ultimate judgement of the world by Christ.¹¹² The Christ has an eschatological function because he brings the new eon,¹¹³ that is the new creation. His appearance is "realised eschatology".¹¹⁴ The concept of New Being forms the strongest correlation between Tillich's essentialist christology and his essentialist eschatology. New Being, present for the first time in Christ, is essential being, "protected" from the negative impact of existence, as it transcends the gap between essence and existence. It is also the end-product of the eschatological process of essentialisation which is completed on death for the finite individual (individual essentialisation), and at the *eschaton* at the end of history (universal essentialisation) where there is ultimate fulfilment for all creation. Just as Tillich considers that the whole cosmos, not just individual human beings, is negatively affected by the fall, so too in his christology, soteriology and eschatology he envisages that the *apokatastasis panton* will inclusively

¹¹² Cf. *ST 2*, pp.159-165.

¹¹³ Cf. *ST 2*, pp.118-120. "According to eschatological symbolism, the Christ is the one who brings the new eon. ... The new state of things will be created with the second coming, the return of the Christ in glory. In the period between the first and the second coming the New Being is present in him. He *is* the Kingdom of God. In him the eschatological expectation is fulfilled in principle" (p.118, Tillich's italics).

¹¹⁴ "His appearance is 'realised eschatology' (Dodd). ... it is fulfilment 'in principle', it is the manifestation of the power and the beginning of fulfilment. But it is realised eschatology in so far as no other principle of fulfilment can be expected. In him has appeared what fulfilment qualitatively means" (*ST 2*, p.119).

embrace, not just persons, but the whole of creation in universal fulfilment in the kingdom of God at the *eschaton*. Tillich develops his idea of New Being in the context of his christology and his reinterpretation of the Incarnation, but he is definitive about the eschatological dimension of New Being.¹¹⁵

All of the anthropological and christological Tillichean themes which we have just been considering, have distinctive eschatological orientations. They are all designed specifically to facilitate the “return” of the essential to Immanuel by overcoming the essence-existence split and “rescuing” essence from estrangement at the expense of existence. Even Tillich’s understanding of salvation as healing, echoes exactly the same essentialist eschatological agenda.¹¹⁶ Tillichean salvation is essentialist redemption *out of* existence. It is complete at death for the individual, and at the *eschaton* for the whole created cosmos. Ultimately and eschatologically, the finite individual is excluded from the kingdom of God and the eternal presence of Immanuel. By contrast, the panentheistic eschatology of our Immanuel theology is inclusive. The eschatological self is a whole being, a reconciled and harmonious composition of essential being and existential being as first created and now restored to complete unity with God. It “lives” eternally in full communion with Immanuel.

In our final examination of Tillich’s essentialist eschatology, there is one further issue which requires some exploration. To what extent exactly is the returning essence, bereft of existence, life and individuality, absorbed into the inner life of God? Does the returned essence lose all differentiation and become indistinguishable from God? We will deal with this question in the next section.

¹¹⁵ P. Tillich, “A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation” in *Church Quarterly Review* 147, no.294 (January – March 1949), pp.133-148. “... the term New Being has an eschatological implication. The Incarnation is an eschatological event in the sense of an event in which history has received its meaning, and therefore, in principle, its end. Thus the New Being which overcomes the essential and existential being might be called teleological or eschatological being in which fulfilment is given in principle because it is orientated towards the end. If the Incarnation is the appearance of the New Being it constitutes the centre of history, and therefore includes both its meaning and its consummation. What we are essentially has appeared in existence, thereby overcoming existence and creating the New Reality, which is not merely *something* new within existence, but *the* New overcoming existence as a whole. This eschatological aspect of the Incarnation, which is expressed in the term New Being, is correlated with the concept of the beginning of history” (p.147, Tillich’s italics).

¹¹⁶ “Salvation as ‘healing’ means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a centre to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself. Out of this interpretation of salvation, the concept of the New Being has grown. Salvation is reclaiming from the old and transferring into the New Being. This understanding includes the elements of salvation which were emphasised in other periods; it includes, above all, the fulfilment of the ultimate meaning of one’s existence, but it sees this in a special perspective, that of making *salvus*, of ‘healing’ ” (ST 2, p.166, Tillich’s italics).

