The title of this article is chosen to remind us, from Scripture, that the teaching role is implicit in the public ministry of the church's officers. The question which is the article's thesis is whether those in whom this gift of teaching is pronounced should not consider employing it in the teaching of 'Religious Knowledge' in one or other of our types of secular school. The writer came into school teaching from lecturing in a theological college and from a city pastorate, through personal circumstances resultant upon illness. He does not, therefore, claim a clear call to a life-work, but rather, after eight years and three schools (two secondary modern and one grammar), blesses God for the privilege of a ministry as intensive and far more extensive than any previously experienced.

The 1944 Education Act laid upon local education authorities, in whose control is some 90% of our school life, the twin duties of ensuring that every school day begins with a corporate act of worship and that every pupil shall receive at least one period of religious instruction per week. When all the safeguards, conscience clauses (for pupil and teacher), and 'let-outs' like '.... wherever practicable' have been noted,

Paul Tillich is one of those names with a built-in intellectual aura. Nor is this without reason. For Tillich, who was born in 1886 (the same year as Karl Barth) has two long and distinguished careers behind him. After a period at Breslau in 1911, a Licentiatus at Hamburg the following year and service as a chaplain in World War I Tillich embarked on a teaching career which took him to the universities of Berlin, Marburg, Dresden, Leipzig and Frankfurt. It was a period marked by a deep interest in philosophy, particularly the work of Heidegger. But these years also saw Tillich becoming increasingly concerned with existentialism and religious socialism. This first career was abruptly terminated by the advent of Adolf Hitler. He became a chaplain in the United States Army, and on returning home in 1940 he became a professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Eventually he became a full professor there, teaching philosophical theology. In 1946 he became an American citizen, and on retiring from his post at the Union Seminary in 1954 he became a professor at Harvard.

The year 1933 saw Tillich (now forty-seven) launch out upon his second career. Thanks to Reinhold Niebuhr, he obtained his present post at the Union Theological Seminary, New York. Eventually he became a full professor there, teaching philosophical theology. In 1946 he became an American citizen, and on retiring from his post at the Union Seminary in 1954 he became a professor at Harvard.

Over the years Tillich has collected some fifteen doctors and a steady stream of books has flowed from his pen. They have included collections of sermons like The Shaking of the Foundations (1949; Pelican 1962) and The New Being (1956) to essays and lectures like The Future to Be (1948), The Things to Be (1952) and Love, Power and Justice (1954). But Tillich’s great work which largely overlaps all these is his Systematic Theology. Begin in the twenties, the third and final volume has just appeared (British edition, Nisbet, Vol.1, 1933. 330pp. 35s.; Vol. II, 1937. 216pp. 25s.; Vol. III, 1964. 464pp. 42s.).

1. THEOLOGY

To pick up Tillich’s Systematic Theology after studying traditional textbooks is like straying into a room full of Picasso’s. Everywhere the perspectives are strange. While some features are oddly familiar, others are consequentially absent. There are next to no biblical texts. There are few references to classical theologians and fewer still to contemporary scholars. But there is a lot of talk about ‘ontology’, ‘structures’ and ‘concrete’. The whole thing is more like philosophy than theology. And, in fact, this is intentional. For the difference between the two, according to Tillich, is largely one of perspective; both are concerned with being (ST 1, pp.25ff.).

In their attempts to grapple with the problems presented by being, the ways of the philosopher and theologian tend to part at three points. (1) Whereas the philosopher tries to be detached as he looks at the structure of being, the theologian looks at being as one who is desperately involved with the whole of his existence, with his finitude and his anxiety, with his self-contradictory despair with the healing forces in him and his social situation. (2) There is also a difference of source. The philosopher is concerned with the structure of reality as a whole; he seeks to grasp the logos or reason which permeates all being. The theologian looks not at logos in general but at the logos who became flesh and is manifested in the life of the church. (3) Whereas the philosopher deals with the structure of logos in general (time and space, etc.), the theologian is concerned with the human aspect of being, the great problems of life. Above all, he is concerned with Tillich who calls the answer to a ‘new being’.

Later on we shall have occasion to look more closely at some of these