5.8 Tillich : An Eschatological Pantheist

Our critique of Tillich's eschatology, and our understanding of his process of essentialisation which leads to the *apokatastasis panton*, the restitution of all things, prompts one more important question to be put to Tillich. If, at the *eschaton* all finite life, time and individuality disappear at the end of existence, does the restitution or return of everything back to God, the return of essence without existence, mean that Tillich's final eschatological view is in fact pantheistic? "There is no life where there is no 'otherness'."¹¹⁷ In the end, is there no remaining finite otherness? All essentialised creation has been restored but without individuality¹¹⁸ or existence, and returned to the Creator, according to Tillich's final version of the end. Universal participation has become universal absorption back into the Godhead. Is Tillich "guilty" of pantheism?

When defining and clarifying different types of pantheism Tillich correctly called for sensitivity and precision before laying pantheistic charges at anyone's door.¹¹⁹ This carefully refines our understanding of Tillich's idea of pantheism which is certainly not the simplistic idea that God is everything. That is what our Immanuel theology would call *absolute pantheism*. If that were the case then, of course, there would be absolutely nothing else except God alone. Instead, Tillich's view of acceptable and necessary pantheism is here identified as the claim that God is the essence or substance of everything. This could be termed *relative pantheism* in our Immanuel theology. This is the more usual pantheistic position, and this is what Tillich should reject because for him God is prior to existence "for being-itself does not participate in nonbeing ... God is beyond essence and existence. Logically, being-itself is 'before', 'prior to', the split which characterises finite being."¹²⁰

We question Tillich's claim that even this relative pantheism, holding to the notion that God is the essence or substance of everything, is a necessary pantheistic element of the Christian doctrine of God as being-itself. If God was the essence of something then it would be nothing less than God. If God was the substance of something then that thing would be identical with God. We recall that, when dealing with the four ontological

¹¹⁷ *ST 3*, p.421.

¹¹⁸ On one occasion Tillich explicitly refers to pantheism as "the tendency toward the complete extinction of the individual" (*HCT*, p.144).

¹¹⁹ "Pantheist has become a 'heresy label' of the worst kind. It should be defined before it is applied aggressively. Pantheism does not mean, never has meant, and never should mean that everything that is, is God. ... Pantheism is the doctrine that God is the substance or essence of all things, not the meaningless assertion that God is the totality of things. The pantheistic element in the classical doctrine that God is *ipsum esse*, being-itself, is as necessary for a Christian doctrine of God as the mystical element of the divine presence" (*ST I*, pp.233-234). See also pp.236-238.

¹²⁰ *ST I*, p.236.

categories which are “forms of finitude”,¹²¹ and which have positive and negative elements because they express both being and nonbeing, Tillich insisted that substance equated with self-identity and continuity of self. Tillich’s acceptance of this pantheistic element is puzzling, unnecessary and inconsistent with his own ontotheology. Such detectable traces of pantheism in his ontological thinking later emerge more explicitly and profoundly in his eschatology. It would have been much better if he had rejected outright any form of pantheism by simply saying that God as the ground of being is therefore the ground, the source and condition, of the substance or essence of everything finite. God as the Infinite Other is certainly not the essence of finite being, nor is God “the absolute substance which is present in everything ... the essence of all essences”.¹²²

The shadow of pantheism, at times, threatens to eclipse the pantheism reflected in much of Tillich’s theological thinking when he is dealing with the “lifetime” period from creation through to *eschaton*. Tillich, shortly thereafter, enters his own corrective as he clarifies further his understanding of pantheism.¹²³ In Tillich’s view, pantheism “says that God is the substance of everything and that there is no substantial independence and freedom in anything finite”.¹²⁴ In the end, Tillich can accept the formulation that God is the substance of everything only if substance is used “not as a category but as a symbol” meaning “the creative and abysmal ground of being”.¹²⁵ Our Immanuel theology would be much more comfortable if the language of substance and essence in this context was set aside in favour of reference to the creative power and presence of God as the source of life in every existing finite being.

Tillich constantly returns to the bedrock of his own ontotheology. There he repeatedly affirms the total dependence of all finite being on Being-Itself. God is the ground of being and the power within every being. Therefore, every finite being has its roots in the ground which is God, and the power of being in every finite creature is sourced from God who is the power within all being. Because all creation is grounded in and powered by God it is, on that basis, legitimate to call Tillich a panentheist. For example, ontological presence

¹²¹ *ST I*, p.192.

¹²² *ST I*, p.233.

¹²³ Tillich writes: “... it is wrong to speak of God as the universal essence. ... If God is understood as universal essence, as the form of all forms, he is identified with the unity and totality of finite potentialities; but he has ceased to be the power of the ground in all of them, and therefore he has ceased to transcend them. He has poured all his creative power into a system of forms, and he is bound to these forms. This is what pantheism means” (*ST I*, p.236).

¹²⁴ *ST I*, pp.237-238.

¹²⁵ *ST I*, p.238.

discussed at section 3.3.1, above, is an expression of panentheism. Tillich uses the symbol of structure as an alternative way of explaining creaturely dependence on the Creator.¹²⁶ Once more Tillich seems to overstate the case and tilt towards pantheism when, in a contradictory way, he states in the quotation shown in our previous footnote, and again in the subsequent paragraph of the same text that, while God is not bound or subject to the structure of finite being, “He is the structure”¹²⁷. Yes, God is the ground, the source and the power of the ontological structure of all finite being, the creative presence and life-force behind it; but not pantheistically the structure itself. The language of a theology of presence centred on life accommodates better the important distinction between the empowering presence of God in every finite being and the created concrete determinate structured finite being itself. Theology cannot afford to fudge the difference between the Uncreated and the created, between the infinite and the finite. Panentheism, unlike pantheism, respects and preserves that distinction. The heady mix of power and presence, of divine power and creative presence, is a legitimate and helpful way of understanding the relationship between the divine and the human, the ongoing impact of Creator on the created, without dissolving the infinite distinction between God and the world. For our Immanuel theology, Tillich’s symbols of ground, power and structure are all panentheistic in character. These symbols echo the reality that all human life is present in Immanuel who is present to and in every individual self. Panentheism is in tune with our Immanuel theology, but Tillich’s apparent tolerance for variations of relative pantheism must be resisted and rejected.

Moreover, Immanuel theology in general is challenged by Tillich’s view of the end of the *eschaton* as the end of existence where the black hole swallows up individual life, and where essentialisation is the purging process which brings about the *apokatastasis panton* and delivers only essence back to the Creator. Tillich “agrees with the Pauline vision that in ultimate fulfilment God shall be everything in (or for) everything. One could call this symbol ‘eschatological pan-en-theism’.”¹²⁸ By contrast, we disagree that Tillich’s perception of the end of the *eschaton* is panentheistic. We have already registered our concern about Tillich’s explanation of life “in” God, the essentialised third “in” of his threefold “in-ness”, and also his identification of Eternal Life as exclusively Divine Life.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ “Since God is the ground of being, he is the ground of the structure of being. He is not subject to this structure; the structure is grounded in him. He *is* this structure, and it is impossible to speak about him except in terms of this structure” (*ST 1*, p.238, Tillich’s italics).

¹²⁷ *ST 1*, p.239.

¹²⁸ *ST 3*, p.421.

¹²⁹ *ST 3*, p.421.

We concluded that, with the loss of existence and finite life, separate identifiable creaturely life is lost eternally as essence returns to its pre-creation origin in the mind of God as creative ground. There is no “space” left for the continuing existence of distinctive finite life. “For the eternal dimension of what happens in the universe is the Divine Life itself. It is the content of the divine blessedness.”¹³⁰

In Tillich’s *eschaton* God remains eternally. There is nothing else apart from God. Given our Immanuel eschatology, and our earlier analysis and critique of Tillich’s eschatology, we assert that Tillich is a post-*eschaton* absolute pantheist holding to the position that, in the end, God the Creator terminates meaningful finite life and takes back essence, briefly enhanced during temporal distorted existence, into the ground of Being-Itself where there is only one life, the Divine Life of the Eternal One. Creation survives only as a divine memory. Tillich’s eschatology has been cited as an example of “recapitulation theories, which suggest that man’s immortality is the eternal presence of his earthly life within the divine memory.”¹³¹ The black hole at the end of existence has destroyed Tillich’s pantheism. By the end of the *eschaton* Tillich’s theological position has been reduced to absolute pantheism.

For Immanuel theology in general, the relationship between God and creation is the basis of a theology of presence. Through his eschatology Tillich dissolves that vital relationship for eternity. This limits his theologies of life and of presence. Tillich’s “God above God” becomes the God of essence who triumphs over the God of existence. Our Immanuel theology must answer that by declaring that God is the God of essence and the ground of existence. Before a consideration of the mystery of being as the manifold, as plurality and diversity expressing the richness of what is, there is the prior marvelling at the profound underlying mystery of existence, the fact that there is anything at all. In our theology of presence, Immanuel is the ground of existence, and therefore is also the ground and source of all presence as enduring life. The divine gift of presence is the divine gift of existence. It matters less *what* finite being is. It matters less *what* creation is, or *what* life is. In a theology of presence it matters more *that* there is anything at all, *that* there is creation, *that* there is life. Creation is primarily the divine act of bringing finite being out of nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*, and into existence. Where there was once nothing, that is *ouk on* or absolute nonbeing, now there is something; now there is life; now there is presence.

¹³⁰ ST 3, p.422.

¹³¹ J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (1976: Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p.215.

The arrival of finite being into existence through creation is Immanuel's initiative which generates the finite other, the "other-than-divine". This same creative act is the forging of a relationship between the Divine Other and the other-than-divine, a relationship which is the basis of all presence. The creative gift of existence is the moment of God's gift of life as creation. Creation into existence is Immanuel, as the ground of existence, making the divine present to finite existing life for eternity. The blessing of existence is not just a "standing out" from nonbeing. The appearance of the finite is also a standing out from God. This is the formation of the infinite-finite relationship, the manifestation of presence as life. Creation into existence of the other-than-divine is the eruption of presence as life into reality. Before creation there is God alone, pre-creation pantheism. However, creation changes everything. It is the primary affirmation of presence as life through the divine gift of existence from Immanuel as the ground of existence. This is why Tillich's cleavage between creation and existence is unacceptable. This crucial split or division of reality led Tillich to abandon existence and meaningful finite life at death, and to preclude the possibility of post-*eschaton* presence as life. It eventually corrupted his panentheism leaving him, at the end of the *eschaton*, with eschatological pantheism only. Firmly rejecting post-*eschaton* pantheism as the eternal abolition of presence, a state where all finite life would be driven *in nihilo*, into non-existence, our Immanuel theology, holding for the eternity of presence, in contrast maintains the post-death existence and flourishing of all finite life for all eternity with God. Unlike Tillich's vision, authentic eschatological panentheism proclaims meaningful life beyond death for each individual finite being in the eternal presence of the divine.

5.9 Conclusion to Chapter Five

For a theology of presence, the issues examined in this chapter are extremely important. As we explored the strengths and weakness of Tillich's essentialist eschatology, with particular reference to the reality and mystery of presence as being and as life, we sketched out elements of our panentheistic eschatology along the way, showing where that converges with and diverges from Tillich's theological system. Using the theology of life in the context of a theology of presence we suggested the outlines of an alternative Immanuel onto-eschatology as an essential part of our emergent Immanuel theology, which differs and contrasts in various ways with Tillich's eschatology.

Our Immanuel theology closely scrutinised Tillich's eschatology. This exercise was intended to be the ultimate test case where Tillich's ideas on God, presence, life and the

eschaton were confronted by the reality of death, and where other, related, Tillichean concepts were “put to death”, that is, assessed in the light of human mortality. Arising from this critique of Tillich’s eschatology, it was found that Tillich failed that test, which exposed both his narrow negative view of existence and the limited use he made of his ontology when applied to his version of life beyond death. Our analysis highlights Tillich’s treatment of existence as the central limiting factor in his theology. This is particularly evident in his eschatology where we concluded that he had given finite being only a short lease of life. In effect, we discovered that the short-lived lease ran out at the end of existence, at the end of time when the *eschaton* was complete. Reluctantly, we accept that, for Tillich, all meaningful human life has an expiry date which coincides with the end of existence.

Tillich tightly brackets existence into a period which starts immediately “after” creation and finishes at the end of time, the end of history and with the conclusion of the *eschaton*. Actual existence, and therefore also real life as actualisation, is correspondingly funnelled into that time span between Tillich’s concepts of “dreaming innocence” before historical or temporal existence, and the “eternal memory” of God to which essentialised essence returns to the divine creative ground at the completion of the *eschaton*. In Tillich’s theological world, time is terminal in two senses. Time itself comes to an end with the last stage of the *eschaton* and, because its span coincides with the duration of existence, its end is also the occasion on which all finite being, and with it human life, comes to an end. This implies that the death of an individual human being is also the end of time and the arrival of the end of the *eschaton* for that person who, by consequence, ceases to exist.

The central question of existence continues to force its way to the top of our agenda when we deal with Tillich’s theology of presence and evaluate our findings arising from a critique of his eschatology which, through essentialisation, gives the final place of honour to essence. The problem is that Tillich has left no place for existence, and therefore for ontological life, at the end of the *eschaton*. By stopping time and change at the end of existence he has also stopped the clock on dynamic life. From our analysis, it emerges that Tillich’s split between essence and existence turns out to be the major fault line in his ontotheology. His essentialist eschatology casts a shadow backwards over the rest of his theological system, right back to his doctrines of God, creation and the Transcendent Fall, where he makes such a determined effort to shield God from any responsibility for, and from any “contamination” by, existence. If those who die do not live on in some way as

individuals, then any theology of life and presence is devalued because divine presence would not have prevailed over death. As a test case, death has probed Tillich's theology of divine presence to the limit and found it wanting. Tillich's eschatology, especially his theology of death, truncates his theology of presence, and is unmasked ultimately as life-destroying.

Our exploration of Tillich's eschatology confirms for us that Tillich is the panentheist turned pantheist. He is a "lifetime" temporal panentheist, but a post-death eschatological pantheist for whom the spent former lives of finite beings become past recollections which flicker eternally in the divine memory. Beyond death and at the *eschaton*, Tillich's panentheism breaks down under the weight of disposable negative existence and melts away into a monistic pantheism where finite life, "filleted" through the process of essentialisation to preserve the positive and cut away the negative, loses meaningful existence, individuality and conscious self-identity. For finite life, Tillich's latent eschatological pantheism emerges as his view of Eternal Life beyond the grave. Such eschatological pantheism is the end of presence, the elimination of the finite other, leaving only trinitarian self-presence in the inner life of God. Beyond the *eschaton*, pantheism heralds the end of creation when God would be alone once more. In our theology of presence, such an outcome is unacceptable.

On a more positive note, we commend Tillich for identifying and developing eschatology as a crucially important part of any theological system and as one which should both enlighten and impact on every other major dimension of that system starting, for Christians, with creation and the inner life of the Trinity. Equally valuable has been the serious way in which Tillich, using a combination of both philosophy and theology, has given due weight to the importance of integrating the theologies of life and death into a comprehensive theology of divine presence. He has shown us that issues of life and death, in theology as in other disciplines, are and should always be topical and relevant, and certainly never out of date. Quality of life and unavoidability of death are correlated in all human experience. The true meaning of life is found in the real meaning of death, and both should inform every living religion, every religious faith and every human belief system in every age and in every culture. We are grateful to Tillich for his contribution and for the special emphasis he placed on eschatology in the wider context of divine presence. He has reminded us that raising and analysing eschatological questions requires

great theological humility and faith as we stand at the edge of life and ponder the mystery of an ever-present God of love.

CONCLUSION

This particular journey through Tillichean territory has come to an end. We have followed closely the five chapter route maps supplied at the start of our work, and we have visited places of special interest to theologians of presence. We explored a network of pathways which converged and diverged. Most of the time we were in Tillich's company. Sometimes, we struck out on our own. Tillich has been an engaging travelling companion with whom we agreed and disagreed at different stages along the way. At times, Tillich was our guide. At other times, we followed our own compass, occasionally veering away sharply in another direction. With Tillich on board, we have experienced highs and lows, ups and downs, a few break-downs, but no crashes. We have reached our chosen destination by following our thesis itinerary and, *en route*, completing the threefold propositional task set down in advance by us before starting out on our travels.

Firstly, the position and extent of Immanuel theology in general has been reviewed within the broader context of theology. This examination of the ramifications of divine presence has demonstrated that Immanuel theology underlies many key areas of theological study. It has been shown that Immanuel theology unifies and consolidates multiple theological topics, and is a useful thematic research tool. We can report that presence theology flourishes implicitly at the heart of theological enterprise. It is centrally important and deserves more explicit recognition than it has previously received. Our hope is that promotion of general Immanuel theology in this thesis, will help to advance it a little closer to a position where its standing and service to theology gains more acknowledgement and appreciation. It has served us well here because it provided a reliable and broad background screen against which it has been possible to project Tillich's own theology of presence. This has facilitated clarification, evaluation and critique of his position.

Secondly, and on close indepth inspection, a substantive but latent panentheistic theology of presence has been uncovered and retrieved from the writings of Paul Tillich. This has been identified as an authentic expression of Immanuel theology. Through a process of critical repristination, Tillich's extensive but scattered work on divine presence has been collated, faithfully represented and reinterpreted in a neo-Tillichean manner. Finding and using appropriate language to address the mystery of God's presence is always problematic for Immanuel theology in general. In approaching Tillich's theology of presence, an exploration of the difficulties and delicacies of prepositional theology proved to be

beneficial in raising awareness of the constant need to hone and qualify prepositional language when speaking and writing about divine presence. In this respect, we learned to value the precision and sensitivity of Tillich's own terminology as he refined his concepts and referred repeatedly to the symbolic nature of prepositional language in theology. In our opinion, panentheism is a form of prepositional theology well suited to accommodating Immanuel theology. Our case that the predominant character of Tillich's Immanuel theology is panentheistic, is consistent with and strengthened by much of the symbolism and metaphor used by Tillich in his theological explication. We have produced evidence of Tillich's panentheistic credentials, and shown the importance that Tillich placed on the classical panentheistic principle of the finite in the infinite and the infinite in the finite. Using this principle, we manufactured and shaped our own three panentheistic models of divine presence using Tillichean materials. We "road tested" our three Tillichean models which have taken us to places and vantage-points from where we could appreciate better the complexity, richness and depth of Tillich's theology of presence. The models have functioned well as interpretative devices and as structuring principles, and have demonstrated the ontological, existential and phenomenological dimensions of Immanuel's presence in the God-world, divine-human network of relationships. By linking the three models together we formed one overarching macro-model based on life as panentheistic. We built upon that development within the context of Immanuel's creative power as operative in being, presence and life. We correlated and, ultimately, equated being, presence and life to show that "being" and "life" are synonyms for divine presence. The power of God's presence is the power of being and the power of life. Our elaboration of this Tillichean macro-model of Immanuel theology highlighted the comprehensiveness and inclusivity of Tillich's theology of presence which spreads out to consolidate large areas of his panentheistic theological system. Only in his eschatology did we detect that Tillich's turn towards panentheism twisted awkwardly and lurched towards pantheism. Our overall assessment of Tillich's Immanuel theology is that it is fundamentally essentialist because it allows essence to triumph at the expense of existence. Tillich forecloses on existence.

Thirdly, with Tillich as our conversation partner, we formulated our own panentheistic post-Tillichean Immanuel theology. It has not been set out separately in any particular section. It has been woven into the text of the thesis as it developed incrementally in response to Tillich's own work and the requirements of an Immanuel theology in general. At different stages, our particular Immanuel theology gradually emerged from a critical meditation on Tillich to produce a range of constructive proposals. Various, our

proposals endorse, amend, repair, modify and correct elements of Tillich's theology. Where serious disagreement was obvious, our suggestions, particularly in reaction to Tillich's protology, Christology, anthropology and eschatology, took the form of counter-proposals. On protology, we suggested, as a corrective to Tillich's theology of creation and fall, that existence be treated as an integral part of God's gift of created finite being. On christology, we offered a radical alternative approach to the Incarnation, based on the concept of an infinite-finite God, on our doctrine of two finitudes and on our distinction between presence *in* and presence *as*. On anthropology, our case centred on the human being as a *whole* person in whom essence and existence are intrinsically and indissolubly united, for whom dynamic life with Immanuel is eternal, and to whom a theology of grace as gratuitous and relational is relevant and necessary beyond death and the *eschaton*. On eschatology, we responded from a different standpoint which defended the idea of an eschatological self instead of Tillich's "return" of the essential, and which pointed to the eschatological merits of a theory of individual essences. Counter-proposals were also framed as we interacted with Tillich's ontology and his ontotheology, both of which pivot crucially around the central interplay between the three great "E's" of the Tillichean system, namely essence, existence and essentialisation. In comparison to Tillich's essentialist position, which is a positive option for essence and a negative option against existence, our Immanuel theology adopts a holistic ontological approach. This is based positively on whole finite beings, including whole human persons, in whom there is an indissoluble union of created essence and existence, a union sealed by Immanuel the Creator. Given the presence of God as the power of every being, the total of a holistic creature is infinitely greater than the sum of its essential and existential parts.

Tillich's separation of creation from existence prevents recognition of existence as divine gift. Attribution of existence to the Creator is vitally important if we are to attribute correctly the whole of finite being, presence and life to Immanuel as the God who shares life through creation, and maintains an intimate and eternal relationship with created life. Recognising Immanuel the Creator as the direct and immediate source of the *whole* of being, including existence, and therefore also as the only source of presence and of life, is fundamental to our Immanuel theology of presence which espouses created life as whole being living forever in eternity with God.

From our perspective, the prevailing problem of Tillich's theology is the primacy and preference he accords to essence. This characterises Tillich's Immanuel theology as

predominantly essentialist, even though he starts with existential analysis of the human condition. Initially, he uses his own unique mix of existential phenomenology and existential ontotheology to break through the surface issues and dig into the major underlying theological concepts and themes which, in due course, eventually surface as fundamentally essentialist. The inner core of Tillich's theology is essentialist. Essence is favoured in Tillich's protology because creation is reserved for essence, while the fall relates to existence as the fallen world. Tillichean essentialist christology is about God's salvific arrangements, on behalf of human beings, for "conquering" or overcoming existence, and for protecting essence which escapes into unity with God *via* New Being which functions like an existentially sterile "rescue" vehicle. Tillich's essentialist anthropology, correlated with his christology, limits the possibilities of the human person to temporal life by representing the human predicament as the struggle of essence against existence equated with estrangement, and by restricting human *telos* to the preservation of essence only as a divine memory. His essentialist eschatology is based upon the idea of "shedding" existence, and returning essentialised being safely to the Creator where it is subsumed pantheistically and absorbed totally, without differentiation, into the inner life of God. In short, only essence may apply for inclusion in eternal life interpreted as the sole life of God. All these important essentialist strands of Tillich's systematic theology feed directly into the composition of his Immanuel theology in which divine presence is grounded in essence, but destabilised in existence.

It will be obvious at this final stage in the present work that, on some important theological questions, we disagree with elements of Tillich's ontology and his ontotheology, elements which impact adversely on specific areas of an Immanuel theology of presence. We established that, for us, Tillich's unfortunate split between essence and existence gives rise to problems in his theology of creation, in his views on the Incarnation and on salvation, his theology of life, in his opinion of the significance of death for life, in his perception of divine existential concrete presence and, finally, in central aspects of his eschatology, particularly his understanding of eternal life. The radical cleavage between essence and existence has gone damagingly deep into his theology of presence, and has even vitiated important dimensions of his overall theological system. We have shown how our Immanuel theology has responded positively to address these issues and to point towards solutions. Treating existence as divine gift and adapting his Immanuel theology accordingly, would have served as a corrective to help repair and restate Tillich's theology of presence, and to unify the God-world, divine-human set of relationships into the one

integrated panentheistic reality which Tillich himself championed as part of his “third way” beyond naturalism and supernaturalism.

When dealing with the existential model of presence, we sought to retrieve and reinstate existence as positive. We reflected on many aspects of Tillich’s treatment of existence, and on the problems and answers we perceived as arising from that exercise for a theology of presence. However, the final outworking of Tillich’s views on the role of existence has proved to be unsatisfactory. From the standpoint of our Immanuel theology, it was viewed as “the shaking of the foundations” of Tillich’s own theological edifice. Other cracks appeared when we considered Tillich’s view of the nature of life as confined to temporality, and the interaction between his ontological concept of life as actualisation and his jaundiced outlook on the character of existence. His negative view of existence led Tillich to the conviction that life’s ambiguities were generated by existence interpreted as estrangement. Ironically, Tillich considers that unambiguous life can only be found at the *eschaton* where existence, individuality and dynamic finite life all end, and where eternal life refers exclusively to divine life interpreted as synonymous with unambiguous life.

In Tillich’s theology, the potentiality-to-actuality shift has proved to be a rich feeding-ground for his ontology and his ontotheology, especially as applied to his protology, his doctrine of God where divinity is inclusive of *me on* as relative nonbeing, the polarities of finite being, and his ontological concept of finite life. Our theological appreciation and awareness of the complexity, dialectics, continuity, dynamics, multidimensionality and ambiguity of individual finite life, have been enhanced by Tillich’s integration of the three polarities of finite being with the three functions of life. This is manifest in human beings as their potentiality is actualised in the presence of Immanuel, the Life-Giver. Where Tillich’s theological use of this important potentiality-to-actuality shift in conjunction with the Tillichean gap between essence and existence, caused problems for Immanuel theology, we introduced some antidotes. These countermeasures included affirmations that God, as power of being, is the Actualiser, not finite freedom, and that Tillich’s “mere potentiality” has real existence as the divinely gifted power of being itself. In any case, we have been able to show that Tillich’s panentheistic theologies of life and presence converge to confirm that life is presence. This has augmented our own Immanuel theology.

We endorsed the manner in which Tillich's Immanuel theology holds together the immediacy and the mediation of Immanuel's presence through awareness and manifestation, made possible by the impact of the Spiritual Presence which unveils the transparency or translucency of finite media. We acknowledged the theological delicacy with which Tillich balanced, panentheistically, God's transcendence and immanence as immanence-in-transcendence or, as we named it, inclusive transcendence. Indeed, inclusivity is a feature of Tillich's panentheistic theology of presence, with the exception of the eschatological exclusion of existence and individuality. Tillich's theology of presence is universalist. The cosmic fall which follows upon creation, is corrected by the prospect and promise of cosmic salvation. Tillich's *apokatastasis panton* provides for the comprehensive restoration of all creation because it offers universal salvation, universal essentialisation and universal fulfilment. The kingdom of God embraces the New Creation characterised as New Being. An inclusive theology of universal participation, with all its planetary and cosmic dimensions, is Tillich's answer to, and rejection of, all theologies of exclusion.

As the theologian of the boundaries, Tillich has shown us that a boundary is neither a barrier nor a limitation. It is a borderland, a meeting-place where dialogue is encouraged, where relationships are formed and where opposing possibilities can be correlated. In that way, theologians are able to expand the frontiers of theology as they move beyond immediate boundaries. Theologically, Tillich lived on the edge as he explored and probed the big boundary concepts centred on relationships and correlations, such as Creator-creature, God-world, divine-human, infinite-finite, transcendence-immanence, eternal-temporal, theology-philosophy, revelation-reason, and life-death. As we travelled the borders with Tillich, we strained to see and understand as far as possible ahead of our starting-position. Conceptually, the power of the Tillichean theological telescope has proved of immense benefit to our Immanuel theology. With that particular aid, we were able to view up close the major issues of Immanuel theology in general. It has allowed us to discern theologically the multidimensional presence of God. Ironically, it has also helped us to see out beyond Tillich's own position, and to develop our own Immanuel theology. Boundaries, even the boundaries of Tillich's own theology, our only reference points from which new theological bearings can be taken. Tillich would approve.¹ He considered that no system, including his own theology, is ever final and complete. All theology is culturally conditioned and, therefore, transitory. In the spirit of ecumenism and

¹ Cf. *ST 3*, p.4.

in dialogue with the world, theological thinking should be open-minded and open-ended, open to new conceptions and new possibilities. Tillich subscribed to this viewpoint.

Our holistic Immanuel theology has moved beyond Tillich's theology of presence, and it offers alternative approaches and proposals which point toward new ways of developing and expanding general Immanuel theology within the wider context of theology today. Immanuel is always present with us, and is there for all people in all periods and cultures. Therefore, Immanuel theology is always relevant, always current. It might not always be in fashion but it can never go out of date. It is central to theology, but it needs to be reinterpreted, restated and reviewed constantly to ensure that it chimes with the culture and the understanding of the time. This thesis is our reinterpretation and restatement of Immanuel theology.

The presence of God will always remain a mystery. Divine presence is forever relational, and so we started our journey at the boundary of the God-world, divine-human relationship. At the end of our travels, we have arrived back at the same place from which we first set out, that is, the Immanuel mystery of God present amongst us. There, we contemplate afresh the presence of the Eternal, knowing that we have reached, not a boundary, but rather our limit. We wish to give the last word to Tillich who could see that, as we drive beyond all the boundaries experienced in life, we meet that which defines and limits us, the Eternal.

... each of life's possibilities drives of its own accord to a boundary and beyond the boundary where it meets that which limits it. The man who stands on many boundaries experiences the unrest, insecurity, and inner limitation of existence in many forms. He knows the impossibility of attaining serenity, security and perfection. ... there remains a boundary for human activity which is no longer a boundary between two possibilities but rather a limit set on everything finite by that which transcends all human possibilities, the Eternal. In its presence, even the very centre of our being is only a boundary and our highest level of accomplishment is fragmentary.²

² *OB*, pp.97-98.

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